DIGITAL STUDENTS IN THE DEMOCRATIC CLASSROOM: USING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE CRITICAL PEDAGOGY IN FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
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Students enter composition classrooms in the twenty-first century with various levels of computer proficiency and comfort with technology and digital media. Instructors often make assumptions that their students’ are familiar with technology, even though students may be hesitant to use technology in the classroom. This dissertation gathers data from one university class and two community college classes to study students’ perceptions of and use of technology, particularly the Blackboard content management system (CMS), in the critical pedagogy classroom. In particular, it studies students’ use of technology to reflect on their own work and engage in dialogue with classmates and the instructor. The evidence suggests that students use technology and media cautiously in the classroom and will revert to more traditional forms of expression (e.g., the linear essay) when they feel uncomfortable using technology or they feel that their grade is in jeopardy. Students tended to use Blackboard more for reflection and dialogue when the CMS was an integral part of in-class and out-of-class activities. Findings indicate that first-year composition instructors should reflect on their use of technology to enhance critical pedagogy and make that pedagogy more reactive to students’ needs.
Chapter One: Description of the Problem and Study

Since the publication of Paulo Friere's 1980 work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, educators in the field of composition and rhetoric have found Friere's critical pedagogy useful in helping to engage students in composition classrooms and to encourage them to become more active participants in their own educational experiences. Friere's original incarnation of critical pedagogy centered on his theories of *praxis* (the relationship between practice, action, and reflection) and *conscientização* (consciousness of consciousness). While Friere explored the generative themes of peasants in Central and South American basic literacy programs, practitioners of critical pedagogy in the United States focused primarily on the use of student texts to highlight and confront cultural limit situations, such as American perceptions of race and gender. Critical pedagogy in twenty-first century American college classrooms focuses student learning on students' texts and experiences and builds on the knowledge that learners bring with them to the classroom in order to expand that knowledge as they come into contact with other knowers – other students who also bring their experience to a community or classroom.

Increasingly, students in those classroom communities congregate around computer terminals, over laptops, or in cyberspace. Computers are now a mainstay in freshman composition, whether students compose or design texts on their computers in their dorm rooms or in their classrooms. While students in the 1980s and 1990s spent time at computer terminals used primarily for word-processing functions, early twenty-first century students
use computers to access online communities. Henry E. Pence cites the work of Mark Prensky and others as he writes, “The old Web paradigm is an individual user accessing content. The new paradigm is communities creating and sharing ideas! The Web is becoming less about content and more about individual social connections; personal knowledge is anything anyone in your Web of online contacts knows” (348).

Students are increasingly extending the concept of Web as community to Web as learning community. The most recent Sloan Consortium report from October 2007 confirms this, citing that “almost 3.5 million students were taking at least one online course during the fall 2006 term; a nearly 10 percent increase over the number reported the previous year.” The growth rate for online courses is increasing at a rate higher than the growth rates for traditional seated enrollments: “The 9.7 percent growth rate for online enrollments [from 2005-2006] far exceeds the 1.5 percent growth of the overall higher education student population.” Seated classes are still the priority on most college and university campuses, but “nearly twenty percent of all U.S. higher education students were taking at least one online course in the fall of 2006” (Allen, Seamans, and Garrett 1).

These statistics focus on online students – those whose education revolves either partially or totally around computer-based communities. However, other students populate hybrid, blended, or computer-mediated classrooms. Measuring enrollment in online courses is easy; institutions can quickly pull data on classes with an “online” designation. However, as the Sloan Consortium found in a March 2007 report on blended or hybrid courses, schools often had no way to measure the number of students in blended, hybrid, or computer-mediated courses because those courses do not have separate designations (Allen
and Seamans 4). One can assume that, as more institutions invest increasing amounts in technology, that technology will be manifest in computer-mediated classrooms.

As a result of late nineteenth century rally cries that students couldn’t write, virtually all college and university campuses today require at least one composition class. A similar rally cry happened in the 1980s, concurrent with a push toward the use of computers in composition and close to the same time as the beginning of the North American movement toward critical pedagogy in composition. Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was published in 1980, and the first issue of the journal *Computers and Composition* was published in 1983. However, in the intervening quarter century, computers have been touted more as a means to help Johnny write than a means to help Johnny explore and de-mystify the limit-situations from which he must rise out of oppression. Technology in the classroom has often been sold as a means to more efficient job training for students, particularly at technical schools and community colleges. As open-enrollment institutions, community colleges were established to meet the needs of developing a skilled workforce and are described as the “workhorses” of higher education (Boggs 25). Studies routinely cite the community college’s mission and emphasis as “vocational programs and workforce development” (Cejda and Leist 255). The biggest growth period for the community college was in the 1960s, when schools were called to provide educational opportunities to new populations of students, including low-income students, women, minorities, people with disabilities, and older Americans (Medsker and Tillery 20). The American Association of Community Colleges indicates that, in January 2008, “59% of new nurses and the majority of other new health-care workers are educated at community colleges,” and “95% of businesses and organizations that employ community college graduates recommend community college
workforce and education training programs.” In many technical and workforce development programs, students are required to master the technology of the workforce in order to pass accreditation exams or to become certified in a particular area of expertise and earn a place in the workforce. However, higher education overall in the U.S. is far behind other industries in the use of technology overall as an industry. A 2003 U.S. Department of Commerce report shows that, “of the 55 industries surveyed, Education Services ranked dead last in the intensity of its use of IT equipment per worker” (International Society for Technology in Education).

Because of the push toward computers as a tool that students use rather than a tool that uses students, as Neil Postman claims (597), the use of computers in the composition classroom and critical pedagogy have remained virtually separated. Critical pedagogy demands that students analyze and criticize tools of technology that promise them a brighter future in the job market and higher wages to help support their families. Even though these two forces seem at odds, scholars are now seeing how critical pedagogy and computer-mediated instruction actually serve similar purposes. Donna LaCourt views critical pedagogy theorists and computers and composition scholars as involved with the same primary practice: understanding “how students make meaning in culture.” LaCourt shows that those critical scholars involved in cultural critique often limit that critique to print-based cultural texts (275). Barbara Dufflemyer builds on LaCourt’s premise of the connections between computers and composition and critical pedagogues, affirming that teachers need to provide the spaces in which students reflect on and articulate their relationship to digital technology, the forces that influenced the formation of that relationship, and the ways that they
might develop some agency within the parameters of that relationship, thus opening the way for them to develop the more complicated and mature positionings relative to technology that computers-and-composition scholars advocate. (368)

Dufflemeyer’s argument exposes what is missing from much of the focus on computers and composition and the critical classroom, primarily a space for students to reflect on and articulate their relationship to technology so that they might become more critical consumers and producers in relation to technology.

One issue that arises when offering students space to reflect on technology use is that the “space” exists within the system students are being asked to critique. Freshman composition courses, for good or bad, are charged with the responsibility both of asking students to develop sophisticated responses to and critiques of the system and simultaneously perpetuate that system. As Amy Lee points out, white, middle-class students who frequent our classes might not be open to questioning systems in which they are invested, including the technologies in those systems that promise them the potential for the benefits they seek from attending college in the first place: foremost among those, increased earning potential and upward social mobility (119). Lee questions what the critical classroom can offer students who do not necessarily view themselves as the oppressed or seek to align themselves with the cause of the “other.” She questions the easy categorization of students into the “oppressed” and the “oppressor,” particularly when students will more than likely categorize themselves in a category opposite of that in which we as teachers might place them. As Victor Villanueva writes,
I have seen . . . students, overtly caught in institutional and state apparatuses, not resist hegemony, despite experiences that made it apparent they were oppressed. . . . They were in school to fulfill a dream, a longtime American dream of success through education. They were not in school to have their dreams destroyed. They would naturally resist any such attempt. (256-257)

Villanueva is not the first to recognize this tendency in students (see Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary*). As an undergraduate, I would have resisted such attempts to classify myself as “oppressor” or “oppressed.” I was a first-generation college student from a rural area of Arkansas, the child of working-class parents. However, I also earned a full-scholarship to a private college where I excelled, earning further assistantships and fellowships to complete three additional graduate degrees. Had I been asked to classify myself as a freshman composition student, I doubt that I would have seen myself as either “oppressed” or a budding “oppressor,” though a brief look at my background and college experience could place me in either category. Similarly, as Lee and others point out, making assumptions about students in our classrooms and the way they would classify themselves is extremely problematic and, in some cases, can lead to open student resistance to pre-conceived categories.

In the article “What Happened in English 101?,” Erika Jacobson reflects on a course in which students responded to the critical pedagogy presented to them with revolt; by the end of the course, students were filing formal complaints with the department about the experiment in teaching. Jacobson reflects on one of the more problematic assignments in the course in which students were asked “To read Villanueva recalling our other class readings
and your own experiences and to write a letter to an educational authority figure and challenge his/her contribution to an ideology of education.” Jacobson writes,

Looking back at this assignment and thinking about my own experience as a first-year college student, I see how I, the knowing teacher, was asking the students to attack, armed with rhetoric, a community of which they were striving to become a part. Students come to a university expecting teachers to help them enter into the ‘academic discourse community’; my assignment was implicitly asking them to challenge this same community (57).

When teachers implement a pedagogy that asks students to question the sources of authority around them, students can openly rebel, even when those instructors have the best of intentions.

For students and instructors alike, technology has become an authority figure in the classroom. And just as practitioners of critical pedagogy make assumptions about how students would classify themselves as “oppressors” or “oppressed” in the freshman composition classroom, proponents of technology-enriched classrooms often assume that all twenty-first century students in the Net Generation not only are comfortable with using technology but also can transfer that comfort to the composition classroom. While students might be techno-savvy with Facebook or text messaging to friends outside the classroom, students clearly divide the technology they use for writing outside the classroom from technology used to produce writing and multimedia texts in the classroom. A recent report from the Pew Internet and American Life Project shows that, while 85% of teens participate in communication activities in digital media—including text messaging, sending email or instant messages, or posting comments on social networking sites—“60% of teens do not
think of these electronic texts as ‘writing.’ Teens generally do not believe that technology negatively influences the quality of their writing, but they do acknowledge that the informal styles of writing that mark the use of these text-based technologies for many teens do occasionally filter into their school work” (ii).

A majority of students surveyed (78%) stated that increased use of technology in schools would encourage them to become better writers, but only 17% of those teens indicated that they felt the writing they did in Internet-based forums or for personal reasons affected the quality of their writing in the classroom (vi). The classroom is a place to learn the “traditional” forms of English, and risks in that forum—particularly risks that involve critiquing media they produce for personal reasons—are not easily undertaken.

This study seeks to avoid some of these common assumptions to provide a theory of how students interact with technology in the classroom and whether students are willing to reflect on their work with technology in ways that question their use of that technology. One way this study seeks to accomplish this task is to ask students to pose questions about knowledge, literacy, technology, and the intersections among those concepts and then to choose the technology that they feel best expresses their viewpoints on those intersections. Further, I ask student to express the reasons for those choices and reflect on their choices. If a student chooses to use PowerPoint to present the answer to a question about technology, can the student reflect on why he or she used that particular medium to answer a question about the medium? Asking students both to use and reflect on their use of technology foregrounds the technology itself as part of a student’s limit situation—not only the factors that limit a student’s actions and behaviors but the student’s perceptions of limits on his or her

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1 Another 57% indicated that they would be more likely to revise texts composed on a computer. However, what students classified as “revision” was not defined (vi).
behaviors. Thus, looking at student’s perception of his or her ability to use technology alongside the choices he or she makes in using that technology helps us to better understand the complex learners we face in the brave new world of the twenty-first century.

Much ethnographic and theoretical study on computers and composition already informs our pedagogical practice in the classroom. Cynthia Selfe calls for composition instructors to pay attention to technology and get involved in determining the uses of technology in our classrooms and departments. In *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century*, she connects the roles of educators, businesses, and the government and urges educators to “commit ourselves to reading and analyzing these texts and the lives of students—honestly, with respect, and to the very best of our abilities” (160). She and Gail Hawisher follow up this call to action with an article in *College Composition and Communication* and the book *Literate Lives in the Information Age: Narratives of Literacy from the United States*, both of which look at the lives of people dealing with different levels of technological immersion and the ways that immersion (or lack of it) affect their literacy.

One of the benefits of Selfe and Hawisher’s work is that those “subjects” represented in the text are also listed as co-authors of each chapter, giving the “subjects” of the study a voice. However, the scope of this book is broad; the authors seek “to begin tracing technological literacy as it has emerged over the last few decades within the United States” (3). My study will narrow that focus significantly, tracing the journeys of nineteen students at a Midwest university and twenty-seven students at a Midwestern community college through their journeys in freshman-level composition classes.

Just as Selfe and Hawisher call for understanding a broad range of narratives about the intersections of technology and literacy, Stuart Selber calls for students to “be able to
recognize and articulate the way power circulates in technological contexts” (133). I contend that that recognition can and should begin in the freshman composition course. While students will not achieve rhetorical literacy, as Selber calls for in the end of his book, by the conclusion of a single course, one course can lead them to begin to question the roles that technology plays in their literacy process. And because critical pedagogy, in its most pure form, is defined as the “ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human” (33), the process should be one that a student continues without end—one does not “achieve” full humanity but constantly works toward the recognition of his or her humanity. This study will capture how critical pedagogy can guide students toward praxis in their dealings with technology and begin (or continue) the process of recognizing how technology adds to and takes away from the choices they make as humans.

With these considerations in mind, how do students in a first-year composition classroom centered on critical pedagogy use various media to complete assignments and then reflect on those technologies? My study addressed four questions:

- Does the implementation of the Blackboard course management system encourage students to engage in critical dialogue about their writing and their technology use?
- How do students perceive their use of technology, both in and out of the classroom?
- Will students critically question the choices they make regarding their use of technology in and out of the composition classroom?
- How do students use technology in the classroom to produce (or not produce) rhetorically-based multimedia texts?
Much published work involving critical pedagogy and technology minimizes student voices by focusing on theory, with the research either completely missing (Giroux) or existing to supplement the theory (Lee), or relying primarily on anecdotal narratives about students from the perspective of the teacher (Shot). Thus, while critical pedagogy’s origins in Friere’s work are dialogic, what we often see is a monologic interpretation of students’ thoughts, words, and actions through the lens of the teacher-researcher. Often, these narratives serve either to champion critical pedagogy or to shape the students’ experiences to fit the "hero narrative" of the teacher: the person who faces adversity but overcomes, using critical pedagogy to reach students and help them succeed (Tassoni and Thelin).

Similarly, writings about student use of technology in the field of composition seem to revolve primarily around the theoretical aspects of digital rhetoric or large-scale contexts of how students work with technology (Bolter; Hawisher and Selfe). This study seeks to understand how students’ experiences with and reactions to technology in the classroom determine their investment in the use of technology and their willingness to critically question their use of that technology. To this end, students have the option of presenting material in any format during the class. They are then asked to engage in dialogue about the media and formats they chose in terms of both their experience with and access to technology and their comfort level with and perceptions of that technology.

This study examines whether the freshman composition classroom can employ critical pedagogy to explore technology in ways that encourage students to be functionally, critically, and rhetorically proficient (Selber). Can students develop critical and rhetorical proficiency as we ask them to become better composers using that same technology? The
results of the study will be situated primarily in the perspectives of students in freshman composition classrooms participating in the study. Intermingled with student perspectives will be my reflection on my own pedagogy and practice. Do I “practice what I preach” in my use of critical pedagogy to explore student technology use? Do I give students the space that Duffelmeyer calls for in which to critically examine how and why they make the choices they do regarding technology use?

The focus on student voices combined with my self-reflection works to counter the contradictions evident in much of the writing and research about critical pedagogy: its tendency to address an abstract classroom enacting a generalized pedagogy with the “every student.” As Amy Lee points out, “writing about our teaching—representing and theorizing the space of our own classrooms—is often more difficult than theorizing about the composition class, the critical teacher, or students in general” (100). She calls for scholarship about the critical pedagogy classroom that “reconceptualize[s] our work as teachers and scholars in order to prioritize action and reflection in both capacities” (101). The study will not only forefront student voices but also reflect on how I situated my initial pedagogy, how at points that pedagogy went horribly awry, and how I adjusted that pedagogy in order to more closely align my action and reflection in a true teaching praxis.

Chapter two reviews the pertinent literature addressing critical pedagogy, providing an overview of my initial definition of critical pedagogy based on my reading in the field. The chapter will also review previously published work on student perceptions and use of technology in the composition classroom and in other comparable classrooms across the university and college system. Additionally, criticism about those studies and about critical pedagogy will address places where gaps exist in current study regarding both critical
pedagogy and technology use in the composition classroom. Finally, this chapter will address how my study attempts to fill some of the gap in this discourse.

Chapter three sets up the methods and methodology of the study, including a justification for the use of grounded theory in a mixed-methods approach. This method most closely aligns with the goals of critical pedagogy, the need to listen to student voices in order to compose the classroom.

Chapter four addresses critical pedagogy in the university classroom. Not only does this chapter provide an overview of the structure of the course, but it also provides critical self-reflection on my actions as a teacher in that classroom. Student voices will provide an overview of how students did and did not engage in dialogue about their learning and how the Blackboard course management system did or did not facilitate that dialogue.

Chapter five reviews how students in the university classroom used or did not use technology in order to compose documents for the course and how those students reflected on the production of those texts. First, results of a survey of student technology use will establish how the students self-identified as technology users. Then, student comfort with and use of technology will be analyzed to draw conclusions about how students’ comfort levels with technology influenced technology use and dialogue about that use.

Chapter six addresses how my experience as a teacher/student with students/teachers in the university classroom affected my teaching in the community college classrooms. During the period between teaching these classes, I accepted a job as the Instructional Designer for Online Teaching and Learning at the community college where I conducted my study, a job that greatly influenced my own perceptions of and comfort with technology in the classroom. I intertwine self-reflection about my own experiences during
this period of transition with a description of the changes implemented in the community
college classroom as a result of my reflections on my university classroom and the changes I
was experiencing with my own technology use. Student voices are incorporated to shed light
on the successes and failures in implementing critical practice in these classrooms, including
a study of how students did or did not engage in dialogue about their writing and the
classroom.

Chapter seven looks specifically at the results of a survey of student technology use
and will establish how the community college students self-identified as technology users.
This chapter will focus on four community college students who self-identified as being
comfortable with technology but used that technology in the classroom in a variety of ways.
These case studies will help to understand the range of student reactions to technology and
the ways in which those reactions influence their ability to use and reflect on technology in
the classroom.

Chapter eight provides a review of how the community college students were able,
or not able, to identify and discuss their learning in the classroom in their final projects and
in interviews conducted while they wrote the final projects. In particular, case studies of four
students at different levels of technological and writing proficiency illuminate critical
classroom practice by using student voices to identify the ways in which dialogue facilitated
by various technologies served and failed students in the critical pedagogy classroom.

Chapter nine summarizes conclusions from the study and suggests paths for future
research and practice in online, blended, or computer-mediated critical classrooms.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

While much theoretical and speculative work on technology in the composition classroom justifies the use of technology in the twenty-first century’s increasingly digital and global world (Selfe; Selfe et. al.; Hawisher and Selfe), very few studies to date have addressed the gap between students’ current proficiencies with digital texts and technology and what these theoretical treatises propose that they can and should do. The gap between theory and practice, between the scholar publishing in the journals of the field and the practitioner often facing upward of 80 students weekly, is not new to the field of composition. However, implementing theory about how students should or can use technology rubs against the discrepancy between student knowledge of technology and their ability to use technology critically.

This chapter focuses on three separate issues. First, I review how critical pedagogy is framed in the primary texts about critical pedagogy, showing how little of that work focuses on studies in which students’ voices are given primacy in the text. Second, I explain how this lack of student voice informs the definition of critical pedagogy that guides my study. Third, I focus on studies analyzing student perceptions about and use of technology, primarily the work done in composition studies. Finally, this chapter will show the necessity for my study in the context of the definition of critical pedagogy provided and the studies (or lack thereof) of students participating in a classroom that practices critical pedagogy.
Critical Pedagogy: Action, Reflection, and Critique

Critical pedagogy came to America with the work of Paulo Freire in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and its focus on praxis became popular in composition studies. For Freire, praxis is the combination of reflection and action: “Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed—even in part—the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world” (68). For the critical pedagogue, teaching involves both participation and reflection—in other words, students must not only write but also reflect on their writing; they must not only practice in the classroom but also look at how the words and images they use are reflective of how they view themselves and the world around them. To remove either one leads to an imperfect system; word without action is “verbalism” and action without word is “activism.” For Freire, the word is both a way of accessing individual truth and of understanding how that truth connects to a larger world. In naming their worlds, Freire’s students made connections between words and their world to develop their budding literacy.

Composition teachers have sought to make Paulo Freire’s informal, third-world educational practices applicable to formal, first-world classrooms. Critical pedagogy’s dichotomous struggle with the “banking system” provides a certain allure, allowing the teacher to see herself as hero in the conflict between the “good” liberatory pedagogy and the “bad” banking method, which has at its core the perpetuation of master narratives. As Richard Miller states, “Freire has given teachers a way to see themselves as something other than the mindless functionaries of a state apparatus responsible for tidying the prose of the next generation of bureaucrats” (11). Teachers who practice critical pedagogy envision their
class not as upholding the status quo but fighting it—not replicating the master narratives of traditional, standardized education but helping students to see their world(s) with conscientização (a consciousness of consciousness).

Practicing critical or liberatory pedagogy inspires teachers to place their classrooms in opposition to the banking system of education Freire outlines in chapter two of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. However, few courses in the hierarchy of the contemporary university meet Freire’s purpose of “helping the oppressed see themselves as women and men engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human” (48). Most critical pedagogues focus on the idea of praxis, often reducing it to a system in which theory informs practice or at best a system where students reflect on texts that seek to replace a student’s sense of consciousness (or lack thereof) with that of the educator. The former too often privileges theory over practice; the latter can lead teachers to become “the oppressor” by seeking to implant a consciousness on students in lieu of helping them to develop their own conscientização. The concept of the banking system provides a means of introducing the “oppressed” into a state of conscientização by highlighting the master narrative of traditional pedagogy. However, only dialoguing with students can reveal the “reality” the master narratives propose. Dialogue with students about the language that shapes their reality, whatever that language or reality may be, is often missing from the class on critical pedagogy.

The critical pedagogy classroom focused on dialogue maintains a relationship between action, language (the word), and reflection, all three surrounding a “point of encounter” at which “there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages; there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know” (71). Traditional pedagogies rely on the binary of the knowledgeable teacher and submissive students or, if
not explicitly constructed in terms of authority and submission, one at least centered in the
teacher as the bearer of knowledge and the student as receiver of knowledge. Teacher-
training often supports this practice by providing “little emphasis on how to facilitate
knowledge-making or active inquiry; what a new teacher requires is training (a day-long
“orientation”) in how to organize and conceptualize a course to ensure that the necessary
content can be passed on and that students will be able to demonstrate their mastery (or lack
thereof)” (Lee 134). The classroom is not a point of encounter but a place of transmission.
Critical pedagogy’s emphasis on action, language, and reflection seeks to fight this traditional
classroom structure.

Critics claim that Freire’s system is hypocritical because it uses the binaries of
oppressor/oppressed and banking pedagogy/liberatory pedagogy. For Freire, however, the
goal is neither to bring oppressors and the oppressed to a synthesis nor to give the
oppressed the tools to become the oppressors. In fact, Freire claims that his pedagogy
cannot be effectively used by those operating under this binary:

How can I dialogue if I consider myself a member of the in-group of “pure”
men, the owners of truth and knowledge, for whom all non-members are
‘these people’ or ‘the great unwashed’? How can I dialogue if I start from
the premise that naming the world is the task of an elite and that the
presence of people in history is a sign of deterioration, thus to be avoided?

(71)

These groups are not necessarily on opposite sides of a power struggle: oppressors and
oppressed alike can both believe that the oppressors should be owners of truth and that
people should be written out of history. Through dialogue, these beliefs are exposed. That
Freire sets his system in opposition to the banking model using the terms suggested by that same model is the result of the time and place that Freire is responding to and his sense of consciousness, just as teachers and students will use the language and terminology of their time and place to name and claim their worlds.

Using the word to name the world is how students in Freire’s pedagogy deal with the differences between *doxa* and *logos*. “The role of the problem-posing educator,” Freire states, “is to create, together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the *doxa* is superseded by true knowledge at the level of the *logos*” (62). *Doxa* for Freire can be equated with the term “generative themes,” or ideologies in community, culture, or nation that implicitly or tacitly influence how people perceive their world. Freire states, “there is…a relation between the given objective fact, the perception women and men have of this fact, and the generative themes” (87). In this relationship, *doxa* leads to the creation of generative themes, both those created by community and those accepted by the community. Generative themes promote “limit situations” in which “people are reduced to things” (84). The generative themes people create from their perception of *doxa* result in internalized beliefs which limit the individual’s quest for *conscientização* by removing the individual’s agency. Understanding the language around which the world is constructed restores agency.

A focus on the generative themes that can spawn limit situations is an active use of critical pedagogy in the classroom. When students and teachers dialogue about their perceptions and the language that embodies those perceptions, they can find agency that leads them to a more fully human consciousness. The composition classroom is the ideal

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2 James Berlin describes a similar concept with the term “noetic field,” which is a “closed system defining what can, and cannot, be known; the nature of the knower; the nature of the relationship between the knower, the known, and the audience; and the nature of language.” Berlin’s noetic model places rhetoric at its center as rhetoric “is thus ultimately implicated in all a society attempts. It is at the center of a culture’s activities.”
location for this dialogue because of its focus on the written language. Thus, a study of critical pedagogy in the classroom must encompass a study of that dialogue in order to understand more fully how action, language, and reflection bring about consciousness.

The most cited advocates of critical pedagogy in composition are Henry Giroux and Ira Shor. Friends and colleagues of Friere, these scholars have applied critical pedagogy to educational systems in the U.S and Canada. Giroux’s *Border Crossings* calls for a radical view of critical education that questions received assumptions, is interdisciplinary, questions the fundamental categories of all disciplines, has a public mission of making society more democratic, and operates on the assumption that “there is a need for a language of critique a questioning of presuppositions” by utilizing “a positive language of human empowerment (the ability to think and act critically)” (10-11). Giroux uses the generative themes of cultural studies, particularly the language of the educational system and of popular culture, to question presuppositions and empower students to think more critically.

Shor focuses less on the culture at large and more on undergraduate education, particularly composition education at the community college. *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* and *Empowering Education* posit that student resistance to learning is actually a product of their lack of agency, making them resistant to a culture that dehumanizes them. Shor identifies four ways in which people are immersed in cultural mystifications that prevent them from engaging with the world around them: reification (which keeps people from seeing the consequences of systems as wholes), pre-scientism (which discourages the quest for rational explanations to authentic problems), acceleration (which makes the mind work too quickly to be able to maintain sustained thought on a topic), and mystification (which provides false explanations for complex situations and processes) (66). *Empowering Education*
in particular elaborates on a specific set of guidelines for creating a classroom centered around student experience through critical pedagogy.

However, Jennifer Gore, Elizabeth Ellsworth, and Amy Lee claim that critical pedagogy theorists have gotten away from these principles of critical pedagogy, particularly the principles of action and reflection as the core of the classroom. Gore focuses on what she sees as “the slippage away from instructional aspects” of critical pedagogy (42). Gore summarizes her argument:

Giroux and McLaren’s self-proclaimed discourse of critical pedagogy is a misnomer. Theirs is not critical pedagogy, but critical educational theory, which is aimed at enabling “teachers as intellectuals”. . . . Giroux and McLaren provide an exciting vision of more democratic schooling and society, one that captured my imagination and energy many years ago. But that vision has not been actualized, and it is my contention that the “failure” to live out its own politics is resultant, in part, from insufficiently attending to pedagogy; that is, pedagogy as the politics of classroom practice, not pedagogy as politics (articulated by the theorist) and classroom practice (left for the teacher to create). (42) [emphasis hers]

Lee highlights exactly why the classroom teacher and the theory cannot be separated in the true critical pedagogy classroom. She states that “critical pedagogy foregrounds self-reflexive critique precisely because we are never, finally, critical or radical teachers because we are always operating within prevailing systems (of academia, of institutions, of a racialized, gendered economy)” (122). She evidences this in the exchange between Ellsworth, Giroux, and McLaren in which Ellsworth claims that “an emphasis on practice is central to the
rhetoric of Giroux and McLaren, [but] its substantive absence leaves intact, rather than challenging or displacing, the traditional division of academia: theory is identified as the province of a select, elite few; practice is for the rest of us and remains in the classroom, excluded from the scholarship” (124). When Giroux and McLaren reply with criticisms of Ellsworth’s “theory” (quotations theirs), Lee claims that they continue to reinforce the dichotomy they claim to refute in their writing (126). In doing so, there are rarely arguments, to any end and from any position, that root their conclusions in the experience of having participated in one or another kind of classroom, as student or teacher. The arguments are based on idealized conceptions of what is liberatory (or critical or student-centered or radical) for students and for teachers, and these arguments are grounded in a critical reading of other texts. (131)

This tendency away from the study of lived experience, both the students’ experiences and the teacher’s experience in the classroom, and toward the critical reading of texts as the basis for developing critical consciousness is reflected in the research on critical pedagogy. Anderson and Irvine hint to this same theme when discussing the nature of reflective articles often published on critical pedagogy that lack a research-driven focus: “Although methodologically nonsystematic, reflective articles provide an antidote to the abstractness that has characterized so much of the writing in critical educational theory” (88). To merge theory and practice in true praxis, therefore, the researcher/writer must, in light of the criticisms of writing on critical pedagogy, conduct research in classrooms that are a result of practice informed by critical pedagogy that include both a self-reflexive pedagogy and the
voices of students and teachers in reflective dialogue about their collective actions captured using methodologically systematic research.

**The Critical Classroom: Merging Critical Practice, Language, and Reflection**

The first step in presenting critical pedagogy in the classroom must be identifying elements about which to think critically—dialoguing with students to identify generative themes and the limit situations that result from those themes. In Freire’s work, students use their words and language to study their limit situations and achieve basic literacy. However, as Shor points out in *Empowering Education*, critical educators in American higher education are infrequently teaching basic literacy and cannot always rely on Freire’s exact methods. Shor writes,

> Those students who did refer to social problems would often repeat the quick messages they had learned in school or from the media, confirming the need for in-depth critical inquiry. . . .these students could bypass a general discussion on the human power to make culture because they are already preoccupied with the question of power, although not in a crucial or liberating way. They are not marginalized peasants from an underdeveloped nation; they are assertive, aspiring individualists seeking buying power in a runaway consumer society whose government and elite dominate world affairs—and them. (61).

One solution to the problem of student-generated themes is the topical theme, one proposed by the teacher after she has carefully studied the student environment. The topical theme is generally a social problem that might “be largely outside student talk or reflection”
(62). Shor give examples of courses based around the themes of the nuclear arms race and apartheid, both issues being played out on a larger global scale at the time that he taught these particular courses. Because these issues are “ignored, underrepresented, or misrepresented in the traditional syllabus and in the media,” the critical teacher has a duty to present them in the critical classroom (62). In order for the critical classroom to be truly democratic, students must have the right to refuse these topical themes. In both instances above, the students did not reject these topical themes, and Shor used these themes along with personal writing from the students and interviews the students conducted with each other and with members of the community outside of the course to bring a current topic of political discourse to the composition classroom. The key to his success, however, was the class agreeing on the themes in order to study the language and limit situations that those themes generate.

Once the theme has been selected, critical pedagogy focused on action, language, and reflection can evolve using the following principles.

*Critical pedagogy involves exploration of the students’ views of reality, not merely asking students to read examples of critical thought or outlining a critical view of the world to “show” them that they are oppressed.*

Teachers in dialogue with students use the language and perceptions of the students. To give them articles to read and discuss is the banking method in disguise, the use of traditional teaching practices with a modified subject matter. If those articles are presented, students must have the right to exercise the rejection of these articles or books, just as Shor outlines above.
Often, students will reject these texts even without the given option to do so. As Villaneueva and Lee point out, students presented with readings that place them in the position of the “oppressed” will not necessarily accept that designation. This rejection is shown in the article by Hendrix et al. discussed in Chapter One. Students in the English 101 class lead by Hendrix and Erika Jacobson were asked to read Mike Rose’s *Lives on the Boundary*, Victor Villanueva’s *Bootstraps*, and texts by bell hooks, Ira Shor, and Sapphire (52). The instructors assumed their first-year students in Lawrence, Kansas, would identify with the readings and write about their struggles against a hegemonic system of educational repression. However, the reaction from students was instead, as one student writes, “the books that we had to read were quite boring and not very interesting—so it was hard to write about them” and “it was very difficult to know what the teachers expected from us…it seemed as if there was a patronizing tone” (53). Hendrix and Jacobson identify that the text selection and tone of the course could be seen as demeaning by “students coming to college with hopes of escaping their working-class identities in favor of elitist aims” and offend students who read that “working-class students…would learn nothing if teachers focused on where they, the students, came from” (54). In reflection, they write, “This reminds us briefly of the importance of contextualization: far from starting our course from the level at which students perceived reality (see Freire 1970, 52), we had already constructed an understanding for them; we had assumed their engagement with education issues without asking them what the nature of their engagement might be” (54).

This example reinforces the vital role that dialogue with students to develop themes plays in a successful critical pedagogy classroom. Students cannot only read articles that instructors assume represent a critique of their socio-economic status; they must dialogue
with teachers and with each other to expose the themes and limit situations they have internalized. Freire is emphatic about this point:

I repeat: the investigation of thematics involves the investigation of the people’s thinking—thinking which occurs only in and among people together seeking out reality. I cannot think for others or without others, nor can others think for me. Even if the people’s thinking is superstitious or naïve, it is only as they rethink their assumptions in action that they can change. Producing and acting upon their own ideas—not consuming those of others—must constitute that process. (89)

When the instructor makes assumptions about the students’ reality based on the teacher’s own limit-situations and not in dialogue with the students, conscientização will not result.

Students must have opportunities to be able to reflect on their experiences through language before they can critically analyze their experience.

Teachers must create classrooms that challenge the four elements that hinder dialogue and critical thought described in Critical Teaching and Everyday Life: false consciousness, reification, pre-scientific thinking, and acceleration.

Shor identifies false consciousness as “manipulated action and reflection which lead people to support their own oppression” (55). False consciousness allows people to “deny the means of their own liberation while taking responsibility for acting in ways that reproduce their powerlessness” (55). To counter false consciousness, the critical educator must provide opportunities for students to reflect (without manipulation) on those ideas that they use to police themselves and their presuppositions. One example of false consciousness that I have encountered often in student dialogue in my classrooms is that the banking
concept should not be challenged because memorizing information is the way that children learn important concepts, such as their ABCs. Students will often cite classes where they had to memorize concepts and terms as evidence that the only way to teach concepts such as science is through memorization. Because the only assessments they have encountered have limited their reflection on the material, they see their only means toward an education as memorization and regurgitation, even when those methods do not lead to retention or synthesis of ideas or concepts. Thus, they support their own educational repression by their insistence that memorization is the best way to learn.

Reification is the push toward separating humans from their surroundings and each other, fragmenting the mind from reality and people from each other in a move to ensure that social action either does not take place or is limited to small actions that one would claim are “sticking it to the man,” such as cheating on taxes or stealing office supplies at work. In this way, individual efforts for change are channeled into repetitive tasks and spectator activities: television watching, attending sporting events, shopping. Shor indicates that “Reified thought is static and contained. The parts of the social whole are changeable and related, but reified consciousness experiences life in stationary pieces… Alienated from power in class society, labor is also alienated from the power to think critically about gaining power” (57). One sign of reification is student language that is passive and accepts that an authority figure knows what is best for the students (i.e., “I don’t agree with the teacher’s comments on my paper, but she’s the teacher, so she must be right.”). These students might stop coming to class or refuse to turn in assignments as ways of “getting back” at a teacher they believe has treated them unfairly. To counter reification, students must be asked to
question how systems operate and asked to reflect on how they can act in situations or in systems in order to promote their best interests.

Pre-scientific thinking, or a state where elements of everyday life (such as the tax system or how a bill passes through Congress) are relegated to “common sense” rationales, also keeps individuals from questioning contradictions in the system. Pre-scientific thinking is that which allows answers for problems that fall outside of the empirical world, the world of cause and effect. Shor writes,

Pre-scientific thinking is a deep support for irrational behavior. It is a retreat from comprehending cause and effect in reality. Instead, mystical causations reign, as unverifiable explanations for the phenomena of everyday life. For consciousness already conditioned against systematic analysis of culture, pre-scientific modes of thought are familiar and comforting. Science is rational and demanding; it expects that truths can be tested. Pre-scientism is magical; it is emotionally reassuring to minds which have been socialized to fear the use of their critical intelligence. For people raised with doubts about their ability to think, the big, quick, untestable truths of pre-scientism have the authority of being simple and certain. (60-61)

Students whose language reflects pre-scientific thinking often have difficulties supporting opinions or arguments with evidence. They will write unsupported opinion statements as fact, such as “I am bad at writing because I am bad at grammar,” even when their writing shows no evidence of difficulty with grammar. The counter for pre-scientific thinking is to provide opportunities for students to reflect on their experience, identify presuppositions
and “common sense” beliefs, and dialogue with the instructor and each other regarding the received and unchallenged notions students perpetuate in their language and actions.

The final factor, acceleration, speeds up the pace of life, providing “action without progress” and resulting in students that are impatient with reasoned consideration of ideas and hostile toward those who are not. Shor uses these elements to show why community college students consistently under-perform or fail to perform even though they are competent or above average in other areas in their lives. If students are taught that they can’t think, or that they shouldn’t need to think, then the prepackaged explanations of capitalism, religion and mystified ideals such as “democracy” provide comfort in the status quo and the illusion of action. “Where vocationalism levels the capacity for critical thought, and reification freezes and fragments mass reflection, acceleration speeds up mental processes beyond a pace suitable for critical analysis. The mind is conditioned to operate at a perpetual speed which repels careful scrutiny. Life in thought, and thought about life, are swept up into the rushed routines of existence,” according to Shor (62). Accelerated thought is evidenced in students who have difficulty reading longer passages or focusing on an idea in classrooms for an entire class period or students who show impatience when an instructor asks them to reflect on their work, providing only minimal answers to complex questions. Counteracting acceleration is difficult because to do so requires that students to have the time to reflect on elements that surround them, a task that can be difficult when composition programs require a particular number of assignments be completed in the course of a semester. Fewer but more in-depth assignments and time for class discussion and individual time for reflection on that discussion are primary practical components of critical pedagogy that counter acceleration. Students must have opportunities to break down
those things seen as “truths” or “given,” the cultural stereotypes and assumptions that students bring with them to the classroom. Students should be offered opportunities to discuss and reflect on their own language use, particularly phrases or ideas that might have behind them more complex themes.

Students must be encouraged to participate in the critical classroom. Coercion or threats, which primarily come through giving punitive grades or similar punishments for behavior that the teacher views as “unproductive,” negate the practice of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy teachers must strike a fine balance between not creating a course where all writing is rewarded for the sake of its existence and creating a grading system that implies that unless the students accept the teacher’s world view, they will receive poor grades. Students work must be evaluated fairly, and students must be evaluated equally when they refuse the generative themes of the course and choose to write about issues of their own interest instead.

The critical teacher/educator continuously practices critical thinking along with his/her students.

The lack of self-reflexive critique is a primary criticism of the work of critical educational theorists. As Lee points out, the instructor must not see herself as a fully-formed individual leading others into enlightenment. He must “constantly re-form his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers her earlier considerations as the students express their own” (Freire 62). The self-reflective practitioner identifies ways in which he or she uses language in the same ways that students can use it to promote false consciousness, reification, pre-scientific thinking, and acceleration. When an instructor seeks to bring
students to conscientização without simultaneously bringing herself to conscientização, critical pedagogy in the classroom can easily devolve to an oppressive system where the teacher holds himself or herself above dialogue with the unwashed masses of students. 

*Students must have opportunities to explore their perception of limit situations that encourage verbalism and activism and discourage dialogue and praxis.*

Critical pedagogy is ultimately a pedagogy of hope. The critical educator must consistently believe that perception can be reformed in order to ultimately influence reality. Freire writes “…it is not the limit-situations in and of themselves which create a climate of hopelessness, but rather how they are perceived by women and men at a given historical moment: whether they appear as fetters or as insurmountable barriers” (80). I often work with instructors who claim that students are “too stupid” to complete an assignment or that a theory or idea is “too complex” to present in the critical classroom. I have myself caught myself saying these same things. In doing so, the instructors I work with and I are not only *not* practicing critical reflection on our own language use but also are imposing new limit situations on students by determining what the students can and cannot do and then withholding the opportunity for dialogue and praxis.

*Students are active investigators capable of posing their own questions based on their experience and exploring those questions using sources that include their relationship with and perceptions of “reality.”*

This principle is a corollary of the previous two principles. While many critical pedagogy classrooms and studies have the best of intentions for including students in a dialogue, often teachers tacitly control student investigation “for their own good.” Freire identified this impulse in the critical pedagogy teacher:
Some may think it inadvisable to include the people as investigators in the search for their own meaningful thematic: that their intrusive influence (n.b., the “intrusion of those who are most interested—or ought to be—in their own education) will adulterate the findings and thereby sacrifice the objectivity of the investigation. This view mistakenly presupposes that themes exist, in their original objective purity, outside people—as if themes were things. Actually, themes exist in people in their relations with the world, with reference to concrete facts. The same objective fact could evoke different complexes of generative themes in different epochal sub-units. There is, therefore, a relation between the given objective fact, the perception women and men have of this fact, and the generative themes. (87)

Not allowing students to develop their own questions in search of their themes might lead to a more neatly structured classroom, but in actuality it focuses the attention of the classroom on the perpetuation of an “objective” reality that students must be guided toward in order to be successful.

Research into Student Perceptions and Use of Technology

Few published studies in computers and composition deal with student reflection on technology in freshman composition classrooms. While practitioners have a variety of methods to elicit freshman student response to technology, those teacher-researchers whose studies reach publication seem more inclined to focus on studies of upperclassmen or graduate composition classrooms. Two studies published in Computers and Composition have studied freshman student perceptions of technology in the writing classroom (Boyd,
Hewett). Studies looking at graduate or upper-classmen in composition classes are more than double that amount (Kirtley, 2005; Gruber, 1995; Yagelski and Grabill, 1998; Longo et al., 2003; Anderson, 2006; Hewett, 2000; Turnley, 2005; Wickliff and Yancey, 2001). Outside of composition, the same trend continues with more attention paid to computer users in upper-level courses.

Kirtley, whose study of classroom technologies most closely mirrors my study, looks at “the newer technologies associated with computers, such as the computers themselves and the associated software as well as magazines and print materials about computers.” She acknowledges the role that interactive internet tools play in students’ lives, but her study “primarily examines the computer, its attendant software, and the print material surrounding it” (213). Kirtley’s study takes place at the University of Massachusetts—Amherst, the school where Amy Lee publishes from for her book Composing Critical Pedagogies the same year as Kirtley’s study (2000). Her study is similar to mine in that

The class acted as a collaborative research group exploring computers, computer culture, and how new technologies might influence students’ writing and experience in writing classrooms. My goals for the course included exploring students’ perceptions of computers and computer culture through writing, discussion, and interaction, and working collaboratively as a team to identify issues of importance to students interested in Writing and Technology. The course was designed to work as a collaborative research group in which students were active participants in shaping the research questions as well as the answers.
Kirtley’s group of twelve participants had already completed a first-year writing course, and her course was held in a computer classroom. Her results suggest that students’ previous experience with technology, particularly how they learned to use computers, greatly influence their willingness and ability to experiment with technology and learn new features of that technology. “As writing instructors,” Kirtley writes, “we need to consider the part of the composing process we may not see and what students are likely to experience when they do write with computers. This means bringing discussions of writing technologies into our classrooms; computers shouldn’t be an invisible part of the process” (223).

Patricia Webb Boyd’s study of student-to-student and student-to-instructor communication in hybrid and online courses at Arizona State University implements Arthur Chickering and Zelda F. Gamson’s Seven Principles of Learner Centered Education. The survey studies “seven key principles [:] student-faculty contact; cooperation among students; active learning; prompt instructor feedback; time on task; communication of high expectations; and respect for diverse talents and ways of learning” (228). While her findings are primarily quantitative, the answers to those and open-ended questions indicated that Blackboard and other CMSs can utilize discussion boards and other communication features to effectively “achieve the learning outcomes of writing courses” (238). Students’ answers to open-ended questions suggested that they saw the use of Blackboard as vital to their learning because all discussions had to be submitted in writing instead of spoken out loud in the course. Boyd writes, “Presenting their opinions and interpretations for an immediate audience can also help students write their way into new insights and ways of seeing. In such
discussions, students become co-constructors of knowledge rather than passive receivers of predetermined truths” (239). In spite of these conclusions, Boyd found that students did not connect the discussions or other course activities requiring the “co-construction of knowledge” as relevant to their learning:

However, in their responses to the closed-answer questions, students did not directly connect those exchanges to their learning in the course. A majority of students reported that the feedback they received from their classmates both in the discussion boards and on e-mail was not important to their learning. Even though they reported that they liked the interactions with their peers, the students in my study insisted that the teacher’s feedback was what was most important to their learning. Since they rated their instructor’s feedback as most important, it is hardly surprising that they were dissatisfied with the kinds of feedback and the immediacy of their instructor’s feedback. The contradictions between their responses to the open-ended questions and the closed-answer questions suggest that although students indeed participated with their peers in “multidirectional written conversations”, they still judged the online environment through their experiences with “the teacher-dominated, unidirectional discourse of traditional classrooms” (Lapadat, 2002, p. 11). The interaction was present; students’ understanding of its significance was not.

One of Boyd’s suggestions to counteract the tendency of students to rely heavily on teacher response was to make the goals and pedagogy of the class transparent, to provide a meta-
discourse about how and why the course was designed to promote the collective
development of knowledge.

The other study in *Computers and Composition* that focused primarily on freshman
writers was by Beth Hewett. She followed twenty-three students through fifty-two online
interactions using a Whiteboard as they worked toward developing a writing portfolio at
Pennsylvania State University. The students all used SmartThinking, Inc., a professional
tutorial service that used asynchronous essay review and synchronous whiteboard tutorials.
She sought to gauge students’ reactions to their online interactions with the tutors, all of
whom were experienced online educators with graduate degrees. While she “studied how
participants talk in such interactions, and then . . . used textual analysis to consider how
students might employ the interactions when developing their writing” (8), she did not do
interviews with either students or tutors in the study. Her results conclude that
the synchronous whiteboard conferences in this study can be characterized as
efficacious in that most of them can be connected to student writing
improvements, however moderate in quality. Nonetheless, the conferences
also reveal a characteristic that may be common to other synchronous online
conference platforms: such conferences are text-intensive dialogues that may
lead to only one or two discrete writing changes—or even none. (23)

The study indeed shows correlations between the amount and quality of exchanges and their
impact on student learning, but the study does not take into consideration students’
familiarity with the technology, their previous writing experiences, or their reactions to their
experiences with SmartThinking, Inc. The text-based study discounts the complexities of
students’ interaction with and reaction to the technology used to enhance their learning.
Studies that ask students to both use and question technology in the same space often focus not on the first-year composition classroom but on graduate students and teacher trainees. Longo et al.’s study of a graduate seminar looked at the “complex relationship between humans and technology” through fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and films focused on technology topics (99). Their work highlights projects in the course and student response, particularly responses of those students with little or no familiarity with technology. Stuart Selber, whose work *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* calls for students to be trained functionally, rhetorically, and critically in the use of and consumption of technology, admits that “Teachers who espouse critical approaches, then, are generally interested in preparing students to be social critics rather than indoctrinated consumers of material culture. However, many teachers themselves have not been adequately prepared to think critically about computers” (172). While Selber’s meta-discourse heuristic provides a place to begin the conversation about technology in the classroom and in larger cultural contexts, Selber admits that the heuristic should be used only with graduate students or upperclassmen. The heuristic’s relevance for the undergraduate classroom is unknown.

The intersections between critical pedagogy and technology have only begun in the field of composition, and publication of studies in this area has been led by *Computers and Composition*. Barbara Dufflemeyer developed a project with 140 first-year comp students that “sought to develop first-year composition students’ critical awareness of unexamined assumptions about computer technology as presented in the prevailing discourse” (290). Donna LaCourt states that “despite a similarity in pedagogical goals, critical literacy theorists, with a few exceptions (e.g., Lankshear and Knobel, 1997) make little mention of writing technology, although other forms of media and popular culture appear frequently as the
What La Court finds missing in critical technological pedagogies are “the ways students might perform their own critical readings of a writing space rather than relying on the teacher to create that space for them, a teacher-centered assumption we also can note in much of the pedagogical work on difference in computers and writing” (276). Her study of real-time and asynchronous discussions includes an extended discussion of agency, but mentions only a few student interactions with graduate students and other unnamed students (assuming them to be English majors).

Duffelmeyer builds on LaCourt by asking students to question the source of cultural myths surrounding technology and asks “What does it mean that our culture finds them comfortable and accepts them without thinking?” (360). Duffelmeyer’s purpose in the classroom “had a dual thrust: their recovery of their own experiences with technology and recognition of the stances that those experiences had led them to take, followed by their examination of previously unimagined or rejected positions and consequent formation of negotiated stances toward technology” (361). Her work showcases her students’ voices by including a transcribed discussion at the end of the semester when students start thinking critically about the connections between technology and society.

Outside of the field of composition, researchers have focused more often on students’ perceptions of technology and how that influences their approaches to and uses of various types of technology. Concannon, Flynn and Campbell studied student perceptions of e-learning in a large undergraduate accounting class environment. A first study conducted a year earlier led to changes in delivery systems, and the study reported in this article “an insight into how these students really work and learn using technologies” (501). Researchers found that, when e-learning is based on a solid pedagogic rationale, provides feedback,
interaction, and access to course materials, it can be a benefit and improvement to teaching quality. Klaus Schmidt and Dan Brown studied “how student a priori experiences with computer technologies and applications correlate to student perceptions of and success with embedded on-line learning experiences” to “enhance decisions about the design and delivery of on-line components embedded in traditional classroom instruction” (23). They measured student success primarily through achieving learning objectives and they correlated student success and satisfaction with their a priori experience with technology. They found that “students learning new skills with computer technology and using a new software package to complete new tasks face numerous challenges” (30).

Another sub-set of studies focuses on student interaction through discussion primarily in online environments. Fauske and Wade studied how planning, netiquette, the instructor, and assessment all played important roles in developing online discussion environments that many of the same principles that applied to the seated classroom, such as students policing each other and the productivity of an approach grounded in collaboration, applied to the online discussion board as well. Wiebe, Shaver and Wogalter studied student perception of the internet at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, and found a love-hate relationship between students and the Internet “tempered by the perceived difficulty of accessing the information one wants and securing personal information one does not want released” (154). Bill Anderson interviewed teacher education students, primarily over the age of twenty-five, who participated in an online program that utilized Web CT as its platform. The study showed that the program focused on reflection using a variety of forums, some established by the instructor and some requested by the students for special-interest groups. While his article covers student opinions of time, technology constraints and student-to-
student interaction, conclusions review the efficacy of these interactions from the instructor’s point of view, not indicating how students’ impressions of the online discussion would serve to modify the nature of these discussions. Choi, Land, and Turgeon’s study of instructor-modeled questioning practices showed that students in experimental groups utilizing instructor-modeled prompts encouraged students to continuously utilize online peer questioning guidance. These studies indicate that student perception of the technologies used to enhance classes are greatly influenced by the instructor and the preconceptions that students bring with them to the course.

More focused studies have looked at components of instructional technology use, including Stuart Palmer’s studies of on-line assignment submission, marking and return in a fourth-year engineering management unit. The formal evaluation was undertaken to understand student perceptions of the new development. Students positively viewed the speed and ease of submitting and receiving feedback, but found that file-size limitations limited their use of large graphic images. Namin Shin applied Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow in virtual class environments in a traditional university context. They found that students’ level of skill and challenge specific to each course are critical to determining the level of flow; flow is a significant predictor of course satisfaction and other than flow individual differences such as “gender” and “having a clear goal” can make a significant difference in the level of flow in a virtual course.

The bulk of studies on student use of technology in the university and in the classroom focus on student perception of technology’s benefits to their learning. Judy Drennan, Jessica Kline and Anne Pisarski examine factors affecting student satisfaction with flexible online learning. They identified two components: 1) positive perceptions of
technology in terms of ease of access and use of online flexible learning material and 2) autonomous and innovative learning styles. Students had some choice as to the amount of use of instructional technology, but all students had to use some instructional technology at some point in the Introduction to Management course. Other studies have looked at the connections between teaching and learning practices in web-infused classrooms. Joan Gallini and Daniel Barron studied both teacher and student perceptions of their competency in web-infused courses and their satisfaction with the design and use of the course. Teacher surveys focused in part on how teaching in a web-infused course changed teacher's attitudes toward and methods of teaching, and student surveys looked at engagement, control, communication, and how they approached learning. And Shouhong Zhang and Heping Deng compared student perceptions of traditional and multimedia classrooms through student perceptions of their learning achievements, their instructor’s teaching methods, and satisfaction with the instructional technology obtained in a multimedia classroom vs. a traditional classroom. While their study showed that the learning achievements had no significant difference, students in multimedia classrooms had more positive perception of instructor’s teaching methods.

Perhaps the most interesting studies on student perceptions of technology in education are those conducted to understand gaps between student’s use of technology, their perceptions of their use, and how teachers understand that use. Jinx Watson admits that most research focused on student learning involves statistical, quantitative measures. She formulates a qualitative study involving student interviews to find out what eighth-graders in particular mean when they say that they use the World Wide Web and how they make sense of their access to and retrieval of information. Wilson sees room for exploration in students’
self-confidence, resilience and openness to learning about the new technologies as well as their skill in reading and managing information on the web. Steve Jones asked students about how the Internet impacts their academic and social routines. His article talks about the great majority of college students who use the internet both for academic and social uses. Most students say that the internet has a positive impact on their college experiences. They also use the internet to communicate with their professors and each other in their classes.

Liam Murray surveyed over 1000 students to understand how the students use the web to support their learning. They found that while students overwhelmingly thought that the web forms an integral part of their study and research practices, those practices require greater definition and refinement for and by the students. On the Ball State campus, Melissa Messineo and Ione Y. De Ollos looked at 233 students’ experience, comfort level, and perceived skill with informational technology. Students view computer competence differently when they are using computer recreationally or for course-related tasks. While confidence is high for most students, the study shows that “exposure and confidence with more advanced applications are lacking” (50).

While many of these studies deal with student skill or students’ perception of their skill with technology, very few of them deal with how students use technology to create documents, including new media documents, when they’re given the choice of responding to assignments in alternative forms. The connection between critical pedagogy and students’ use of technology has been even less studied, particularly in regards to student texts.
Critical Pedagogy: Filling in the Gaps in Current Studies

The studies on the intersections between critical pedagogy and technology are primarily unpublished dissertations. As in the published literature, the dissertations on the intersections of critical pedagogy and technology are highly theoretical. Jobe provides a convincing argument for the intersection between the two by blending critical theory with theories on classical rhetoric and digital rhetoric to show that the goals of rhetoric, such as *kairos* and understanding the subject positions of others, can be naturally paired with new media in the composition classroom. However, Jobe does not extend her theory to the practice of an actual classroom. Jordan does extend his theory of the intersection between liberatory pedagogy and network pedagogy to his community college classroom. He asserts that the community college is the natural place for this pairing because of “their large percentage of ethnic minorities and socio-economically disadvantaged students, and [their] typical identity as small, locally-rooted, largely independent and thus versatile entities” (viii). While he does include excerpts from networked classrooms he studies, the majority of the book again works to establish the theoretical connections between liberatory and network pedagogy, focusing more closely on the ways in which this intersection can lead to empowerment for students than on the students’ views of how they are empowered by the classroom.

One dissertation that provides a study of student work in the computer classroom is Carl Whithaus’ study of assessment in a computer-mediated classroom. Whithaus builds the case for the intersection, again, between critical pedagogy and technology, and then looks at a writing course at Stevens Institute of Technology that used a “student-centered, communication-based system of assessment” (v). The class utilized “four methods of
assessing student work in computer-mediated composition: distributive, interacted, descriptive, and situated evaluation” (122). His work is much more narrative than the previous dissertations and works to build the class context as it reviews student response to that context. Whithaus’ classroom focuses closely on the language that students use in constructing the classroom reality and tying that reality to their “material and institutional worlds” (137). He notes that in the assessment of student work, the responses and discussions of student papers was “likely to slip back into the old, authoritative, teacherly voice . . . . we talk about learning concerns and negotiated evaluation criteria. Then, we turn in the details, in the margins, and between the lines to the traditional exercise of power. What may be worse is that this exercise of power is cloaked as care and concern, as doing our job as writing instructors” (186). Whithaus concludes that the computer-mediated classroom must be sensitive to the risk that students take when writing in new media: “The more risky students’ writing —the more they push their ideas, their hybrid discourses —the more responsive—the more distributive, interactive, descriptive, and situated—systems of evaluation will need to become” (302). The understanding is that, at least when this study was completed in 2001, composition was only at the beginning of understanding how this process would occur.

Studies that focus only on critical pedagogy in the classroom are much more likely to include student voices, ironically, than those that insist on technology as a more natural medium for the voice of the twenty-first century learner. Anne Maxham-Kastrinos study of adult learners focused on how critical pedagogy and action research engaged adult learners through participatory action research. Maxham-Kastrinos integrated self-reflection as a teacher and administrator. The results of the study were students with higher confidence in
being actors in their own educational process, and the course resulted in the adult learners revised a website for the university, becoming more confident in themselves as writers as they formed relationships with other students and with the instructor. Rachel Lander focuses closely on one middle-school classroom in her critical ethnography, including passages from student text in tandem with ethnographer observations to give a more complex picture of how one classroom uses critical pedagogy. Her conclusion is that “critical literacy in classrooms is messier than it is often conceptualized and described,” and that the binary of “traditional literacy” and “critical literacy” has much more grey area than is often discussed in the literature surrounding the two concepts (267). Both the Maxham-Kastrinos study and the Lander study acknowledged that the classrooms that they studied were much more complex than simple narratives about liberation through critical pedagogy could encapsulate.

One vital element of this study that will differ from previous studies involving critical pedagogy in classrooms is that I am defining the critical pedagogy that I use fairly narrowly and in specific response to criticisms of critical pedagogy posed in particular by Ellsworth, Lee, Gore and others in the feminist branch of critical pedagogy. I do not particularly consider myself a feminist researcher for two reasons. Firstly, my research does not focus primarily on the experiences of the women in my classes. Second, I do not overtly bring gender into my course as a primary thematic for study as does much current work on critical pedagogy in the classroom. I instead choose to focus on the six principles described above in order to think about the classroom not solely as place of thematic discussion but of activity and dialogue based on active practices.

The primary rationale for not focusing on traditional critical pedagogy concepts as race or gender is to counter the impulse to place too much emphasis on readings that are
examples of critical thought or outline a critical view of the world to “show” students that they are oppressed. Readings by Freire, Shor, and others can be a useful part of the critical pedagogy classroom. But the study of texts that are not overtly critical is equally important so that students can identify in those texts thematic that connect to their lives and experience. This focus on texts on a theme that are not overtly critical can give students opportunities to be able to reflect on how those readings do or do not reflect their experiences to make connections with and critically analyze their experience, particularly their experiences with technology and literacy as the themes of the course.

Another way in which this study differs from others lies in the third principle above—that the emphasis in student writing is on students as active investigators capable of posing their own questions based on their experience and exploring those questions using sources that include their relationship with and perceptions of “reality.” Much like Shor introduced a theme and asked students to form interview questions to investigate that theme, the classrooms I studied were encouraged to form their own questions to investigate. I encouraged them to fit those questions within the broader themes of technology and literacy, but I also wanted students to have leeway to challenge what those themes meant or to reject those themes if their passions led them elsewhere. If students were to enact the fourth principle of exploring their perception of limit situations that encourage verbalism and activism and discourage dialogue and praxis, I could not discourage dialogues that might take them in directions that did not neatly fit into the basic themes of the course.

Finally, I constantly strive in this study to be critical of my own dialogue with students, to be critical of what my assignments and assessments communicated to students and to use the reactions that students had to the activities in the course to further shape the
course itself. My critical participation and my articulation of that participation as students were also asked to articulate their participation, I hoped, encouraged students to participate more openly. My reflection also provided a place for me to see where I was being coercive with students, an unfortunate occurrence more than once in the two semesters I review for the study. I had to fight my own perceptions of my limit situations and my interpretations of students in order to be more willing to engage in the dialogue I asked students to partake of with me.

This study draws on previous studies in that it seeks to blend critical pedagogy and technology to look at the commonalities between the two and how one can facilitate or hinder the other. It differs in that the focus will fall primarily on student reaction to their use of technology as they use that technology. This multi-layered approach encourage opportunities for student reflection using the media on which they reflect and will show whether or not students are willing and able to discuss technology use critically in the classroom while using the technology they critique. The study draws conclusions about student willingness to engage in the dialogue necessary for critical pedagogy and the ease or difficulty of implementing that pedagogy in the university and critical community classroom.
Chapter Three: Methods and Methodology

In this chapter, I explain why a teacher-research approach using qualitative methods centered in grounded theory is the best method to capture the reactions of students in the critical composition classroom, providing a picture of student interaction and perceptions of technology through data triangulation. I also outline the steps in the process of coding data and explain the limitations of my methods and methodology.

Framing the Study

This study follows three classrooms of students enrolled in freshman composition courses at two schools: a midsized Midwestern university and a midsized Midwestern community college. The study will address the following questions:

- Does the implementation of the Blackboard course management system encourage students to engage in critical dialogue about their writing and their technology use?
- How do students perceive their use of technology, both in and out of the classroom?
- How do students use technology in the classroom to produce (or not produce) multimedia texts?

3 Initially, I planned to study two sections of English 104 at the university. However, I accepted a position at a community college in another state in Summer 2007, requiring the study to be completed at that community college. While I initially worried that the change in focus would interfere with the study, it instead added a level of complexity to the research that yielded interesting results (see chapters 6-8 for a discussion of the community college classroom).
Will students critically question the choices they make regarding their use of technology in and out of the composition classroom?

To answer these questions, data was first collected in a section of English 104, the second-level of the university’s composition sequence, in Spring 2007. The class was held in a laptop classroom, one of three new laptop classrooms with overhead projectors, ELMO projectors, DVD players, and long tables arranged around ports. The campus, regarded as the number one wireless campus in the nation at the time of the study, also offered wireless Internet in its classrooms. Because the three laptop classrooms being used synchronously would be a burden on the wireless network, students were encouraged to plug their laptops into the Ethernet ports in the centers of the tables.

Most of the university students had just taken English 103, the first level of the traditional freshman composition sequence. Two students had previously completed the basic writing sequence, English 101 and English 102, which collectively replace English 103 for students who test into those lower-level courses. Twenty-four students began the course, twenty-one students completed the course, and nineteen students signed the permission forms and completed the surveys at the end of the course. The majority of the students were nineteen (14 total) with only three being younger (18) and two being older (20 and 23). Seventeen of the students were freshmen, one was a sophomore, and one was a junior. All of the students would be considered traditional college students.

The second set of data was collected in two sections of English 102, the second level of the composition sequence, in Fall 2007 at a community college in Missouri. The class was held in a networked computer classroom where the computers were housed in NOVA
stations all facing the front of the classroom. The campus has wireless Internet, but because
the computers were in a networked classroom, the wireless internet was not necessary in the
classroom.

Community college students involved in the study are required to have either taken
English 101, the first level of the traditional freshman composition sequence, or have
completed the course at a similar college or in high school dual-enrollment courses. Some
students would have also taken English 040 and English 050, the community college’s non-
credit basic writing courses. Twenty-five students began each course. Fifteen finished the
first section of the course, thirteen finished the second section of the course, and all twenty-
eight students signed the permission forms and completed the surveys at the end of the
course. The community college students were slightly older than the university students.
Only six of the students were eighteen or nineteen. The remaining twenty-one students were
over twenty, with six of the students being twenty-four or older. Seven students were in their
first year of college, thirteen were in their second year of college, and seven were in their
third year of college.

Methodology

To study how students use and reflect on technology use and to compensate for gaps
in current studies on critical pedagogy, I use empirical methods, particularly teacher-research
using a grounded theory, mixed methods approach. Empirical research is defined by Janice
Lauer and William Asher as “the process of developing systematized knowledge gained from
observations that are formulated to support insights and generalizations about the
phenomena under study” (7). Mary Sue MacNealy responds to Lauer and Asher by
narrowing the definition of empirical research even further. She states that an empirical study has three essential characteristics: the study is planned before the data collection, the data is collected systematically, and the “data collection produces a body of evidence that can be examined by others” (40-41). For MacNealy, “the term empirical refers to research that carefully describes and/or measures observable phenomena in a systematic way planned in advance of the observation” (6). Systematically studying the results of student text production and their dialogue about the production of those texts allows me to draw conclusions using pre-determined sets of data, thus reducing the chance of bias toward interpreting the critical classroom automatically a success.

Grounded theory ameliorates the chance of forcing data into pre-existing theories, which can silence student voices in favor of validating past studies. Observing student reactions to their writing and attempting to engage them in dialogue through written and spoken responses to their coursework allows me to draw conclusions about these particular groups of students at these particular historical periods, a necessity in the context of the critical pedagogy classroom. And creating a body of evidence made up of coded student texts allows others to review my findings to verify the veracity of my claims (see Appendix II for a sample of a coded Individual Discussion Board post).

In order to answer questions regarding how students use, perceive, and discuss their technology use, this study required methodology which provided an excellent means of taking into account not only the writing and documents of the classroom but also context of the classroom. Teacher-research and ethnographic methods along with surveys and quantitative data provide a variety of responses from students encountering technology in and out of the classroom. Ethnographic methods, particularly teacher-research methods,
captured a fuller picture of the classroom and helped me understand how the complexities of the computer-mediated classroom affected student writing and student response to writing. Beverly Moss explains that “while ethnography in general is concerned with describing and analyzing a culture, ethnography in composition studies is generally topic oriented and concerned more narrowly with communicative behavior or the interrelationship of language and culture” (156). Anderson and Irvine state that “ethnographic research is well suited to reveal the distribution of language varieties and social uses of literacy, among other factors, which could be used to determine what kind of literacy practice would be critical (that is, would best challenge norms of inequality) in a particular setting.” They insist that “for critical praxis literacy practitioners and their students may need to become ethnographers as well” (83). Teacher-research adds to ethnographic method immersion; the teacher is not just a researcher in the classroom who participates in the activities of the class but also a vital part of the classroom, able to adjust the classroom situation to meet the student needs while simultaneously studying those changes through data collection. Constant adjustment to student needs based on active dialogue with students is a vital component of critical pedagogy.

Student participation in the process of research is a vital quality of both critical pedagogy and ethnography. A critical ethnographer who claims that her pedagogy empowers student voice but then treats the students as subjects of her discourse represented through her words alone discredits her claims of action research. Joanne Addison notes that for research to be active, researchers must pay close attention to how both they and their students are represented in the text. She cautions that work with populations “chosen” as research subjects can “work to reinscribe the marginalization of those without power by
focusing on individuals or groups of individuals as problems in a system rather than focusing on these individuals as part of a problematic system that interacts with them to create and maintain these problems” (115). To partially counter this impulse, Addison recommends “replicat[ing] the actual statements, conversations, or written text of participants” (115) in a researcher’s report. While this will not completely nullify the dominance of the researcher’s perspective over that of the participants, including their voices as much as possible can allow for research that more closely represents the agendas and views of the students participating in the research.

Teacher-research was also beneficial to maintaining the critical stance of the classroom. Ruth Ray points out that teachers who engage in teacher-research benefit because of their belief in the social construction of knowledge. She writes, “Successful teacher research is usually conducted by an open-minded, inquiring teacher who sees the classroom as an egalitarian community in which he or she is but one of many learners” (175). These sentiments seem to echo critical pedagogy’s insistence that learners consciously resist the banking method of domination where the teacher teaches and the students are taught, the teacher talks to the students and the students listen. Teacher-research actively makes the teacher a learner as she studies along with the class as a topic of study. Because the teacher is a part of the community, her research is not done as an outsider and thus her presence in the classroom is not disruptive.

Cathy Fleischer further elaborates on why “teacher-research is more than a method—[it] is, in fact, a way of thinking about issues of power and representation and storytelling and much more” (4). Teacher-research pairs well with the critical pedagogy classroom both because of its challenging of traditional power (the researcher is not outside
of and separate from the classroom in a position of power through her detached status) but also because it is about storytelling, and ultimately each student’s perception of his or her work in the classroom revolves around the story told by his or her texts, or as Freire would say, the students speak the true words that transform the world. And teacher-research mirrors critical pedagogy’s response to the student population—Freire’s original classes began with a team of teachers observing a village to understand the village’s “generative themes” instead of imposing themes pre-made on the villagers.

Obviously, my place as the teacher in the classroom limits my possible results; I am suggesting classroom themes of technology and literacy with an obvious bias toward the use of technology and tenets of critical literacy. My selection of data on which to focus and my attitudes in the classroom toward technology and critical literacy could influence student responses as the students write in response to assignments to earn a grade in the course. If the students perceive that I am more open to positive reactions to technology, they might be more likely to provide those reactions in order to appease the teacher and earn the grade. My perceptions of the classes and the data as well will determine which of the data is selected and which is rejected. As Kenneth Burke states, “any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality, and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality” (45). Thus, any naming of a reality that either the students do or my interpretation of that naming or of my reality as it relates to the class will be influenced by the terministic screens of my previous experience and interpretations. With these limitations in mind, I triangulated data by pulling from multiple sources: student surveys, student writing, discussion board responses, my observations and notes and student interviews. I was also cautious to question my reactions and responses to student texts to
expose (as well as I can and with the help of my committee) places where my biases, particularly toward critical pedagogy as a teaching method, might cloud my interpretation of the research.

Unfortunately, the scope of this study limits it to computer-mediated and laptop classrooms. This does not allow me to fully investigate distance-learning classes, online courses, or courses that might study technology or critical pedagogy in traditional face-to-face classrooms. Also, the study is further limited to looking at students’ use of and perceptions about their own use of technology and that of other university and community college students. While students’ cultural critiques of technology form the backbone of many of the studies conducted on critical pedagogy and technology in the classroom, my classroom limitations ask students to look only at their immediate experiences and context to address how technology works at a personal level of an individual’s literacy and education practices. Because the research is situated, it might not be applicable to a larger population.

**Methods**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach. In her *Computers and Composition* article, Patricia Rose Webb calls for the multimodal approach to studying classroom-based research in computers and composition “because they will help us to arrive at large-scale assessments of the impacts of various types of technologically mediated learning environments and will provide a long-lasting way to assess the ongoing changes that occur as our cultural understandings of technology increase and shift” (475). A variety of types of quantitative and qualitative data allows for triangulation, which is important to insure that the conclusions I reach are supported by multiple sources of data (Merriam 99). Quantitative
data gathered through surveys and in Individual Discussion Boards establishes frequency of use of various technologies in and out of the classroom. Some of the qualitative data, including coded student proposals, projects, individual discussion board posts, and student responses to their own work, will provide data to answer the main questions regarding student use of and attitudes toward technology and their willingness to critique that technology. Other qualitative data, such as notes taken during and after class sessions, student interviews and surveys, and notes and transcripts from individual meetings with the students provide classroom context not apparent in the coded student documents and posts. Triangulating data sources and types addresses problems with construct validity.

I collected all writings, assignments and correspondence produced during the regular course of instruction of one English 104 class in Spring 2007 at a mid-western university and two English 102 courses in Fall 2007 at a mid-western community college in a different state. The university class was held in a laptop classroom where students provided their own laptops, and the community college courses were held in computer classrooms with networked desktop computers. The majority of the writings were posted to Blackboard; email correspondence was gathered through the Microsoft Outlook system connected to the students’ campus email addresses. I also collected any instructional materials posted in the course, administered a survey at the end of the course, and regularly wrote notes about sessions of class after the class sessions were over. All instructional materials were posted to Blackboard, including multiple versions of syllabi as they were updated, and prompts, activities, and handouts for the courses.

At the end of the semester in the university course, I compiled written notes in Microsoft Word detailing my final meetings with each student as much as possible. All of
these meetings were traditional, face-to-face meetings using no electronic means of recording. However, I had access to additional resources at the community college, so students had four options in completing their final class meetings with me:

- Online “meetings” where I would provide asynchronous feedback on their texts using Camtasia screen-capture software with voice over. Students could then initiate dialogue about their papers via their Individual Discussion Boards.

- Face-to-face meetings where we collaboratively reviewed their text and captured the sessions using Camtasia software to video-record student papers as the student and I discussed them on audio recordings.

- Face-to-face meetings that were audio recorded.

- Face-to-face meetings with no recording. I took notes at the conclusion of these meetings as I had with the university students.

The majority of the students in the community college course chose face-to-face meetings with some form of recording. A close minority chose the online option, and only two students chose not to be recorded during their meetings with me.

To understand details about students’ technology use before the course and their use after this course, I administered a survey at the end of each class during the finals period of that course (see Appendix A). The survey was based on the work of Randal Woodland, Dene Grigar, and Susan Kirtley and is constructed to elicit students’ opinions about and use of technology prior to and after classes held in computer classrooms. The surveys provided further insight into students’ use of the technology for completing assignments and any issues the students may have brought with them to the classroom that might have impacted
their views on and use of technology in the classroom. This information informs student reactions to the technology used for assignments and their use of technology in the course.

Because I conducted teacher-research, I did not always have time to stop during the class to record my impressions of the course. When possible, I made notes about my reactions to class periods in the university course. I also tried to use the time at the end of each community college course period while students reflected on the course activities to note things that I had seen in class and to copy materials I had written on the whiteboard. My reflections did not include all events in each class period. I am sure many moments of the course vital to the interpretation of the course went unrecorded. However, my contact with students would have been impeded and the nature of the course modified had I video-recorded course sessions or artificially paused during discussion to jot notes about the courses.

Student consent and surveys were collected on the last regular class day of each class, delivered by a student in a sealed envelope to the writing program office at the university or my supervisor’s office at the community college and were not accessed until after grades were issued to ensure that I did not know which students did and did not choose to participate in the study. I also received student responses from standardized course evaluations given at both schools after grades were submitted.

After collecting all student writing from the course, I followed grounded theory practice in coding that writing. Grounded theory allowed me to address student responses without introducing pre-conceived notions of how students would respond to questions about their technology use and their perceptions about technology use. Many current theoretical and research-based articles and books begin with the premise that 21st century
students are comfortable with technology. However, I wanted to capture student voices to construct theories about how students truly approach the technology they encounter in the classroom – theories that are generally absent from the discussion about technology.

The majority of the documents coded were stored in the classes Blackboard sites. Because all student assignments were scored and responded to electronically, I accessed all student papers, my responses to their papers, their formal responses to my feedback, my reactions to those responses, and final in class writings where students pose any further questions or give me feedback on the conversation we have had about the assignment. My grounded theory approach to coding the routinely provided data (student essays, online postings to the class discussion board, in-class writings, archived synchronous discussions, emails to the instructor) allowed me to code physical data provided by students and also allowed me to use that data to develop categories that emerge naturally from the data instead of imposing pre-existing categories on the data or bringing existing biases about what student responses should look like to the classroom. While I did not code the first set of data from students at the university prior to developing the classes at the community college, I did code the university students’ data before the community college students’ data in order to juxtapose the sets of data in the order they were received and hopefully shed light on the chronology of changes in my pedagogy and practice.

Kathy Charmaz, who studied with grounded theory’s principle advocates Glaser and Strauss, states that grounded theory was a reaction to the quantitative research, which prioritized “replication and verification result[ing] in ignoring human problems and research questions that did not fit positivistic research designs.” Grounded theory counteracted this by providing researchers a way to simultaneously collect and analyze data, to construct codes
and categories from that data, make comparisons continually throughout the analysis, and tighten and advance theory as the theory is constructed instead of fitting the data into a pre-conceived theory (5).

Using grounded theory, the researcher gathers rich, contextual data in multiple forms. She then does two types of coding: 1) initial line-by-line coding to begin forming ideas from the text and 2) focused coding, which allows the researcher to synthesize larger amounts of data. The researcher then separates the codes and produces “memos” that help the research explore ideas derived from the codes and that will allow for further data gathering. Finally, when the categories are saturated, the memos are organized and used to fit larger theoretical categories and show relationships among elements in the work (11-12). The primary benefits of this method, according to Joyce Magnotto Neff, are “sophisticated representations of complicated social practices (such as writing and the teaching of writing) while it leaves a paper trail of memos and visuals documenting the researchers’ paths through the data” (125). Data was not analyzed as it was collected, as is typical in grounded theory research, in order to not bias other data collected in the classroom because of my teacher-research methodology.

My general assumptions behind this study were that students immersed in technology, those defined by Don Tapscott as the “Net Generation” (3), will come to the composition classroom with some level of technological expertise, particularly in the use of computers. The Net Generation are those adults who were between the ages of two and twenty-two in 1999 (3), the age category that most of my students fall into (and which I am just outside of, being twenty-four in 1999). I assumed that these students would be more
comfortable than I was with composing on a computer, posting documents electronically, and evaluating how technology has influenced their literacy.

In the university course, I was new to teaching in a laptop classroom and anticipated that this would impact the course and student perceptions of the course as well. My own apprehensions with teaching in a new format indeed influenced some of my decisions in the classroom, as the following chapters discuss. During the community college courses, I was also working as the Instructional Designer for the Division of Online Teaching and Learning at that same community college, a position which made me a Blackboard administrator on the campus and placed me in charge of evaluating online courses for instructors in the program. Obviously, my full-time administrative position in an online program placed me in a very different position than the position I was in as a graduate student in a university facing a new classroom environment.

My assumptions about technology use and my differing employment positions no doubt influenced my view of the data collected in the courses. However, I test my assumptions about technology by closely observing and analyzing student words and behavior in the three sections of composition. Using direct student quotes and language as much as possible to counteract biases of interpretation leads to another limitation. By including many students’ interpretations in their own words, I run into the possible problems highlighted by Susan Peck McDonald. McDonald sees three assumptions in including the subject’s voices in research: “1) that subjects speaking for themselves may clarify or correct our misinterpretations, 2) that it is better for researchers to be collaborative and anti-hierarchical than not, and 3) that silencing our subjects voices is harmful” (120). She takes issue with these claims because “‘subjects’ [may] be wrong or confused or resistant in
what they are thinking...adding their voices to our research may contribute little of
importance to the knowledge developing in the field” (114). I would counter this conclusion
by stating that student confusion might be beneficial to showing at what points assignments or
instruction was ineffective, or at least at what points communication in the classroom broke
down. Because the data coded in this study was largely written in the students’ own words
(e.g., Blackboard posts, emails, responses to assignments, responses to classmates in
discussion board), including the students’ words, even if they seem to contradict my
interpretations or add little to the points being made, lends insight to what happens when
communication breaks down.

I did not want to impose my data into pre-existing categories, which could bias my
coding and analysis of the data. Therefore, I used grounded theory during my data analysis in
order to construct theories about student technology use and reactions to technology in
shaping documents in my courses. I used a constructivist view of grounded theory, which
“place[d] priority on the phenomena of study and sees both data and analysis as created
from shared experiences and relationships with participants and other sources of data”
(Charmaz 130). Before theorizing, however, I proceeded through several stages of coding
the data collected in my study.

First, I engaged in initial coding, which moved me toward defining “core conceptual
categories”. Initial coding required answers to the following questions, according to Glaser,
Strauss, and Charmaz: “What is the data a study of? What does the data suggest? Pronounce?
From whose point of view? What theoretical category does this specific datum indicate?”
(Charmaz 47). This stage of coding required close adherence to the actual texts, both in
word-by-word and line-by-line coding, and the coding of data as actions and not the
impressions of the researcher (48). For this first stage of coding, I reviewed all student text from several sources: their Individual Discussion Board posts in Blackboard, their initial diagnostic writings in the course, their proposals for each project, and their responses from each project.

Initial coding was followed by focused coding, when I determined the most “significant and/or frequent” codes and used these codes to return to the data, thus determining the adequacy of those codes (57). In this second stage, I reviewed the pertinent sentences and phrases pulled from the student texts to look for patterns in those student quotes. The third stage of coding, axial coding, built “a dense texture of relationships around the ‘axis’ of a category.” Terms were applied to categories to answer questions such as “what, where, why, who, how, and with what consequences?” (60). In this stage, data was further grouped to see if any patterns emerged that would suggest larger theories. A final stage of coding involved the creation of “theoretical codes” that “lend form to the focused codes” and “move [my] analytic story in a theoretical direction” (63). For sample codes and theoretical categories, see Appendix JJ.

Teacher-researcher methodology using grounded theory as a method allowed me to remain as true as possible to the spirit of critical pedagogy. I could participate in and shape the course based on student dialogue while simultaneously collecting data that leads to conclusions on how my courses could be further molded to meet student needs. At the heart of the study is an emphasis on students, their voices, their experiences, and their practice in the classroom. The use of grounded theory allows those elements to naturally evolve from the research as opposed to the generic placement of their work into categories presupposed by previous research or theory originating outside of our classroom.
Chapter Four: Critical Pedagogy in the Laptop Classroom at the University

This chapter reviews the data from the English 104 course at the university where I attempted to both fashion a course that met the guidelines for the critical classroom I outlined in chapter two and to focus on the following question: Does the implementation of the Blackboard course management system encourage students to engage in critical dialogue about their writing and their technology use? In doing so, I draw from student writing, class activities, and my own notes about the course to show how students’ and my own desires to stay within the parameters of the traditional course in many ways prevented the success of critical pedagogy and hindered authentic dialogue.

My Vision for English 104

One of my primary goals in English 104 was to implement a pedagogy that would allow students to do active investigation of larger issues surrounding literacy and technology, beginning with their own experiences with literacy and how technology influenced that literacy. I envisioned that the Blackboard course management system would facilitate dialogue because students would have continual ability to post messages to which other students and I could respond at virtually any time. While a typical classroom limited my access to students to two-and-a-half hours a week, plus the occasional office visit, Blackboard allowed them to post and receive messages at any time, extending the opportunity for dialogue beyond the confines of the physical classroom.
For the dialogue to be effective, the critical pedagogy that I implemented in my classroom needed to follow the guidelines I established in chapter two. I wanted to encourage students to participate in the class as active investigators of their educational and technological experiences, able to question and explore their backgrounds with writing and technology. To do so, the central texts of the course needed to be student work, not readings that merely told students to challenge systems and be critical of the world around them. Working closely with the language students used to describe and create their world, I sought to teach students the critical and rhetorical skills they would need to fight reification, pre-scientific thinking, acceleration, and mystification. And I wanted Blackboard to provide space and time for students to reflect on their history with literacy and technology and their current work in dialogue with me and other students through Blackboard. Likewise, I anticipated questioning and exploring my background as a learner and a teacher, using those reflections alongside my students’ reflections and work in the course to modify the course to more fully engage students in reflection that could lead to action.

Ideally, the classroom would look like the following:

Figure 4.1: Flowchart of Reflection and Action in Critical Classroom
At the beginning of the course, I would introduce the themes of literacy and technology based on Shor’s method of proposing a theme that is relevant in students’ lives but not necessarily a part of their everyday discourse. For example, students are inundated with technology on a daily basis, from their cell phones to their laptops, but they do not necessarily “see” the technology as a theme for exploration—the technology, as Neil Postman insists, has become invisible and is something that uses them rather than something that they use. As a class, we could explore student experiences with that invisible technology and reflect on those experiences to develop questions for individual investigation. Students would complete a project as a result of their investigation, choosing a media that best communicated the information that they had gathered. I would respond to those projects to continue dialogue with each student, who then in turn would write responses to my comments. The comment cycle would continue until its natural conclusion, with students responding to my comments on their projects and students responding to those comments through their Blackboard Individual Discussion Boards (IDBs). That dialogue would lead to the introduction of new themes in class as I synthesized student dialogue and shaped the course to meet the students’ experience and needs. Thus, course revisions could focus on the critical skills students needed to develop as well as introduce new themes that emerged from student projects and dialogue.

In retrospect, this ambitious plan relied primarily on my ability to model the feedback necessary to promote dialogue. As I was to see when reviewing the data from my class, this dialogue happened less frequently than I had envisioned for a number of reasons: time constraints, my own control issues, lack of student participation in class, and a hesitance

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4 The Individual Discussion Board is created using the Group Discussion Board feature and assigning one student to each group. The instructor and the single student are the only two with access to that particular discussion board.
on the part of students to challenge the perceptions they brought to the class about writing and assessment.

**Objectives for English 104 and the Purpose of the Course at the University**

English 104 is the fourth course in the university’s composition sequence. Students take an exam that places them into the basic writing sequence consisting of English 101 and English 102 (Fundamentals of English Composition) or into English 103. Students testing into the English 101/102 sequence then go into English 104 having met the same objectives as they would in English 103 in two semesters instead of one.\(^5\)

English 103 “introduces students to the fundamentals of rhetoric; to the elements, strategies, and conventions common to persuasion; to the use of those elements, strategies, and conventions in the construction of their own persuasive visual and verbal texts” (Writing Program Course Description). English 104 expands on the rhetorical goals of English 103 to include more of an emphasis on research. English 104 goals state that the course “applies the fundamentals of rhetoric to the research process. This class introduces students to the methods of research; the rhetorical nature of research; and the elements, strategies, and conventions common to research writing, including the visual as well as the verbal organization of new knowledge” (Writing Program Course Description).

The official departmental content and format aligned well with the purposes of critical pedagogy (see Appendix B for the official content and format statements in the course syllabus). The standard statement focuses on discussion and analysis done through major research questions that “involve generating a question, collecting data, analyzing data,

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\(^5\) Honors students take an advanced version of English 104—English 114.
and interpreting the analysis.” The course required students to not only write and receive feedback from their peers and instructor but also to “Reflect regularly on the choices available and the decisions made in the creation and completion of research projects.” These stated policies allowed me to easily implement critical pedagogy in the course while still meeting the policies of the English Department.

However, I felt uneasy about implementing other departmental requirements in the course. One such requirement was textbook selection. I chose one of the five approved textbooks for the course, Anne Wysocki and DEster Lynch’s Compose, Design, Advocate. The authors had visited campus earlier that year, and I was excited about the content of the book after their visit, particularly the ways that the book encouraged critical reflection on visual images and text alike. At the time that I began the course, I had not completely familiarized myself with the textbook, and I included only limited passages from the text in the original syllabus, mostly sections explaining formatting and visual rhetoric. I was not comfortable striking a balance between using the textbook and maintaining a focus on student texts.

One of the primary tenets of critical pedagogy is that students and the instructor create the course together in a democratic process. A review of the course policy statement and syllabus shows that I did not implement this practice in my English 104 course. The policies include the standard statements required by the university as well as policies for late work, grading, and others that I had developed over a number of years. I presented the syllabus as complete the first day of the course; students did not provide feedback to change any of the components of the course, nor were they given an opportunity to do so. I justified this practice by saying that the goals and the purpose of the course were focused on developing students’ critical skills, which I would be assessing to modify the course, so I did
not ask for student input in drafting the syllabus. After reflection on the course and the data, I see that decision was one of several that reinforced my control in a course that claimed to be created for and by students.

**Student Demographics in the English 104 Class**

The first written assignment students posted to Blackboard asked them to respond to their one of three prompts regarding their educational background and their current educational goals (see Appendix C for specific prompt questions). Responses to this assignment indicated that students in English 104 resembled the students who Villanueva and Lee identify as most likely to resist classification as “the oppressed” because of their reliance on education to provide upward mobility. Critiquing education and technology would not necessarily appeal to these students who were heavily invested in that education and technology—at least so much so that they would enroll in a university and choose to take or agree to continue a class held in a laptop classroom.

Their responses indicated that several students felt college was the only option because they were members of a family that had several members who attended college (Bradley, Freeman, Kelly, Mather, Montecriso, Padgent). Others entered college in spite of low expectations of their family (Booker, Glendale, Evan, Hummel, Schinder). Almost all students indicated that education was an “escape” from small towns or their parents’ lives in blue-collar industry or manual labor jobs. A few students (Hummel, Vansant) specifically mentioned social concerns when choosing a college or university, particularly being active and involved in a community. Several students indicated that they had made their college selection for personal reasons: to go where friends went or not or to attend a college their
parents wanted them to attend. Students’ choices for attending college in general and for attending this university in particular were closely linked to family or community or social entities.

A few students wrote of their lack of choice in attending this particular university, such as Evan who expressed disappointment that he did not go to a private school like one of his sisters. Booker, who already had an associate’s degree from a local community college, was the only student in the class who had previously attended college and was finishing a degree in hopes of starting his own video production business. The majority of the students who wrote about attending college seemed to see college as the next step toward a brighter future.

Career goals were important to students, and some indicated that writing would help them achieve these goals even if they did not articulate the reasons for this belief. Montecriso, a pre-med student, indicated that this university best fit his college goals, even though he was also accepted to both Purdue University and Indiana University, both schools with more reputable programs in pre-med. He wrote about his perception of the importance of writing in his introductory paper: “I don’t really consider myself a great writer but I’m hoping that with skills I will improve the way I write. I know that during college there will be many papers that I will have to turn in. Using the writing skills I learn could be beneficial to me for college as well as the rest of my life.” He gives no examples of how these skills would be beneficial, which indicates that he is not fully invested in the claims he is making or does not yet have the language to articulate his reasons for this belief. Other students had similarly vague ideas about how writing would help them in the future. Fennel wrote in her introduction to the course that
I really want to excel in my writing. I would say I’m a fairly good writer and I’m up for challenges….I have realized how important writing really is this past semester. No matter who you are or what your major may be, you will have to eventually write something that could determine whether or not you have a job. To me that is very important and becoming a teacher is very important to me. I will not achieve my goals if I don’t first accomplish the task of learning to write.

These students showed that they have at least some investment in their writing, even if that investment is mystified in that students will “somehow” benefit from their English course and that benefit will help them be successful in their chosen fields. Williams and Colomb indicated that these language formations are signs of a “novice writer” entering a discourse community where they complete assignments by “summarizing rather than analyzing,” both stating what members of the community might typically leave unsaid and using features of voice that “characterize the discourse of the field” (222). As we see in student responses here, students are very generally summarizing the helpfulness of writing in language they are gauging as appropriate to an audience that believes in writing as important to future successes.

Because of the largely rural population from which this university drew its students, I had anticipated the demographics that were represented in the course—students primarily from small-towns or from the town in which the university was located, a few from a larger metropolitan area an hour to the south of the main campus. From their initial writing, these students seemed positive about both the educational experience that they would receive at
the university and their future careers, making them potentially hesitant to critically question the education they had and were hoping to receive.

**Early Struggles in English 104**

Struggles early in the course occurred on several fronts, mainly problems with the physical layout of the classroom, my control and time-management issues, and unanticipated student problems with technology. The physical layout of the laptop classroom did not lend itself to collaboration. (see Figure 4.2).

![Figure 4.2: Laptop Classroom Layout for English 104](image)

Two sets of students faced each other, which facilitated communication, but the last row of students closest to my podium faced the wall. This arrangement affected how the students interacted with each other during the course.

In his study of computer-supported classrooms, Mike Palmquist notes problems facilitating group or collaborative learning in classrooms where physical limitations were challenging. The laptop classroom design was closest to what Palmquist would call concentric circles, set up so that all students face the center and some students face the perimeter. He wrote, “This arrangement has the advantages of pods where students look up
and make eye contact with other students but requires a large enough room so that teachers and students can move comfortably behind the outer ring. The inner circle might also cut down considerably on the space available for discussion and consultation in the center of the room” (84). The layout of this classroom significantly limited the students’ ability to move and collect in groups.

Those students who faced each other seemed to talk more frequently, but students who had their backs to each other did not frequently interact. In some instances, student engagement in the course was linked to who the students faced; the students in the farthest rows from my podium were most active in communicating with each other and myself, while the students closest to me who faced the wall seemed to be the least interactive. In my notes, I wrote about how the females on the left side of the room and in the middle seemed very engaged while the males did not. The students I mentioned in my journal reflections who faced the wall (Montecriso, Batt, and Dyson in particular) rarely engaged with either the rest of the class or with me. They were attentive when I spoke, but they did not engage with the class. One of the students who regularly sat against the wall dropped the class after the first project, and another of the students did not sign the consent form to participate in the project. Other students in the course seemed to notice that the arrangement hindered interaction in the course. One student, Padgent, a female student sitting in one of the rows that faced each other, expressed concern with getting to know the class in one of her Individual Discussion Board posts and remarked after class that she wondered about those “boys over by the wall” that never said anything in class at all.

A review of research done on how computers promote learning in the classroom reinforces that the physical classroom is vital to promoting student-centered learning
(Speck). The lab in which the learning or writing takes place affects how students interact. Reynolds found that a significant amount of collaboration occurred around tables, desks, bulletin boards, and file cabinets. With no real available space for collaboration, the classroom design had a significant effect on students’ collaboration and dialogue.

In addition to problems with the physical layout of the classroom, the laptop classroom posed unanticipated difficulties. Because students provided their own computers, students had a variety of software making instruction modeling any type of software problematic for at least some of the students in the course. Spring 2007 was also the first that the university was transitioning from Microsoft Office 2003 to Microsoft Office 2007. The university was a test campus for Microsoft Vista, and students could download both Office 2007 and Microsoft Vista for free. I had anticipated that, because it was also free, the majority of students would download Microsoft FrontPage for Web design. Students had free server space on individual iWeb accounts, but they did not have FrontPage or use other programs, such as Microsoft Word, for Web design.

One example of how technical issues impacted student technology choices occurred with Batt. He indicated a desire to create a Web page but struggled much of the semester with Vista, which he had just had installed on his computer. He wrote that had never used hypertext until the first project, but thought it was a “fun way to spice up the paper” and he “liked how it came out.” He wanted to do a Web page, but because of his difficulties with Vista, he decided against it. Instead, he created a PowerPoint for his second project. “I thought it would be easy to present my topic to my audience. I wasn’t sure about how to make a website, so I decided that a power point would be similar and then I wouldn’t have to worry about screwing up a website.”
Students who were not comfortable creating a Web site attempted creating the hyperlinked pages by linking from Word documents to other documents. This method was ineffective because of the way that the individual pages were submitted. The hyperlinks did not work unless the documents were saved to a specific folder and linked in a very particular way. I had to download the separate Word documents from the students’ IDBs and flip between the separate documents to make the hyperlinks work as the students intended. Navigation structures within Word documents were also problematic. Students linked from one Word document to a separate Word document but did not provide a link in the second document to return to the original document or to navigate to other pages. Aside from difficulties posed by software, laptops sometimes were not able to access the internet, and students would have to go to the IT help desk during class for assistance.

Difficulties with technology prevented students in some cases from completing the projects they proposed. Schinder was one such student. For her first project, she used a Word document with hyperlinks and intended on using both hyperlinks and a video for her second project. “I have located a short two to three minute video online of the head of the English Program presenting information on the importance of integrating laptops in the classroom that I think would be a neat to incorporate into my paper. However, I am struggling with the process of how to link the video into my paper.” In the final product, incorporating both the hyperlinks and the video were thwarted by internet access. She wrote in her response that, “I choose [sic] to present my paper in this form because I wrote my paper over spring break and did not have any access to wireless internet to incorporate hyperlinks or create a web page.” Schinder had previous difficulty connecting to the wireless
Internet in our classroom as well, and spent a few days of class time at the help desk trying to find out why her laptop would not connect.

A final struggle I had not anticipated was the difficulties that some students had navigating Blackboard and using basic technology. I noted that the range of student ability with technology was wider than I had originally anticipated. In the first few days of class, I noted in my journal that students have asked no technical questions during class time. However some emailed me to ask about posting or how to access Discussion Board. A few people did not bring laptops. Elementary education majors were required to have Macintosh laptops for their programs, which required knowledge of different programs and systems that I did not have.

The problems with posting to Blackboard and other basic issues I encountered in the first few days of class carried into their first written assignment, the diagnostic essay asking about their previous educational experiences and their goals at the university. Of the eighteen students participating in the study, seven either posted the document in the wrong place (not in their IDBs) or in a format my computer could not read. In between notes about the issues raised by various students, I wrote the following note in bold: “At this point, I have to wonder if I count the unposted ones as late paper? The ones posted incorrectly? How can I design a class if three of the first five responses I can't read?” Later, I wrote that I was torn between scrapping the idea of using Blackboard and focusing on technology and continuing to explore the use of Blackboard considering that students would need learn Blackboard to be successful in the university.
Time Limitations and Struggle With Control

Throughout the class, my time limitations and my struggles for control interfered with my ability to keep up with the optimistic plans I had for the course. In the first week of class, I noted the lack of time that I had to focus on the course and the problems with technology that I had not anticipated. In my reflections on the first day, I wrote:

At first I had a hard time fixing the projector, and I called the lady at the help desk. She said toggle F4 and I felt dumb because I knew that. At least it worked. I told the students that if it didn’t work, I’d scream and their first impression of me would be that I was insane. . . . I went over the syllabus and Blackboard and the only questions were whether or not the grades would be posted. . . . and how to post to Blackboard. . . . And I explained that we’d be doing “first-person” research, surveys, interviews, etc. and that the textbook would be a guide to writing the papers for the course. I now have to remember to use the textbook since it is so expensive.

In this first day’s posting, I was already uneasy with a perceived weakness in myself. I am also explaining to them the elements of the course instead of asking for or receiving input. And my last line indicates that I am using the textbook because it is mandated not because it best serves the student needs in the course—all signs that even from the first day I wrestled with control and insecurity issues.

My notes early in the class showed how time constraints fed my growing feeling that my plans were awry. One of the ways I envisioned students engaging in dialogue was through the creation of a course database of case studies about literacy to support their
discussion using studies about literacy. I indicated that the class database was not going well through language that belies my intention with the database:

January 11:

We just set up their IWEB space and looked at Blackboard again and then I *let them look up* and post a case study and then go. Or they could go somewhere else and post a case study. Most students stayed in class and most of those who stayed in class actually posted one from the [library] databases *like I’d asked*. A few didn’t, but I *let them post anyway* so we can talk about the differences in those and the ones that the others posted from the databases. I’m thinking that I might have some kind of activity where they post to their individual discussion boards the differences between them so that I know that *each of them are clear on this topic* instead of just assuming that they are from class discussion where only a few of them participate. The benefit: consistency. The pitfall: more time reading students posts, which I don’t really have right now. (emphasis mine)

Students wrote about the case studies on their Individual Discussion Boards, but the initial intent of the activity—to build a shared group of resources for dialogue—did not occur. Instead, I asked them to write a paragraph in their IDB using information from the case studies, an activity that I did not connect to anything else in the course. The isolation of the IDB activity that originally began as a plan to make connections using student-located texts showed that my goals were not implemented as planned.

All of these struggles caused me to question my ability to carry out the guidelines I had initially envisioned for the course. In the second week of the course, I had my doubts
about being able to fully integrate the pedagogy I intended. My notes on January 16 read, “I felt good about the class, but continue to feel uneasy at feeling like I’m not sure what to do next. I can see the allure of being in control because it keeps you from laying awake at night and panicing [sic] when you haven’t come up with the ‘perfect’ lesson plan for that day yet.”

While I follow one of my guidelines for the critical classroom by reflecting on my experiences, I do not use those reflections to modify the course or my role in it. Aside from the English 104 course, the one-course load for a graduate teaching assistant, I was teaching an “overload” creative nonfiction course, preparing for my oral comprehensive examinations, finishing a master’s degree in creative writing (including completing the thesis for the degree and six hours of other creative writing credits), and working “on the side” twenty or so hours a week as a research assistant to the director of the state’s National Writing Project. I realized that I was over-extended, but instead of modifying the course or my schedule based on this realization, I justified the overload based on the fact that many instructors, particularly adjunct and contingent faculty, had similar overload schedules, thus making the circumstances of my study relatable to those with similar schedules. My own schedule reinforced the acceleration for myself that I was trying to counter in the students’ lives, making it difficult to model reflective activities for students and distracting me from acting on the results of my own reflection.

My fast-paced schedule made slowing the pace of the course to allow space and time for dialogue that shaped the course almost impossible. By the end of week two, I crammed too much information into a single class period, leaving little or no time for student reflection or student discussion. In one course session, I did multiple activities that overwhelmed the students and me entirely. In addition, problems with the layout of the
classroom began to combine with my increasing frustration over time pressures and lack of response from students in the class:

January 18:

Today I felt focused and scattered all at once. I went over Aristotelian and Burkean rhetorics and it *seemed like everyone was listening*, but for some reason I was really feeling off. Maybe because they don’t seem willing to talk yet. Like they still want to be receiving information. Not a lot of community building. Some of it is the room, I think…not easy for everyone to see everyone else. I also looked at websites, talked about interviews and case studies and talked about their experiences in H.S. Too much stuff in one day. *I’ll have to go back over some of it*, more than likely the case study and interview stuff. (emphasis mine)

Again, my language indicates that I was providing information as opposed to encouraging dialogue, contradicting the community-building I want to occur in the classroom.

These notes indicated the primary struggles I had throughout the semester: allowing my busy schedule and stress to overwhelm my best intentions by encouraging my impulse to revert to controlling the classroom in stressful situations. Critical reflection does not adhere to a timetable in a truly critical classroom; students needed space for dialogue and time to process and reflect to counter Shor’s principle of “acceleration.” I needed the same in order to modify the course to meet the needs of and respond to feedback from the students. The ideal critical pedagogy classroom, according to Shor and others, includes a truly democratic beginning where students and teacher together collaborate to create the syllabus, develop the themes of the course, and agree on common goals and outcomes. However, the overload I
had taken on as well as unanticipated problems with classroom layout and student
technology problems strained my ability to provide the time necessary to have a truly
reflective classroom.

**Introducing the First Class Theme: Literacy**

In the first weeks of class, I introduced “literacy” as the theme for our first project. I
issued the following goals, intending to meet course research requirements while
simultaneously encouraging students to critically reflect on their experiences and case studies
they collected for the class database:

1. To **explore and pose an answer to a specific question** that students used to guide
   their research and reflection for the project.

2. To **utilize some of the elements of interview and case study** to answer the
   question. Because several of the course objectives for English 104 were research-
   based, I wanted to encourage students to think of research not only as the secondary
   research they found on the internet or at the library, but also the primary research
   they could gather from their own experience (fulfilling Anderson and Irvine’s call for
   students as co-ethnographers).

3. To **find at least one other outside source** to add to their project. Initially, I
   envisioned this source being from the class database of sources on literacy they
   began building at the beginning of the class.

4. To **find a medium of expression** (traditional essay, hypertext document, essay
   using visual rhetoric, etc.) that best conveyed the answer to the questions students
   posed about literacy.
Students had all been through many years of mass education, and I wanted to begin with that education, particularly their education in writing, to make connections between their previous experiences and this course. They were all here, as they wrote in response to early prompts, to become more educated, and being literate was a part of that education. One of the goals that I had for this theme was to counter some of the reification and pre-scientific thinking surrounding education and writing. Students’ language in their early writing indicated a belief in education and the future that education promised that did not seem tied to specific examples based in reality. They were using the language that they needed to use to enter the discourse community of the college composition classroom, which was based on a form of mystical language they had no doubt had reified in their secondary education experiences. Education and learning to write would somehow help them fulfill their career goals and become more well-rounded individuals.

To begin the class dialogue that I hoped would lead to reflection on these unexamined ideas, I asked students to wrote in their Individual Discussion Boards about their perceptions of the differences between the writing that they did in high school and in previous courses and the writing that they were doing in college. Four themes emerged consistently in their responses: differences in expectations between high school and college instructors, choice in writing assignments, shifts in assessment away from mechanical issues and toward content, and personal connections with instructors at both levels.

The first theme reiterated in student writing was increased expectations that instructors had for their writing in college. Students wrote about their surprise at the levels of critical thinking involved in writing at the college level and the time involved to produce college-level writing. In her diagnostic essay, Fennel addressed the high standards that she
had for herself, and the difficulty she initially faced in realizing that her new high standards would require more work than anticipated. “The one thing that surprised me the most about writing in college was the fact that you can’t just wrote your assignments 2 hours before class and expect it to be good enough. I was so used to procrastinating about writing and now I can’t do that any more [sic] . . . . Also, you can’t really B.S. your way through your English papers. In high school it was so easy to B.S. an entire paper and get a good grade. In college, it’s not such a great idea to B.S. your papers.”

Padgent was surprised by the level of critical thinking in college-level writing, even though she had taken AP English in high school:

> When I came to Ball State, I felt well prepared for my writing class. After taking AP English my senior year, I was confident I would succeed. However, I was surprised to find that my ability to think and write critically was not at the level it needed to be. I underestimated “college level thinking” and assumed I would be at the appropriate stage. My professor expected very clear ideas and strong supportive points that exceeded the expectations my teacher had in high school. In order to earn the grade I wanted, I had to step up my analytical thinking and be able to back up my ideas.

Vansant expresses similar realizations that work that she had done previously would not necessarily match the grades she wish to receive: “Throughout my high school career I came to expect the first paper assignment in English class to be, ‘Who Am I’ or ‘What Did You Do Over Summer Break.’ After awhile I just started saving the paper and editing it as necessary. I always got As on my papers in high school and now I struggle to get a C. It’s a rough life.” These students’ comments are reflective of several who respond to the
expectations to become better writers not to fulfill a career goal or to improve as writers but to earn better grades than they have previously received—an indication, perhaps, that students saw a grade as a reliable indicator of writing improvement.

A second common theme arising from student writing about their previous experiences was choice. Not all students enjoyed the opportunity to make choices in their writing. Glendale wrote about the differences in choice between her previous English course and this one:

In English 103, for each writing assignment we were given three or four choices to pick from to write our papers about, whereas in here the topic [is] very broad, and it could be taken in many directions. Also, the format [is] very different because I am used to the four page, double spaced, 12 point times new roman font, etc . . . . I [am] very frustrated . . . because of these differences.

Freeman, however, appreciates choice in college writing. She says,

One thing that surprised me the most in college English was the lack of choice and creativity. Every paper we did, the idea or theme was given to us. It was impossible to pick your own topic and really say what you think and feel. The papers were mostly all persuasive, but she would not allow us to use our opinion what so ever. It was kind of frustrating. I figured in college, the topic given would be very broad and that you would be able to branch off in almost any direction you please.

As the course progressed, students had mixed responses to the freedom that the topical themes allowed—some students appreciating the ability to explore areas of interest and
some students feeling uneasy at what they saw as a sudden lack of comforting restriction that allowed them to know exactly what was required of them in the course.

A third theme arising from early student writings was differences between high school courses and college assessment. Overwhelmingly, students indicated that their instructors in college were much stricter about assessing for content and critical thinking than for grammar and mechanics. Kruger thought that college writing was more focused on content than grammar.

The one thing that surprised me most about writing in college is the way my paper was graded. I felt as if my papers were graded with a much higher expectation, obviously. I also, thought that what was being graded was completely different. For example, in high school my teachers would look at the over all [sic] format of the paper; length, grammar [sic], and if the main point was achieved, but in college I feel that the idea of expanding is emphasized much greater.

Later, in an IDB post, Kruger mentions the comments on her papers: “Most of my comments on my papers in college included things such as, ‘how so?’ and ‘expand’. A lot of times I would be shocked because I would never have guessed to add more in a certain spot in my paper. Teachers in high school did not stress that point as much.”

Mather agrees that the details in college-level writing are much more important than mechanical concerns:

The one thing that I believe surprised me the most about writing in college would have to the extensive attention to detail and how well formed your writing’s [sic] are. In high school teachers just look at information and skim
over your structure. Here professors will pay attention to the smallest of
details and grade you on it. Your structure has to be a lot better and payed
[sic] attention to more than you needed to in high school.
The idea that they were graded more harshly was an important point for several students.
Freeman was upset by her score in Eng 103, although she does not reflect on what impacted
her grade: “I managed to receive all ‘A’s and ‘B’s this past semester except for in English. I
hope to receive a better grade this semester and I am very happy that the grades will be
posted on blackboard. I never was able to see what I got on my final and I felt that I did
very well and am very upset with my C. I plan to work hard to do better this semester.”

Other students, such as Harden, relate frustration over begin graded harshly for
mechanical concerns in college. She wrote, “I know giving credit to whoever you borrowed
your information from is important, however when a student loses A LOT of points for
incorrectly citing, I think that’s wrong. They should learn the correct way, but if they are
giving credit, I think that’s a step in the right direction.” She mentions her concerns with
proper citation several times in her writings. Harden wrote, “The one thing that surprised
me most about college writing was the emphasis on citing the sources you used. Last
semester in English I lost more points because I didn’t cite things correctly than I did on
anything else. I had never had that much emphasis put on sources. It was almost like citing
my sources was more important than the paper itself.” Unlike Freeman, who was upset with
her grade but does not indicated that she disputes that grade, Harden was one of the few
students who questioned how the instructors or methods of assessment in general.

A final theme in student writing about their experiences was the importance of
personal connections between students and the faculty in both high school and college. The
levels of attention they received from instructors varied greatly. Dyson, a male student who was one of those who sat facing the wall and did not engage regularly with myself or the rest of the class, wrote, “The most surprising thing about writing in college for me is that my first professor did not do as much preparation as my high school teachers did. I guess that I just became accustomed to being ahead of the class, and in college I am just an average student and I need to work hard to get good grades.” In another writing, he indicates that instructor preparation might not have been the only reason that he was a more successful student in high school than in college—the relationship with the instructor played a role as well: “…to complete your best work, you need to have a good relationship with the professor or teacher. But until [ENG 103], I really enjoyed English. Writing has always been fairly easy for me.”

Glendale had an opposite reaction from Dyson. Surprised by the help and preparation she received in college, she wrote, “My English 103 was very different from what I expected. The professor was really willing to help everyone whenever they needed her. She always reminded everyone that she was always there for whenever we had any questions, and she provided constructive feedback on our papers to help us become better writers.” Another student, Hopper, wrote about a positive experience with the instructor in his English 103 course.

The aspect of college writing that surprised me the most would definitely [sic] be my English 103 teacher . . . . He was a good teacher, but he made us do some interesting assignments. For example, we had to pick a partner from the class and take a trip to downtown Muncie on a Mits Bus. while in downtown Muncie, we were to pick a spot and practice our descriptive
writing. Also, the first day of class he gave us a list of words that we were
forbidden to use in any of our papers, or we would receive an instant F. We
were not allowed to use “it,” “they,” “there,” or “very.” I thought it was
stupid at first but later I realized that it made me a better writer.

These four themes indicated that students’ primary concerns are related to performance as
measured by assessment and relationships with instructors—both in meeting expectations in
those relationships and developing the relationships themselves. These themes drove the
most democratic activity in the course—student development of a class rubric.

The Student-Designed Rubric

These responses from students prefaced the creation of a common rubric for the
first project in the class. Because themes from early student writing indicated that they were
concerned primarily with expectations and assessment, I asked students to create a sliding
scale\(^6\) that I would use to assess their projects based on the writing they had done so far
about college expectations and what they believed to be good and bad writing based on their
previous classes (see Appendix D for the final scale). I hoped that the sliding scale would
encourage students to actively question the concept of assessment by dialoguing about their
experiences and putting their reflection on their previous experiences and perceptions into
action by controlling how they would be assessed on their first project.

I ask students to write in their IDBs about what constituted “good” and “bad”
writing to prepare for the group activity of creating the scale. I then compiled their
individual responses and posted those to Blackboard for class dialogue. In spite of their

\(^6\) I use the term “sliding scale” because the rubric itself relies on three columns or categories that can be
adjusted in order to modify the weight of those categories—thus the “sliding” scale. The categories for these
projects, however, were not weighted.
earlier responses that indicated increased standards for college level writing and source-supported argument, their description of the elements of “good” and “bad” writing focused primarily on mechanical concerns. Students most frequently related good writing to grammar (13 students), “flow” or organization (11 students), and clarity (10 students). The least mentioned elements in good writing were related to process, content, and detail. Very few students mentioned the following as important aspects of good writing: using good sources or examples, providing good content, appealing to an audience, having a compelling introduction and conclusion, or showing evidence of critical thinking or knowledge of a subject.

Student responses related to grammar consistently referred to the importance of “correct grammar” as if grammar was a system of rules applied without regard to audience. Three student responses typified most students’ writing about grammar. Baute wrote, “In good writing you have to use good grammar…because if you use bad grammar then you may not look very smart.” Booker had a similar opinion: “What makes writing good or bad is if the person has good grammer [sic] and the spelling is great.” Hopper added, “To be a writer, one needs to be good at spelling and grammer [sic], without those your writings won’t make sense.”

Two students indicated that grammar could be situational and that the content and meaning of the writing were more important than the grammar. Hummel wrote, “I know some people struggle with spelling and I think that is okay. I mean as long as the person reading your piece knows what you mean, that’s all that matters. I know some may disagree, but that’s okay” (emphasis mine). Kanter wrote, “You can have a grammar problem and still get your message across. The same applies when you spell something wrong. Your message
can still be understood which is the point of writing in the first place.” Both students’ used the “teacher tone” Bartholomae indicates is a sign of students taking on the voice of authority in lieu of a feeling of authority (625). The majority of students discussed good writing as somehow being tied to “correctness” in grammar, organization, or clarity with few specifically indicating what these terms meant for the writing itself.

Students talked about other mechanical aspects of writing in terms of “correctness” as well. Kruger wrote, “I think that in order to be a good writer your thoughts have to flow well, correct spelling and grammar are a must, and ideas must be clear. I know that my writing is not the best because just this past semester I took English 103 and received a B-. I believe this is because of how well my papers were organized. Hopefully I can learn to fix the flow of my papers and receive a better grade.” The “flow” of her papers, an organizational concern, is not necessarily related to rhetorical needs of the audience—rather, the flow of writing can be “fixed” independently of context.

I reviewed student responses and formed three main categories on the scale: form, content, and design/mechanics. In groups of three or four, students identified what they should put in each category using what the class had written about good or bad writing. Not surprisingly, they came up with a list very heavy on the grammar and mechanics side, with almost twice as many elements under that heading as under “Form” or “Content.” I asked if they would feel comfortable with this list…including the few things that students had placed in multiple categories which meant they would be counted off twice for the same element. Some students said that the items should be in one category or another, and I revised the scale based on their concerns. I could see the influences of past English classes coming through in the decisions they made. In my notes, I wrote, “They don’t so much question
when I ask them to do things or rebel or take advantage of situations. I think that there are individual students in the class that would do this (Hummel and Hill), but they are not close enough in the room to organize with each other.” Again, the room seems to thwart what I hope will happen: that students will challenge the notion of what makes good writing and create a scale based on what they want good writing to be instead of what they’ve been told that good writing is.

By the time we created the scale, I had indicated difficulty implementing the pedagogy. In my notes, I wrote:

January 23:

Today, several students looked shell-shocked when I said that they could wrote non-linear papers that included stories outside of their main story. I'm almost afraid to open up their Individual Discussion Boards and see what they are proposing to do. Hopefully, at least some will attempt to do something out of the ordinary and then we can see what they come up with and how they will evaluate that. . . . I'm terrified every class period that I go in that something won’t work. But today, when I was asking questions, I heard them talking to each other while others wrote…also a good sign that they are communicating with each other about issues in the class.

Still, scary. I can see why people don’t necessarily implement critical pedagogical techniques. Meeting student’s needs leaves lots of scary space around not-planning or semi-planning a class…

The emotion I most often felt during the class, according to my notes, is fear: fear of not implementing the pedagogy, fear of not building community, fear that I will be overwhelmed
with my responsibilities in the semester and will sabotage this course in the process. I begin realizing the reasons for my discomfort in the course a few days later, in week four of the class, I wrote:

January 30:

UGH! I’m doing all lecture, and when I ask questions, no one is answering them because they know that I will. I’m not doing any group activities, they talk to each other, but only in the pauses. I’m trying to justify this by saying that a) I am helping them with my knowledge base so that they can eventually work away from the knowledge base and b) they’ll need to know all of these things to do the first project well. Really, I think that I’m working against all of my strengths and what I believe in (critical pedagogy-wise) because I feel like there are so many things that they’ll need up front in order for their next two projects to be effective (particularly the idea of using questions to determine research). But really what I think is happening is that I am overcompensating for being in a new and unfamiliar teaching environment. The same thing happened when I moved to teaching online…suddenly I reverted to assignments that I wouldn’t do in face to face class because it was a totally new environment.

The collaborative activity to create the sliding scale rubric I hoped would refocus the course around the more democratic tenets of critical pedagogy, empowering students to take control of decisions in the course and shape course content. However, my sub-text here is control. I “allow” students to make a decision about how their assignments will be assessed.
My feelings of reverting to more familiar, less risky assignments mirrored students responses regarding the student-created rubric – responses which indicated students understood the decisions they made were illusory. When given the choice to control the assessment in the course, they reverted to those assessment criteria they experienced in previous writing courses.

**Student Reflections on Rubric**

I asked students to talk about the impact that creating the scale had on their work on project one in their reflections. Overall, twelve of the eighteen students, two-thirds of the class, indicated that they did not use the scale for a variety of reasons. They did not pay much attention to the scale for the first project or use it when they wrote their papers. These responses reflect the general responses of these students, which indicated that the scale itself needed little attention because it reflected the qualities for which they were used to being evaluated. Brawn wrote, “The sliding scale [did not] influence my writing. I just wrote my paper. If I would have spent to [sic] much time worrying about the sliding scale, I would have never got my paper done.” Bradley added, “I’m not sure if the sliding scale changed the way I wrote my paper at all. I feel that I went about writing how I normally would but I also assumed all the requirements on the sliding scale were things I had been judged on in the past.” Glendale also indicated that “Creating the sliding scale didn’t really affect the way that I did the assignment because it seemed kind of similar to the rubrics that I am used to.” Finally, Freeman wrote, “The sliding scale did not really change the way I looked at my paper. I never really focus very hard on rubrics I just simply write about the topic given. I do like how we were able to create it in class but I don’t think it would have really made a
difference to me.” These responses show that students remained within the comfort of reification, not at this point in their education willing or able to think critically about changing the rules by which they are evaluated. Even when I offered them the power to change the ways they are assessed, students willingly provided the same assessment standards they had always been given and admitted as much in their responses to the project.

The remainder of students who did not use the scale found it confusing. Fennel wrote, “During one class period we sat and created the sliding scale for the grading. I was so lost during the conversation. I felt as if after we finished the sliding scale I needed to go back and rewrite my entire paper to form around the sliding scale. I felt as if it was not clearly explained.” Booker reaffirmed Fennel’s ideas, stating “I didn’t understand out grading scale so it didn’t effect [sic] how I wrote my paper. I just wrote from the heart.”

My first attempt at including students in the course and encouraging them to have a voice in how they would be evaluated did not go at all as planned. I envisioned creating the rubric as an opportunity to question assessment and expectation—the two themes students discussed in early writings. However, students saw the scale as merely affirming what they already knew about writing—that they would be evaluated more for form and mechanics than content—and those students then created a rubric that reinforced those beliefs. Their responses to the scale support my feelings about what happened in the sliding scale experiment; my attempts at including students in creating the course materials reaffirmed the importance of the traditional rules about writing that I had hoped the class would challenge.

As we moved into the second project on the theme of technology, I made another attempt at engaging students in shaping how they would be assessed, inviting them to take an active role in their own learning and encouraging dialogue in the class.
Project Two: Addressing the Theme of Technology

One of the primary goals of critical pedagogy is the use of student text in order to generate themes and drive the course. After project one, I asked students to revise their projects based on feedback and post those to a course discussion board. I intended to begin project two by asking them to read those texts and make suggestions for the next project based on what they and their classmates wrote. Instead, I literally never visited or mentioned that discussion board. Not only did I not use it as I intended, I did not access it myself to see if students have posted papers or if they were able to utilize the comments that I wrote on their papers and their self-reflection to revise their work.

For project two, I made connections with the first project; however, the connections were not based on the student documents for the course (see Appendix E for the assignment sheet). Project two also focused on implementing more of the objectives in the course, particularly those regarding the types of research that students should use to complete the project. I asked students to:

1. **Incorporate quantitative research, library research, and online research** in their product (all academically sound sources) as well as interviews and case studies.

2. **Write and submit a proposal** for what their projects would include and have their proposals approved by the instructor.

3. **Utilize at least ONE form of visual rhetoric** in the final project (graph, chart, hyperlink, photo, etc.) that **SUPPORTS their document and adds meaning to that project**
4. **Develop a sliding scale** that helps me understand what areas in particular need to improve based on feedback from project one (each student will do this and submit this with their proposal).

These goals, as well as the rest of the assignment sheet, showed just how far from implementing critical pedagogy I was in the second project. I dictated that students submit a proposal for their project that seeks my “approval” before they can do the research. I set limitations on graphics and the sources that they can use that are not driven by student dialogue or input but by requirements based almost entirely on form and mechanics. The only hint that I created something that included their critical reflection and response was my request that they create an individual sliding scale rubric. I used this scale to assess their work based on the criteria that they established, what they felt that they needed to work on most based on the previous assignment.

My notes from the class activities during the second project indicated that I realized the course had not upheld the standards with which I began the class:

February 20:

I can’t seem to get out of the rut. I let them go 15 minutes early after I tried showing them Zotero and it didn’t work. Sigh. It felt like class went on forever, and we were only in there an hour. We talked about assignment two, then I talked about Web of Science and Zotero. Zotero didn’t work. And Web of Science was kinda impromptu because I had gotten through the P.E.E. structure\(^7\) WAY early and had like half an hour of time left. I feel like a failure. When I ask questions, like “what do you think of when you hear

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\(^7\) P.E.E. structure is a method of structuring paragraphs where students are asked to provide a **Point**, give **Evidence** or an **Example**, and **Explain** how the evidence or example reinforces or proves the main point.
‘academic writing”? and they respond with silence. I feel like I’m getting a lot of feedback from individual students on discussion board, but nothing in class. And I don’t know how to get out of this rut. Maybe I should have them start presenting, but I feel like it’s too late in the semester to change focus. Except that’s what critical pedagogy is all about. I’m just overwhelmed and exhausted.

I realized what I needed to do, but I did not seem able to muster the energy to actually do what I know needs to happen. At this point in the semester, we were in week seven of a fifteen-week course…not quite halfway through.

In class, I tried to focus as much as possible on the ways that students used technology to both conduct their research and to complete their project using different forms of technology. Through weeks eight and nine, the two weeks before they submitted their proposal for project two, I asked students to do a variety of activities. We completed a survey about their technology use through SurveyMonkey.com in class, and I posted the results on Blackboard so that students could use them for their second project. None of the students used the survey results in their projects.

Most of the activities in the course seem completely focused on the processes of research and disconnected from any form of inquiry. The survey was an example—students did not discuss the results of the survey in class; the activity became a technological demonstration instead of an opportunity to dialogue about how students use technology according to the results of the survey. While I made attempts in the class to model questions that students might pose using the searches that I demonstrate, these activities seem
perfunctory. And the more that I felt the course was perfunctory, the less I initiated dialogue with students in the course. After skipping several days of taking notes, I wrote,

March 1:

I showed them some searching on CardCat for government documents unsuccessfully. Today (Thursday) we went to the library. I showed them the Smartboard and we took a brief tour to find books, journals, and find the reference desk. I didn’t know what else to show them, considering that most of what they get will be off the internet anyway. While I am exhausted, overwhelmed, and negative about my work in the course, I do have moments where I seem to be making progress with individual students. Kruger is one of them. I had previously spent a hour the day before helping her revise her first paper. . . . I only feel connected to the few of them that I have talked to, and the vast majority I either have never talked to or have only talked to briefly.

The proposals students submit (or fail to submit) for project two bring my frustration with the class to a head:

March 3, 2007

I will not break students in half…I will not break students in half. It’s now 12:30 p.m. on Saturday, nearly 24 hours after the project two proposal was due (5:00 p.m. yesterday). Twelve students have not yet submitted their proposals. The first one that I opened up was two paragraphs long and didn’t follow any of the proposal requirements. The second one was on why people don’t vote any more in elections in the U.S. It followed the proposal guidelines, but
had nothing to do with technology. And some of the people not turning in assignments are *good students*, students who have asked questions and talked to me in class. I just don’t understand. Maybe they’re tired. Maybe they are looking forward to spring break. I don’t know, and I’m starting to not care.

(emphasis mine)

The anger is palpable. I am angry at their refusal to do what I tell them to do—I praise those students who “performed” by succumbing to traditional classroom behavior. I was pleased by the detail that has gone into “good student” proposals and completely furious at those students who did not submit proposals. When students returned to class, they had reasons for not submitting their work, and I accepted their late work and moved on with the course.

My frustration with students was compounded by my frustrations with technology. I remember panicking the day that I showed students Google Sites (formerly Google Pages). I realized a major setback in having a laptop classroom: not all of the students would have all of the same programs installed on their computers, which made building Web pages in FrontPage and posting those pages to iWeb, the free server space that each student received, much more difficult. Instead, I tried to provide an overview of the technologies that they could use to create Web sites. We practiced using Google Pages to produce Web sites, which required students had to sign up for Gmail accounts. When Google Pages didn’t work with Safari browser on Mac, some had to download Firefox. One student told me during the course that Macs have a program called iWeb that allows them to design Web pages faster and easier than Front Page, but half of the class had P.C.s that *didn’t* have iWeb, so I could not really tell them to use that program. Another student told me how to name pages
separately in Google Pages when I was trying to show the class how to do it and could not get the navigation to work. In my journal from the day, I wrote,

When I was standing up in front of the class, feeling helpless to figure out the program, I for the first time felt like showing your vulnerability in front of the class left me vulnerable. I wonder if they’ll put on their evaluations at the end of the semester that I really didn’t know what I was doing. I was hoping that they’d be really excited about the easy webpage design, and several people were playing around with making Web pages. But I didn’t feel the enthusiasm I was hoping for. But then again, I never really feel the enthusiasm I am hoping for.

While I typically feel comfortable showing weaknesses with writing, teaching, or research in front of students, I did not feel comfortable showing my weaknesses when using technology. And while I bemoaned students’ lack of class participation, when they did participate, I seemed to ignore that they were participating and instead feel threatened by their suggestions.

From this point on in my notes, I become a “lister”: I wrote a few brief paragraphs each day regarding what we did in class, but I did not make a real attempt at reflection or indicate what I could be doing differently. The week before spring break, while students worked on project two, I wrote this entry

March 8:

I just want to keep the class centered in research, writing, and design and not get too far outside of those bounds. I keep thinking that I am introducing them to a plethora of options (i.e. Google Pages, del.icio.us) and they can
pick and choose which ones will be easiest to use. Those who choose many/well will be rewarded with class success; those who don't, won't.

Here, I tied reward and student success directly to the number of technologies that they use. And the language I use in the notes belied what I intend—to give students the opportunity to explore in class. Phrases like “keep the class centered in research” and “those who choose many/well will be rewarded with class success” indicated that I violated my principle that course participation should not be coerced with punishment. I have stopped engaging the students or practicing the philosophy I’ve been preaching.

**The Second Student-Designed Rubric: A Last Attempt at Student Choice**

The sliding scale for the second project had mixed results, much like the first. More students used the self-created scale than those did the first scale, perhaps due to the fact that the scale was a component of their second proposal—requiring that they pay more attention to the details on the second scale than to those on the first. However, they seemed to largely see the scale as another set of criteria like all of those that they had received previously.

When commenting on the scales in their responses, many students had vague reasons regarding the second scale’s helpfulness to their projects or tied their use of the scale to a better grade, not necessarily improving their writing or questioning the nature of assessment. Batt wrote, “I thought that developing my own grading scale was helpful because I could set what I needed to work on. I knew what I needed to work on and if you were grading that then I could work on what you were grading, and therefore get a better grade.” Bradley was equally vague about the specific reasons that the rubric helped her. “Making a custom sliding scale was also apart [sic] of the assignment….Creating my own
grading scale was helpful because it gave me a chance to reflect on my past mistakes and focus on improving them on this assignment.”

Unlike with the first scale, some students seemed to see the benefit of creating their own sliding scale and using that scale to revise their writing. Glendale indicated that the sliding scale provided a way for her to focus on their writing. She wrote, “I think that creating our own grading scale for this project helped because we were able to choose what we specifically needed to work on individually. Creating my own then helped me to write my paper and focus more on the areas that I needed to focus on.” Fennel echoed similar feelings,

I felt as if creating our own grading scales gives me an opportunity to work on my specific struggle areas. I like begin able to make my own grading scale….I felt as if creating our own grading scales were helpful. I was able to have you grade me on areas that I know I personally need help in. It’s nice to have a grading scale that only pertains to your weaknesses and/or struggles.

I was encouraged by these responses at the time that I received them they showed that students took opportunities to make class materials personally relevant to them. However, many of the responses were still tied to language about punishment, struggle, and assessment. Kruger wrote,

The grading scale for this paper definitely came from my first paper and the troubles I had with my sentence flow. I knew that this was one of my weaknesses in writing and was something that I had to consider when writing my paper…. Creating our own grading scale was definitely helpful because it
allowed us to set limits for ourselves on what may have been our weaknesses and then focus on those to fix.

Padgent also alluded to the rubric as a check-point to ensure that she achieves the grade she desires:

Creating my own grade scale was sort of helpful, but I generally know in my mind what it is that I need to do in order to get the grade I want. However, it’s nice to see it on paper, and go through and double-check myself to make sure I have all the elements I need. It also reminded me of what I needed to work on from the last project so I didn’t lose points this time…. I thought that creating my own grading scale simply reminded me of what I needed to double check and fix for this project. However, I didn’t make many comments on my scale.

Finally, Schinder includes an interesting Freudian slip in her response to the self-created scale: “Creating my own grading scale made me weary of my weaknesses as a writer. When I submitted my grading scale, I knew that I would have to take my paper to the writing center and complete several drafts to eliminate many of my typical mistakes to get the grade that I desired” (emphasis mine).

Only a few students reflected an understanding of the rhetorical complexity involved in creating a rubric. Evan wrote “I have been extremely reluctant about creating my own grading scale for the assignment. For one thing I don’t want to make my scale too easy, or too [sic] hard. I find that after twelve years of being graded by teachers it is difficult to try and be on the other side of the table.” This reluctance diminished the helpfulness of the activity for him: “As before I did not find that creating my own grading scale was very helpful, as I
found it difficult to understand, and create any sort of fair scale.” Kanter also understood that creating the scale would affect the outcome of the grade, depending on what she put on the scale: “Creating my own grade scale may have saved my grade. I liked creating it because I could cater it to my writing. Also, it was more detailed and specific; therefore, I knew exactly what to make sure was perfect.” Unlike Evan, who found the complexity unhelpful, Kanter took advantage of her opportunity to cater the scale to her needs. Mather did likewise: “Doing our own grading scale though I believe really did help because if you were weak in an area you could put less emphasis on it and increase your papers score a little. It also helped you focus on some areas that you were extremely strong in…. Creating our own grading scale helped because you could really emphasize areas you were strong in and not the ones that you were weak in.”

As in project one, some students chose to disregard the grading scale in their writing. Freeman was one of these students. She wrote that like with the first scale,

Again, I don’t pay too much attention to rubrics so I did not care too much about the grading scale. I seem to just pay attention to what needs to be in the paper and I then just hope it meets the criteria with the grammar and such. I did not add much to my grading scale, so I don’t think it helped me very much. If I would have started with a blank one I would have just added the same things that were on the first project because those are the kinds of things that I am used to.

Hummel also expresses that her input on the sliding scale was unnecessary because the criteria existed independently of her. She wrote, “I don’t really like creating the sliding scale because I don’t really know what to put on it. I think that you as the professor should be
able to put whatever limitations on the paper and I shouldn’t really have much say in the matter. You are the teacher and I am the student, but that is just the way it has always been for me. That’s the way I was taught.” Montecriso also indicated that he didn’t feel confident enough to create his own scale: “I didn’t really find it helpful that I created my grading scale. At this point in my life, I’m still not sure of what my weaknesses and strengths are when it comes to writing….I found that creating my own grading scale really didn’t help me. As I said before, I’m still not sure of strengths and weaknesses involved in writing.” Students who were unsure of what to do with the scale because they had never encountered such an instrument or did not feel secure in their ability to judge their own writing, tended to either disregard the scale or relinquish authority back to me. Perhaps they sensed that control of the classroom was really not handed over in the creation of a scoring guide. Discussion of their reactions to the rubric would have been a fruitful activity to move students through this stage of reflection into the next. However, that discussion did not occur.

Three students did not seem to have any need for the sliding scale at all. Flagman wrote “When it came to my grading scale, I was not so creative. I could not think of things to add.” Hopper echoed her response “I found that using our own grading scale didn’t mean that much to me, I didn’t really pay attention to it.” And Vandevort did not even attempt to create a scale. “I am however still a little confused on the whole sliding-scale concept. I just attached your sliding scale, because I didn’t know what to do.”

These responses stood in glaring opposition to earlier responses from the students who saw the scale as a way to improve their writing by focusing on their weaknesses. While Glendale, Fennel, Padgent and Schinder extolled the virtues of improving their writing (and thus their score) by using the scale to edit for weaknesses, Evan, Kanter and Mather took the
opposite approach, using the scale to highlight their strengths. And the remaining students in 
the class seemed to surrender control completely, assuming that the “teacher knows best” or 
that selecting their own standards would not really grant them authority over their own 
work. Those students who used the scale more rhetorically as opposed to those who used it 
as a checklist for writing improvement or those who did not use it at all would have 
provided an excellent place in the course for us to talk about the rhetorical nature of 
assessment and how control, once granted, is accepted or rejected—a dialogue that did not 
take place.

The students whose comments focused on the assessment-value of the scale reveal 
how little creating the scale really had to do with the students becoming more reflective 
about their writing. Instead, the sliding scale becomes a tool they can use to further reinforce 
the standards of the traditional classroom. It is a “checklist” to help them see where they are 
“weak,” or where they need to “fix” their writing. Their comfort with the scale should have 
been a warning for me; taking advantage of the situation here and stopping to reflect in class on the nature of this activity would have asked them to be investigators in their own 
learning. Instead of accepting their praise of the scale, I should have been engaging them in 
conversation about the nature of the scale itself. Did they really feel more in control of their own learning through making the scale? Or was their comfort limited only to the fact that 
they had specific, self-regulated standards with which they could maintain the false 
consciousness of appearing to take control of their writing while actually continuing to blame themselves for their errors and their lack of ability in writing?
My Engagement in Dialogue with Students

One the causes to which I attribute students’ perceptions of the rubrics was a lack of engagement in the course. I assumed Blackboard would encourage students to more freely dialogue with me in their IDBs. I envisioned students who were passive or silent in the classroom taking advantage of the opportunity for “undivided” teacher attention on Blackboard to engage in dialogue that they might not normally in a traditional seated course.

Students did use their IDBs for prompt responses rather than genuine dialogue. I was disappointed by students’ tendencies to only answer questions to complete assignments. A contributing factor to this was no doubt the fairly rigid sets of questions I created for their response papers. I intended for these questions to prompt student reflection that would lead them to explore their experiences with research and writing in their responses (see Appendix I for the prompt “Questions to Develop Project One”). However, the questions prompted students to simply answer the questions to complete the assignments. And when students did venture to ask questions or attempt dialogue, I frequently did not honor those attempts.

One example of how the dialogue broke down on both sides was seen in Dyson’s response to the first project. He answers the questions in the order that they appear on the sheet without providing transitions or crafting a coherent response. When responding to the prompt “Read the comments in the margins and at the end of your essay. Respond to as many of them as possible,” Dyson, like many students, took this directive very literally. In my response, I pointed out places in where he could develop his answers with examples. I wrote, “I hope that the comments on this are in some way helpful, particularly in seeing where you could add examples (think in terms of the P.E.E. structure we talked about in class Tuesday). Of course, you were answering specific questions, which makes writing a
fluid paper more difficult, but I think that the same principles still apply.” In his IDB, he responded, “I’m sorry about not writing the questions, I just answered them in the same order that they were in on the paper. I was in a hurry because I forgot to do the response when it was due earlier, I learned my lesson with the bad grade and will pay more attention to the comments in later projects.” Even though I had not asked them to copy the questions, rather to divide the response with headings for clarity, he responded by apologizing for not doing what was not required.

Dyson’s apology and honesty about the reasons that his response was not well-developed would have been a good opportunity to engage him in dialogue to develop paragraphs based on the comments that I provided. Asking him to do so would have countered the acceleration he indicated in his response (“I was in a hurry…’’). However, I did not respond to him at all on his IDB, and in spite of his promise to “pay more attention,” his future projects continue to lack attention to detail or provide reflection.

Dyson’s apology was less engagement than explanation. Evan has a similar approach to responding to my comments on his response to his first project. He replied to some of the questions that I asked, but without an apparent pattern or much depth:

Literacy essays aren’t something that I have a deep interest in, but I found it to be fresh and new after doing a semester’s worth of introspective/emotional papers. If I was to choose any paper to write it would be a research paper, specifically one that I get to choose the subject. This allows me to pick something ill [sic] have an interest, and will actually enjoy writing and researching, and in the end hopefully result in a better
grade. While I can read at a high level, my functionally skills are extremely lacking, so that will continue to be a problem to plague my papers.

Evan opened the door to several issues that could have been engaged by further questioning. For example, I could have asked him why he did not consider the literacy essay to be “introspective” or asked what types of introspective projects he did not enjoy in the past and why. He alluded to the fact that interest in a topic relates to performance in the course, a definite area for further exploration in the critical classroom. Finally, his last sentences could most definitely have been questioned. What did he mean by “functionally skills”? Could he explain how this could be a problem in future assignments? Evan began the process of reflection, but instead of cracking open his quick replies for further reflection, I did not respond to his post.

Other students answered my questions from the proposal and synthesized those answers to draw conclusions. Flagman answered the questions from my comments on the response and drew a very specific conclusion at the end that showed reflection on the relationship between form and topic.

I didn’t think I was going to find much pleasure in an English [sic] project because I never had. Usually I just write out my paper because I’m obligated to. I never really enjoy it. But since I was able to be more creative, I actually wanted to do this project. For the past project, I really did not give myself enough time to do a website. I didn’t know about googlepages which made project 2 very simple to make. Project one had to be put into a more non-creative form because I didn’t give myself enough time to use a more creative and timely form. The skills I developed while making a website I had actually
learned myself. Well, some of it was learned through class because you showed us googlepages. Also, thought, I work a lot with creating websites because I like decorating my blogs (esp. Myspace). I chose my pictures by going to google.com, clicking the picture tab, and search ‘iPods’. Also, the boy where the iPod headphones on the frontpage is my boyfriend (hah!)..I took that. I really have no idea why the picture on my third page came up twice. There was only one picture on the preview page..but it always doubled itself when I saved it and looked at the completed page. And no, I’ve never worked with creating websites in any other class I’ve had at Ball State. I find it interesting too. It actually goes along with my point with iPods as well. If, we have all this technology around us, why not use it?!

Flagman’s conclusion is excellent. She makes connections between form and function, between the content of her project and the form that the project took. Her reflection still includes specific answers to questions that break the flow of the paragraph because she was answering questions in order. But the overall response and the conclusion show that she is reflecting on her experiences. Again, however, I did not respond, losing an opportunity to engage in dialogue about her conclusions.

Another opportunity lost for engagement occurred (or did not occur) when Mather responded to my comments on his first response:

When I feel that I cannot express my ideas thoroughly I will gather up as much information as I can and then build ideas around that. With this paper I just felt that I didn’t get me [sic] full expressions across because I really didn’t know how to put my ideas together and make the paper flow well. I
will stay with my same method that I have always used and I believe that I will have much better papers in the future.

As with Evan, Mather raises issues ripe for engagement. He indicates a method he plans to continue using, even though he admits that it did not work well for him in this instance. However, I did not respond to him to ask why he would stick with a pattern that did not work. He did not respond to any further comments in the course.

Some of the students responded directly to the questions on my response to them and indicates to what they were responding. Padgent answered questions from the response mostly to clarify:

I wasn’t very sure how to post this…So I figured I’d do it this way!

1. In one comment, you asked if I respond well when an assignment challenges my creativity. I think I tend to perform well under pressure in general, so I would say this is an accurate statement. Thus the reason I sometimes tend to procrastinate. :)

2. When I was talking about using my previous knowledge of web design, I wasn't very clear in my meaning. I meant that since I had very little experience, I didn't have a lot to rely on, therefore making it a challenge.

3. In my final sentence, I talked about using less simple words. Such as "it is" "there are", etc.

I hope this is the right format.. I didn't really have any other responses! Let me know if there is something else I should do.

She not only answered the questions but also addressed the form of how her response “should” be, worried about doing the “right” type of response. Both of these clues indicate
that she is still working to perform and please me instead of taking charge of her experience and reflecting on her learning. I could have easily taken the opportunity to respond to her clarifications with comments that asked her to reflect on her wording and reaction to my questions; however, I responded only with “This was fine. Thanks for the feedback. See you Thursday.”

In her second set of comments to respond to my response, she followed much the same pattern of answering questions directly, showing that she sees this as a successful method:

As you talked about in the first part of your response.. I found out this year (it was one of my big lessons) that I do tend to underestimate myself. I wasn't sure that I would excel in college like I did in my last few years of high school. I was pleasantly surprised. /After seeing your highlighted corrections, I realized, "wow, I made some ridiculously dumb mistakes." Sorry for my temporary stupidity. /I was surprised with the stat from your old school. 2/3 is really impressive! However, I think I would have questioned that too.. /I agree with how you said that our classroom is not well suited for group work. I found some difficulty getting to know our class this semester, which honestly has bothered me. I feel like I'm just now getting to know a few more of my classmates. However, I'm not usually feeling my most social at 9:30. /And I think I'm out of comments.

Her tone, particularly in addressing the content of what I say, show that she was engaging with those comments, most notably where she feels that she makes dumb mistakes and in her response to how she feels she does not connect to the course. While I did not respond
in the IDB, I did talk to her about her concerns about the class in our final individual meeting. In that meeting, she said that the class was awkward because of the room set up and the lack of discussion among classmates. She said that in all her other classes, she feels like she’s really gotten to know people except this one; even though there were a lot of “social” people in the class, she didn’t feel like they got to know each other. Padgent was the only student in the class who made these observations so explicitly, showing that she was engaged not only in the course material but also in thinking about how the course itself operated—a goal of the critical classroom obviously absent in this students’ reaction to the course.

Freeman engaged with the comments and responded to me to clarify points from her initial review, to which I did not respond:

By looking at the comments written on my paper I can tell that my response was a bit confusing. What I was trying to say is that when I glanced at my paper and saw all of the comments I thought I was going to get a bad grade. Once I read the comments I realized they weren’t all bad comments which changed my guess on my grade for the paper. I was very pleased with the grade that I received and do think that I deserved it. From looking at the comments, I also see that I need to work on clauses and commas that go along with them. Otherwise, I think I did pretty well on the paper and the response and hopefully I can keep it up the rest of the semester.”

In her next response, she actually made connections between the elements of the papers that she needed to revise, but again I do not respond:
The first thing I noticed in the response is that I am not very good at deciding whether to use commas, semicolons, or to just start a new sentence. I remember getting the same comments on my first paper and its response, also. I don’t really think it is a big deal but I just notice it over and over. The next comment was about me not finding very much information and the idea was brought up that maybe people don’t want to deal with McDonaldization of technology because they like it too much. I would have to agree with that, I feel that more than ¾ of the world would agree that it is the best thing that the world has thought of, but still there are some out there that don’t care. Most of the other comments were simple grammar mistakes that can be fixed, but one comment I liked because I told me to state my opinions. I was told over and over again last year not to, and I am glad we get to this year. I do understand that I need to back up my beliefs though. I also understand about including all of the instructions on how I came up with my statistics. I didn’t think about other people may be trying to test my results. Otherwise I was very pleased with my score and agree that I showed a lot of detail in my response.

As with Freeman in this instance, I often do not respond to student feedback to my comments or to their own reflections on their work. In this instance, I could easily have addressed her feelings of being silenced in the classroom, the connections she is making with repeated errors, or continue the conversation about her ideas in the paper. However, the dialogue drops with the student response, violating one of the key principles of the critical classroom.
The students who might have most benefitted from engagement, though, were not those whose responses showed a willingness to engage or understanding of how to engage with ideas in their texts. Several students focused primarily on either quickly agreeing with the comments without much reflection or responding to surface-level issues from the comments. Bradley was one student who responded to my comments on the response to project two by agreeing fully with my assessment:

As I read through the paper, I agreed with your comments. Especially those about the vagueness of “researchers” and “reporters”. I also agreed that I could have wrote a lot more about my survey. Overall I was happy with my grade and I think the comments you included at the end will really help my writing in the future. You brought a lot of good points to my attention.

Thanks! See you soon!

This response, like Dyson’s, is accelerated. She agrees with two of my comments but does not discuss why or how those changes should be made. She is sure that the comments will help her in the future, but again, she does not provide any specific reasons for how they will be helpful. Unlike the earlier comments where students attempt to engage, Bradley seems to be providing only a perfunctory response. Engagement on my part might have drawn her into dialogue about how the comments would be helpful, asking about which comments in particular, other than those she mentioned, would be of use to her in the future, and opening discussion about how she reads the comments on the paper, including whether or not she actually had read the comments.

One of the students I did regularly engage in dialogue on drafts of papers and in her IDB is, I do not think coincidentally, the only student who closely achieved the purpose of
asking and answering relevant questions in the course. Fennel generally wrote several drafts of projects, including proposals and responses, for feedback. For her first response, she asked for comments: “The response to my wiritng [sic] project #1…I’m not sure if I did it the right way so that’s why I’m posting it early just in case I need to change it before Friday…if you could let me know that would be great…thanks!” I attach comments and send her paper back to her, and she replies again with another IDB post:

I realize I have problem with using unnecessary and vague words. I really to do try not to use them. For me it becomes a struggle, but I will definatly [sic] work on being more aware. My grammar is not exactly the best and I don’t know when or where I should use apostrophes. I was never good at putting those in. I appreciate how you grade our papers. I like knowing exactly where/what I did wrong or right in my papers. I’m glad you explain why you feel the way you do about certain issues within the paper. Thanks!”

I respond again, but not to the desire to know “right” from “wrong” in writing, which could have easily led into a discussion about the kairotic nature of rhetoric and the problems with black and white issues of correctness. Instead, I focused on her problems with apostrophes:

Thanks for the response. Apostrophes are tricky. I just got into a fight with my nerd husband over an apostrophe issue the other day (how to use them when the word ends with ‘s’). He said I should use an extra “s” (like Dennis’s) and I said it should be without the second “s” (like Dennis). Then we both found websites that supported our point of view…so we never settled the debate!”

For more details about how students asked and answered questions in the course, see chapter five.
Fennel continued to draft, and I responded to her drafts for the majority of the semester. Her willingness to engage and my frequent responses might be a result of her extra work in drafting and her requests for extra commentary on drafts.

One final student with whom I dialogued perhaps more than any of the other students in the course was Kruger. In her response to her first project, which showed her frustration with the poor results, she wrote,

As of now I'm not sure what else could have been done. Obviously, I need another way to express what was expected because I must not have got the same memo that everyone else got, because my grade obviously shows I didn’t understand what to do. I thought I did a good job something in the B range. So anything that could have helped me to make sure my grade wasn’t so bad. Yes, I do find a D+ to be a bad grade. It’s definitely something that I usually don’t get and shocked me to see.

My response was one of the most detailed to any student on the first project. I wrote:

Stephanie, I can tell that you are shocked and a little angry about your grade. I COMPLETELY failed my first two speeches when I took communications in college. And I COMPLETELY failed the first two papers I wrote when I came to graduate school. I really thought that the assignments would be no big deal because I’d given lots of speeches before and written lots of analytical papers before, but I realized after failing a few that the way that I wrote before wouldn’t work in a new context or with new teachers. I say this because you seem to be doubting your writing process based on the grade and not necessarily the feedback. At the end of the response, you talk
about the feedback and things that were unclear. But earlier in the essay you state that you don’t know what else you could have done to make the paper better. So I’m not sure if you still don’t know what to do to make the paper better, or if you have looked at the comments and feel like you have a direction for revision.

I know that this doesn’t help the anger, but learning is a tricky and uncomfortable process. In order to really challenge ourselves, we have to move into areas we haven’t encountered before and do things differently…and often not as well as we have in the past… in order to grow as writers. Again, this doesn’t negate the feelings you have about the score you received on the paper. I just wanted to let you know that I recognize those feelings and have felt them to. And I wanted to let you know that the results of this paper weren’t because you didn’t “get the memo” that the other students did. This assignment challenged a lot of students in the class. At several points in this response, I’m confused as to what certain words mean or what you are referring to in class or in the text. I’ve noted those in the margins. Come and see me if you have any questions or want to talk about the assignment. Maybe we can find out where your expectations and the assignment didn’t connect.

My response to Kruger, and the fact that I worked harder to dialogue with her about her writing than I did with other students, hinged on my connection with her shock at receiving a D+ on what she feels is a fairly strong paper. Several other students also doubted their writing ability based on their grade, but something in Kruger’s response obviously triggered
feelings that I had in first entering college as a confident honor student and then receiving less-than-glowing feedback to my college work. My connection and dialogue with Kruger indicated that I was willing to open up to her because of our shared negative histories with entering an unfamiliar discourse community, a reaction that was absent from my responses to other students.

To my response, she replied that “I felt that you understood what I was saying. I really wanted to say things up front so that hopefully for the next paper our responses back and forth can help create a better way/style of writing papers for me. The comments to my responses seemed accurate and I plan to take all the constructive criticism [sic] and put it to use on the next paper.” I thanked her for her honest responses before and after this response from her: “I know that coming into a new situation can be stressful and difficult. And I really don’t want grading to be punishment. I also want you to come away from the class feeling confident as a writer. Let’s talk through the assignment together. She and I worked together on revising the first paper, including meeting in my office to talk through parts of the paper I had difficulty understanding.

When she turned in the revision, she wrote, “Here is my revised literacy essay. I’m hoping that this is much better than before. If there is still something majorly off with this paper, please let me know. I will try again to fix it. I went through the whole paper and checked for small errors along with my sentence structure and flow.” With her next paper comments, I asked her to come by and work with me or ask questions if she needs to talk about the second paper. She did not take me up on the offer but write in her IDB that “I was so happy this time to see the positive comments about the work I put into this paper. The comments made on my response to Paper #2 noted the work I put into this paper.
Also, I received the comments on how well I wrote even the response paper and how it’s going to help put my final paper together. So, it’s nice to know I have a good base for my Analysis Report.” Her self esteem is evident in her confidence going into later projects, and her writing also shows that she is applying concepts from her work in the class.

Kruger provides one example of how authentic dialogue that shows empathy could help students overcome actual and perceived difficulties with writing. However, this dialogue happened infrequently in the English 104 course. One explanation for this lack of dialogue was the disconnect between how I envisioned using Blackboard for reflection and how Blackboard was actually utilized.

Instead of seeing Blackboard as a place to dialogue and reflect, students often indicated that they primarily used Blackboard as an informational source. Brawn wrote, “I did not use . . . blackboard to help me with my assignment, with the exception to get the guidelines for the project off blackboard. I don’t really know why I didn’t use [it] . . . I just didn’t think it would be beneficial to use [it] with the material I was researching.” Booker indicated similar feelings on both the first and second projects. For the first, he wrote, “I did use Blackboard to help me with this assignment . . . . I mostly used information from my life to write my paper.” For the second project, he wrote, “I didn’t use any of the postings on Blackboard . . . because it’s just easier to look up the information I want online. That’s usually where I go first and I didn’t know that there were postings for us on Blackboard at the time.” Freeman used the Blackboard site for limited reasons: “I didn’t really use blackboard at all during this project. I did use it for the criteria and to edit someone else’s paper but that was about it. I didn’t find it necessary.” Dyson said, “When I was writing this paper I used the class notes on blackboard as a guideline.” However, like most other students, Dyson did find the IDB
posts useful: “In class I think that it was helpful to write and answer questions on blackboard.”

Most students found the IDB helpful to help them organize and focus their writing, not necessarily to reflect on that writing. Hummel wrote for project one that “the classroom activity that helped me the most was the day our professor gave us random literacy questions to help us brainstorm. That really helped me put some things together for my paper.” However, she did not connect this with the IDB; she sees it entirely as an in class activity: “I didn’t really get any help from the book or from blackboard. I just kind of did my own thing.” For her second project, she had a similar reaction. “I don’t think I used the things that were posted on BB either …The reason I wouldn’t have used BB is because it just isn’t easily accessible for me and I have only opened my text when we were asked to bring it to class.”

Kanter also liked how the literacy questions helped her focus her paper. “I really liked the class activity that we did when you asked us questions that related to our literacy. It allowed me to think about my literacy and gave me topics to include in my project. I did use some of the postings on blackboard to help me with my project. I looked over some of the webpages and ideas that people had on our group discussion board to help me decide a topic to write about.” The helpfulness of the IDB for the first project did not carry over into the second project. “I didn’t look at the book or any of the postings on Blackboard because I didn’t really think about it. I never thought to look there for ideas and help.”

Kruger and Mather had similar experiences. Kruger found the initial brainstorming activities on the IDB helpful. She wrote, “I found the long list of questions very helpful. This is because it gave me places to start from and branch off to, helping me explain my
story.” Mather wrote, “I finally got the main ideas of the paper when we started doing class exercises and talking about how we became literate and the many different types of literacy. I think the class work that helped me the most was the individual writings at the end of class that we did. We wrote on how we became literate and what it means to become literate. Writing those really gave me a sense of directions on where I wanted my paper to go.” For his second project, he had a similar experience: “I liked how in class we all had to post what our ideas were in doing this project and also outside the classroom. That really helped in seeing what other people were doing and how maybe you could incorporate some of those things into your paper to enhance it. It also was helpful because you could see many different uses of technology in schools and then go from there.” Overall, he was optimistic about how these activities helped him. “The little individual writing assignments were very good and maybe do a few more of those a semester because it really gets ideas flowing for your upcoming projects.”

The pre-planning helped Montecriso and Padgent as well. Montecriso wrote, “The classroom activity involving us writing out what we planned on doing for the essay helped me think about it a lot. I used the postings on Blackboard as a guideline on how I should write my paper….The classroom activity that I found helpful was when we were told to write down our plans of how we were going to go about conducting our surveys and finding our information. This activity really made me think about what I was going to do to complete this project.”

These student comments indicate that Blackboard provided a repository of ideas helping for focusing their projects. But few if any saw Blackboard or the IDB as a place where focused exploration took place—no students in the class critically explored
Blackboard as technology that they frequently used in their everyday educational experiences. Blackboard was functional and invisible to students. While Blackboard provided the perfect forum and theme to discuss both writing and technology, it remained essentially behind the scenes in the course. And my lack of engagement in many instances allowed Blackboard to remain invisible.

**Conclusion**

Several patterns emerged in the data from my notes and student responses to course activities in English 104. First, I struggled to find a balance between responding to the needs of the students and the objectives and requirements of the course. The course objectives easily worked with the pedagogy I intended to implement in the course. However, as the course progressed, I tended to lean more toward fulfilling the research objectives and less toward soliciting student input on the content of the course. In doing so, I selected minimal and controlled areas, such as assessment rubrics, to gather student input to democratically create the course. The desire to show that I was fulfilling course objectives superseded my commitment toward student-centered learning.

Second, my control issues often manifested themselves in the course. The language I used in my notes to describe the students and I often belied the intentions I expressed. While I insisted that I tried to build community, I described the lecture I gave instead. While I hoped that students would engage in the course and take an active role in their learning, I doled out carefully worded prompts and course activities that communicated clearly that students were to follow guidelines without providing the time, space, and guidance necessary to truly explore their realities. And several times I ask students to pick apart their own
experiences, including their weaknesses in writing, while I simultaneously am angry and fearful when my own weaknesses are exposed in class. The most basic tenets of critical pedagogy insist on a teacher-student with students-teachers moving toward the common goal of becoming more human through shared investigation of reality. Enforced control undermines this system and violates one of the primary guidelines I expressed in chapter two: to invite and not coerce students to become active researchers and participants in their own education.

Perhaps most striking is the tendency, both in students and in me, of “regression” into familiar patterns when feeling threatened, challenged, or pressured. When students encountered the activity of creating an assessment tool, one they had no doubt never done before, their reaction to creating the tool was not relief over the ability to have a say in the ways they would be evaluated. They instead created a tool that reinforced the learning they had experienced thus far in traditional education. In brainstorming for the activity, students primarily identified elements of assessment that they had most frequently encountered in high school writing (form and mechanics), whether or not those methods of assessment aligned with the expectations that they had experienced at the college level (support, critical thinking). Only a handful of students attempted to challenge the assessment overtly by speaking up in class or covertly by creating a scale that would cater to their needs. Student feedback reinforces this reading of the data as students overwhelmingly insisted that the sliding scale rubric was not a useful tool for evaluating their writing, but only reinforcing their perceptions about how writing should be assessed.

Like the students, when faced with new situations or challenges, I reverted to teaching practices that felt familiar, even if those teaching practices were in direct opposition
to the claims I made about pedagogy in my classroom. Instead of fostering class dialogue, I lectured. Instead of providing time and space for reflection, I accelerated the pace of the classroom in order to “cover” the material I felt needed to be covered in the space of a course period. When technology became a challenge, I react with hostility and question whether or not to use the technology at all when the more rational alternative would have been to use those challenges as a way of exploring limitations of technology in the classroom.\(^9\) Both students and myself seemed to revert to previous practices and beliefs about writing and the classroom when faced with challenging, stressful, or new situations.

A possible explanation for the regression experienced by both the students and I in this classroom could be found in Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky defines the zone as the “distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (86). When asked to create the rubric as a class, students recreated what they had previously known—a scale heavy on grammar and light on content. They did not practice using the scale or discuss the scale and further in class, thus not using it to problem solve with either adult guidance or with the collaboration of those in the class who understood the rhetorical purpose of the scale and could use it effectively. When asked to do a second scale, scaffolding them toward making independent choices, they did not feel comfortable with the use of the first scale and could not move into the second stage of the ZPD, independent problem solving.

\(^9\) For students’ similar reactions to technology, see chapter six.
The lack of collaboration with more capable peers and of dialogue with myself no
doubt impacted student’s reflection as well. Students could not move through the ZPD in
their reflective pieces because they were missing the important elements of collaboration that
would help them move into more sophisticated levels of analysis.

Perhaps because I did not use Blackboard as a place for reflection, students did not
see Blackboard as a place where they could reflect on their writing and technology use other
than in response to carefully controlled prompts. Blackboard served as a repository for class
texts and, in some instances, a place where students could gather and focus ideas for their
course projects. However, a combination of their hesitation to reflect on their experience
and my missed opportunities to push them toward reflection limited both the ways
Blackboard was used and completely avoided any critical reflection on Blackboard as an
education tool itself.

In the following chapter, I look more closely at students’ use of technology and their
perceptions of their abilities with technology as well as students willingness to pose and
answer critical questions about their writing and technology use.
Chapter Five: University Students’ Perceptions and Use of Technology

In English 104, students were asked to use technology to create projects that best expressed the results of their inquiries into literacy and technology. By using the technology as we investigated issues related to technology, students could draw from their experiences with the media they were investigating for the course. I also asked them to reflect on their technology use in class and in responses to course projects. Doing so opened spaces for students to critically reflect on their technology use. In this chapter, I investigate the following questions: How do students perceive their use of technology, both in and out of the classroom? How do students use technology in the classroom to produce (or not produce) rhetorically-based multimedia texts? Will students critically question the choices they make regarding their use of technology in and out of the composition classroom?

Data indicated that while students, for the most part, seemed well-versed in what Stuart Selber calls functional techno-literacy, very few students posed and answered critical questions or viewed their choice of media rhetorically in their reflections on their own technology use. Most students selected to use technology not for critical or rhetorical purposes but rather based on their comfort levels with technology or their perception of the ease with which they could use particular forms of media or technology to complete projects, remaining safely within their pre-determined comfort zones and regressing to what they saw as easier media when they received “bad” grades or comments on their work in the course.
This chapter reviews how students viewed technology using the basic framework established by Selber in *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*, which divides techno-literacy into three forms: functional, critical, and rhetorical. I then use data from surveys, proposals, projects, and responses to show how students, while perceiving themselves as functionally techno-literate, often declined to challenge technology critically or use technology for rhetorical purposes in the course.

**Student Use of Technology**

Selber’s first category of techno-literacy is functional techno-literacy, which he defines as “the skills associated with writing and communication processes as teachers have come to understand them in a digital age” (44). Students who are functionally techno-literate can “use computers effectively in achieving educational goals. . . . understand the social conventions that determine computer use . . . . make use of specialized discourses associated with computers . . . . effectively manage their online world . . . . [and] resolve technological impasses confidently and strategically” (45). In order to measure students’ functional techno-literacy, I administered a survey to identify student technology use before the semester began (see Appendix A for the survey instrument). Nineteen students in the university class completed the survey.

When asked to rate their level of comfort with technology in general on a scale of 1–10, all students felt that they were above average (above 5 on a scale of 10). Students had a variety of levels of computer use, but most of them were on the computer multiple times a day for a variety of tasks. The types of tasks students completed using technology *before* taking the class in a laptop classroom are listed in Figure 5.1.
All of the students used a computer multiple times a week; the majority used one
daily. Very few visited chat rooms or played computer games regularly, but the majority used
communication systems such as instant messaging and email. The majority of the students
used Blackboard at least twice a week, which indicated that students were accustomed to
accessing Blackboard when they entered our class. Students used computers primarily for
homework, email, accessing the Internet, instant messaging, accessing Facebook, and using
Blackboard. Overall, students reported that they used computers and the Internet equally for
communication and educational purposes.

All of the students but one owned a computer, the majority of them owned laptops
when they signed up for the course, and all but one of the students had Internet access at
their primary residence. The students used computers consistently in a variety of places: their
dorm rooms, the computer labs on campus, the library, friends’ rooms, and at home. All of
the students but two lived in on-campus housing, so the diversity of places students could
use computers on-campus because of the wireless network might contribute to the fact that so many owned laptops.\(^\text{10}\)

In spite of the high number of students who owned a laptop, not all students signed up for the course because it was in a laptop classroom. When surveyed, only six of the students had intentionally chosen to take the course because it in a laptop classroom. Those who chose to take it in a laptop classroom did so for a variety of reasons: some wanted to “try it out” or get more comfortable with their laptops, others wanted to use their own computers instead of the “crappy computer lab classrooms” provided for composition classes. Three students initially indicated that they chose to take the course in a laptop classroom, but when asked “If yes, why?” they responded with answers that indicated that they actually did not intentionally choose a class in a laptop classroom. When students realized that their course would be held in a laptop classroom, they overwhelmingly reacted positively. After taking the class, they remained similarly positive. Of the nineteen respondents, seventeen indicated that they enjoyed it or liked it better than a traditional classroom or computer lab. Only two expressed hesitation: one because s/he was easily distracted by the computer and one because s/he had limited internet access to complete assignments at home after class.

Students were also asked the question “Do you think that having your composition course in a computer classroom influences your writing process?” The students were split on the question, with nine indicating that the computer classroom did influence their writing and ten stating the opposite. Students who indicated “yes” indicated a variety of reasons, including ones ranging from personal preference (“I don’t like expanding ideas and taking

\(^{10}\) Students who were education majors were also required to own Macintosh laptops.
the time to write out my points an explanations [sic] with paper and pencil,”) to practical concerns (“The feedback received in a writing classroom w/laptops for me seemed to be much more detailed. We also received responses/grades quicker allowing us to be aware/change our papers quicker and easier” and “Since I always have my laptop with me on campus I can do assignments at any time. It’s a lot less stressful.”). Students who indicated “no” said that they only benefited from the most basic practical applications, such as spell-check or the ability to make changes to their work during class.

The answers to the previous question were interesting because those who indicated that the computers had changed their writing process tended to see it as a tool beneficial for time management, noting that it changed the way they write but not necessarily their writing process. The students who indicated that the computer did not influence their processes provide answers that are slightly more process-oriented. These results indicate that students who answered “yes” to the question might not have actually had a different process; they may have just interpreted the question differently.

When asked what random images came to their mind when they thought of computers, students primarily provided the names of software and internet applications, indicating a broad range of ability to use terms to discuss technical issues, one of Selber’s criteria for functional techno-literacy. Their responses included email, MySpace, Microsoft Word, Facebook, AIM, Web pages, solitaire, AOL, and CNNSI. Other students mentioned specific types of computers or hardware: Macbook Pro, my laptop, screen, mouse, keyboard, desktops. Overall, students used the following words to describe their feelings for computers: Confident, “stupid computer,” helpful (5), convenient (6), they’re great, thankful, happy, efficiency (2), organization, troublesome, personable, reliable, over dependent, love, enjoy, entertainment, best
invention, fun, frustratingly fun, effective, love them!! Overall, the words used to describe technology were positive, with a few indicating that some technology was frustrating or inconvenient.

Information regarding the amount of time students spent using technology came primarily from a survey conducted in class to model the use of Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). The surveys asked the following questions regarding student time spent on certain activities. Twenty students completed the survey. The results are listed in Figures 5.2 and 5.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before you came to this university:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many hours a week did you spend in front of a computer?</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many of those hours a week did you spend online?</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many hours did you spend gaming?</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many hours did you spend on homework/preparing class materials?</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many hours did you spend communicating (email, Instant Message, Facebook, etc.)?</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.2: University Students’ Computer Use Before College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At this time:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many hours a week did you spend in front of a computer?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many of those hours a week did you spend online?</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many hours did you spend gaming?</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many hours did you spend on homework/preparing class materials?</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many hours did you spend communicating (email, Instant Message, Facebook, etc.)?</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.3: University Students’ Computer Use in College**
Hours students reported spending communicating in various forms and the hours they spent online between high school and college shifted upward. No significant changes occurred in the amount of time they spent gaming or in doing homework. Student attitudes about technology might have been influenced by changes in their computer use between high school and college. However, based on this survey, student computer use remained relatively unchanged between high school and college. Overall, most university students were very wired, indicating that they had internet access at home and at school, and that what had primarily changed in their computer usage at BSU was access; the wireless internet made connecting possible from anywhere on campus at any time.

**Students’ Self-Identified Comfort Levels with Technology**

Aside from the surveys, I asked students to respond to a series of questions in their Individual Discussion Boards (IDBs) during one class period to gauge their self-identification as users of technology. University students placed themselves across a spectrum when they described their level of functional techno-literacy and technology use. They expressed their perceived competency with technology through directly addressing their computer use in responses to prompts or through the problems they had while trying to navigate Blackboard and other forms of technology in the course.

A number of students self-identified as limited users of technology. Hopper, a student who stated and maintained his aversion to anything outside of the essay format in English class, stated that he was “the least techno savvy person in [his] group of friends.”

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11 Hall was the only student who expressed very little interest in technology throughout the class and remained steadfast in his rationale that he should not need to use technology in an English course, in spite of the fact that he typed his papers for the course and interacted in limited ways through Blackboard and email. He seemed almost hostile toward the idea of doing anything but a traditional essay. He wrote, “I used the
When asked if he had programs on his computer that he didn’t use, Brawn wrote, “I am not a computer person so I don’t know what half the crap is on my computer. I basically use it to play games, type papers, do research, and talk to people.” Bradley also self-designated as being “the least techno-savvy” of her friends. She was one of the few students who used technology less in college. She wrote, “Before BSU I mainly used the same technology I use now just less of it.” Kruger’s computer use was also fairly limited in high school. She indicated that she only wrote a paper on a computer for important projects. She was aware of many of the programs she owns, but doesn’t really need them: “I have programs on my computer I have never used. no need/want to use, ex. Movie maker, music maker, excel, address book.” Freeman also expresses a lack of technology use: “I check out laptops from the library because I don’t have one….College has caused me to use a computer more but that is about it, I’m sure once I pick a major I will have to use technology a lot more.” Aside from these students, the majority of students indicated that they were moderately- to highly-tech-savvy.

The person most frustrated by her courses’ use of Blackboard and the Internet was Hummel. She had only dial-up Internet access at home because she lived too far out in the country to have a high-speed Internet connection. She responded to a question about using the Individual Discussion Board in the classroom, saying “I really liked instant results because usually I have to wait on e-mail and that doesn’t work for me because I don’t have the internet at home. All of my teachers want stuff done on line or posted on line. I don’t
have internet access at home so this ruins my day/life.” She seemed openly hostile toward technology: “most of the time I HATE computers. I may post a blog on my myspace but no one would see it.” On another occasion, she wrote, “Prior to BSU I used the computers in the yearbook room for spreads and whatnot, but I hated that too.”

Hummel was one of those students who also showed her lack of techno-literacy in the problems she experienced during the class. She had difficulty with research for the second project, partially because she could not get in touch with people who could answer her questions about Internet access for commuter students; she indicated that the problem is technical: “If I could do one thing over I would have made it clear that I was Jamie and that my e-mail was jlhummel@bsu.edu instead of ImFlagman@bsu.edu.” At several points in the semester, she sends me messages hoping for a speedy reply because she would not be able to access the Internet to read her email, which means that she had to wait a day or two for a response. “I am posting this today, but I don’t know if it will work. If it doesn’t then I won’t know until 8 o clock Monday morning if you e-mail me. So I will repost it as soon as possible, but I don’t have internet access at home.”

Hummel was one of the students who had difficulty with using basic Blackboard functions, such as attaching documents and posting messages. Occasionally, students had difficulty posting or accessing assignments in spite of stated experience with Blackboard prior to the course. Fennel seemed to have a lot of trouble with various functions of Blackboard and of Microsoft Word: “I was looking for this for a while…I didn’t know they were under all the groups…im [sic] sorry…I know its [sic] late now…my survey results are going to be posted in another thread because they would hyperlink in my paper…it wouldn’t work…sorry for the inconvienience [sic]…” At another point when posting part of an
assignment that was missing, she wrote, “heres [sic] the survey graphs/results…im [sic] sorry about that…” And in a response to a paper, she indicated that the comment feature of Microsoft Word inhibited her understanding of my comments: “I found the comments to be very hard to read. I’m not quite sure how to make the comments bigger so I can read them better.” Problems such as these, while minor, inhibited students from posting the correct documents on time and receiving timely feedback in the course.

Another student, Montecriso, was comfortable with the Internet and technology but had specific difficulties with programs he used for the course. He wrote, “I’m used to having wireless internet. [Before] I used my desktop computer and cellphone [sic] mostly. Now I use my laptop and ipod.[sic]” His trouble with PowerPoint in the second project was a reoccurring theme in many of his postings, including the response for the second project and in the survey at the end of the course. He wrote, “The fact that I had trouble contrasting the colors on the slides is a good indication that I had no idea how to use visual technologies. It made me realize that this is one weakness that would help me greatly if I worked on it.” He was also one of the few students who recommended that I spend more time in class helping the students use technology: “The only suggestion I have is maybe having one day where you go over different formats that the students might be able to use. Maybe you can show them a little bit how you could use each one.” While I spent time in class showing students free Web-design software and how students using PowerPoint to post their content using the notes feature, students like Montecriso needed more specific instruction on how to use the technologies available to them.

Very few students fell in the mid-range of competency when describing their comfort with technology. Evan was one such student who used technology frequently but
Skurat Harris 137

was still skeptical about its necessity. Evan’ technology use was pretty much the same before college except for using wireless and a laptop. “I take my laptop every where [sic] I go on campus so I can get online and find out anything in a couple of minutes pretty much, or talk online with people from all over the place.” He also uses a Palm Pilot for work. But unlike students who identified as more techno-savvy, he doesn’t seem dependent on the technology he uses in his everyday life.

If I never saw a computer again, id [sic] probably be okay, it would mean that society had reverted to an agrarian state so life would be simpler and probably more enjoyable….I know from experience how it important it is to limit yourself to the amount of time spent on the computer. But I have had friends who spend every free moment of the day playing online games, so it is a very important topic for me.

Evan did not particularly have trouble with using Blackboard, but he often cut and pasted his text into a text box to post it, even for major assignments and after being instructed to attach .rtf or Word documents.

The majority of students in the course expressed their use of and familiarity with technology as being at the upper-end of the spectrum. Flagman was one of the students typical of those in this category. She indicated that she uses technology frequently and that her life at college is not particularly different from what her life was before college in regards to technology. She wrote, “I had internet access at home, so in that perspective, my life is the same. But, I use my computer in class…which is so different than highschool. I can chat with a friend, write down notes, and listen to a lecture at the same time.” She actually seemed incredulous about why anyone would use a typewriter: “I’ve never written on a type
writer. They scare me because I can’t erase mistakes. I ALWAYS make mistakes. Who would make a machine where you can’t erase an error?”

Other than in responses to specific survey questions about their use of various internet technologies, few students mentioned particular use of social networking sites. Flagman was one exception. She wrote, “I did make my first Myspace in a highschool computer lab my junior year. That was before they blocked blogs.”

Flagman owned more technology than most of the students in the class. However, she did not seem particularly attached to technology. She saw it as both beneficial and distracting. She wrote, “If I never saw a computer again…I think I would be better off. I waste so much time on here. Yes, I know a computer makes life easier, but should life be hard so we can grow…nothing is challenging anymore..everything seemed to be in this screen.” Even when she had trouble with technology, losing an entire proposal that “self-destructed,” she did not seem to become frustrated with technology.

Students who self-identified as functionally techno-literate generally expressed a need for or desire to constantly use technology. Booker identified himself as highly dyslexic (“On a scale from 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest, I am about 11.5 on the dyslexic scale). Technology helped him with his disability, but he also identified as highly techno-literate outside of the use of assistive technologies. He wrote, “I have more technologically [sic] then my friend [sic] because I am trying to start my own production company so I always stay up on new stuff that is coming out…I know how to do more things on a computer then most of my friends….I don’t think I would be in school right now if it was not for my computer and helping me get by.” Booker wrote in his literacy narrative about how he attended a
special program at the university that used technology to help him overcome some of the more significant reading problems he experienced in high school.

Most students who identified as more frequent users of technology do so because of increased access to technology. In the first essay for the class, Kanter wrote, “The computer labs at our school were used for projects and papers. We went to the computer lab every once in a while, but not on a regular basis.” She indicated more attachment to her computer than most of the other students in the class, even though she owned less technology than others: “If I never saw a computer again I would probably go insane. I use it so often for a variety of things that I would be lost.” Her frustrations with technology are few and far between, and she manages to trouble-shoot most technical problems on her own once she is aware of them. After project one, she wrote, “I was very stressed out before I submitted my project because it was not publishing correctly, but afterwards I felt like I had done a good job.” She had difficulty with posting a second time later in the class: “I thought I posted it, but I guess it did not work. Sorry! Thanks for letting me know that it did not work.” Mostly, she was enthusiastic and unquestioning about technology: “Computers and the internet have provided us with so many opportunities to expand our knowledge and we are fortunate to have grown up in such a technologically advancing time.”

Padgent’s access to technologies had also increased:

Yes, it has changed my life [wireless]. I can now study in more places, rather than just in my room. I can lay on my bed and talk online to friends or move out into the hallway if my roommate is asleep and I’m trying to watch a movie and don’t want to use headphones. Before BSU, I used everything I
had. TVs, computers stereo equipment, DVD players my iPod, etc. This
hasn’t really changed.

Unlike Padgent, Schinder did not have a laptop until college, but Schinder used technology
frequently, in spite of problems she had with that technology. “If I never saw a computer
again I would cry I use my computer all of the time… I am on line more now than I have
ever been in my life. Partly because it is required to check online regularly.” Schinder was
one of the only students who frequently had trouble with her laptop in the classroom; she
also had difficulty using programs for completing projects:

 Well in every paper that I write at one point or another I end up trying to
solve a problem that I don’t anticipate. This paper wasn't any different. I
created a survey on survey gizmo and e-mailed it to several people come to
find out the link to my survey also linked to a website on bikes. So when the
participants clicked on the website to go to my survey they ended up looking
at bikes. I was eventually able to get this problem worked out and proceeded
to e-mail participants. Then the survey gizmo stopped comulating [sic] results
for one reason or another and I ended up having to find a survey online to
replace my survey.

In spite of these trials, Schinder was enthusiastic about technology and focused her first
project about literacy on the adaptive technologies that she planned on using as a speech
pathologist.

The students in the fall English 104 class were typical of most teens, according to
surveys by the Pew Internet and American Life Project. Figure 5.4 compares self-reported
technology use by English 104 students to students surveyed by the Pew Internet and American Life Project.¹²

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>English 104 students</th>
<th>Teens Nationwide</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instant Messenger (daily use)</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email (daily use)</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Access at Home</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own a Laptop or Desktop</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5.4: University Students’ Technology Use Compared to Pew Statistics Nationwide**³³

English 104 students were similar to students nationwide in three categories measured, but were notably higher in use of email than teens nationwide. The variety of responses to the questions from the survey and the in-class prompts revealed that students in the English 104 course had a variety of experience and felt comfortable with a variety of forms of technology in part due to the increased access to the Internet provided on the wireless campus.

**Student Questions: Their Engagement with the Course Themes**

Beyond functional techno-literacy, Selber challenges students to become critically techno-literate, an approach which he claims “recognizes and then challenges the values of the status quo. Instead of reproducing the existing social and political order . . . it strives to both expose biases and provides an assemblage of cultural practices that in a democratic

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¹² Statistics from the Pew American Life Project were gathered from October 2006-June 2008. Because English 104 occurred in Spring 2007, we can assume that the populations of students in both surveys were roughly the same age at the time of the surveys.

³³ Because the survey given in English 104 focused primarily on technologies regularly used in the classroom or the technologies that students most frequently used for academic purposes, technologies such as text-messaging, blogging, or social networking were not a part of the English 104 survey. Thus, the number of categories of comparison between the English 104 survey and the Pew Internet and American Life data was limited.
spirit, might lead to the production of positive social change” (81). Selber refers to the work of both Paulo Freire and Donald Macedo in developing a system of critical techno-literacy that “prepares students to be social critics rather than indoctrinated consumers of material culture, with critique generally defined as culture study of power in situated uses of computers” (95).

To encourage students to become critically techno-literate, English 104 centered around the themes of literacy, technology, and the intersections between literacy and technology. Projects one and two invited students to ask specific questions about their literacy experiences and about the technology they encountered in their everyday life and educational experiences. To prepare for asking these questions, we had several class activities where students practiced asking questions that would be relevant for their research. In the second week of the course, I asked them “What kinds of things did you do in your high school English classes?” and “What one thing most surprised you about writing in college?” The answers to the first question I collected and posted to Blackboard in a Word document, and the answers to the second I asked them to post to their IDBs (see Appendix G for those answers). The purpose of this activity was two-fold; I wanted students to begin exploring their experiences as fodder for questions and also wanted to model a questioning process that gathered data for reflection.

To introduce the idea of asking questions, I posted questions that I found on the internet about literacy to Blackboard in order to give them an idea of the range of questions that might be asked about literacy and technology (see Appendix H for the questions). Students also practiced asking different forms of questions in class, such as questions of
value, belief, fact, etc. Students then submitted their questions for each assignment for feedback.

Active investigation required that students posed meaningful questions about their experiences with literacy and technology and investigated the answers to those questions. One of the initial struggles in the course, even after class periods spent asking and exploring questions, was getting students to ask questions instead of making statements, or getting students to ask authentic questions instead of framing informational statements as questions. For example, when I asked students to pose questions, they would make statements instead (i.e., “I will probably explore when and where I started to read and learn and how it came on me to learn.”). Not only is the student not posing a question, he hedges a suggestion to investigate something vague that could be easily answered (i.e., the answer would be that he started to read in kindergarten because he was in a public school system). The statement does not propose an authentic question. Posing authentic questions would help students break through the habit of asking easily answered questions or writing informative papers, both forms of reification that divorced student writing from their experiences and allowed them to regurgitate information in order to complete an assignment for a grade.

Shor identifies how institutional concepts of “research” work against students’ ability to conduct practical, real-world research in the classroom. In Empowering Education, he writes,

Traditionally, the term research has not referred to teachers studying their students’ learning, or to students studying their own language, lives and thinking, or to students and teachers mutually scrutinizing materials in class. Research has meant for most students the academic ritual of preparing a research paper. Research has also been a special activity of scholars,
consultants, and graduate students in libraries, laboratories, institutes, corporation, military centers, universities, and field sites visited by specialists.

This traditional universe of research is what Boomer (1987) called the “elsewhereness” of scholarship—it happens everywhere else except every day in the classroom, where it is needed. (170)

Students asked to “research” often revert to informational papers of compiled sources in order to complete an assignment for a grade. To change this tendency, I asked them to ask questions that required research to derive an answer, questions about their lives or experiences or about literacy and technology that could not be easily answered.

The other goal I had for students in their projects was to draw a conclusion from the evidence that they provided in the course of answering their question. By drawing a conclusion, students would hopefully fight both reification and mystification: they would see patterns and draw conclusions from those patterns and identify cause and effect in their experiences instead of attributing experiences to “luck” or “common sense.” Often, students who pose questions in projects will come to conclusions that do not logically follow from their evidence, are very vague, or are clichés that the students say to neatly “wrap up” their papers while remaining basically meaningless.

Skorczewski suggests that the cliché conclusion to a student paper has a rhetorical meaning that actually is the student asserting power over and against the teacher’s imposed concept of “good writing.” Clichés, such as “everybody has their own ideas,” are not necessarily a failure to draw obvious conclusions based on the evidence provided in the body of their paper or student examples of being “inexperienced in ‘my’ language, but instead [students] wrestling to make sense of what they read in terms of what they knew and
believed” (225). The cliché ending, then, is not a sign of lack but rather a sign of students showing power by testifying to participation in multiple communities or holding on to those forms that have served them well in academia thus far.

While the lack of authentic questions or the cliché conclusions provided by students asking actual questions might indeed signal reluctance for students to give up forms and structures that are comfortable and have paid off in the past, the critical classroom insists that students investigating a specific question will reflect an answer to their question without necessarily “selling out” to teacher-talk as Skorczewski suggests. In several instances, students were able to ask a question, complete research, and follow through to answer the question. For example, Flagman investigated the question, “Did kindergarten (with the help of my parents and my teacher) provide me with the basic literary [sic] skills needed to grow and flourish in my reading and computer capabilities.” Her project intertwines literacy and technology by showing how the technology used in her early education encouraged her to read. Her conclusion is that

The influences in my life as a child greatly affected my understanding of literature and technology. Elementary teachers were my guide. In particular, my kindergarten teacher taught me the essentials. She showed me how to put words together and create meaning to them. My father and mother should take credit for my ability to read and use computers as well. Both of them supported my literacy needs by encouraging me to pick up a book and try to read it. Promoting the use of books by reading to me and buying the computer programs I desired to have, my father and mother created an environment where advancing in literacy came easy.
While lines such as the first in the above passage seem to be cliché, the conclusion is drawn from specific examples of books and experiences that she remembers and that her parents recalled when she interviewed them for the project. Thus, the conclusion of research in the critical classroom does not need to necessarily abandon what students find familiar to adopt the teacher’s idea of good writing. However, that research will hopefully be drawn from students’ experience instead of being an example of false consciousness, a phrase without connection to cause and effect.

Students frequently had difficulty asking, researching, and answering a question in both their first project on literacy and their second project on technology. Instead of asking questions to drive their research, they would make statements that led them to gather information instead of exploring issues or themes. For example, Kanter, who does a website for her project on technology, creates an informational website instead of answering a question. She initially proposes the question, “What different types of technology do Ball State University student [sic] use and what influence does technology have in learning?” Her second question set up the opportunity for authentic exploration. However, she doesn’t follow through on doing research that can lead to an answer to her question and instead substitutes a cliché conclusion:

Wireless internet on Ball State’s campus is an advantage to students and has become an important part of students everyday lives…. Technology is everywhere and the access that students have on campus is so beneficial for our education. It makes life simpler and it will always play an important role throughout our college experience and future lives as technology expands and improves everyday. [emphasis mine]
She draws a conclusion, but that conclusion does not provide an answer to the question of *how* technology influences learning. Instead, the conclusion restates basic points about technology assumed to be true that do not actually respond to the initial question. Rather, they reify popular beliefs about the importance of technology and the effects that technology has on education. Conclusions such as Kanter’s often appeared in the students’ work, one which traded an actual answer for clichés about the benefits of technology.

The vague, unsubstantiated conclusion was prevalent in many of the projects that students completed. Sometimes, but not always, these conclusions were an unfortunate product of a question requiring a speculative answer. Mather proposed the following question for his literacy project: “Where would I be today or how would my education be affected if I had not received the teaching and knowledge to become as literate as I am today?” I indicated in feedback that the answer to this question would be based on speculation, not necessarily evidence. In his IDB, I write,

> ... since the question that you have now is speculative (i.e. there are any number of possibilities and choosing one definite one would be difficult), you might want to work your search question differently to look at where you are instead of where you might be. Or, if you wanted to keep it with a more speculative question, how would you set up parameters to answer it? One would be to look at your experiences with education at home. But what about school? And what teaching have you received? You might want to look at narrowing your topic to a more specific focus in order to be able to complete it in four pages.
Mather’ question in his first project is “Really though what is the best way for a kid to start their journey on becoming a literate person?” The question is less speculative but is still not a question that can be easily researched and answered. He poses the answer that parents are the best way, but in the conclusion of his paper, he makes sweeping generalizations about literacy instead of returning to the conclusion he stated early in the paper regarding his parents:

Through my nineteen years and all my years of schooling I have learned many concepts and facts, but the many types of literacy that I have built is something that I will never forget and use every day of my life. There will always be something new out there to learn about with literacy and I will continue to build and expand my knowledge of literacy and keep advancing in this world with it. [emphasis mine]

Again, the conclusion seems to be a placeholder. Mather’ writing indicates that he needs to draw a conclusion, but that conclusion doesn’t seem to have anything to really do with the rest of his writing or focus on the conclusion that he initially sets up in his introduction. He, like Kanter, substitutes clichés about literacy for true conclusions about his own literacy experiences.

Of the nineteen students in English 104 who participated in the study, none consistently asked and answered questions in their projects. The student who was closest at being successful was Fennel, who asked questions for both of her projects about which she drew relevant conclusions, but both the questions and the conclusions were vague. For project one, she asked, “How has technology advanced over the years and how will it affect generations to come?” I indicated in IDB comments to her that she might want to narrow
her concepts of “generations” by focusing on particular generations and also choose specific technology that she would like to review. However, she doesn’t end up narrowing either parameter, which her conclusion reflects:

Technology has changed greatly over the past 100 years and it will continue to advance.

Generations to come will have to be technologically literate in order to be able to get a decent job. The college core curriculum will focus more on technology than anything else. Technology is advancing faster than we can keep track of. We live in a world in which technology rules all. Technology is the future and will always be the future. [emphasis mine]

Phrases such as “Technology is the future and will always be the future” are the types of clichés the critical classroom seeks to draw out and interrogate. However, instead of drawing her into a discussion of that cliché, my comment on her paper left much to be desired. I wrote, “I like that you project ahead earlier when you talk about your mother’s education. Can you be more specific about the future here as well?” I wanted her to draw connections between her evidence and her conclusion, but the comment I provided does not necessarily prompt her to do that.

For her second project, her question was less vague but still needs to be narrowed. In her proposal, she began with the question, “How does Ball State University’s wireless campus compare to other colleges and universities wireless systems?” In my comments to her proposal, I indicated that I felt this was a strong question because she would be able to look at the specifics of our campus in comparison to others to see whether or not the learning environment at BSU was truly better than others as the campus publicity claimed. However, for her actual project, she asked a different question: “Are students enjoying the
wireless campus too much?” This new question was much more speculative. She did not indicate how much would be “too much” or clarify what “enjoying” the campus involved. Her conclusion alluded to the original question in her proposal but was very vague:

Over all, it seems as if the wireless system has been affected here at Ball State University. The students take advantage of the system both positively and negatively, but it’s the same for all other college campuses as well. The unwired life here at Ball State University seems to be a great one. Students and faculty alike can enjoy the wireless life at Ball State University and still be able to perform at their best possible levels during class time. There will always be the select group of students who will overly enjoy the unwired life at every college or university, but the over all impact of an unwired campus has taken Ball State above and beyond other colleges and Universities and it is something to be proud of.

The conclusion draws partially from the evidence that she provides from surveys of Ball State wireless users’ experiences and from research on other wireless campuses. But the statement that “the over all [sic] impact of an unwired campus has taken Ball State above and beyond other colleges and Universities” does not logically follow from the evidence she provided. The second project is much closer to authentic research, but the conclusion remains vaguely connected to actual evidence.

These student examples represent the bulk of student work in the course. Students did not seem to rebel openly against active research or against critical techno-literacy, as Shor says can be the case with students encountering the critical classroom after a lifetime of memorization and regurgitation. However, they did seem to struggle with posing questions,
researching, and drawing conclusions about authentic questions to critically analyze class themes.

**Students’ Rhetorical Use of Media**

Finally, Selber writes about the challenges of helping students strive to be rhetorically techno-literate. Selber’s definition of rhetorical techno-literacy “insists upon praxis – the thoughtful integration of functional and critical abilities in the design and evaluation of computer interfaces” (145). In this section, I modify Selber’s definition slightly to move away from interfaces and toward media use. However, Selber’s parameters for a rhetorically techno-literate student apply equally to the student designing interfaces and to the student using media to communicate a message. He indicates that the rhetorically techno-literate student will

- understand that persuasion permeates [media] contexts in both implicit and explicit ways . . . . understand that [media] problems are ill-defined problems whose solutions are representational arguments that have been arrived at through various deliberative activities . . . . articulate his or her [media] design knowledge at a conscious level and subjects [his or her] actions and practices to critical assessment . . . . [and] see[media] design as a form of social versus technical action

Students in the English 104 classroom encountered significant struggles in using media rhetorically, both in actual difficulties with technology and in perceived difficulties with the media. A few students who perceived difficulty or had real difficulty using technology or media in previous courses chose not to use that technology or media in English 104. Some
students, talked about “screwing up” as a deterrent to further experimentation or implementation of technology in the class.

After each project, I asked students to reflect in prompted responses about their use of media in the course.\textsuperscript{14} The responses indicated that students often deterred from using media or technology when they blamed the media for problems that actually pertained to the content of their project or their research. Often, their lack of familiarity with the media they used for a project required that they spend time learning the technology that they might have spent on gathering information or preparing the content for the course. This led students to often revert to the traditional essay as a “safe” form, even when they admitted that the traditional essay form was “boring” or that a Web page would be an easier way to convey their message about technology use. Perhaps because the students were investigating the familiar in new and unfamiliar ways, the addition of unfamiliar forms of technology and media for representing the results of those investigations taxed student abilities, particularly when those students were focused not on the best means of presenting information to an audience but rather the best means of earning a particular grade.

An example of student media choice based on point loss and not on rhetorical concerns was Brawn’s first project. He chose not to use hyperlinks in his projects because he had difficulty with them in English 103, where he had done a Web page about himself for a project (tjBrawn.iweb.bsu.edu).\textsuperscript{15} Brawn wrote, “I know how to do [hyperlinks] now but I figured I would save the possible point loss due to it not working.” Brawn chose a PowerPoint for the second project on Internet usage among college students so that he could incorporate charts into the project. He had previous experience with PowerPoint, and

\textsuperscript{14} For the prompts to a student response, see Appendix I.
\textsuperscript{15} He indicated that the links do not work, but when I visited them, I could not find any non-working links.
he “honestly chose PowerPoint because [he] thought it would be a little bit easier, and [he] enjoy[ed] working in PowerPoint.” Early in the project, he asked for the minimum number of slides required, indicating again that he was intent on a score and not on communication for a purpose.

In spite of his focus on avoiding point deductions, he included no explanation for his slides in the notes section of his presentation, one of the main requirements for the use of PowerPoint listed on the course-designed sliding scale rubric. In his response to the project, he wrote that he regretted choosing PowerPoint “because [he] did not do it correctly.” While most of his points were deducted for his lack of written explanation in the notes section of his PowerPoint presentation, problems with the content and not the medium of the project, he indicated that he will no longer use PowerPoint: “This project changed my mind and I will not do any other projects in PowerPoint unless I am forced to. I do better when I just sit down and write a paper.” He attributes his low score to the fact that he did a PowerPoint and adds it to hyperlinks on his list of media not to use for classroom projects in the future.

In both his first and second projects, Montecriso seemed to have difficulty explaining how the media he chose best conveyed his message. For his first project, Montecriso chose a traditional essay with hyperlinks as his medium of expression. His reasoning for this is unclear: “I think I will have an essay and have hyperlinks in that essay involving such things as my interviews with my mom and sister. For the most part, it will be a traditional essay with hyperlinks.” In the response to project one, he provided a rationale for his choice but no specific reasons. He wrote, “I decided to use the hyperlinks to websites

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16 Montecriso was one of the students who sat against the wall and did not frequently engage in the course.
and other pages to make the reader interested. If it was just one long essay, then it would seem boring to most people. I didn’t use much technology in this project besides the hyperlinks which I already knew how to do.” His attempt to increase reader interest was to divide one longer essay into four Word documents connected by hyperlinks; however, the four separate documents all seem to work in a way that would have been more easily as one document.

One problem with Montecriso’s organization was that once a reader selected a hyperlink to another Word document, they did not have any clear direction of where to go next, unless they linked to a third Word document. The reader began on the main page with his question, “Who or what helped me become literate?” The first three hyperlinks went to Wikipedia (for a definition), Lebanon High School (where his mother taught), and the Fashion Institute of Technology (the school his sister attended). These hyperlinks did not seem to directly relate to his question, but the reader could navigate between the links and the main page. However, the fourth link took the reader to a second document that detailed how he learned to write in kindergarten. Once the reader reached this page, s/he read the page-and-a-half of text then had to find the original document again before moving on. This second document about his experiences in kindergarten could just as easily have been included in the original document. The hyperlink to this document did not seem to serve a specific purpose other than to “make the reader interested.” In actuality, I found moving between separate pages and back for no apparent reason frustrating. Had Montecriso uploaded the documents as a Web page using his iWeb account, readers could have navigated back and forth between them, and Montecriso’s argument for using hyperlinks would be more salable.
While Montecriso’s explanations for his first project were very vague, both in the proposal and in the response, the rationale for his second project and the explanation in his response were much more detailed. His second project answered the questions, “What kinds of new technology will be integrated into cars, in the next five years? What will be the new alternatives to gasoline to power cars? How will this affect students who use their cars to drive to campus?” He indicated that he was passionate about the topic of cars. In his proposal, he argued about which form of media he should use:

I have two forms that I have thought about using for my paper. One form is presenting my paper in a journal article type format. I will have paragraphs with information along with graphs conducted from surveys. I might also have hyperlinks in my article going to other websites or any other data I found. Another format I might use is a PowerPoint format. I could present my information in graphs on different slides making it easier to display my findings and data. My question to you is which format do you think I should use to best present my data and other findings? In my opinion, I think the PowerPoint would work better, but I’m not sure if that is what I am supposed to do.

These questions show that he was in the second project exploring the relationship between media and message. In the end, he chose to do a PowerPoint. After completing the PowerPoint, he reflected in his response that he regretted his decision.

My first concern with this project was regarding the format that I would use to display my information. I decided to challenge myself by using PowerPoint as my format. As soon as I chose this as my format, I knew I
was in for some trouble. This was the first time I had ever used the PowerPoint program. At first, I struggled to figure out all the buttons that are displayed on the menus of PowerPoint.

His difficulty with mastering the new format and the information in that format were primarily technical: “I have never used PowerPoint, so that by itself posed a problem to me. During my composition process, I couldn’t figure out how to change certain things on the slides. It seemed like for hours I was just trying to figure out all the buttons that program has to offer. Once I figured this problem out, that part of the project became a little easier.”

In spite of his difficulties, Montecriso provided a more rhetorical reason for his choice of media. He wrote,

I decided to use PowerPoint because I thought it would be the best way to display my surveys. My process for creating the text was completely different than the papers I have written in the past. The reason for this difference in the process I used was the format that I used to display the text. During my decision-making process, I couldn’t find any good way besides PowerPoint to display all my information along with my surveys.

While he insisted that he didn’t see a better option than PowerPoint to display his graphics, he used only four charts and one flowchart in his eight-slide presentation. The majority of the graphics on the PowerPoint consisted of multi-colored backgrounds that looked like roads, and icons representing the various types of fuels. All of the graphics could have been easily incorporated into a Word document or displayed in a Web page.

As with Brawn’s PowerPoint, the comments I made about Montecriso’s PowerPoint primarily dealt with the lack of transitions, explanations for his data, and conclusions drawn
from his sources—all points that I frequently made on a variety of projects regardless of format. However, Montecriso’s response to his project, like Brawn’s, claimed that he will not be using PowerPoint after receiving the score and my comments:

My experience with the technology that I used to create my document showed me that I have many problems learning new technology. I have never used PowerPoint before, and I don’t intend on using it anytime soon if I don’t have to. PowerPoint and I are definitely not a match made in heaven….I wish we would have spent more time learning about PowerPoint so I had some kind of an idea of how to display my information and notes on each slide.

He attributed his lack of success with the project to his “problems learning new technology” and the lack of time spent in class on creating PowerPoint presentations. However, from the comments on the text, the problems were primarily in the organization of the material and the conclusions from that material, not with the format or function of the PowerPoint. Students like Brawn and Montecriso who attributed content problems to the media they used for projects had difficulty with the content because they were trying to master a media with which they were unfamiliar. Much like students whose grammar and syntax suffers when trying to master a new content and discourse, students’ attention to content and detail suffered when trying to master a new medium.

Glendale was another student who indicated in a response that she would no longer use a form of media, hypertext, after what she considered to be an unsuccessful project. However, she later used hyperlinks with a Web site. Much like Montecriso, Glendale had no previous experience with hyperlinks prior to the first project, and when she used them to
link to other Word documents in her first project, she was not successful in making the pages link smoothly. She was, however, one of the few students who incorporated a variety of visual elements into her project (using photos of books she discussed, putting individuals’ names in different font types, colors, and sizes). In spite of receiving praise for using visuals and hyperlinks in her work, after the project she wrote in her response to project one that, “I have never used hyperlinks. My hyperlinks didn’t end up working, but they were supposed to be linked to the three interviews. After my experience with this paper, I don’t plan on writing any other ones in the same way.”

Unlike Montecriso and Brawn, Glendale’s lack of success linking Word documents on project one, Glendale attempts a Web page for project two. Despite her lack of experience with Web pages, just as she had little experience with hypertext, she does not rule out making one again after she completes the second project. She had struggled with Google Pages and had emailed me several times for help with getting charts to work correctly. She wrote in her project two response,

At first, I had to play around with the fonts (color, size, type) to make it all the same on every page. Then when I tried to put my images on the pages, the site wouldn’t let me. The last problem that I had was on some pages the links to the other pages would be at the bottom, and on other pages the links would be on the left side.

She was persistent through the technical difficulties, however, and indicated that “there were parts of the web page [sic] that I would have liked to turn out differently (the graphs and the links to other pages on the side), but overall I think that it was good for being my first web
page[sic].” Even though Glendale had more difficulty with this project than with the first project, she did not rule out using Web pages for future projects. She wrote,

For this text, I felt like the technology was working against me. Since it was my first web page, I was just trying to get used to it, while also trying to make the information presentable….I didn’t expect to have as many problems putting everything onto a web page. It was my first time making a web page [sic], and after awhile I think that I kind of caught onto it. My biggest problem is getting my images on there, and for everything to be in the correct spot to make it look right. After this project, I now sort of know how to make a web page [sic].

Unlike Montecriso and Brawn, she viewed her difficulties with Web page creation as isolated technical incidents not as failures that precluded her use of that media in the future.

Not all students decided to attempt Web pages, even after success with hyperlinks in Word documents. Bradley had experience with hyperlinks, and her first project had a variety of hyperlinks worked into the text. Not only did the resources she linked to support the points of the text, she also created embedded hyperlinks so as not to interrupt the flow of the writing with lengthy URL addresses. While she was proficient with hypertext, she opted out of doing a Web page for any of the projects. After the first project, she wrote, “I chose to make a formal word document with hyperlinks because I knew how to do it, the web page [sic] seemed really fun to design but I have never done one before and I didn’t want to get myself into something I didn’t think I would do well.” Even though she used hyperlinks effectively, she did not feel comfortable moving from a Word document to a Web page.
Clearly, students’ reasons for using or not using certain types of media more often revolved around technical issues or feelings of inadequacy with the media than rhetorical reasons. Bradley couched a technical concern in a rhetorical rationale:

Because I have not ever made a webpage [sic] I think that learning how to create one may distract me from researching my topic and hinder my essay’s subject matter. I feel that I will be able to express my ideas more clearly and precisely using [traditional document with hyperlinks or traditional document] because I am more familiar with the software and will not need to spend time learning how to create a webpage [sic].

She hinted at a rhetorical reason for choosing to use a traditional essay instead of a Web page, but returned to her original premise about discomfort with the amount of time necessary to learn how to create a Web page. However, she also used more fully rhetorical explanations for using a particular media in her response to her projects: “I chose to do a word [sic] document because I didn’t feel there were many other points that I needed to touch on, as I would have using hyperlinks or a website format. My last project I used hyperlinks because there were a lot of subcategories within my main topic.” Familiarity with media was not always a determining factor in choice of media, but perception of failure did play a significant role in media choice.

Students also more overtly tied choice directly to experience, tacitly referencing a fear of failure. Evan considered creating a website for various projects but never does so. In his proposal for project one, he wrote, “I imagine that my paper will remain a typical essay format. I cant [sic] see it fitting into a web page or anything else coherently so I will stick to what I know.” He was very familiar with the traditional Word essay and indicated so in his
response to his first project. He wrote, “This paper was written in a similar style to previous papers. A simple essay which I tried to keep simple by avoiding works cited and other things that I thought might be unnecessary like a title.” In spite of his comfort with Word, he also indicated that he would like to experiment with other forms of media in future projects:

While I found the idea of creating a website to be intriguing, I decided to stick to what I knew since it was a literacy essay, and not become involved with something I was illiterate in. While I am comfortable with using word to make documents like this, I think in the future I will try and do more of my assignments thru website publishing or other means.

However, he continues to stick to the traditional essay for similar reasons, even though he admits that a Web page would be “interesting and easier”:

At this point I am still planning on writing this paper in the standard essay or research paper form. However, this could be more interesting and easier if it were done as a Web page. Unfortunately, since I do not have very much experience with Web page design, I doubt I will be using it. I don’t know if we will be practicing or using a Web page design system in class, but if we were to I would probably try to do this as a Web page.

For his second project, he even began experimenting with a Web site but did not complete it:

Like my earlier papers, this paper was formed in the typical essay draft style. I initially had planned on making the paper as a web page on GooglePages. When I started the paper about a week and a half before it was due, I felt that the work I had done on the web page wasn’t very effective in conveying
its meaning. This may have had more to do with not having focused my topic to my final subject, but I decided to return to the essay form as that was what I felt most comfortable with. My experience with the website designer was also a reason why I chose the essay form. I didn’t have any previous experience with web design, but I was confident I could figure it out in time. In the end I felt that the paper’s flow would suffer too much from being in the web format.

His reasons for choosing to revert to essay format were a mix of perception of his own skills and rhetorical reasons. If he had submitted the Web page as well as the essay, I would have looked at the two and determined if the flow really was better in the paper or if his perception of the flow was actually an excuse for not using a media he was unfamiliar with. But his response was the only mention of the Web page he provides.

Hummel, who expressed frustration with access to the internet earlier, was one of the education majors with a new Mac computer. She also expressed hesitancy to create a website because of lack of experience. Her literacy essay contained photos, hyperlinks, and even an image of how she wrote her name as a child, but the project stretched her experience with graphics and with her computer. In her project two response, she wrote, “This paper was different from others because I had to learn how to make hyperlinks and I had to learn to use my Mac a lot better….I decided to use a Word document with hyperlinks because I didn’t want to do a boring regular document. I am definitely not very great with technology and I knew that I wouldn’t be able to do a Web page.” She gained a little more confidence for her second project in spite of her success with various forms of media in her first project. Her question for project two asked, “How does Ball State being wireless affect
commuters?” Ironically, her hesitancy about her skills with creating Web sites does not prevent her from attempting a Web site; her lack of internet access as a commuter, the impetus for her research, does. In her project two proposal, she wrote, “I would like to try to do a web page [sic], but since I know nothing about web pages [sic] or how to start, I am going to stick with a Word document and I might find some hyperlinks to put in my paper. My essay will probably include a picture or two.” She appeared to flirt with the idea of using a website throughout the project but stuck with an essay format that includes images, multiple columns and WordArt. In her response, she wrote, “I was going to try and make a Web page for this assignment however doing that when you lack the ability to get on the internet 90% of the time that becomes an impossible task.”

Like Harden, Flagman chose traditional forms to explore issues with technology. She was comfortable with hypertext but did not feel comfortable with completing a website for her second project, which asks how the university’s wireless campus compares to other colleges and universities. In her proposal, she planned on “inserting hyperlinks into my sources, survey and possibly and [sic] interview.” In the final project, she hyperlinked to only two items: an article explaining how the university was the nations’ most wireless campus and another to a file with graphs compiled from the survey she administered using www.freeonlinesurveys.com. She wrote in her project two response that, “I decided to do a traditional essay with hyperlinks because I am not very familiar with web pages and I don’t want to risk doing something wrong and ending up not having a paper at all. I really do not like using Mac computers to do anything because I’m so use to short cuts on Windows computers.” Her lack of familiarity extends to both Web page design and her new computer.
While Flagman’s hesitation about completing a Web site does not particularly deal with difficulties of use, she was aware that time limited her decision of what media to use. In her proposal for her first project, she wrote, “I’m really interested in using the website format because I love being creative! However, if time gets away from me, I might just stick to the traditional word document.” The importance of creativity continued to concern her, even in the response for the project:

I think hypertext was the best format for my paper. It expanded my knowledge of writing and technology. I had a difficult time getting my hypertexts to work at first. However, I learned to create them, and it made my project one of the most unique pieces I have ever written. Now, instead of free writing, I can plan out my areas of focus. Also, I now know of different formats I can use to visually express my future writing projects.

She began her explanation of why hypertext was the best choice with a critical stance toward her technology choice, but the second sentence veered away from the reason that the media was good for the paper, instead providing a vague statement about why the media was good for her learning. Her project was successful because it was “unique,” and hypertext allowed her increased visual expression, but any mention of the hypertext being a good choice for conveying a message or reaching an audience is missing.

Flagman branched out in her second project to tackle the Web site she wanted to do for the first project. Originally, she planned on doing “normal, essay form” with “pictures to illustrate different students using their ipods for different purposes.” She changed her mind and instead completed a website about iPod usage on the BSU campus.17 In her response,

17 http://project2ipod.googlepages.com/home
she again stressed how the project was challenging because it required her to use her creativity:

I had trouble with constructing a paper for the last paper because I had no motivation to do it. It seemed boring to me. Creating a website was something new and interesting. I had never made one before, so it was a great learning experience for me as well. … During the creation of my website, I felt like I was in my comfort zone. I am in elementary education, so one of my greatest strength is creativity.

She followed the same pattern as her first response, first mentioning that the website was interesting and creative, then vaguely referencing her project as a “learning experience.” Later in the response, she made a differentiation between actual enjoyment and “school” enjoyment: “I found the project fun in a school-ish type of way. I really enjoyed constructing a website because I love being creative.” The choice of media and the learning experience themselves centered around creativity, focusing on the author’s enjoyment instead of the text or the audience.

Again and again, students willing to explore themes dealing with technology and with the Internet in particular avoided using Web pages or other digital media to convey the results of their inquiry. Freeman used hyperlinks to Word documents in her first project but chose not to do a Web page. “I was somewhat nervous writing this paper because I had never used hyperlinks or anything like that. I have never created a web page so I felt that trying to learn how on top of making the actual page would be too stressful, so I stuck with hyperlinks since we were shown in class how to do them.” Freeman used her hyperlinks to connect her main page to a page of people who influenced her literacy, a page about books
she loved as a child, and a page with transcriptions of interviews with her mother and father. Combined with the background graphics and page borders, she basically replicated a Web page in Microsoft Word. Her reason for using this format was somewhat rhetorical in that she assumed, as did other students, that her audience found traditional essays “boring”: “I also decided to use hyperlinks so my paper sort of jumped around and wasn’t just some boring essay.” Her final assessment of her experience was positive. She wrote, “I think it worked out well and I was able to get everything to work out, technology-wise, and I think I would be comfortable with writing another paper in this format.”

For her second project on the McDonaldization of society, Freeman chose the same format. Although her first project was the first time that she used hyperlinked Word documents, she indicated that she was doing so because of her success with them in the past: “I chose to do a regular paper with hyperlinks because I never seem to have problems with it, and I didn’t have a problem this time either.” Her absolute statement of “never” having trouble with the form in the past insinuated much more experience with the media than she actually had. After she completed the project, she regretted using the format she chose because she wanted to try something different, not because another medium would have been a better choice to convey her message. She wrote in her second response that “I am comfortable with that format, and I completely forgot that we could do a power point. I wish I would have remembered that so I could have changed up my format a little bit….I do wish I would have stepped out of my comfort zone.” In the end, comfort again edged out rhetorical concerns to determine the medium a student chose—even though the medium of choice is “boring.”
Comfort was not always the primary determining factor in media choice. Fennel had a specific rhetorical reason for using hyperlinks in her paper. She wrote in her project response “I decided to use hyperlinks and pictures in my paper because I wanted to give a visual to the reader about what I was talking about and show comparisons. Comparisons are sometimes better understood when the reader has a visual of the comparison.” Here, she referenced a specific reason for her visuals that directly related to the reader. She used hyperlinks to strengthen her point, not to practice her creativity or to avoid seeming “boring” to the audience. She explained the specific materials she chose to use for hyperlinks:

The hyperlinks went to reference materials on certain words that could be misinterpreted by the reader. I wanted to clarify exactly what I was trying to say to the reader. I found it easy to create the hyperlinks and insert pictures into my word document. I have a lot of previously [sic] experience with my computer and creating hyperlinks and inserting pictures. I didn’t find it very difficult to write my paper using the technology I used.

At the end of the paragraph, she moved from reasons for her use of hypertext to the ease of using hypertext. A good next step in the response would have been for Fennel to give some examples of the words to which she hyperlinked and why the reader would have difficulty with those words. In the actual text, Fennel linked to only one word whose definition could be confusing (“abacus”). Her other three links were to articles that clarified the points she is making, such as a link to an article explaining why teachers will have to have additional certifications for technology in the future. So while she seemed to understand that hyperlinks
would help the reader with comparisons, she did not use any actual comparisons in her text; she primarily used hyperlinks to articles that explain points in her text.

Some of the issues that the students had proposing technology use and following through with that use no doubt had to do with their ability to support their points with examples and explanations and their struggles with mastering language to describe processes that are unfamiliar. One example is Kruger’s description of the media she will use for her first project. At first, she indicated a rhetorical purpose.

I plan to use a logical order or traditional essay to start off with. From there if necessary I will add hyperlinks and pictures to make my project more clear and understandable…. There are some things that im [sic] not sure of like...how could I use hypertext, what to do with my outside source, and using visual hierarchy. All I know how to do is traditional essays, so I’m unsure how to break that habbit [sic] for this paper.

At the beginning of the statement, she proposed to use the traditional essay and “logical order” for clarity and understanding, but by the end of the paragraph, the elements she was questioning and her reference to her “habbit” of writing a traditional essay belied her purpose for that essay. Her response to her first essay admitted that her choice of form was related more to comfort than to rhetorical purpose:

I chose this way [essay with hyperlinks] because it was overall like a traditional essay, which is what I am most comfortable with. Also, this type of essay format that I choose is what I’m used to doing. I’ve never had to use hyperlinks, so it was a change to think of having different topics that all fit together. I’ve used pictures before in essays, in the background, but other
than that, I’ve never really inserted technology into my essays. For example, I’ve never submitted my document online. I’ve always printed it and then turned it in.

The end of her response conflated using software to create an essay with using Blackboard to submit the essay. Using “technology” indiscriminately was a common pattern in student writing. They did not seem to draw distinctions between, or have the vocabulary to articulate the distinctions between, hardware and software, creation and submission, completing a project and presenting that project to a wider audience.

Kruger worked diligently on making her writing clearer throughout the course. As she does, she was able to articulate more clearly her purposes for using particular types of media and the rhetorical effect those have on the audience. One example of improvement was between her proposal and response for her second project in which she looks at the “explosive” growth of the Internet impacts students’ lives. In her proposal, she wrote, “I’m still trying to consider how I will present my information, whether it be traditionally or by some other form of web design [sic] or more technology oriented.” The proposal still showed confusion when she considers format. But her explanation in her response was clearer and showed stronger reasoning for her choices. She began with a purpose for her essay related to comfort but then switched to talk specifically about the reasons for her use of other forms of visual rhetoric:

I decided to use the form that I did because I am the most familiar with it.

What I did to change my format from my last project is to simplify the visual rhetoric. In class we talk about keeping the paper easy to read for the reader, without too many distractions. I indented my paragraphs underneath my
main points to allow the reader to easily know what he or she is reading about. I also used a picture of my Facebook profile to give the reader an idea of what one may look like if he or she was unfamiliar with one. I used word like my first paper again, because I was familiar with it and had worked only with this before.

One notable feature of Kruger’s response was her reference to a class period discussing how visual rhetoric can distract the reader from the purpose of the essay. While she used Microsoft Word for convenience, she made more sophisticated choices with the content of her essay.

Two students were able to do successful Web pages and were confident in their abilities from the beginning. Padgent completed a successful Web page for her first project after experience doing Web sites in other classes. She wrote, “I had little experience with forming a Web page, I had made my portfolio for my Foreign Language Education course last semester, but that was guided by my instructor and had specific information that needed to be on my page, taking out the guesswork. I relied on all of my previous knowledge of web design to help me with this method.” Even with her experience, she spent considerable time crafting the site. In her response, she discussed that experience,

I spent many hours and a few late nights struggling to develop my Web page and have strong content on the individual pages…. It was a challenging process for me, but I felt that the website would be the best format. To fully explain Internet slang, I needed to show specific examples with graphics and make graphs and charts. The website enabled me to do this, and made pages easy to navigate.
In her explanation, she addressed why she chose that format based both on the best method of showing examples and the ease of navigation for the audience.

After her success with her first Web page, Padgent switched to a traditional essay for her second project for primarily rhetorical reasons. She knew that she could create another website, but indicated that it would not best serve her purpose. She wrote, “While I feel that a website could be beneficial for this project, I also believe that writing a paper would be an appropriate form. I will most likely have images on my pages, as well as hypertext.” She created a traditional essay for the second project, explaining that “I decided to use this form because I thought it would be appropriate to show my graphs and that paragraph form would present my thoughts most clearly.” She doesn’t express the reasons why the paragraph and essay form would best present her thoughts, but later in her explanation, she indicated that rhetorical purposes might not have entirely guided her choice: “This was completely different than the last project, where I did a Web page. Honestly, it was slightly less stressful because I knew how to use Word efficiently and didn’t have any struggles with my computer.” She did not, like other students, completely abandon the use of technology because of the time and effort to create a project. She instead shifted her use of technology to different forms. She wrote in her response,

The new form of technology I used was working with the survey website. It was really cool to see how it would do a report for me and be so specific. It was incredibly helpful. I conducted my research by using the library’s website to search for Internet usage amongst the college student’s [sic] of the U.S. I then searched other websites such as Google.com to find information. I also conducted a survey of Ball State student’s to get a local perspective.
She continued to use multiple forms of technology to research and present her data. Her comfort with technology allowed her more freedom to choose from among multiple media, freeing her to make a choice not to use digital media when it did not serve her purpose.

The other student who successfully created a website, Kanter, had no experience with Web design but chose to do Web pages for both of her projects in spite of this. She created her Web pages on Microsoft Publisher and posted to her university iWeb space. “I have never made a Web page before so it was a new experience and I had some difficulties, but in the end I was happy with it” Kanter wrote in her first response. Her success with her Web site on literacy led her to create a second Web site about how technology enhances education at the university. She created this page on Publisher but did not post it to the Internet:

I am pretty sure that project two is going to be presented through a web page [sic]. I really enjoyed working on the last one and now that I know a little bit more about making a web page [sic] I can incorporate my knowledge to make this one better. Also, I think that it could be the best way to display my information. I will most likely use Microsoft Publisher again to develop my web page [sic].

In her second project response, she specifically mentioned using the feedback and experience in her first project to improve her second project. She wrote in her response that, “I decided to do another web page. [sic] I wanted to try to fix my problems from project one with layout and I also thought it would be the best way to present my project. I didn’t have any problems with the technology I used. I really only used my computer and the internet to do this project.” In her response, she stated that a Web site would be the “best way to
present my project,” but she doesn’t mention why. And as opposed to other students who saw technology as an obstacle to completing digital projects, Kanter perceives the technology she used for the project to be very limited, showing her comfort with software like Microsoft Publisher that many students did not consider using at all.

Conclusion

How do students perceive their use of technology, both in and out of the classroom? Will students critically question the choices they make regarding their use of technology in and out of the composition classroom? How do students use technology in the classroom to produce (or not produce) rhetorically-based multimedia texts?

In reflecting on their use of technology, students primarily identified themselves as functionally techno-literate. However, that confidence did not translate during the course for most students into either a critical reflection on that technology use or a rhetorical use of media in their projects for the course. Students tended to steer away from posing or answering questions that critically delved into their use of technology or views of technology in the world around them. Their reflections on their choice of media were often disconnected from persuasive deliberative purposes. This trend was particularly evident when students discuss using hypertext. Often, they referenced the use of hyperlinks in terms of being “creative” or “interesting,” and did not seem to express a thorough knowledge of any type of navigational purpose for the use of hyperlinks in a document. Those students who first hyperlinked Word documents and later ventured into creating Web pages elaborated more on their navigational choices with hyperlinks, but for the most part, students saw hyperlinks as a way to make their work “different,” not necessarily better.
Another reoccurring pattern was students who are willing to attempt using hypertext in Word documents but are not willing to create Web pages. Even when students could have easily transferred Word documents to a Web page in order to make their hyperlinks more stable (particularly with the first project on literacy), they did not do so, insisting that they did not know how to use Web sites. In spite of going over Google Pages in class and explaining that they could just upload documents from Word onto a Web page, student hesitation remained rooted in two main issues: lack of confidence with page design and the time necessarily to learn the technology while simultaneously completing the research and creating the project. These issues indicated that students might be more receptive to using Web pages in projects if they have more time and space in which to play with various aspects of the form. Had a Web page been the requirement for their final reflective project, and had I spent more time in class talking about design and the rhetorical structures behind Web pages, more students might have been willing to use that media for their project.

Again and again student choice came back to comfort and convenience. Those who took risks and did not immediately succeed did not generally take another risk by choosing media with which they were unfamiliar. In spite of research showing that teens are very active in using Web 2.0 technologies, such as blogs and sites where they can create their own content (Pew Internet and American Life Project), no students in the class ventured to suggest media such as blogs or wikis to complete their projects. And no students mentioned using visual editing programs, such as Windows Media Maker, to complete projects for the class. Students still, for the most part, choose print- and text-based media to convey their messages.
These results reinforce the work of Michael Wesch, Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Kansas State University and frequent lecturer on the needs of the twenty-first century student. In a lecture given in Canada, Wesch discussed the media that students were most frequently using in their personal lives and the assumptions educators make about how students will or will not critically use those media. Wesch contends that in Web 2.0 activities, there are no such things as “digital natives” because the technologies are relatively new, the majority of them having only been invented in the last five years. Wesch stated,

You’re in the same boat with your students, no matter who you are. They may know all about YouTube and Facebook and how to navigate these things to entertain themselves, but they know nothing about how to use these things to learn and for critical thought and more than anything, they rarely know how to use these things to create something interesting and new. And so that’s where you’re on the same footing with your students. (“A Portal to Media Literacy”)

Wesch’s point highlights one of the flaws with our English 104 course. I did not necessarily explore or use technologies beyond those with which I felt comfortable (Word, PowerPoint, basic Web design) or encourage students to explore and use Web 2.0 to complete course projects. And when students used technologies that they associated with the classroom, they might not have been as comfortable with those technologies because they are not those that they regularly use. Few students indicated in surveys that they regularly used PowerPoints, even though they chose those forms to use in the classroom. This indicated that students are still drawing very specific lines between what they perceive as “classroom technology” (e.g., Microsoft Office) and “entertainment technology” (e.g., Web 2.0 technology).
Wesch goes on in his presentation to point out that we can productively help students think critically about technology if we begin thinking differently about the assumptions we make about their media use. While I maintained throughout the course that I was open to them proposing and using any technology, I still felt self-conscious at what I didn’t know about Web 2.0. And even if students would have chosen technologies with which they are more familiar for projects, there is no guarantee that they would have been able to use or discuss those technologies any more effectively. Wesch stated,

Because there are no natives here, we cannot just assume our students are media literate and know how to navigate this world. We need to help them along and we need to show them a lot of the skills we’ve learned through our Ph.D. program or wherever you learned your critical thought. We need to bring that into this media environment as well. . . .Think about our learning environment as platforms for participation and help students learn this new media environment…they see them as tools that help them collaborate better and create something new. We want them to use these new media tools instead of these tools just using them. (“A Portal to Media Literacy”) Indeed, I wanted students to do just what Wesch stated in this final quote. Students did use the tools, or attempt to use the tools, they felt were valid media for the rhetorical purposes of the classroom, whether they fully articulated these purposes or not. Had I followed through with giving students the time and space to experiment, and had I experimented with and reflected on my own media use, we might have been more successful in critically evaluating what was using whom.
This chapter focuses on my experiences in the community college classroom and how the lessons I learned from unsuccessfully implementing critical pedagogy in the university classroom influenced me to revise my practice to more fully align with my pedagogy. I look at not only how the community college classes were significantly different from the university classes but also how I was a different teacher in these courses, much more attuned to the classes I was teaching and attentive to what students needed in order to modify the course to meet those needs. Finally, I show that students in the community college courses were more willing to use Blackboard to reflect on both course themes and on their experiences in regard to those themes.\textsuperscript{18}

In May 2007, I accepted a position as the Instructional Designer for Online Teaching and Learning at a Midwestern community college in a city where I had previously lived and taught, both at this community college as an adjunct and at a local university as a full-time instructor in writing. My primary duties as the instructional designer were to train and supervise over 150 full-time and adjunct faculty who taught online and provide Blackboard support for the more than 500 adjunct and full-time faculty who used Blackboard to supplement their seated and hybrid courses.

To train, supervise, and assist faculty with Blackboard, I had to become much more familiar with the course management system than I was at the university the previous

\textsuperscript{18} For a more detailed discussion of student reflection and response, see chapter eight.
semester. In addition to previous online teaching experience with this community college, I now had administrative access to all areas of Blackboard. I also prepared to support faculty by participating in the mandatory online teacher training course at the community college, which focused on using all of the instructional tools that Blackboard offers to deliver online course content more effectively.

I was much more immersed in technology use at the community college than I had been at the university. My administrator access in Blackboard and additional training on online pedagogy were only two of the changes in my use of technology from the university to the community college. Part of my instructional design duties required creating online training materials using Camtasia, software that allows the user to provide voice-over narration to real-time screen-captures. I was also trained to use Microsoft Movie Maker and spent time researching and using free online Web 2.0 resources to help instructors fully implement effective online pedagogy. While I had used technology and studied how technology could impact pedagogy in my classes at the university, my focus at the community college centered on the very themes I asked my classes to critically analyze: literacy and technology. As such, I became much more familiar with and comfortable using technology in the classroom and in responding to student work.

Not only was I more immersed in using technology, I was much less divided between several jobs and school commitments at the community college than at the university. My varied positions as teaching assistant, research assistant, graduate student, and

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19 Just prior to the spring semester at the university, I had completed my coursework for the Ph.D. and passed my written comprehensive exams. Along with studying for those exams over break, I was also eight hours back-and-forth between where I lived and my hometown to fulfill the duties as trustee of a colleague’s estate after she passed away in November: a task I had NOT anticipated or been informed about until her death. In the spring semester, while teaching English 104, I was also teaching a creative nonfiction course, taking two graduate creative writing workshops, completing a creative nonfiction thesis for an M.A. degree I was
conference presenter, and trustee required mental juggling as I navigated roles requiring varying levels of authority and responsibility. At the community college, I had one focus: my job as the instructional designer and much of my work in that capacity centered around literacy and technology. I also had one primary level of responsibility—mentoring and supervision of students and faculty in the online program. After moving in late July, I spent much of August preparing to teach my fall classes and getting acclimated to my new job at the community college. One of the goals that I had set at the beginning of my job was to complete my dissertation, and my director was supportive of my goal. In short, I felt much less hurried while teaching at the community college than I had at the university. At the university, I was experiencing definite acceleration as defined by Shor: my life was fragmented in a dozen ways, and I did not have adequate time to stop and reflect on my classes or my participation in those classes in my rush to complete what I needed to do as a student and scholar.

I relate these details to preface the fact that, logistically, my classroom experience at the community college was much different than that at the university in three primary ways: my new ability to focus my attention on issues regarding literacy, writing, and technology; my experience using various forms of technology; and more time to focus on exploring these themes because of the nature of my new job position. This focus greatly influenced how I viewed my classes and the ways in which I engaged with students at the community college as opposed to the university. Changes in classroom practice and the data that resulted from my study in the community college show that these factors in my teaching allowed me to

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simultaneously receiving along with the Ph.D., working as a research assistant for the National Writing Project’s Local Site Research Initiative, taking my oral comprehensive exams, and presenting on a graduate research panel that was the follow-up from a previous semester’s course at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in New York.
more closely reflect on student needs and dialogue with students in order to make reflection on their writing and analysis of their technology use much more central themes of the course.

I realized, even without visiting the data between semesters, that I had not upheld the principles of critical pedagogy that I had espoused when proposing this study. Student feedback about the course activities and about student writing in English 104 revealed my lack of dialogue and the students’ lack of engagement with generative themes in the course. Thus, I was determined to adjust my practice to more clearly adhere to the principles I believed were vital to a critical classroom:

- using classroom readings that students critically analyzed for rhetoric, not just content

- making student texts a focus in the course

- helping students recognize and investigate larger thematic patterns in their everyday lives

- encouraging students to participate as active investigators of their writing processes (and their use of technology)

- viewing traditional classroom practice but as a thematic for inquiry

- providing time, space, and opportunity for students to not only produce writing but also reflect on that writing and implement the results of those reflections in their future writing

- reflecting on my work in the course along with students in order to modify my teaching and the classroom to help students accomplish these goals.
I had identified a wide-ranging set of tasks, no doubt, but I believed that, based on my experience the previous semester, I needed to have all of these elements working together to provide the critical education I claimed I was providing.

The specific ways I implemented these changes were five-fold:

- Increased student collaboration
- Focused activities that used student writing as classroom text
- More dialogue with students
- Greater student participation in their Individual Discussion Board forums
- Increased reflection on student learning to adjust to student needs.

One of the mindful changes I implemented in the community college courses was daily writing in the students’ Individual Discussion Boards. In the university class, I used the IDBs for reflective writing in class only thirteen of the twenty-eight days that we met as a class. In the first third of the university course, students did use the IDB regularly, but that use tapered considerably after the first project. At the community college, students’ prompted writing activities at the end of each class period provided students the opportunity to reflect on the class activities, providing me feedback regarding student understanding and needs. I wanted to use the student IDB writings as text on which to focus the course and to encourage the possibility of more dialogue among members of the course and between them and myself.

**Off to the “Write” Start: Focusing on Student Experience and Text in ENG 102**

Because of the problems building community with the English 104 class, I instigated activities at the beginning of English 102 that would begin building community and ask
students to talk to each other from the beginning of the course. One of the first of these activities was a Blackboard discussion board forum where students introduced themselves to each other in addition to the face-to-face introductions in class. This discussion board also provided an informal and less intrusive method of attaining personal data from the students than formal survey data collection. Students interacted in this discussion board readily, several sharing stories and experiences in response to other students’ posts.

Student answers in the discussion board forum were impromptu, and students were invited to provide a “short biography or relevant information about [themselves]”. Fourteen students indicated that they worked full-time jobs as well as attending school, most of them as full-time students. Five students commuted more than an hour one way to get to campus every day. Five of the students talked to each other about beginning school several times, often at four-year universities, before dropping out and returning to a community college years later. One of the students was beginning school after four years in the military. Five of the students were married or planning a wedding, and three of the students had children.²⁰

Students in my courses at the community college were an average of twenty-one-years-old. Thirteen of these twenty-five students who participated in the study were traditional college-aged students (18-20); the remaining students were twenty-one and older. Several of the students were in their thirties, returning to school to re-focus on a new career after being corporate managers or construction workers. A few students worked part-time or full-time in nursing-homes or for local assisted-care organizations. Almost all of the community college students indicated that they were working full-time or part-time jobs

²⁰ Because the English 104 students did not participate in a similar forum, I did not collect similar data. But in the course of working with them, none of the students mentioned working full-time, being married, or having children. Most of the students lived on campus because they could only live off campus if they were over 21 or living at home (which two students were). And all but one of the English 104 students were first-year students. The differences in experience between the two groups of students were significant.
outside of school, while none of the university students indicated employment off of the university campus. One of the most striking differences between the surveys completed by the English 104 students and English 102 students were the number who indicated that they accessed a computer at their workplace: eight students at the community college mentioned that they worked on coursework using their computers at work while none of the university students mentioned working on their coursework on their work computers.

I was biased in my belief that community college students would be much more amenable to my “agenda” in regard to questioning the educational system and their use of technology. My experience with community college students, particularly returning students or non-traditional first-generation college students, indicated that they understood that education could be a double-edged sword. Education was a means to a better life in an economy that rewarded educated workers. However, many of them had either failed to be “good students” in high school or, if they had been successful, lacked the resources to continue at a four-year university that, ironically, promised increased financial reward only for those that could afford to attend. Many students attending community colleges had seen first-hand how a lack of education could limit their opportunities in the working world, and a number of them had also experienced the importance of knowing how to use technology to be successful in that working world.

In addition to the immediate focus on student interaction with each other, I also immediately incorporated the class themes of literacy and technology by asking them to use Blackboard to reflect on five prompts: the first thing they remember reading, the first thing they remember writing, their most memorable class, how they feel about English courses, and what they expected from this course. Shor indicates that such questions “stimulate
critical thought about present and past learning: they also signal students that the learning experience is something to reflect on” (Empowering Education, 175). The first four questions were intended to encourage reflection on their educational experiences in preparation for the first project on literacy and the last question gauged their expectations about the course which I could compare to their perceptions of the class after it was over. In doing this, I hoped to avoid some of the “this was a great class” responses that I had received from English 104 students by comparing their reactions at the end of the class with their perceptions at the beginning. Also, this specific question focused their experience on the class, a tangible entity, as opposed to the concept of “writing,” something much more abstract.

The most frequent response from students when asked what they anticipated from the class was “to improve my writing skills.” Mitchner, Prince, and Roden all used this exact phrase when describing what they anticipated in the class. Other students expressed similarly vague ideas of what the course would be or include. Ester wrote, “I expect this course to help me with my writing skills. I love typing. I expect to become aware of different types of writing as well as writing good papers and have confidence in my writing.” Owsley wrote, “I expect this class to be hard, but informative.” And Endle wrote, “I expect this course to be filled with assignments and reading. Just like my last except more advanced. Hopefully I'll be able to advance on my skills in this class better than I did my last as I struggled toward the end.” Therons, who would struggle with both health problems and writing throughout the course, wrote, “I expect to learn how to conform a well presented paper that is universal. One that I can learn and stick with and not change every other year. I expect to be treated as an adult and learn things that will benefit me in the future.” These responses indicate that
students anticipate a skills- and information-based class, one much like their previous writing courses that will provide basic necessities for them to incorporate in future writing.

Other students provided slightly more detailed responses to what they expected from the course. Mathes, one of the older non-traditional students, also mentioned his “honest” reaction, one that showed more understanding of what the class themes would require:

\[
\text{Actually, I am glad that this class has a more unique emphasis than the norm because I have done that and, to be honest, I can always look in a reference book to get the grammar rules, the punctuation rules. I think it will be refreshing to have a class that acknowledges the important role that technology is playing in the progression (or regression) of the English language. I know, a bold statement to make, but that is a pet peeve of mine.}
\]

Shelby, another non-traditional student, echoed Mathes’ thoughts of hopefulness at the promise of a different kind of college course: “All my instructors at [this community college] have been fair. I just ask to be treated with respect. I’m a 31-year-old, non-traditional student. Some of my classes have felt more like high school than college.” These students would be, not surprisingly, two of those most willing to engage in dialogue with me and to explore the themes of the course through posing and answering authentic questions about literacy and technology.

While I had no students at the university who planned on becoming English or journalism majors, I had two students who intended on majoring in English and another two majoring in journalism at the community college. Two of those hoping to major in English did not reflect expectations based on anything from the course syllabus or the explanation of the course provided on our Blackboard site. Hugh wrote, “I would hope that we would do a
lot of literary analysis. Also, I would hope that the teacher is strict on grammar and on improving everyone’s everyday English. I hope we will write a lot as well.” And Raneman added, “I think that this course will be fun because we are not doing the normal writing of research papers, and the fact that we will be reading stories, and discussing them will also make it fun.” Nothing about the course indicated that we would be reading or responding to literature or “stories.”

A few students expressed expectations more in alignment with the course description provided at the beginning of the class, including some who anticipated using computers to produce projects in different forms (Bree, Harms, Roden, Darling). Yet another group of students indicated that this course would be “fun” or “different”: Mesiner wrote, “I expect this course to be educational as well as entertaining.” And Harrell based his reaction on the first day of the course: “Well from the first class session I think it’s gonna be pretty fun….” Akins, a talented writer who would have difficulty finishing her projects in the course, said, “Honestly, I expect the grade of an A or a B, a weekly headache, and a lot of stress while trying to get all these papers done.”

Student perceptions of what the course would entail were wide-ranging, including everything from the typical English course to a course that would be “fun” and entertaining. These responses encouraged me because of their variety and, in several cases, their willingness to discuss previous experiences and be critical in small ways of traditional courses and writing. To follow up on this willingness to question, I immediately introduced students to readings from the textbook that addressed the theme of questioning traditional educational structures and introduced critical pedagogy as a viable option to the banking system with which they seemed familiar. The first class activity used student text as a focus
for the course, asked students to reflect on previous educational experiences, and provided time for them to work collaboratively to discuss the course themes in relation to readings from the textbook.

I asked students to read Alexander Calandra’s “Angels on a Pin: the Barometer Story” and excerpts from Paulo Freire’s “The ‘Banking’ Concept of Education.” Calandra’s article related the story of a physics student who wrote non-traditional answers to the prompt “Show how it is possible to determine the height of a tall building with the aid of a barometer.” The instructor/narrator in the piece asks the student at the conclusion of the essay if he really did not know the “correct” answer to the prompt, and the student indicated that “he was fed up with high school and college instructors trying to teach him how to think, to use the ‘scientific method,’ and to explore the deep inner logic of the subject in a pedantic way . . . rather than teaching him the structure of the subject” (160). From “The ‘Banking’ Concept of Education,” students read a three-page passage that contained a bulleted list differentiating critical education from the traditional “banking” form of education (241). In class, I asked students to write about activities they felt they could do well and list how they learned to do those activities. Then, I placed students in small groups and asked them to compile a common list of how they best learned what they already knew. When we came back together as a class, I compiled the lists in a Word document. I posted that list alongside the bulleted list of qualities of the banking method from the Freire reading.

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21 One difference between the English 104 course and the English 102 course was textbook choice. At the community college, I could choose Rolf Norgaard’s *Composing Knowledge*, a textbook that claims that “Higher education has its own rules—and you’ll want to learn them. *Composing Knowledge* introduces you to this world by first asking you to step back and examine your assumptions about learning. It then provides you with a training ground for higher education by helping you think deeply about – and understand – your own experiences” (back cover). I was much more familiar and comfortable with the readings in this textbook and would use it much more extensively than I did the textbook for the English 104 course.
and asked students to draw connections between the list that Friere provides and the list of 
how they learned to do what they did well.

We formed two columns for “active” and “passive” learning based the two lists. I 
asked students to place qualities about how they learned from their lists in one of the two 
categories. When we had divided qualities into the two lists, I asked them to relate college 
courses they took to each of the two categories. Students argued from their experiences that 
some of the classes that would typically be classified as “active” (English, art, etc.) or 
“passive” (math, sciences, etc.) actually fell into both categories based on how the teacher 
presented the content of the course. Where in English 104 I had pulled sample questions off 
the internet to “show” students potential questions for inquiry, in English 102, I modeled 
the process of inquiry that leads to forming questions. Student discussion of the Calendra 
and Freire text combined with their own experiences and the differing opinions students 
expressed about the lists and about learning in general all provided the backdrop for 
introducing project one, allowing students to reach the conclusion that, unlike traditional 
representations of education and literacy, actual practice in both areas was much more 
complex and open for exploration.

Once we had approached the themes of the course from student experience, 
I introduced project one. The introduction to the unit stated, “James Berlin, a writing 
scholar, wrote, ‘To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality and the best way of 
knowing and communicating it.’ For the first project we will be address [sic] the following 
questions: How do we know what we know? How do we communicate what we know?” I 
listed the same primary goals for the project as I had in the first project at BSU: to explore 
and pose an answer to a specific question, to utilize some of the elements of primary
research, to find at least one outside source to add to the answer, to find a medium of expression that best conveys the answer to the questions they posed. However, I broadened the theme from literacy to knowledge and communication, hoping to draw on student experience and change the focus of the project from a single word (literacy) to more complex questions, modeling the concept of asking questions instead of looking at a “topic.”

When constructing this first project, I wanted to make several significant changes from the first project at BSU. First, I wanted to incorporate Blackboard more comprehensively from the beginning. I utilized the Learning Units feature of Blackboard 7.0 to put together the elements of the first project in a sequence of screens instead of in a Word document attached to a content area: the readings for the course, the description of the proposal, the overall theme of the project, and the goals for what we would incorporate in the project (see Appendix K for screen captures of the learning unit)\(^\text{22}\). Second, I asked students to write a proposal before beginning the first project and gave them a sample proposal to help them construct an effective proposal. I did this because I wanted students to have three stages to each of the projects in their course: a proposal, a project, and a reflection\(^\text{23}\). This three-stage process would encourage student reflection both before producing a project and after the project.

Along with using in class inquiry to introduce project one, I immediately used their IDBs to begin collecting student text which would become a centerpiece of the class. After introducing project one, I asked students to write in their IDBs in response to the question “How does Calandra’s argument compare to Freire’s argument? Do you agree with either

\(^{22}\) I did not have access to the Learning Unit feature at the university because they were operating Blackboard 6.0.

\(^{23}\) Although the reflection for the third project would be, in the interest of time, condensed with the final project, as it had been at the university.
argument?‖ I asked them to support their reasons with evidence from the text. Student responses to the question were very vague for the most part, tending to draw general and unsubstantiated conclusions instead of focusing on the prompt and supporting their argument with evidence. Most students in the class had difficulty discussing and using quotes, particularly from Friere, in some cases claiming that Friere was arguing for the banking concept instead of against it.

In my journal for that day, I wrote, “When I got the [responses] in both classes, they seemed to not have read Friere at all. On further consideration, and after getting angry at them for not reading, I thought that maybe they just didn’t understand Freire. So I put him on the schedule for later so that we could revisit that concept.” Over the next few days, I provided individual feedback to their posts, encouraging them to use evidence and ask specific questions that challenged their reading of the articles. After reading their responses and seeing that they would need help with both paragraph structure and evidence, I modified my plans for the third course meeting. I introduced the P.E.E. structure for paragraphs (Point, Evidence/Example, Explanation) and using that format asked them to re-write their posts about the Calandra and Friere articles. In doing so, I wanted to introduce a new concept to the course (P.E.E.) while simultaneously emphasizing revisiting and revising their texts instead of doing a quick write in class and never reviewing that writing again. In this way, we would return to analyze both a reading in the class and their writing as a text in the class.

Two examples represent the majority of interactions during this activity. The first is from Ardle, who wrote in her initial post:
I believe that the two authors are making the same point. They are both saying that there can be more than one way to learn, teach, or answer questions. Calandra tells about a boy who answered a certain question a different way then was originally sought but that the answer was still correct. Freire states that the traditional way of teaching cannot still be used because people are changing and now teachers must also be the student of their students sometimes. All in all, the two authors are both saying that there is more than one way to look at or do certain tasks and that we should look for the most effective or most relevant way to complete that task.

To Ardle’s writing, I replied:

Well stated. What would make your argument even stronger would be specific passages from the text. In the Calandra text, was the article about the boy answering the question differently, or was it about more than that? Why are the people changing in Freire's piece? Does he mention specifically that the people are changing? From what to what?

During our follow-up activity, Ardle revised the paragraph to read:

I believe that these two authors are making the same point to a certain extent. They are both letting us know through personal experience that there can be more than one way to learn, teach, or answer questions. Calandra tells a story about a boy who answered a certain question a different way then was originally sought but that the answer was still correct. The story itself was about how not only one answer may always be the only correct one and that there may be many possible solutions to any given question. Freire states that the traditional way of teaching
cannot still be used because people are changing and now teachers must also be the student of their students sometimes. *He was talking about changing teaching styles to fit children in impoverished Brazil but this point could apply to anyone who finds that conventional standards of teaching are not relevant to the students they are teaching.* All in all, the two authors are both saying that there is more than one way to look at or do certain tasks and that we should look for the most effective or most relevant way to complete that task. [emphasis mine showing changes from the original text]

Again, I responded to her post:

Good additions to this paragraph. You might make the explanation sentence a little more relevant to the argument...is the argument that they're making as broad as the explanation indicates?

Ardle contextualized her argument within the text of both readings much more clearly in her paragraph revision. While she adds only a few lines, those lines provide explanation that show how her examples relate to her main points, a key concept in the P.E.E. structure. In my follow-up response, I acknowledge her revisions and continue the dialogue by asking her if her final explanation fully explains the references she provides. I provided much the same feedback to Bree’s initial post and revisions with similar response (see Appendix L). The sustained focus on one paragraph over several days keeps the student’s focus on the text and shows my engagement with the students’ ideas and work. Even though the students do not choose to respond to my second set of responses and engage in dialogue, their revisions show that they are at least engaging with the class ideas and revisiting their writing and course readings in ways that did not happen in English 104.
I outline the first few days of class to establish the changes I implemented based on a more conscious use of critical pedagogy. My first few days of class are much closer to what Shor describes in *Empowering Education*:

The critical teacher can design the early weeks of the course as an exploratory time to become grounded in student language, cognitive skills and affective levels. To do this well, the teacher needs a participatory approach with relatively short-term exercises, to get the students expressing themselves as soon as possible and as much as possible. A participatory opening invites students to write about their experiences and learning in their own words, producing the raw materials that the teacher mines to construct the curriculum. (172)

My approach to English 102 implements Shor’s ideas in a variety of ways. First, these early activities in the course provided an opportunity for me to hear student voices, their expectations for the course and previous experiences and learning. I began the course with student experience instead of beginning with research that might not have been familiar to them (the case study, as in the university course), helping students recognize and investigate larger thematic patterns in their everyday lives and see that not only were those experiences valuable but that the experiences related to the course readings and the activities in the course.

Shor further indicates that instructors should not only elicit student voices and experiences, but then use those voices and experiences to shape the class activities:

What the teacher learns from student writing and speaking informs her selection and structuring of generative, topical, and academic themes. In an
academic discipline, where specific texts need to be covered, the teacher can extract from those texts their key themes and questions, and ask students to reflect on them in their own words prior to encountering them in the text. Working from a student-centered discourse better prepares students to take on material in an academic form. (172)

In these first few days of class, I asked students about their previous successful experiences with learning and connected those experiences to classroom readings that addressed critical and traditional literacy. I asked students to reflect on key themes in their own words prior to exploring course texts and also asked students to revisit their earlier writing and look at it again after encountering those texts and my comments on their writing. Whereas my English 104 course asked for student input on the grading scale, the element of the course that students seemed to understand they had the least control of, English 102 asked for student input earlier and more often and about issues over which they had control, like how they successfully learned skills in everyday life.

In addition to practices Shor espouses, I instated a number of practices essential to the vision of the critical classroom I hoped to maintain throughout the semester. First, I encouraged students to participate as active investigators of their experiences by asking questions to begin the first project instead of introducing the theme of the first project in terms of a statement. Second, I upheld the educational system itself as a thematic for inquiry by beginning with the broader themes of “knowledge” and how we learn. And I used my journal reflections about their first writing and my reactions to the writing (their avoidance of one of the articles and my reaction of anger at that avoidance) to modify my teaching and the classroom to best fit what the students had written. Where I might have instinctively
used my anger with their initial writing to scold and lecture, I used their responses to rethink my next activity in the course. I provided feedback that questioned students’ initial responses and invited them to review these concepts that were no doubt new to many students. Finally, I opened up invitations to dialogue about student thoughts and opinions, not just the mechanics of their writing. While few students initially took up the challenge of dialogue by responding to my second set of feedback on their paragraphs, I felt the stage was set for more effectively using Blackboard to encourage authentic questioning and dialogue.

**Introducing the First Class Theme: Knowledge and Communication**

As project one progressed, I continued to structure the activities in the course around student needs based on their IDB posts. Students often expressed difficulty forming a question, so several IDB activities included prompts that encouraged brainstorming to form questions. One early class period, after reading Theodore Rosak’s “Of Ideas and Data” and discussing the difference between “ideas” and “data,” students wrote to the prompt “In elementary, middle school, and high school, what kind of information did you learn to gather? What were you asked to do with it? What kind of information (data) will you gather for project one? Where do you plan on gathering information for this project?” To this set of IDB posts, I replied with more questions to model forming questions from their ideas.

As opposed to the English 104 course, where students posted IDB posts thirteen of the twenty-eight days the class met, English 102 students posted IDB posts twenty-three of the twenty-six days the class met. And I responded to these posts as frequently as possible, trying to never have a student post be the final post in a series (see Appendix J for a chart of student post dates and my response dates). Asking students to post and providing regular
responses to the posts provided many more opportunities for dialogue, even if students did not always prolong that dialogue.

Because I was careful to build project one by incrementally prompting students to write in their IDBs and responding to their writing by adjusting the course accordingly, student responses to their first projects were of particular interest to me. How students responded to this first project would shape the course of the second project, what activities would begin the second project, and the themes for that project.

Students’ responses to the first project were primarily confusion, the desire for more specific instructions, or fear. Several students indicated that this assignment was the least structured project they had ever completed. Both Ardle and Clause indicate that the assignment put them outside their “comfort zone.” Ardle, whose initial question was “Does advertising online help a business gain more customers and increase sales?” wrote, “I thought the assignment was a little too broad for me because I have been trained to need guidelines and requirements. I do feel like the way this assignment was presented helped me to come out of my comfort zone as a writer.” Ardle identifies her discomfort but also the source of that discomfort—her “training” to rely on very specific sets of directions for assignments. Clause indicates similar feelings of discomfort: “I was at first really confused on what you wanted. That was the first unconstructed project I think I have ever done. I think a lot of it was that I didn't choose a really easy topic and it really wasn't easy to write about.” Her question regarded how parents and others inform their children about where babies come from: “How are you supposed to know what each individual child is able to comprehend? What is ultimately the best way to answer this question appropriately? Is there anything one might do to prepare or assist in answering the question?” Both Ardle and
Clause identify their discomfort and relate that discomfort to the lack of specific structure in the project.

Two students commented on the intentional nature of my remaining general about the theme with slightly different reactions. The first student, Akins, asked a question based on recent experiences she’d had at work: “How does one’s age and level of education affect their job position and amount of respect they are shown in the American business workforce?” Akins went beyond reacting to the vague nature of the assignment and speculated as to the purpose, “I felt uneasy about this project from the get-go. There was so much freedom in the choosing of a topic that with an unfocused mind like mine, it was impossible to narrow it down to a paper length idea. There were barely any boundaries as to what you could write about, but then again, I think that was the point.” Gratton also commented on my intentions in the assignment. Her question for project one focused not on human communication but on insect communication: “Do butterflies know what species to mate with?” In writing about her reaction to the first project, she said,

Throughout [sic] the writing, I was a little concerned whether [sic] or not I could do the assignment [sic]. I was not real sure exactly what I was supposed to do or really what you wanted. You were cleverly evasive [sic] to the end. I was relieved [sic] the day you talked about your reasoning behind this. Good job teach. . . .I was not real sure what to expect, like I mentioned in the previous paragraph, I was kind of confused [sic] throughout the process.

I had addressed the issue in class as Gratton indicates in response to a post by the following student, Mathes, who had in his original expectations for the class noted his relief that the
class had a “more unique emphasis.” He indicated confusion about how to formulate a question and frustration about the theme of the unit and broad nature of the initial questions. Mathes, unlike the others who showed uncertainty from the beginning of the project, moved from being certain to being uncertain about the project. His question regarded whether or not technology benefited English as Second Language speakers, asking “Would the students benefit from having more of it introduced into the classroom or would it detract from the lessons?” Responding to criteria I gave in class when students asked how to form a question, he wrote,

I didn’t understand how I would find a question that’s [sic] answer couldn’t be found on Google, especially in the time frame that we had. So, as I was completing the assignment, I was feeling stressed and was thinking that this assignment was next to impossible. . . .I guess my expectations for the assignment were for it to be like most of the other papers that I’ve written throughout my education, and there have been many of them over the years. It was, however, different from any other assignment I had ever done.

Here, Mathes indicated that in spite of initially anticipating that the class would be unique, he admits here that he actually anticipated that assignments would be much like the others he had done in previous courses, and the differences in project one and previous assignments both confused and disturbed him.

Two of the more confusing comments I received about the first project were from roommates Shelley and Prince. In spite of the directions posted on Blackboard and the course discussions, Shelley wrote, “Throughout the whole writing process I was very unsure. I like directions and with this assignment there was none. It makes me second guess myself!”
Her question was, “Are websites like Facebook and MySpace replacing face-to-face conversation?” Her roommate, Prince, echoed her sentiments: “The whole time that I had this assignment, from beginning to end, I was terrified. Not having any guidance on this assignment really bothered me. I would much rather have a certain curriculum or guideline to go by; I’m definitely not use [sic] to it.” Her question “Is counseling effective for children?” was very broad, and in spite of my questions to try to help her narrow, she did not narrow it down during the in class activities. Prince’s and Shelley’s statements about the complete lack of direction or guidance indicate that they did not consider the prompts or questions for the project to be “directions.” In the traditional sense of “direction” as instructions to follow in order to complete an assignment, they were certainly correct that the IDB writings and activities were not directions. However, they also seem to discount any of the question modeling in the course as “guidance.”

Students who indicated a fear of the first assignment included Gleason, who had one of the most critical and clever questions for the first project. She asked, “Do the steps we take in communication to avoid stereotyping often cause us to reveal the same or even more stereotypes and personal prejudices?” She wanted to interview people about whether or not they indirectly showed racial or other prejudice through the words they chose as they were expressing their lack of prejudice. She wrote, “When I started the project, I had no idea what question I wanted to explore, so I was really scared, but when I finally came up with a good idea, I was excited about it. However, when I began my research I was back to scared because I found basically no supporting evidence. In the end, I think my project was okay, but I wish that I could have done more with it.” Another student who took a critical stance on his first project was Willard. His project, focused around the question “Is there a right or
wrong way to produce a proposal?” was written as a mock academic journal article. In his reaction to the first project, he wrote not about fear but worry:

I took way too long to get started and really going on it, as I always do though so I am used to it, so the whole thing was sort of worrying me until it was actually finished and then "what's done is done" so I worried no longer. When first I thought of my topic and told you that was what I was thinking, I was truly talking about a marriage proposal; haha but you sounded so excited about this that you were able to convince me to do it (and without even trying to convince me).

Both Gleason and Willard showed true critical thought in forming their projects. Gleason looked at the difference between what is said and how it is said. Willard “proposed” a satire on traditional academic writing that worked at the levels of form and content and required research outside the traditional concepts of research. However, in spite of their obvious understanding of the nature of the project, both expressed doubt in their ability to complete the project.

Some of the students indicated becoming nervous mid-project once they realized that they might have made choices that they were uncomfortable carrying out. Berg chose to do a PowerPoint on the question “How reliable are self interest tests in comparison to the actual career path I have chosen for myself?” In her reflections on the project, she wrote, “After the rush of excitement came, it was immediately followed by dread only because I realized after doing the practice powerpoints in class that my topic was not very good. (The reason why those first slides were in the future tense was because I had done those slides during the practice power point).” I had expressed interest in her topic and excitement that
she was choosing to review a technology that was highly touted as one that would help students choose future career paths. However, she indicated doubt in her topic based on her first attempts at creating the project in the form she chose.

The above responses show a variety of reactions to and interpretations of the first project. I was pleased that students chose a variety of questions in response to the initial prompt (see Appendix M and N for a comparison of the questions asked by English 104 and English 102 students). I asked students several times to explain their project: first in an IDB post that brainstormed what they might possibly write about, again in their proposal, and finally in their project. Unlike BSU students, these students posed a wider variety of questions in response to the theme-based questions.

During the course of Project One, I spent very little time journaling about how I felt about the class and spent much more time responding to student posts and to what we did in class each day. I also spent more time taking quick notes while the students were writing their IDBs at the end of the class. Most of these notes deal with what we did in the course or what I needed to do for the next class as opposed to my notes from English 104, which focused primarily on myself, my fear and anger and feelings of failure in the course. While a journal from these early class days would have lent insight to my thought process as I revised the course to suit student needs, I am encouraged at the focus on student activities my notes and lack of journal reflect.

**Introducing Project Two: Using Student Reflection to Build the Theme of Literacy**

Based on student comments in their project one responses, I realized that I would have to make more explicit the connections between class activities and IDB posts and
project two. Project one invited students to practice the skills of problem-posing and analysis before fully introducing the themes of literacy and technology and then followed up by practicing problem-posing and analysis using textbook readings and student experiences. Project Two continued analysis based around the questions “What does it mean to be literate? What assumptions do we make about literacy? How do cultural assumptions/messages about literacy match/not match our experiences?” I introduced this project using the learning unit again, focusing students on the readings, questions, and directives for the project (see Appendix O for screen captures of the project two assignment). In project one, our activities focused on how we could use information to answer a question. In project two, I wanted to move from using information to answer a question to posing questions that would spark analysis of information. I wrote in my journal at the beginning of project two to focus my purpose in the second project:

Today, we did the first "check in" writing that lasted all hour. I'm writing because today seemed to click for me for some reason…it dawned on me that I would actually have to structure my course so that before the proposal we did brainstorming and after the proposal we did writing activities. Although today we did writing activities before we all have topics . . . . I'm trying hard to walk the talk about the critical pedagogy. Constantly modifying the courses so that they meet the students' needs at the time that they need them. For example, taking out the fourth assignment because I knew that I didn't want to go from assignment to assignment to assignment without following up like I say I do. We can do fewer assignments and I can spend more time responding to what they've already done. I'm trying to look at the
assignment as the fulcrum of the process instead of the end, or as a point
two-thirds from the end. It's a part of a conversation that goes forward. It's
hard to stop and think about this and connect what they are writing to where
I want them to be and figure out what they might need to get there.

The only language that gives away my continuing need for control in the classroom is in the
final paragraph, where I indicate that I have an end goal of “where I want them to be and
figure out what they might need to get there.” In one sense, that only reflects the expertise
that I bring to the classroom as a teacher. Shor writes that his classroom proceeds not only
out of what the students bring to the class but from his course plans as well:

Before a semester begins, I outline all my courses. I prepare lessons and
readings. In August, I cope with my September anxiety by designing a term’s
worth of projects, writings, and exercises. But I hope to discover generative
themes in-progress from students. If I can discover provocative themes
generated from student experience, I reinvent the syllabus. In short, a critical-
democratic teacher comes to class with a structure and then reinvents that
structure with the students according to their learning, language, conditions,
and interests. (179)

My goal was to help students express themselves clearly and analyze the education that they
are receiving in order to make the best decisions that they can in the educational process. My
desire to provide them time, space, and guidance to make those decisions is where my
expertise as a teacher, I believe, came into play. However, my journal entries show that I am
also fighting with myself at this point because of the difficulty of staying focused on
flexibility and allowing students the time they need to reflect and the opportunities do their best work, whether they take advantage of those opportunities or not.

The class activities in project two involved asking the students to apply criteria to analyze an aspect of literacy. I wanted to use the course readings to provide activities that asked students to practice breaking apart texts to look at their structure, how they worked, and how they tried to persuade their audience. The act of analyzing text for structure as well as content was an important part of my own literacy process, one I encountered again and again in my undergraduate college courses, and one I hoped to model for students as I, like they, drew from my own experiences with literacy to direct my focus in the classroom. In the first activity, we read Jonathan Kozol’s “The Human Cost of an Illiterate Society.” I asked them to write in response to Kozol’s quote, “Questions of literacy, in Socrates’ belief, must at length be judged as matters of morality.” A few students reflected on literacy in the broader context of society as Jonathan Kozol implies, but many students seemed to believe that Kozol was making a judgment about the illiterate being immoral for their condition. One such student, Ester wrote:

I believe that this statement is somewhat true. The fact that morality means how we conduct our lives properly. Whether it be doing the right thing in our own state of mind or interpreting something in a different way than someone else interprets it. The fault of this statement would be the fact that everyone has a different opinion in a situation. Kozol believes that everyone should be able to read and understand what something is, either by reading it or looking at it. When he talks about the man who couldn't read the signs on the road, the lady who couldn't dial 911, or the man who didn't know the tv
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channels, he makes it sound like the only way to survive is to be literate.

Which is somewhat true, but not b/c people who have disabilities have to find another way to survivie [sic]. I believe if you want to learn how to do something [sic], you have to teach yourself. You know right from wrong, use your own instinct.

Like many students, Ester ended with a “morality lesson” which addressed morality as biblical or dependent on an individual’s set of beliefs. These lessons seemed to provide the very cliché conclusions that Skorczewski claims shows students taking control from the teacher by using their own conclusions rather than ones drawn from the evidence in the text.

Like with the Freire activity before project one, the students, for the most part, interpreted Kozol and Socrates as “blaming the victim” instead of making statements about literacy as at least partially the responsibility and result of societal factors. Shor indicates that “blaming the victim” is a symbol of mystification where individual problems are the fault of the victim, not the result of larger conditions and forces. And morality lessons, such as the one provided by Ester, seem to indicate that students feel the individual can survive by adhering to a set of common place lessons that apply universally, not by taking control of a situation that they could potentially change. Morality is a simple “right and wrong” dichotomy and instinct, something highly intangible, is the appropriate means of determining whether a situation falls into one category or another.

After reading and responding to the Kozol prompts, I decided to approach the question of literacy and society from another angle: the concept of a “public literacy.”

Students read Theodore Sizer’s “Public Literacy: Puzzlements of a High School Watcher,” an article that has as its premise the statement “We Americans share a culture so completely
that we are barely aware of it” (71). He claims that public literacy has four properties: it is centrally driven, usually for purposes of merchandising; it is commercial; it simplifies, synthesizes, unifies, and focuses; and it is pedagogically sophisticated (72). The class discussed examples of those four properties, and then I asked them to write in their IDB about a symbol or concept that was an example of these four properties. Students mentioned everything from the Wal-Mart smiley face to the concept of “i” in marketing for Apple. The Sizer response was as widely successful in getting students to identify cultural forms of literacy as the Kozol article was successful in helping students to explore potential mystification in student beliefs.

The following week, students still seemed to be a little confused about the idea of literacy, and so I talked about concepts of literacy in general, how basically literacy was having a thing/sign/symbol that represented a concept and how literacy was really anything where a human had to interpret a sign or symbol within the context of a culture, and I explained that they could analyze cultural literacy, as Sizer discussed, as well as standard written literacy.

I wanted to go at literacy from yet another direction than the standard concepts of “literacy” as reading and writing. To do so, I used a text to which they had frequent exposure: the college syllabus. Sharon Rubin’s “Professors, Students, and the Syllabus” discusses how instructors construct and students “read” a syllabus. In class, I used the Rubin text to talk about how the structure of the first six paragraphs starts out identifying the problem of miscommunication between instructors and students, then moves into addressing more specific aspects of the problem. Students seemed to engage with the idea that Rubin’s article was written to the very teachers that she might be condemning with her
ideas, a tricky rhetorical purpose. Some of the students even questioned if Rubin practiced what she preached. In my journal, I wrote, “Bree in 125 said that she wanted to see a copy of Rubin’s syllabus to see if she practiced what she preached. I wish I could find a copy of Rubin’s syllabus because that would be an excellent follow up activity. I might try to find that online somewhere. I did a quick search in class, but came up with nothing.”

For their daily writing, they chose between brainstorming ideas if they did not know what they wanted to analyze for the second project or using Rubin’s writing style (beginning broadly and narrowing to particulars) to find a universal idea they could then narrow down to a question. As they wrote in their IDBs, I wrote in my journal:

> I liked this activity, and I liked it more as I went along. I really wasn’t as sure today what I wanted to do in class, but I knew that I wanted to do something that would help them look at the texts we’re reading not just for content (which they are more used to doing) but also for structure, to try to look at them rhetorically. I showed how Rubin’s article worked on the rhetorical triangle, how she was connecting to her audience.

I did not go in to class that day with an expectation of what the final activity would be. Rather, I let the discussion of the Rubin text dictate how students would reflect on that text for their final IDB post. My journal shows how I respond to what each student needs to pace the class, asking them to participate and then reflect on that participation.

> I strove to continue the recursive process of returning to previous texts in the course to reflect. During the following class period, I ask students to revisit Rubin’s article, this time

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24 I searched for Rubin’s syllabus but did not find it. In hindsight, I might have attempted to contact her via email or phone to ask for a copy of her syllabus or ask students to generate questions and attempt to interview her to find out how her own syllabi do or do not live up to these standards. Such an activity would be an excellent example of modeling inquiry for students.
to reflect on Rubin’s premise that a syllabus builds “relationship between teachers and students and material to be learned” (155). Rubin asks a series of questions that should be addressed in any syllabus that is written to clearly communicate the purpose of the class and how the class fits into a larger program of study. I asked students to use Rubin’s questions to analyze syllabi from courses that they were currently taking. Did the syllabi they saw every day in their classes meet the expectations that Rubin establishes in her article? I not only asked them to answer this question, but also to identify in their writing which parts of their own paragraphs followed P.E.E. structure by labeling them “point,” “evidence/example,” and “explanation.” I wanted them to both reflect on something from their ordinary experience, making the ordinary extraordinary, but also make their thinking visible to gauge whether or not they understood how to incorporate evidence as they explored an issue. These are the very processes that they would use to explore their ideas about literacy in the second project. Students for the most part successfully identified components of the syllabus and were able to draw conclusions in general about the effectiveness of the syllabus in communicating standards based on Rubin’s criteria, exhibiting increasing skills of reflection and analysis.

One of the activities that most clearly displayed my new focus on adjusting to student learning during the course of the second project was a two-day series to help students focus on the difference between summary and analysis. I asked students to read Charles Bazerman’s “Where is the Classroom?” to identify the different interpretations of the classroom brought by administrators, the public, teachers, and students as outlined in Bazerman’s article. Using a four-cell table with one set of expectations in each cell, I asked students to name possible ways of analyzing a classroom through different perspectives (i.e.,
how a teacher’s perspective on “competence” in the classroom might differ from a principal’s or a student’s. In my journal for this activity, I wrote,

Perhaps one of the most unsuccessful days of the semester. I wanted them to analyze Bazerman’s article for the four elements that influence the classroom and then make connections between those to narrow down the topic. We did a chart as a class, and then everyone seemed confused about what to do next. Which would be about how I was feeling considering I had just come up with the activity in a blind attempt to come up with something to help them narrow down their projects. The problem is that I wanted them to narrow down a topic, and I tried doing it with a finished project. They asked several times what they should be doing when I asked them to connect items from the different boxes.

Immediately, I identify that I was using a finished project to try and help students come up with a question early in the process, and students were not seeing the connection between the Bazerman article and project two. A number of them indicated such in their writing at the end of class, several of them writing that they did not know what to write because they were confused about the course activity.

Over the next two days, I considered how I could accomplish the goal of helping students begin the process of analysis. Finally, I realized that as a writer, I had an analytical process, and as a teacher who had written analysis about my own literacy, I could model that process for my students. So before class, I took an essay I had written about two influential teachers in my life and used Microsoft Word to comment in the margins on the purpose of each of the paragraphs (see Appendix P for the annotated essay). Then in class, I projected
the essay on the screen and walked them through the process that I used to narrow the focus down to just those two teachers, starting from a larger question (“What influenced me to become a teacher?”) and working through to a final product, what I hoped that they could do with the second project. In my journal, I wrote,

        My classes are genius. I went back and took them through the analysis of a paper that I had written, then had them follow those guidelines with their own paper, asking questions that could narrow their focus from analyzing EVERYTHING about a topic to analyzing just a few things, like I did in the Carman/Gianoli paper. I noticed that students in both classes were referring to how what they wanted to analyze was their “Carman/Gianoli.” Hopefully, I can use those words to quickly help students in the future by tying the more complex idea of narrowing a topic to specifics to those words.

One exciting element from this journal post is the mention that students are consciously using the language of the classroom (“Carman/Gianoli”) when referring to their own writing. Students wrote much more successful posts outlining the process they could use to go from a larger idea to a more specific, manageable analysis project. Several students indicated much clearer ideas of what they wanted to do for their projects.

        For the second project, students selected a variety of questions about literacy to explore (see Appendix Q for the students’ questions). Students chose everything from the political (the purpose of the No Child Left Behind Act and exploring literacy among Native Americans living on reservations) to the cultural (Why has Eric Cartman evolved from season one to the mastermind in season nine, yet he is still in the 3rd grade? and Why are children’s television programs teaching them foreign languages?).
Shelby, the non-traditional student who mentioned wanting to be treated like an adult, used his interest in religious studies to ask “What are some of the Christian symbols in our everyday lives, and how do they help socialize Americans into Christianity?” He spent two weeks with a digital camera taking pictures of all of the religious symbols he saw in private homes, in public spaces, and everywhere in between. The final result of his project was a one-hundred-and-forty slide PowerPoint showing how pervasive Christian symbolism was in his everyday life to the Pet Shop Boy’s song “It’s a Sin.”

Overall, students who seemed uncertain about the first project had strong, positive reactions to this project. Ardle, who indicated that the lack of specifics in the first project made her nervous, enjoyed the second project, for which she explored the question “How is literacy important to farmers?”, in particular local farmers that she knew. After initially struggling to find a direct ion in her IDB posts, she wrote, “I thought that this assignment was a very good idea and I really liked that you picked a category and we were able to pick the specific topic we wanted. I think I did reasonably well but still could have done better.” Clause, who used the Kirsey Temperment Sorter “to analyze myself through these four temperaments and how they effect and contribute to my learning ability,” wrote,

I was excited about this project because it was one that I knew I could write a narrative for. I love writing narratives. When it was assigned I was nervous about what I was going to write about and how it could tie into the assignment. But after I wrote it and had someone proof read it I became confident and feel [sic] good when I turned it in. I had high expectations for myself and my grade for this paper. . . .Project one I was very confused about
and I chose to do a research paper which is defiantly not my strong suit. This project was a lot more organized to me.

Raneman, who indicated on her first project that she was uneasy finding her own ideas after following directions in previous assignments, wrote, “I feel really good about this...I am keeping my fingers crossed!!! At first I really struggled with putting my paper together because I had good ideas in my head, but no way to get them to say what I wanted on the paper.” She wrote about this project later for the final, when she stated,

An example of [my creativity and thoughtfulness in the writing process] would be that before when given a subject of literacy as in project 2 I would have never come up with something as creative as the objectives that teachers list on their syllabus verses what the student actually learns. I am personally very proud of this paper, and thought that it was very creative and very “outside the box” from what I would normally do.

Raneman derived her project idea directly from a class project, but her confidence came from the idea that she was doing something outside her comfort zone. She indicated that the topic was “creative,” even though we completed a similar project in class. But after struggling with writing what she felt was a traditional research paper for the first project, she did indeed branch out with her second project. The confidence in students’ reactions for this project was much greater than those for the first project.

In spite of the increased confidence, some students still hesitated about their projects, even when they felt that they had done a good job. Endle, who wrote an analysis of a website that greatly influenced him because of the biting sarcasm of the author, wrote that
Before I submitted the project, I pretty much just held my breath before sending it. I didn’t proof read it that well and for some reason, I felt a little light-headed. I wouldn’t say that the writing process was all that difficult but I did feel naturally uneasy about I was going about it nevertheless. It was a little fun reviewing Maddox’s page again. It was almost as though I were taking a break and researching at the same time. . . .I initially thought that the paper wouldn’t be so hard when we talked about it in class but starting on it told a slightly different story. Though once again, it wasn’t so bad.

Other students felt confident about their paper and were able to discern their strengths and weaknesses with their project. Ester wrote, “When I completed the paper, I felt good about what I had written, but I wish my conclusion was more thorough and better written, but overall I was when I submitted the paper and happy for it to be over with.” She goes on to describe the process of deciding how to do the project: “All I could come up with was NCLB, so I figured why not add it to how schools in our surrounding area are affected by NCLB. The assignment was broad, but I felt more comfortable with this project than project one. . . .This assignment helped me understand the NCLB law, before I wasn’t sure what it was.” Her project was a great example of the purpose of the project, applying NCLB to critically analyze local schools, making the universal particular and questioning received authority, but sees the project not as successful critical inquiry but rather as the best that she could for the project.

Other students had mixed reactions to the project. Mitchner, a big fan of Superman who wrote on the question “Why is Superman a symbol of American culture?” indicated confusion about the project as a whole. We discussed his concept both in class and after
class for several days, and he posted extra information about Superman to his IDB that he thought I would find interesting during the course of his project. In his response to the project, he wrote,

When this project was assigned I was very confused and when I asked for clarification it helped but as soon as I got home and began to work on this project I was confused again. I guess I was having trouble picking a topic and telling how that relates to literacy. . . . My expectations for this project initially where that I didn't think I would be able to complete it because I couldn't find a good topic and when I thought of a topic I couldn't figure out how to connect it with literacy. . . . even though I had a rough start for this project as I continued working on it I began to understand it more and was able to complete it.

Mitchner’s project directly relates to the idea of cultural literacy in class, but he assumes the traditional definition of “literacy” as working with words, not symbols. His use of the word “topic” also indicates that he is fighting against the traditional assignment of writing about an idea instead of problem-solving a question.

The one student who still indicated that she was confused throughout the assignment was Shelley:

I am not a big fan of this assignment… I feel rushed most of the time…

LOL I also like direction and not much was given. I think this project could have been better if I would have had a little more direction… I know that sounds shocking since I hounded you for like two days for direction… You gave me a lot, but… Man I sound like a baby! I just feel to be honest I really
didn’t know completely what I was doing… I know that sounds bad, but… I just tried to put it together the best I could… I didn’t have any expectation for this assignment because I wasn’t quite sure what I was doing… (I know you are probably rolling your eyes thinking, “How dumb is this girl, but…”)

Her constant self-criticism is almost painful. Shelley was one of the students who frequently engaged in discussion with me on her IDB, but she sees herself as “needy” and fears I will resent her for it, in spite of my frequent reassurances to the contrary and my encouragement on her IDB.

Project two was successful in that students identified questions or ideas they could critically analyze. Student ability to follow through on their analysis and complete the projects they proposed will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Nine.

**Introducing Project Three: Technology**

In English 104 at the university, I had toyed with the idea of having some of my courses meet virtually, but because I was already situated in a laptop classroom, and because I did not feel that I had the leniency with choosing to hold my classes outside of the traditional classroom that I did at the community college, all of the class sessions for English 104 were held in the classroom or library. However, for English 102, I decided to move several course meetings “online” so that students not only experienced an “online” course but also discussed the efficacy of the online environment for learning. For two weeks mid-semester, while students were preparing for their third assignment on technology, our class met both synchronously in small groups and asynchronously in discussion boards while
reading passages from our textbook and discussing those passages and the experiences we had with Blackboard.

Prior to their online experience, I introduced project three (see Appendix R for the assignment details). The project centered around Neil Postman’s article “Virtual Students, Digital Classroom” in which he states that the main point of studying technology is “not how to use them but how they use us” (597). For the project, I introduced our online activities and gave students the following prompt for the project:

The activities that you'll do this week should help you begin to think about your third project for this class. The third project should involve analyzing a particular website, article or technology using a particular set of criteria or ideas. For example, you might use one of the articles about technology in our textbook to look at your particular experiences with technology. Or, you might look at some website on the internet that interests you to see if it is a good resource, a good means of expression, etc. Basically, I'm looking for you to use your powers of analysis to look critically at some element of technology. Technology might mean an ATM, a website, a computer, or access to all of the above. Or, you might look at the idea that technology is becoming "invisible" in our lives...we use technology without thinking about it very much.

To prepare for going “online,” the classes annotated and discussed a transcript from a listserv that discussed whether or not the Conference on College Composition and Communication should supply child care. To facilitate the analysis, students first read Susan Herring’s “Bringing Familiar Baggage to the New Frontier: Gender-Differences in
Computer-Mediated Communication.” They identified typical “male” and “female” characteristics based on Herring’s study of those online posts, then worked individually to identify passages from the CCCC listserv transcript that could be classified as each, as well as strategies that seemed to cross gender lines. We discussed as a class the ways in which the listserv both reinforced and contradicted Herring’s conclusions about how men and women communicate, and the class came to the conclusion that the adversarial styles attributed to the men and the attenuation features of women in Herring’s study did not hold true in the CCCC transcript; men and women used both strategies fairly equally in our small study.

After discussing online behavior, students participated in an in-class synchronous chat so students understood how to access the Virtual Classroom feature in Blackboard before we met “virtually” the following week. Ideally, I anticipated both classes reviewing their in-class chat transcripts before we moved into actual synchronous communication at a distance to see if they reinforced or contradicted Herring’s principles. However, I managed to lose the chat transcript in section 125 and the students in 124 seemed less interested in discussing the transcript than they did in performing the chat or in analyzing the transcripts from the listserv. The participants on the transcripts from their chat were in the room with them whereas the CCCC listserv participants were not, which could possibly explain why they did not analyze the communication during their seated class chat.

During those weeks that we met online, we replicated in small groups the synchronous chat that we’d practiced in class in small groups. Students signed up for group meetings, and we met in each group for approximately one hour. I archived all of the sessions and posted them to Blackboard for students’ future use should they decide to study these transcripts for Project Three. I initiated conversation with the questions about how the
synchronous chat from home was different than the chat they completed in the classroom and whether or not, overall, they felt that synchronous and asynchronous communication were beneficial to their learning.

Students also participated in an asynchronous discussion board forum within Blackboard. To prepare for this, students participated in a practice discussion board forum reviewing the online Computers and Composition article “One Size Fits All?” about the efficacy of online discussion boards in promoting student interaction. I asked students to discuss the following questions: “Do you find parts that connect with your own experience? Do you agree or disagree with the points that the authors are making? Why?” Overall, students responded with only brief reactions and answers to the question about the article connecting with their own experiences. Only three students in the two classes actually agreed or disagreed with the author’s points. Most of the students talked about their experiences with online classes or online learning as being “convenient” because of the time and place of the course but difficult in that they required students to be focused and that sometimes online teachers were not as attentive as face-to-face teachers. Very few of the students actually discussed the points that the authors made about how students do or do not connect in virtual discussion boards or feel the freedom to express themselves in that format.

During our virtual class weeks, students were asked to play with free online web building software and then respond to the following questions:

Is writing for websites, wikis, and blogs as vital to learn as writing for traditional paper-based essays and research projects? Why? Is the prevalence of the internet requiring us to learn to write in multiple modes, not just on paper but also online through these digital forms? Do you feel that
hyperlinks and other forms of digital expression could help you more clearly communicate with others? More clearly than you would in a traditional paper?

These prompts asked students to not only reflect on their experience but also to begin drawing from previous discussions in class about traditional classroom learning, what forms of knowledge and communication were acceptable and prevalent, and the effectiveness of digital technologies.

Students in this discussion board were, overall, very skeptical about digital technology. They were also torn as to whether or not they would actually be using online technologies to communicate in their futures. Shelby, who had spent ten years in middle-level management before returning to college, wrote:

I think learning to write for websites, wikis, and blogs is important because they are used in the real world. Most of my previous employer's policies and procedures were housed in online manuals or "job aids." It was important for the information to be well written and easy to find/follow for the front line staff because they used it repeatedly to service customers. Online information that was poorly written, incorrect, or difficult to find/follow often resulted in dissatisfied customers who had to call back multiple times to have their issue resolved. Having said that, learning to write websites, wikis, and blogs should not replace learning how to write traditional essays. Is the prevalence of the internet requiring us to learn to write in multiple modes? I had to really think about this question. At first, I was going to make the point that learning to write and learning to use technology are separate
events. But when I thought about what writing really teaches us--how to express ourselves clearly and effectively through written communication--I realized it is important to learn how to use digital forms effectively. The discussion we had on email is a good example. It's easy to email people who know our personalities, but people who don't might not understand us as well. They may fail to read between the lines, or read more between the lines than what's there.

Prince, a student in one of the allied health programs on campus, did not see communicating in digital media as important.

I personally do not feel that writing for websites/blogs is as vital as a traditional paper. Many of us in this class will be able to go our whole life without ever having to know how to make a website. Don’t get me wrong, would it be useful in life? Most likely. I’m fairly certain that at some point in my life I may say, “I wish I knew how to make a webpage”, but it will not be a necessity in order for me to survive. I’m sure that it could enhance a project or a paper, but it is not vital.

No doubt part of this difference in opinion can be accredited to experience; Shelby was returning to school from the work world while Prince was preparing for a new career in that world that she had not yet encountered. For most students, the internet and learning to communicate on the internet was vital because of its prevalence, whether or not they were comfortable communicating in these media.

After these experiences, students reflected on online classes in general and our activity in particular. The students basically fell into two camps: those who felt that the
activities reinforced what they already believed to be true about online learning and those who had a new perspective on online learning, considering its value in ways they previously hadn’t.

Some students felt uncomfortable going into the activities because of their lack of experience in online course environments, in spite of our in class practice and in some cases, experience taking online courses. Bree reflected on both the discussion board forums and on the in- and out-of-class synchronous chats:

When we started the technology unit, I was not a happy camper. Mrs. Harris talked about all knew mediums we would be working with like, web based classes, online chatting, designing websites, and looking at virtual worlds. I have had a little experience in some of the areas but not much. I was terrified. Now I have taken online classes before, but there wasn’t much to it. I had an assignment due once a week and that was about it. With Mrs. Harris’s online learning, we did discussion boards, which turned out to be interesting. I enjoyed having the time to write about a topic, and then see what other people thought about what I had to say. I also enjoyed reading their postings because they always put things into a different perspective then what I had thought of.

She continued to discuss her mixed feelings about the chat experience:

I really enjoyed the chat from home over the chat we did in class. I know the class chat was more for practice, but I felt we didn't have any topics to discuss. Everyone was too involved with what was going on in the room to realize we were attempting to have a silent discussion. The chat from home
was the exact opposite. People had great things to share and we actual for the most part stayed on topic. It was great. The one dislike I have with the online chatting involves my personality. I like to be heard. With the online chatting I don’t feel I could be as I could in class. I felt I would write a good comment or questions but it would just get lost in all the rest of the postings. I got responses from some people and I tried to comment to others, but it was just too fast paced for me. There was way too much going on on one page for me to comprehend. Overall I enjoyed the class discussion boards a lot more.

Bree expresses a sentiment common on the reactions: difficulty with the pace of the chat. Ardle wrote, “I thought the chat was cool but kind of hard to keep up with. Maybe that isn’t a way I learn very well. I think that I need face to face discussions to learn more.”

Endle, who was very active in the class chats in ways that he was not in face-to-face class, did not find the activities insightful. His coursework already revolved around the internet, so he did not “think this activity changed my mind too much. I’ve already considered online learning by ways I’ve just been generally doing my assignments. Almost everything I do is via computer and Internet.” Gleason also did not seem impressed by the quality of the interaction in the online course activities: “I don’t know that this class made me consider online learning in ways that I wouldn’t without it. I think that everyone just discussed things that have been discussed before and that are all pretty much well-known. Also, a lot of the posts were pretty much the same.” And Willard echoed Gleason with his feeling that “This activity did not offer any extremely profound changes in the way I thought about online learning. It made me think a little more or perhaps a little deeper about it but
most of what we covered was not necessarily new and was stuff that I had seen or practiced before.”

Only one student in section 124, Raneman, entered and ended the activities fully pro-online learning, in spite of technical problems she had logging on for the synchronous small group chat:

This activity did not really make me think about online learning any differently than I would've before because I am all for online classes and the "digital age", but it also made me realize that to do well in an online class, or class that is based around the internet or blackboard for instance [sic] you must be very diligent in your work, and make sure that you check your email every day. The fact that you have a life and possibly a job wouldn't matter and if you happened to have a crisis that week and knew there was no way that you could get your assignment done, that is just tough because online classes would require so much more concentration and devotion.

She recognizes potential difficulties with online learning, but they were not enough to change her opinion about the worth of online courses in general.

Double the number of students as had no change of opinion did have a change of opinion after the online course activities. Most of the students expressed concern with online courses that they hadn’t had before. Ardle wrote, “I thought that I would be really good at learning online before we did this assignment but now I'm not so sure. I realize now that I will have to check my Blackboard everyday and make sure to check for assignments even if they aren't posted because they may be in the syllabus. I think reading what other people and to say about online learning helped me learn a little more about it also.” Ardle
went on to successfully take an online religion course the next semester, applying what she
had learned to keep up with her coursework in the class.25

Darling was much more skeptical about her abilities to be successful in online classes
then Ardle, who was concerned but not prevented from participating in online courses.
Darling wrote,

Actually, I was thinking about taking online classes next semester because I
work so much that I thought one less drive across town a couple times a
week would help out. I also thought that online classes would be easier than
a traditional class. Well, these activities this week were not difficult but
definatily [sic] made me change my mind about online classes. I’m not the
type of person who checks black board or that is even on the computer every
day. To do online classes I think it would be more of a hassle for me to have
to log on every day apposed [sic] to just coming to school a couple times. I
also realized that I need a lot of guidence [sic] while working on projects.
Emails are ok to receive that but I prefer face to face conversation. So I think
I may wait a while to take classes online.

Darling had difficulties being in class because of her changing work schedule and the fact
that she took a supervisory position early in the class that required that she fill in at the last
minute for others at her job. Hugh worked at the same facility as Darling and had similar
problems with attendance. His response to the online activities involved the lack of personal
contact in the online course. He wrote, “I do have a different opinion about online classes.
This week wasn’t that bad. Although I don’t know if the reason why it didn’t bother me was

25 As I proctored online assessments, I talked to Ardle, who was taking several online classes that semester. She
said that online classes were “more fun” than the seated classes she’d taken previously.
that I knew everyone from the regular class, I was familiar with the instructor, and with the students…etc. I think that if I were taking an online course without first having the course in a regular classroom, I wouldn’t enjoy it as much. I prefer to know the class, and the teacher in person.”

Ester, who missed her first scheduled chat session with her small group because of technical difficulties, joined a chat scheduled with the other section of the class that would fit her schedule. She, like Hugh, had serious concerns about personal connections in online classes. She indicated that she enjoyed the chat, but the series of activities overall did make me think about online classes, but the fact that I wouldn’t be able to have that social connection concerns me. I am a visual person. I like to hear the way people talk and interact with one another, I couldn’t just read typed assignments and people chatting to me. Text is boring and doesn’t give personality to anyone. I would consider online classes, they are hard to understand and boring. But from reading others responses I believe it is probably going to become more useful in the future, considering you have to learn how to use a computer to access what is needed for a class….This online learning could become the future, so it’s good to hear what people are saying about it.

Meecher also appreciated the online activities because of the potential for increased involvement with technology in education:

The assignment changed my perspective online learning. In my experience here at OTC I have come to appreciate the capability of using technology in my educational pursuits. One thing that I appreciate is the convenience of
being able to post an assignment or reply to a discussion board at a time that suits my schedule. This assignment helped me to better realize that technology is going to play a huge role in education in the future.”

He doesn’t seem as concerned about the lack of personal contact as Ester or Hugh are.

Technology for Meecher and Ester are inevitable, so understanding and using the technology is important, whether or not they feel comfortable with that form of class platform.

Spoker wrote this response to the online class activities:

I think that online discussions aren’t as beneficial as a classroom discussion. I don't know if it's just me, but I am a hands-on learner, I learn better in a classroom, where the answers are right there and in words by a teacher. If I have to get on the internet and search for an answer I have a really hard time because often I have no idea where to look and then sometimes even if I think that I have found my site for the answer I can't find the answer.

Although online learning is helpful because you can do it anywhere and anytime, sometimes it's not as easy to learn that way, at least for me. I am taking some online classes and if I like the class I can do good in it, but if it is a class that I am just naturally bad at I typically don't succeed in that subject online, where I might in a classroom. Sometimes the discussion board is helpful because you can ask your peers and it's less stressful to ask peers because sometimes they are thinking the same thing you are "What in the heck are we doing?" or "When was this supposed to happen, how'd you do?" Stuff like that is harder sometimes to ask a teach because you never know how they are going to react. And you never want to feel as though you have
dissapointed [sic] someone and peers I don't think really count... not in judgementwise [sic] at least.

The issues she raises here she would later explore in her essay for her third project, which details the difficulties that she had in an online course earlier in her academic career. In this post, however, she hits on several points that are important to the intersections of technology and pedagogy in the critical classroom. First, she sets up a definite opposition between “right” and “wrong” knowledge. She does not believe that she can always find the right answer online on her own. Secondly, she equates her comfort level with a subject with her ability to perform well in a class on that subject. This again touches on the need for familiarity with the content of a course; again and again, students indicate that the technology will take a back-seat to the content when the two are in opposition, both in creating course assignments and for Spoker, in choosing online education. Third, she establishes a definite difference in the opinions and judgment of her peers and that of her instructors. The instructor must be pleased, and while peers can provide assistance that is less intimidating, the end result is to cater to the demands of the teacher.

I posted ideas for the directions students could go in their third project (see Appendix S for those prompts). All four prompts asked students to use some set of criteria or ideas to analyze technology use, much as we did with literacy in the previous assignment. After these experiences, students chose a variety of topics for their third project, including analyzing online games, online banking, and online classes. Students also ventured off into topics such as dating forums and MySpace. Quite a few students looked at whether or not technology was pushing humans farther apart or bringing them closer together. While several students asked questions based on the themes that we studied for class, none of them
chose to actually analyze any of the documents or activities from our class, which I had hoped that they would do. Looking back on the directed prompts, however, I see that students might not have seen this as an option as it is not posted as one, and they may not have viewed the documents or activities that we used in class as “technology.”

For their class final, I asked students to reflect on their learning during the course of the semester (see Appendix T for assignment). When preparing for the class activities that would lead them into this reflection, I wrote in my journal:

When I was preparing for class today, I was having trouble figuring out how I was going to present this and walk them through the steps of the activity. Then it dawned on me that I could do it with them and then I could use what I wrote yesterday to work with them on what they can do today. Both classes spent almost the entire time typing their documents, and when I showed them how they could collect and print their discussion board messages from the IDB, they seemed to be following along. Michelle is the only one who printed hers out in class, but I think that several other students printed theirs out in the second class.

I asked students in class to answer the questions in the assignment, then to derive paragraphs based on the answers to those questions. I modeled this in steps to the class. In between class drafting periods, I recorded myself developing a paragraph from the ideas I'd brainstormed in class using Camtasia software and posted that recording to Blackboard. Students could then return to the narrative of me creating the main parts of the paragraph based on the notes I wrote with them in the course.

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26 Student discussion of their use of and experiences with technology will be further covered in chapter seven.
The last few days of the course were spent in individual conferences with me, either via their individual discussion boards where I posted feedback to their drafts using Camtasia or in face-to-face meetings where I gave them the option to record or not to audio record their meetings with me.27

Conclusion

English 102 was much more successful following the guidelines of critical pedagogy that I had envisioned for both classes. I attribute this to the pace of the course and to the constant attention to student needs that allowed me to reflect on the course and adapt to those needs. The five-fold changes outlined at the beginning of this chapter were all implemented, providing more frequent dialogue and interaction with students.

Overall, the above student comments reflect a greater willingness to explore authentic questions in response to themes presented in the course, which upheld my initial belief that students at the community college would be more open to questioning their experiences because of their previous experiences with and beliefs about education. However, I was not as prepared for the lack of confidence I saw in student writing in spite of their ability to follow through with posing and answering questions in response to prompts. Also, I was both pleased by student reactions to online course activities and surprised at their skepticism in the ability of technology to be as effective in learning as traditional classroom activities. I anticipated that students at the community college would have a wider range of experiences with technology in education and in the workforce. I did

27 The student responses to the course and to the options to record are covered in Chapter Eight.
not, however, anticipate the unease, and in some cases fear, students expressed when completing course activities solely online.

In the following chapters, I explore students’ reactions to the technology used in the course in more depth and also review their final reflective projects to draw conclusions about students’ engagement with their writing and learning in the English 102 course.
Chapter Seven: Community College Students’ Perceptions of and Use of Technology

In this chapter, I discuss the community college students’ comfort levels with technology in and out of the classroom to investigate the following questions: How do students perceive their use of technology, both in and out of the classroom? Will students critically question the choices they make regarding their use of technology in and out of the composition classroom? How do students use technology in the classroom to produce (or not produce) rhetorically-based multimedia texts?

Data indicated that while students were more functionally techno-literate. Several students posed and answered critical questions or viewed their choice of media rhetorically in their reflections on their own technology use. While students at the community college had more opportunity to critically reflect on their technology use, they also seemed more willing to do so. In spite of this critical reflection, English 102 students still did not frequently choose to use multimedia to complete projects for the class.

This chapter reviews how students viewed technology using the basic framework established by Selber. The data from surveys, proposals, projects, responses, and class discussion boards shows that students who perceived themselves as functionally techno-literate were willing and able to critically analyze technology use. However, these students often did not choose to go beyond using Microsoft Word to complete traditional essays. Other students not so functionally techno-literate often declined to challenge technology critically or use technology for rhetorical purposes in the course. While students seemed
willing and able to use multiple forms of technology to complete projects, these students tended to uphold traditional forms of classroom communication, particularly face-to-face communication and the “academic” essay, as those most necessary to know to be successful in college and beyond.

Physical Layout of the English 102 Classroom

Both sections of English 102 in the study were held in the same computer classroom with tables arranged in rows facing the front of the classroom (see Figure 7.1 below).

![Figure 7.1: English 102 Classroom Layout](image)

Palmquist et al. view this classroom design as limiting for several reasons: students have trouble with visibility when monitors sit on desks, students have difficulty working with
other students around a single desk, and teachers have minimal contact with students because of space restrictions (70). The English 102 classrooms, however, did not seem hindered by these special concerns. The students had minimal problems with visibility because the computer monitors were housed in NOVA stations. The layout of the room did not seem to significantly affect student interaction because students worked either with the two other students in their row or worked with students in front of or behind them in other rows. The rows provided enough room for me to navigate between stations, which I often did to help individual students. Students did not make any statements that the layout of the classroom hindered their ability to communicate with each other or with myself.

**Community College Students’ Functional Technoliteracy**

To determine students’ perceptions of their own functional technoliteracy, I collected information regarding student computer use the last week of the semester (see Appendix A for survey questions)28. On the survey, all but one of students felt that they were above average (above 5 on a scale of 10) in their comfort with technology. Students reported a variety of computer use upon entering the class, most of them using the computer multiple times a day for a variety of tasks. Computer usage is broken down in Figure 7.2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1 or less/week</th>
<th>2-3 times/week</th>
<th>Every Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Computer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

28 For Selber’s definition of functional technoliteracy, see chapter five. Students were not surveyed at the beginning of the semester about their computer use at the beginning of the semester because consent was only given at the end of the semester to avoid as much bias as possible in students’ reported and actual computer usage in the course.
Table 7.2: OTC Students’ Frequency of Computer Use by Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laptop Computer</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Games</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-Processing Software</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chat Rooms</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instant Messaging</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PowerPoint</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web-Design Software</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7.2: OTC Students’ Frequency of Computer Use by Task

All of the students used a computer multiple times a week; the majority used one daily, and only two students indicated that they never used a computer or used one only once a week.

Computer use was concentrated around school- or work-based tasks. Very few students visited chat rooms or played computer games regularly. The majority of students did not regularly use instant messaging. The majority of the students frequently used email and Blackboard, but very few students regularly used PowerPoint or Web-design software. Surprisingly, over half of the students reported using word-processing software only once a week or less. Students used computers primarily for homework, email, accessing the internet, and using Blackboard.

All of the students but one owned their own computer and all but three of the students had internet access in their current living situation. The students used their
computers consistently in classrooms and at home, at the campus computer labs, and at their place of employment.\textsuperscript{29}

While all composition classes at the university were computer-enhanced, and instructors were required to keep an online presence, at the community college, instructors were not required to use technology in their composition classes and only developmental writing classes were consistently taught in computer classrooms. Instructors had only been required to post their syllabi to Blackboard beginning in the fall semester of my study. Approximately half of other composition classes in Fall 2007 were taught in computer classrooms. The English 102 students indicated that they were frequent computer users, but only four of the twenty-seven students enrolled who gave consent to be studied chose these sections of English 102 because they were being held in a computer classroom. Those who chose to take it in a computer classroom did so primarily for the convenience of being able to type instead of hand-write in class projects.

One of the traditional concerns with writing classes (and any classes, for that matter) held in computer classrooms is the distraction of technology. English 102 students did not seem to indicate a high level of distraction due to the presence of computers in the classroom. About half of the students (11) spent less than fifteen minutes of the one-hour-and-fifteen minute class period on non-course-related activities. Only three students spent more time, indicating that they spent “a lot,” “¼ of the class period,” or “maybe an hour a day” surfing the internet or doing non-course-related activities. The majority of student answers (24) gauged their time in non-course-related activities from “none” to “15 minutes per week, +/-.”

\textsuperscript{29} Because dorms were not available on campus, all students lived in off-campus housing.
The students’ initial impressions of the computer classroom seemed to center around convenience of typing and storing papers. Several students indicated that they liked the computer classroom because they could be more productive or actually finish assignments during class time or they enjoyed “work[ing] along with the teacher and do my work while she is there to help me.” These impressions mirrored those of the university students.

When students realized that their course would be held in a computer classroom, whether or not they chose the course intentionally, most reacted positively. Again, students primarily indicated convenience as the reason for their satisfaction, although other students indicated that the computer classroom seemed “more comfortable” to them than a regular classroom.

Answers to questions on the survey confirmed that students were firmly entrenched in what Stuart Selber calls “functional literacy.” Those who are functionally computer-literate see computers as tools, as “invisible once users understand their basic operations. A computer application that is well constructed allows users to focus on the assignment at hand or to explore activities and ideas appropriate to the application. In these ways, computers are just a means to an end, tools with practical utility that users manipulate for their own, often immediate, purposes” (36). Student reactions in English 102 to questions regarding their computer use were very functional, and their written responses throughout the course reinforced the practical, immediate nature of technology use in their schoolwork.

Students asked the question “Do you think that having your composition course in a computer classroom influences your writing process?” overwhelmingly indicated that the computer classroom did influence their writing (twenty-one of the twenty-seven students) for a variety of reasons. Eight of the students mentioned that the computers helped them
with specific elements of the composing process (e.g., brainstorming, rough drafts, research, proofreading, editing). Another eleven mentioned that the computer was more convenient or “quick” without connecting those qualities to the writing process in particular. Only three students indicated that their process did not change or that they did not see writing ability as linked to computer use.

Students had strong opinions regarding Blackboard in particular and the use of technology in general. More English 102 students commented on the convenience or inconvenience of Blackboard than did English 104 students. One student said, “I like blackboard a lot because of the constant updates in grades and communication with teachers.” Another commented, “I like Bb for checking my grades . . . but not for online classes themselves—at least not my online-only classes.” And one student was openly hostile toward Blackboard: “Blackboard is one of the most troublesome, stressful, and counterproductive devices in the online education arsenal. The fact that most of the time, it’s broken didn’t help me much.” Overall, students commented most frequently on technical issues related to school work or to communication, such as email, IM, and MySpace or Facebook.

Negative comments most frequently addressed technical problems and perceived social deterioration as a result of technology. When asked what they disliked about technology, students wrote:

- Computer games. I don’t enjoy playing them and become highly annoyed when people play them around me. It seems that nothing else matters when they’re playing them.

As a Blackboard Administrator, I am not sure why this student would have perceived Blackboard as broken “most of the time.” While we did have intermittent problems with Blackboard, the system very infrequently was completely inaccessible.
I dislike all of them because of their innate tendency to damage and control society.

I do not like chat rooms because most are usually full of pornographic bots. Ugh!

I dislike anything complicated or that takes some time to learn or understand. I don’t have the time to spare unless it’s mandatory.

When asked what random images came to mind when they thought of computers, students primarily provided the names of software and internet applications: email, Internet, YouTube, MySpace, Limewire, Facebook, Word, Microsoft Works, Windows, Google, AOL, Kodak software and Yahoo. Other students mentioned specific types of computers or hardware: iPod, jump drive, mouse, a laptop, disk drives, an old Apple II, and old IBM, network cables, monitor. English 102 students included many more references to game terms and consoles: Duck Hunt, solitaire, Playstation, Nintendo, Wii, black cheat shields, and game pads. A surprising number of students also provided very specific images related either to marketing or a specific experience. One student writes that s/he sees “a smiley face and a blackboard error.” A final category of responses seemed to fall into the category of conspiracy theory: “A noose, a time bomb, robot overlords, the matrix.” Overall, students used a mixture of negative (frustrating, scary but time saving, complicated, strong dislike) and positive (helpful, handy and advanced, fun, convenience, wonderful, enjoyable) language to describe technology.

English 102 students mentioned the practical aspects of using computers much more frequently than the English 104 students. A frequent comment regarded how computers made writing easier because of the practical issues of typing, spell-check, and saving documents. Ardle indicated that she liked using computers to write because, “it seems easier
to type out something than actually write it down.” Ester had a similar reaction in response to a question about her comfort using computers: “computers do make writing easier for me. I’m so thankful I took a computer class back in high school to learn how to type. It is so nice to be able to type and not have to poke at every key with your pointer finger.” Owsley said the same, “For me personally, I love to type. Computer writing works great for me.” Willard, definitely one of the more proficient writers in the course, also equated the use of computers in writing with practical issues of typing and organization. He wrote, “Computers do make writing easier for me because it is easier to sit down and do a project from start to finish. Writing longhand always hurts my wrists after a short period of time. That being said, if ever I do any prewriting then I do that by hand.”

These students interpreted questions about “writing with computers” as the physical act of creating text with computers, not “drafting with computers” as I had intended. The range of students who answered this question literally was also surprising. Shelby and Hermenez, students who worked frequently with computers, tended toward practical applications for computers just as students who were less comfortable with computers. Shelby wrote, “Computers make writing much easier for me, mostly because I can type much faster than I can write.” Granted, Sheldon might be indicating an ease with typing that would take into account a “drafting” phase of writing, but his focus on computers as “mostly” convenient for speed indicates issues of efficiency rather than purpose. Hermenez wrote, “Writing is one of the few things of hundreds that computers makes easier because i would rather type than write anyday [sic].” And Roden, who was the only student who attempted to do Web pages for each assignment, wrote, “Computers make writing easier. I can go back and edit documents. Spelling and grammar checking also helps. At times it can
be handy to reference a webpage.” One of the only students who indicated that computers did not make writing easier for him, Mitchner, also differentiated between stages in the process of writing. He wrote, “computers do not make writing easier for me. They are great for researching ideas but not for actual writing. When I write I like to write things in the margin as they come to me or relate to something I have already written. I always feel compelled to fix mistakes and errors as I come across them when I write on computers.”

Students were not as uniformly engrossed with technology in the English 102 class as they seemed to be in the English 104 class at the university. Several students expressed negativity or hostility toward computers and technology, and others indicated that they did not have time to use computers or to learn new technologies. But across the board in both classes, those students who held favorable opinions about technology felt that technology helped them in their schoolwork and in communicating with others.

Students recognized how computers were useful more broadly, talking about how computers could help them complete tasks for the course. Meecher wrote in response to a project that he “was grateful for the technology that I used. I just bought a new computer so it was fun to be able to use the new word program and be able to save and transfer files from the work that I had done. Having the software also allowed me to work on my project from home instead of having to be at school which would have been difficult for me.”

Raemaeker saw the practicality of computers for research projects: “computers definitely [sic] make writing easier for me because if we didn't have computers we would be back in the stone age when you had to look up all your sources in the library which I only like to read stuff that is interesting to me, if it is not interesting I could care less about it.”
Spoker, who struggled with writing all semester, wrote a passage that both discussed her reasons for the practicality of writing on a computer and showed the reader a good example of what she was talking about:

Computer's [sic] make it easier writing for me, I enjoy writing on the computer because I can get my feelings down faster. I am a pretty fast typer and when I am thinking something and type it I can get it all down before I forget what I am thinking. When I write using pen and paper, it's not that I am slow, but when I do this sometimes I am finishing a thought that was a long thought and already thinking about something else before I finish writing the first thought so when I get to the second one sometimes I forget what it was. But when I am typing I seem to not forget things because most of the time I am typing as I am thinking so I get done with the first thought just in time for that second thought to come about and I don't have to waste time by stopping and trying to remember what I was thinking.

Spoker often commented through the semester on the difficulty of staying focused in her writing. This passage is a good example of how her struggle with focus affected the quality of her writing and how typing on a computer helped her. Overall, students in English 102 were much more interested in the practical and functional aspects of computer use and how computers could make their schoolwork and lives easier and faster than were the students in English 104 at the university.

In English 102, students were much more involved in using technology and a variety of digital media in our class (discussion boards, chat rooms), for course projects
(PowerPoints, Web pages) than students in English 104. I asked students to use these particular technologies in class and then to reflect on their use aside from the major projects they completed for the course. Students used both synchronous and asynchronous communication forms to discuss issues regarding technology in the course (see Appendix U for a description of these activities in relation to project three). One week, students used discussion boards and chat sessions in class in order to “practice” the use of these forms of communication. The following week, they participated in these same activities outside of the classroom in an attempt to experience the use of discussion boards and chat sessions from remote locations. Students also completed an activity during which they practiced using PowerPoint software and online library resources (see Appendix V for description of this assignment) and another activity where they practiced using free online Web page development sites, such as GooglePages or Freewebs, and reflected on their experiences. In-class activities asked them to use and reflect on their use of these technologies along with readings about communicating in virtual environments.

**Students' Attitudes Toward Technology and Media Choice**

The English 102 students had a variety of stances regarding technology. Overall, students tended to remain cautious and critically optimistic about their technological futures. Some of the students, primarily those who self-identified as functionally technoliterate, were willing to critically challenge technology. Most students in the course showed at least the

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31 Also, the community college where the study took place had a variety of online courses for students to take in order to complete their degrees. At the time of the study, the college offered one-hundred-and-eighty-three online courses with an unduplicated online enrollment of 2,071 students. Thus, a number of students in my classes had taken or were currently enrolled in online courses at the college.
beginnings of critical technoliteracy as defined by Selber\textsuperscript{32}. In spite of their levels of technological expertise or willingness to critically challenge social perceptions of technology, students did not necessarily use English 102 as an environment in which to experiment with alternative forms for their projects or challenge traditional media as appropriate for completing class projects. The majority of students remained conservative in their choice of media for their projects, many completing projects using Microsoft Word or PowerPoint, with only two venturing into creating Web pages and no students completing projects in other forms of media\textsuperscript{33}.

\textit{Students Who are Comfortable With—and Critical of—Technology}

In spite of the functional stance students took when surveyed about their use, when explaining their own technology use, students were much more critical in their stances. Two students in particular were highly critical of a technology-enhanced future. The first of these students, Daughton, makes choices of media to complete projects in the course that are consistent with his strongly held view of technology as degrading education. Daughton, who plans on being an English major when he transfers to a four-year university, wrote only essays for his projects in spite of the fact that he was comfortable using and well-versed in writing about technology. His choice of media upheld his beliefs in the “pure” form of the written word as opposed to the “corruption” of technology.

For project one, he proposed to investigate “how the romantic levels of speech are translated into written word, and vice versa.” In his proposal, he wrote, “I hope to be able to express this study completely through writing, without confusion.” Ironically, his proposal was very confusing, and I asked several questions to attempt to get him to narrow down and

\textsuperscript{32} For Selber’s definition of critical technoliteracy, see chapter five.
\textsuperscript{33} One student, Gleason did attempt at first to complete her project via a blog but was unsuccessful.
specify what, exactly, he was writing about. In the response to his paper, I again indicated that he needs to narrow his focus and more carefully consider his audience:

Overall, your writing is good, but you’ve bitten off such a HUGE chunk of question to answer that you have pulled in about three dissertation’s worth of ideas into one three page paper. Also . . . would someone with [your audience’s] knowledge need to know the conclusion “In summary, it seems that both speaking and writing are important forms of communication to all walks of life, and that each form often influences the other.”? Or would you assume that your audience would already KNOW this conclusion and look into a more specific area of writing or speaking?

In his response to the project, Daughton acknowledged that he has read my remarks about his essay. He wrote, “Even during the proposal phase, it became obvious that in tackling the relationship between words and speech, I needed to narrow the topic. I just didn't like that idea and didn't feel comfortable with it. I wanted to look at both from various angles and viewpoints, but it didn't work out at all.” When asked about his response to specific comments in the margin, all of which dealt exclusively with the content and confusion about what he was writing, he responded, “I was happy to see that I didn't make that many grammatical errors. I always try to proofread my papers well, and I feel that my words ended up flowing exactly as I would've wanted them to. Thanks for all the input throughout the process!” In spite of his beliefs about the purity of the form and his insistence on flow, his responses indicate that he was not willing to open a dialogue about either of those features in his own work.
Daughton’s insistence on the purity of the written word overshadowed his perception of his first project and my comments. In the response to project one, he wrote, “Written essays are my element indeed. I express myself the clearest, and I don't have to concern myself with minute details like the background color or clip art…. [I used] Computers...Microsoft Word Processor...the tools of a student...” In his second project, he chose the same format to study the question “How has the involvement of television in literacy evolved over the years?” The topic relates to visual media, but the justification for the format remains the same: “As I conveyed in my last project, I feel that an essay format would be the most effective for me, and would allow me to express my ideas more purely, without having to worry too much on the form of the presentation, or proofing the design of the website/power point for errors in animation/structure.” In his project two proposal, he continued the idea that the simpler form allowed him to focus on his message, even though in the second project, I again commented on problems with clarity in his writing and in understanding his main points in the essay: “As I conveyed in my last project, I feel that an essay format would be the most effective for me, and would allow me to express my ideas more purely, without having to worry too much on the form of the presentation, or proofing the design of the website/power point for errors in animation/structure.” Daughton’s insistence on the “purity” of the written word is a possible explanation for his refusal to dialogue about passages in his writing or to explain why he believes in said purity. Questioning his words might sully the purity of those words, the purity of his written text.

Daughton self-identified as a relatively “new” user of internet technology, at least compared to the idea of the student as a “digital native” (Prensky 1). In a response to a

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34 Interestingly, when Daughton saw that I had a tablet PC, he asked me to use the tablet feature to provide handwritten comments on his second project, which I did.
discussion board, he wrote, “Well, in feeling that the internet is still rather new to all of us, its [sic] hard to say if we've been using it 'all our lives'. My family didn't even own a computer till I was about 13 or 14, and even then, we didn't use the internet for a couple of months.”

His idea of “purity” in written communication and the artificial and unnatural nature of communication via other technologies remained consistent in his choice of media and in his dialogue with fellow students. In the class discussion board, he wrote,

> Academics have always been so...tangible...so in removing that element of a physical object that goes from teacher to student to teacher again, many people feel a loss of control. Also, communication through spoken word is a reflex to anyone on a college level. However, typing or any other form of computer use is quite foreign. Babies don't grow up with little keyboards in their hands, and if they did, it wouldn't speed anything up to type out a message on it, instead of simply crying until the necessary action is completed.

The “physical” nature of writing and of communication is of utmost importance to Daughton, even when he described learning situations that are not necessarily pleasant:

> I agree with that feeling of frustration over the 'openness' of the internet. All through public school, a student associates an assignment with the teacher that gave the assignment, or rather, the physical form of the teacher (and the physical/verbal abuse that went with it, i.e. 6th grade English [sic] teacher, Mrs. Moss). Without that physical connection, it's easy to get lost, especially those of us who are visual learners.
Considering that he self-identifies as a “visual” learner, one would assume that Daughton would find the internet, which is a very visual medium, a natural means of communication. Instead, he associated it with unnatural or extraordinary communication. For example, in response to another student, Daughton said, “I think that the internet will always be an 'accessory' to communication...like hyperlinks. Nothing will ever replace the value of face to face or 'tangible' communication, like a written paper.”

While nothing will replace the “value” of written communication for Daughton, he realizes at the same time that these technologies of which he is skeptical are here to stay.

Personally, I think that technology represents the future of the business world. The faster information travels, the more productive the communication is between the parts towards the whole. Maybe the internet, or computers in general, aren't completely applicable towards every field of study or profession, but I think that as time goes on, there will be more and more reasons to use computers and the internet, other than web design. But this won't be without a lot of changes! The internet, as it is right now, is a dirty, scruffed-up evolution of communication. It needs to have smoother edges, and a more refined image as a whole. From the social prospective, I agree with you completely. Future generations will have a grasp of the technology we toy with today. It will be a necessity to social survival and status.

Again, Daughton upholds the dichotomy between academic fields in which technology does not apply and the internet and digital communication as “dirty” and “scruffed-up.”
Understanding and using technology effectively occurs in a future when the problems, of which he is not specific, with these technologies have been solved.

Just as students in the course associated computers with the very literal task of physically writing (typing), Daughton saw the physical act of using a computer as a detriment to the physical act of writing. In response to a discussion board post from a fellow student, he wrote,

On a literary level, teaching a child to hit a button to spell the letter 'b' teaches them nothing about how to write out the letter itself. Flash to the future, and that same kid is working at a sit down restaurant as a waiter. The computer system is down, so all the orders have to be written out. Without knowledge of how to spell on a basic level, our culture will become slaves pathetically, to a word processing program. There are already signs of computer literacy degradation, as the English language is 'contorted' online, with mixed abbreviations and letter groupings in certain cyber communities, to allow for faster conversation and less [sic] grammar issues . . . . Personally, I think there's one key word in education: Survival. Academics teaches us how to survive and how to further ourselves as human beings. There is no room for regression in education. Perhaps the future of all learning is computers, but somehow, I hope that we as human beings will limit ourselves and our technology. A society that sees through its technology is blind without it, and I hope that isn't our future.

Daughton’s post set up a binary between technology and academics that most people in the course did not acknowledge. He posted a mixed message—there was “no room for
“regression” in education, but we must beware and be aware of our use of technology for educational purposes. He was one of a small group of people in the class who viewed technology use in nearly apocalyptic terms—his excellent metaphor regarding the “blind” insistence on technology use indicates that technology will lead us only into a pit of despair. Oddly, while he insists on technology as degrading to literacy that can only be upheld by the purity of traditional academic forms such as the traditional essay, his discussion board posts are more clearly written and easy to follow than his essays. And while he was not willing to engage in dialogue regarding his clarity in those essays, he was willing to engage in dialogue with his classmates about technology.

Daughton was one of a few students who openly disagreed with the consensus of the course that “technology is our future.” In the same discussion board as the above post, he wrote,

I disagree completely with all of the comments being left about everyone feeling like the 'digital future is upon us'. Let's chill out for a second . . . . I can apply for specific job, or even get paid to do something through the computer, but these jobs are highly unpopular given that it requires [sic] an immense amount of self-discipline on the part of the employee, and a huge amount of 'dumb faith' on the part of the employer . . . . Electronic Education has the same integrity issues. It's hard to commit. It's hard to find the right programs, credits, and materials. It's hard to separate user error from dumb program error. On and on and on. Chill out, folks. I think we'll have hover cars before we have electronic lives, and I dare you to argue!
No one in the class takes up the gauntlet that Daughton threw down. However, several students in the class agree with him, or make similar points. Hugh is one of those students. Hugh does not seem to agree completely with Daughton as Daughton does with Hugh, but the points that Hugh raised about Daughton’s writing show that he shares much of the same skepticism that Daughton does about the benefit of technology as a means of human progress (see Appendix W for Daughton and Hugh’s entire discussion board exchange).

Hugh’s skepticism permeates his choices of projects. When brainstorming for his first project, he wrote,

I am also going to address why I believe that the universal requirement of the computer and the internet creates a larger gap between the learned and the uneducated. It makes it more difficult for the poor to be able to improve themselves. A poor person is much more likely to be able to purchase a pen, some paper, and some books to learn with. They are not, however, so easily able to purchase a computer, computer software, tech. support, and internet access in order to educate themselves….Universal adoption of the computer in learning will strive to eliminate the pen and paper method, which will cause a larger gap between the wealthiest and the poor.

Insights like these were what I strove for in the course, and to Hugh and others, initial reactions that were critical of technology in various ways came easy. Hugh was the least technologically-friendly of the students in section 124. His primary purpose for his first essay was to prove that technology was not only a distraction but detrimental to communication:

I will be focusing my paper on the idea that technology (e.g. everything invented after the typewriter.) has only served to complicate processes that
were previously much easier. Whereas with a typewriter a paper can be easily written and printed at the same time, a computer takes many different items to have a finished product. One must use the actual computer, the monitor, the printer, and the software to type the paper. This costs more than a typewriter and only serves to create more things that are required to be purchased in order to have a type-written paper.

For his first project, he wrote the same paper using two different forms of technology: one on a computer and another on a typewriter. In spite of the possibilities for connecting the points of his paper to the formats he used to convey his message, his project one discussion of his use of technology was brief: “My experience with the technology was that everything worked okay.” Although dedicated to critiquing the evils of computer use, he was unconcerned with extending that critique to his own experiences.

Flexibility in medium for Hugh comes not in the format of the media but the genre of expression. For his second project, he at first chose to write a fictional work: “My project will be a narrative in the third-person about a man who is proud of himself and of his ‘achievements’. It will be an experience he has that makes him question how much he really knows.” I spoke to him after he turned in his proposal and indicated that writing fiction was not consistent with the goals of the course, and that I felt he could get his point across through a non-fiction narrative as easily as he could a work of fiction.\(^{35}\) He changed his project to write a personal narrative about how he felt his physical illnesses as a child.

\(^{35}\) While a part of me wanted to let him write the fictional piece, I know that my strong beliefs about the place of fiction in the composition classroom prevented me from allowing him to express himself in this form. One of the problems I see in composition classrooms is an over-emphasis on fictional forms, both in reading and in writing. At the community college, I had often heard students who complained about English 102 as “too hard” because in their English 101 courses, they were able to read and write “stories” instead of having to do research or analytical papers. My biases showed through in limiting Hugh’s ideas about the form his writing should take.
contributed to his love of reading but kept him from understanding the pop culture that his peers were immersed in. In spite of my intervention, he took responsibility for the decision to write a narrative: “I decided to write this paper as a narrative rather than a traditional essay because I wanted to have a more flexible medium for talking about my feelings on literacy.” He did not express the same kinds of dedication to the essay as form that Daughton does, but he did not seem to extend his options into any other medium either.

Hugh’s disdain for online communication was not motivated by his perception of the corruption of academic literacy as was Daughton’s. Instead, Hugh’s dislike of online communication stems from his belief in the importance of physical proximity to communication. In the class discussion board, he wrote,

I agree with what the "One Size Fits All" document says about students having an easier time voicing opinions online. It is much easier for many to speak their mind in an impersonal setting on a screen by typing rather than raising voice. Also, online discussion forces others to read what you type. Basically, it makes other people listen to you. So this helps those who would have a hard time speaking in class. However, I am completely against this way of learning for many different reasons. Obviously it is much easier to voice your opinion when you don’t have to face any retribution from peers for what you believe, but what is this teaching us? Is anything worth believing or even voicing your opinion about if you refuse to face any comments or stares in return for your ideas? We seem to believe that technology is a solution to every problem. When students have a hard time actually being in class, or they have a hard time discussing their feelings in
face to face conversations, we develop a system that allows them to sit at home and bravely type away their opinions. I used to have a hard time talking about what I feel in person, but I realised [sic] that you have to believe something, whether others condemn you or not. It takes practise [sic] to be able to face criticism, but that's part of being a human.

Hugh, like Daughton, made appeals to physical connections as vital to humanity. Unlike Daughton, he was much more critical of the current educational system, maintaining a vision that does not rely on traditional education as “a key to survival.” He wrote,

I think another reason that students have a hard time speaking their opinion in class is the way we have been made to believe school should be for so long. The class is designed in a way that prevents group discussion. The only students who can see the whole class are those on the back row. All of the desks face the teacher facilitating [sic] listening, not speaking. It is especially difficult to facilitate [sic] group discussion at OTC because of the way many classes provide a computer at the desk of each student. I am sure (as I have in the past) that many students are not looking at class info on the computers in English class. Even if they are looking at class info, they are not in any way geared toward group discussion. They are looking at the schedule, but not listening or talking. So this document [the article “One Size Fits All”] says that this format was great because many people learned so much from peer discussion and feedback, but is it the format, or is it the discussion, and argumentation about subjects that the students enjoyed?
Hugh came closest of any of the students here of truly challenging banking model concepts of learning and the blind allegiance to technology as the savior from or cause of humanity’s ills. His final question challenges cause and effect in the obsession with technology as opening opportunity for communication. Are some of the successes we attribute to online forms of communication actually the result of the message and not the media? Are students getting the social stimulation they need in virtual reality that they are being denied in a physical classroom? Hugh answered, “yes.”

Mostly, I believe that this article wants us to believe that online discussion adds rather than detracts from the class, but I have to disagree. I believe that if classes were changed to group discussion (rather than listening to the teacher) we would be able to be guided by the teacher and learn more effectively than online. The face to face classes need renovation. It isn't "online" that is improving class, it's the discussion and argumentation with peers.

Hugh draws his conclusion based on a critical stance toward the medium of expression…not a fear of technology or praise of traditional formats. He spoke often in the face-to-face class, and his discussion board posts reinforce his stance in the class: “There is no practical application of online courage to speak out. If you can't speak your mind in person, but you can online, then what are you going to do if you disagree with someone…. go home and write it in blog? We need to get the courage to voice our opinions, with our vocal chords, and loud yells, with swearing mixed in if we disagree.” His extroverted stance and vision for the classroom are consistent with his views of technology.
In spite of his views of online communication, Hugh, like many others in the course, saw the future of digital communication and the internet as inevitable.

Online writing can be a very good way to teach a different aspect of composition. It's [sic] importance is dependant [sic] on the individual's opinion of what one should learn in writing, and the final outcome and application of one's knowledge. Obviously, if a student wishes to be a web designer, or to have a job that requires time spent online, then education in the various ways that writing is used online would be vital to their education. If a student is going to have a job that requires no online interaction, then it may or may not be useful. Because internet use is so prevalent, many would desire to develop online communication abilities. . . . future generations will have to learn internet use if they want to be a part of the mainstream society. Avoiding its use would cause the individual to be left out of many things. The use of the internet is not necessary today, but in the future it will probably be a requirement if one wants to stay in the mainstream of business and education. The application of the internet to one's life is something that each individual will have to decide if they want. Those who accept it will probably have an easier time in employment and in social situations. Those who refuse to use it will become more obsolete as far as the mainstream society goes, because they will lack the skills required to keep up with modern times.

Like many students, Hugh’s vision of the future is one dependant on use of the internet, and those who make personal choices to not use the internet will not be successful “in business
and education.” But the choice he mentioned in the above passage was a choice that he had made in his personal life. In response to Daughton’s message, he wrote,

you can reject it, and you can live with as little technology as possible... which is what I've done. I use it when absolutely necessary, but otherwise it has no use in my everyday life. I drive a '72 car with no power anything, and no radio, and no horn. All it does is drive. I live in a house built in 1917. It has no landline phone, it has no cable wires to hook up cable, everything runs on natural gas. If I can find a manual substitute for something with a motor, I buy it. Why? I guess part of it is because I'm weird... but I also believe that everything is easier when we control it. Tools are easier if they aren't power tools. Things last longer when they are made out of metal, or wood, than out of plastic. Technology may provide convenience, but it certanitly [sic] isn't easier.

The last sentiment is one that seems to echo through a number of student responses, ether explicitly when they talk about the frustrations of using technology or implicitly when they champion the usefulness of technology but choose to use Microsoft Word to create an essay over GooglePages to create a Web page, even when admitting that rhetorically, the assignment would be better served through the digital medium.

Even those students conversant in technology and who looked critically at technology were hesitant to use digital media for their projects. Endle was one of the individuals who professes comfort with technology, was an active gamer, and talked specifically about using particular technologies. He was willing to add hyperlinks to his essays and to use technology, and the internet was the subject of several of his projects. However,
his projects did not venture beyond traditional essay form. In his IDB discussion for project three, he wrote about his comfort with technology:

My experiences with the technology I’ve been using to create these documents have been good. I now use my computers and the Internet to do virtually all of my schoolwork. I’ve found my iMac G5 and MacBook Pro to be the best 2 pieces of equipment I’ve ever owned of course along with my guitar. I must mention that the most inferior pieces of equipment I’ve ever owned was pretty much anything by Microsoft. For instance, my Xbox 360 managed to break itself regardless of how well I’ve taken care with it, and within the mere 4 months I’ve owned it. I’ve also dealt with computers that eventually rotted and failed to work any longer, booting up with a screen that claimed the hardware was missing. Perhaps I could make this somehow relevant to project 3?

In spite of his critical take on technology, both hardware and software, and his willingness to explore the efficacy of various technologies, he did not feel a need to use those technologies to complete projects. For his first proposal on why he has trouble staying focused on his education, he wrote, “The only form I can imagine this project taking is just that of a written paper. I'll add anything I can that may help get my point across (images, hypertexts, etc).” In his response, he:

 decided to use hyperlinks and websites to incorporate to the essay in order to provide more “cold hard facts.” I did it in Word document simply because I just prefer it this way, and also because I have way more experience with it. This is the first time I’ve used hyperlinks but only because I didn’t think to
do it last time. I mainly just do whatever I can to help me do the assignment at hand. The experience with the technology I used to create this document is very convenient. It’s about the same convenience as last semester except I’m getting better at it the more I use it.

In his second project, an analysis of how the satire of his favorite online commentator, Maddox, made him become a more critically aware person, Endle made slightly more informed choices about why he planned on using various elements in his text:

The form I plan on taking for this project will be in that of a narrative and analytical essay. I’ll use hypertexts and quotes within the sources to explain how and why these certain things influenced me. In fact, I might just cut out certain quotes from the actual websites in the form of an image or images from the sources if I find it necessary in the process in doing the project.

Endle used hyperlinks effectively, embedding them at places in the text that help the reader understand his point without providing extraneous information for the sake of information. While he was willing to critique himself and the technology around him, he did not entertain the idea of using that same technology to create a webpage. Instead, he chose the “safe” technology of Microsoft Word to convey his message.

Whereas Hugh’s insistence on speaking out in class drove his arguments for face-to-face communication, the distinction that Endle makes is one typical of introverts—the feeling that one has to speak loudly to be heard. Unlike Hugh, Endle sees online communication as a way to be heard altogether, not a way to hide from communication with others. He participated in the class chats and the discussion boards regularly, wrote prolifically in his IDB (often staying after others had left in the class to continue writing),
and was open to the idea of online classes. However, I do not remember him ever speaking up in class. In his final conversation with me, which he agreed to record for the study, Endle talked much less fluently about his work than he does in his IDB or in class discussion boards (see Appendix X for a transcript of Endle’s interview). In a discussion board, he wrote, “One who stumbles on their speech and stutters a lot may find it easier to just type out what they think. It's also more comforting to know that you don't have to worry about raising your voice loud enough in order to be heard and avoiding having to repeat yourself numerous times when you can just have someone read what you think.”

While he felt more comfortable writing in his IDB, he was also practical about the limitations of using technology in education:

> There's nothing wrong with having online courses available. But having them available only to an online course replacing face to face classrooms would be a bit excessive. The problems would be all too obvious. The quality of the course would depend highly on the technology you can get a hold of such as a decent internet connection or a computer that runs well. Even then, the stability would be questionable. An online course could go quite wrong having to sign back on after numerous failing attempts from getting booted offline (especially with dial-up), or just having your computer freeze leaving you no choice but to just reboot your whole system and then sign back on.

In spite of these limitations, he expressed interest in using more technology in classes: “I wish that all classes (at least at OTC) would allow the use of this technology during class, however it seems (from what I've heard) that some teachers here don't really care for the
idea of students bringing laptops to class to take notes or make use the internet.” His description of technology use was almost completely functional. Technology is useful for practical purposes, such as notetaking. But the use of media for communication outside of traditional forms transmitted electronically is minimal. In a discussion board, he wrote,

I believe that writing websites, wikis, etc are not quite as vital to learn as writing for a traditional paper-based essay and research projects but is tremendously helpful and convenient nevertheless. You can still go to a library and do all your research there and write out a paper by hand. Personally, I'd rather just pull up websites for research and type everything out and submit it via email, blackboard, whatever, which saves me a lot of time and gas by minimizing the trips I'd have to make to certain locations for research . . . . The prevalence [sic] of the Internet doesn't necessarily require us to write through these digital forms but for the most part, it does kind of pressure us to use them. There are still classes out there that don't require any use of a computer or the Internet but even then, the Internet is still useful for researching things in whatever those classes may be.

Usefulness for Endle was, again, tempered by reliability and the legitimacy of communication in this medium:

Other than the fact that we can't depend on the Internet because of it's [sic] reliance on electricity (which I agree with), I don't believe the "online language" as in acronyms, abbreviations, misspelled words, etc, is a legitimate language and should even be bothered with. I do agree that it's vastly spreading as you said. This makes me lose hope as well. I'd say if you really
know English, you'll be able to understand these small things well enough.

That is to say that whoever is typing by the way of "online language" is at least coherent, otherwise they aren't even worth addressing to begin with. I'm not so worried about having to learn this "language" as it's been around for quite a while and I've yet to see a passing paper that "iz riten lyk thiz, ~LOL~." I believe it's a horrible idea to be required to learn this Internet lingo for the very sake of our human intelligence.

Endle’s final sentences show that he is very aware of code switching and uses it to make a point, much as he uses hypertext in his essays. He has a rhetorical control of the written language, and media is a means for him to maintain that control in the most expedient way.

The themes that run through the statements of Daughtery, Hugh, and Endle are the purity of traditional written language and the importance of upholding language or literacy that will advance humanity—an idea that seems to be denigrated by the use of technology. All seem to see technology as functionally practical, but all maintain the importance of writing in traditional forms in order to maintain a form of social stability. And all three students maintain a critical view of the very technology they see as inevitable in their futures, maintaining separation between technology as subject and using digital media in coursework.

*Students Who Are Uncomfortable with—and Less Critical of— Technology*

Other students upheld the use of various forms of media and technology as important for communication but did not go beyond using basic word processing programs. The second group of students were more concerned with not fully understanding how to use anything outside of Microsoft Word, particularly for schoolwork. Darling, who had difficulty
with computer use throughout the class, wrote only essays for the course. For her first project proposal, she wrote, “I feel that a research paper along with a small chart would be most fitting.” She proposes the same for the second and third projects.

In response to the discussion on the online article “One Size Fits All,” Darling wrote,

Since I was in kindergarten, I was “programmed”, so to speak, to follow. Follow the directions given from the teacher as they tell you exactly what you will do, how you will do it and when you will turn it in. Coming from that to a very generic description [sic] of an assignment over the computer would make me feel lost. Just turning [sic] in assignments on the computer took me a while to get used to.

Her hesitation with using technology for her projects overwhelms what she claimed to believe both about the rhetoric of using Web pages for communication and the necessity to know these technologies for future success. In the discussion board, she wrote,

I feel that with using a web page instead of a traditional paper may more productively get your message across to the reader. Say if the reader is more of a visual learner you could include graphs, pictures or recordings to better infasize [sic] your point. They can also pick and choose what information they read by clicking on different sections of the webpage. Or if they wanted to explore the subject more in depth by using the hyperlinks. I feel that more and more this society is becoming reliant [sic] on computer communication. Though we are not being forced to use this tecnology, [sic] we are exposed to it daily and many places will not hire with out computer skills so it is a good
thing that we know it. I feel that hyperlinks may make it easier to communicate information than reading a paper. If you are having trouble understanding the subject discussed you could click on a hyperlink and have access to many different explanations that you may understand better or come across a website that provides more detail to a subject that you may wanted but was not available in a paper.

Darling uses “you,” which Bartholomae describes at a teacher tone, in the above passage. Bartholomae says that for students struggling with a topic or with writing, “it is very hard . . . to take on the role—the voice, the persona—of an authority whose authority is rooted in scholarship, analysis or research. They slip, then, into a more immediately available and realizable voice of authority, the voice of a teacher giving a lesson” (625). In both of the passages above, when Darling talks about authority or about the importance of digital communication, she slips into the “you” voice to speak to us as the “expert” about a subject she admits she does not feel comfortable.

Another student who had difficulty navigating Blackboard also stuck to essays because of comfort and convenience. Gratton toyed with the idea of creating a Web site for her first project, which answered the question “Do butterflies know what species to mate with?” Instead, she completed essays for all three projects in the course. In her first proposal, she did not seem to have a rhetorical reason to do a Web site. She wrote, “While I feel that a website could be beneficial for this project, I also believe that writing a paper would be an appropriate form. I will most likely have images on my pages, and maybe some cool hypertext links.” Her rationale that hyperlinks would be “cool” does not lead her to ultimately use them. In the end, she chose a traditional essay format, “MLA style because
that is the style we used in my last class and it was very familiar to me. I felt more comfortable with it.”

She stuck with comfort as a reason for writing essays throughout the remainder of the course. After writing an essay, what she considers the “appropriate form” for the second project, her response focused primarily on her inexperience with technology as the reason for her choice. She wrote an “essay MLA style. i like to write essays. i prefer them over other complicated forms. I'm not real good with technology, so hyperlinks and websites are harder to accomplish. yes i have done MLA essays in the past…. no technology used to create this document.” The curious final statement, that she used “no technology” to complete her essay, indicates that not only does she have difficulty using the technology, but also she doesn’t seem to acknowledge the existence of those technologies she can comfortably use.

Gratton’s lack of comfort with technology extended to Blackboard itself. In her final about her experiences in the class, she indicated that she uses strategies to help her understand how to use Blackboard:

The first big hurdle was learning how to maneuver through Blackboard. I had never done anything more than look up my grade and read one post that my psychology teacher had posted for us, so this was all new to me. Blackboard was kind of hard at first to keep up with all of the tabs and I learned quickly that it would be better to click on every tab to check to see if anything had changed because I had missed turning in a couple of assignments because they were under different tabs and I never noticed they were there. After a week or two, working on Blackboard seemed to be much more efficient to me and my work and I began to wish all of my teachers
would base their classes around Blackboard. There were no papers to be handed in or lose, and as soon as the teacher was finished grading it, we could see the results immediately. Being trained to use Blackboard ended up being a great learning experience and I feel that in the future, if I have a teacher who uses Blackboard, I will feel a lot more at ease with Blackboard surfing.

Her strategies to become comfortable with Blackboard did not extend to other activities in the course, such as reading the online article “One Size Fits All?” She wrote in the discussion board that “I liked the lay out, but it was a little confusing when i click on one of them hyperlinked words and got shuffled to another page. I thought i was having dejavu when i would go back to the main screen and start reading another page only to realize i just hyperlinked to this page so what the h*** am i doing reading it again.” Later in the discussion board she indicated being totally confused even with the terminology that I use in the discussion board: “What are wikis and blogs? Does anyone know?” And in response to whether or not writing for these forms was important, she wrote, “No, it shouldn't be as important. Why? Because there are so many people in this world we share that know nothing about technology and can not afford to keep up. Are we supposed to just leave them behind?”

Gratton admitted needing help to understand basic terms dealing with technology. “By multiple modes, i assume you mean text messaging and emails.....im confused. Yes technology is requiring us to learn to write in all different forms. I wish this school offered CLASSES FOR DUMMIES on these things so that I can keep up.” And finally, she contradicted her earlier statements about using hyperlinks with another answer on the
discussion board and defended her choice of media based on the “stability” of the essay form: “what do I need a hyperlink for? I can talk just fine without someone clicking on me. . . . That is the beauty of the traditional paper. It is taught exactly the same way over and over and over for years. It doesn’t change and once you learn how to read and write, anyone can do it.” Gratton’s problems with basic functional aspects of technology prohibited her in many ways from being critical of that technology. Her responses in discussion boards and choices for projects reflect her feeling of being left behind by technology, and she exercised much less choice than Hugh, Daughton, or Endle to “take or leave” the technology that was being thrust upon her in the digital age.

Raneman, a budding English education major, expressed doubt like Gratton about using Blackboard when she first came to the class,

> When I found out that we would be using Blackboard every day in class, and to turn in our papers I was mortified. I had never used this program before, and what if I couldn’t figure it out? I look back now and think to myself how different the class would have been if we had not used Blackboard. I not only ended up using the system for English, but also used the program in many of my other classes as well.

Like Gratton, she saw the value of Blackboard and related the importance of learning to write in various media but only briefly flirted with the idea of creating a PowerPoint before sticking to the essay format for all of her projects. In her first proposal, she wrote, “I would really like to make a power point because I love doing power points, but for this project I believe that a paper would be most effective.” In an IDB message, she changed her mind midway through the project: “I was just wondering, I was wanting to change my format of
my paper from a paper to a powerpoint but I didn’t know if I could because I put on my proposal that I was going to write a paper will I lose points if I do a powerpoint instead?” She did not provide a justification for her desire to change formats, but I indicated that her change in format will not affect her score. In her response, she talked about why she reverted to her original format when she talked about the decisions she made during the course of the project: “I also had to decide whether I was going to do a paper or a powerpoint. I made these decisons [sic] by doing a paper because I had no graphics that I could use to make a powerpoint be effective . . . . I tried to make a hyperlink to my interview, but it wouldn't work.” Her following projects are both essays.

For her second proposal for comparing whether or not her syllabi for her courses adequately reflected the work in those courses, she wrote, “I feel that a paper will be most effective for my project because I can compare and contrast different opinions and points of view better than with a power point.” In her response, she wrote, “I decided to use a word document because I thought that a word document would most effectively demonstrate how the syllabi compared and how the objectives related to the class, I have done many word documents before.” The rationale for her third project was much like that for her second project, “I feel that a paper will be most effective for my project because I will be better able to explain my ideas and use examples in a paper rather than a power point.” Neither of the rationales for the second or third project seems to relate in particular to why the essay is the strongest form.

However, in the discussion boards, Raneman insisted that “learning to write for websites, wiki’s, and blogs is just as important as learning to write in the traditional form because so much of our lives are spent on the computer. If you had to learn how to write in
these formats then you could better understand what you are reading when you go to a website that is not of your own making.” Her rationale for using Microsoft Word in her projects was based on comfort with the technology, but she indicated in her discussion boards that learning to write in other forms will be necessary for success in both school and the workforce. She wrote,

Whether we like it or not most of our college classes involve a computer to some extent, so why should we not be taught how to use it? Also whether or not your major is requiring you to deal with computers right now, it will eventually because basically every job that is out there today deals with computers in one way or another. I also think that the prevalence of the Internet is forcing us to learn how to write in these different forms because it is such a useful tool in today's society [sic] . . . . So many people have to use computers for their jobs that they really don't have a choice in the matter, they have to learn about them, and how to communicate through them. I think that hyperlinks and other forms of digital expression could help me to better connect with my audience because sometimes when you are writing a paper the idea is so clear in your head, but you just cannot get it down on paper to make sense like it did in your head. . . . All in all I think that technology is the way of the future, soon all of our classes will be online, and we won't even have the option of taking the classes in a "normal" classroom setting. Of course there are those who will fight this to the death, but really there is not a lot that they can do about it.
Like Darling and Gratton, Raneman uses the “you” tone and does not seem to claim control or choice in her use of media. Her post is a mix of resignation about the need for technology use and championing technology use as important for getting messages across more clearly to an audience.

Another non-traditional student, Mitchner, was an A.A. transfer student who eventually wanted to study art at a four-year school. Like the previous students, he decided to complete three essays for his course requirements. For his rationale in his first proposal, he wrote, “I will probably write an essay explaining what my findings are and what effects they could have on my career choices. This is possibly the best and easiest way to present this information, though a powerpoint with graphics could also be a very good choice. A powerpoint uses graphics and designs that tie directly into how comic books are presented.” The PowerPoint would, indeed, be a good choice here given the fact that he would be discussing comic books. However, he stuck with a traditional essay because “Writing a paper is what I am most familiar with and is easiest for me. I thought about other forms but wasn't sure how I would do them, so I stuck with what I have done in the past. Most of the technology I used on this project was stuff that I use on a daily basis.” He continued with a similar rationale for projects two and three. In his second project, a PowerPoint would be highly effective to explore the question “Why is Superman a symbol of American culture?” Instead, he wrote an essay, claiming that

My decision to write my project as research paper was based on the same reasons I had for the first project. It seemed to be the easiest and most logical way to express my findings. I think that a power point would end up being nothing more than a slide show of Superman images. I don't have
much knowledge when it comes to creating a website and didn't feel that this
was the time to try experimenting with one. It would also probably be a
collection of images just as the power point would be.

When Mitchner talked about his second project, he primarily used technologies that will help
him remain efficient in completing his work. In his response, he wrote:

Most of the technology I used on this project was stuff that I use on a daily
basis. I am on the internet all time and have to type papers and reports for
other classes. The major differences for me was the use of the databases,
works cited generator and the posts on blackboard. I had never even seen an
online database until last semester and never put it to much use until now.
The works cited generator came in really handy. I have had some experience
with basic books and magazines, but websites and other online systems get
really complicated. It save [sic] me a lot of time and effort. The biggest
difference is having to post assignments on blackboard rather turning them
in. None of my classes have done that before. Apparently I still need some
work on this issue since I am now typing the third copy of my project one
response. I don't know what happened to the first one. I accidentally clicked
off of it and then it was gone and I couldn't get it to come back. When I
submitted the second one, there is no text on the post. Hopefully this one
works.

He had difficulty with technology outside of Blackboard as well:

The attempt to do a survey of peole [sic] I know was a new experience. I had
several questions that I asked to everyone I worked with. I didn't do a very
good job of incorporating them into the text and my attempt to create a chart was a disaster. I never could remember how to create the proper chart and I came close to running out of time to post my assignment, so I chose to leave it out.

In spite of his choices and his failures, he still admitted that communication in various forms is important:

I think that writing for websites, wikis and blogs, as much as I hate to say it, are as vital to learn as writing for traditional paper based essays. Times are changing and technology is growing with leaps and bounds with every second that passes. No one can deny that the world is becoming completely based on new technology. If we don't do our best to keep up, then there is the definite possibility that we will one day become useless and eventually extinct.

Mitchner expresses the lack of control and choice for those who do not keep up with new technologies. And even more than this, he sees the benefit of using these technologies to communicate effectively with an audience. In another discussion board, he wrote,

Hyperlinks and other digital expression allow us to incorporate a lot of information with a small amount of words. Traditional papers require us to write out and explain everything with words. Hyperlinks allow for you to include more information, including some that doesn't completely relate to your topic, for the reader to explore if they should choose to do so. The reader can have the option of what they want to get from an essay or other paper.
Like Darling, Mitchner lapses here into the teacher tone, telling his audience what we should do or can do with technology. And he asserted in all of his responses to classmates the importance of learning to write in multiple modes. In one of the responses, he indicated, however, that anything submitted digitally would fall under his umbrella of communicating using technology. He wrote, “A good example is our English class. Learning to write in these ways is very important since we don't turn in any hand written papers, everything is submitted online. I think that it won't be much longer until every class that isn't completely online will do things in this manner.” So writing a traditional essay and submitting it for class on Blackboard would be considered the same as writing for a wiki or blog or a website. This classification at least partially explains why he maintains the importance of learning to communicate digitally but still completes Word documents for all projects.

Students in this group, much like those in the first group of students, seemed to see technology as inevitable to future success but were not willing to use class projects as an opportunity to practice these skills. Convenience and getting good grades in the course were more important, for the most part, than experimenting with the technologies that would lead them to future success. The students in this group also often fell into a “teacher tone” when describing the importance of technology use, as if they were not fully comfortable with their own opinions in the matter or might be worried that I would be judging their posts based on how much they believed that technology was important. They remained tied to the essay form, which they saw as the key to success in the classroom through a good grade.
Students’ Rhetorical Choices: Taking Risks with Media

While many of the students upheld the traditional essay as the soundest rhetorical choice for their classroom projects, other students ventured into new forms of media (or attempted to), they bridged the gap from critical to rhetorical literacy by making connections between the form of media that they chose and the message they wished to convey with that media. These students also took risks with media, even when they did not necessarily succeed in the traditional academic sense of earning good grades in the course.

Roden was perhaps the most technologically adventurous student in any of the classes I followed for this study. He described himself as an average student with some technology experience: “When I came into the class I was OK at writing to where I could at least get my point across. I knew a little about the technology but didn’t have a lot of experience.” However, he did have experience creating Web pages. Early in the semester, he wrote, “Back in 8th grade I made a webpage but it looks pretty dorky now. Then I tried updating it in 2004 but never did get very far on it. In recent times MySpace is the closest thing I’ve had to a webpage. I’ve done some of my own HTML and used Arachnophilia, FrontPage, and Publisher to do pages.”

His experiences with technology inform his first project:

Three years ago I could login on Trillian (allowing you to login to multiple messenger services through one program) and I'd usually have at least 5 friends who would be logged in and at least one would say something. Now there are many times when I login and no one is on. I suspect that cell text

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36 For Selber’s definition of rhetorical technoliteracy, see chapter five.
messages and the social networking sites have caused the decline in use. In my opinion, instant messaging was quicker and easier than anything else. He proposes a Web site for his first project on the question “Has the use of instant messenger software dropped?” so that “I can place links to the data that I collect.” He also completed a successful survey online for the project. In his response to project one, he wrote, “I ended up setting up an online poll and sent it to all of my e-mail contacts, posted a MySpace bulletin, and posted the link on a forum that I frequent. I had 25 responses which is enough to answer the question.”

The Web site was moderately successful but had some problems with formatting. In his response, Roden addressed these problems:

I hadn’t done a website for any assignment since high school. I have played with my own personal webpage but haven’t had time for it in a couple of years. I didn’t care for Tripod. It is a like a lot of other webpages, not as good as they used to be. I’m either going back to Arachnophilia or FrontPage. I’ll mention this one more time. Don’t use Tripod. It isn’t all that easy to use because it limits you. It would be OK if I was in 5th grade having a webpage for fun.

His second project, a PowerPoint regarding the relationship between wealth and literacy, was never completed.

On discussion boards, Roden was cautiously optimistic about technology. But as with other students, he also valued the importance of the social nature of courses. He wrote in response to a student on a discussion board, “I'm like you where the social part of learning is very important. Online courses are OK but the social aspect only goes so far. It
also depends on how the instructor leads the class.” He expressed his desire to eventually attend seminary and questions how the online seminary would work: “There is even online seminaries and I don’t see how that works. I know the dean of a St. Louis seminary and she doesn't know how that would ever work. So much of that is the community experience. I guess that the seminary is the educational institution and the denomination would be the ordaining body.” His best solution for education was a mix: “In an online class I’d like to be able to meet the students in person every month or so. But there goes being anonymous. I think I must be a hybrid fan similar to what we're currently doing.” And he took a moderate position on whether or not online discussions encourage expression, pointing out that lack of expertise with technology is another form of muting: “I see where there is both muted groups in the online classroom and the face-to-face classroom. The shy students in the traditional classroom can be muted. The people who are struggling with technology would be muted online. I think that overcoming these obstacles is part of your education.”

In class, Roden was very quiet, and when he participated freely in the class chat we held in the classroom, several students wondered who he was because he had been so quiet during in class discussion. In the discussion boards, he was also active in responding to others, even though he was skeptical of the practice of being “out there” online but not in person. He wrote, “I participate in another online forum and don't always say what I want because I know people are watching. If people didn't know who you were then you could say what you wanted. But would that practice for the real world?” In these statements, he echoed Hugh’s doubt that online discussion prepares one for real world debate. But in practice, he was more introverted, like Endle. Overall, his positions on technology are much more moderate than others, especially regarding the use of technology in coursework.
In response to questions about the importance of writing online, Roden also held a moderate position:

For some people writing on websites, wikis, and blogs is important. For others it may not seem important. I think that every person would benefit from networking with people who are in a similar job as their own. . . . I do think that as bandwidth increases we will see more video and that may push out text. We are a very visual people and don't like to use our imagination. On the other hand some people gain respect with their words differently than they may on video. Others may come across better with video. Video is more intrusive into the person's environment than the written text . . . . Traditional paper essays aren't going anywhere either and they will always have their place. In my opinion better writers of traditional papers would make better online writers as long as they knew how to use technology. It is still the language.

One significant difference with Roden’s dialogue about technology is his specific reference to non-print-based media. He makes clear distinctions between verbal and visual communication, and when another student questions him on his previous statement, he clarified with specific examples about his family:

I don't think I said that the way that I wanted. I meant to say that good writers in traditional formats would also make good online writers, as long as they knew how to use the technology. I didn't mean to say that the writers would be better with the technology, although some may be. Yes, you'd probably be able to survive but most people that I know who don't
know how to use the computer feel left out. Are they missing out on something? An example is my Grandma Haase. She's in her early 80s and both her older brother and her younger sister are now online. They talk to her about what they do online. Then her kids and grandkids are all online. She feels like she's missing out on something. She's always figured that she wouldn't be able to use the computer. She's been asking more and more questions and looking at Princes. Makes me think that she's going to get in on the action. Another example is my older sister. She is an RN and got by without ever being on the internet from the time she graduated college in 1994 until she taught classes [here] in 2005. The only time she touched a computer was whatever software they use at a hospital. When she started teaching [here] she had to learn how to use e-mail. That opened up the door for her. She realized all that she could do online and starting using it at home. She comparison shops for EVERYTHING online. She no longer teaches [here] but is now able to at least say that she knows something about the computer whenever she goes after other jobs.

Roden’s views on technology were certainly more moderate than those of other students in the class. He was also one of the few students to use Web-design software in the one project he completed and to propose similar projects that he did not finish in the rest of the course. His negative experiences with Tripod did not discourage him from proposing a Web page for his third project which would have answered the question “What is the value of the features of www.missourigasPrinces.com and do they make it worth using?” In his proposal for project three, he wrote, “The project will use a webpage so that I can use links to the
webpage. I also plan on using screen captures. I plan on trying out GooglePages.” But this project was never submitted, and Roden, who only missed one day of class and participated in almost all class activities, did not submit a final project and failed the course. While Roden’s views on and proficiency with technology would indicate that he would be one of the more successful students in a course exploring and using technology, he did not complete the course.37

One of the only other students to use a website, Kline, used a variety of media for her projects in the class. She began with a PowerPoint for her first project on the question “Why has the age for first pregnancies changed over the last 50 years?” but did not provide a rationale for the choice. She wrote, “I plan on doing a PowerPoint presentation, but I will also turn in a written paper.” She did the PowerPoint but not the paper. In her response for the first project, she wrote, “I used a powerpoint and I thought it would be really cool and easy but it wasn't at all. I have done one other powerpoint but I also presented with it so it ran a lot smoother. I have made a previous powerpoint and it was awesome but that was like 5 years ago and I have lost some touch on what I use to know.”

After limited success with the PowerPoint, Kline proposed an ambitious second project: “The specific question I will be asking is, ‘Why has Eric Cartman evolved from season one to the mastermind in season nine, yet he is still in the 3rd grade?’” In her proposal, she planned an elaborate Web page for detailing the results of her question:

I will be making a website for this project. I believe that it would be beneficial to add video clips, clip art, animations and links to other websites to make my project reach its full potential. I have found some video clips on

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37 Interestingly, Rodenburg asked me to be his Facebook friend after I sent a message to members of the class asking them to contact me if they had a Facebook account. When I asked members of the class to provide a follow-up to their experiences in the class a year later, he did not comment.
youtubecom and comedycentralcom that I plan to put on my website. I will also be looking for some graphics that will make my webpage look really good. I will also be adding a link to the comedy central website and youtubecom. I am also hoping to find some animations that will go with my theme and add a little character to my website.

Her project accomplished all of the things stated above with regard to design; however, the content of the original proposal was lost in the final project, which ended up including an overview of South Park’s seasons and characters instead of being a focused analysis of one character’s development. In her response, she acknowledged that the form overwhelmed the function:

I really enjoyed making the website. I wish I would have made my topic a little less broad because I think I was a bit overwhelmed by topic. I really wanted my website to be great. I was having problems with my graphics to work and I messed with them too much that I didn’t get all the information that I wanted on the website. I had videos to go with each character but FreeWebs made them unassesscable [sic] to viewers so that caved in. Most of my graphics FreeWebs wouldn’t let me put on the site. I really thought it would be great to make a website. I had great ideas to make it. I have made one other website before but it was about my family so it was really easy. I have learned quite a bit about making websites and different things to really focus on.

After the first two projects, she opted for an essay to end the course: “So far in this class I have done two projects, one being a powerpoint and the other being a website. For this
project I will be writing a paper. I will most likely include images and hypertext on my pages.” She does not wind up adding any hyperlinks or photos.

Her experiments with form reflected her opinions about the usefulness of technology in the classroom. In a class discussion board, she wrote, “I think the best way to teach someone to write is to use the traditional paper based essays and branch from that to websites, blogs, etc. I think you need to know the basics before you get technical. I think the prevalence of the internet is requiring us to learn multiple modes of writing. Which after a person knows the basics using these digital forms is a lot easier.” This post was written after she had already completed the problematic website. In spite of her willingness to experiment with different media, she held fairly traditional views about the standard research essay, saying

I think that hyperlinks and other forms of digital expression make it easier to communicate your point with others. I would even say that it would be more clear than a traditional paper. I think that the ability to write papers online is great but I think the best way to start out writing is with a traditional paper. I think that you should be able to write about something without being able to attach hyperlinks . . . . I think it is good to know how to write on websites, blogs and etc but I also am a big fan of the traditional paper. In this class I have tried to branch out from my usual ways and trying other methods. What do you think is the best method to learn from? I think it the traditional essay.

Her views of traditional essays are not quite as glowing as those of other students. Her statements about “learning from” traditional papers seem to contradict her practice. She sees the traditional essay as essential to academic development and the “correct” way to progress
to other forms of writing. However, she composes only one essay, and that falls at the end of her series of projects in the course.

While Kline did not seem to clearly make connections between her beliefs about traditional essays and the work she completed for the course, Gleason was one of few students who flirted with doing a format other than an essay, PowerPoint, or website that clearly addressed rhetorical needs. For her first project, she considered a blog because opening a dialogue about her project would be fruitful. Her idea for the project was an investigation of tacit racism. In her first proposal, she stated, “While there have been great strides made in smashing social stereotypes, it still seems that some people have a hard time just getting everything right when it comes to being politically correct in everyday communication. In fact, a lot of the time, Americans reveal the same or even more stereotypes when they attempt to avoid them.” When she proposes the project, she shows rhetorical savvy in her consideration of the blog as a medium for her project: “I’m considering doing either a paper or creating a blog for this project using basically the same text for either. In a paper I would be able to come up with a more definite answer to my question, thus basically sealing the topic. In a blog there would be room following the text for open discussion which may be a more effective way of handling this particular topic.” However, she completed only the traditional essay because of the difficulty she had in getting people to actually talk about her ideas. In her response to project one, she wrote, “In the beginning, I had considered doing a blog, but it really just didn’t work out for me. I couldn’t get people to go on and post comments and I wasn’t really sure how to have it all layed out either, so I just went with a paper because I was comfortable with it.” The rhetorical purpose for her project disintegrates not for a lack of trying but for a lack of
participation by her potential research subjects. For the second project, she stayed with what was familiar to research literacy among Native Americans on reservations: “This project will almost definitely be a paper. The only other possible form it could take is a PowerPoint presentation, but I don’t know if I could come up with enough graphics for it to work well.” Even after experimenting with different media, she returned to the more familiar for her later projects.

Gleason, like Roden, rarely participated openly in class but took advantage of the discussion boards to post moderate responses supported by evidence from the texts we discussed—a practice that few students followed. In response to “One Size Fits All?” she wrote:

> The main thing that stood out to me in this piece was the kind of language the students used under students on dissensus, saying things like "Someone has to take the punishment for taking the live of an innocent individual no matter what their age is " or "I think the general American public has trouble recognizing the difference between legal and religious recognition.” This goes back to support the conclusion made in Students’ response to peer collaboration when it says, "Online, some students are less afraid to voice their honest opinions to their peers.” Even though I don't know these people personally, I think it would take a much bolder person to say things like this to someone in person for fear of being "called-out" or even just being disliked.

She then relates the example immediately to one of the predominant themes in the class: students hiding behind discussion boards to express unpopular opinions for which they
don’t have to be challenged. She wrote, “This is one of the things I like about online collaboration. Being a shy person, it helps take some of the edge off. At the same time, I feel that it may interfere with some of the social maturation that usually happens during college. If one is not required to speak face to face with his or her peers and instructors they may never learn to ‘come out of their shell.’”

She also used the discussion board to express her insecurity with her writing. Gleason struggled all semester with turning in work because she never felt that the work lived up to her high standards. She related the article we read for class to her own insecurity with writing in the chat activities: “I agree that the assignment helped some people that were shy be able to participate in class. However, I still had a hard time with it because I am insecure about my writing, and by the time I would make fifteen revisions to what I was going to submit the subject would have changed!!”

While expressing self-doubt in her own abilities, Gleason was one of the few students who challenged other students on their definition and use of media in the discussion boards. She wrote,

First of all, when I think of paper-based essays this would include essays that are typed. Being typed or hand written doesn't change what one is actually saying. Using wikis, blogs, and websites is becoming just as vital as traditional essays, but I think that it comes more from being expected to use this expensive technology that's been purchased than because it is actually progressive. If anything, this type of writing is dumbing down what we are saying. Because everything is at our fingertips, we are coming up with less and less original work. Students simply think of what they want to write
about, go online and find two or three sites that say something similar, and then change a word here and there so that it's not plagiarism. I'm guilty of this as much as everyone else and in a way I think that this is what we're expected to do and what we're graded on how well we avoid plagiarism. I imagine that before this technology was available papers were so much more difficult to write, but also so much more imaginative. Students were required to develop their own ideas based on written research from all kinds of fields, and they weren't simply restating what two or three other people had said. Much more inductive reasoning was happening.

Her opinions did not claim the internet and technology as completely corrupting education, but she did acknowledge the impact of these technologies on the “dumbing down” of education. She did not, however, go as far as to attribute this corruption to the media as do other students:

I'm not saying, however, that web-based writing is completely corrupt. It's just the way that the system seems to be evolving that I'm not fond of. Being able to access information from anywhere at anytime is wonderful and so is being able to put my own ideas out there to share with everyone. For this, I think students should learn how to write for websites, wikis, blogs, etc. As for hyperlinks, I do feel that they can be a useful tool, but I also think that they can be used as a crutch. One isn't required to come to his or her own conclusion when he or she can simply link to someone else's. Again I think this goes back to wanting to basically copy everything that's out there with the main goal being to avoid that gray line of plagiarism. I see what you're
saying, Tim, about using hyperlinks, but isn't effectively writing clearly and concisely something we should be learning instead of learning to cater to our laziness? I'm not saying that these things are not effective or necessary, but they should not be used in place of writing our own ideas and conclusions vividly. Instead perhaps, they should be used as merely a supplement.

Again, Gleason expressed moderate views about technology that show that she was sensitive to both the rhetorical purpose of media as well as the convenience the media provides.

Roden, Kline, and Gleason were all willing to experiment with forms of digital media and all also held moderate views about that technology. Their ability to separate the media and the message allowed them to use media to attempt or complete projects for the class.

**Students Who Successfully Mixed Media and Message**

Two students in particular clearly demonstrated rhetorical technoliteracy in their projects for the course. Perhaps the cleverest use of a form to express function was Willard’s first project, for which he wrote a mock journal article. In his proposal, he wrote,

I will most likely do it in a doctrinal journalesque type of paper; mixing themes found in medical journals with those found in journals done by the psychology group as well. It will not be sensationalized and as such I don’t see any purpose in adding pictures or any such thing to raise it’s [sic] aesthetic value. I will just stick to cold hard statistics. If I find any need for hypertext I may integrate some into this paper but I doubt that I will find any such relevant information that I will need to link to.
The project was to talk about the process of proposing. In his proposal for the project, he indicated that he would investigate the question, “Is there a right or wrong way to produce a proposal?; A psychological study into the minds of the proposing population.”

I initially misinterpreted what he proposed; I thought that would be discuss how to propose an academic proposal, but he later indicated that he initially meant how people propose marriage. However, he went ahead with my idea of writing about the process of writing a proposal. In his response, he wrote,

I have not practiced writing anything satirical or even anything close to a scholarly journal. I have, however, written plenty of essays and theses so I was familiar with the program and the type (e.g. written paper with no hyperlinks). And I would like to branch out and try other media but just writing still intimidates me so I was skeptical about trying anything very new above and beyond just writing the text. Even more than fear though, I chose to use the format that I did to close mimic the journalesque style.

For his other projects, Willard chose PowerPoints that clearly reflected a consciousness of the relation between media and message. In the second proposal for a project that explored the question Does the media of today try to tailor their message toward those that are illiterate or are they still blind to it? he wrote, “While I feel that a website could be beneficial for this project, I also believe that a PowerPoint Presentation would be an appropriate form considering it can all be done with flashy things and little - to no - reading. I have never done anything but Essay style with no hyperlinks or anything, rather drab huh? I am almost certain that I will go the Presentation route but if I do another essay I will try to include pictures and/or graphs (for the illiterates in the class).” His PowerPoint about the
media tailoring their messages to a literate population fell short of the mark. He had graphics and text, but the PowerPoint ended up being about the “typical” day in the life of someone illiterate with little or no mention of media message. In the response, he wrote,

That was my first PowerPoint that I have done (with the exception of just horsing around) so I was quite alright with the score I got. / Also,

PowerPoint allowed me to do a step by step type of presentation whereas doing that in an Essay form would have proved difficult. I have never really done a PowerPoint in a real classroom setting as a real assignment so it was fun to see how well I could do by your standards.

The response does not directly relate to the comments on his project nor does it go into detail about the lack of correspondence between the question he outlines in his proposal and the fulfillment of his project.

His reasoning for the third project had little to do with rationale for the project. His final question was “Has technology become ‘invisible’ to us today?” His justification for the media he would use only vaguely related to his question: “While I feel that almost any form of writing could be beneficial for this project, I also believe that doing another PowerPoint will likely be the ticket. I will most likely have images on my slides, as well as text. I like this idea because it is useful for something that has the feel that this project has in my mind.”

Willard was one of the students skeptical of the usefulness of multi-media for communication. In the class discussion board, he wrote,

Learning the language of online writing is not and should not be a requirement of today's youth. IT is a language that is vastly spreading and it seems to be taking over the English language with it's [sic] abbreviations and acronyms etc...
This makes me sad. I believe that online communication and education is a very good asset to this generation. That being said, anything that is reliant upon something dependent specifically on man and his creations (i.e. electricity) should not be soley [sic] relied upon. This is due to the unmistakable fact that sometimes these things fail as we have seen time and time again.

His reference to “IT” as a language indicated that he was not as versed in the language of technology as the other students in the course. Willard expounded at length on the discussion boards about various forms of expression, not only written but visual as well.

Going back to the unmistakable fact that digital communication offers a splendid means to relate thoughts and ideas. Everyone has heard the quote "A picture is worth a thousand words" insomuch that it is almost a cliche; but it is quite true. Any thought or idea can be expressed with eloquent language and can be expressed sometimes even more fully than pictures or visual representation, but it come at a cost, to relay a thought so vividly with words would require a great amount of them, which require no small amount of dedication from both the writer of the words and the reader. For that reason I say that such tools as hyperlinks and other digital additions greatly help a paper or project to convey a thought . . . . I think that once it becomes a requirement to learn it then there may be less emphasis placed on learning true good old fashioned English, the stuff that gets you places. And I rue the day that learning online language becomes a requirement for education.

And even more than his critique of technology, Willard made connections between the school environment and the technology revolution he dreads:
It is true . . . that not all classes require the use of a computer to function in it. But can you not see the direction we are heading is exactly that? All that has to happen is [for this college to] put up some more dollars for computers and some program writers to design programs that can be done on a computer for each class (which, if you can do complex algebra by way of the keyboard, you can do pretty much anything by way of the keyboard). One must be aware that we could at any moment be one really large paycheck from [our college president] away from a digital college.

Willard’s opinions and work in the class are a mix of critical and rhetorical views of technology. His first project indicated a strong understanding of the connections between media and message. However, his understanding of this connection waned. And his participation in the discussion board indicated that he had an ambivalent stance toward technology, not so much the moderate stance of earlier students who attempted to use media in multiple forms.

The student who most successfully chose to use a mixture of media was Shelby, a non-traditional student like Willard who was returning after ten years in the business world to complete a degree in religious studies. Shelby was by far the most capable writer in the course, perhaps in all of the courses for this study. His first project began with the possibility of a Web site: “While I feel that a website could be beneficial for this project, I also believe that writing a paper would be an appropriate form. Regardless, I will include hypertext. If I conduct interviews, I will also include data in the form of spreadsheets.” His question: “What is the context of biblical references to homosexuality?” Mid-project, he shifted to write a much more traditional academic essay about the subject. In his response, he
explained that “Basically, I wrote a persuasive paper that incorporated research data. It’s easier for me to incorporate data into my writing than to write to accommodate data. I have to get my basic thoughts out first.”

His second project, a PowerPoint reviewing various forms of religious symbolism that he believed permeated the culture of Southwest Missouri, was a massive undertaking. In more than 140 slides that moved in time to the song “It’s a Sin” by the Pet Shop Boys, Shelby represented the results of two-weeks of photography as he traveled around the Ozarks in the course of his daily life. The final project was almost overwhelming. Shelby was very clear about the reasons he chose PowerPoint for this project and the affect that he wanted to have on his audience. In his proposal, he wrote: “I believe a PowerPoint presentation would be best suited for this project. While there will be both narrative and analysis, I want to speak to my audience through pictures. My goal is to demonstrate the effectiveness of Christian symbolism in our everyday lives.” In the follow-up, he reinforced the choices he made in involving primarily graphics with music and very little explanatory text:

I decided to use PowerPoint because I felt images would be more powerful than text in communicating my message. All I knew in advance was that I wanted to take as many pictures of symbols that reinforce Christianity as possible. To me, they had to include symbols in our personal lives, community/region, and nation….Once I had the pictures, the text started falling into place….The most important decision for me was the choice of music. Music is an important part of my life, and I often communicate through it. My close friends know to pay attention to the songs I play
because they often give insight into what I’m thinking/feeling at the time.

I’m a huge fan of 80s pop, so I immediately tried *It’s A Sin* by the Pet Shop Boys when I found it in my library. I didn’t like it at first because I thought others would think I was admitting to sin when I wasn’t. I tried *One Of Us*, *None Of Us Are Free*, and *Like A Prayer* before deciding on *It’s A Sin* when *None Of Us Are Free* didn’t work. In the end, I felt like the symbols were saying “it’s a sin” to be different whether it really is or not. Also, I often feel like “I’ve always been the one to blame” because it was me who chose not to conform (which cost me in terms of relationships with friends and family). The music made the project for me. My negative experiences with technology included pictures from my camera phone that did not turn out well, slow processing speeds, and file size limitations.

Shelby’s first two projects clearly utilized appropriate form to reach his audience. His third project, a paper about the effectiveness of online dating, did not match form as closely to purpose. However, he admitted with the third project that he was exhausted having used up all of his emotional energy on completing the first two projects. Even with this reasoning, his third project cleverly integrated graphics to explain the research he conducted.

Along with experimenting with visual, verbal, and audio combinations for expression, Shelby was also taking online courses, of which he was highly critical. In the class discussion board, he wrote,

I am taking my first online class right now, so I really enjoyed reading what other students had to say about their online experience. I was able to relate to many of them, especially when it comes to "communication anxiety."
identified with the student who wrote, "Can I please meet with you sometime early next week?" I think it takes a certain kind of teacher to successfully facilitate an online class, regardless of student (or teacher) technical literacy. Teachers have to have a strong attention to detail, and be willing to put in the time. I'm sure my instructor is busy, but she has a tendency to send short, sometimes vague messages that often lead to more questions. Her messages also make it easy to read things between the lines that may not be there (or fail to do so). A little more detail would help to replace the missing "social cues" and save her time in the long run.

His concern was for the social connection he needs for a course to be successful. In our course, he was very active in both face-to-face and online discussions, even to the point where another student in the class (whose work I review in Chapter Nine) commented in her final meeting with me that his eloquence and outspoken nature were the main reasons that she did not want to speak up in class for fear of looking stupid in comparison. In discussion boards, Shelby was also a vocal and eloquent participant. In response to “One Size Fits All?” he wrote,

As far as collaboration and dissensus go, my class posts discussion threads and comments, but we don't seem to have true conversation. Most students post the minimum amount required for credit, and never look at the discussion board again. Maybe it's because it's science. True discussions help me to learn by reinforcing what I've read. I find myself memorizing for tests rather than learning and retaining knowledge . . . .[in the article] It was interesting to read what the instructors were looking at behind the scenes.
Analyzing the online classes of other teachers besides themselves may help to see a bigger picture.

When other students offer him advice for how he can deal with the problems he was having in online classes, he engaged with them, revealing that he was also concerned with how he came across in the online courses and how the teacher evaluated him:

I suppose I could take the initiative to start more conversations [sic], but it's tough when you're given a specific subject to discuss. Maybe I just need to give that feedback (and my other feedback) to the instructor. I would if I knew it wouldn't affect the way she grades me.

Beyond voicing the traditional concerns that other students have with digital forms, Shelby brought to bear his work history when discussing the relevance of communicating digitally. Whereas other students in the course speculated on the importance of digital communication in their future careers, Shelby affirmed that importance through his experience:

I think learning to write for websites, wikis, and blogs is important because they are used in the real world. Most of my previous employer's policies and procedures were housed in online manuals or "job aids." It was important for the information to be well written and easy to find/follow for the front line staff because they used it repeatedly to service customers. Online information that was poorly written, incorrect, or difficult to find/follow often resulted in dissatisfied customers who had to call back multiple times to have their issue resolved. Having said that, learning to write websites, wikis, and blogs should not replace learning how to write traditional essays.
Shelby’s posts most clearly made critical and rhetorical distinctions between clearly communicating in any form and using digital media for media’s sake. He also discussed the intricacies of form—reflecting on the subject as he wrote.

Is the prevalence of the internet requiring us to learn to write in multiple modes? I had to really think about this question. At first, I was going to make the point that learning to write and learning to use technology are separate events. But when I thought about what writing really teaches us—how to express ourselves clearly and effectively through written communication—I realized it is important to learn how to use digital forms effectively. The discussion we had on email is a good example. It's easy to email people who know our personalities, but people who don't might not understand us as well. They may fail to read between the lines, or read more between the lines than what's there.

He clearly ties media to rhetorical purpose:

I feel the availability of hyperlinks and other forms of digital expression help me communicate more clearly with others. Going back to the example of my previous employer, most of the reports and presentations I made incorporated graphics—especially graphs. If I was having a stakeholder meeting, I had to use data and graphs to communicate the "trend," "bottom line," or "sense of urgency."

And he further used his ability to understand the importance of audience in a response to Roden: “I also agree about wikis and blogs being confusing if they are not well-maintained.
Websites can be the same way if they are not well written/designed. The fact that we're complaining says something about the importance of learning how to write using them...”

Conclusion

Three recurrent themes thread through student responses to their media choices and to their reaction about technology use in society and education. First, students seem to agree with variations on the theme of “technology is the future” no matter their level of technological expertise or comfort with technology. Students such as Hugh, Daughton, and Endle all believed in technology as the future even though they were not willing to use that technology to complete course projects. Darling, Gratton, Raneman, and Mitchner held similar beliefs about the inevitability of technology and media use in the future, but these students did not feel well-versed in the technology that they felt they were forced to use. Finally, students such as Roden, Kline, Gleason, Willard, and Shelby held more moderate or more ambivalent beliefs about technology and were willing to experiment with different forms of media in the course. Overall, students’ willingness to use media to complete course projects seemed more related to their comfort with the technology than their belief in their need to use the technology. Students’ belief that “technology is the future” and the importance of learning and using digital means for communication were often overridden by fears of judgment: either fears that their peers would judge them in online courses, chat rooms, or discussion boards because of poor writing skills or fears of not knowing what criteria the instructor was using to assess their projects in various media.

Second, students seemed to more often than not hold the written word, or the traditional academic essay, to be of a higher status than writing or communication done
through digital media. This finding would reinforce results from the Pew Internet and American Life surveys where 60% of survey respondents reported that they did not view electronic texts as “writing.” Students in English 102 consistently completed traditional essays for class assignments or seemed to ascribe special attributes to the essay form, associating it with higher levels of literacy than digital forms of writing. And even those students who chose alternative media for some of their projects, such as Kline, Willard, and Shelby, completed traditional essays as well as alternative essays or claimed the importance of understanding the traditional essay for being successful in academics and the future.

Third, face-to-face contact was held up as more a relevant form of communication than digital communication. Students frequently mentioned that they had difficulty in online courses or learning in online communities because a lack of face-to-face interaction with the instructor and the other students. In discussion boards, students simultaneously upheld the need for learning to communicate in digital forms and also in face-to-face contexts. Many of the students feared a future of completely online courses or communication as dehumanizing (Daughton, Hugh, Raneman) or as portending a lack of ability to communicate in the multiple forms required for effective communication (Spoker, Willard, Shelby). Students frequently fell into two camps regarding online or digital communications in classes. The first group of students saw chat rooms, discussion boards, blogs, and other means of communication as “hiding” from others or avoiding social contact—a sign of weakness. Other students saw the benefit of these forms of online communication for those students who had difficulty quickly processing thoughts in a classroom, were shy, or were afraid of their opinions not being heard or of those opinions being judged harshly. However,
even those students who fell into the latter camp would sometimes attribute communication via digital media as a weakness.

Students in English 102 held complex beliefs about the usefulness of technology for education, and those beliefs often informed their decisions about media use. The following chapter further explores students’ willingness to critically explore their technology use and explores students’ reflections about their use of media in the course.
Chapter Eight: Student Questioning, Dialogue, and Reflection at the Community College

This chapter reviews students’ willingness to question literacy and technology, their attempts at dialogue with me (or lack thereof) during the semester, and student reflection on the course in general and their work in particular during and at the end of the course. The critical classroom seeks to focus student attention on students’ everyday realities and language in order to present what is common in a new light to allow for reflection and action. My hopes in English 102 were that students would reflect on their literacy, their use of technology, and their perceptions of the course. Asking questions of, dialoguing about, and reflecting on class themes would invite students to be critical investigators of their reality in the hopes of helping them become more critical of both the choices they make in their writing and in their education in general.

Overall, the English 102 students seemed to be more engaged with questioning literacy and technology than the students in English 104. This engagement was reflected in the questions that students chose for their projects on literacy and technology. Students in English 102 were for the most part successful in asking questions and providing answers for those questions in their projects. While the answers to their questions were at times vague, the students were more likely to choose a question for which they provided an answer or attempted to provide an answer than students in English 104. Students also engaged in dialogue about their projects more readily with me in the Individual Discussion Boards and
in response to their projects. Student responses to their projects showed more engagement with their writing, although in some cases, that engagement was based on student perception of their writing and not necessarily the writing itself or my comments on their writing.

**Student Questions: Their Engagement With Course Themes**

The English 102 course had three generative themes for their projects: Knowledge and Communication; Literacy; and Technology. Unlike English 104, where students jumped directly into looking at literacy, I designed English 102 so that students had an opportunity to pose, research, and answer a question before introducing the themes of literacy and technology. The first project also provided an opportunity to center student attention on their perceptions of education broadly and the course and their experiences in education specifically. This early focusing, I hoped, would encourage students to view their previous experiences as fodder for research to fight the common perception of research as something done by others, elsewhere (Shor, *Empowering Education*, 175).

I wanted students as much as possible to focus on their own experiences in both forming questions and investigating answers to those questions in order to follow my belief that critical pedagogy should encourage students to investigate their own worlds and reflect on those worlds through language. The broader hope was that students would look toward their own perceptions of limit situations both in their previous educational experience and with technology.

A majority of students did pose questions that stemmed directly from observations made about their previous educational experiences, frequently used forms of technology, or issues of which they were aware in the world around them (for lists of specific questions
students posed for each project, see Appendices N, Q, and Z). Students were also able to follow through fairly consistently on the questions they posed to identify relevant sources to research and provide answers to their questions.

Of the twenty-eight students included in the study who posed questions or indicated that they would be analyzing a particular issue for a topic, six were able to successfully follow through with research and draw conclusions based on that research for all of their projects. Another eight were able to do so for all but one of their projects, and the remaining eleven followed through with answering their questions or performing an analysis on only one or none of their projects (see Figure 8.1 for a list of students who fell into each category).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drew conclusions from research on all projects</th>
<th>Drew conclusions from research on two of the three projects</th>
<th>Drew conclusions from research on one of the three projects</th>
<th>Failed to draw conclusions from research on all projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clause</td>
<td>Bree</td>
<td>Ardle</td>
<td>Darling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endle</td>
<td>Ester</td>
<td>Akins*</td>
<td>Harrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathes</td>
<td>Hugh*</td>
<td>Daughton</td>
<td>Meecher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince</td>
<td>Harms</td>
<td>Gratton</td>
<td>Raneman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelley</td>
<td>Kline</td>
<td>Gleason*</td>
<td>Willard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shelby</td>
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<td>Mitchner</td>
<td>Roden*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Owsley</td>
<td>Spoker*</td>
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<td>Theron*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates students who did not complete one of the projects in the class.

Students who self-identified as strong writers or had identified as future English majors (Mathes, Shelby, Harms, Daughton, Darling, Raneman) fell into all categories on the chart. Also, self-identified “weak” writers (Prince, Shelley, Marsh, Gratton, Harrell) also fell into all categories of the chart. Perception of writing abilities and students' ability to follow-through with deriving conclusions based on evidence to answer a question or analyze an issue did not correlate.
The types of questions that students posed, particularly those that related to the course themes, showed that they were willing in many ways to question the structures that supported literacy and technology that they encountered on a daily basis. For the literacy project, several students chose to analyze materials from their present or previous courses (Raneman, Marsh, Akins, Bree, Owsley). Others chose symbols of cultural literacy, including images surrounding poverty (Mathes), and children’s televisions shows incorporating foreign language study (Prince). And still others chose to take on larger issues of literacy, such as the implications of the No Child Left Behind Act on local public schools (Ester) or the success rate of two-year college students who have earned a GED and transferred to a four-year school (Harrell).

For the technology project, many student questions revolved around three issues: 1) the danger of increased online communication, such as MySpace and Facebook, making human relations less personal or being in other ways detrimental to society (Kline, Owsley, Harms); 2) the popularity of online banking and whether or not the convenience outweighs the risks (Clause, Mitchner, Raneman); or 3) how electronic gaming has impacted them personally or education in general (Harrell, Endle, Gratton, Mathes). These questions reflect issues from the prompt for the project (see Appendix S) and issues discussed in the course.

For both the literacy project and the technology project, student conclusions seemed to reinforce their already-held beliefs about literacy or technology or reinforced much of the “status quo” of systems. One such example was Clause’s conclusion about online banking: “After researching the topic, online banking’s disadvantages aren’t as scary to me compared to before. I will absolutely utilize more of the features I didn’t know about such as the portfolio management programs in online banking.” All of the students who analyzed online
banking came to similar conclusions—while the potential for identity theft or invasion of privacy was prevalent, they would begin to use or continue to use online banking because of the convenience. Even those students who had previously expressed skepticism at the “takeover” of technology in everyday life during their online discussion board sessions, such as Raneman, came to conclusions about online banking that reinforced their desire to use technologies for convenience.

For the literacy project, students were only slightly more willing to challenge traditional educational structures when those structures were a part of their inquiry (for exceptions to this rule, see the case studies of Marsh and Bree later in this chapter). Often, conclusions were general or reinforced already held beliefs about education and literacy. One example is Harms’ conclusion to the question “Does parental involvement influence children’s acquisition of literacy?” In his conclusion, he wrote, “In this writer’s opinion, if parents spent more time serving as a positive role model for standard literacy, children’s overall ability to demonstrate literacy skills would greatly improve. Not only would this time spent help children’s ability to excel in literacy, but it would also benefit their overall relationship.” Harms does not choose the more challenging questions of why parents might choose not to be involved in the literacy practices of their children or what might prevent parents from being effective literacy coaches for their children. Other students, such as Raneman, who wrote about whether or not course objectives were reflected in the courses she was taking, concluded that

In my opinion, an effective teacher covers all of the objectives that are listed on their syllabus. I understand that sometimes there are circumstances within the class that can change what objectives are taught. This does not
necessarily take away from the quality of the class, but could eventually add unexpected lessons that end up benefitting the student. Objectives are placed on a teacher’s syllabus to serve as a roadmap for the semester, and students can use objectives to determine if the class was an effective part of their education.

The conclusion did not necessarily answer the question but instead reinforced the main point of the course objective as a way to pattern a course that might necessarily change. Instead of making specific conclusions about the course objectives she reviews and how she used them, she defines what course objectives are in general and how students could possibly use them.

I sought to dialogue with students about their writing in ways that would challenge them to identify what methods of inquiry would be most beneficial to answer their question or to analyze the issue they initially proposed. To elicit student response, I asked them on proposals to indicate not only what question they would be asking but also other questions they would need to ask to answer the primary question and where they would go to look for the answers to those questions (see Appendix BB for the assignment sheet for project one). In their response to each project, I asked them to reflect on their process for creating the project, the decisions they made in creating the project, and how they made those decisions (see Appendix Y for the questions to elicit the project one response).

Not surprisingly, students indicated a broad range of possibilities in their proposals for how they would go about answering their questions or analyzing the issues they proposed (see Appendix FF for a chart of what students proposed for their research and how they followed through with that research).
Students, for the most part, proposed ambitious research plans to answer their questions. Their plans integrated elements of the course that we discussed in class—such as interviews, surveys, and academic articles—with sources on the internet or from their own experience. When discussing their process, how they made decisions, and what steps they took to answer their questions, however, they did not always refer to the sources they gathered or their process of inquiry as part of the process for their project. In fact, a number of students separated the process of creating the project from the process of inquiry itself. This was no doubt due in part to the prompt questions, which asked students about their process of creating the “text” and their experience with the technology that they used to create that text. Students seemed to interpret that question as pertaining only to the actual writing of the text and not the creation of the project as a whole. More careful wording of the response prompts might have elicited more thorough responses from students.38

One student who mentioned an ambitious research plan in her project one proposal is Ester. Her question was “Where do college students get their news from?” In her proposal, she explained that

To explore my question I will start by using Internet resources. I will look at statistics as well as find information that will supply me with examples and evidence to support my point. At this point I have interviewed a few of my peers that were in a college setting. I asked a few background questions that helped me get to know my audience better. I have interviewed both men and women, yet my question still stands for more exploring. I hope to find a deeper acquisition towards the actual importance of television, radio,

38 For the specific questions on the prompt response, see Appendix Y.
newspaper, etc. For future research I am looking into EBSCO host on the [college] website as well as find reports relating to my question. I also want to look more into the classroom discussions by interviewing teachers. That will be a small portion of my research, but a keen part to the project as a whole.

In her project response, she focused on the decisions she made when creating her PowerPoint and not necessarily her process of finding sources using the technology she proposes.

The toughest decision I made was finding graphics to make my power point stand out from most. If I would have had better knowledge of power point, I think it would have been better. It was hard trying to think of graphics to replace for example the radio and computer. I tried to make the power point flow, but some parts I’ve realized I didn’t do so well. I would talk about the subject matter, and then I would just move onto the next method or something totally new.

In project one, she used only websites in her final analysis, not the interviews or EBSCOhost sources that she originally plans to research. She drew a conclusion to her question that followed from the sources that she locates for her paper:

In conclusion, I have found in my own agreement that television is the most profound use of media. Students would rather find out the news by watching Comedy Central. They would rather have an entertaining aspect to help them inquire the current news. When starting this assignment the only television media I thought of was the network news. I had no idea about Comedy
Central having two shows, The Daily Show and The Colbert Report that aided to knowledge of news. I’m happy to see the media industry has found a more efficient way to introduce important topics to college students in a more “in their words” type of way. The network news broadcasting stations are too hard to understand and are aimed toward older adults that understand the concepts.

She was successful in answering her question based on her sources, even if she does not see the sources themselves or decisions of which sources to use as a part of her overall process nor utilize the sources she initially anticipates.

Some students shifted easily between questions that required traditional academic inquiry and questions that required inquiry primarily outside of the realm of traditional “academic” research (e.g., relying on gathering primary data rather than gathering secondary sources). Shelby, a non-traditional student hoping to transfer to a four-year religious studies program, was one of these students. For his first project, he posed the question “What is the context of biblical references to homosexuality?” To answer this question, he proposed using interviews and surveys to “analyze general perception” and using books and texts written by religious scholars. He completed the first project in traditional academic essay form because “religious scholars seem to write essays.” He did follow through with writing a traditional essay; however, he did not conduct the interviews and surveys he proposed but stuck with primarily textual analysis of the Christian bible and books written by religious scholars—traditional secondary sources for student research.
For his second project, he asked “What are some of the Christian symbols in our everyday lives, and how do they help socialize Americans into Christianity?” The research process he described in his proposal was as follows:

To explore my question, I plan to take a digital camera with me everywhere I go over the next few weeks. I will take pictures of as many things that remind me of the Christian faith as possible, and may ask a couple of my close friends to do the same. I will then analyze the pictures for their meanings, messages, and affects. I am currently taking pictures. I will try to take at least one weekend trip, and will search the Internet for state and national images that I cannot personally capture.

When he described the process he actually completed for the project, he discussed how gathering the photos was an integral component of his process:

The process was different than Project One because I had to wait to make most of my decisions until the pictures were taken. All I knew in advance was that I wanted to take as many pictures of symbols that reinforce Christianity as possible. To me, they had to include symbols in our personal lives, community/region, and nation. . . . I started carrying my digital camera and camera phone with me almost immediately. I started taking as many pictures as I could, but found it difficult to take them through the week (I couldn’t always stop to get really good pictures). Because of this, I took most of the pictures during the last two weekends before the project was due.

Once I had the pictures, the text started falling into place. I used the Wednesday and Thursday before the due date to make and arrange slides, set
up transitions, and add music. The due date itself was used for completing my notes.

Shelby’s data and the decisions he made during his process were closely linked, an ideal process for authentic student inquiry. For more information about Shelby’s choice of media and his description of his actual process in creating the PowerPoint that resulted from his research, see Chapter 7.

The Final Analysis: Students Identify Their Learning in the Course

I felt strongly in English 104 that I didn’t provide students with enough support at the end of the class to write strong final projects analyzing what they learned and synthesizing the major components of the course. I was determined in English 102 that I would not repeat that mistake. By the final class periods in English 102, I was much more comfortable working with students through projects and modeling for them the processes of posing questions for analysis. In my journal, I wrote,

Next to last class day. I handed out the final and we answered the questions that I wrote up to help them brainstorm for the paper. . . . When I was preparing for class today, I was having trouble figuring out how I was going to present this and walk them through the steps of the activity. Then it dawned on me that I could do it with them and then I could use what I wrote yesterday to work with them on what they can do today.

Students spent the last few days of class brainstorming and drafting their final projects before coming to talk to me about those projects. In class, I brainstormed with students

39 Other students, such as Gleason and Daughton, proposed similar projects, basically projects utilizing grounded theory, with various degrees of success (see Appendix FF for details about those students’ projects).
based on the prompt questions for class (see Appendix AA for the questions the course brainstormed and my answers to those questions). Between class periods, I crafted a paragraph from that brainstorm, and as I wrote the paragraph, I captured my writing and revisions in Camtasia, narrating over the writing the process that I was using in drafting the paragraph. I posted the recording on Blackboard and played that recording in class. Students then used class time after I played the recording to draft paragraphs and analyze their experience in the course in preparation for the final. Students posted their paragraphs to Blackboard so that I could provide feedback before they began fully drafting their final projects.

The last few days of class, I asked students to meet with me individually, either one-on-one in my office or “virtually” in a synchronous or asynchronous format. The majority of students selected the face-to-face meeting option, and all but four of those students agreed to let me either capture our session on Camtasia or with a voice recording. Other students asked for feedback via Camtasia recording alone, and I posted files with me talking about their work in their IDBs. Students could then dialogue asynchronously with me regarding the comments I posted to them online or arrange a time to meet synchronously in the Blackboard chat room.

Student paragraphs after the final two class days showed great success at moving from initial brainstorming to fully developed and substantiated paragraphs. Students did not simply answer the series of questions that I presented during class for the final but formed essays that questioned what they had learned and elaborated on that learning to critically analyze what they had done in the course.
The most surprising quality of student finals was that the majority of the students were able to elaborate on ways their writing changed with specific details from the class itself. Students at all levels of writing proficiency demonstrated that they had learned how to construct solid paragraphs by *writing* solid paragraphs. And even more surprising, and pleasing, was the critical review that many students did of their work, assessing the elements of writing on which they had done well or could continue to improve.

The first example of this critical stance can be found in Clause’s final. Clause was one of the students who in the beginning of the course flinched at the idea of not having specific directions for the first assignment. She wrote her final to specifically compare English 101 which she had completed the previous semester with English 102. She focused in particular on the ways in which the English 102 course challenged her writing to be more complex and less formulaic:

> Although English 101 was restricting and uniform, English 102 has been a completely different story. At first, the class concerned me due to the new ways of teaching by Mrs. Skurat Harris. This teacher never gave guidelines for topics or formats of projects. The papers turned in were intended to be analytical and supportive with personal evidence and examples; not strictly informative. I had trouble at first because I have a logical, by the book personality/learning type which was opposite of how Mrs. Skurat Harris teaches. Learning to step outside my box and be creative with my own thoughts and assumptions through writing has been amazingly refreshing during the course. I have grown as a writer and learned how to analyze a topic, provide evidence and examples, and give a concrete conclusion based
on the initial statement and supporting evidence. I have also better learned and applied pronoun, comma, paragraph, and proper sentence structure throughout the course. I feel the papers I write now have a concrete consistency and meaning, whereas before, I produced wimpy grade school essays.

In another paragraph of her final, Clause identified places in her writing that she did not follow through with analysis even when she realized the importance of that analysis to the overall project due to the process she was using in writing her projects:

Working without breaks also effected the elaboration of a specific thought. I read over my information of the topic so many times I began to cut important explanatory ideas out of my projects. This happened throughout paper two [sic] many times. I failed to elaborate on the four temperaments in the Keirsey Temperament Sorter. I listed four types but the paper sounded like there were more temperaments included in a larger list. I also say the idealist teacher forces me to express and inspire myself yet I fall short of explaining how I manage [sic] to do this. The sorter also said I needed to respect the freedom of an Artisan teacher but I never listed any ways to achieve this respect. In my opinion, little situations like these make a ninety percent paper fall to an eighty-five.

Clause not only indicated that she needs to continue to work on providing examples, she elaborated on specific examples of where she could have been more effective in her writing. Clause continued throughout the paper to analyze her sentence structure, struggles with
grammar and syntax as she tackles increasingly difficult subjects, and the ways that the class frustrated and challenged her to be a stronger writer.

Writers who were not necessarily as strong as Clause were also able to look back at their projects and critically assess their strengths and weaknesses in the course that they would need to continue to work on in their writing in the future. Hermenez, who came into class a very confident, though not necessarily competent, writer, admitted this in his final:

> When I started English 102 class, I thought I was a fairly good writer. Always in the past my papers have returned some good scores. I found myself waiting until the very last minute before the due date and began scrambling to write a paper. I hardly ever brainstormed, wrote a rough draft or gave much thought to the actual idea or point I wanted to write about. All of these things seemed pointless until this particular class. Now I know to be a better writer I would have to spend quality time brainstorming, proofreading, watching word usage, focusing on the point and staying on track.

Hermenez follows through on each of the themes that he identifies as a weakness in his writing. In both his final meeting with me and in his final paper, he recognizes that much of the semester he continued the habit of writing what he termed “word vomit”:

> Eventually, I would stray off track and end up using filler words to make the paper lengthy because I lost the point I was trying to make. In my first paper, I was trying to suggest that sexual activity was healthy for individuals to engage in. What I did was write an advertisement encouraging people to have sex for the mere reason of doing it. I had no real valid evidence to
support the idea as actual truth in the slightest sense. I thought if I wrote a
bunch of junk I would get a decent grade. How I fixed this problem in my
last paper about my phone was simple; all I had to do was make a point and
write actual truth to support the idea. This was easy because I had the phone
and knew how to use it. To convince someone that my phone was better
was done by examples of how the phone worked. What I didn’t do that I
should have to further support my theory was compare it to a
technologically-crippled phone such the RAZR. If I would have done the
comparison, the paper would have been a lot better . . . . To sum up my
experience with writing in contrast to this particular English class, I can say I
learned a few things . . . . I storm my brain, proofread and minimize the word
junk fest and chisel out a decent paper.

Hermenez admitted throughout our course that he used the B.S. method in much of his
writing. His realization that he could use techniques to improve his writing was reinforced by
his specific example of a time that he used these techniques to produce a better paper.

Therons, who also struggled in class with a number of problems, not all writing
related, wrote in her final that elaboration in her work challenged her in ways that she had
not previously been challenged in courses. Like Hermenez, she did not just talk about but
showed how her ability to use detail improves. In her final, she wrote,

When I first started the class my main problem was that I didn’t go into
much detail. I was straight to the point and didn’t elaborate. For my first
example, I use my first individual blackboard blog, 5 questions. I didn’t
explain that much. When asked what the first thing I remember writing
about I responded “The first thing I remember is writing a Betsy Ross autobiography in third grade. We had to write about famous women and I chose her and got an A for the paper.” All I was concerned about was saying I got an A on the paper and not how I structured the paper. How I got that A. I couldn’t prove how I got an A by the short sentence I wrote. Towards the end of class, I was going into more detail. On my October 9 post, I wrote in detail why I wanted to choose the topic I chose. I went in detail about the different women in my life that help me chose what I want out of life. I explain this in enough words without completely writing a paper about it.

Not all students were able to provide specific examples of the improvement that they made in the course. One of those students was Ardle. In her final, she talked about the ways in which she learned to use facts and evidence but did not manage to back those points up using actual facts or evidence from her semester’s work:

The changes that have occurred in my writing over the course of this semester have been great. I have learned that supporting my research with facts and substantial evidence are critical to the relevance of any paper. I have also learned that I have a creative imagination and I should use that to my advantage in all my writings. The things that have not changed in my writings are things like my willingness to use my everyday experiences in my papers. One thing that I still need to overcome in my writing is my fear of stepping on toes and hurting others feelings when I may want to say something that is a bit controversial.
Kline did much the same as Ardle in her final project. While she talked about some of her projects early in the paper, the conclusions that she drew did not necessarily follow from the writing that she does in her paper, which primarily focuses on her decisions for using particular media and the confidence she had to make the decisions she did:

My overall work in this class has improved, not with the work I have done, but with the knowledge that I have gained through my experiences with all of these projects. What I have learned from this course will definitely help me with future essays and papers. This is the first English class that has taught me so many things that I plan on using when I am writing. The valuable things I have learned for doing the projects in this class are lessons that will definitely help my future. For example, I will not use the word “it” at any cost, I will always research a project before I work on anything else and I will always remember evidence and examples help enormous when trying to prove any point. These are just a few of the things I have learned in your class. These lessons will not just help me in future English classes but they will help me with any writing that I do, i.e. letters, emails, resumes, etc.

One of the successes of Kline’s final, however, was that she identified that forms have a rhetorical purpose, even if she oversimplifies the fact that the structures she has learned can be used in any format.

Another of the weaker students, Spoker, did two impressive things in her final. First of all, she reflected back to the origins of her literacy to set a background for her discussion of her difficulties in the course:
When I first started being taught English, I was no different than anyone else. It was a normal classroom with a normal teacher. But when it came to English, I always seemed to be better in grammar. In early Intermediate school, we did the ‘Shirley Method,’ this was all about grammar. There were rhymes we used to remember what an verb, noun, adjective. This was very helpful, and I was always good at it. We did worksheets and had tests and spent at least an hour on these ‘Shirley Methods’ everyday. This was very beneficial to me as I am a hands-on learner, so with these saying [sic] I could remember all there was when it came to grammar. Writing on the other hand was a different story; I don’t feel as though I have ever had a GREAT writing lesson. I don’t know if that is because none of my teachers every explained it in a way that was easy for me to understand clearly or because there was no method in school involving writing that I could sing to. So over the years I have still struggled with writing.

Throughout the paper, she identified and reflected on specific ways she learned most effectively. A second important element was how she identified how the paper she was writing continued to prove her points about her learning in the course:

I feel that in this paper I have done an EXCELLENT job and should get a good grade. But writing this paper was different than any of the papers I have written over the semester. In this paper, I felt like I just needed to explain myself and why I write the way I do. I felt casual writing this paper and not so stressed; it was as though I thought of this paper not as a final paper but more as a journal of the semester and the good and the bad that
happened over the course. I got all that I needed explained and elaborated on the parts that were scarce and confusing and didn’t put in the parts that wouldn’t have made any sense. If I could have written all my other papers over the semester as I have written this paper, the end result of this paper would not be the same. I would not have to talk about how I am uncomfortable as a writer and don’t understand my reader, but how I feel like a professional and an avid English student. If only.

Her ability to analyze the process behind the paper that she was completing for the final is impressive. While she had many other struggles in and difficulties with writing and focus in the course, at the end she was able to focus on the writing that she was completing to be critical of her work as she completed that work—a trait she can hopefully continue in future courses.

Willard, who wrote the mock article for his first project, writes about confidence for his final paper. However, unlike Spoker, Willard’s fluency in writing belies the struggle he fought all semester with confidence. He writes:

Four months ago, I came into a certain English classroom for the first time of the semester, but it was not the last; no, nowhere near the last. I was as a scared, small, child, feeling as though this would be the most difficult class in existence. I felt this way because I cannot diagram sentences very well and I had an English teacher in highschool that was under the impression that diagramming sentences was the backbone of the English language, and consequently, of the English class. I didn’t quite grasp this method of understanding the sentence and it created a stigma in my mind. A generally
small voice that would tell me I was no good at this type of thing. It told me if I tried to perform the voodoo magic known as writing a paper that catastrophe would soon follow, that all hell would break loose, that Ragnarok was surely nigh and the apocalypse would follow in all its magnanimity! . . . to be perfectly straightforward and blunt, I honestly cannot say you taught me anything this semester. There is no one thing that comes to mind; it was your influence that taught me about Second Life when I knew nothing about it, and it was also your influence that taught me that I could write without bringing about the Norse end of the world as they knew it. But without a doubt, I came into that classroom four months ago not sure that I could write well or that I would even pass, and I left that classroom able to write with confidence. Thank you.

In spite of Willard’s glowing appraisal of his confidence in writing at the end of the course, his paper lacks many of the hallmarks of other excellent final papers, particularly the ability to use specific examples to support how the course helped him become a more confident writer. He equates scores on his projects and supportive comments on those projects as influencing his writing confidence, but he did not show in particular which comments were hopeful, even though he does make the similar comments about his increased confidence in writing throughout the semester in his IDB.

Another student, Harms, showed fluency with writing but struggled throughout the course. His final project gave examples of how his writing could have been better with ample evidence from his work that showed that he spent time looking at his writing and identifying places he could have improved. If anything, Harms was a little hard on himself
over his performance in the course. He did what few students do—provided a stylistic
criticism of his writing:

In my first paper, for reasons unbeknownst to me, the language I use and
even the syntax of my sentences seems to flow better and make more sense.
For example, this sentence taken from my first project makes good sense and
is worded well, “A lot of the studies negate each other, so much that it seems
hard to draw any conclusion of certainty, since certainty usually comes from
incontrovertible facts and proof” (Harms 3 from “At Risk on the Phone”).
This sentence from the third project, however, is poorly worded and
repetitious, “Tufte believes that PowerPoint has contributed greatly to the
country’s ‘lazy thinking’ and that it allows for ‘decoration’ to fill in as a
substitute for good substance in a presentation” (Harms 3 from “Seldom
Loved; Always Used”) . . . . The PowerPoint is also flawed in the content of
some of the sentences. For instance, some sentences seemed cookie-cutter
made, too statistical, and also pretty bland such as “90 million adult
Americans could not demonstrate simple literacy skills” and the sentence
directly following “600,000 students will drop out of school in any given
school year” (Harms from “The Acquisition of Literacy”). These two
sentences (or bullets) seem apathetically placed as it is obvious that more
could have been done with that information, instead of just seemingly
dropping it in as a bullet. In retrospect, it was not a very good idea to try
something I was fairly unfamiliar with as the format for a project.
Harms concluded the paper by bemoaning his self-defeat through procrastination. While his writing indicates that he should be able to easily navigate writing at the college-level and beyond, his harsh self-criticism is worrisome. Unlike Willard, Harms’ confidence during the course has not improved, and even though he is a fluent writer, he does not seem to see his writing as worthwhile.

Two final elements in the writing of English 102 students showed their willingness to take risks in their writing: their ability to use humor, sometimes self-deprecating, and their ability to discuss their writing using specific, concrete terms from the class. Critical pedagogy asks that students study the words they use to describe their reality, and their use of wordplay and wording from the course show that they are paying attention to their language use.

Daughton provided an example of this in an activity where I asked students to first identify the rhetorical purposes of paragraphs from a course reading and then use that same method to analyze the paragraphs in their first project. After this activity, Daughton wrote, “Analyzing Project One was like watching a video tape of yourself tripping in public… No, I’m kidding, but it was a little tense for me.” At the end of the course, after I placed a graphic of a t-shirt that read “I survived English 102 and all I got was this lousy digital picture of a virtual t-shirt” on his final paper, he wrote in his IDB: “Thanks for being an English teacher whose interested in English, oh, and thanks for the virtual shirt. If I get ten more of those, I might have to get a virtual closet…”

In Hugh’s practice paragraph for the final, written in the last few days of the course, he not only writes a solid paragraph about his struggles with writing but also shows awareness of his writing in the paragraph itself. He wrote,

My writing has improved in this class. I believe the more that I write, the
better it gets because I get the experience of the process. Each time I write I find a way to make what I'm saying more concise. I know that my second project was much better than the first. In the second project I was able to focus on a single issue rather than trying to cover an entire subject. I believe with writing if one can use a small example of something to prove a large-scale idea, then it is more effective than trying to prove the large idea in the first place. For example, in project two I focused more on my personal experience in learning, and compared it to the experience of my friend to prove my thesis. In contrast to project one, where I wanted to prove such a large ideology in one bite. If there is any area that I have improved on, it’s focusing on smaller ideas to prove larger ones rather than trying to prove large ideas with small examples that may or may not relate to the larger idea.

Did I say I was concise?

Another student who used self-deprecating humor to get across a serious point about his performance in the class was Harrell:

First things first: the location of the class had me pretty done in on concentration. Being in a computer lab and trying to listen to the teacher proved to be somewhat of a huge challenge. I learned the best thing to do is just not use the computer unless you have to, otherwise your focus is kind of bent on the monitor (not a good way to learn). After tearing my eyes away I realized that the class involved some kind of brain activity. Enter thinking.

Harrell uses this paragraph in his final paper to set up the theme of how he improved his writing.
Word-play appears in the work of even those writers who professed difficulties with their writing. Kline, for example, wrote,

Following the critique of the third project, I learned two key points: 1) always double check your work, 2) the word “it’ is an abbreviation for I’m an idiot for using the word “it” too much. Now, when I look back over any work I have done the word “it” jumps out at me, which in the long run will help me enormously. I think that will help so much because when using the word “it” I am not defining my subject or point.

She, like Harrell, uses humor to make a serious point. Spoker, another student who struggled with writing, alludes to a biblical passage when describing her relationship to the subject with which she has always struggled: “In the beginning there was English, it was grammar and writing and writing and grammar. That seemed to all it was about, and come to find out that’s what it mostly was, at least in all the English classes I have taken.”

Willard, who was a proficient writer, manages to incorporate humor and allusion in his final critique. He wrote,

Education, and the learning that, all too often, goes along with it, is a strange and curious creature. Now I don’t mean creature in that it has fangs and bites people in the dead of night, rather, I am speaking of creature as it once was. Our word creature comes from Latin creatura, which means “thing created”; and, as I have been shown time and time again, education is created, and continues to be created as long as there are people willing to share their knowledge and pass it on to their children and their children’s children… et cetera.
Aside from humor, students used specific terminology in the course in their writing to show their engagement with course themes. Endle wrote in an IDB post, “This didn't seem all that hard to do as this was my own essay. I'm not quite sure if I'd change anything, other than just a revision of the same thing. I didn't really ‘chunk’ any of the paragraphs up other than the first two. For the rest of the beginning sentences of each paragraph, I just labeled them individually as to what their purpose was” [emphasis mine]. Endle also uses another IDB to discuss group work in the class, using specific terms from Kenneth Bruffee’s work to describe the ineffectiveness he encountered during a small group project. He wrote,

This wasn't a very effective experience for me. My natural discomfort for these kinds of collaborations kind of contradicts the "three principles" of collaborative learning that Bruffee had listed. My "friendlines" and "good grace" isn't demonstrated so well when I stay mute through the whole collaboration. I'm willing to do whatever I can to help but I've developed this complex where I feel that everything I do would be counter-productive thus I get in the way. I avoid this as much as possible, and what better way to be sure? I understand that this isn't the way I should approach this but I've never acquired the comfort for this technique..

Several students discussed the P.E.E. method for writing paragraphs (Point, Evidence/Example, Explanation) and how the method was helpful in their writing. Bree wrote, “I worked very hard on using some of the techniques we did in class. For example the P.E.E method and the essay we read in our book really helped me to figure out transition and flow of a paper.” Gratton wrote, “The above topics are the areas that I feel I have improved in the most . . . . I will be more independent in my writing, I will continue to use
the P.E.E. structure so that my papers are less confusing, and I will be able to maneuver
around Blackboard efficiently now.” Many students indicated in their final or in their final
interview that the P.E.E. structure was influential in their understanding of how to more
clearly write in the course.

Overall, students in English 102 were willing to engage in questioning and answer
those questions, even if they did not always completely follow the processes to complete the
research they described in their proposals. However, their final projects showed impressive
ability to use examples to back up the conclusions they drew about their learning in the
course. Finally, students’ language use frequently indicated an awareness of and engagement
with the elements and themes of the course. In summary, the English 102 students were
actively engaged in exploring course themes and willing to dialogue about those themes
using language and examples that showed their engagement with the course.

Four Case Studies: Students’ Individual Engagement

During the course of the final project, I conferenced with students in the class
regarding their experiences in the course to help prepare them for the final project. I also
conferenced with students in the English 104 course. The primary difference between the
two sets of conferences is that the English 102 conferences were recorded using either
Camtasia screen capture software with voice-over narration or standard voice recordings as
MP3 files. Both the Camtasia videos and the MP3 files were then posted to students’ IDBs
for reference as students completed their final projects.

These interviews and the students’ final projects show students reflecting on their
engagement with the course. In particular, four students engage in critical work throughout
the class, culminating in their final meetings with me and in their final projects. Some like LaQuisha Marsh used and evaluated technology in ways she had not previously done. Jason Mitchner and Jennifer Bree used the course to evaluate their previous educational experiences and responded to challenges new to them. A final student, Brian Mathes, I include because he came into the course a confident writer and was a particularly challenging student, one of the few who openly challenged our course and my responses to his work. What all of these students have in common is that they at some point in the narratives of their semester show engagement and willingness to question themselves and the course itself and apply that questioning to their own work to draw conclusions about their perceptions of themselves, their technology use, their writing, and the words they use to analyze these elements of their learning.

LaQuisha Marsh

LaQuisha was a single mother of two who had taken previous college courses while in the military. Two elements of LaQuisha’s previous educational history and experience with technology are particularly noteworthy. First, she indicated at several points during the semester, particularly in her final interview with me, that she had not before English 102 ever written a “formal” paper (see Appendix CC for a full transcript of that interview). In her interview, she said that she would like to use her final paper from her previous English course as an example for her final paper because she did so little work on that paper. She explains this reasoning during an exchange in our final interview:

LaQuisha: Can I… I know you want samples of our work, is that right?

Heidi: Um-huh.
LaQuisha: Can I take samples...cause I have that paper that I wrote, and I'm telling you, it was just the first page, the little um, intro page of English class, LaQuisha, blah blah blah blah blah, then the outline, and then the first paragraph, and that's it. And I got a B on it. So can I add that...

Heidi: Yeah, I think that would be totally fascinating, like, that idea of...was that like the product of the end of the class, like the whole class led up to that?

LaQuisha: Yeah.

Heidi: [laugh]...and you were... No wonder you felt like you were intimidated.

LaQuisha: And we had a lot of in class essay writing, and I did ok on that because we just picked a topic and wrote about it, but it wasn't nothing formal. And then the last thing we had to do was we had to write a paper for our final, and I didn't know how to do it. So that's what I came up with.

Heidi: So you've never done an MLA...

LaQuisha: No. Foreign language.

Secondly, LaQuisha also used technology very infrequently before taking English 102. She indicated early in the semester that “At this point in time computers are making my life complicated because I dont [sic] have one of my own so I am having to either go to the public library, call a friend, or use the computer lab at school normally this wouldn't [sic] be a problem but when you have kids it gets tough.” Toward the middle of class, she purchased a computer for her home, and the class periods we held online opened up a whole new world of expression for her—one in which she did not feel intimidated like she does when
speaking in class. In our interview, she began by elaborating on how the days we held class online changed her perception of herself and her classmates and made her more willing to speak out in class:

**LaQuisha:** When we did the online chat, and some of the ascrutinous [sic] and scrutinous [sic] chats that we did, and I got to read what everyone else wrote, it almost seems as I wasn’t that far off, you know. I know that a lot of them know how to write, but my thinking and their thinking was sort of the same…

**Heidi:** Um-huh.

**LaQuisha:** …so I didn’t feel as intimidated. I felt more comfortable, especially talking, actually talking online with them, you know. They thought some of the same crazy thoughts that I did…

**Heidi:** [laughs]

**LaQuisha:** …so it was just comfortable. I felt like I got to know some of my peers even though I didn’t see them face-to-face, I got to know them and how they respond to things, and it was the same, so I felt more comfortable speaking in class.

**Heidi:** Hm. Cause you were so different. It was like…like… I remember that first day after we came back to class, I asked a question and you were like the first one to answer it. And I was like, “You’re talking!” [laugh]

**LaQuisha:** Well, honestly speaking, the first few classes that we had, there was a guy. I can’t even remember his name. But he just talks…he just talks so
proper, and he uses just…well, when…I don’t even know how to describe it, and I can’t think of his name, but he sits in the second row…

Heidi: Jonathan.

LaQuisha: …close to the wall…

Heidi: Jon.

LaQuisha: …and he was talking about his job, and how he has to supervise, and he’s using all these crazy works, and I’m goin’ home, lookin’ these words up, and I’m like, “Ok, gotta look these up so I can respond in class,” but…after being in class, not EVERYBODY thinks like he does, not everybody is quite intelligent with their words like he is, and so it just made me want to speak more. I didn’t feel quite so retarded when I talked…

Heidi: [laughs]

LaQuisha: …so it was nice. And I actually enjoyed the class. I really did. It was a challenge…I can’t lie about that.

Her attempts at using the words “synchronous” and “asynchronous” early in the previous excerpt show that she was incorporating language from the course into her own vocabulary, reinforcing what she said in the excerpt about needing to use the language of others from the course to feel like she was smart enough to speak out in the class. LaQuisha goes on in the interview to talk about how after the online courses, she becomes heavily involved on social networking sites, such as MySpace and Black Planet—sites where she can meet other intelligent people and not feel as intimidated as she does in the face-to-face classroom.

Throughout the course, LaQuisha struggled with writing, partially because of her lack of previous writing experience and partially because of a lack of self-esteem in her
writing. She relates her lack of esteem to school writing in her final—a type of writing she sees as different from the informal writing she enjoyed the majority of her life:

I started writing at the age of 8. My mother was a single parent and joined the military to make a better life for her and I, so I spent most of my childhood under the care of my grandparents. While my mother was away, to keep me occupied, I kept a journal. Writing in my journal started out as a way to keep me busy but quickly became one of my favorite things to do. I can remember back when I was in elementary school there were several days that during recess I would sit and write in my journal instead of playing with the other children.

She made strong distinctions in her writing between writing poetry, which she enjoys and for which she has previously won awards, and “formal writing,” or school-based writing. When she talks about the two forms, her tone shifted significantly, both in the types of examples she used to discuss each type of writing and the “teacher tone” (Bartholomae) she slips into when she describes the “formal writing of school.”

When discussing her love of poetry, LaQuisha wrote,

I fell in love with poetry after reading a poem written by Ernest Lawrence Thayer titled "Casey at the Bat." This was one of the first poems I had ever read and for me the structure and the rhyming of the lines sparked a huge interest. At the age of 10 I wrote a poem and entered it into a poetry contest held at my school for a chance to win 50 dollars and have my poem published in the school paper. The poem I wrote was titled "Dreams of black and white" and it read as follows: “Pictures and colors of black and white
made up my dream one Saturday night. I tossed and turned lying in bed while many things ran through my head. I dreamed of a world united as one. People holding hands and having fun. No crime, no prejudice, no hate for others, just people holding hands together as brothers. Pictures and colors of black and white was Martins' dream, was Martins' right.” I won the first place prize that day, and thus began my ambitions as a writer.

Her next paragraph, her writing changes tone from one of ownership of her writing evidenced in her paragraph about her award-winning poetry to one more uncertain about what she labels “formal” writing:

Though poetry is my preferred choice of writing, I have recently become interested in writing in a more formal fashion, such as what you would see in a book, term paper, speech, or possibly even in a newspaper article. My interest in formal writing comes from the fact that for me, this type of writing gives me the opportunity to express my feelings so that everyone can understand. Where as with poetry, if you are not familiar with reading between the lines of the beautifully written versus, there is a chance that the message you are trying to get your audience to understand could be overlooked. I had never written a paper before taking my English 102 class so writing papers to fit a specific format such as the MLA, APA, and more recently P.E.E., was all new to me and a bit of a challenge. A challenge that I excepted.

The clear voice that described her love of poetry in the paragraphs above is replaced by the “teacher tone” with the use of “you” that lectures the reader about the importance of
“formal” writing, a topic that LaQuisha indicates is a “foreign language” in her final conference. Her writing in the final upholds this idea of a “foreign language” because her wording about “formal writing” is much less clear than that about her poetry writing. Her language use also contradicts her content when discussing formal writing, particularly where she writes that formal writing allows her to “express [her] feelings so that everyone can understand.” Ironically, her emotion comes through much more clearly when describing her poetry than it does when describing the formal writing she indicates as a clearer form of expression.

In spite of her discomfort with formal writing, LaQuisha does accept the challenge of the P.E.E. structure and by the end of the class is one of the biggest advocates for the method. In her final conference she talked about championing the method to others, including her brother, who used P.E.E. structure successfully in his writing at another school. Not only did she show marked improvement in her use of P.E.E. in the course, she also adapts the structure for her own purposes when brainstorming topics in the class as a means to narrow her points—something she indicates as a difficulty in her writing process. In this conference excerpt, LaQuisha modeled how the P.E.E. method helped her narrow her focus for her final paper:

**LaQuisha:** I think the main thing for me is not to be so broad with my topics…I mean, throughout the class, trying to pick topics, I could pick something and it sounds good in my head, but when you actually start talking about it there’s so many…different sides and stories that you could go with, I think the main thing to help me was to stay focused on one thing and talk
about that instead a being so open, cause your thoughts get bounced around. So that helped a lot.

**Heidi:** So how do you do that? Like, what’s your process to go through to focus?

**LaQuisha:** [pause and sigh] I pick a topic, and then I just brainstorm everything I can think of about that topic. Like for this, well, I didn’t have a whole lot of time to think about that one, but when I was thinking about the whole P.E.E. structure, I was thinking about, ok, we’re supposed to write about how we improve in class. Well, I’ve never taken a writing class before, and since I’ve started writing, the thing that helped the most was the P.E.E. structure. Well, what about the P.E.E. structure has helped me out? Being able to focus on your point, your explanation, and then your example…I mean, it’s simple. But for me, it started out hard because I’m thinkin’, well, my point is…I didn’t want to take English. Well, why didn’t you want to take English? Because I don’t know how to write. Well why come you don’t know how to write? Well, because I never had to write before. It’s just so many points that you can go through. And I just had to pick one and stay focused on it, which was hard sometimes cause you run out of things to say about that topic.

**Heidi:** Um-hum.

**LaQuisha:** But with you, you don’t care necessarily how long the paper is so you don’t have to B.S. your way through it, you can just get down to the
point and be done with it. And it was simple for me. Hard, but simple. Does that make sense?

In her final paper, she used the difficulty of P.E.E. as a theme to focus her writing. She went through her three major projects and showed areas where she didn’t follow the format and other areas where her writing improved because she applied P.E.E. to her writing.

Her conclusion summed up her ideas about how P.E.E. in the course was influential in her work:

I do believe that as the class continued, I began [sic] to feel more comfortable with the choosing of topics and fitting that topic into the P.E.E. format and it shows in my writing. For the 1st project I received [sic] a C and for the 2nd and 3rd I received [sic] a B. Though the P.E.E. format was a challenge [sic] for me and is still challenging [sic] I feel that this format has helped me to improve my thinking and writing skills. I started this class with great ambitions, not knowing what to expect nor if I would succeed. For anyone with ambitions such as mine, I encourage you to follow your dreams, except every challenge with a smile, and learn from your mistakes. Though I still have a lot to learn about writing, taking this English 102 class has encouraged me to continue my ambitions. My ambitions of becoming a writer.

She reverts to the cliché “follow your dreams” toward the end of her paper, but she did allude back to her initial paragraphs to bring her writing full-circle. She also drew conclusions about her writing and thinking skills based on the evidence that she provided in
the body of her paper, showing that she was able to follow-through on our conference and use the ideas that she developed during our meeting to analyze her writing in the class.

After our class, LaQuisha decided to enroll for all online courses in the Spring semester. She emailed me to ask a question about one of her online classes, and I asked her how her Spring semester was going. She responded,

I am currently taking 4 classes online and as of right now I am loving every minute of it. I have been looking forward to taking online classes since the online sessions I had in your class last semester. The way you taught your English 102 class last semester opened my eyes to a whole new world of learning. Online classes are not only convenient for me but taking classes online also allows me to feel comfortable about voicing my opinion because I don't see the faces of the other students.

I love it! I love it! I love it!

*Jason Mitchner*

Jason was a student in his early twenties returning to college after taking a few years off from school after high school. He indicated to me in class that he could have gone directly from high school to college, but he experienced burn-out after high school. Jason’s previous experiences with English classes and with education in general informed much of the time we spent after class talking about his specific projects or about school in general. In both his conference with me and in his final, he discussed how his negative experiences in previous English courses encouraged him to only complete the bare minimum and how
English 102 was a challenge for him because of these previous experiences. In his final, which he titled “The End of English as I Know It,” he wrote:

The beginning of the semester was filled with happiness and apprehension at the thought of taking my last English class. I have always been reluctant to take any form of English classes, especially writing classes. Writing classes are extremely hard for me. This is due mainly to my lack of self confidence and my overly critical nature. I am never able to settle for second best. Everything in my life has to be one extreme or another, all or nothing. If I can find even one mistake in my writing then the whole thing is ruined and I throw it all away. The thought of my grade for a course being dependent on what I consider to be poorly written work is difficult to accept.

His entire final was a series of specific passages where he outlined what he did in particular to improve his writing based on my comments and on his own analysis of his writing. Some examples from the writing show how he was able to critically evaluate his work, incorporating both examples from his writing and comments I made on his text to show how our dialogue during the course challenged him to revisit his writing:

When I wrote my first project, I still tried to get away with my old style of generalized writing. I developed a bad habit during high school of trying to make my papers sound better and well thought out by making my sentences very wordy. I also tried to write the way I would talk during normal conversations. This is really noticeable in a sentence from my opening paragraph. “The question now arises as to whether or not they are effective in education?” I thought this would logically come at the end of the statements
before it and never gave it another thought until I read the comments after it was graded. The comment said “I’m not sure that the question naturally arises from the last sentence.” It was at this point that my eyes were opened and I knew that I would have to try harder and put forth more effort that I ever had in the past.

Jason spoke throughout his conference with me and in his final project about how his perfectionist tendencies and his previous courses influenced his work in English 102. He, like LaQuisha, was one of the quietest students in his course, and in his conference he explained that, much like LaQuisha, his silence was the result of not wanting to appear foolish in front of others in the class. Unlike LaQuisha, Jason tied his quietness in class to his need not to appear vulnerable or imperfect, a theme in other areas of his life. Because of this, his learning process was one of learning by observation and practice:

**Heidi:** So you’re picking up those rules…you’re not picking up the rule, you’re picking up that intuitive knowledge. Like you know because of reading…you see…like your brain is picking up those patterns without you thinking about, “Oh, comma with an introductory clause there,” you know.

**Jason:** Which that…I guess that’s the way I’ve done a lot of things. I hate asking for help. If like my boss, he intimidates me or whatever or if I don’t know him very well, I don’t like to ask for help. So what I would always do is, you know, like at work, if it’s something I don’t know, I would usually find a way to get out of it for the time being, and I’d watch real closely what somebody else is doing, and I’d figure out how they’re doing it, then next time I go out there, and I try to go out there at a time when I’m kinda alone,
and I can remember what he did, I try that, see if it works, and if it did, alright then, I learned how to do it, I didn’t have to ask anybody….

Heidi: That’s really interesting. [laugh]

Jason: …that’s the way I go about everything.

Heidi: So seeing examples of that…or, like you don’t learn from…like if I handed out a handout, and said like “Step one…”

Jason: The examples because I guess I always pay more attention to the examples because that’s a way of not having to ask anybody and nobody knows that I don’t know, so the more attention I pay to it then the better I can learn it. That’s, like I say, that’s about everything, I do that with everything I do.

In his final project, he discussed this theme using specific examples from the text that show how the previous writing that he did, particularly paragraphs that he has previously written intuitively, would not work for this course. He wrote:

There are many rules for grammar, punctuation, sentence structure and paragraph structure when it comes to writing. These rules were hard for me to learn, so I compensated by learning what sounds correct when given a pause or break in a sentence or paragraph. As I would read back through a paper I was writing, I would start new paragraphs according to this principle. My first project is a prime example of this type of writing. These are a few sentences taken from that paper.
“There is an ever growing number of schools all across the nation that are using them as a new tool for learning. Many of these schools are finding them to be very effective and have countless benefits as well. 

Schools systems in Maryland, New York, and California are among the first to use comic books on a regular basis.”

At the time they were written, they sounded acceptable. It wasn’t until I read the comments off to the side did I really start to understand. “Can you focus this paragraph completely on the history of comic books in education to set the stage for their use today? Perhaps expand the first few sentences and let the last few sentences go into the next paragraph.” After all of these years, I finally started to realize what paragraph structure was and that mine needed vast improvements.

Jason understood his process and questions that process and how working in the class challenged him to change that process based on the comments I provided in the text and the discussions we had in his IDB. In my conference with him, he indicated that our dialogue in the IDB was one of the elements that most challenged his writing and learning:

Heidi: So do you think that happened in this class? Were there times that you remember, like, doing that watching or looking at something…when you didn’t understand something. Was there something that you looked at?

Jason: Well, originally, when I came up with the idea of Superman as an American icon, I wasn’t even sure necessarily that tied into what you were wantin’, the only reason was that you had done that similar thing that example on there…I don’t even know what it was exactly, being a symbol of this, and that’s the only reason I knew I could use it, and then I submitted
that to you in the individual discussion board and you came back with saying that was a good idea, so then, ok, that released a lot of stress…alright, she said it was a good idea, I can go with this now.

Jason and I spent a lot of time dialoguing during the course of the semester about various projects, both in his IDB and before and after class. Jason notes this dialogue in his final project:

The greatest improvement in my writing skills has come from the prewriting processes that we did in class. I have always been an impatient person and normally jump right into an activity without paying any attention to the warm up exercises. The tedious, step by step prewriting techniques always seemed stupid and time consuming, so I just skipped that part. This usually ended with me sitting in front of the computer for hours before the deadline with a blank screen and no ideas on what to write. The in class activities and the individual discussion board posts became the answers to my prayers. The best example of that is when I was deciding on a topic for project two. I had absolutely no idea what the assignment was actually about when I picked my topic. The choice to use Superman as an American icon came from a similar example that was used in class. The response I got back after posting my ideas to IDB, “This is an excellent question” and “You're really getting to the heart of the question,” gave me the confidence that I was doing my paper right. This initial spark of confidence is what separates a mediocre paper from an outstanding one.
Feedback from me and the conversations we had after class played a significant role in his desire to work more diligently in English 102 than he had in previous classes. Jason’s conference with me covers many of the same themes that he investigates in his final paper, including how he responds to challenges in general and how that natural response to challenge was triggered by the dialogue we had in the course. Jason was one of the few who spoke at length about his sense that I listened to him and heard what he was saying.

**Jason:** I guess I’d have to say it did help cause it…we had that, the one conversation where we went back and forth a little bit about the, if nothing matters then everything matters and vice versa and stuff like that, and those are not…those are more my own personal thoughts on things and those aren’t something I would ever put into a paper, especially one we turn in to a teacher…that’s not…I don’t…where me and a teacher usually aren’t on that kind of discussion level, they normally don’t want to hear what I have to say on something, and it…usually a comment like that, too, it’s most of the time from people I either get a confused look or they think I’m crazy and that I should be committed or something…

**Heidi:** [laughs]

**Jason:** …so and then if it’s a personal comment, or something that should have a deeper meaning to it and then you say it out loud and no one takes it for its meaning then it’s lost everything and it’s pointless. So…it…I suppose I’d have to say that for me it’s a big deal to put, that I should put something like that down and submit that. I never have before. I don’t do those kinda things.
Heidi: Well, and definitely talk about that. You say down here [refers to paper on screen]...you did that same thing you analyzed the guidelines, you figured out exactly what you had to do, and...you weren’t gonna do anything for someone who didn’t care, so obviously there’s that factor in what you just said and in what you’re writing that you need someone to, like, respond and listen to and care about what you said. Otherwise...

Jason: And in school I had teachers who like they seemed to be friends with some of the students in class and they always could talk, and I was never one of them. I couldn’t relate to them on that kind of level.

[pause]

Heidi: So was this class different?

Jason: Yeah. It was definitely different.

Heidi: So why? Like, you talk to me a lot, so why did you...why did that happen?

[pause]

Jason: I’d have to say...[pause]...um...I got more feedback and feeling from you, doing more than just...I have to tell you this, this is how you did on your paper...

Heidi: Um-huh.

Jason: ...and this is...you know...you had normal conversations with me, you know, just about stuff at home or this or that or whatever, it wasn’t just strictly business. So I’d have to say that made it more personal or whatever.

In the conclusion of his final, he wrote:
Reviewing all of my writings from this semester has helped me to see the vast improvements I have made. It wasn’t until I looked back to the beginning that I realized just how far I had come. The changes that took place with each assignment seemed small and insignificant, but they have really added up in the end. Looking back over each of my writings, I began to see that I wasn’t just looking at my improvements as a writer, but I was looking at myself and who I am. The initial mistakes I made were based on my own fears and beliefs about writing. I am able to answer many questions about why I do the things I do. The face to face meetings really brought these revelations to light. All of the ideas about myself, were ones that I had always known, but never gave much thought about until I said them out and talked about them as areas for improvement in my writing.

Jason and LaQuisha both indicated in their conferences and afterward that talking through not only their work in the course but also how their preferred learning processes or previous course experience impacted their performance in the course. Overall, those students who engaged most with their learning in the course and in dialogue with me throughout the course and in the final conference were those who were most willing to investigate their previous learning experiences and question both their individual processes and their coursework.

Jason responded to an email message I sent almost a year later to say that he “may not remember everything I was taught but most of it still echoes in my head every time I write a paper.” When I asked him to elaborate, he responded, “I remember the PEE structure. I also still have the Bloom’s Taxonomy handout. . . .The part I remember the
most is the structure for writing a paragraph. I don't think I do as well as when I was in English class, but it definitely stands out the most. I think I still have some of my papers saved on my zip drive.”

While both Jason and LaQuisha challenged themselves to question their experiences with technology and literacy, the primary difference between the two seems to be the nature of their interaction with their classmates and me. LaQuisha drew confidence and strength through her experiences in online forums, both in class and in the social networking sites and online courses she joined as a result of the course. Jason also gained confidence in his writing; however, his confidence stemmed more from his dialogue with me than from his interactions with classmates. Both students, however, show that the interactions they had with others were the primary motivators in their willingness to critically analyze their writing and meet challenges in the class that they previously had not encountered. Writing becomes a means of authentic communication with an audience—not only a hoop to jump through to complete a project and finish a class.

Jennifer Bree

Jennifer was a traditional college student who was in her fourth semester of college writing classes, having taken both levels of developmental writing (English 040 and English 050) before taking English 101 and 102, all at the community college. In her second project, she compared her experiences at a private academy in elementary school with her fiancées experiences in a public school. Bree later attended public schools, but she indicated that her experiences at the early private academy set a good foundation for the rest of her education, in spite of the fact that she took all four levels of writing classes at the community college.
Bree was willing to complete projects that questioned both her perceptions of her own educational experiences and her possibilities for the future. Her first project was a study of the accuracy of online tests that claim to tell students the jobs for which they would be most suited. She began the project excited about her use of media because she thought it would be “fun.” She wrote, “I think I'm going to attempt to do a power point project. Why? It's just more fun to do. I'm not sure if the power point is the right way to present the information, but I'm going to give it a try. If it doesn't work as I have planned I will most likely just write a paper.” She admitted in the proposal that she was uncertain as to whether or not the media fit the message, but she continued with the PowerPoint anyway.

The PowerPoint itself had issues with erratic design, but most of my comments on her project dealt with the fact that she reviewed the tests but did not draw conclusions about their accuracy. In her response, she wrote,

I did one power point previous to this assignment. It was not similiar because writing a paper i guess you just wite [sic] down the page and with the power point I went through and jodded [sic] down what I wanted on each powere point [sic] with out any real detail. I think because of this detail my project was not as good as it could have been. I decided to use the forum of the power point because I'm not good at writing papers and I felt the power point would be a good avenue for me to take to get that B instead of the c. I was right about the B, but I know the project could have been better. If I was experienced at power point I would have given myself a way lower score, but lucky for me I'm not. The power point was fun to do for a chnge [sic] but I think for the next project it would be wise to do a paper instead.
She followed through with the plan of writing an essay for the next project where she contrasted her experiences in private school with her fiancée’s experiences in a public school.

In her second proposal, she wrote:

I'm going to write a paper for this project b/c let's be honest my power point didn't go so well. I think I just want to write a comparative essay with a little bit of my own opinion. I think it will turn out okay. With the information I gave you, if you think I should write a different kind of paper then let me know. I figured a comparative essay is kind of like an analysis.

For the third project about whether or not online communication is as effective as face-to-face communication, she used similar reasoning: “I have decided on writing another paper for project 3. I want to try and keep a good grade and I feel doing a web based project would be detrimental to my grade.” She did not provide responses to either the second or third project.

Even though she was not willing to risk “an okay grade for effort” in order to experiment with forms of technology, Bree still challenged others in the class who seem even more hesitant to embrace technology. In a class discussion board exchange with Gratton, Bree wrote,

Hi mel. I too am lost in this unit. I don't understand blogs and websties, but they are there and people use them so that leaves people like you and me to understand why. I understand technology is taking over the world but I'm not necessary ready for it yet either. . . . As for your last comment on the traditional paper I totally agree. But I do have to say, once
there was a person who wrote the first essay format paper too. How many people do you think got left behind [sic] when that happened [sic]?

Bree’s discussion board post and attempt at using PowerPoint indicate willingness to use technology, but not at the risk of her overall grade in the course. She addressed these issues as well as others about her use of technology in her final project.

In her final conference, Bree brought a fairly substantive piece of writing that centered around three themes: how she learned ideas from my feedback in the course, writing techniques from the textbook, and about technology from other students in the course. At the point of the conference, she had elaborated on two of the three themes and indicated that she had taken notes for the third. She also set up the paper with a brief review of the previous classes she had taken at the community college (see Appendix EE for the transcript of Jennifer’s conference). In her conference with me, we worked to group ideas into themes, and she at several points mentioned that she trusted my judgment over her own and would make sure to take my advice on the paper, often in a teasing way:

**Heidi:** I’ll just do track changes, then we…

**Jennifer:** What is that?

**Heidi:** I just marked through the semi-colon and put a comma in there

**Jennifer:** Oh.

**Heidi:** And track changes is for later when you go in, you can just right-click and say “Accept” or “Reject” and it will put it back to where it was…

**Jennifer:** And I always want to do “Accept”?

**Heidi:** Yes. [laughs] No…

**Jennifer:** [laughs]
In her final paper, I noticed that she did make many of the revisions that I mention, most likely because she asked me to note the changes we discussed directly on the paper as we recorded the conference. Jennifer, like Jason and LaQuisha, mentioned at the end of the course that the conference recordings were instrumental in helping her draft the final versions her paper.

In her final, Jennifer carried through on the themes she established in her rough draft and that we developed in her conference. When she discussed the challenge of English 102, she wrote:

> Adjusting to this new course was very challenging for me. I was not accustomed to having to use my brain so much to write an okay paper. At the beginning of this course, I was already thinking of a topic for my personal narrative. I was shocked to find out we wouldn’t have to write one. Even more shocking was the fact we didn’t have to write a paper unless we chose to.

Bree questioned technology throughout the course, including in those online forums she enjoyed. She was willing to admit that technology is important and that she was surprised at not having to write papers, but she did not find technology important enough or the class so shocking that she would jeopardize a grade to experiment with that technology. She wrote in her final that,

> Virtual worlds and website design is something I still haven’t grasped. This is why I chose to do paper based projects over any of the other options available. It was either attempt this new technology and get an okay grade for effort, like my power point [sic] project. Or stick with something I know,
papers and receive a grade I deserve for the content. I will probably design a
web site some time in my life but, this semester was not the time.

Her conclusion brought her points back full-circle and emphasized the importance of the
challenges that she enjoyed but did not always completely embrace:

After reading back through this paper to come up with my conclusion, I
noticed something. It seems I like to be challenged by new, different things
and find it a more fun way of learning. There must be a glitch in my
personality or something because if I enjoyed knew things wouldn’t I have
enjoyed learning all this new technology stuff or at least attempted to try it.
HUMMMM? I can admit I enjoyed learning about it, but didn’t like using it.
Maybe I’m just being untruthful to myself and saying I don’t enjoy it simply
because I can’t grasp it. For whatever the reason I enjoyed my college
English experience and have grown substantially since the first paper I ever
turned in.

Jennifer’s conclusion, one of the most honest in the course, was based on her recognition
that she could appreciate, enjoy, and avoid elements of the English class all at the same time.
Throughout the course, she was willing to use elements of the course to improve her writing
and to look critically at both her previous experiences in education and apply her current
experiences to draw conclusions about her future learning. However, she also admitted that
the grade was the final arbiter in her decisions about her media use, not her understanding of
or enjoyment of the technology or media.

_Brian Mathes_
Brian was one of the few students in any of the classes that was openly challenging both to my comments in the course and to the methods of the course itself. He is in his early 30s, a construction worker who was a member of a union and who also taught ESL classes for the local Literacy Council. His interest in ESL inspired the question for his first project: “Does technology affect how difficult it is for Speakers of Other Languages to learn English?”

In his final, Brian discussed the overconfidence with which he entered English 102:

Being a senior at a four-year university before entering this class, knowing that I had taken this class before and that it hadn’t transferred in, I didn’t want to be in this class. I figured that I knew how to write really well and that I could breeze through this class a second time. What would it really entail anyway; a few papers and a term paper at the end? I have done that many times in the past, so how hard could it be? I didn’t really need the professor to be there at all, just to give me the topics to write my papers on. The first day of class, though, it was clear that this wasn’t the way this class was going to work. I had never taken an English class before that boasted being technology-based, so I knew it would be a challenge to try to incorporate Blackboard, PowerPoint, Wikis, blogs and so many other facets of technology that I had never been exposed to before this.

Brian’s work in the course was reminiscent of Daughton’s work. Both students came in very confident in their writing skills and both produced first projects that were vague and academic, choosing very broad projects based on language acquisition that necessitated broad conclusions only loosely tied to the evidence they provided. And like Daughton, Brian

\[40\] See Chapter Eight for a discussion of Daughton’s work.
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seems to interpret the comments on his first project as reaffirming the points he makes instead of questioning the content of his paper. While I asked several questions regarding how specifically ESL students could use technology, Brian’s response to my comments only touched lightly on those comments, insisting instead that he had properly addressed the issue by including hyperlinks:

My only response about the comments in the text are that, for every website I listed, I provided a hyperlink to a page that could relate it back to my paper. Web Quest and Education Word had sections on their web sites that were geared toward ESL, including forums where students can speak to ESL teachers, tutors, and fellow students. The technology could be incorporated into a classroom setting fairly easily, just as you have with English, only not as completely. It would take some time to get the students used to the technology before the teacher could incorporate it full-blown, but PowerPoint, movies, email, and many other things are available and very easy to work with.

While I asked him to show studies or to link technology use to effective ESL pedagogy, he instead addressed the fact that it could be incorporated, thus seeming to engage in dialogue but not completely addressing the questions I posed in my comments.

Brian’s second project caused considerable frustration for both of us. He began planning an essay for his project: “I would like to do a PowerPoint presentation, but there may be too much information to present with that medium. So writing a paper would probably be the appropriate form. I will probably have images on my paper along with text.” However, as he planned and worked on his project, he came up with an idea that he could
use images to draw out his audiences’ pre-conceived notions of what a literate person looked like. His initial question was “Does the American culture create degrees of literacy, like a modern caste system?” and he wrote of his plans for his project:

I thing [sic] that I will discuss my version of a predominantly American culture right at the start of the project. I can look on the internet and find some photos of people in each of the social classes, ones that are the stereotypical for the class, so that with just one look, it it understood who they are. /I will explain the different levels of literacy, and how each class fits into each level. Then I will go on to tell how, at different points in my life, I was one of these people in the photos. I want to do an online poll to see what people associate with each photo. [emphasis his]

Brian’s concept of the project cleverly wove rhetorical principles of addressing the audience and a visual rhetoric that he proposed to link to his personal experiences. During one class period, I reviewed the first few slides of the project, which fulfilled this purpose initially. However, the middle and end of the project, which I did not see until I evaluated the project, drifted away from this main focus and into more “informative” slides about the state of literacy in America. He did not utilize the notes component of PowerPoint under each slide to explain his slides, as was required for students choosing PowerPoint for their format, and he almost completely excluded any discussion of how his personal experience related to each of the slides, as he initially proposed. When he submitted his project, he was very excited about its completion. He included the following notes on his first slide:

Ended up not really needing to do the analysis. After my talk with you yesterday, I walked out of the class knowing exactly what i wanted my slide
show to look like. So I am going to submit my project 2 because I really feel like it just turned out awesome. I will go ahead and do the analysis in the morning just to be sure that I don't miss out on any points because I can't afford to for the rest of the semester.

One curiosity about this note is that he seems to separate the analysis from the project, the point of which was to be an analysis following the patterns of analyses that we had done in the class several times up to the point at which students submitted this second project.

Brian receives a high “B” on the project, with my comments noting his lack of transitions, explanations of the slides, and a lack of a conclusion that provides an answer to his question and wraps up the analysis. Brian was extremely unhappy with the score and comments, and posted the following to his IDB:

Well, I don’t even know what to say about your comments on my project 2. You said it was good, that you liked it, then it was shredded. It was meant to be taken as a whole, not slide by slide. Not to mention that it was only the second PowerPoint I have ever done. I think that all I can do is go slide by slide and comment by comment and let you know how it SHOULD have been taken.

He goes on to described what he believed each slide did. I was infuriated by his condescending tone, and I posted this in response:

I spend quite a bit of time providing detailed feedback to all of my students. If you have specific questions about any of that feedback, please note the feedback you are concerned about, and I can address your specific concerns. I would like to respond to the comment, “You said it was good, that you
liked it, then it was shredded." Please refer back to the feedback I provided regarding the part of the PowerPoint project I had seen as of the time I made that comment (slides 3-7). I had not seen anything beyond this in class, so I only commented in class on the slides that I saw and what you told me about the rest of your plan. Regarding the above breakdown of your presentation, had you included an analysis that went along with your slides explaining the above ideas in the notes section (as is required based on the scoring guide distributed in class before the project was due and used in a classroom activity to assess the project), I would have known the things I "SHOULD" have interpreted from the PowerPoint presentation. I can only grade what I see, not what you think I "SHOULD" have seen. Again, if you have questions about specific parts of the feedback, I will be happy to address those questions.

My answer was hostile. I did not seem interested in engaging in a conversation about his project. Instead, I addressed the two most hostile parts of the message and send a not-so-subtle warning that he should not speak to me in the tone that he does. He does not respond to my comment nor does he approach me in person to discuss the posts on the IDB. In fact, he continued to be a productive member of the course acting at least outwardly as if this exchange had never occurred.

In his response to the project, he continued to insist that the score was unfair:

I felt that the score was acceptable, though I was convinced that the project turned out much better than the score and comments suggested. I felt that the idea of the project was to deliver a message and that, even with a few
mistakes, the message was clear. However, had this been an assignment like any of the ones I was used to from the past, I would have known better what was expected.

Throughout his response, he maintained that any problems with his project were minimal. He also shifted his focus at this point from his project to general confusion with the course itself.

Much of the writing process was confused, not sure what the next step should have been. It really didn't sound too bad, when I was first assigned the paper. I was already pretty sure how I wanted to approach it, but through the course of the writing process, that changed. I was sure that it was evolving into something that would be a better paper.

He indicated confidence in the project itself, if not in the process to complete the project:

When I completed it, when it was submitted, I was sure that it was an ‘A’ paper. I even showed a few friends the project because I was proud of what had come of it. . . . I felt that the time, effort and creativity involved in the project made it a much better project than if it had been simply a term paper. I felt that, with exception to some extra information that had been added against my better judgment, it was a great project. I didn’t feel that it was reflected in the assessment of it.

Throughout his response to this project, he noted confusion with the process itself. This confusion was remarkable because our course took more time with the second project (over a month) than we did with either the first or third project. In fact, many other students
who felt confusion after the first project noted in their response to the second project that they felt much more confident. This feeling was not the case for Brian. He wrote,

The directions were vague and I was unsure of how to do the assignment and fulfill the requirements, while pleasing the teacher. It was, in that I felt stressed and utter chaos until the clouds cleared and the project was an image in my head. It really didn’t feel like much of a process as much as trying to fight the clouds to make them clear so that I could picture what I wanted the project to look like. I think that, for this process to work, it would take more time than we are allowed. It seems like we are doing a huge project, then another, then another. I thought it went well and that a powerful message was conveyed, though there were a few mistakes. . . . over all, even with all of the snags I ran into and the effort I put into this project, I wouldn’t do it again. I don’t really feel that the return was worth the time and effort invested.

He indicated at several points that he invested much time in the project but that more time was necessary to make the project effective. However, he also contradicted this with other statements about how effective he felt the project was as a whole. Again, he explained this discrepancy with criticism of how time was spent in our course:

I didn’t really feel that any of that [activities in class] really did anything to help me at all. It seemed that a lot of it was to help the individual find a topic, and not to guide them into producing an acceptable final product. This didn’t help me because, with both projects, I had my topic before I left class

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41 See Chapter Seven for examples of these student responses.
on the day it was assigned…and it was the topic I had when the project was completed. I felt that the class sessions were separate from the project, with an exception or two…

Again, Brian’s interpretation of the course directly contradicted what students in the class and myself felt was happening in the class. For project two, much class time was spent analyzing texts and situations to practice the analytical strategies that students were to apply to their project. However, Brian’s initial comments in his PowerPoint regarding his need to not use any of the analysis he initially proposed and the comments in his response both indicate that he separated the analytical activities we did in the course from his final project.

Another element of Brian’s response with which I was confused was his interpretation of my comments as unfair because they related to individual slides. For each students’ PowerPoint, I provided specific comments for each slide and more general comments at the end on a sliding scale. When Brian comments on my comments in his project response, he wrote that the comments were mostly true, but the method of feedback was inaccurate:

For the most part, they are accurate, if each slide was taken to be a separate entity. However, even if I made the mistake of adding too much information in an effort to “beef up” the project, the message was clear and, I felt, the project was good. Maybe not 100 percent, but worthy of more credit than was given.

In his lengthy response, he also refused to engage with the points in the sliding scale that I made about his project. Instead, he rallied a lengthy defense of his project, chalkling up the problems this time to the confusing course and instructions and a “few mistakes,”
completely avoiding the point I make regarding his lack of analysis in the project that was intended to be an analysis.

My response to his response was again terse:

I find it interesting that you sum up all of the feedback that I provided with the words "a few mistakes" and have continued to insist that the problem with the feedback was that the slides were evaluated individually. However, I've already addressed those issues in my feedback to you. I'd like to know more about how the projects that we did in class didn't help you actually work through the stages of the project. Most of what we did in class were practice analysis, the same kinds of analysis that you would need to do for your project. I also said several times in class that the practice projects would be the same thing that you would need to do on the final analysis. I'd like to know which projects in particular were related to the project and which in particular were not. I'm sorry that your expectations were not met, but because of your lack of specifics regarding the course activities that were and were not helpful, it's hard to really address what did or didn't work for you.

I attempted to engage him in discussion so that I could better understand what about the course was confusing for him, but underneath the engagement was a warning. I stated my position on what happened in the course and implicitly challenged him to provide evidence to refute me, which he never did.

Brian’s third project was an essay, which he justified in his proposal, stating that “Based on the idea that this is an analysis, I think that the most appropriate forum for this type of assignment would be a simple paper, instead of trying to make it flashy with other
multimedia that just would not fit.” He wrote an analysis of Second Life after attending an optional extra credit session on Second Life’s use in the classroom. In this project, he participated in Second Life and highlighted educational uses for the world, even interviewing the speaker who presented the extra credit Webinar he attended. He received an A on the project and seemed satisfied with it overall.

Brian chose the digital response option for his final class meeting, and I reviewed a draft of his final, providing voice-over comments using Camtasia and posting the recording to his IDB. In my review of his draft, I asked him to specifically address the conflict on the second project. In his final for the class, Brian did not do this. Instead of addressing the encounter, he focused on a critical review of his work in the course, in particular on his repeated problems with transitions in his work. He mentioned both the IDB and individual course activities as being influential in his progress in the course. In regards to the IDB, he noted its efficacy as a means of communication that allowed me to answer his questions quickly so he could “complete the assignment, as required, for class that evening. This proved to be a testimony to the usefulness of the Blackboard system, however much I disliked it at the beginning of the semester.” He also indicated that the peer review was helpful for him in understanding his problems with transitions, noting in his final that in doing one peer review, the student was having trouble with transitioning from one topic to another and, in helping her, I was forced to think through my own problem with it as well as utilizing some of the other analysis exercises and discussions from class. This put into play the practiced writings, the sentence analyses [sic] that we did on the Bruffee sentences as well as the character analyses we discussed on the IDB and the analysis and
digestion of our numerous readings. I realized here that everything had a purpose and it all came together in Project Two.

He almost compromised with my assessment of his second project when writing his final for the course. He also recognizes the importance of some of the class activities. With his focus on transitions, he admitted that parts of the PowerPoint were unclear, but he still adamantly insisted that the research he presented for the project was solid:

After other transitions in the same paper were missing, after it was unclear whether the conclusion actually stemmed from the data, the reader was left with a lot of unanswered questions. I realize now that the topic that I chose was too broad so that, even with all of the information that I provided in the paper, there were so many subtopics and so many points to make that I had a rough time trying to tie them all together. This caused my paper to be weak even though it was well-researched and fairly well thought-out.

In his conclusion to his final project, he gave a nod to the conflict surrounding his second project. However, the conclusion did not seem to draw directly from the evidence he provides in the rest of his paper. Rather, it alluded to the conflict while adhering to the idea that his writing in the course drastically changed as a result of the conflicted second project:

Through the course of the semester, my work shows that I have really grown as a person and as a writer. I was able to get over the attitude that I brought into the class by being taught to analyze writings, both mine and others, so that I could learn what I needed to and improve my writing skills. When forced, grudgingly, to analyze Project Two, I was able to realize that my work wasn’t perfect and that I was in a place where I could receive the help and, as
evidenced above, my work from the beginning of the class and from the end are as different as night and day. My last project had a structure and a flow to it that didn’t confuse the reader or leave him or her hanging.

In the last weeks of the class, Brian continued to be cordial, even visiting me in my office to chat. His challenge to my comments and score on the second project did not influence his work in other parts of the course; instead, it seemed to be very much tied up in his own expectations for the course. And while he did challenge me on the project, which is what I had hoped would happen for students in the class, my hostile and defensive responses may have closed any opportunities for the dialogue with him. However, when he does respond to my comments or to my responses in his IDB, he frequently skirts opportunities to reflect on his own writing or to answer my requests for examples that reinforce his points—two strategies that indicate his defensiveness when challenged to truly dialogue about his work.

Conclusion

Students in English 102 were willing to inquire about the world around them and to engage with me in discussions of their previous coursework, their writing, and their use of technology. However, the ways that they initially proposed to explore their inquiries and the sources that they would use for those inquiries often were left at the wayside when the projects were actually completed. The methods of research most frequently abandoned by students were those which might have been the most time-consuming: interviews, surveys, and other methods of collecting first-hand data. Students seemed initially eager to pose questions about their experiences, but in completing projects, they often reverted to the
familiar gathering of second-hand source material from the internet or from traditional academic sources, probably to save time.

While their processes for investigating their initial questions were sometimes disappointing, students in English 102 did frequently attempted to pose authentic answers to their inquiries, one of the most important elements of the critical classroom. Even when those answers did not challenge the status quo or when those answers fell back to clichés about the classroom or about technology, the recognition by students that conclusions should be drawn from the evidence they provided showed that students had some understanding of the end result of authentic inquiry. Even more encouraging was seeing students using words with intention, either through their use of humor or through their incorporation of terms used in the course in their IDBs and final projects.

Finally, the case studies above show the importance of dialogue with the instructor and with other students in fully realizing critical inquiry in the classroom. Some students needed to feel that their voices were heard by their peers, and technology facilitated that need. Other students needed to know that I was not only available but was genuinely listening to and responding to the statements they made in order to feel challenged in the course. Yet other students were willing to draw conclusions about their work that honestly reflected times in which they were unwilling to risk their grade in order to utilize technology or fully engage in the course, a step that shows that students did not always give the “right” answer when asked to reflect on their learning in the course but rather looked at their actual performance in sometimes brutally honest ways.

A final conclusion drawn from the data on students’ willingness to engage in and reflect on their educational experiences, use of technology, and learning in the course leads
to the importance of student perception of their own work. Even those students who
discussed their work in responses and in the IDB were not necessarily engaging in dialogue
but were rather defending their own work or the perceptions about writing or technology
that they brought to the course. When these students were invited into dialogue, they did not
always truly enter that dialogue with the intention of crucially analyzing their own work.
However, I sometimes had similar motives. I, too, wanted to defend or justify my comments
on student work, perhaps in place of authentic dialogue with students.

All of these conclusions reinforce the intimacy and difficulty of the critical
classroom, a place where the most important factor to student learning is time and the
willingness by all parties to ask and answer questions that sometimes take us into the
uncomfortable unknown.
Chapter Nine – Conclusion

Both critical pedagogy and computers in composition have enjoyed a central place in the field of composition since the 1980s. However, very few scholars and researchers have focused on the intersection of these two elements in the freshman composition classroom. The study of these, however, is logical because computers and new media are central to the lives of many of the students entering our freshman composition classrooms, both at universities and at community colleges.

This study has focused on four questions:

- Does the implementation of the Blackboard course management system encourage students to engage in critical dialogue about their writing and their technology use?
- How do students perceive their use of technology, both in and out of the classroom?
- Will students critically question the choices they make regarding their use of technology in and out of the composition classroom?
- How do students use technology in the classroom to produce (or not produce) rhetorically-based multimedia texts?

My use of grounded theory allowed me to gather data from multiple student proposals, projects, and reflections, Blackboard discussion boards, class chats, interviews, emails, and my class notes in order to formulate an answer to these questions that listens primarily to
student voices. The study involves two different populations in order to capture similarities and differences between students enrolled in second-level composition courses at a university and a community college. Finally, this study attempts to view the intersections between critical pedagogy and technology by using forms of technology, such as Blackboard, in order to practice critical pedagogy in the freshman composition classroom.

The overall conclusion of this study is that students’ decisions in freshman composition classes at both the university and community college levels, particularly in regards to their use of media to complete course projects, are heavily based on their previous experience in the classroom and on their preferences for the paths of least resistance. Students tended to view technology as functional and to use and discuss technology in terms that reinforced those views. Because of these functional views, students used Blackboard primarily as a repository for assignments and other documents in the university classroom. Students in the community college classroom also used Blackboard in this manner, but they seemed more critically aware that Blackboard was a vital part of the classroom and discussed Blackboard as a part of the class in both their everyday posts and in their longer reflections at the end of the course.

Part of this difference was due to the differences in interaction between students and myself and among students in the course. The university students and I interacted much less frequently via Blackboard than the community college students and I did. After what I saw as a failure of communication in the university course, I was much more attentive to community college students, using Blackboard to facilitate communication. The community college students were asked to write in their Individual Discussion Boards at the end of each class period, and I tried to respond to each individual post. This interaction allowed me to
challenge students to further interpret course readings, look at their own lives and work with a more critical eye, and encourage them to ask questions about the course that I could then answer as they posted them, day or night. The university students also did these types of activities, but to a much more limited extent.

Students in the community college class also interacted with each other much more than the university students via Blackboard using both the discussion boards and the chat feature. The community college students had several group discussions on Blackboard regarding the technology they were using and reading about. They also participated in both in-class chats and small-group chats from home using Blackboard. The university students did not use the class discussion boards to interact nor did they use the chat feature. Differences in how students viewed Blackboard’s importance in the class had much to do with the amount of use and the purposes for which Blackboard was used in each of the classes.

One major factor impacting the differences in the two settings was myself as a reflective practitioner and the differences in my employment situations between the two schools. At the university, I was a graduate student juggling multiple responsibilities and roles. At the community college, my job as an instructional designer for an online program allowed me to focus almost completely on how students use technology in my primary job duties, in my classroom, and in my research. Thus, I was able at the community college to spend much more time preparing for and reflecting on the students in my classes. No doubt this time to focus played a substantial role in how often students interacted on Blackboard because I had time to foster that communication. I also had access to a version of Blackboard and other technology, such as Camtasia, that allowed me to more fully
incorporate technology into the classroom. I could focus on using the technology myself as well, and because of my administrator access in Blackboard, I was much more familiar with how the CMS operated and comfortable with using it in the classroom. My increased confidence with the CMS led to increased use of that technology, which no doubt impacted students' views of and use of that technology as well.

Students in both settings viewed themselves, for the most part, as functionally proficient users of technology. However, they seemed to separate their technology use from the decisions they made to complete projects in the classroom. While many students viewed technology as vital to their everyday lives, primarily for communicative functions, several of those same students chose not to complete multimedia projects or use alternative technologies\textsuperscript{42} to complete projects in the composition classroom. Students who chose to use alternative technologies did so with great caution; once they completed a project that they viewed as “unsuccessful,” that technology was often abandoned, and those students reverted to completing traditional essays. Very few students completed a second project using a similar media once they had received a score lower, more feedback, or more negative feedback than they had initially anticipated on an earlier project.

While students at both the university and the community college had similar views of their technology use and both tended toward conservative uses of technology to produce media, the greatest differences between the two populations were seen in their willingness to critically question their use of technology and to use media rhetorically. Students in the English 104 classroom at the university did not frequently choose to critically question their technology use. Often, they abandoned their use of particular media altogether rather than

\textsuperscript{42} “Alternative” here refers to software, programs, or media other than basic word processing software used to complete traditional essays.
look critically at how they used that media when completing subsequent projects. Students in the English 102 classroom at the community college were more likely to critically question technology use in general and in their own work, perhaps because they had more opportunity to do so in class discussions and on Blackboard discussion forums. One of the most surprising differences between the two sets of students was that university students seemed accepting of technology in their everyday lives as a positive force. Community college students often resented the ways in which technology was ever-present, even though they, like the university students, admitted that technology would be important to their future success.

Students in university classes were, for the most part, homogenous in their use of and views about technology. However, the community college classes had a broad range of abilities and viewpoints about technology and media. One explanation for the broader gap in viewpoints in the English 102 classroom, between those students who saw technology as a menace to society and those who could not live without it, might partially be explained demographically. At the beginning of the study, I assumed that the students in English 102 would be similar in age and experience to those in English 104 because students taking English 102 are primarily those seeking to transfer to a four-year school. Also, I assumed that many of the English 102 students were attending the community college as a result of a program that guarantees two free years of community college tuition for high school students who maintain good grades and attendance in high school. However, many of the students in the community college classes were twenty or older, indicating that the state program would not have been a significant factor in the classes studied. The classes participating in the study were also held in late-afternoons and early evenings (section 124
from 4:00-5:15 and section 125 from 5:30-6:45), which pulled in more students who worked full- or part-time on top of going to school, a major difference from those students participating in English 104 at the university. Students in English 102 might have been more critical of technology and more rhetorically aware of how media could be used because they were slightly older and had been exposed to the use of both in work as well as educational settings.

One final detail about the differences in the two different populations is the attrition rate between the classes at the two schools. Of the twenty-five students who began the English 104 course at the university, twenty completed the course, an attrition rate of 20%. However, of the forty-eight students who began the two English 102 classes at the community college, only twenty-five completed the course, a 52% attrition rate, more than double the rate at the university. This factor is significant in that those students who stuck with the community college courses might have been those students more willing to critically reflect on their work, or at least those more comfortable with reflecting on their own work in general. Had the students who dropped the course remained through the term, the results of the study might have been much different.

The following sections of this chapter provide an overview of the results for each of the four questions listed above. Finally, I recommend further study into the intersections of critical pedagogy and computers in the composition classroom, including studies co-authored by researchers and students utilizing technology and media to publish the findings in digital forums.
Blackboard Enhancing Critical Dialogue

University students saw Blackboard as repository, not necessarily as a means of communication. My pedagogy could have reinforced this view of Blackboard due to the nature of the class and the way Blackboard was used. In chapter four, I identify my lack of dialogue with students regarding their projects. Students used Blackboard to post assignments and access feedback and other class documents, whether as a result of my lack of dialogue or a natural tendency toward the most practical uses of the CMS. This class used few Blackboard features and did not use the communication features, such as the discussion boards and the chat feature, nearly as often as students at the community college.

Community college students used Bb much more often in class, seeing it more frequently as means of communication. Several students in their final projects indicate that the Individual Discussion Boards in Blackboard helped them in the course because of their ability to have questions answered or discuss projects with me outside of class at times when they were working on the projects or when they needed individual attention. In-class use of the IDBs for posting daily writings helped students have time to reflect on class activities and practice writing, making the classroom itself a place of exploration through writing to a much greater degree than the university classroom. The daily use of the IDB also allowed me to tailor the course to meet student needs because I could easily respond to problems or challenges as they arose by reviewing their daily posts and engaging them in dialogue about their writing and technology use.

The amount of dialogue with each other and myself was very different between the two environments. University students rarely spoke to each other in the few discussion forums in Blackboard. When students used Blackboard to correspond with me, I frequently
missed opportunities to answer their questions or to further conversation on important points they raised in their writing. In comparison, community college students used both synchronous and asynchronous components of Blackboard to talk to me and to each other. The dialogue in class and online in the community college was much more frequent than at the university. Students in these discussions were much more likely to critically question the topics raised in the class using the synchronous and asynchronous technologies provided by Blackboard than those students who did not frequently use those technologies in the university classroom.

Perhaps because of the more extensive use of Blackboard, community college students were much more reflective about their experiences than students in the university class. Students in the community college class pulled from their projects, their IDB posts, and their responses to their projects to reflect critically on their progress and experience in the class and on their use of technology in the course. Not only did students take advantage of Blackboard documents when constructing their final projects, my use of Camtasia allowed me to record their final meetings with me, allowing them the opportunity to play back those sessions to access ideas that they came up with in brainstorming ideas with me or in reviewing their work-in-progress. Several students indicated that they took advantage of their recorded meeting sessions to develop and revise their ideas, a benefit that I had not anticipated when beginning this study because Camtasia was not readily available to me at the university.

Another potential explanation for the difference in students’ willingness to critically review their own work was the difference in the activity sequences between the university class and the community college courses. The university class completed three major
projects: one on literacy, one on technology, and a final simulation game that did not relate directly to either of the previous themes. The community college classes, however, completed projects which were much more intertwined: a project about how we know what we know and how we communicate that knowledge, a project on literacy, and a project on technology. The initial focus on knowledge and communication set the stage for the future projects, allowing students to complete a three projects that asked them to pose and answer meaningful questions about the world around them. This added practice with asking and answering questions might have influenced their ability to complete final projects that critically reviewed their work in the course.

The structure of the final project itself also contributed to the differences in students’ critical awareness of their work in the course. In English 104 at the university, I asked students to comment primarily on their third project, the in-class simulation activity, and then draw conclusions about their work in the rest of the course as a secondary activity (see Appendix HH for the assignment sheet). In English 102 at the community college, students were asked to primarily reflect on their experience across the entire course, allowing students much more freedom to choose their focus for the final project (see Appendix T for the assignment sheet). English 104 students completed a final project that, like their responses for projects one and two, prompted them to simply answer a series of questions. The English 102 students, on the contrary, were asked to use the same questioning and analysis skills that we had used throughout the semester to complete their final project. This difference in the construct of the final activity for English 102 reinforced the concepts of critical pedagogy I used throughout the class; the English 104 activity reinforced the rigid
control I sought to maintain in that course in spite of my insistence that I was attempting critical pedagogy and students were failing to engage.

The differences in the project sequences in each course reflect a change, primarily, in my ability as a teacher to step back from the classroom to reflect and modify the course as the students needed. In English 104, when I became frustrated with student performance after the second project, I reverted to an activity with which I was familiar: the in-class simulation. I used assignment sheets I had used in previous classes, only slightly modified. And their final project was also one that I had used before. However, in the English 102 classes, I created each project and their final project after the students had completed previous projects so I could closely build on what we had already discussed and encountered in the class. The results of this study indicate that doing so was a much more effective way of helping students move into the more complex levels of analysis that Duffelmeyer found students completing in her study of critical pedagogy and technology use in the freshman composition classroom.

**Student Perception of Technology Use**

There were no significant differences in student self-reported use of technology between the university and the community college. Both groups of students viewed themselves as functionally technoliterate when surveyed about their use of technology and media. The majority of students at both the university and the community college used technology and media primarily for informal communication, mentioning using computers to communicate with others through Facebook, email, or other forms of digital communication.
When discussing technology use, students in all classes seemed to separate use of technology inside and outside the classroom. Word processing and presentation software, such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, were not necessarily discussed as digital media. Those forms seemed to fall so easily in the realm of the classroom that they seemed to be invisible to students who discussed their technology use. “Technology” was discussed most frequently as the internet or communication technologies. Software used in the classroom did not often enter discussions of technology or media use. In fact, several students indicated in their reflections that they used no technology to complete their projects, even though they had obviously completed them on a computer using word-processing software.

Their perceptions of themselves as functionally technoliterate did not always translate into them using that technology with which they were most proficient to complete projects in the course. In fact, students seemed to quickly revert to more comfortable technologies for completing projects when their use of technology for completing projects was challenged. This conclusion reinforces studies completed by both the Pew Internet and American Life and Michael Wesch, both of which indicate that students carefully separate their use of computers for informal use from their use of computers in the classroom. The classroom is for traditional forms of technology use (e.g., using word processing software or PowerPoint to complete essays or presentations). Other forms of technology, such as Web sites or Web 2.0 technologies, are reserved for informal communication or for enjoyment outside the classroom.
Critically Questioning Technology Use

Students in the university classroom did not, for the most part, critically question technology use, either indirectly through their choice of questions for their major projects or directly when asked about their technology choices in completing those projects. Because the university was a wireless campus, many of the students indicated that the use of laptops and wireless devices was more prevalent in their lives and in their coursework than in their high schools or, for two, at previous community colleges. And these students did, on occasion, reflect on how wireless and other technologies influenced their lives and their work in school. However, while these students posed questions that opened the possibility of critical reflection about the technology that surrounded them, they infrequently were able to use evidence they collected to draw conclusions or reflect on those questions.

Students in the community college were more willing to question technology use in their lives in general and in their projects in particular. Perhaps this was because they had more practice using forms of technology (e.g., in-class practice with PowerPoint, Blackboard chat, and discussion forums). Also, the community students were more immersed in a discussion of technology use using the technology that they were discussing. Not only did students read about the rhetoric of online discussion board transcripts, they also used discussion boards and online chats to complete their own discussions and review the rhetoric of those discussions using other discussion forums. This recursive use of technology when discussing technology provided students the opportunity for immersion in the technology they were critiquing, a feature missing in the university class.

Even students who were critical of technology and willing and able to question technology and media in their lives and in their coursework viewed both as inevitable to
their future success. Because they had already full lives, they tended toward using those forms of media and technology with which they were most comfortable and that promised the best results (i.e., highest score in the class) for the least effort.

A partial explanation for this could be that the purpose and promise of education in America is social and economic advancement, and to critically question technology, the one thing perhaps more than any other touted as tied directly to future social and economic success, might jeopardize that success. Making technology a visible, questionable focus for exploration requires both a healthy skepticism for that which they use on a regular basis and the time to leisurely reflect on those technologies, which students with busy lives often did not have.43

Overall, students at the community college were provided more opportunity to use and reflect critically on technology over the course of the semester. While they were more likely to draw conclusions that critically questioned technology use in their lives, they would still in many cases revert to conclusions that upheld their belief that their ability to use technology was inevitable to their future success, whether or not they felt comfortable with that technology.

Production of Rhetorical Multimedia Projects

Very few students ventured outside of the traditional forms of essay or PowerPoint presentation when completing projects in either English 102 or English 104. Those students who did venture into creating Web pages did so with varying levels of success. Students who

43 An important caveat: those students in community college classes who indicated the most outside obligations (e.g., family, work, etc.) were often those students who were most willing and eager to take the time to question their technology use and to engage in forums discussing issues in and out of the classroom.
chose any form other than a traditional essay frequently had difficulty describing the rhetorical decisions for their choices when questioned about those choices in their post-project reflections.

Students were asked in their responses to projects to reflect on why they made particular choices on their projects, both in the creation of their projects and in the technology they used to create those projects. In a few cases, outlined in chapters five and seven, students were able to indicate a connection between the message they were conveying and the medium they used to convey that message. However, the majority of students indicated expediency, comfort, or “fun” as reasons to use the technology that they chose in their projects, even when, in some cases, they acknowledged that the form the project took was not the most interesting form for their intended audience.

One striking difference between students in the university class and in the community college class was the rhetorical reflection in which students engaged on their final projects for the classes. Students in the university class, when asked about their learning during the semester, did not seem willing or able to discuss what they had learned in the course. Students in the community college, however, wrote detailed analyses of their work during the course and what they learned in the course, showing both a willingness to critically reflect on their experience and a rhetorical understanding of the choices that they made in the course (even when those choices were simply to earn a grade or to complete a project with the utmost expediency). This awareness is reflected in the detail shown in the final projects from the English 102 students and in interviews with students in those classes in the final weeks of those classes.
**Recommendations for Further Study**

Studies with a two-pronged focus on critical pedagogy and students’ use of technology should be replicated, ideally as longitudinal studies that show whether or not students are able to maintain a critical and rhetorical stance toward their use of technology and media in their future college courses and in their lives beyond college. I intend, as much as possible, to keep in contact with the students highlighted in the case study in chapter eight in order to follow their progress using technology in future classes. Additional studies could also narrow the scope of critical pedagogy to focus on students’ construction of gender or race in relation to their use of technology in the classroom. A fruitful area for exploration might be issues of how students construct class-consciousness using technologies both in and out of the classroom.

Even for those not able to complete longitudinal studies or focus on a more specific critical focus, a few recommendations would make future studies even more productive. First, future studies would be well served to look more closely at the differences in previous experience, future goals, and self-perceptions of students at the university and the community college to investigate how differences in students attending each type of institution can influence results in comparative studies of these two populations. This study poses tentative conclusions regarding differences in student perception and willingness to critique technology and their own work in the course. Many of these conclusions are based on students’ prior work history, current work history, previous experiences in college and high school courses, and their age. However, more detailed studies, including case studies of particular students which take these factors into account, might help us understand the
complex histories that lead students to choose or avoid the use of particular forms of technology and media in the classroom.

Second, future studies should use Blackboard or other course management systems even more prolifically to generate dialogue between students and the instructor and among students in the course. Increased use should be even easier with the incorporation of more Web 2.0 technologies in traditional CMS systems. For example, Wimba plug-ins to Blackboard now allow students and instructors alike to easily post podcasts, produce audio posts to discussion forums, and use the enhanced virtual classroom feature to interact using video and document-sharing. These technologies will be the most useful for online and hybrid or blended courses but could easily be used to enhance the seated classroom as well, particularly to allow students to work in groups more easily from a distance outside the classroom. The best part about these types of plug-ins is that they are easy to use, they incorporate Blackboard interfaces with which students are already familiar, and they require inexpensive microphones and cameras in order to use them.

The biggest challenge in using these technologies productively is encouraging students to use these technologies to complete projects and facilitate dialogue. One suggestion would be to model their use with students during class time, much as I did with the chat feature in Blackboard. This study suggests that even when students are comfortable with technology, they do not necessarily choose to use that technology in the classroom due to concerns about ease of use and the risk of getting a lower grade or what they see as less positive feedback should they use technology other than word processing to complete projects. However, when podcasting, video conferencing, and Web 2.0 technologies are regular parts of everyday class activities, students might begin to view them less as “fun”
possibilities to be used in addition to traditional essays and more as a vital part of communicating in the class.

Third, future studies applying critical pedagogy to technology use should be more open to allowing students to democratically determine those technologies used in the composition classroom, including providing opportunities for students to teach each other how to use various technologies through small group work and student presentations. I have previously mentioned that Wimba for Blackboard provides a way of facilitating small group work and student activity in and out of class. Other free Web 2.0 technologies, such as Netvibes, allow students to create free Web sites using RSS feeds, blogs, and other interactive technologies to compile lists of sources, comment on those sources, develop wikis, upload media, and create projects that draw on technologies with which they are already familiar outside the classroom to make their work in the classroom relevant to a broader audience.

These studies could also take into consideration the course themes and how these themes impact student views of technology use in composition. In the university course, the sequence moved directly from the theme of literacy to that of technology. In the community college course, I began by asking students first about the nature of knowledge and communication, then moved to the theme of literacy and finally to the theme of technology. Further mining of the data might provide fruitful conclusions regarding how the addition of the initial theme of how we know what we know and how we communicate that knowledge impacted students’ views of literacy and technology later in the course.

Fourth, instructors should become more involved in completing projects along with students, including projects that are disseminated to a wider audience using the internet or
various forums, such as blogs or Web pages, available through their college or university. Instructors should work alongside students to complete their own projects using digital media. For example, I could have used Netvibes to compile lists of sources on technology and invited students to read and respond to those sources in their class projects or in our class chats. They could also add to these lists or open new sites to create compilations on their own topics. Students may have felt more comfortable using Web 2.0 tools to complete class projects had we worked more frequently with those technologies in our “play” time in the classroom.

Finally, instructors must continue to carefully focus on how their own reflection contributes to or detracts from effective class instruction. Instructors should be willing to document what happens in their courses and use that documentation to shape the course to most benefit students. However, when that documentation becomes a means for the instructor to note all of his or her own insecurities, fears, or problems, the documentation can become counterproductive. The best way to reflect on the critical classroom is to constantly communicate with students, no matter how time consuming that may be. In reality, however, I realize that the majority of instructors in composition classrooms are overworked and underpaid, cobbling together too many classes at too many schools in order to make ends meet. This failure of the educational system will not likely be addressed any time soon. But all instructors can at a minimum ask students to reflect on the day’s activities, either electronically through a CMS or email or in written form, and then compile some starting points for the next class period based on the areas in which students were confused or had more questions. In addition, instructors can be willing to admit when an assignment
or activity is not meeting the needs of students and adapt those activities to be more
effective for their courses based on their reflection and student feedback.

Instructors can also recognize in their own experience the elements that limit their
time with and impact their experiences with students: acceleration, reification, pre-scientific
thinking, and mystification. Sharing reflections on their own experiences can help instructors
model inquiry and reflection for students. This modeling will counter each of the four
elements that promote the cultural mystifications listed above that critical pedagogy seeks to
fight. Technology could be beneficial in modeling this reflection. Instructors could set up
simple Websites or blogs about their own professional concerns, such as contingent faculty
issues, that give students examples of ways to research and reflect on their own situations.
Instructors can also use technology, such as Camptasia and simple podcasting, to talk about
their own writing processes, illuminating the struggles that instructors have with writing to
give students an example of how drafting works for professionals who write.

Perhaps the most counterproductive activity in a classroom is assumption: assuming
that students have the time and space to make reflective rhetorical choices about their use of
media, assuming that the assignments and activities that we bring to the classroom are the
most effective for student learning, and most of all, assuming that because the majority of
our students have grown up around digital technology and used computers that they feel
comfortable bringing that media and technology with them into the classroom.
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Appendix A: Student Technology Survey

Section A: Some Basic Information

Name: __________________________
Age: ________
Academic Level: ___________

Section B: Experience with Technology

Please explain how frequently you used each of these technologies prior to this class:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>1 or less/week</th>
<th>2-3 times/week</th>
<th>Every Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Computer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laptop Computer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Games</td>
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<tr>
<td>Word-Processing Software</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Chat Rooms</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Instant Messaging</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Blackboard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PowerPoint</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Web-Design Software</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Do you particularly like/dislike any of these technologies? If so, which ones? If not, why?

Do you own a laptop?  yes  no  If not, how did you get access to a laptop?

Do you have internet access in your current living situation?  yes  no

Where do you usually work on computers (check all that apply):
- [ ] Dorm Room
- [ ] Computer Lab
- [ ] Library
- [ ] Friend’s Room
- [ ] Home
- [ ] Other ____________
How would you characterize your level of comfort with computers (1=least, 10=most)?

1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

What are the two words that best describe your feelings for computers?

What are the primary purposes for which you use computers? (Check all that apply.)

- Homework
- Email
- Games
- Internet
- Chat rooms
- Instant Messaging
- Facebook
- Blackboard
- Other ______________

Did you choose to take your writing class in a laptop classroom?  yes  no

If yes, why?

If no, what were your feelings upon realizing your class was to be held in a laptop classroom?

How do you feel now about having your class in a laptop classroom?

Do you think that having your composition course in a laptop classroom influences your writing process?  yes  no

If yes, how?  If not, why?

How much time do you think that you spent in class on non-class-related websites, IM, etc?

When you think of computers what specific images come to mind?  (Just jot down any you think of.)

**Survey based on the work of Randal Woodland, Dene Grigar, and Susan Kirtley.
Appendix B: University Course Policy Statement

### English 104: Composition
TR 9:30-10:45

**Instructor:** Heidi Skurat Harris
**Office hours:** TR 11-1 (or by appnt.)
**IM Name:** (Yahoo) haskharris
**Contact info:** hasharris@bsu.edu

**Course Description**
Further instruction in composition with an emphasis on writing longer essays. Includes assigned readings. Further instruction and practice in research methods. Prerequisite: English 101, 102; or ENG 103; or appropriate combination of SAT verbal or ACT English scores and academic index. Credit Hours: 3.

**Course Goals**
English 104 applies the fundamentals of rhetoric to the research process. This class introduces students to the methods of research; the rhetorical nature of research; and the elements, strategies, and conventions common to research writing, including the visual as well as the verbal organization of new knowledge. At the completion of English 104, students should be able to achieve the following goals:

... Create and complete research projects. This involves generating a research question, engaging in critical/analytical reading, developing an argument with evidence collected from both primary and secondary research, and documenting sources appropriately.

... Align research questions with appropriate research methods.

... Employ critical thinking in evaluation, speculation, analysis, and synthesis required to evolve and complete a research project.

... Use a variety of strategies to gather and organize information appropriate for the context and persuasive to the intended audience.

... Use the university research library to forward their research agenda

... Engage in collaborative research.

... Employ format, syntax, punctuation, and spelling appropriate to various rhetorical situations in a stylistically sophisticated manner.

... Collect, analyze, and organize research information in verbally and visually compelling ways.

... Take initiative for the development and completion of individual and joint research projects.
Course Content and Format

The content and format of English 104 are designed to enable students to achieve the course goals; specifically, students in English 104 will:

… Discuss, analyze, and respond to texts composed in a variety of media that develop an argument by relying on different kinds of research and that are addressed to diverse academic audiences.

… Analyze the connections among research questions, research methods, audience, and style.

… Design various research projects that involve generating a question, collecting data, analyzing data, and interpreting the analysis.

… Conduct research projects that rely on various means of gathering data, including but not limited to fieldwork, online research, and library research.

… Analyze data collected through a variety of methods.

… Compose proposals, progress reports, and final research reports for individual projects.

… Compose final research reports that are persuasive and appropriate for the intended audience and context.

… Compose research reports in multiple drafts, involving peer feedback, self-reflection, instructor’s written comments, and teacher-student conferences.

… Reflect regularly on the choices available and the decisions made in the creation and completion of research projects.

Course Rationale/Philosophy

I believe that practice, action, and reflection are vital parts of writing and of learning. In this course, we will use the topics of literacy, education and technology as focal points to practice the elements of writing, write papers, practice research strategies and reflect on our writing and learning experiences as we work with technology to produce projects that deal with literacy and learning.

In other classes, you might have come to expect that you will be lectured on information and then tested on that information. In this class, we will try a new approach to learning. My purpose in the course is to mentor you through the discovery and writing process by not only providing opportunities for you to study and practice writing but also providing feedback and evaluation to help you move toward the course goals and success in English 104.

The textbook will serve as a tool to use to develop documents and assignments. However, the bulk of the text we study in the course will be generated by the class. Students will be designing multi-media essays, reflecting on writing/design and building a
database of those essays for classmates to "mine" for data. We'll also be building a database of research to use in looking at those projects when we develop further projects as a class. In-class writing and reading will be a regular component of the course, and you will be doing small-group and interactive work along with your classmates as well.

**Required Texts**


... Readings on BlackBoard and on Handouts as assigned.

**Requirements**

As an outcome of the course content and format, which enable the accomplishment of the course goals, students in English 104 will be required to complete:

... Four or more research projects that address different audiences, contexts, and data collection/analysis processes (Each project will culminate in a research driven report, between 4 to 6 pages with an additional appropriate works cited and one report must incorporate a significant visual element)

... Reading assignments for discussion, analysis, and response including texts created through a variety of media

... Informal writing assignments (such as journals, reading reflections, in-class writings, or smaller pieces intrinsic to major research projects)

**Evaluation**

Students will provide anonymous evaluations of the course. Instructors are urged to evaluate and revise individual syllabuses on a regular basis. ENG 103 is subject to curriculum review by the Writing Committee.

**Student Evaluation**

*A-range work* (A=95-100, A-=90-94)

Exceptional work with goes beyond the minimum requirements in many ways. The student shows attention to rhetorical elements, includes more than adequate information/examples, makes connections between main points and examples, addresses complex issues and applies logical ideas (i.e. thinking) in a format that uses visuals appropriately and addresses all elements of the assignment.

*B-range work* (B+=87-89, B=84-86, B-=80-83)

Complete, but unexceptional. Might show attention to some but not all rhetorical elements. The work reveals an attitude of completing the assignment “to get it over with.” The might have some examples or make basic connections. Some format/typographical problems distract the reader from the message. Visuals may be used, but they don't show thoughtful attention to the rhetorical situation.

*C-range work* (C+=77-79, C=74-76, C-=70-73)

Average; just barely meets the basic minimum requirements of the assignment but leaves out some elements of the assignment. Work that has not been edited for anything beyond grammatical mistakes falls into this category. The rhetorical elements are not addressed. This level of work also leaves out examples, necessary steps, or evidence for each "point" or claim.
**D-range work** (D+=67-69, D=64-66, D-=60-63)
Lacks several of the minimum requirements for C-range work.

**F work** is largely incomplete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Essay (50 pts.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Essay (150 pts.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal for Technology Exploration/Research Project (50 pts.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Exploration Project (100 pts.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BlackBoard Discussion/Response Posts (300 pts.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Simulation Proposal (150 pts.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Researched Simulation/Learning Analysis (200 pts.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points: 1000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For a chart showing how points convert to letter grades, see our BlackBoard site.

**Class Participation**
I expect all students to be prepared to participate in class discussions. In order to do this, you should have read the work that we are discussing and be prepared to give your opinion and back that up with specific passages from the reading. In other words, if you did/didn’t like a work, be prepared to tell us why. Should it be evident that you are not prepared to participate class, or are actively NOT participating in the day’s class, I reserve the right to count you as “absent” for that day’s class.

**Regular attendance**
A significant component of the course is in-class activities and discussion. If you’re absent from class, you will not receive credit for the in-class writing. If you miss more than twenty percent of the semester (6 days in a TR class), you will be dropped from the course. If you have more than three unexcused absences (which occur when you do not provide documentation of an absence—doctor’s note, etc.—or speak to me about your absence in advance), I will deduct 15 points from your grade for each subsequent absence.

**Late Work**
Students will be penalized **five points** for each day a paper is late unless specific arrangements are made with me in advance (i.e. school sponsored trip, family leave, etc.). **The final documented report project will not be accepted after the day it is due.** All assignments must be submitted for a grade in the order that they were assigned. No late paper will be accepted more than seven (7) calendar days late.
We will use a BlackBoard site for a good portion of the activities in this course. On this site, you will have

... course policies, documents, etc. (Because these are available 24/7 online, I will expect you to know when deadlines are and how to navigate the course without exception.)

... an individual discussion board, in which you can post anything that you would like only me to see.

... whole-class discussion boards and small-group discussion boards.

... readings (.pdf files).

... a database of research on various aspects studied in the course that we can draw on as a class for our final project(s).

You will be responsible for reading all items posted to BlackBoard, as well as those items listed in your syllabus for each week.

Failure to contribute to the course database will preclude your use of this database for later assignments (in other words, if you don't add sources to the group database, I won't accept sources you use from the group database).

I may occasionally refer to items you post online in class discussion boards (with the exception of the individual discussion board), so think about the items you write as being designed for the classroom audience. Our learning community will no doubt bring diverse perspectives to discuss this semester's readings and writings. With this in mind, respect others as you would yourself like to be respected in the course. I will not hesitate to ask you to leave the class if you cannot maintain a civil, cordial discussion tone throughout the course. You may offer a perspective that disagrees with a classmate; however, you may not be insulting, hostile, or degrade anyone based on gender, religion, race, sexual preference, etc.

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible.
Plagiarism  The use of another's words or ideas without appropriate citation of the source from which you took those words will not be tolerated. For an explanation of BSU's Academic Ethics Policy, see http://www.bsu.edu/sa/dean/stucode. You are responsible for knowing the policies expressed in the BSU Academic Ethics Policy. If I find that you have plagiarized, I reserve the right to fail you for that assignment or for the course.
Appendix C: Diagnostic Essay for University Class

For Thursday, write an essay on one of the prompts below. The questions listed under each prompt are there as a guide. You do not have to answer every question as long as your essay develops specific examples that support your main idea. Be sure to clearly state the theme of the essay and organize your ideas around this theme. If some questions from other prompts relate to the one you have chosen, feel free to pull them in and address them as well.

1. Only 1% of the world's population holds a bachelor's degree. Making the decision to attend a college is often tough. What or who influenced your decision to attend college? When you arrived here, did you find that this university met your expectations? How so (or not)? What are your academic goals and how will you achieve these goals as a student in a writing class?

2. Who or what comes to mind when you hear the word "writer"? Are you a writer? Why or why not? How do you feel about writing in general? How do you define good and bad writing? Explain some examples to support your answer.

3. What English classes (or other writing-intensive classes) have you taken in the past? Did you like them? Why or why not? Which papers and assignments appealed to you? Which did not? Have you written anything in the past that wasn't assigned in a classroom? If so, what? If not, why not? What do you think is expected of you as a writer at the university?44

1 These prompts had come from a fellow classmate in my English 105-Teaching Preparation course the semester before I taught this BSU class.

44 These prompts had come from a fellow classmate in my English 105-Teaching Preparation course the semester before I taught this BSU class.
### Appendix D: Student-Designed Rubric for Project One in English 104

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Design/Mechanics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... Transitions</td>
<td>... Clarity</td>
<td>... Sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... Order/Flow (not choppy)</td>
<td>... Appeal to the Audience</td>
<td>... Grammar (spelling, commas in a list, “it is” “that is” “there are”, verbs consistent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... Organization—right order</td>
<td>... Staying on the subject</td>
<td>... Strong thesis statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... Knowledge of the topic</td>
<td>... Presentation (using the design that best fits your paper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... Strong examples</td>
<td>... Photos/graphics clear/well placed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... Connections</td>
<td>... (optional) Working Hyperlinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>... Comparisons (optional)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>B+</th>
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<th>B-</th>
<th>C+</th>
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<th>C-</th>
<th>D+</th>
<th>D</th>
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<td>Excellent</td>
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<td>Above Avg.</td>
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<td>Below Avg.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lacking</td>
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The scale begins with the category at the far left and slides to the other two categories based on the student’s performance. A slide can go up or down no more than two levels when moving from left to right.

excellent = up 2 
above average = up 1 
average = straight across 
below average = down 1 
lacking = down 2
Appendix E: English 104 Project Two Description

Project Two: Technology Exploration/Research Project
Proposal for Project: Due Friday, March 2 by 5:00 p.m. (50 pts.)
Project Two: Due Saturday, March 24 by 5:00 p.m. (100 pts.)
Project Two Response Paper: Due April 2 by classtime

The second project in this class will build on Project One in the following ways:

1. You will pose a question to be explored in your paper, just as you did in project one.
2. You will either focus on a small, local issue (this time, at BSU) and tie it into larger issues (at other universities, in other states, etc.) or look at statistics, issues in the larger community and tie them in to an issue at BSU.
3. You will collect research of a particular type to help explore the question you pose.
4. You’ll work again with developing a sliding scale for your project.
5. You’ll again look at issues with technology, possibly as it impacts literacy (for those of you who combined the two in the last project).
6. You’ll decide what format works best to show your exploration of the specific question you pose.

Project Two will ask you to also:

5. Incorporate quantitative research, library research, and online research in your final product (all academically sound sources) as well as interviews and case studies, if you would like.
6. Write and submit a proposal for what your project will include and have that proposal approved by the instructor.
7. Utilize at least ONE form of visual rhetoric in the final project (graph, chart, hyperlink, photo, etc.) that SUPPORTS your document and adds meaning to that project (i.e. a clip art person will NOT work, nor will other photos included that don’t add to the meaning of the text).
8. Develop a sliding scale that helps me understand what areas you in particular need to improve on based on feedback from Project One (each student will do this and submit this with their proposal.

For Project Two, you will need to pose a question about some technological component, device, program, function, etc. used on the Ball State Campus. For example, you might investigate whether or not cell phones distract students from their coursework or how students use laptops on campus (homework, gaming, communication, etc.). You will also compare your research/findings to other universities, schools, states, etc. to draw conclusions about how your findings compare to others.

The purpose of this assignment is to ask a question that COMBINES research you undertake on this campus (quantitative and original, preferably, although you might be able to find some of the statistics you need on the internet) with research statistics you find elsewhere (on another campus website, in academic journals, etc.).
For research you find elsewhere, the **data must come from actual research projects, not just an article with one statistic in it** (i.e. “Surveys show that 10 percent of all college students use IM” will not be acceptable. You should be able to talk about where the survey was completed, who performed it, and how it was done as well as listing the statistics).

You will propose your project, including what your question will be, what steps you’ll go through to answer the question (including what sources you’ll consult during your investigation), and a sliding scale you would like me to use to evaluate your paper based on the comments from the last paper and your review of those comments on Project One response. I reserve the right to modify the scale and will post a template with common items that everyone will be evaluated for based on this assignment sheet. Please base your sliding scale elements on things you need to improve on from looking at your last paper.

I’ll post guidelines for the proposal and the sliding scale on Thursday to the “Assignments” part of Blackboard.
Appendix F: English 104 Project Three Description

Project 3: Simulation
Points Possible: 250
Simulation Dates: March 27-April 20

For the third project, we will be running a simulation that your class will create, organize, and run. This is simulation is part of our research component of this class. You will be doing either Track 1 or Track 2, depending on whether you are a team member or a committee member.

Since you will be writing an analysis of the simulation as part of this project, you will want to pay close attention to all parts of the simulation, including taking notes if necessary.

Setting up the simulation:
1. To begin the simulation, the class will propose issues they would like to explore and then vote on which issue the simulation will involve. The simulation involves either a controversial issue on campus, in Muncie, or in Indiana or funding for improvements or projects on campus, in Muncie, or in Indiana. Other suggestions will be considered.

2. The class will then brainstorm issues/ideas for possible group proposals. The class will also decide how to choose a committee of no more than five (5) members who will “run” the simulation and be the decision making body. This committee will be in charge of the following:
   - Preparing the Request for Proposal (with the instructor’s help), which competing groups will follow when preparing their Proposals
   - Creating the rules and regulations for the simulation
   - Mediating the simulation process (leadership role)
   - Double-checking the groups’ research and proposals
   - Preparing questions to ask the groups regarding their presentations
   - Preparing a final report detailing their decisions and justifying those decisions with facts from the proposals and presentations

3. The teams work to prepare their proposal and presentation from March 29-April 13. While the teams are preparing, the committee also researches the topic to be prepared and knowledgeable about the topic of the simulation. Groups will post copies of their proposals to BlackBoard before the simulation runs (on April 16-20).

4. We will have two days to “run” the simulation (give and evaluate presentations). The committee is responsible for researching the details of the proposals in advance and running the simulation according to the rules and regulations they establish.
5. The committee will prepare a report detailing their critiques of the groups’ proposals and their final decision. The report will be due to the instructor and posted to Blackboard, and a short oral defense of the report will be given to the class.

*Note: A group is allowed to fire a member if that member is not doing his/her work. The group must submit their reasons for their team member’s termination to me. Then, this fired individual must complete the project on his/her own or attempt to join another group.

**Track 1: Team Member**

**Group Proposal (collaborative)**

Points possible: 150
Due date: Group Proposals due Thursday, April 13 (Posted to Game Forum)

This written proposal should meet the criteria established by the committee and any format guidelines posted by the instructor on Blackboard. Your goal is to convince the committee that your project should be chosen as the “winner.” This project will require research, so your team will be given several days to work on this project. You will be presenting this project to the committee on the days we run the simulation, so you might want to think about what kinds of visual aids you might need to make your presentation stand out from the others.

Components of the proposal:

1. **Includes research and documentation. Prove that your information is reliable and accurate.**
2. Is clearly laid-out proposal. Make it easy for the committee to follow your plan and decide on its validity. The proposal should follow committee guidelines.
3. Add visual elements like graphs, charts, tables, pictures, maps, or anything that might help make your idea understood.
4. Be prepared for tough questions from the committee. Their job is to make sure that your team is reliable, and that your project is feasible.

**Track 2: Committee Member**

**Request for Proposal (collaborative)**

Points possible: 50
Due date: Wednesday, February 14

This document should: 1) outline details of the simulation situation, 2) outline the criteria that the committee decides should be added to the proposals and the presentations and 3) how the presentations will be done. Remember: the groups will be using this RFP to prepare their proposals, so take it very seriously and be as detailed as possible. Look for other examples of Requests for Proposals. You will also want to include how the simulation will run and the criteria you will use to make a decision.
Formatting is very important in documents such as these, so you should use headings, numbering, etc. to help your audience understand what they need to do for their project.

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**Analysis Report (individual for both Tracks)**

Points Possible: 200
Due date: Friday, April 28 (posted to Individual Discussion Board under “Papers”)

For your next activity, I would like you to put your problem solving and analytical skills to the test!

Write a report about your experiences with this simulation and the simulation’s relevance to your learning and to game design.

**Keep a log of any activities that you or your group complete.** Use the log to consider and address the following questions when discussing the simulation in your report. **You will want to do a chronological description of the events prior to/during the simulation to help your reader understand your role in the project.**

If you follow these guidelines, you should be able organize and write your report:

**Introduction**

- What is the purpose of this report? Why was it requested? What is the main point/conclusion/recommendation you reach in this report (statement of purpose)?
- What is the specific area(s) of the simulation are you studying? You should look at one particular aspect of the game to focus on as you analyze the simulation (i.e. small group dynamics, game theory, psychological effects of role play, etc.).
- What was your group’s experience while preparing for and running the simulation? What strategies did you use? What did you discuss in your group meetings? How did you delegate work? How did you solve problems? What research did you do, and how did you do it?
- How did you, your group members, and others in the class participate in the simulation? What happened when the simulation actually ran? (The more details/specifies you can include the better.)

**Discussion**

- What is the purpose of your discussion? What is/are the conclusion(s) you reach at the end? (short introduction to your discussion)
- How do your sources relate to your experience with the simulation? (I am very interested in how your experience in the class compares to role-playing theory, simulation theory, or theories of small group interaction. Since we are doing research in an “academic” community, please only use sources from academic journals or reliable books and websites in your analysis.)
• What specific examples from the simulation explain the points you are trying to make with your sources?
• How does the learning from the simulation fit into the overall plan of the course? Look back at previous projects. What skills from those projects helped you complete project 3? Which didn’t? Provide specific examples.

Conclusion/Recommendation
• What is the purpose of the report (restated) and the conclusion you reach? Was the simulation relevant to your learning? Why or why not?
• If the simulation was relevant, how? What did you learn from the experience? What evidence can you give to illustrate what you’ve learned?
• Do you think that simulations are a more or less effective way of teaching technical writing than traditional methods? Why?
• How did the simulation meet your expectations? What elements did you think were missing? What would you do to make the simulation more productive and effective? How realistic is the simulation compared to the “real world”? In what way was it similar? In what ways was it different?
• What did you learn in this class? What did you wish you had learned? In what ways did you develop as a writer in this course? Not develop?
• What are your recommendations based on your research and conclusion(s)? How can future students or I implement these conclusions?

Document your sources using MLA formatting (both in-text and in the Works Cited page). You can find help with documentation at the Purdue Online Writing Lab link at the bottom of the “Handouts/Readings” section on Blackboard.

A final tip: Use headings and subheadings to help your reader through your main and minor points. Always use them between main points and make sure that headings are clearly differentiated from subheadings in the report. Remember that the document should be not only clear and concise but also visually appealing.
Appendix G: English 104 Answers to Questions about High School Writing

January 16, 2007—Class Notes

What kinds of things did you do in your High School English Classes?

- Research paper on any topic you choose—had to do all research outside of class…
- Research project on any novel—all research in class
- Poem about ?
- Short story—children’s book—illustrated/animated
- Pick a year and make a newscast out of it (sports/weather/etc.)
- Speech class—in English class
- Research a topic and do a PowerPoint/Paper/Speech (ADD/ADHD)
- Research paper—pick three writers and explain how those three writers defined their genre—evolution of the fiction of vampires (Lord Byron-Bram Stoker)
- 25 pp. typed (on a typewriter) research paper on second-hand smoking
- PowerPoint (past/present/future)
- Portfolios (frosh-senior) how you improved as a writer?
- Term paper on whatever topic that you wanted (adoption rights)

Research as posing questions and making connections/observations to form answers…

The first assignment will be an essay (from the Greek “essai” meaning “to weigh”)…regarding a question you come up with regarding your own literacy (find the assignment for this posted to the “Assignments” tab of Blackboard).

For Today…the question is…

What is literacy?

Find the answers to this posted to the “Literacy Sources” Forum in the Class Discussion Board…

Question: What one thing most surprised you about writing in college? (in a paragraph to “In Class Writing” in IDB)
Appendix H: English 104 Model Questions for Project One

Literacy Questions—

Standards/Influences—

- What is the measuring point for literacy? When you can read your first word or can fully comprehend a story? How is that determined?
- How is literacy measured? Can it be measured?
- What is the average age a person becomes literate?
- How has the definition of literacy changed over the years?
- How do you measure literacy?
- What are some significant ways that people can improve their literacy skills?
- How has becoming literate helped people in the world more than people who have?
- What subject matter must you be knowledgeable of to be considered literate? Is it limited to just English, math, science, etc.?
- How does one go about becoming literate?
- How did you become a Literate person?
- What age were you when you became a Literate Person?
- Who was your biggest supporter on becoming a Literate Person?
- How well are other people's literacy skills?
- Is the outline of my paper configured in a proper manner?
- Does my paper have any extra words that I do not need?
- What is the average age that children become literate?
- What qualifies a person as being literate?
- Is there a consistent method to making children literate or does it vary from child to child?
- I have wondered if the expected or required literacy changes are noticeable in people from different counties within Indiana. Do different high-schools have vastly different required amounts of literacy, or is the difference small?
- Does literacy really make an effect in the job market? Or is it just the degree of literacy you possess that is what makes the difference? My grandfather didn't complete high school and had a very good job he retired from. My dad didn't go to college and has a VERY good job he can retire from and be well off. How is that going to relate to what I'll need?
- Who decides how literate a person really is? The culture or the people they interact with?
- What would the world be like without literacy?
- Is it a privilege or a right?
- Is it necessary to survive in the world today?
- What form of language is used by the general public? Do we use cultural bias when we speak, assuming that everyone knows what we're talking about?
- What are levels of literacy?
- How is literacy measured?
• Is literacy directly link to IQ?
• How do learning disabilities effect literacy?
• How is my education in the school system of today different from my grandmother’s experiences in a one room school house?

Reading—
• How did you remember learning to read?
• Did you enjoy reading growing up?
• Were there any teachers/family members that influences your reading ability?
• Do you think that today's youth is headed in the right direction with their level of reading writing ability?
• How likely is it that children learn to read before school? How often do they come into kindergarten with the ability to read (even if it's just a small amount)?
• Do the majority of children in the U.S. learn to read in kindergarten or is it later?
• Why are some people more attracted to and like to read more than others?
• How does when they learned to read affect them later?
• Why do some people enjoy reading more that others?
• What was your first book you remembering reading?
• What was your favorite book of all time?
• Do you consider yourself a good reader?
• Is there a link between parents reading to you as a baby, and how that would effect the child's ability to learn and understand language?

Technology Questions—

Technology Alone—
• How many people are computer literate?
• Over time, what is the biggest technological innovation?
• What is the most important thing there is to know about technology?
• How has technology affected older generations when it comes to getting jobs?
• What different types of personas do people create through online profiles? How do those personas compare to their face-to-face persona? Why do people have these different personas?
• Have the sell of books gone down since computers/internet became popular?
• How much information can a person find out about another person over the internet?
• How far along will technology be in 20 years compared to the last 20 years?
• How much time do you spend on the computer?
• When using a computer do you spend most of your time for leisure activities such as playing games chatting etc. or to do education work?
• What information are people posting online? Do they have blogs or profiles? Do they buy things online?
Technology and Literacy—

- How has technology changed the Education process?
- How will technology affect younger generations to come?
- How has technology enhanced my generations learning environment and allowed us to be more literate?
- Has technology been a major factor in teaching us or do we still rely on teachers as much as previous generations?
- Do you think that technology is a better and easier way to teach or is the teacher classroom situation better?
- Do people read less now with new technology?
- Does literacy affect the way technology is developed?
- When people use AIM or other forms of instant messaging services, and use shorthand, does that effect their language outside of those services?
- Are people more likely to read news online than to pick up a newspaper or watch the news on TV?
- Do you think it's easier to use a computer to find information or to research at a library. Why is it easier?
- What age did people (my age, elders) start using technology in the classroom? How much did they use? What did they use? How often? How are they using technology today? Do they like it? Can they understand it? Are they buying more upgrades? Or do they stick to the simple stuff?
Appendix I: English 104 Questions to Develop Response to Project One

Questions to develop Response to Project One (worth 50 points)  
Due date: Friday, February 16 (Individual Discussion Board “Papers” Forum)  

You may shape the essay using the questions provided, but please use the bold headings I provide for the essay to help me navigate your answers.

Introduction:

… What was your initial reaction to the score/comments on the text?
… How did you feel/what did you think about this assignment when it was assigned?
… How did you feel about/what did you think about this assignment when you worked on it?
… How did you feel about/what did you think about this assignment when you submitted it?
… What were your expectations for the assignment/text/grading?
… Did this assignment seem to follow from what you did in English 101/102/103? If so, how? If not, why?
… Did you feel as if the assignment/score/response to your text matched your expectations? Why or why not?

Process:

… What was your process for creating the text? Be specific, including dates and specific steps or examples when possible. In other words, what steps did you go through to create the text? What decisions did you make, and how did you make those decisions?
… Was the process for creating this text similar to the process you’ve used on papers in the past? Why or why not?
… Why did you decide to use the form that you did (i.e. with or without hyperlinks, as a website, as a Word document)? Have you done similar projects in the past?
… What was your experience with the technology you used to create this document?
… Do you plan on changing anything about your writing process after your experience with this paper?

The Assignment and Class Activities:

… How did you initially interpret the assignment when it was posted? In your own words, explain the assignment.
… What classroom activities did you find helpful? Unhelpful? Wish we would have done?
… Did you use the textbook or any of the postings on the Blackboard site to help you with the assignment? Why or why not?
… Did creating the requirements for the sliding scale in class change the way you looked at or produced the assignment? Why or why not?
Response to Comments/Plan for Revision:

… Read the comments in the margins and at the end of your essay. Respond to as many of them as possible.

… Finally, talk about how you will revise the project before you post it to the “Project One Discussion Forum” in the Discussion/Database section of Blackboard.

Finally, post a clean copy (without my comments) of your Project One Literacy/Technology essay to the “Project One Discussion Forum” in the Discussion/Database section of Blackboard by class time on Tuesday, February 20.
### Appendix J: English 102 Student Dialogue

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<td>Therons</td>
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Appendix K: English 102 Project One Description

James Berlin, a writing scholar, wrote: "To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality and the best way of knowing and communicating it."

For the first project we will address the following questions:

How do we know what we know? How do we communicate what we know?

Our first writing project will focus on how knowledge is known and communicated. All writing is a visual form of knowledge—if you don’t know something, you can’t write it. Conversely, when a writer encounters new knowledge, she often has difficulty expressing that knowledge clearly in writing. This difficulty happens at all levels of education, social and economic status (see Williams and Colombo in the reading).

For this project we will read the following texts:

- Paulo Freire’s “The ‘Banking’ Concept of Education” (pp. 239-241)
- Alexander Calandra’s “Angels on a Pin: The Roommate Story” (pp. 158-160)
- Theodore Roszak’s “Of Ideas and Data” (pp. 282-293)
- Joseph Williams and Gregory Colombo’s “Two Metaphors for Learning and the Novice Writer” (pp. 217-227)
- George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s “Concepts We Live By” (pp. 314-317)
Sample Project One Proposal (.2 315 Kb)

Make this assignment relevant to you...research a question that needs an answer...

The proposal should have the following components (use the questions below to divide the sections):

**What is the question you will be exploring?** Remember to ask a question (i.e., How do I know who I am?) instead of making a statement (i.e., In this paper I will talk about how I know who I am...).

**What questions will you have to answer to explore this question?** List other questions you will have to answer to answer the larger question (even the smallest question is important).

**Where will you go to look for answers to this question?** For the first few weeks of class, we will be considering what knowledge is and what constitutes an answer to a question. So what kinds of evidence will you need in order to answer your question (this evidence could be verbal or visual).
3. Proposal Requirements and Scoring

The final project that you address in the proposal should do the following:

1. **To explore and pose an answer to a specific question** that you pose at the beginning of your document. The question should be more narrow than those above. For example, you might look at some aspect of your educational experience and write a short essay analyzing why that experience was effective/ineffective.

2. **To utilize some of the elements of primary research** to answer the question. For instance, you might interview someone who was vital to your knowledge in the area to help recall details that you may have left out. Or you might look at papers you still have from a course to talk about how your writing changed during that course.

3. **To find at least one other outside source** to add to your piece (something that helps you answer your main question, not a definition or a description). This outside source could come from the readings we've done in the textbook (Freire, Galindo, Williams and Colomb, Rosati, Lakoff and Johnson).

4. **To find a medium of expression** (traditional essay, hypertext document, essay using visuals—such as photos, etc.) that best conveys the answer to the question you pose about knowledge.
Appendix L: Bree’s Freire Post and Revisions

Initial Post:
Yes these are articles are clearly making the same argument. I think the Barometer Story is a very good example of what Paulo Freire is trying to get across. Just because your teacher tells you to complete a task one way doesn't mean it is the only way to solve the given problem. In the Barometer Story, the student is asked how to get the height of a tall building using a barometer. I couldn't help but laugh when I read this story. This student must have been a very arrogant, sarcastic person. He must have given every way to get the height of the building except for the answer the teacher wanted. What a pain, but what a thinker. I would have to say I, as a student am handy-capped, because I rely on the teacher's point of view way too much. I have been taught with "the banking concept" my whole life. I find it very hard to be creative and think for myself. When I study for a test I more or less study the teacher teaching because it is a good way to distinguish what is going to be on a test. I know that's terrible, but I think most students do a similar thing. These were two great articles. They really got me thinking about the way I learn. Who knows though? This article is just Freire's point of view. Teachers work very hard and I'm sure they don't feel like they are poisoning our brains. Teachers might be passionate about a subject they are teaching, but they can't make every student have the same passion and critical thinking skills they have. I believe maybe a student's education lies more with the student then the teacher. Thinking critically is something nobody can teach you.

My Response:
Good connection between the articles in this sentence: "I think the Barometer Story is a very good example of what Paulo Freire is trying to get across." How do these sentences support your main argument about the articles?: "This student must have been a very arrogant, sarcastic person. He must have given every way to get the height of the building except for the answer the teacher wanted. What a pain, but what a thinker." You say later that, "This article is just Freire's point of view." Which article are you talking about here? Did you talk about this article before this sentence so your reader knows what the "this" refers to? Look at the number of different arguments you have in this paragraph...I think what you have here could be expanded to be an entire essay, with support.

Her Revised Post:

Yes these articles are clearly making the same argument. I think the Barometer Story is a very good example of what Paulo Freire is trying to get across. Just because your teacher tells you to complete a task one way doesn't mean it is the only way to solve the given problem. In the Barometer Story, the student is asked how to get the height of a tall building using a barometer. The answer the student gives doesn’t satisfy his teacher so the teacher gives the student a bad grade. After some arguing the teacher brings in another teacher to grade the student’s project. In the end, the student gets a good grade and both teachers agree to it. The student must have given every way to get the height of the building except for the answer the teacher wanted. The Barometer Story is a good example of what Freire is trying to get across because, Freire wants his students to learn to think for themselves and not just spit
out all the previous things he has said. Freire wants the students to be good critical thinkers and be able to communicate their ideas to others. I would have to say I, as a student, am handy-capped, because I rely on the teachers point of view way to much. I have been taught with "the banking concept" my whole life. I find it very hard to be creative and think for myself. When I study for a test I more or less study the teacher teaching because it is a good way to distinguish what is going to be on a test. I know that's terrible, but I think most students do a similar thing. Both of these articles had the same valid point and they got me thinking about the way I learn. The "banking concepts" article is just Freire's point of view. Teachers work very hard and I'm sure they don't feel like they are poisoning our brains. Teachers might be passionate about a subject they are teaching, but they can't make every student have the same passion and critical thinking skills they have. I believe maybe a student's education lies more with the student then the teacher. Thinking critically is something nobody can teach you.

My Second Response:

You could probably make this into a short essay (5-7 paragraphs) on these articles and how they relate to your learning. Aside from the good paragraph with much detail (yeah!), you have some ideas I'd like to address:

You state: "I have been taught with "the banking concept" my whole life. I find it very hard to be creative and think for myself. When I study for a test I more or less study the teacher teaching because it is a good way to distinguish what is going to be on a test. I know that's terrible, but I think
most students do a similar thing." So what you're saying is that you are actually analyzing the teacher's rhetoric in order to know what will be on an exam? Much like I was talking about the other day--knowing your audience and knowing what will influence that audience. I think that's actually a higher-order ability...not necessarily terrible.

You also state: "Teachers might be passionate about a subject they are teaching, but they can't make every student have the same passion and critical thinking skills they have. I believe maybe a student's education lies more with the student then the teacher. Thinking critically is something nobody can teach you." Too true. Which might be the reason that the "banking" concept is so popular. If I'm Teacher X, and my students hate my subject and don't want to be in my class, is it worth my time to try to get them to think critically if they don't want to?

Excellent points, Jennifer.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What or who was my biggest influence to become literate?</td>
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<td>How was becoming literate for me different than my parents and younger brother?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who is to blame for declining literacy rates in the U.S.?</td>
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<td>Is being illiterate in today’s society possible for some people?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wrote about the point at which he feels he became literate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ends up writing about the literacy of her peers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My early experiences with becoming literate are different than those of most of my peers.</td>
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<td>I did not have the typical experience of the American public school system because I was</td>
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<td>home schooled until the seventh grade. While home schooling has various pros and cons, I</td>
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<tr>
<td>found that my literacy experience was all very positive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking back at my childhood there were many people that influenced my literacy, but the main</td>
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<tr>
<td>contributors were my grandma, parents, and teachers. Enjoying literacy on the other hand, is mostly</td>
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<td>a result of my parents.”</td>
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<td>Did kindergarten (with the help of my parents and my teacher) provide me with the basic</td>
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<tr>
<td>literary skills needed to grow and flourish in my reading and computer capabilities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How has technology advanced over the years and how will it affect generations to come?</td>
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<tr>
<td>This is an essay that explores the reasons why I want to be an elementary teacher. I know</td>
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<tr>
<td>that my unusual childhood has impacted my decision. I am going to share some things about my life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and some experiences from my journey to literacy that have impacted my decision to</td>
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<tr>
<td>be an educator for the rest of my life.</td>
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<td>As stated before, family plays a role in the development of a person’s literacy skills, but how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>important of a role do they play?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How children are influenced to read can make a huge impact on how they become literate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now literacy can take on many different meanings to many different people, but the universal</td>
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<tr>
<td>definition is the ability to read and write or the ability to use a language to read (Wikipedia).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being literate in this world is maybe one of the biggest steps that a child will take in their</td>
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<tr>
<td>development towards their educational life and more importantly life itself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>“What or who influenced me to become literate?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“How has the use of instant messaging slang affected how we type and speak?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“One in every six children across the United States cannot reach his or her full potential in a</td>
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<td>normal classroom environment due to a “neurological disorder that affects the brain’s (sic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to receive, process, store, and respond to necessary information” (Learning Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at a Glance). For children with disabilities, the normal everyday classroom activities turn into</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a barrier that separates disabled students from their peers. Computer technology provides a way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for children and adults with disabilities to level the playing field with their non-disabled peers</td>
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<tr>
<td>through the aid of word processing, communication, research, and multimedia projects (Hasselbring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Glaser).”</td>
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</table>
“So, my question for is this, “How are people even a few years older than me using technology today? Do they like the technology? Can they understand it? Are they buying more upgrades or do they stick to simple stuff?”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You have to ask yourself, how does someone’s communication, age, and</td>
<td>level of education affect their job position and amount of respect in the business workplace?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How accurate are self interest tests?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do butterflies know what species to mate with?</td>
<td>Rumors of cell phones causing diseases such as brain cancer have been circulating since cell phones became such a commodity to the American public. However, these rumors have never daunted our hunger for cell phones and the betterment of cell phone technology, as it seems they come out with something new and more high-tech every month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex is an everyday activity, and if it is not it should be. Why? Sexual</td>
<td>activity plays a very important role in mental, physical, and emotional health.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is being done to prevent sexual predators from being hired into the</td>
<td>school system?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would the students benefit from having more of it introduced into the</td>
<td>classroom or would it detract from the lessons?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is counseling effective for children?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the use of online instant messenger software decreased?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are websites like Facebook and MySpace replacing face-to-face</td>
<td>conversation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking these questions helped me to develop a historical/critical view</td>
<td>of the Bible. I also learned that verses taken out of context could be used to justify hate and inequality. This paper is going to focus on three passages in the Bible that are often used to condemn homosexuality: the story of Sodom, the Leviticus Code, and part of St. Paul's letter to the Romans. Before beginning, it is worth noting that the Bible makes very few references to homosexuality. It is not mentioned by Jesus whatsoever.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should the death penalty be abolished?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does advertising online help a business gain customers and increase</td>
<td>sales?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are you supposed to know what each individual child is able to</td>
<td>comprehend? What is ultimately the best way to answer this question appropriately? Is there anything one might do to prepare or assist in answering the question?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How much time does an average phone consumer, whether it be a cell</td>
<td>phone, land line or text message, spend talking on the phone apposed [sic] to face-to-face interaction?</td>
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<tr>
<td>So, how do writing and speaking represent communication differently?</td>
<td>How are they similar? How does the human ingredient interact with each medium in day to day life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any techniques or strategies I could use to approach my</td>
<td>problem, perhaps something that could help me accelerate my learning and help me focus?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where do college students get their news from?</td>
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<tr>
<td>I want to challenge the idea that is seemingly going unchallenged by</td>
<td>the majority of students. Do computers improve education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While there have been great strides made in smashing social stereotypes,</td>
<td>it still seems that some people have a hard time just getting everything right when it comes to being politically correct in everyday communication. In fact, a lot of the time Americans reveal the same or even more stereotypes when they attempt to avoid them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is it the people who listen to rap and therefore they feel that they</td>
<td>have first hand experience to say that rap causes violence, or is it other citizens, people who do not listen to rap and as</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
a result stereotype this genre as antagonistic?

Why has the age for first pregnancies changed over the last 50 years?

I would like to take a deeper look into the life of a common teenager, and seek to answer the question of whether or not they are becoming more disobedient to their parents.

Why do people shy away from communicating with disabled people?

What would happen if we were unable to communicate with each other effectively? The major responsibility for teaching communication to children in our country falls on the school system. There have been many changes in our educational system in the last generation, mostly positive, but also some negative. For example, the insufficient teaching of formal English, that could one day have a negative effect on our society.

Does the use of emoticons and text speak help create emotion when using text messaging?

Well I will answer this question, explaining what they are, how they are used in showing emotion in a text message and how when using them emotions are easier to understand.

With interview data from a sample of two proposal writers, and an observational study among various many students and people of the working force, I used relevant questioning to estimate the norms of proposals, the styles that one can take, the amount of people in today’s world that currently write proposals, and the different projects and topics that may need a proposal.
Appendix O: English 102 Project Two Description

Penelope Klass writes in "Learning the Language" from our textbook that, "with any new language, to use it properly you must absorb not only the vocabulary but also the structure, the logic the attitudes." (51).

Theodore Sizer states in "Public Literacy: Puzzlements of a High School Watcher" that "We clearly have a pervasive and powerful public literacy, a set of widely accepted symbols and ideas that give meaning to being American. . . . We Americans share a culture so completely that we are barely aware of it." (71).

With these quotes in mind, the controlling questions for Project Two are:

What does it mean to be literate? What assumptions do we make about literacy? How do cultural assumptions/messages about literacy match/not match our experiences?
For Project Two, we will do the following:

1. Brainstorm ideas for Project Two based on our own experiences with literacy.
2. Analyze current syllabi to understand "literacy" in the specific context of OTC.
3. Synthesize ideas from the course readings with our own experiences.
4. Propose and complete a project based on some aspect of literacy.
3. Readings for Project Two

In the next few weeks, we will be reading the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page #s</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kozol and Klass</td>
<td>38-51</td>
<td>Tuesday, September 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin and Sizer</td>
<td>162-165 &amp; 70-74</td>
<td>Tuesday, September 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bazerman</td>
<td>101-187</td>
<td>Tuesday, October 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mering</td>
<td>608-618</td>
<td>Tuesday, October 16</td>
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</table>

Consider the main points, the audience, and the explanations for each reading and be ready in class to analyze and synthesize the texts.
Much like in Project One, you will pose a question that you will then research and answer based around a question of literacy.

You’ll write a proposal that outlines your project on this question.

What is the question you will be analyzing/evaluating? The question might look at a particular series of events in your experience or pose a question about a particular symbol of cultural literacy. Or you might analyze something at OTC that relates to literacy, much like we did with the syllabus. Talk about a particular issue in your OTC education so far and analyze whether or not that added to/deleted from your learning.

What questions will you have to answer to analyze this question? List other questions you will have to answer to answer the larger question (even the smallest question is important).

What will you consider to answer this question (i.e. sources, experiences, resources)? In this unit, we will draw from the experience we had researching project one and apply the higher order skills of Bloom’s Taxonomy (analysis, synthesis, evaluation). Discuss what kinds of ideas you will have to consider to explore your question.

What format will your project take? Same as last project: PowerPoint, essay, website, wiki, blog, other. Make the presentation fit the topic.
### 5. Due Dates for Project Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities for Project Two</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syllabus Analysis (bring syllabi from your courses to class)</td>
<td>Thursday, September 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Two Proposal (to “Submit Here”) by midnight</td>
<td>Friday, October 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Two Final (to “Submit Here”) on</td>
<td>Friday, October 26</td>
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</table>
Appendix P: Sample Annotated Essay for English 102 Project Two

Heidi Skurat Harris

Ms. Barbara Bogue

English 610

1 November 2004

The Pedagogy of Respect: Five Simple Rules

The first page is a story that sets up who Dr. Carman is as a person and my relationship with him using one specific story that I feel best represents who he is.

When I decided to study for my master’s degree in writing my senior year of college, I went to Dr. Carman’s office to ask him for a letter of recommendation.

“I’m applying for some assistantships,” I said. “I think I’m going... I think I want to teach.”

Dr. Carman’s laugh came straight from his beltline. His chin dropped, his underbite appeared, and he chortled. A similar chortle in that very same office frightened me into not applying to work in the Center for Writing and Thinking my freshman year. A version of the chortle popped out my junior year after he gave an impromptu soliloquy to his tiny piece of chalk, “Mr. Nubbins,” in Advanced Composition.

I gave him the addresses of the schools I was applying to. He tossed them with a flick of his wrist onto a stack of papers waist high to me next to a stack of papers waist high to him.

“So what’s your advice?” I asked. “About being a teacher?”

He pushed together the tips of his fingers and leaned back in his chair.

“All you need to decide,” he said, “is whether you want to be feared or respected.”
“Feared,” I said without pause.

“Respected,” I said after his eyebrows rose to question me.

I’m giving background in this paragraph to talk about how I was trained as a student. Knowing how I was trained as a student was one part in helping me understand who I became as a teacher.

Ten years before this “moment of truth” in Carman’s office, I began my pedagogical training in creative non-fiction. In elementary school, high school and college, the teachers and professors who taught me to write also modeled their pedagogies. In elementary school, I learned the basics of how words interact. In high school, I learned the fear of a form I must master or perish in academia’s fiery flames. In college, I learned a pedagogy of respect and a method of teaching writing that I carried into my creative non-fiction classroom. I also found in college a model useful only in the ways it did not teach. All contributed to my pedagogy—a pedagogy that, in 1987, I didn’t know would exist.

Part One: Heidi Learns to Write

In this section, I detail the important instructors I felt influenced my writing education using specific examples.

I learned “to write” the wrong way: Prescriptive grammar, note cards, sentence diagramming. Each step of the learning process trained me not to be a better writer, necessarily, but to be a better student in the next stage of school.

I blame Mr. Upton, Bergman Elementary, for the fact that I am now, essentially, in the 19th grade. He sparked my love of language by showing me how words worked. All year his sixth-grade English class, made up of gifted and problem students too smart or too unruly for the “normal” English class, diagrammed sentences.
Before we diagrammed, we memorized. We memorized all of the helping verbs (is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been, do, does, did, have, has, had, shall, will, should, would, could, may, might, must, and can). We memorized the parts of speech (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, pronoun, conjunction, preposition, expletive). I memorized while swinging on the porch swing at my sister’s house. I chanted the lists in time with the rocking, a moving mnemonic.

After I memorized parts, I diagrammed sentences, fifty or so a day, for the rest of the year to prepare me for High School English.

In high school, I wrote. I wrote during class--note cards, outlines and essays designed to prepare us again for the scary world of College English. I explicated “Fire and Ice” for my junior English final, working against the clock to coax out imaginary meanings in a predicated form. Out of class, I wrote for the school newspaper and yearbook, winning feature writing awards and editing both publications my senior year. In between classes (and all through my third viewing of Tora, Tora, Tora), I wrote haikus to my friends, memories in my journals, letters to pen pals. My career development assessment (a scientifically based, highly reliable instrument matching student interest to future careers) indicated that my best options, after my inevitable college education, were 1) feature writer, 2) clergy, 3) fur designer. Tenth on the list was “teacher.”

College of the Ozarks offered me a scholarship. I accepted, and found myself at a small, private, uber-conservative Presbyterian liberal-arts school. I would have majored in English from the beginning, but the only thing that English majors did was teach, and according to my career development assessment, I was supposed to be a journalist. Besides, I didn’t want to teach. I wanted to write.
My only year as a journalism major, I breezed through freshman comp. My professor, Dr. Patsy Watts, knew me from teaching at my high school, and she arranged for me to be in her class where I could redesign the course in whatever way I found handy, as long as I kept up my “grammar notebook” (I earned a solid “C” in the grammar notebook but an “A” in writing). Simultaneously, I took a seminar in British literature, and a miracle happened. I hated British literature, but the substitute who took over two weeks before the end of the class while Dr. Hendrickson had prostate surgery fascinated me. I signed up for his classes and to work in his Center for Writing and Thinking the next year.
### Appendix Q: Project Two Questions from English 102 Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“How is literacy important to farmers?”</strong></td>
<td>I will uncover how personality type, hemispheric dominance, and learning styles effect and contribute to my personal learning ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The topic I have chosen for project two is how do subliminal messages from the media and society impact our views on what we consider beauty?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How has the involvement of television in literacy evolved over the years?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How did I reach my current level of overall literacy?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the purpose of the No Child Left Behind Act?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is literacy?</strong> I am considering writing my paper about why I love to learn. I am still going to narrate the paper and I am going to analyse the differences between those who learn social/cultural skills before they are literate and those, (like me) who learn to read before they make friends their own age…I will draw the conclusion that the reason why I love to learn is because I received praise for being “smart” when I was young before I made friends.**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The topic I will be exploring is literacy among Native Americans living on reservations.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are the success rates of high school drop-outs who have obtained their GED?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why has Eric Cartman evolved from season one to the mastermind in season nine, yet he is still in the 3rd grade?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are the effects of using acronyms?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why is the reading/literacy level so different between different styles of schools?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are the objectives that teachers come up with to put on their syllabus different from what is really learned in the class?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does the media of today try to tailor their message toward those that are illiterate or are they still blind to it?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wrote a narrative detailing her history with learning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Does a narrative of her and her boyfriend’s experiences with different schools.)</td>
<td>I have often wondered how my elementary education differed from others. Andrew’s was a great learning experience for me. I wonder if every other child had the same type of experiences I did. My fiancé and I sat down and discussed these issues and came to the conclusion there was a drastic difference in his elementary education in comparison to mine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why do some teachers choose to discipline students and others do not?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does parental involvement influence children’s acquisition of literacy?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Are you Literate? /I ask this question to arouse thought on the specific subject of literacy and how people in a sense become literate. How do people become literate and how literate do they become? Is there a way to affect how literate an individual becomes throughout their life?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>So the question I will attempt to answer is “Does student/teacher interaction have any effect on how successful students are in the class?”</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I intend to prove that, in or society, we have preconceived notions as to a person’s literacy based solely on what we see.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regardless of how few or how many details a person remembers of the Superman origin</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and legend, everyone knows who he is and what he stands for. Adored, worshipped and admired by so many Americans, the Man of Steel stands apart as one of the greatest symbols of American culture the world has ever seen.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why do children’s television programs teach them foreign languages?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will you end up behind bars if you don’t have a high school diploma?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some of the Christian symbols in our everyday lives, and how do they help socialize Americans into Christianity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I come from a family that the girl marries a rich husband and then quits everything to take care of their family. I wondered if I am following in that footsteps, should I really waste the time going to college when I won’t apply the degree because I will be a stay at home mom?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix R: English 102 Project Three Description

In our class, we have discussed different forms of writing, including writing using various forms of digital technology (i.e. PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, webpages, Second Life, etc.).

This week, we will host class online to explore the benefits and problems with learning to write in a virtual format. To do so, we will look at three types of "virtual" writing:

1) Synchronous chat: discussions that take place between students at different places at the same time using a chat feature.

2) Asynchronous chat: discussions that take place between students at different places at different times (with the use of a discussion board or threaded forum).

3) Webpages: sites hosted online by one person to which several other persons may or may not visit.

As we look at these methods of writing and learning, keep the following questions in mind:

Do I learn more/less/the same amount when I am using digital or online sources/tools?
If this method of learning is more/less effective, why?
Do I use digital tools for writing in my life outside of school (i.e. IM, text message, email, blogs, etc)?
How could I use my strengths in other online/digital media to help my school experience?

To participate in this week's activities, you'll need to read Neil Postman pp. 597-605. In particular, think about the line from the introduction to the article where Postman claims that the issues with technology are "not how to use them, but how they use us" (597).

Also, be thinking about Project Three and the different digital and online elements or texts that you might use for your final project analysis.

Synchronous Chat--
You will meet for approximately one hour with other students in your class and possibly with my other English 102 class for an online chat. The chat schedule is as follows:

Monday, 4-5 p.m.--Kella, Jeanna, Luke, Joel
Monday, 7-8 p.m.--Matt, Mike, Keri, Tim
Tuesday, 5:30-6:30 p.m.--Jessica, Danielle, Amanda, Shane, Layla, Amber, and Jonathan
Tuesday, 7-8 p.m.--Shay, Kirby and Aaron
Wednesday, 8-9 p.m.--Jason, Andrew, Joshua, Michelle, Justin, and LaQuisha
Thursday, 9-10 p.m.--Jennifer, Nick, Cheryl, and Brian
The discussion for this synchronous chat will look at the following questions:

**Is the internet/digital media effective for writing education?**
Would composition classes, such as this one, be more effective for students if they remained paper-based?
Or do online, internet, and digital technologies help students be more engaged and more comfortable with writing?

Total for this chat: 30 pts.

**Asynchronous discussion--**

For the second part of this week's assignments, we will be participating in an asynchronous chat using the Class Discussion Board in Blackboard. You'll find a discussion board titled "Websites, Wikis, and Blogs! Oh My!"

On this discussion board, we'll be sharing our experience examining various technologies that could possibly be used in the composition classroom and for learning throughout the college curriculum.

To prepare for this discussion, visit one or more of the following:

www.weebly.com
www.freewebs.com
www.googlepages.com
www.pbwiki.com
www.blogspot.com
...or other online webpage, wiki, or blog generators.

On the discussion board, we'll talk about our experience using these digital means for writing and expression. We'll consider the following questions:

**Is writing for websites, wikis, and blogs as vital to learn as writing for traditional paper-based essays and research projects? Why?**
Is the prevalence of the internet requiring us to learn to write in multiple modes, not just on paper but also online through these digital forms?
Do you feel that hyperlinks and other forms of digital expression could help you more clearly communicate with others? More clearly than you would in a traditional paper?

These questions aren't the only ones we'll look at, but I'd like to use these to begin to talk about online and digital education.

**Post an initial posting with your argument (remember the P.E.E. structure to support your point of view) by WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31**
Post at least three comments to classmates by SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3 (midnight) responding to their ideas and comments. A few simple sentences agreeing with a post will not count as a comment. Comments should ask questions or further discussion with specific examples (think about talking in class in response to a classmate).

Total for this assignment: 40 pts.

The activities that you'll do this week should help you begin to think about your third project for this class. The third project should involve analyzing a particular website, article or technology using a particular set of criteria or ideas.

For example, you might use one of the articles about technology in our textbook to look at your particular experiences with technology. Or, you might look at some website on the internet that interests you to see if it is a good resource, a good means of expression, etc.

Basically, I'm looking for you to use your powers of analysis to look critically at some element of technology. Technology might mean an ATM, a website, a computer, or access to all of the above. Or, you might look at the idea that technology is becoming "invisible" in our lives...we use technology without thinking about it very much.

The **Proposal for Project Three** will be due Saturday, November 10 by midnight. It should follow the same format as the proposals for the first two projects.

**Project Three** itself will be due Wednesday, November 21 by midnight.

Both will be posted to the "Submit Here" tab of Blackboard.
Appendix S: Prompt for Project Three

Idea Starters
Think about the Postman quote from last week’s discussion where he states that the importance of technologies is "not how to use them, but how they use us" (597). Find a technology that you use and analyze it with this quote in mind. Here are some examples of what you could do (examples only, feel free to modify).

- Use the criteria posted under “Documents” to analyze a familiar website. How does this website encourage use? Does this website use YOU (i.e. do you feel controlled by the website)?

- Use an article in the book to address Facebook, chatrooms, the internet, PowerPoint, computers, online classes, etc. (so if you don’t have a Facebook account, this option would not be good). Analyze your own experience in light of what these authors say about these technologies. Are the authors making a statement about whether we use technology or technology uses us? If so, do you agree? How so/not (using your experiences/evidence from sources)?

- Using one of the Pew Internet and American Life Project articles or reports (located at [http://www.pewinternet.org/reports.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/reports.asp)) analyze and interpret the results in terms of your experience. What do these numbers mean? What does a report tell us about whether technology uses us or how we use technology?

- Analyze a type of software or technology you use frequently (or something considered Web 2.0—wikis, blogs, tagging sites, etc.). Look at Word, PowerPoint, Second Life, online banking, a video game, eBay and determine the usefulness of that software or technology. How do YOU use this technology? How does this technology use YOU?
Appendix T: English 102 Final Project Materials
This semester we’ve been working in the higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy: Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation. See the pyramid below for a description of the levels.

During our in-class time this week, we’ll be doing the analysis of your work in this course. This analysis will lead you to write your final, an essay that provides a synthesis and evaluation of your work for the course. The documents you create in course should help you draft your final, but they shouldn’t be the end product for the final.

In class, we’ll do an analysis, including the following:

- Examine the assumptions and experiences that you had in August about writing/English courses.
- Examine the assumptions and challenges that you had during the course.
- Compare materials from the beginning, middle, and end of the course.
- Analyze the materials you have produced for this course.
- Categorize those materials into categories you devise.
- Look critically at what has/hasn’t changed during the course of the semester in your written work.

For your final, you will compose an essay, website, or PowerPoint synthesizing and evaluating your progress in the course.
Synthesis:

- Make several main **points** about your writing in the course using the brainstorming you did in the course this week.
- Collect samples of your work to provide **examples** for the points you make about your writing in this course. You must provide evidence and examples of your points from the work in the course or from other writing you have done outside the course.
- **Explain** how those documents support the points you are making about your own work.
- Provide a logical arrangement for the materials that you collected from your analysis (i.e. chronological, by the categories you devised in class, etc.).

Evaluation:

- Draw conclusions about your work in this course.
- Assess the overall work that you have done for the course.
- Support that assessment with summaries from the points in your essay.
- Rate the activities that you feel most affected the work that you did in the course.
Appendix U: English 102 Technology Activities

1. Why an online learning unit?

In our class, we have discussed different forms of writing, including writing using various forms of digital technology (i.e. PowerPoint, Microsoft Word, webpages, Second Life, etc.).

This week, we will host class online to explore the benefits and problems with learning to write in a virtual format. To do so, we will look at three types of "virtual" writing:

1) Synchronous chat: discussions that take place between students at different places at the same time using a chat feature.

2) Asynchronous chat: discussions that take place between students at different places at different times (with the use of a discussion board or threaded forum).

3) Webpages: sites hosted online by one person to which several other persons may or may not visit.

As we look at these methods of writing and learning, keep the following questions in mind:

- Do I learn more/less/the same amount when I am using digital or online sources/tools?
- If this method of learning is more/less effective, why?
- Do I use digital tools for writing in my life outside of school (i.e. IM, text message, email, blogs, etc)?
- How could I use my strengths in other online/digital media to help my school experience?

To participate in this week’s activities, you’ll need to read Neil Postman pp. 597-605. In particular, think about the line from the introduction to the article where Postman claims that the issues with technology are “not how to use them, but how they use us” (597).

Also, be thinking about Project Three and the different digital and online elements or texts that you might use for your final project analysis.

2. Assignment one for this week

Synchronous Chat:
You will meet for approximately one hour with other students in your class and possibly with my other English 102 class for an online chat. The chat schedule is as follows:

Monday, 4-5 p.m. – Kella, Jeanna, Luke, Joel
Monday, 7-8 p.m. – Matt, Mike, Ken, Tim
Tuesday, 5:30-6:30 p.m. – Jessica, Danielle, Amanda, Shane, Layla, Amber, and Jonathan
Tuesday, 7-8 p.m. – Shay, Kirby and Aaron
Wednesday, 8-9 p.m. – Jason, Andrew, Joshua, Michelle, Justin, and LaQuisha
Thursday, 9-10 p.m. – Jennifer, Nick, Cheryl, and Brian

The discussion for this synchronous chat will look at the following questions:

- Is the Internet/digital media effective for writing education?
- Would composition classes, such as this one, be more effective for students if they remained paper based?
- Or do online, internet, and digital technologies help students be more engaged and more comfortable with writing?

Total for this chat: 30 pts.
3. Assignment two for this week

find a discussion board titled “Websites, Wikis, and Blogosphere!”

On this discussion board, we’ll be sharing our experience examining various technologies that could possibly be used in the composition classroom and for learning throughout the college curriculum.

To prepare for this discussion, visit one or more of the following:
www.wiki.com
www.freewikis.com
www.googlepages.com
www.pbwiki.com
www.blogspot.com
... or other online webpage, wiki, or blog generators.

On the discussion board, we’ll talk about our experience using these digital means for writing and expression. We’ll consider the following questions:

- Is writing for websites, wikis, and blogs as vital to learning as writing for traditional paper-based essays and research projects? Why?
- Is the prevalence of the Internet requiring us to learn to write in multiple modes, not just on paper but also online through these digital forms?
- Do you feel that hyperlinks and other forms of digital expression could help you more clearly communicate with others? More clearly than you would in a traditional paper?

These questions aren’t the only ones we’ll look at, but I’d like you to use them to begin to talk about online and digital education.

Post an initial posting with your argument (remember the P.E.E. structure to support your point of view) by WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31 (midnight).

Post at least three comments to classmates by SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3 (midnight) responding to their ideas and comments. A few simple sentences agreeing with a post will not count as a comment. Comments should ask questions or further discussion with specific examples (think about talking in class in response to a classmate).

Total for this assignment: 40 pts.

4. For Project Three

The activities that you’ll do this week should help you begin to think about your third project for this class. The third project should involve analyzing a particular website, article or technology using a particular set of criteria or ideas.

For example, you might use one of the articles about technology in our textbook to look at your particular experiences with technology. Or, you might look at some website on the internet that interests you to see if it is a good resource, a good means of expression, etc.

Basically, I’m looking for you to use your powers of analysis to look critically at some element of technology. Technology might mean an ATM, a website, a computer, or access to all of the above. Or, you might look at the idea that technology is becoming “invisible” in our lives...we use technology without thinking about it very much.

The Proposal for Project Three will be due Saturday, November 10 by midnight. It should follow the same format as the proposals for the first two projects.

Project Three itself will be due Wednesday, November 21 by midnight.

Both will be posted to the “Submit Here” tab of Blackboard.
Appendix V: Practice PowerPoint Activity for English 102

1. Class Activity for August 30

In class today, we will be completing and posting this activity.

If you don't have any experience with Blackboard, you should still be able to do a very short PowerPoint easily. Don't worry about bells and whistles; just practice a basic presentation. If you've used Microsoft Word, you should be able to use PowerPoint. The basic functions are very similar.

To find the PowerPoint program, click the "Start" menu, scroll over the "All Programs" option that pops up, then when the menu appears at the right side, go to "Microsoft Office". PowerPoint will be one of the programs in Office.

2. Introduction to PowerPoint

One option for Project One takes is to create a PowerPoint presentation with Notes.

If you plan on having graphics or images in your project, you might want to think about this option. Placing graphics in Microsoft Word is sometimes tricky; the graphics can move on their own.

But with PowerPoint, you can place a graphic or a hyperlink on a slide, then place the text that the graphic or hyperlink relates to in the "Notes" below the slide.

For class today, we will practice making and posting a PowerPoint presentation. This activity has two purposes:

1) Practice making a PowerPoint presentation.
2) Practice posting attachments to the "Submit Here" section of the course.
3. What your Powerpoint presentation should include...

You should have four slides on this Powerpoint (or more if you’re just really having a good time):

One introductory slide that includes your name and information about the assignment, just as you would do for a regular presentation. (For those who have not used Powerpoint, the slide that appears when you enter Powerpoint will be a template introductory slide.)

One slide that includes the question you will answer for Project One. (For those new to Blackboard, you can create new slides by either clicking the “New Slide” button at the top of the screen or finding it under the “Insert” menu.)

Two slides that include at least one source on each slide. One source (on one slide) should be from one of the library databases (explained on the next slide) and one source (on the next slide) should be from the internet.

The format, design, etc. of the Powerpoint is up to you...be as creative as you would wish, but if you use a theme, think about choosing a background theme that enhances the presentation (if you would like to see more themes, you should be able to go online from the Powerpoint program).

4. Step One...

First, go to the library databases and find one source you could use for your research:

1) Go to “MyOTC”. Once you are logged in, click on “Resources” at the top of the page.

2) Use one of the databases to find one source you feel is relevant to your question. You don’t have to use this source...I would just like to see that you found the source on a database.

You might begin with one of the more general databases (EBSCO, Lexis Nexis) or a more specialized database (Education Full Text if you’re researching a topic about education/learning, or Grove Music Online if you’re doing a topic on music, etc.). Most of the databases are self explanatory.

If you have trouble using the databases, you can call 447-8166 (from off campus) or 8166 (from a campus phone) and a librarian can walk you through the process. Or, you can email or IM me (Yahoo Messenger screen name “hashharris”), and if I am online I will help you.

5. Step Two...

Once you find the source you want to include on your slide, do one of two things:

a) find a place on the page that allows you to get a link to that source (for example, in JSTOR, that option is underneath the name of the article). Then just cut and paste the link for that source into a Powerpoint slide.

or

b) take a screen capture (a photo) of the article to insert into Powerpoint. To do this, center the text on the screen, with the title showing (or center the abstract if there is no text), and hit the “PrtSc” button on the top right hand side of your keyboard. It might say something else, like “Print Screen” or “PrtScr”. This will take a picture of the screen as it is on your computer.

Then you can insert the picture you’ve taken by going to the Powerpoint slide and pasting it into the slide.
Now, search on the internet using a search engine to find another source that you might use for your Project One.

A search engine finds sources that are accessible to anyone online. A database is a very specialized search tool for finding resources held in a database purchased by the college. The database generally contains more academic sources than a search engine. Search engines will search documents and websites, but also commercial sites, which are usually unreliable academic sources.

Try to find websites with .gov (government) or .edu (educational) endings. If you can’t, try to choose sources you feel are reliable on other sites.

Post the internet source on another slide. You can just cut and paste the link into the Blackboard slide.

In the “Notes” sections at the bottom of each slide that contains a source, write a paragraph explaining:

1) What the source is.
2) Why the source might be helpful to answer your Project One question.

Here is an example paragraph:

Johann Hari’s review of Christopher Hutchins’ new book *God is Not Great* provides both the positive and negative responses to the book. Johann Hari is a reporter for the New York Times, and often does book reviews of religious books, so he is a reliable source. I might use this in Project One because it includes both viewpoints, and I’ll need to show that there are two different opinions about the book.

Finally, save the Powerpoint as a file with your last name as the file name. Then post it in the “Submit Here” tab under the “Practicing Powerpoint Posting” area.

I will look at your presentation and score it this weekend. Check “My Grades” Sunday to see your score and comments.
Appendix W: Daughton and Hugh's Discussion Board Exchange Regarding Technology

Subject: Wave of the future, wave of the future, wave of the future, wave of the future, wave of the future...

Daughton:

So, there's a lot to be said for how influential and necessary computers and online communication are now and in the future. While computer use is swallowing our culture whole, with the incorporation of computers in public schools, and the invasion of the Personal Computer into the homes and lives of millions, there's still some glitches. On a literary level, teaching a child to hit a button to spell the letter 'b' teaches them nothing about how to write out the letter itself. Flash to the future, and that same kid is working at a sit down restaurant as a waiter. The computer system is down, so all the orders have to be written out. Without knowledge of how to spell on a basic level, our culture will become slaves pathetically, to a word processing program. There are already signs of computer literacy degradation, as the English language is 'contorted' online, with mixed abbreviations and letter groupings in certain cyber communities, to allow for faster conversation and less grammar issues. Apparently, Australia is either thinking about or has gone ahead and made 'cyber language' a grammatically acceptable form of communication on an educational level. That's one last continent I'll never look to, personally, for a good education. Should a language evolve with the culture that adopts it? Yes. Should a culture shun the origins and roots of its language for the sake of evolution? Certainly not. Should cars still have turn signals even when a lot of people stop using them? Should cooking classes be taught completely through the microwave? Personally, I think there's one key word in education: Survival. Academics teaches us how to survive and how to further ourselves as human beings. There is no room for regression in education. Perhaps the future of all learning is computers, but somehow, I hope that we as human beings will limit ourselves and our technology. A society that sees through its technology is blind without it, and I hope that isn't our future.

Hugh:

As much as I agree with your sentiments, I have to believe that humanity will not limit its adoption of technological answers to biological problems. If you look at history, you can see that humanity has always done things that they can see are detrimental to their society, even to the point that it causes their downfall. (Rome, WWII Germany, The Soviet Union, etc.) Although we can see that technology is causing bad effects on us, (as well as good), we will not drop it unless we are forced to. It will eventually become like you said. We will be slaves to the technology that we created. If it is working fine, then we do fine, but if a system crashes, we are helpless. We see it even today. If you've ever been in a bank when the system is down, it's impossible to do anything. What is the answer to this? Either get with the program, and adapt to technology, and try to work out the bugs with it, (if that's even possible)... or you can reject it, and you can live with as little technology as possible... which is what I've done. I use it when absolutely
necessary, but otherwise it has no use in my everyday life. I drive a '72 car with no power anything, and no radio, and no horn. All it does is drive. I live in a house built in 1917. It has no landline phone, it has no cable wires to hook up cable, everything runs on natural gas. If I can find a manual substitute for something with a motor, I buy it. Why? I guess part of it is because I'm weird... but I also believe that everything is easier when we control it. Tools are easier if they aren't power tools. Things last longer when they are made out of metal, or wood, than out of plastic. Technology may provide convenience, but it certainly isn't easier.

**Daughton:**

Well, I, in turn, agree with you on multiple levels, Matt. Apparently you understand my shade of insanity. We are, to a certain extent, pushing ourselves towards an eventual 'doomsday' of sorts. Maybe it won't be tomorrow, or the day after that, and maybe it won't be as violent or dramatic as 'The Matrix' or 'Equilibrium', but at the end of the day, we are all 'giving up' our own responsibilities to machines we created ourselves. There used to be a cartoon on television that had a group of kids exploring different planets together. One of the planets they came upon was populated by 'cow people scientists' (mouthful). The kids had to help the cows to get their band of robots online, because the cows had given so much of their responsibility in daily life over to the machines, and when the machines broke, there was no one left who knew how to fix them, because the machines fixed each other. That's our ultimate direction in life. We are all, to some extent, technology cows. I read briefly over the survey in the documents section, and I found it amusing how much it focused on cell phone use and cell phone gadgetry. It's interesting how we, human beings, live on a planet of thunderstorms, hurricanes, asteriods, and tectonic plates, yet we focus all of our efforts into developing easier ways to hear each other talk. We've done nothing to preserve ourselves, and everything to remove ourselves from the picture. There's a story in the Martian Chronicles (terrible, I know), about a dog, coming home to a house with no owners...yet the newly deceased's technology lives on and works hard to preserve a home that no longer has a purpose. Depressing, indeed. I hope we, as a society, will suffer only a minute blow when all this technology falls apart on us.

Now on today's assignment...

This thread definently meets the criteria of a discussion, despite the fact that there are only two participants. I kept things a bit general, criteria wise, and focused on tackling my personal feelings towards technology as a whole, instead of how it holds an effect on education and learning in general. I didn't really change my feelings towards online communication and learning, either. I have to say, that it seems like the majority of those out there are completely on-board with the newest baby in town, the Internet. I'm not completely shunning the internet from my life, personally, or network communication either. I just recommend that we all be very careful with it and be a bit choosy in how we use it...and trust it.
Appendix X: Transcript of Endle Interview

Heidi: Cumulative, you know…
Shane: …yeah…
H: Product of all of your work…it’s really late, so I’m going to be, like, speaking in fragments. (laugh) Ok, so…what do you have so far, tell me what this is.
S: So far, I’ve just described my experiences, before uh entering this class.
H: Ok
S: And um, well now that you’ve said it’s cumulative that reminds me uh there’s some extra stuff I gotta put in there, I gotta describe how uh how the projects went probably each project individually, probably just tell uh what I did and how I went about it.
H: Uh-huh.
S: Um…yeah…That’s uh just the only thing I can think of to add to it so far. Um…it does …uh…it explains…uh…just um…what I liked about the class so far. I don’t remember…
H: Ok.
S: Just uh…I didn’t get too far after that paragraph I don’t think so…. …Pause…I know there’s plenty of mistakes and stuff I haven’t smoothed out just yet.
H: That’s ok. This is mostly for like content to talk through.
S: Mainly I just based it off that document that we did with all the questions…
H: Ok.
[pause for reading]
H: I like this…
S: What’s that? Oh…
H: …where you say ―then the pending receiver would be penalized.” Like it’s a…Like you’re talking about how tedious and formulaic this is in tedious and formulaic language. I find that funny….ironic.
S: [Laugh. Pause for reading.]
H: Um…this is unrelated to your paper. Do you have to have a C to pass 101?
S: I believe so. Cause, just any class, you have to have at least a C. That’s how I understand it anyways.
H: Ok.
S: If you have a D then …. It’s not a passing grade.
H: Well, the last student I had in here we both panicked at the end because we didn’t know whether or not…and I hadn’t thought about it…I was like, I’ll have to check that out.
S: That’s how I understand it anyway. I wouldn’t take my word for it, but…[Laugh]
H: …that’s what I’ve been going by…
S: [Laugh] I wouldn’t trust me, but yeah…pause…I have to look at the…pause…[Quiet laugh.]
H: Sounds good.
S: Cool.
H: I like it. You’re really specific in this.
S: Oh, cool. Thanks.
H: So you say…ok…pause…I’d say when you go back through and talk about it, talk about what that means for you, like… why was the first one better than you expected and the rest not?
S: Mainly just the grade…uh…I’d say I struggled with…I don’t know, not really struggled…I’d admit I didn’t put too much though into it past the grade I’d say the first one
went smoother than expected because…can’t hear this part…then the rest I just didn’t do too hot.

H: Um-huh.
S: It’s just the way I’m judging it.
H: Ok.
S: I can explain why…I don’t know…I guess if I could have I probably would have done it by now.
H: Well, you might just say what you said, I’m basing this on the grade and not on…
S: Alright.
H: …the writing because I see that happen a lot like I don’t think that necessarily grades reflect writing, so I’m always interested to see when students…what…I guess maybe what they define as good writing. Because you can…I think you can have good writing and just not support your ideas and that will make you get a bad grade. But it’s not that your writing isn’t good, it’s that you’re…maybe leaving out a part of what you needed to do.
S: Yeah.

[Pause.]
H: And then with this…um…here, I’d definitely give specific examples.
S: Yeah.
H: Like what are some…like even take through the process like here’s Paper One, I wrote this, then this then this…
S: Yeah I can…
H: …and that’s what you said you’re going to do with the rest of it.
S: Cool.
H: I think it looks really good.
S: Alright.
H: So…
S: Maybe I can expand it enough…so…um…yeah because when you just said a cumulative…uh…I remember you saying that in class. I just forgot.
H: [Laugh.]
S: I’m glad I didn’t fill in that extra content because that’s just kinda where I got stuck. Then again, I did just do all that yesterday.
H: Um-hum.
S: …other than the um introducing….the introduction paragraph…
H: Uh.
S: …there’s more than one paragraph in the introduction.
H: So I’d say just keep going like you are and using those specific examples of things and quotes and tying it in. Cause your structure’s fine…I mean uh…pause…you’re doing good paragraphs.
S: Alright.
H: I guess the other thing that um… I would ask about that I was thinking about here is that…you say that…ok…no no no you explained it. I was thinking…I’m sorry…
S: That’s ok.
H: Cause you’re saying the workload that came with it was one of the things that was a problem. So I think that my class is work intensive…so was it different. Did you do more work in 101 than you did in this class or was it just a different kind of work?
S: Um…pause…like…there’s a lot of things running in my head right now and I’m not sure how to answer it if it’s how much work I considered putting in to a certain class or if it’s how much work instructors wanted us to do…
H: Um-huh…
S: …which one is it? Just either?
H: I don’t know because you say…like…you say it’s the workload that came with it and then all of this is about your workload…
S: Well she just piled a whole bunch of work on us…
H: Um-hum.
S: …she…uh…pause…I’d say this class was more of a relief…uh…since 101 cause 101 she just…I mean not only did we have uh we had…the…it’s not the individual discussion but every week we’d have uh the class discussion board…
H: Um-huh…
S: …after we read something we had to write about it…
H: Umhuh…
S: …and sometimes that had to be uh…that had a minimal requirement of about…500 words…
H: Huh…
S: …sometimes. And then we had to answer to at least two students…and um…on top of that, since the beginning of the class we had this big book project…
H: Um-hum…
S: …about popular culture which reflects on all the essays we did…
H: Uh.
S: And uh…then just the papers came with it as I said they’re uh just the work that came with the project the cover letter and all that stuff…
H: Uh.
S: …I’d say, uh, we had to do more work in that class than in this class…
[Pause.]
H: So it was more like pause…like regimented? Like like many tiny little things that all lead up to…cause you said like cover letter and all of the work that…
S: …well, that had to be turned in with the project…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …the cover letter and the peer reviews and the self-evaluation…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …all that stuff pause uh…I know uh…It’s like for this class…we just uh we just had to do the projects, and then after the project we um we just did…we explained what our process and stuff.
H: Uh-huh.
S: Uh but this one it all came before that. And we had a chance to revise it as well.
H: Uh-huh.
S: Nothing that I ever took up, though. I just took what I could get.
H: Uh-huh.
S: I mean…I she really gave us a lot of homework. I just say that, I probably had to do more work in that class than in this…
H: Uh-huh.
S: That’s not to say that uh…that I actually…considered spending that much time…I don’t know.
H: Uh. Well I, I’m just wondering like…like you’re explaining here, but I’m thinking…like when I read that the first time I was thinking pause It sounds like the workload here is picky or tedious…cause I think in our we do…like we write every day…
S: Yeah.
H: …there’s writing in class every day, and you have three steps to every project…so it’s kind of to me…it sounds like the same kind of a thing, but when you talk about this you talk about it being different. … I don’t know what I’m saying.
S: I don’t either. I…
H: Like I want to see how they’re…I guess I want to see how they’re different. Like, was it the regimented quality of this where…like it seems like there’s a lot of numbers, like three peer review forms, 500 words…you know…those kinds of things…
S: Yeah.
H: …and I don’t care…like I don’t care about that. Like numbers are not important.
S: Yeah.
H: So you’re doing probably…I think you’re doing probably the same—or more—work for this class but for some reason this class you’re doing the work. And maybe like this individual discussion board was one of the things that was different. I’m just thinking out loud. So those are the kinds of things I’d be interested in hearing is what about this class…was different.
S: Maybe…well…um…you recommended that we did the Individual Discussion Board before we leave class.
H: Uh-huh.
S: So I guess it didn’t seem like too much work as far as homework or everything.
H: Uh-huh.
S: Cause we did that in class.
H: Uh-huh.
S: So…that might…that might just uh…be why I thought of it as more homework, but still then, I mean…I mean for the requirements for each project…they, they all have their own minimal requirements, usually three pages which…thinking back isn’t that bad, with the exception of that research paper and that paper right after that at the end of the day
H: Uh-huh.
S: …ur the…yeah, whatever.
H: Hm.
S: But uh…it really seems like the workload was just way more, way too much in the last class.
H: Uh-huh. So you didn’t really…you didn’t get something out of doing those things, like did all the work you did, do you feel like it made you a better writer?
S: Um…after, like, right after leaving that class?
H: Um-huh.
S: …no, I felt like a terrible writer.
[Laugh.]
S: …cause, um, I just did whatever I could to get by…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …um, I just…all my work was…uh… I don’t know. The peer reviews would give me confidence because everyone was like, “Oh, that’s pretty good!”
H: Uh-huh.
S: …then I’d get it and…like…one guy even told me, “Oh, It’s gonna be an A, it’s gonna be ridiculous if it’s not an A.” Then I get it back and it’s like a really low C…
H: Humph…
S: …then my next paper, the three…I mean, still three page…uh…requirement…I actually made it 5 pages just because I had so many ideas and I had trouble keeping it within the 5 page minimum…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …so I had to do some backspacing and stuff, and even then I got a low D that time because it was deemed irrelevant. It was, uh, the project was write a…it it was two things…write about a time in which we were in exile and we felt that we were in exile…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …or a happy place, or whatever…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …and, uh, what I kinda wrote about was uh, both. I said, um, the point was supposed to be I’ve always felt like I’m in exile when I lived here…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …and I just…I gave just a brief description of the place that I’d rather be…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …and, um, it was deemed irrelevant. She uh said it was…um…it was more of a…just a…whole life story more so than a time that I, uh…she said that she’d rather hear more about the time I’ve spent in a happy…my happy place…which I said was the Philippines…so I’d rather you explain that. Which I could see that but looking back even then, I don’t know, I thought of uh…doing the revision option that she…uh…that was always available afterwards but I never took it up…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …but yeah…sorry if I’m not making any sense…
H: No, I see what you’re saying …
S: …I’m kinda uh just rambling…
H: No, that was like an example of…of one thing that bothers me, because …it depends on if she had specific requirements, like you need to do this, this and this, like…
S: …uhhuh…
H: …or if she’s just saying “you need to do this”…uh, that’s not what I thought you should do, but let me tell you what I thought you should do…
S: Yeah…
H: …but this isn’t it (laugh)…like that kinda thing, that’s what it sounds like…
S: Yeah.
H: That bothers me. So I try not to do that, but maybe I do.
S: That’s cool…[Laugh]
H: So, ok…that …maybe like that example would help me understand some of the…like that one specific project, but you don’t have to go into all the projects in your old class, but…
S: Yeah.
H: …so…you didn’t take the revision opportunity cause you didn’t do those kinds of things…
S: I had ideas for it, but just when it came time to do it, I just never…took it up. Cause I thought about…you see, we always had to propose what kind of grades we thought we should get, which, I really hated that, cause, I don’t know, I always thought…I thought it to be of her own amusement…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …trying to see…well, I think I should have a B in this…
H: …and she’s like “hahaha! No!” laugh
S: …I found that to be pretty pointless, I didn’t like that. [Both laugh.]
H: Instead of a B you get…let’s see, what rhymes with a B? [Laugh.] C? D? Anyway…ok, so do you think that….and this is not…I mean you don’t have to write about this but…so do you think this class was different in that way…pause…like do you feel like it was as contrived or do you think that there were times…and it’s fine if you do…if you say “wow, this really reminded me of 101 when we did this,” or whatever. But since you are so elaborate in that description of 101…like tying…like going through 102 and also like referring back to that once in a while like…whereas in 102 we did…
S: Oh, yeah…
H: …like you did proposals in both…So what was the difference? Or maybe there was no difference.
S: Well, they were all uh…English 102…see…I…don’t know…see this was probably the best class that I’ve had…I don’t know…see this was probably the best class that I’ve had…like three semesters…like last…101 was just terrible…uh…they were all due at the same time…uh…we had to make the cover letter, well, uh…you know that, but…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …uh, here, we uh actually, we went over it and we actually did work like the Individual Discussion Board…
H: …uhhh…
S: …we talked about it…I mean, let alone you talked about it in class, then we went to the discussion board to talk about that, then the proposals…uh…to even reassure it…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …and even more individual discussion board work, and, I mean by the time it was time to do that project, I at least had a better idea of what to do…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …for that paper, whereas in English 101 it was just all due at the same time.
H: Uh-huh. Ok. [Pause.] And I think you can get to that when you talk about each individual paper, like working through that structure… and maybe that’s part of the conclusion, is that what works for you is maybe returning to things over and over until you…like…maybe part of your process is this…and I think this is true because when I’d see your discussion boards and like I’d see you kinda…playing through these ideas, and then you’d maybe pick one and go with it, or you know…like…the discussion board for you seemed to be a place where you could…get that fuzz…like you say you have a lot of ideas all at once…
S: Uh-huh.
H: …like maybe you could write some of those out and then go on with that…
S: One of the things about the Individual Discussion Board that I think that I put on there, I don’t think I described it that well… I don’t know…but um…it’s just a, it’s a good way to test if, uh, my ideas were relevant to the project…I mean if they weren’t, we still got the points for doing the work…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …and we’d get feedback to reassure if we’re on the right track…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …that’s one of…one of the main things, and if we were…well if we weren’t, or if I weren’t, I mean…I’d be able to…you, you’d give me ideas, and that’d still…that’d still help me, I could go back to the Individual Discussion Board and make reference to that…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …just kinda base that off what I was gonna do for the project.
H: Ok. Yeah, talk about all that stuff, cause that’s…
S: Yeah, yeah I guess I could expand that one paragraph where I’m talking about it.
H: Yeah, it’s important for me to know because I need to know if it’s valuable to continue, and it will be important, I hope, for the overall analysis, because…if you…you could say that…you know, I know I really need feedback, I know I really need to be able to bounce ideas off to find which ones are relevant, so maybe if you have to write another paper again, you might replication…you know find someone and say, “here’s what I’m thinking about,” or write it down and…you know…have somebody look at it…pause…cause I don’t…like…I write for a long time before I let anyone look at it because I’m not comfortable with feedback until I get to where I feel good enough with it, so I think that this would drive me crazy a little bit, like constantly getting feedback?
S: Oh, Oh YEAH…
H: I think that would bother me.
S: Yeah, um you remember the last pap…I’m sure you don’t remember my paper specifically, mine was video games…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …and I’m still relieved with the grade that I got… [Laugh.]…it was a high C, 78, um, but yeah, I had trouble with that. Um, I had my friend help me kind of by just posting kinda my ideas on there and just having the constant feedback…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …and having them…like…he’s WAY better than me…but uh, yeah, having him give me just constant feedback over and over, just everything that I did was wrong…no it should be like this, no it should be like this, I was like man, I suck at this! I just want to quit. [Laugh.]
H: Yeah, so it’s a different kind of feedback, like the feedback you were getting from him sounds like, it was kinda like, he was changing it to be what he thought you…
S: Right, yeah…
H: …needed to write.
S: Yeah…I mean it was, they were better revisions…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …way better revisions, and…I mean they, uh…they weren’t so wordy…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …but…
H: Cause your second paper was really focused...like I could tell it was important, I could
tell that you did a lot with it...and when you did your analysis you could like really point to
spec...like you put those hyperlinks in there, like this is the...
S: ....yeah...
H: ...article that made me think about that. So that was so focused...and then when you got
to the video game one, I knew you had the same...intensity...and you knew just as much
about it if not more than you did about the second one, but it felt like you were putting so
much in that...it wasn’t...as, like, clear and focused, like you were trying to get in, like,
twelve things instead of saying...
S: Well, my links weren’t that specific, all I did was like...I don’t know even how helpful my
links were because all I did was link video games, like Call of Duty 4, Call of Duty.com...
H: Yeah.
S: ...linked it to it, so, I mean...
H: Yeah, that might be part of it because like in the one about Maddox I could go read that
article and really see what you were talking about...
H: Yeah.
S: ...right there. Like I would have had to go play the game...
H: ...oh, yeah...
S: ...probably to get...and that would have been a huge disaster. [Laughs.]
H: I can’t play video games very well. So...yeah, that might be part of that, like, how that
felt... and I, maybe I wasn’t voicing that, but I think you’re right, that I didn’t feel that
connection that I felt with the Maddox quotes...also I spent like forty-five minutes just
reading that website... [Laugh.]....laughing and calling friends and reading parts of it to them
and making them go look it up.
S: [Laugh.]
H: It took me longer to grade your paper than anything else because I got way off
track...laugh...
S: Awesome.
H: ...and I had to come back and be like...ok, I have to grade now laugh. But I really liked
that site, like that was...
S: Do you still...uh...do you still look at it?
H: Yeah every once in a while I just kinda...I didn’t get to read it very much ‘cause I’ve been
busy, but I definitely am going to keep up with that one ‘cause I...[Laughs.]...just that like
advertisement one alone...the very end of it where he says, like...the drug talk or
whatever...between the two boys that are like “Hey Timmy, I don’t do drugs because I blah
blah blah...” “Really, I’m glad you feel the same way.” “NO I DON’T!”
S: [Laughs.]
H: Like, I don’t know how many people I read that to...anyway...so...that was really
focused, like that paper I could tell you...really...and the other part that I think...cause a lot
of people are saying that paper two was really focused and paper three, less focused, and I
think...we spent a LOT of time on paper two, we spent a month...
S: Yeah.
H: ...working on that paper.
S: Yeah.
H: So. Anyway, well that’s all stuff, though, I just wanted to talk through it with you, so I
could see kinda where you were going and it sounds like you...you’re fine, I mean as long as
you keep those examples in there like you’ve been doing…cause that’s what I’m looking for, that you can show me…what you’re basing these conclusions on…
S: Ok.
H: And it sounds like you have a lot of material. Pause
S: Cool.
H: Cool. And you’re a good writer, so I’m not worried.
S: Thanks.
H: I mean, your writing is really clear…pause…and funny…so…
S: Thanks, that uh…makes me feel a lot better about my writing. [Laugh.] Even better than just a…just when I started doing it, that was just yesterday. It’s like when I was going through that I don’t know how well I was doing…
H: Uh-huh.
S: I don’t know if I added too many…too many extra words, tried cutting down a little bit. I noticed that I, uh, I use the word “we” a lot…
H: Uh-huh.
S: …we had to explain…I wasn’t sure how else to put it, I’m not sure if I should have been using…that…
H: You might read through it again once you get it all down and think about those kinds of things.
S: Alright.
H: Cause “we”…I don’t know…pronouns…
S: Yeah…it’s like…I don’t know…I kept saying “the class, the class” so many times.
H: Yeah, it’s fine to say “we” cause I didn’t even notice it until you pointed it out…it’s really “it” that gets me…[Laugh] “it” and “that.” [Laugh.] …[whispers]…I HATE THEM! Ok, so do you have any other questions or things that you wanna talk about or don’t…aren’t sure about?
S: Um…there’s nothing I can think of right now until I actually start working on it and getting stuck…uh…I don’t know. I mean, once I get it started, I don’t really…have much of a…problem with just carrying on and just…there’s times when I get stuck but…at least I know what to write about. It’s mainly starting it that always gets me, just like starting at a blank page and just running through ideas and just thinking of how to introduce it.
[Pause.]
H: Well this sounds good, I mean this sounds really relaxed, like you’re just describing something and you feel comfortable with it.
S: Cool.
H: Even though what you’re describing is hideous. [Laugh.] Ok, I’m going to shut it off now…maybe…
Appendix Y: English 102 Questions to Develop Response to Project One

Questions to develop Response to Project One (50 points)
Due date: Tuesday, September 25 (type into text box of Individual Discussion Board...like our daily responses)

Part of the goal of this course is engage in a conversation about your writing. Thus, when you post to your IDB, I try to respond to every post.

After an assignment is graded, I don’t want the feedback to end. For you to improve as a writer, you must evaluate and incorporate or dismiss feedback from others. For me to improve as a teacher, I must listen to student successes, problems and suggestions and change subsequent assignments and courses accordingly.

You may shape the response using the questions provided, but please use the bold headings I provide for the essay to help me navigate your answers. Add other comments or feedback as necessary.

Obviously, these questions have no right or wrong answers...only complete or incomplete answers. The response will be evaluated according to completion (i.e. how thoroughly the questions are answered). Analyze your audience (me) and think about what I would like to see in a response based on what we've discussed in class.

Assignment:
... What was your initial reaction to the score/comments on the text?
... How did you feel/what did you think about this assignment throughout the writing process (i.e. when it was assigned, as you completed it, as you submitted it)?
... What were your expectations for the assignment?
... Did you feel as if the assignment/score/response to your text matched your expectations? Why or why not?

Process/Technology:
... What was your process for creating the text? Be specific, including dates and specific steps or examples when possible. In other words, what steps did you go through to create the text?
... What decisions did you make, and how did you make those decisions?
... Was the process for creating this text similar to the process you’ve used on papers in the past? Why or why not?
... Why did you decide to use the form that you did (i.e. with or without hyperlinks, as a website, as a Word document)? Have you done similar projects in the past?
... What was your experience with the technology you used to create this document?
... What role did the Individual Discussion Board posts play in your creation of the final project? Explain with examples.
Response to Comments/Plan for Revision:

... Respond to the comments in the margins of your essay (or on your PowerPoint slides) and on the sliding scale (if you have any).
## Appendix Z: Project Three Questions from English 102 Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does the discovery and growth of the internet’s popularity in China mean for job opportunities there? So how do my experiences with the internet differ or somewhat seem the same as the Chinese people?</td>
<td>I plan to break down the positive and negative features of online banking and analyze which type of banking works best for me, electronic or traditional financial institutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>In order to extract the essence of WOW’s appeal, I’ve broken the game down into four different categories: Gameplay, Environment, Community, and Marketing. Hopefully, by analyzing these different parts, I can reveal the nature of the game’s addictive quality.</td>
<td>Due to video games being my ultimate source for enjoyment, it has affected me (1) Socially (2) Physically, and (3) Psychologically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to challenge the idea that is seemingly going unchallenged by the majority of students. Do computers improve education?</td>
<td>While most teens surveyed did say they were more likely to be bullied in person than online, an alarming 32% stated that they have been the victim of any one of the offenses aforementioned. Obviously this is a problem, but one has to question what factors are contributing to these statistics?</td>
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<tr>
<td>A little over two decades later, America along with the rest of the world has been swept off their feet by an electronic gaming mania.</td>
<td>Technologies are all faster and cheaper, but how personal are they? Without human contact are we becoming more distant and how is this affecting our interpersonal communication skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One of the most used processes used today to get to know people is an online profile based website called Facebook. Students are more apt to meet people and step out of their comfort zones on Facebook, as opposed to face to face. This then leads to an opportunity for more than just a side communication; it becomes more of an addiction.</td>
<td>We all strive to make our lives more efficient and convenient, but are all the things that we consider “helpful” really helpful, or do they hinder more than help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is where online classes come in handy, it’s convenient, can be done after work, and only requires a computer. But is this type of learning as effective as classroom learning, does it really better you? Does it really get you all the knowledge you need?</td>
<td>Technology today has fallen into the cracks and crags of the unnoticed. One might say the bulk of it has become “invisible”. Most of us go through one single day and use more technology than our fathers, just one generation back, ever even dreamed of!</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a society, we are more connected than ever, but as individuals we feel more secluded and alone. Technology has connected and disconnected us all to some extent. Face to face communication is the best form of communication, but e-mails are quickly taking over. E-mail can be unclear, impersonal, but can be a very useful tool when used appropriately.</td>
<td>Rumors of cell phones causing diseases such as brain cancer have been circulating since cell phones became such a commodity to the American public. However, these rumors have never daunted our hunger for cell phones and the betterment of cell phone technology, as it seems they come out with something new and more high-tech every month.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The program is called PowerPoint and while it is an easy way to organize information in an interesting way, it can also be a very bland and boring presentation for the audience, depending on...</td>
<td></td>
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the creator’s knowledge of the capabilities of PowerPoint.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why is my phone better than yours? Well I don’t really know; however, I do intend to find out by analyzing said piece of technology from a personal level.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over the past few class periods we have been discussing the effects of technology on society. There were even vague hints made at the possibility that technology, was beginning to control us. I contend that this has already happened. The most recognizable case of this is social networking. Every day someone else finds and becomes addicted to a social networking site whether it be myspace, facebook, or in my case blackplanet. For those of you who are not familiar with blackplanet it is a website much like facebook and myspace where you can chat, write blogs, create, and customize your own personal web page etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are dozens of forums out there that allow people to meet in an environment that allows them to communicate. I’m sure that everyone has had a chance to use programs such as ICQ, Yahoo Messenger, or AOL Instant Messenger. Maybe they have even hosted a web page, a blog, or kept in touch with family and friends through their MySpace page. This is all going to change over the next few years, I believe, with the launch of Second Life, a virtual world developed by Linden Lab. Once this new environment’s full potential is realized, it’s sure to revolutionize education as we know it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are individuals becoming addicted to their cell phones?</td>
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<td>Are websites like Facebook and MySpace replacing face-to-face conversation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How does email affect people?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are there specific types of people who prefer to meet others through online dating?</td>
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Appendix AA: English 102 Brainstorming for Final Project Model

What was/were the most difficult thing(s) for me in this course? What did I struggle with the most?
I struggled with keeping up with grading the daily postings on time. Toward the end of the semester, I let this slip because things at work got much busier. The most difficult thing was to let the course itself dictate what would happen in the course. I wanted to have the whole thing set up from the beginning, but that couldn’t happen if I needed to see where students were at in order to help them get to the next step in writing.
I also struggled with remembering to keep the focus on the student experiences and text. I wanted the texts from the course to be what we focused on for revision, and I wanted to link ideas in the course back to student experiences. When I would get stuck for an idea for class, I would have to constantly say “what can I do to model this idea with something from the class?” Then I’d try to structure the class around that question.

What was/were the easiest thing(s) in the course? What did I look forward to in the class?
The students. I knew that coming to the community college to teach was the right move for me, even though my professors warned against it (they have never taught at community colleges). Students here were quick and eager to learn and had a critical eye that made doing analytical work lots of fun.
I looked forward to seeing what students write. I looked forward to seeing how their texts changed in the course. I’d be excited and nervous when I graded a set of essays because I wanted to see how they would write/produce a document after we worked on activities in class.

What did I think this course would be like? What did you expect to do in the class?
I expected to do a lot more training on how to use Blackboard. I was very happy that I didn’t have to do that. I don’t think that I was expecting as many students to drop as did drop. I expected to have students work with technology during the course and examine their own experiences with using and reviewing technology in their writing.

What skills did we work on during this course?
Point/Example/Explanation—I really wanted students to know how to support an argument effectively.
Pronoun use—an easy way to make writing better.
Drawing conclusions from evidence and doing analysis instead of arguing a point.

What were my strengths and weaknesses when I came into this course?
Strengths—honesty, openness, hard work, willing to explain why I did what I did, willingness to meet individually with students, good knowledge of Blackboard, passion for teaching
Weaknesses—panic, fear, panic, going into unknown made me uneasy, tend to talk too much when I get nervous, not trusting myself enough, books not in at the beginning threw me off.

What were my experiences with writing before this course?
Have written on my own and in school since I was 5. English always favorite course. Won awards, published, had lots of praise. Understand language intuitively. Feel comfortable expressing myself in words. Like word play.
What did I believe or feel about writing/English courses before this course?
ENGLISH COURSES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE WORLD!!!!
Just kidding. Learning to write is hard. Takes constant practice. No one ever becomes their best. Always a struggle. Most English courses suck—more reading than writing, and reading things that won’t help students write. I’ve only had a few really good English courses even though it was always my favorite subject.
Appendix BB : English 102 Prompt for Project One Proposal

James Berlin, a writing scholar, wrote: "To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality and the best way of knowing and communicating it."

For the first proposal, tell me what kind of project you will be doing for the following prompt:

**How do we know what we know?  How do we express what we know?**

Our first writing project will focus on how knowledge is known and communicated. For example, you could look at a particular aspect of communication, such as the internet, and ask "How does the internet change the way that I get information or communicate with others?" Or analyze what "knowledge" means to a certain group that you are involved with: "How do nurses know and communicate sensitive information to patients?"

**Make this assignment relevant to you...research a question that needs an answer...**

You will submit the proposal as an attachment in the link below (if you use Microsoft Word) or cut and pasted into the text box (if you use a word processing software OTHER than Microsoft Word).

1. **To explore and pose an answer to a specific question** that you pose at the beginning of your essay. The question should be more narrow than those above. For example, you might look at some aspect of your educational experience and write a short essay analyzing why that experience was effective/ineffective.
2. **To utilize some of the elements of primary research** to answer the question. For instance, you might interview someone who was vital to your knowledge in this area to help recall details that you may have left out. Or you might look at papers you still have from a course to talk about how your writing changed during that class.
3. **To find at least one other outside source** to add to your piece (something that helps you answer your main question...not a definition or a description). This outside source could come from the readings we've done in the textbook (Freire, Calandra, Orwell, Lakoff and Johnson).
4. **To find a medium of expression** (traditional essay, hypertext document, essay using visuals--such as photos, etc.) that best conveys the answer to the question you pose about knowledge.

The proposal should have the following components (use the headings below to divide the sections):

**What is the question you will be exploring?** Remember to ask a question (i.e. How do I know who I am?) instead of making a statement (i.e. In this paper I will talk about how I know who I am...).
What questions will you have to answer to explore this question? List other questions you will have to answer to answer the larger question (even the smallest question is important).

Where will you go to look for answers to this question? For the first few weeks of class, we will be considering what knowledge is and what constitutes an answer to a question. So what kinds of evidence will you need in order to answer your question (this evidence could be verbal or visual).

What form will your final project take? A PowerPoint with notes pages? A traditional essay? A website using free web-hosting services (such as Googlepages)? Or propose some form of project that will BEST convey the answer to your question and tell me why you chose that format.

Questions? Send me a message in the "Messages" tab of Blackboard.
Appendix CC: Transcript of Marsh Interview

L: When we did the online chat, and some of the ascrutinous and scrutinous chats that we did, and I got to read what everyone else wrote, it almost seems as I wasn’t that far off, you know. I know that a lot of them know how to write, but my thinking and their thinking was sort of the same…
H: Um-huh.
L: …so I didn’t feel as intimidated. I felt more comfortable, especially talking, actually talking online with them, you know. They thought some of the same crazy thoughts that I did…
H: [laughs]
L: …so it was just comfortable. I felt like I got to know some of my peers even though I didn’t see them face-to-face, I got to know them and how they respond to things, and it was the same, so I felt more comfortable speaking in class.
H: Hm. Cause you were so different. It was like…like… I remember that first day after we came back to class, I asked a question and you were like the first one to answer it. And I was like, “You’re talking!” [laugh]
L: Well, honestly speaking, the first few classes that we had, there was a guy. I can’t even remember his name. But he just talks…he just talks so proper, and he uses just…well, when…I don’t even know how to describe it, and I can’t think of his name, but he sits in the second row…
H: Jonathan.
L: …close to the wall…
H: Jon.
L: …and he was talking about his job, and how he has to supervise, and he’s using all these crazy works, and I’m goin’ home, lookin’ these words up, and I’m like, “Ok, gotta look these up so I can respond in class,” but…after being in class, not EVERYBODY thinks like he does, not everybody is quite intelligent with their words like he is, and so it just made me want to speak more. I didn’t feel quite so retarded when I talked…
H: [laughs]
L: …so it was nice. And I actually enjoyed the class. I really did. It was a challenge…I can’t lie about that.
H: [laughs]
L: It was a very big challenge for me, but I enjoyed the class. I like a challenge.
H: I think you really, really improved. I mean, like, that last…was it the last paper that you wrote about feeling comfortable with teachers…
L: Yeah.
H: I mean, if you look at your first paper and that last paper, I think they’re totally different.
L: The very last one about the online chat, that was the first time I’ve ever been online and since then, I’m like seriously addicted, to chat…
H: [laughs]
L: …like, seriously. I like getting on there and voicing my opinion, getting feedback from other people, I think it’s honestly, it really is helping me as a writer. And that may just be my brain thinkin’ that way, but I honestly do think it’s helping me as a writer because I meet a lot of different people with a lot of different backgrounds that speak, you know, differently, and so it’s really helping me. I’m addicted to it…but I can’t lie about that…
H: [laughs]
L: I’m on it every day, every day.
H: Where do you go to?
L: I started out on MySpace and then a friend of mine told me about this site called BlackPlanet, so I tried that, and then I did Facebook. Facebook I’m not really…I’m not really very good at Facebook. It’s just kinda weird because you’ve gotta be on a certain network and all that, and I like to roam around. So, but I do MySpace and I do BlackPlanet, and it’s pretty neat.
H: So you just started that this semester?
L: Yes.
H: Really?
L: Just after that online class.
H: Wow.
L: It’s just great.
H: Because I thought you had always been on those from what you were talking about with the last paper.
L: No.
H: [laughs]
L: No.
H: Oh, no [laughs]. I’ve created a monster.
L: It’s fun. I mean…it’s…it’s…it’s interesting. And but, some of the things that people, I thought it was just gonna be boring, get on there and talk about nonsense, you know, get off subject and all that, but it’s actually pretty nice. You get some intelligent people on there and you learn a lot. So I like it.
H: So maybe that could be a part of what you write about is how…like earlier you said you’d never been trained in formal writing and how…and how like you love to write, and so like maybe…the idea of formal writing for you was intimidating…this is what I’m hearing you saying…
L: Um-huh.
H: …and when you started looking at what other people were writing and talking about, you felt like…you felt like you were less…intimidated, maybe? And that maybe influenced your other writing, cause you…
L: Yeah…I think so.
H: And I think that’s common for non-traditional students to feel intimidated by coming back to school. My sister is 45, and I keep trying to get her to come back to school, cause she’s never been to college, and she’s like, “I’m too old! I’m too dumb!”…
L: Yeah…
H: …and I’m like, “You could do just fine,” I mean…you don’t…you think you’re not a good writer, and then you get in and…
L: Yeah, that’s what my mom said, “You know you need to go ahead and take it cause you never know unless you try it could turn out to be the best thing.” And it has, honestly…it honestly, it has. I really like to write, I just wish…I could do it better. And this class has really helped me to do that. You…that P.E.E. structure blew my mind.
H: [laughs]
L: It did. I never knew how to write, and then trying to write the way the P.E.E. structure is, it just blew my mind. But I like it. I really like it a lot.
H: Well, that’s good. And I looked at…[pause to look at writing]…yeah, like this paragraph there, right there, just that last paragraph you wrote, when I was reading through that, I was like, I can see…like, it’s just so different. Like if you go back and look at your earlier posts, and then look at what you’re doing at the end. Like you’re a totally different writer. And that was really incredible when I saw this last couple of papers. And it’s fun to see, cause I notice like…details…about…like you’re talking about not writing a paper, and then the format sounds easy, the first blah blah blah, and like you’re doing all this analysis in here. And if you think about the child predator one, and you go back and look at the paragraphs there, like you’re making those points, but you can see that you’re kinda struggling a little bit with it, and…but here, you’re just going right through it.

L: I worked hard at improving, I did. Every paper I got back, I’m like, ―Mom, I can’t get it.‖ Ok, I got a 79%, I want to at least get a B on the next one. She’s like, ―You can do it, just keep going, keep going.‖ She’s not a very good writer either, so havin’ her proofread my papers didn’t work cause she thinks like I do…

H: [laughs]
L: …so I was like, well I’m just gonna turn it in and see what she says then go from there, so that’s what I did.
H: Who did your paper for the peer review?
L: Um…I think both of them did.

H: Did they post something in here?
L: They put it on the…um…share file thing.
H: Oh, that’s right, that’s right, you guys did that. Cause the first time I went in there, I was like, ―I can’t find anyone’s papers!‖ [pause while clicking] So did they help any, like havin’ someone else…

L: It did. They gave me some good advice in that way. I had to go back and re-write some stuff cause I had some things in there that was pointless to be in there, cause it really didn’t…have anything to do with what the paper was about, so I took a lot of stuff out. But they did…it did help. It helped a lot. Although, I think that this being our first time doing this, people were kinda scared to actually comment on the papers and say, ―Well this wasn’t right, and this wasn’t right.‖ So it was more like, well, have a few suggestions here and there, but I don’t really know what to tell you…blah, blah, blah…good luck. So I think if we had’ve done that a little earlier on, and gotten more comfortable with each other’s work, it would’ve worked out better.

H: Like being in the same group…
L: Yeah.
H: …all the way though? I think about doing that, and I just…like I want to…I don’t know why I don’t really. I guess I’m just afraid. Like, peer review is my least favorite part…well, it was my least favorite part of class cause I’d always get in groups with students who didn’t want to work…
L: Yeah.
H: So I’d end up being…′OK…′ But Jason and Brian are both really clear, and always there working…
L: Yeah.
H: …so I knew that the three of you were gonna be on top of things. And you were. Well, maybe I'll think about that. And maybe you could write about that, too. Cause part of this is reviewing for you and part of this is so that I can see like what worked and what didn’t work…
L: Right.
H: …cause then I can change things up.
L: Even if you don't keep the same groups but just doing more of the peer review and switching out with different people so we can get an idea of other people’s work and how we compare with other people. Are we on the same track? Do we understand? I think it would have helped out…a lot…more.
H: So that might have changed…like, if we did that earlier, if we did a chat room or something earlier, then you might have…
L: Yeah.
H: …felt more confident about your writing. Hm…
L: Maybe.
H: [laughs] Maybe? [pause] Ok, let’s go back to where we were…ok…cause I think you could take…all of this [refers to text on screen] and just go…[pause]…just write about kind of like this, like, before, during and after. Like, here’s what you were before, here’s that other class you had, and, well…kind of class…I guess, and then, like, in class, like, kinda the progression…
L: Can I…I know you want samples of our work, is that right?
H: Um-huh.
L: Can I take samples…cause I have that paper that I wrote, and I’m telling you, it was just the first page, the little um, intro page of English class, LaQuisha, blah blah blah blah blah, then the outline, and then the first paragraph, and that’s it. And I got a B on it. So can I add that…
H: Yeah, I think that would be totally fascinating, like, that idea of…was that like the product of the end of the class, like the whole class led up to that?
L: Yeah.
H: [laugh]…and you were… No wonder you felt like you were intimidated.
L: And we had a lot of in class essay writing, and I did ok on that because we just picked a topic and wrote about it, but it wasn’t nothing formal. And then the last thing we had to do was we had to write a paper for our final, and I didn’t know how to do it. So that’s what I came up with.
H: So you’ve never done an MLA…
L: No. Foreign language.
H: …cause I was…and I don’t focus on that because I assume everyone’s had it in 101. And so…and besides, if you use that Knight Cite, that online citation thing…
L: Never did that either.
H: It's actually…I'll show you this for your other classes, cause it...like, my husband used it on a graduate school paper a couple weeks ago, too. [navigates to the site]. It’s a citation generator, and you just plug in all the information, and it creates your citation at the end…
L: Oh, wow. Ok.
H: …for you. And it’s really accurate. Like, I’ve tried…I’ve done both of the MLA and APA. And you just pick if it’s print or electronic. If it’s electronic, it’ll ask you different information.
L: Wow.
H: So if you get it off online, you can just fill this out and it just gives it, and I just cut and paste those into my paper.
L: Cool.
H: And that might be helpful for you to know. It’s just called Knight Cite. [pause] But that’s why I put that up there, and I just ask students to use that because I’m not going to spend a lot of time in class…
L: Right.
H: …teaching it, especially if you’re never going to use it again, which…I mean you might in other humanities classes, but…
L: That’s cool. I will think about using that. Actually, I will use that because I need help.
H: Yeah…I get in fights about it with my co-workers cause they’re like, “You’re not teaching them MLA?” They don’t need to know how to use MLA. They need to know how to write!
L: Yeah.
H: So that could be something you use. And it’s linked under here…it’s under Documents, under the writing help.
L: Ok. So basically for this paper just kinda…tell about…my writing style, how I’ve become the writer I am today, basically?
H: Um-huh.
L: Like, start from the beginning and…ok, that’ll work.
H: And look at…like you mentioned the P.E.E. structure…and you talked about…doing the online chat stuff, and if I was you, I would focus just on those two things for the in class stuff.
L: Ok. The P.E.E. and the…
H: Because those two things when we were talking seemed to be the things that you found most helpful.
L: Right. Ok.
H: So then you could go back and look…it’ll be easy to pick out paragraphs from your writing and things, even in your discussion boards, you’re doing that. And then…um…so compare, maybe, two discussion board posts, just two paragraphs from that, and show how you changed. And then talk about that, how that online experience changed…
L: Ok.
H: …not just how you write but how you interact. I mean…
L: Ok.
H: That’s fascinating. I’ve just never had a student who’s been…
L: It’s fascinating to me, too, because I feel like I’m the only person out there that’s ever experienced this…
H: [laugh]
L: …you know, I look at my cousin, I’m like, “Man, I don’t wanna take English,” and he’s like “Why?” I was like “Because I’ve never written a paper before.” And he looks at me like “What?!”
H: [laugh] Yeah…
L: And I’m like, “I’ve never written a paper…”
H: That’s pretty unusual. I mean, I’ve never had a student…like, I have lots of student who are like, “I’ve never read a book,” or “I’ve never written a research paper,” but not a paper.
Yeah, that’s pretty unique. I think you are the only one out there [laugh] who got through first English and not…
L: But I made it, and I’m happy about that.
H: Yeah, you definitely did make it, your writing is much improved. And you might think about, like…like reflecting ahead. Once you write about the writer you think you are, think about…I don’t know…like, what you feel like you should remember or what you want to take with you so that when you get into another class where you have to do writing you can keep that focus…
L: Ok. Ok.
H: So what is it you wanna tell you, like if you were to come back and read this paper in two years, about what you need to remember about writing. And then you can use it like a little reinforcement and support guide. [laugh]
L: I think the main thing for me is not to be so broad with my topics…I mean, throughout the class, trying to pick topics, I could pick something and it sounds good in my head, but when you actually start talking about it there’s so many…different sides and stories that you could go with, I think the main thing to help me was to stay focused on one thing and talk about that instead a being so open, cause your thoughts get bounced around. So that helped a lot.
H: So how do you do that? Like, what’s your process to go through to focus?
L: [pause and sigh] I pick a topic, and then I just brainstorm everything I can think of about that topic. Like for this, well, I didn’t have a whole lot of time to think about that one, but when I was thinking about the whole P.E.E. structure, I was thinking about, ok, we’re supposed to write about how we improve in class. Well, I’ve never taken a writing class before, and since I’ve started writing, the thing that helped the most was the P.E.E. structure. Well, what about the P.E.E. structure has helped me out? Being able to focus on your point, your explanation, and then your example…I mean, it’s simple. But for me, it started out hard because I’m thinkin’, well, my point is…I didn’t want to take English. Well, why didn’t you want to take English? Because I don’t know how to write? Well why come you don’t know how to write? Well, because I never had to write before. It’s just so many points that you can go through. And I just had to pick one and stay focused on it, which was hard sometimes cause you run out of things to say about that topic.
H: Um-hum.
L: But with you, you don’t care necessarily how long the paper is so you don’t have to B.S. your way through it, you can just get down to the point and be done with it. And it was simple for me. Hard, but simple. Does that make sense?
H: Um-hum.
L: Ok…I’m…just…
H: No, that little process you just said was really good, like that asking yourself questions to get down to it, because the time you get down to that “I’ve never written a paper before,” like that would be your starting point…
L: Right.
H:…you’re not talking about, “I don’t like English class,” which is…
L: Right, it’s not that I don’t like English, I just don’t know how to write, so I was afraid to take it because I didn’t want to fail because I’ve never done it before.
H: Yep, so there’s a point in your paper that you can go from. That’s really good, that process is really good. [pause] I’m so excited…
L: [laugh]
H: I had a student once…I used to grade in purple pen…and so I’d write just all down the margins of the paper, of people’s papers, and I had a student who came in once and he’s like, “I don’t know if I learned anything from you, but every time I look at a paper now, I see ‘WHY? WHY?’ in purple on the sides of it…I can’t stop…”
L: [laughs]
H: …and I’m like “YES! My job is done!” And you can take…that’s one of the skills I think that you can take into any…like if you have an essay test, like, break it down, that same structure…
L: Right.
H: …ask questions of each part of it. It’s applicable to and writing you’re going to have to do in college.
L: Yeah, actually my brother was here for when my grandma passed away, for her funeral, and I was talking to him about it and I was like, “Man, this is so cool, we’re learning this new stuff here in class, and blah blah blah blah blah…” and we got to arguing about it and I was like, “No, no, no, no. See my point is this, ok?…
H: [laughs]
L: …now let me give you an example. We did this and we did this and we did this and because we did this, this is what happened.” And he’s like, “Wow, that’s really cool!” So he’s using it for his next paper…
H: Really?
L: …and that’s pretty neat.
H: That’s awesome…huh…and I use it when I fight, like when I fight with my husband. Like, it gets faster, but you start to use it like “Really, well give me an example of that.”
L: Right.
H: …you know, “If you really think you did the dishes three nights this week, what nights would those be?” You know. And he’s like, “Graw! Stop being logical!”
L: It works. I know it. I’m hooked.
H: I think you’ve got lots of stuff to write about. I mean, that’s a very unspecific phrase. I mean, you have very good focus things that you have a lot of depth in your writing…
L: Right.
H: …that you can work with.
L: Cool.
H: Well, I’m glad that you felt that way about class because sometimes I think, “I don’t think that she likes this class…” [laugh]
L: [laugh]
H: …like not that you were mean or anything, you were just, you were so stoic, you were so…
L: Just trying to take it all in.
H:…I’m like, “I can’t read what she’s…I can’t read her face…
L: There was a couple of times I would go home, I’m like, “Mom, I have no clue what she just talked about. I heard everything, but it just didn’t register.” She’s like, “Well, send her an email.” I’m like, “Aw, I don’t want to send her an email cause then that makes me look like I wasn’t paying attention.” She’s like, “No, just do it!”
H: [laughs]
L: So I did, and you responded. I'm like, “You were right, I actually understand now, it took me awhile, but I understand.” Like the one we did about...um...[pause]...literacy...I just couldn't grasp what you were trying to get me to do. And I would go to my momma's house and I would sit with her for hours, and I'm like, I just don't understand. When I think of literacy I think of reading and writing. But I was like, when we talk in class, they said it's not necessarily just reading and writing, but actually understanding what you talk about. And I said everything that I wanted to write in my paper, but I just couldn't...it wouldn't click in my head. And she made me sit there, and she wrote down everything I said, and she put it in my face, and she's like “this is everything that you said.” And I was like, “Oh, there's my paper right there!”
H: [laughs]
L: That's pretty cool!
H: Well, you can do the same with this recording, like you can go through listen to what you just said, write it down...
L: Go from there.
H: ...restructure it, obviously, but, yeah...
L: I'm excited.
H: Maybe that's your process. Maybe you...you're...[pause]...like...what am I trying to say? Like, you think about it a lot?
L: I do.
H: You're an introvert...process...and then it all comes out at once. And so it sounds like you don't...you...when it all comes out in writing, you get frustrated, but when it all comes out in speaking...cause right now, like, all the stuff you're saying, and like, that's a fantastic example, that would be a great paragraph. Like, I'm just thinking in my head that you could just pull all this stuff outta this...and maybe that's just what...maybe that's one of the things you could write about in the conclusion that you need to remember to do is ask people and talk it out, get feedback...
L: That's a good point. I never thought of that, and that's very good. Cause I do get frustrated when I start to write. Cause it doesn't come out on paper the way it is in my head. So that's a great point, and I need to use that.
H: So maybe speech is like a...like maybe you brainstorm in speech instead of in writing.
L: Yes, I do.
H: Cause there have been a couple times in this conversation where you said, “I went to my mom, and I went to my brother.” And so like all of those examples, I'd just pull out every one of those examples and say like, “Here are the times this semester that I did this...”
L: Ok. Sounds good.
H: See, you have a whole paper.
L: Sounds good.
H: See, you're like, “I don’t know, I can’t even pretend I’m...” I knew you could do it. Ok, let’s stop recording. Is there anything else you want to tell yourself?
L: Nope. That's it.
Appendix DD: Transcript of Mitchner Interview

J: This one to me is the hardest one I’ve done.
H: Why?
J: I don’t know exactly…I know or at least I think my writing has improved since the first part of class, but how necessarily I know a few small things here and there but overall I’m not really sure what exactly has changed that made it better. [pause]
H: Well, on all of this you’re focusing on how you realized that you are going to have to change the pattern that you’ve always done.
J: Yeah
H: So when you made that change, what did you do differently? Like, when you were thinking about writing like for the Superman paper, how did you think about writing that paper that would have been different from how you wrote before?
J: The biggest thing that actually was putting forth effort into it and not just sit down and start writing some stuff, and it… I mean… the paragraph structure came a lot more into play, cause it… before I wrote wherever it sounded like it needed to start a new paragraph was just where I started a new paragraph. So that I had to concentrate more on. And I know that because I’ve made a note on the next page down about that [refers to the draft at which we’re looking]. But like, I don’t know how to provide examples of that without saying “here’s my first paper, here’s my second paper, you can see how that’s different.”
H: I’d pick out a paragraph from the first paper, up here where you’re talking about your first project, you gave this example sentence [refer to sentence in the text]. So then I’d put, “Another way I used to write was to write out and then divide the paragraph just where it sounded like it should be. Here’s an example where, like, I put in a paragraph break…” and then I’d paste in the last couple sentences of one paragraph and the first couple of the next so you’re showing the break.
J: Um-hum.
H: And I’d explain it just like you did with this first example [refers to text]. So you could do it that way, but you might talk about sentence-level changes and paragraph-level changes, and then you can do paper one, paper two, paper three, and do it that way. Just like one example for each could show how you recognize what’s changed.
J: Um-hum.
H: Cause this is good. This is all good.
J: And it… for me, and I don’t know if it actually… to me it says I did better because each grade got better on the papers but then again I guess I could… just because you got a better grade doesn’t necessarily mean the paper was written any better.
H: Um-huh.
J: But for me that’s what it means, just naturally, if I got a better grade it means I did better than I did last time. So I just took it for granted that oh I must have done better, something must have changed, what exactly I don’t know, but… that is… about as far as I got. I sit down to write it and then… kinda just…
H: [Laugh]
J: … a blank all of a sudden.
H: And that was it?
J: Yeah.
[laugh and pause]
H: I'm just gonna change this font 'cause I'm picky. [I change a few sentences of font on the screen.] Um...[pause]...so when we talked about...especially the second paper. I think the second paper was your...like, I saw a huge change between your first and second paper. And since you say that one of the biggest things that changed was the process, you might talk about even that process and say, for example, “my first paper I sat down on a Saturday night, wrote what came to me, did this and this and this revision. The second paper...”

Cause you and I worked together on doing that chart and you did some writing, things in the Individual Discussion Board, so if you wanted to talk about how your process changed as a result of the comments or whatever you realized then you could go through that, too, and say “In paper one, my process was vastly different than paper two,” or “I've used this feedback to change my writing in this way.” So you've obviously...here's one example already, you've said you made the assumption that no one was listening because no one ever had, so you wrote like no one was listening and then someone was listening, so you changed based on that...so what was that change?

J: Yeah, cause I'd have to say that the comments on the first paper were I guess the biggest factor..it changes everything. I'm not used to getting those kinds of comments back, before everybody was just “ok, you get this grade. It was alright, could have been better. Here you go.” That's it. So I wasn’t expecting all this stuff so when I saw them it, like, gave me a starting point.

H: So what was your first reaction to them when you first saw them, other then “there are comments.” What stood out? Here, let me pull it up. [navigates to Jason's IDB]

J: Mostly just surprise, cause it...like I said, the others they were always good enough and that's what got me by. I always usually got a decent grade on it and stuff, as far as I knew, I mean, I didn’t always necessarily put a whole lot of effort into it but I just thought I was doing good on them...

H: Um-huh.

J: ...when I wasn’t doin’ much work.

H: [mumble] Oh, that's the proposal. [continues to navigate] Ok. [looks at comments] So you might go through since the comments were obviously so important to the rest of how you commented, say “here are other comments that made me realize that I was going to have to change my style.” Or even summarize what the comments seem to be saying. Like, are there several comments that ask you to put detail, several comments that are confused. J: And like when you said that you want examples in the paper, I was like going more like it had to be a specific line-for-line taking out saying this is an example, I hadn't really thought much about like you just said there, like kinda generalizing what the comments say. I thought it had to be specific comments.

H: You can do both. I mean, if you...like you obviously can’t say “here are the seven comments...” there’s no point in that. But you could say “These comments tended to address...blank, whatever...” and then say, “For example, here’s an example of a comment that really I noticed stood out to me.” Or something like that. See if you can kinda go back and forth between generalization and specific comments, and especially if you see things that you...um...think were really representative of the point you're making. Like that one you used, that was good [refers to the paper]. What I really like about this is how you explained it. Like you say...

J: Yeah, cause it was like...I used that sentence structure...that question arises...in my normal talking to people and I just...right or wrong I had gotten accustomed to hearing
myself say it so it just seemed right, like and it just...that’s how I wrote it. Never gave much
tought to it meaning, it just actually arose from what was before it.
H: And you worked through that process because you’re doing…it’s kinda like that P.E.E.
structure where you’re...here’s your point...I’m writing like I would talk [pointing to parts
of the text on screen]…transition into example, “This is really noticeable in a sentence from
my opening paragraph.” Example [points it out] Explanation [points it out] and then another
example. Like that structure is really layered. So you’re not just saying the comments really
affected you, they changed the way I write. It was good. Like, you’re really showing me that
you can recognize what changed. Which is the point. So I can see however, in whatever you
write, that you can go back and recognize those changes and maybe come to a conclusion
about what you’ll do in the future with writing. Cause you might honestly...you probably
won’t ever get those type of comments again, so you almost have to internalize that and
think about that for yourself as a writer, when you go to write things. Cause most teachers
don’t...you know...they don’t...so what can you internalize...your conclusion can
be...what can you internalize to help you write a paper like that second paper? Or like the
third paper?
J: Ok.
H: And like these, I think these are fine. Well, like, either way. This might be what you look
at [points to notes in the text] overall in all three papers and then you just do it
chronologically...do the same thing you’re doing here. This is fine. [pause] And you can talk
about the...how...good grades are a good indicator because of what, what do you think?
Because you relate grades to work? Or is it that you looked at this paper and you said “yes,
this is a good paper and this is what it...”
J: Um, I try not to put ‘em, necessarily, I just associate them “A is good.” But it’s always kind
of there, I always kind of do without it. Cause I
H: Well then talk about that, say...
J: ...that was bad for me.
H: Because I do have students who are like, “Wow I got a C, that’s great!” And then I have
students like you, you know, that like a B is...there’s like A and then F, there’s no other...
J: Right, pretty much.
H: [laugh]
J: …my whole life’s that way in everything, its one way or the other extreme, all or nothing.
H: Um-huh.
J: And it’s just like, I suppose the very first thing on the comments for that first paper was
the amount of them, cause they could’ve all been praising everything that was on there, but
my first thought is that many comments I must’ve done something wrong.
H: Ok. Well that would be important to say, then. [pause] Someone...I can’t remember who
it was...came in yesterday or the day before and said that she started looking at places where
I didn’t write comments and writing like that [laugh]. Like, those must be the good spots. I
was like, “That kinda makes sense.” Not all of these are negative [indicates comments]
they’re just like reactions. So maybe talk about that, you know, say, “Here are these ton of
comments, and I...”
J: I don’t...I don’t take well to criticism. If I get criticized on something that means I didn’t
do it perfectly, and then...[pause]
H: So do you think that motivated you?
J: Oh, yeah…cause it like…it…even if it’s something I don’t like I feel like I gotta be the best at it, so I always try harder, cause it…[pause] I don’t know…[pause] it’s always been that way. Which I guess…so like in high school and stuff when I didn’t get comments then, I just stuck to that level, cause I guess there was not that motivation to try harder…

H: Um-huh. Ok. [pause] Well, I think that would be important to say in the beginning here then, because you start saying “I have always been reluctant to take any form of English classes, especially writing classes…they’ve been hard for me due to my lack of confidence and overly critical nature.” So, maybe talk about that a little [indicates lines in text] with the things you just said…

J: Ok.

H: …cause that will set us up for why those comments affected you so much.

J: Alright.

H: Like “I am…”

J: See, and like when I was writing that paragraph, I was sitting there thinking it needed more explanation, and I couldn’t figure out where to… I couldn’t figure out what to say.

H: I guess, like, when I get stuck like that, I just think… ok, I’ll ask questions. I’ll be like “Why?” or “How?” So, like you answer a “why” right here. You say “I’ve been reluctant..” Why? “They’ve been hard for me…” Why? “Lack of self confidence.” So then when you get to that point when you get down to…like the overly critical nature seems to be that core or that explanation, then give an example. That’s exactly what you did down here [scrolls to third paragraph of paper]. You started out kind of general…um…” I was going to get away with this writing,” and what was this writing? “I developed a bad habit…” explanation, explanation, and then when you get down to this kernel, which is you write the way you talk, you get specific. So it’s kinda that narrowing, narrowing, narrowing, and when you think you hit on “this is the thing that really, I’m doing,” then that would be…I’m going to look at this other paragraph [goes to second paragraph]. Ok, like here, “If someone was to look back over the years at my grades for all of the English classes I have taken, they would assume that this course should be a breeze for me.” So why? So you’d obviously…because this is tying right in to your grade thing below. So you’re setting it up perfectly, like you’ve got competitive nature and grades, and those are the things that, you know, you’re building on later. So this introduction structure is good.

J: Ok.

H: If you go back in and say…um…well, build on the critical nature of what you’re like, you know, your wife saying “all or nothing,” you know, maybe an example of a time when you…

J: Because that’s why I don’t have a…you know, I’m an art major, and I don’t have a portfolio…

H: Yeah.

J: …at all. When I’m done, I can see one little mistake, whatever it is, and I throw it away. I don’t keep anything. The only things that has ever been kept are the things that people have usually taken from me and have had framed on their own or whatever and said, “here, we spent money on it, don’t throw it away.”

H: [laughs] Guilt you into keeping it.

J: So I keep it, you know, otherwise, I don’t…

H: So that would be a great example right there…um…where was that? Oh, here we go [referring to the text]. “This is due mainly to my lack of self confidence and my overly
critical nature.” [click on the text at this point]. For example…but you don’t have to say “for example,” that’s just…
J: Yeah…
H: You know, I’m a perfectionist. I destroy things that aren’t up to this level, so then your conclusion would be that the thought of a grade for a course being dependent on what I consider…that would be the logical conclusion because you would be making that…so here, if someone were to look back on all your grades…that would be a place you could expand on that, how you got good grades for turning in mediocre work. And that thing that you said about how you got to the level where you got good grades and then you stayed there, that would be important.
J: Ok.
H: Because…I mean…I don’t like grades, and I don’t think they’re important, but they are, because when I was in school, I was the same way. Like I would…like if I got an A-, I was like, “A minus! What did I do wrong?” So they are important, they’re a motivating thing. And…so maybe…like don’t just say “I don’t just want to write about grades.” Like, write about what that represents to you. What is that grade? And it sounds like it’s representing…you’re connecting that grade to that perfection.
J: Yeah, cause it’s always been a…I always saw that mainly as a teacher’s way of saying how good you did on it, so…I guess it’s always how I’ve always associated it.
H: Well, and cause you’re always associating it with…[pause]…
J: Cause we’re always told that A is the best you can do…
H: Ok.
J: …so…
H: So you thought that the papers you were writing were the best that you could do then? Or did you consciously know that you could do better?
J: Well…I…I would say that I thought I could do better, ‘cause I don’t know that I’ve ever been satisfied with anything. Everything could always be better. So, I knew I could do better, but it wasn’t required, or didn’t seem to be, so there wasn’t necessarily any motivation to go above and beyond what they wanted, so…
H: So do you get motivated by that challenge, like, when something butts up against you…like when you write…or when you draw something, and someone says something about it…I don’t know if you ever even show it to anyone. But like, does that criticism make you want to draw a better…
J: It…there’s always a fine line…it has to…the confrontation does make me work harder for it, work better, as long as it’s still something that seems that you’re capable of doing. If hits you head on so hard that I mean, there’s no way that I could ever get it any better, then there’s kinda of a “why try?” if I can’t…so it has to seem like you’re capable of going above that but there’s enough there to get you to try that.
H: Ok.
J: Cause I had done that several times, it seems like there’s no possible way…why try?
H: So it’s gotta be an attainable goal to get you to…
J: Yeah.
H: So maybe that’s…that might be a part of it with the grade section, you know…[pause]…that grade’s telling you that you need to do something better, and it felt attainable. Like if you’d a gotten a D, I would have just…that sucks, I can’t believe you wrote this…you know…like it would have been different…
J: Yeah.
H: …cause like…so it’s a real fine line, so maybe talking about that line. Cause obviously something hit you and motivated you. So think about that in the future. Ok, I realize that I’m motivated by…challenge…that I feel is something [unclear]…you know, and I want to be cognizant of that so I can make choices and decisions based on that. Which I’m sure you do, but it’s tacit, you don’t think about…like I don’t think about until I’m really struck with it, those patterns I’ve developed, especially in education. Like I would work and work and work, but it was to avoid other things, so I performed well in college because I didn’t want to deal with other stuff. So when I had to deal with that stuff, my grades would fall…
J: Yeah.
H: …partly because…I couldn’t keep those two things going. And then when I started thinking about it, I would be like, “Ok, this is going to happen, this is how you’re going to react, so don’t freak out, still do what you need to do.”
J: Cause I’d always reached a level of comfort from like, like my wife always wants me to proofread her papers. And, I don’t know…I couldn’t hardly quote a single grammar rule or anything else and stuff…it’s just…in high school I just usually, on a where you gotta change the grammar, put in commas here and that kinda stuff, worksheets or whatever, I always did good on them but all I ever did was read through it and then just put where it sounded or what sounded right. I never…and that always worked….
H: Um-hum.
J: …I never actually learned necessarily what the rules are for doing this and doing that…so that’s why, if you get into something that has semi-colons or colons, that’s…what I know…commas and stuff like that, I can usually the way it sounds…
H: Do you read a lot?
J: Not as much now as I used to.
H: Cause it sounds like you’ve picked up…
J: As long as…I love to read as long as it’s what I want to read. That’s why English classes, I hated reading all those books. I hated every one of them, none of them interested me. So I did…the last Harry Potter…I read that in two-and-a-half days or something.
H: So you’re picking up those rules…you’re not picking up the rule, you’re picking up that intuitive knowledge. Like you know because of reading…you see…like your brain is picking up those patterns without you thinking about, “Oh, comma with an introductory clause there,” you know.
J: Which that…I guess that’s the way I’ve done a lot of things. I hate asking for help. If like my boss, he intimidates me or whatever or if I don’t know him very well, I don’t like to ask for help. So what I would always do is, you know, like at work, if it’s something I don’t know, I would usually find a way to get out of it for the time being, and I’d watch real closely what somebody else is doing, and I’d figure out how they’re doing it, then next time I go out there, and I try to go out there at a time when I’m kinda alone, and I can remember what he did, I try that, see if it works, and if it did, alright then, I learned how to do it, I didn’t have to ask anybody…..
H: That’s really interesting. [laugh]
J: …that’s the way I go about everything.
H: So seeing examples of that…or, like you don’t learn from…like if I handed out a handout, and said like “Step one…”
J: The examples because I guess I always pay more attention to the examples because that's a way of not having to ask anybody and nobody knows that I don't know, so the more attention I pay to it then the better I can learn it. That's, like I say, that's about everything, I do that with everything I do.

H: So do you think that happened in this class? Were there times that you remember, like, doing that watching or looking at something...when you didn’t understand something. Was there something that you looked at?

J: Well, originally, when I came up with the idea of Superman as an American icon, I wasn't even sure necessarily that tied into what you were wantin', the only reason was that you had done that similar thing that example on there...I don’t even know what it was exactly, being a symbol of this, and that’s the only reason I knew I could use it, and then I submitted that to you in the individual discussion board and you came back with saying that was a good idea, so then, ok, that released a lot of stress...alright, she said it was a good idea, I can go with this now.

H: So maybe when you talk about that second project, talk about...like put that part in there, say, you know, “I learn best when I can watch and observe,” and here’s an example of that. “I wasn’t sure, I watched and observed, I tried it out kinda when no one was looking,” cause, I mean, IDB, individual discussion board, really, no one’s looking...I mean except me, and I don’t count, really, cause...I’m the teacher.

J: I suppose that's why math works good for me, they usually work out one example of each problem on there, and I write that down in my notes and stuff, then I can...cause especially when I don’t have math class every day, and she only collects homework every Tuesday, I don't do homework ‘til Monday night, so we've done several sections throughout the week, so and then I just sit at home and I can look back through my notes and I sit there and start scanning it and figure out, “ok...this...this...ok I got it.” That’s how I do it...so...

H: Ok, so talk about that...talk about that how you pull...those are your strengths...you pull on those strengths...you know...wait for an example or, you know...so talk about that as well. How those strengths helped you. Because you talk up here [refers to text on screen] about how “Writing classes are extremely hard for me.” But it's not because you can’t write. It’s because of other reasons. So talk about those strengths as well. Because that’s a strength...the ability to watch, and like, deconstruct and reconstruct is...you can do anything then because all you need is an example.

J: And that’s always been my philosophy for any type of job I’ve ever applied for and not known how to do it, show me how to do it and I can do it. [pause] And usually I get it pretty fast. After a time or two, I usually get it.

H: So maybe that’s part...and maybe that’s part of your conclusion, too is that...I know that this is my strength, what...I know...intuitively I can pick up on patterns and apply those. And it might like, you might be like, “duh, I know that already,” but show me in writing that you see that happening. Cause I won’t...I mean...until you said this right now I didn’t know what you were doing.

J: And...the main reason that I’m usually quiet in class is because I hate talking in front of other people, I hate being. People will turn and look at me when I say something, and I don't like that. But then also I suppose that would play a little part in the fact that I, you know, sit in the corner and stuff and I listen...he’s saying, she’s saying what they do, and everything else. And usually if I’ve got a question usually I wait to see if somebody else asks it, so I know it’s not a stupid question.
H: A lot of people...like...teachers are kinda freaked out by quiet students, especially people who teach and are extraverts, because I relate to people through talking, so if someone’s not talking to me, I think they don’t like me, and it took me a long time to overcome that because I kept getting students who never said anything, not in an entire class, would say a word out loud in front of anyone else and then turn in these really, really good papers. So I’m like they’ve gotta be taking stuff in. It’s not that they’re ignoring me, it’s that something else is going on. So that when I started to realize, I still have quiet students who are just checked out, but I see more often, like, students who are just like taking in this information and processing it and then, you know, putting it out there. And that sounds like...that’s what LaQuisha talked about, too, that she did. She’d sit there real quiet and listen to everybody and then go home and process, you know, write something down.

J: So I never...you know...they always try to teach you in class that there’s no such thing as stupid questions, if you don’t know it. That never sank in. I...to me, most...if I’ve got to ask a question then, to me, it usually does sound stupid...

H: Um-hum.

J: ...especially when it’s something that, to me...I should already know the answer to. I won’t do it in class. There are other ways to answer that question.

H: Well, I think that culturally, we’re taught that that is a sign of weakness, you know. Like you come out...

J: I like to think I’m a person that, you know, I take my weaknesses and figure out what they are and try to improve on them and stuff but I don’t think I actually am. My weaknesses, I do what I can to try to avoid those things. Don’t be in that position.

H: Yeah. Well, write about that. Say, “this is the kind of person I view myself as, or what I want to be, and here’s...you know...and honestly, if that works for you...if that process works and you’ve got good results...that listening and watching, and figuring things out and not asking questions, I think that’s just a different way of processing. Like, I don’t think that’s a weakness. And...I don’t really get that many questions in class. Most of the work that I do was on the IDB this semester. A lot of people wait and then ask something in that. And that’s why I give that time at the end of every class, is that if you’ve got something, you don’t have to say it in class, you can say it in that forum and I’ll still respond to it. And a lot of that, the design for that, was because of people that have a process like you so you’d have a chance to...

J: I guess I’d have to say it did help cause it...we had that, the one conversation where we went back and forth a little bit about the, if nothing matters then everything matters and vice versa and stuff like that, and those are not...those are more my own personal thoughts on things and those aren’t something I would ever put into a paper, especially one we turn in to a teacher...that’s not...I don’t...where me and a teacher usually aren’t on that kind of discussion level, they normally don’t want to hear what I have to say on something, and it...usually a comment like that, too, it’s most of the time from people I either get a confused look or they think I’m crazy and that I should be committed or something...

H: [laughs]

J: ...so and then if it’s a personal comment, or something that should have a deeper meaning to it and then you say it out loud and no one takes it for its meaning then it’s lost everything and it’s pointless. So...it...I suppose I’d have to say that for me it’s a big deal to put, that I should put something like that down and submit that. I never have before. I don’t do those kinda things.
H: Well, and definitely talk about that. You say down here [refers to paper on screen]…you did that same thing you analyzed the guidelines, you figured out exactly what you had to do, and…you weren’t gonna do anything for someone who didn’t care, so obviously there’s that factor in what you just said and in what you’re writing that you need someone to, like, respond and listen to and care about what you said. Otherwise…

J: And in school I had teachers who like they seemed to be friends with some of the students in class and they always could talk, and I was never one of them. I couldn’t relate to them on that kind of level.

[pause]
H: So was this class different?
J: Yeah. It was definitely different.
H: So why? Like, you talk to me a lot, so why did you…why did that happen?
[pause]
J: I’d have to say…[pause]…um…I got more feedback and feeling from you, doing more than just…I have to tell you this, this is how you did on your paper…
H: Um-huh.
J: …and this is…you know…you had normal conversations with me, you know, just about stuff at home or this or that or whatever, it wasn’t just strictly business. So I’d have to say that made it more personal or whatever and that…[pause]
H: In your art classes, is it more like that?
[pause]
J: Somewhat. It…I’m more talkative in the art classes. It’s a small group and stuff. But it’s kinda always been a relaxed atmosphere and stuff like that, and then…sometimes I am…the art teacher I have now, me and him talk some times and other times not. He’s a little odd, though, so…
H: [laugh]
J: …but…
H: I’m just asking you all this so we can talk thought it cause there might be something that comes out Cause, you know, it sounded like when you came in like…you were really focused on the example thing, and it kinda…
J: Yeah, that was a big, a big deal…
H: …it stopped you from…
J: …and I guess that would be, it’s always been a problem I guess…I can explain something or whatever but when you tell me to start quoting specific examples…that’s where it stops, usually…
H: [laughs] So maybe taking this and listening to it or whatever, because I think you’ve said a lot of things in us talking that are important to what you’re saying here. Because when we talk, you give me an example.
J: Yep. And that…it definitely helps. Sittin’ at home in front of the computer trying to write it I’m not talking it out, there’s nobody to talk to. So I’d definitely say that it’s helped. Which is what I was hoping for when I came in here. Cause I knew I didn’t have much written, and it took forever to get even those three paragraphs, so I was just kinda…I…and I tried writing more and stuff, and I couldn’t, so I was like, I’ll just…I’ll go in there and hopefully that’s what comes of it.
H: Well, is there anything else you want to talk about?
J: I think that covers it.
H: [laugh] Yeah, well, we kinda got all of it there.
J: Probably a good thing you recorded it.
Appendix EE: Transcript of Bree Interview

H: Ok, so how do you feel about this, before we start looking at it?
J: Good. Good. Um, I started working on it on Tuesday, worked a little bit more on Wednesday, and I felt good about the time I was allowing myself instead of just a day to write the paper, because, uh, more information started floating in. I actually had a notepad next to my bed which is really strange because when I’d think of something else I’d think “remember that for tomorrow.”
H: [laugh] Do you usually do that?
J: No. It was just something…um…I was just working with there.
H: Yeah.
J: I thought of something and I was like, “I’m tired of getting out of bed and writing this back down, so we’ll just put the notebook next to the bed.
H: [laugh]
J: So I did that. That’s the stuff I was going to work on today. There were a couple things I wanted to fix within the…um…I believe it’s the…uh…second part of the paper…uh…there’s three topics in there. It deals with the second that I wanted to add and then a couple thoughts about my third topic …
H: Ok.
J: …that I have written on that paper at home.
[long pause while reading on the screen]
H: [circles passage about Jennifer’s experience in English 040 and 050] Do you remember who you had for those classes.
J: And older woman for [English 040], and I couldn’t tell you, I know she was an older lady and we had like six kids in the class. Honestly, it was [undecipherable], just to help with my grammar. I know I still need help with grammar, but it was the easiest “A” I’ve ever received in my life. There was just no effort into it. Going into 050 and 101 I had the same teacher. Um…her name was…um…I know she’s…um…her roommate is one of the librarians at…OTC…can’t think of her name.
H: Oh, [teacher’s name]?
J: That’s it.
H: Ok, I was just wondering because I…like, the things that you’re saying…I know some of the teachers here..I was just wondering.
J: Yes, the 050, I can’t remember her name, but that question…like I said, I still need help with grammar, but…um…050 and 101 I did have [teacher’s name].
[pause for reading text]
H: So this paragraph, you’re kinda chunking that all together, is that because you think that those two classes were just kind of…
J: 040 I didn’t have a lot to write about. I actually had nothing to write about. It was just grammar, sentence structure, paragraph structure. In 050, I had a little bit more, because…um…we finally got into personal narratives and just your basic papers. And I didn’t have much to write about them, though.
H: Ok. [pause for reading] Do you remember the…the…what the topics of these were?
J: Um…what do you mean?
H: The personal narrative, and the persuasive and the op ed. Like what…
J: Um…what I wrote about?
H: Um-huh.
J: No, I'll have to look back at...I can't find a lot of them. I tried to, but...um...like the op ed piece, I couldn't find and that would have been the one I would have wanted to find...
H: Um-huh.
J: Otherwise, my personal narratives have just been stories about my family and...um...I think I did...uh...oh, I don't know. I'd still have to look at the rest of them. I'm having...cause I had them on a flash drive...
H: Um-huh.
J: ...and since then, this flash drive has disappeared.
H: Oh.
J: So...um...some of them have been on the computer and some of them not.
H: Ok.
J: So I'll have to really look through those again and see what I can find. And what I mean by the world of satire was just...uh...we did...uh...kinda like a whole unit on satire. Um...I don't think we ended up writing a piece after it or anything...
H: Um-huh.
J: ...but we did just do a unit on it and I thought it was fascinating.
H: Cause you say, "I enjoyed learning these things because it was different than what I had experienced before."
J: And I liked the op ed piece because I'd never written one, and in all these previously...ur...previous English classes, I'd done the personal narrative, persuasive essay, you know, and there's only so many things in my life I can write about with a personal narrative...
H: Um-huh [typing].
J: ...do you know? My life's not that interesting.
H: [laughs] I'm just asking because when you go to draw your conclusion, that's something that seems like is a very important point in the...in your...it's part of it, that you...are challenged by things that are different.
J: I'm challenged by them, but I enjoy them...
H: Yeah.
J: ...because they make me feel like I can...uh...write in a different way and not have to do the same thing over and over and over and over again...
H: Um-huh.
J: ...it was fun to experience something else.
[pause]
H: Cause this is...this is why I'm saying this overall...this is all very...these are traditionally traditional classes. Like if you go into an average college English class, this is all what you do. And you are interested by things you wouldn't do in an average college English class, which might become important later.
J: Ok.
[long pause for reading]
H: Ok. So this paragraph starts off with how you were intimidated.
J: Um-huh.
H: And it ends with, "After this first class, I decided..." Ok, great. So, is everything in between here about being intimidated and coming to this conclusion?
J: What do you mean?
H: So if this is your point, you were immediately intimidated, like I would ask “How and why were you intimidated?” So you say, “There was a lot of information in the syllabus,” which is one of the reasons you were intimidated. And then you talk about finding how we were going to use our books. So was that intimidating?
J: No, that was something I was excited about...
H: Ok.
J: …cause in my other English classes, we didn’t use our books. And to me, it was a waste of money not to use the books, obviously, but…um…I don’t know. The book that you gave us helped me a lot throughout the semester because I would reference…or, uh…refer back to them...
H: Um-huh.
J: …and follow their writing structures...
H: Um-huh.
J: You get to read about this later...
H: [laughs]
J: Um, I could follow their structures and it made my papers more structured, and they had thought behind them, and a definite opening...
H: Um-huh...
J: …and…uh…different concepts in the middle, and an ending. And reading over these essays that we had done in class helped me a lot cause I always look back at them. I actually…you’ll read this in here later...
H: [laughs]
J: …that, you know, I picked an essay to look off of as I wrote my essay—I think I used the private vs. public as my example—
H: Um-huh.
J: …I used, I watched what…um…what one of the essays we had read in class had done...
H: Um-huh.
J: …and followed their structure...
H: Um-huh.
J: …to write my paper. So my paper would flow better and would make sense.
H: Ok.
J: If that makes sense.
H: Yeah, so...
J: I actually used one of yours also...
H: [groan]
J:…that one you’d sent over...
H: Oh, yeah.
J: …you’d posted it to Blackboard, I used that for one of my papers.
H: Ok, I mean, I guess. That’s not my best paper, but…um…
J: It was still fun. And it was useful to me, trust me.
H: Well good. I guess maybe because to me, this sentence threw me, because everything else is talking about intimidation, dislike, fear, so maybe this is something...
J: That should go after?
H: Yeah. This might be a separate point. If you’re thinking comparison/contrast, here’s the things you’re intimidated of and you didn’t like, and then maybe the next paragraph can be, “But,” you know, “I was excited about the book…”
J: So, maybe move this down…here? [pause for reading] Is that what you mean? Or just take it out completely?
[pause for reading]
H: I might take it out.
J: Ok.
H: Because it doesn’t seem to go with…because you’re going to talk a bunch about the book later.
J: True. I can add that sentence in later somewhere else.
H: Yeah, I’ll just leave it out. [works on paper]
J: Ok.
[pause for reading]
H: Ok.
[pause for reading]
H: Ok.
[pause for reading]
H: I’ll just do track changes, then we…
J: What is that?
H: I just marked through the semi-colon and put a comma in there
J: Oh.
H: And track changes is for later when you go in, you can just right-click and say “Accept” or “Reject” and it will put it back to where it was…
J: And I always want to do “Accept”?
H: Yes. [laughs] No…
J: [laughs]
H: With grammar stuff, it's faster than going through and having to edit.
J: Well sometimes Word says, “Put a semi-colon there.” And I’m going to trust you over what I think…
H: Yeah, Word isn’t…Word…I and grammar don't get along.
[pause for reading]
H: Ok.
[pause for reading]
H: [laughs] This is good.
[pause for reading]
H: Ok. “This course was very hard for me. I was not accustomed to …” [mumbles]
J: I repeated myself.
H: Where?
J: I said, “This course has been very hard for me…it has been very challenging for me…”
H: Ok. So we’ll…[types and reads] Good transition. “Even more shocking…”
[pause for reading] Ok. This second part seems to be different than the first part. Like here you’re talking about adjusting, and all the things that were different and new, and here you’re talking about [pause]
J: I was trying to give you my PowerPoint history.
H: Ok, so maybe give me your PowerPoint history in a separate paragraph.
J: Ok.
H: Because, you’re talking about your PowerPoint history, too, here, but here you’re talking about adjusting. So maybe keep talking about adjusting, like what…you had to adjust to
these things that you were anticipating and didn’t happen, so maybe wrap that up before you get into PowerPoint. It just seemed you were right here I was jarred into…

J: Something else? I did that when I was reviewing it, too, I thought, “This doesn’t sound right, but I’ll have her look at it…”

H: Yeah.

J: So maybe start a new paragraph here and finish this off with something else?

H: Yeah.

J: Ok.

H: Cause this goes together well, and this goes together well, but this and this don’t go together well. [indicating on screen with the pointer]

J: Ok.

H: When I’m reading them.

[long pause for reading]

H: [laughs] Yeah, this is funny.

J: Yeah, I didn’t look at that.

H: So do you think that’s part of what you’re referring to above, about how you never had to read?

J: What do you mean?

H: Do you think you didn’t read the PowerPoint stuff because in other classes, you didn’t have to?

J: It wasn’t available in other classes, there wasn’t extra information given…um…well, you’re all over the Blackboard. The other teachers that I’ve had have NOT been like that.

H: Um-huh.

J: It was turn in your paper with a hand-copy. It wasn’t over Blackboard. And I think that…uh…what was your question? I lost my train of thought.

H: Do you think you didn’t read it because of what you said above about how the teachers didn’t use the book, they didn’t really…

J: Um, no, I just didn’t read it because it’s something I’ve never done…

H: Ok.

J: …and…uh…once I realized how much helpful that would have been for me, for the project, I read everything you gave us after that.

H: [laughs]

J: That was uh…

H: “I just read everything she gave us from that point on…”

[pause for reading]

J: I don’t know if that really clearly answered your question.

H: Yeah. I was just wondering ’cause when I read that, I thought instantly about what you said above about the book.

[pause]

J: I was talking about the material you had given us with the PowerPoint…

H: Uh-huh.

J: …it was like “How to Do a Bad PowerPoint…”

H: Uh-huh.

J: …I didn’t read those.

H: [laughs]

J: Probably should have, like I said…
H: Yeah.
J: Which is why I was very disappointed with the end product.
[pause for reading]
J: And I really don’t think it was necessarily a terrible topic, I just couldn’t think of anything else to end with.
H: End this with?
J: No, ‘cause I felt that with my project, it bounced all over the place, wasn’t clear in most sections, and was a terrible topic. But in reality, it could have been a really good topic, but it was the way that I approached the topic, I think I just...uh...approached it the wrong way.
H: [types in the background]
J: Cause I think any topic can be a good topic as long as...you know...uh...I think I was just making excuses for myself, I guess.
H: I’d put something about that in there then. And then put that sentence down there with this. [indicates sentences on the screen.
J: Uh...the...
H: “I also missed a very important step in the writing process. Critique. I never looked back over my slides once I completed the project.”
J: So I should start a new paragraph here.
H: Yeah. This feels like the first sentence of this paragraph. [indicates on screen]
J: Ok.
H: And then you can say, “My first assignment is something I’m not very proud of...” This feels like the conclusion of this one [indicates on screen] about what you said about how it was my approach, it wasn’t necessarily the project. It could have been a good project, but I didn’t end the project the right way.
J: Can you highlight what you were going to before just so I’ll know to move that down?
H: Do you want me to highlight it or do you want me to just write a note?
J: Doesn’t matter.

[another student enters and I say she can stay]

H: Ok. And this isn’t just because I think I’m special, but...
J: You think I’m just trying to butter you up.
H: Exactly. And I don’t trust you, so I want you to give me examples of what you thought was so good, if you think it’s good. No really, because you were saying my questions were all valid, so show me what a valid question is and show me how...
J: Um, go through my PowerPoint and pick out a slide?
H: Um-huh. Pick out a couple, one or two, that show you...’cause you say, “Throughout this semester, reading back through my work has helped me substantially.” So you’ve got these points at which you’re realizing that you need to do things different, and you do them different. So I think that’s one thing you can really emphasize. And you might mention later in the paper that one of the things that you did well was that you are taking these opportunities that you are seeing. [pause] Yeah...Ok.
[pause for reading]
H: Yeah.
[pause for reading]
J: Ok.
H: [laughs] Good paragraph, really good paragraph.
J: Thank you.
H: Um…
J: What I was meaning by that sentence was I hadn’t really figured out if what I’m calling the personal narrative method is actually part of that P.E.E. structure…
H: Um-huh.
J: …or if the P.E.E. is something completely separate. Because I think they should be involved together. I don’t know. I think it makes a better paper. That’s just me. Who knows? H: Maybe. I think you’re making a really good point there. I think you might draw that out more, what you just said. Instead of saying, “It doesn’t matter as long as I’m using something,” like…take…strike that…and then talk about [pause] what you just said.
J: And now I can’t remember it either.
H: We have it on tape…
J: Ok.
H: …so you can go back and listen to it. Go back and listen to that last part.
J: Ok. [laughs]
H: My brain is…I’m losing focus.
[pause for reading]
H: Ok, then that’s you’re…you’re going into…
J: Um, this is gonna be, yes, my third part…
H: Um-huh.
J: Um…what concerns me…can you go back up really quick?
H: Um-huh.
J: ‘Cause it’s like I have three different…where is it? Keep going. It’s at the very beginning. Well not at the VERY beginning, but…um…here we go. “I learned from my teacher, my book, and other students. Combining these three sources, new techniques, and great feedback…” So that’s six things all combined into one.
H: Um-huh.
J: Do…and…I think I’m getting lost. ‘Cause I’m trying to pick…um…like I started off with why you have helped me…
H: Um-huh.
J: …and I’ve used new techniques…well, actually, I think I used great feedback as an example for you…
H: Um-huh.
J: …and then my next one was…um…my book, and my book has taught me my new technology…I mean…my new techniques. And then for fellow students I was going to use with in technology, and that was…do you think that’s the wrong way to approach something?
H: No, I think these can be combined. Because you can say, “I learned from feedback given by my teacher, techniques I learned from the book, and then students…” and students and students are the same.
J: Ok.
H: So I think you’re actually writing one thing…
J: Ok.
H: …you’re just writing it twice.
J: Ok.
H: So I think if you just combine those and make just one teacher/feedback, book/techniques...
J: Will you write a little note? ‘Cause I…that really got me. I don’t know.
H: [types a note] And you do that sometimes, like I saw that in your writing. Like you’d say something, and you’d say it again, and really you were doing one point, and you were kinda pulling it into two, and that’s all that is. ‘Cause you’re talking about…you’re talking about this through and you’re setting up that structure for that.
J: Oh, and what I was going to talk about with technology was the different types of things we’ve done with it being the Web-based class that we did, or the…what is it called?
H: Online class.
J: Online chatting...
H: Yeah.
J: And…um…the Individual Discussion Boards, and what I’ve learned from my students sitting next to me, as well as you, and…um…and that maybe technology’s not so bad...
H: [laughs]
J: …and that maybe I just need to catch myself up…maybe, uh…yeah...
H: [laughs] “It's not as horrible as I thought…”
J: Yeah, I’m not as good at it, but I’d like to try.
H: Um-huh.
J: And I’d also like to bring in the why I didn’t choose to use any of these technologies in my other papers. I just chose to do straight papers after that PowerPoint.
H: Ok.
J: And…um…talk about that, and why I chose to do papers and not try the Web site and try these alternate things that you offered us.
H: Um-huh.
J: And bring that into there. And then a conclusion.
H: Um-huh. That sounds good.
J: Is it good so far?
H: Yeah.
J: Ok.
H: I’m really likin’ it.
J: Ok. Good.
H: So make a bunch of paragraphs just like this one...[indicates on screen]
J: Ok.
H: Turn it into a master’s thesis-length work...
J: Go through and look where they had no comments and follow that pattern.
H: [laugh] Exactly. Jennifer tip number 380…find places where there aren’t comments...
J: [laughs]
H: …do that again. Ok. Any last words before I shut off the recording part?
J: This was a very fun paper to write, and I really enjoyed your class.
H: [laughs] Thanks.
Appendix FF: English 102 Section 124 Student Anticipated and Achieved Questions and Anticipated and Achieved Processes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>P #</th>
<th>Initial Q</th>
<th>Q in Proposal</th>
<th>Q in paper</th>
<th>Process Anticipated</th>
<th>Process Achieved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ardle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&quot;Does it really help companies to advertise online through things such as pop up ads and free give aways?&quot;</td>
<td>“Does advertising online help a business gain more customers and increase sales?”</td>
<td>“Does advertising online help a business gain customers and increase sales?”</td>
<td>To research my question, I will first start by simply logging on to my computer and looking around for pop up ads, free online surveys, quizzes, and the junk mail online. Then I will explore what kinds of prizes are attainable and what you really have to do to receive these awards. After reviewing the ways to get free stuff or get great savings online, I will then start asking around to some of my friends asking what they buy on the internet because of pop up ads or online surveys. I will do this through face to face conversations, emailing, and also by posting comments on my blog at Myspace and having my friends then respond. I will also try to email some of the major companies who try to sell their products online through pop up ads and see if they</td>
<td>I through some ideas for this project for a couple of days before I settled on one. Then I wrote out my proposal. My proposal was very rough at first so I had to go back and make the questions more specific. I went to researching my topic and spent a couple of days just gathering information and taking notes. When I felt that I had enough information, I set down and organized my thoughts. I spent about an hour typing out my paper and then about thirty minutes fixing mistakes and proofreading it. I made the decision to write my paper as a traditional research paper instead of a Powerpoint or website because I wasn't as familiar with the other two. I would like to branch out on other papers do something</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ardle 2

For example, one hundred years ago, did farmers need to be able to read to get their jobs done? Do they now? So that is what I have so far.

“How is literacy important to farmers?”

“How is literacy important to farmers?”

I will be looking mostly on the internet to explore my question. I will explore articles on different research that may have done similar studies. I will be interviewing a local farmer from my town and learning about how literacy is important to him and his job. I will be looking at examples throughout history that have to do with farmers and their work to see what form of education they needed to perform their tasks successfully.

The decisions I made for my paper were very basic; how I wanted to present it, what information I would use, where I would look for my sources, etc. Yes, the process I used in creating this project was basically the same as Project one. I thought about the project for a few days, did a little research here and there, started playing around with my powerpoint, and then in a matter of two or three days completed the slideshow....

Ardle 3

N/A

I will be looking for answers to many questions concerning the online population explosion of the Chinese people.

What does the discovery and growth of the internet’s popularity in China mean for job opportunities there? So how do my experiences with the internet differ or somewhat seem the same as the

I will be going back to Pewinternet.org to research more about the Chinese people and how the internet has affected their everyday lives. I will also go to other internet websites such as PBS.org and Economist.com to further investigate the Chinese people
Chinese people? and the internet. I will also be looking at my own personal experiences to see how the internet has changed my life as it has the Chinese people and how it has used me instead of me using it.

Clause 1

I really have no idea what im going to write about. Im not sure what you are looking for. Really my only idea was the communication between adult and child, and how they interact. Maybe symbols or simple things a child can do to tell a parent or caregiver what they need or what. Basically the relationship between the two. Is that anything close to what you are talking about?

“Where do babies come from?”

How are you supposed to know what each individual child is able to comprehend? What is ultimately the best way to answer this question appropriately? Is there anything one might do to prepare or assist in answering the question?

I will begin my research by selecting twenty to thirty people to ask this question. I will record each individual’s age and occupation to make sure there is a variety of people, and answers, with different levels of education. Then, I’m going to ask five to ten children where they think babies come from. The children will be between ages three and ten so they will have different levels of understanding. Also, I will be looking at different websites with information regarding the topic. EBSCOhost student research center will be one area I will look into information. There, I will be looking at assisted methods of pregnancy, and ways the mothers

I first brainstormed and asked family members what researchable topic would fit the assignment. After finding my topic, I then started gathering informative websites in my spare time within two to three days. Then I hilited everything I found to be the most important and relevant to my topic. It took me three days to actually write my own paper with all the information I gathered. Finally, I finished with the works cited page and submitted it. I love children and wanted to think of a topic that was fun and creative, which is why I decided to pick the topic "Where do babies come from?” I was going to include a video
answered later questions of their special conception. I will also be looking into psychologist’s advice to parents through this research center, also in general parenting magazines as well. About.com is another website I will be retrieving data about pregnancy and childbirth. With these various sources of information, I plan to answer this question at every possible angle.

but I decided not to because I felt it was off the topic. It was giving tips to siblings about their little brothers and sisters, which wasn’t directly related, so I didn’t include it. The process I used to create this project was similar to other projects in the sense of finding the information, highlighting what I thought was important, then start to write the paper.

| Clause 2 | I am doing the three tests 4MAT, Keirsey Sorter-II, and the hemispheric dominance. | I will uncover how personality type, hemispheric dominance, and learning styles effect and contribute to my personal learning ability. | I took this test in order to analyze myself through these four temperaments and how they effect and contribute to my learning ability. | When I was writing this project I actually wrote the introduction and conclusion last which I have never done before. For some reason that was the only way it made sense to me…. To begin the project I decided on using three different learning test to analyze myself through. I got just enough information to make my proposal/plan of action to go about doing the project. After printing my results of these three test I went |
how I felt, as a whole, it effected the way I processed the information. I also plan to go through the results of each test and highlight the information that applies to me positively and negatively in terms of benefitting from a teacher and class. The positive and negative results will probably be a factor in which teachers and classes I plan to use as examples in the first couple paragraphs (if that makes sense). Toward the end I will tell how the tests tell me how I learn best and maybe also the things that I benefit least from. I will also state if I am doing all that I can to achieve/gain the most knowledge from my classes or if there is anything I could be practicing to help me interpret information differently in my benefit. I will give my input on my findings and tell how these tests have helped me after this project.

through all of them with a highlighter and picked out what I thought to be important information. Then I tried to make an outline. That is when I panicked and realized the three tests were way to broad for a good paper and narrowed it down to the temperament sorter only. Then I wrote the core of my paper, my conclusion, and finally my introduction, which I have never done before. Reducing the broadness of my paper was the biggest decision I made throughout the project. I didn’t know if it was going to be okay with you at first but I knew you would like the narrowness of it. The process I used was the same as project one because I did the initial information search and printed at, as well as highlighting important information. I also used hypertext in both papers; my second paper was more.
| Clause | 3 | N/A | What are the positive and negative aspects of online banking/bill pay and how do they affect my life? | I plan to break down the positive and negative features of online banking and analyze which type of banking works best for me, electronic or... | To thoroughly answer this question, I am using a few different online sources to find all features of online banking and bill pay. Bankrate.com has provided basic information and benefits of this procedure. | N/A |
About.com lists reasons to stay away from online financial decisions, which among others will give me a variety of opinions about this matter. After collecting all sources needed, I will analyze what features I use through online banking/bill pay. I will also analyze how I my days have physically changed because of the utilization of this process. Giving my thoughts on the positive and negative aspects of this online system will be crucial in this project as well. I will see what safety and privacy issues I am faced with in using online banking/bill pay and if that affects my decision in using this form of technology. I plan to conclude the project with my opinion of what is better, online institutions or brick-and-mortar banks.

| Darling | 1 | ? | How much time does the average American spend on telephones | How much time does an average phone consumer, whether it be | To explore my question I plan to use statistics and a personal log of how much time is spent | I have written several papers in the past and when thinking about what media style I wanted to explore | traditional financial institutions. |
and cell phones?

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<th>Skurat Harris 509</th>
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<tr>
<td>a cell phone, land line or text message, spend talking on the phone apposed to face-to-face interaction?</td>
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<tr>
<td>communicating on the phone. I will go to phone company web cites and look for other information in online articles about my question. I plan to question a small group of peers and find out on average how much time they spend on average on the phone. I will also tally my personal log and compare the data to the articles, peer responses and statistics found on the Internet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>my question I decided that a paper with visual references would probably be the best way to keep me focused. I started by stating a comment “It seems that everywhere I go I see people talking on the phone”. Finding specific information that would tie into my topic was few and far between. Many articles or statistics I found would have time spent on the phone but it would be eclectic with other types of media (video games, computer ect…) So in turn, the majority of my paper was written using the information I collected from the survey I made or the questions I asked my “respondents.”</td>
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<tr>
<th>Darling 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>I am going to write about the influence the media has on women. More specifically the make up industry. How youth is cherished and age is hidden when they should be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The topic I have chosen for project two is how do subliminal messages from the media and society impact our views on what we consider beauty?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrote a narrative…no question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When writing this paper I took specific things that I remember growing up and wrote them randomly on the computer. After I had written the main points I went back through and connected the dialog with my reflections and</td>
</tr>
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</table>
teaching woman to embrace their aging in life's cycle. Even if you cannot read the message is heard loud and clear. It is a message that teaches you what defines "beauty".

| Darling | 3 | N/A | I will be looking at [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com) and evaluate the pros and cons of the time spent and amenities that this website offers. |
|---------|---|-----|Doesn't really have a question...looks at privacy and time on MySpace. |
|         |   |     | Being that I have a myspace account, I will use personal experiences with this website as well as the website itself. I will also look at a couple other websites that are similar and compare. |

<p>| Daughter | 1 | What are the major differences between written communication and spoken word? | How the romantic levels of speech are translated into written word, and vice versa. I want So, how do writing and speaking represent communication differently? How are they similar? How I hope to interview a couple of people, and ask them about the ways in their lives that they communicate something important. I want | Despite some word choice and topic narrowing troubles, the writing process went smoother than I expected, as well.... Essentially |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Daughto</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>How does television augment literacy?</th>
<th>How has the involvement of television in literacy evolved over the years?</th>
<th>Television’s purity in form has always been questionable, in that the entertaining aspect is always directed towards a specific age group, the informative aspect is always from a single perspective, and the productive value of any given program is completely dependent upon the demand for the actual</th>
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<td>For this project, I’ll be reading up on the history of the television, and it’s early influence on American culture. In addition, I am currently considering an experiment where I would abstain from watching television altogether. The issue with such an experiment is that I would want there to be some sort of balance to it (such as a person who would agree to watch television on a regular basis), but that could cause things to get a bit complicated. Also, I would like to focus on the</td>
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<td>n</td>
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<td>I gathered from my own reasoning, formed them into readable content, reviewed the idea with a couple other people, and then backed up my conclusions by creating realistic examples. I got really into the portion of my project that pertained to the relationship between books and movies, and I even learned a couple new things about that specific relationship.</td>
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<td>Essentially, two weeks before the assignment was due, I got together or contacted two people and asked them simply to watch television for me. Their goal was to watch out for pieces of news that I wouldn't catch, solely because I wasn't watching television. Meanwhile, I put effort into observing the different ways in which different news sources utilize the internet to get the news out. As the different stories were brought to me from my two</td>
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</table>
information by the viewing audience. informative side of television viewing, and seeing as how these days there are channels on television dedicated to television programs that have no clear ethical, or informative value, that could also pose a bit of an issue. I will also be analyzing some popular websites to observe how much news can be gathered from them. However, the reviewing of these sites will be kept minimal, as this project is focusing primarily on the television’s role in literacy. sources, I kept track of them and how beneficial they were to me. After I had all my information (it was a one week study) I broke the paper into sections, with each paragraph analyzing a different story. My original idea was to do a focus on the history of the television, but that idea ended up being irrelevant to my goal for the project as a whole, and after my proposal was analyzed, I saw that a different direction was needed, and the idea of a survey or study as the focal point of my project was brought up during the proposal's analysis, and I made the decision to gear the whole thing towards something along those lines.

<p>| Daughton | 3 | N/A | Summary: Hopes to analyze the popularity, language, and parasite and host | In order to extract the essence of WOW’s appeal, I’ve broken the game down into four different categories: Gameplay, Environment, |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Skurat Harris 513</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Community, and Marketing.</strong> Hopefully, by analyzing these different parts, I can reveal the nature of the game’s addictive quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Endle 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What are effective ways of learning?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(In the IDB) I did a little research and I've been reading over some things. I have an idea of how I'm going to approach this but I'm not sure if it's the correct approach. I've began a rough draft starting in the first person talking about my experiences. I'm asking a bunch of why questions that I didn't mention on the proposal but they are personal questions relating to this little intro or story if you will. These experiences that I'm talking about aren't detailed. They are just short rough entries on stuff like, &quot;why can't I focus?&quot; and such to end the introduction. I have the idea of merging this intro into my main question…. To get</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through the writing process of this assignment, I felt confused at some parts. I wasn't sure if I were providing good enough evidence or reliable enough resources. I would have used some of the OTC database resources but I couldn't get them to work when I had returned home. Hopefully this is just a temporary issue and not a newly upgraded 56k handicap…. The process I went to for creating the text was quite planned and simple. I made the question relevant to myself and researched the most reliable and helpful information I could find. It's kind of the same thing I do when I research music or</td>
</tr>
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</table>
far, however. I'm still thinking about better questions to come up with but so far this is all I have.

a better understanding for my question, I'll research heavily on the Internet and try to find ways to solve my own problems and analyze the results. As for now, I've found a few links that seem quite helpful and relevant to my question. I'll try to test these methods and examples to see how effective they are in approaching my rut. I've found a link that has some relevance to my question that I have found on the OTC resource database. I'll continue to search there for more reliable links and articles to help me in this project. I've also found one just by searching Google, which seems reliable enough as a resource. I'll continue to search via Google as well for more information to help me find whatever I may not be able to on the database from OTC's site. I'll attempt to answer each of the questions listed techniques hold the reliable resources (mainly trial and error based). I looked for information relevant to see if my personal ways of learning would be made relevant to what these reliable resources would explain. In the process, I've found things that I've pieced together and more reassuring answers like “getting into the habit of thinking about your personal way of thinking” which is what I attempted to do. Shortly after, I've found a list of “personal skills” provided; one listed as “Musical” which caught my eye. When I saw what it said, I found it to be only halfway relevant considering the way that I personally think as was suggested in the article I researched. Like when it said that music people learn better when listening to music while learning, I personally find it distracting. However, others such as learning
above in my searches in order to answer this question of questions. things in perhaps a melodic fashion like lyrics to a song can help me personally. The process I used for creating this text was similar to the process I've used last semester. Using it again helped me to get better at my own particular process. Hopefully there are more ways I could adapt to in order to add on to the quality of this process.

| Endle | 2 | (long IDB brainstorming on 9/25) 10/09--The sources that I didn't explain in my proposal are mostly articles, blogs, etc. Not blogs like myspace or facebook entries but satirical websites in the form of blogs. Since this class period, I'm also thinking of other things to add on to that such as people or friends that have influenced me | How did I reach my current level of overall literacy? | Most of the issues Maddox would bring out were things I thought were only relevant to myself, things that used to stick in the back in my mind. …These were things that convinced me to finally be myself. /Not only has the content from Maddox's page help me in positive realization, but it has also influenced me in ways of becoming more (1) Independent, | Aside from just thinking back and describing my past experiences, I'm going to search on the Internet for the things that have influenced me and explain how they've influenced me. I'm going to go into detail as to what parts of the sources might have stimulated my mind to make me perform the actions that I took up to reach this level. I already know of one source that I will be using for sure. Having said “overall literacy” for the main question, I'm going to try and link up all the things that have made me more | My writing process was pretty much just to think of how I was influenced by Maddox and to read back on articles to isolate exactly which ones and how they did it. My decisions on which articles I wanted to use as an example of how I was influenced were based on simply just that. I looked for some specific articles like the “War Rules” article to talk about how it influenced me musically and I also just stumbled across some articles that I just had to re-read to find out how it influenced me in the past…. My
in literary competence and explain why. I haven't figured out a way to narrow these things down yet though. So far I'm thinking 2 websites and 2 friends... I'm not sure if I'm doing this post the way we are supposed to. So far, that's all I can think of.

(2) Mentally Mature (3) Musically as far as lyrical content (4) morally (5) and a conclusion. literate as a whole meaning all the things in which I'm personally literate. Surely I should be able to answer all the small questions in order to answer the main one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Endle</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>How is the Internet helpful in our lives practically, and how is it not?</th>
<th>Due to video games being my ultimate source for enjoyment, it has affected me (1) Socially (2) Physically, and (3) Psychologically.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ester</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>My idea for this proposal is the way we communicate what is going on in the world. The points that I am making reference to is the way we find out what is happening in our world today in the past and</th>
<th>Where do college students get their news from?</th>
<th>(proposal) To explore my question I will start by using Internet resources. I will look at statistics as well as find information that will supply me with examples and evidence to support my point. At this point I have interviewed a few</th>
</tr>
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</table>

The toughest decision I made was finding graphics to make my power point stand out from most. If I would have had better knowledge of power point, I think it would have been better. It was hard trying to think of graphics to replace for example the radio.
present. The sources I will use are the internet, television, classes, newspaper, as well as interview other students. What I want to know in the assignment is what people use most in the world today… I want to know what people are most concerned about and how they react to what is going on in our world today.

of my peers that were in a college setting. I asked a few background questions that helped me get to know my audience better. I have interviewed both men and women, yet my question still stands for more exploring. I hope to find a deeper acquisition towards the actual importance of television, radio, newspaper, etc. For future research I am looking into EBSCO host on the OTC website as well as find reports relating to my question. I also want to look more into the classroom discussions by interviewing teachers. That will be a small portion of my research, but a keen part to the project as a whole.

Ester 2 I wanted to write my project on a comparison between the Daily Show and The Colbert.

What is the purpose of the No Child Left Behind Act?

Literacy is defined as the ability to have knowledge and understanding of a subject, especially the

To analyze my question I plan to do research on the internet as well as use the library’s books on the act as my sources. I want to know the basis

I had plenty of time to write my paper, of course I procrastinated, but I feel I wrote a good paper and had enough time to gather my
Report, just because of the fact that I have more knowledge on the two from the last project, and it would be somewhat easy. I want to compare how the media is portrayed from those standpoints. Do you think I should compare the two, or just stick to one??

| factor of reading and writing. When thinking of literacy in our schools you think of particularly the reading and writing aspect. Those aspects contribute to how well a student can learn and whether or not they can pass a set curriculum. This set curriculum was part of a government based act called the No Child Left behind Act of 2001. | for what it says, so I can come up with questions to ask my interviewees. I plan to ask teachers at public elementary and secondary schools and private elementary and secondary school what their knowledge is of this act, as well as parents of these students. If anything I want to make sure this act is being pursued and made known to every student. I will make sure my audience is eligible for this interview; talking with them first to understand what type of person they are and what is their general background. I am also going to look in the card catalog at the city library to see if there are any studies that have been completed on students and teachers using this act. I want to compare my findings with others. My collection of data coming from the internet will help me pose my questions in my interview and research. I wanted to add charts in my paper with the scores from each school I discussed. I wanted to have a communications, math, and total rows to show the difference between each school. My charts were not as easily read as I thought they would be, I wish I would have gone into more detail with them. From project one to this project I wanted to make my dates more specific. I wanted to especially include data from this year. Not like in project one, where my data was old and could have been easily updated. That was one of the main obstacles I focused on. I also wanted to include what people had to say from reports I read on News-Leader, which helped bring out what I wanted to say on how the school, including teachers and parents, were responding to NCLB. Some decisions I made where what schools to use in |
support them with knowledge of the act. I will read parts of the act that concern them (teachers and parents) and ask them question on what it means to them, how they could make it more useful and better, are they pursuing this act, do they have problem students in their classes, are their children having problems, etc. I plan to synthesis what is being done by teachers and parents to improve this act. My sources will mainly be the internet and looking at studies. I also want to evaluate what George W. Bush is doing to keep this act alive, as well as see if there have been any changes made to the act since 2001.

The majority of the schools in the Springfield district didn’t make NCLB. It was difficult to find a school that actually passed the AYP. The schools ended up being different in the sense that one school’s was elementary and the other two where middle school, but all in all they worked for my paper.

| Ester  | 3   | N/A | What is electronic voting? | Long description of the various types of voting | To analyze my question I plan to do research on the internet as well as use the library’s books on the act as my sources. I want to know the basis for what it says, so I can come up with questions to ask my interviewees. I plan to ask | N/A |
teachers at public elementary and secondary schools and private elementary and secondary school what their knowledge is of this act, as well as parents of these students. If anything I want to make sure this act is being pursued and made known to every student. I will make sure my audience is eligible for this interview; talking with them first to understand what type of person they are and what is their general background. I am also going to look in the card catalog at the city library to see if there are any studies that have been completed on students and teachers using this act. I want to compare my findings with others. My collection of data coming from the internet will help me pose my questions in my interview and support them with knowledge of the act. I will read parts of the act that concern them.
(teachers and parents) and ask them question on what it means to them, how they could make it more useful and better, are they pursuing this act, do they have problem students in their classes, are their children having problems, etc. I plan to synthesis what is being done by teachers and parents to improve this act. My sources will mainly be the internet and looking at studies. I also want to evaluate what George W. Bush is doing to keep this act alive, as well as see if there have been any changes made to the act since 2001.

| Hugh | 1 | How do I know that technology has improved society? | Does technology improve learning? | I want to challenge the idea that is seemingly going unchallenged by the majority of students. Do computers improve education? | I will do research on the internet, using search engines such as Google. I will use some online databases that are connected to the OTC website including JSTOR and Lexis Nexis. I will go to the library and check out books on the topic. I will use observations that I have made about my peers and | What I did to write this text was basically what I always do. I sat down and started typing. I always write as much as possible before I decide to edit anything. It helps me to get my words on paper. |

(9/05) I will be focusing my paper on the idea that technology (e.g. everything invented after the typewriter.) has only served to
complicate processes that were previously much easier. Whereas with a typewriter a paper can be easily written and printed at the same time, a computer takes many different items to have a finished product.

| Hugh  | 2  | I am either going to do my project on the idea that literacy doesn’t end with learning how to read and write or I will persuade my reader that the human mind has an unlimited potential to learn and can over time be able to become literate in every field. |
|-------|----| What is literacy? (will write a story) (10/11) I am considering writing my paper about why I love to learn. I am still going to narrate the paper and I am going to analyse the differences between those who learn social/cultural skills before they are literate and those, (like me) who learn to read before they make friends their own age...I will draw the conclusion that the |
|       |    | (Writes a narrative about how he learned to read and became social) |
|       |    | My source will be my own experience with literacy. I will be exploring the idea that a person who is generally accepted to be not only a literate person, but a financially and socially successful person can also be illiterate when it comes to their experience with poverty and with cultural differences. |

I changed my mind a few times before I stuck with one idea. I didn’t use a very organised process when writing this paper. Basically, I changed my mind many times before finding something that I wanted to write about, then I wrote the whole thing in one setting. After reviewing what I had written, and after having others look at it, I revised it to improve the specific areas that were lacking. …My process was completely dissimilar to the process I used in project one since I never really use the same process twice. It was the first time I wrote a
reason why I love to learn is because I received praise for being “smart” when I was young before I made friends.

Do the steps we take in communication to avoid stereotyping often cause us to reveal the same or even more stereotypes and personal prejudices?

While there have been great strides made in smashing social stereotypes, it still seems that some people have a hard time just getting everything right when it comes to being politically correct in everyday communication. In fact, a lot of the time Americans reveal the same or even more stereotypes when they attempt to avoid them.

I will draw a lot from personal observations and experiences to answer this question. In addition, I will research published texts which will more than likely include mostly articles from professionals in the Sociology and Psychology fields. Finally, I will conduct an informal survey of friends and classmates from different backgrounds to further observational data.

My project was primarily based on my own feelings and experiences, so even though I did some online research, I basically just sat down and wrote the paper. I started with an informal splatter of ideas and then inserted research to uphold these ideas and finally formatted the paper MLA style.

The process I used to create this paper is similar to ones that I’ve done in the past with the exception of doing the proposal and having the freedom of deciding the format.

What effect does illiteracy or having a below-proficient reading level have on Native Americans living on reservations.

The topic I will be exploring is literacy among Native Americans living on reservations.

None

I’ve already found some really great articles on Ebsco and plan to keep looking in this resource. Additionally, I’ve found some hard statistics from the

I was then so preoccupied by the fact that I couldn’t live up to my own assumptions that it was basically impossible to complete the project. I changed
<table>
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<th>Skurat Harris 524</th>
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<tr>
<td>culture among those living on reservations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bureau of Indian Affairs website and the Office of Indian Education programs website. I also have a good friend who teaches on a reservation in New Mexico who may be of some assistance, but I haven’t decided how yet. I’ve found a few books through SWAN/MOBIUS, but none of them are in the OTC collection so I will need to put in a request for these to see if any of them are truly related to my topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At this point I had more or less given up entirely. I did finish the paper, but it was late and I even forgot to submit the works cited page.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Gleason</th>
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<th>N/A</th>
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<tr>
<td>The topic I will be exploring is cyber bullying among teens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>While most teens surveyed did say they were more likely to be bullied in person than online, an alarming 32% stated that they have been the victim of any one of the offenses aforementioned. Obviously this is a problem, but one has to question what factors are contributing to these statistics?</td>
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<tr>
<td>I got the idea for this project from survey on the PEW site, so this will obviously be my primary source. In addition, I think that the assigned Herring article may be of some assistance in exploring the question of who is more likely to engage in these acts. As always, I plan to search articles on EBSCO host and other subscribed web sources. Finally, I plan to use a common internet search engine to find any additional credible sources.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>At this point I had more or less given up entirely. I did finish the paper, but it was late and I even forgot to submit the works cited page.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harrell</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Does rap music make its listeners have violent tendencies? Who are the people who believe this? Is it only the people who choose not to listen to the rap genre?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrell</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrell</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skurat Harris 526</td>
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<tr>
<td>either good or bad, does the emergence of online competition have on social aspects, as well as the gaming community in its entirety. later, America along with the rest of the world has been swept off their feet by an electronic gaming mania. will most likely come from the internet. Websites for specific games will sometimes keep records of players online at present and past. This time around though I will also be gaining information through personal experience. I play games on the internet and having that insight, I think, will be a viable asset to my project.</td>
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<th>Kline 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have no idea what I want to write about. I plan on figuring it out over the weekend…</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why has the age for first pregnancies changed over the last 50 years?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why has the age for first pregnancies changed over the last 50 years?</td>
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<tr>
<td>To explore my question, I plan to do research by looking through medical magazines/journals to see what research has been done on this subject. I am currently reading an article by The Evening Standard (London) called “Only 27% of middle-class women pregnant by 30.” I also plan on doing research that will give me the numeric values of the statistical findings over the years for first pregnancies. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has a study that estimates the</td>
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I started by making a list of the things I wanted to cover then I went on the internet and looked for the facts and any other information I could. I wrote out the things I wanted to cover and then put it in the slide show. I finished everything on the Saturday before it was due and then just stared at it for about two days, not completely satisfied with it but I didn't know what I wanted to change. Then I turned it in on Monday. I decided to just run with it. I found all I could about the questions I asked and pretty much
trends in pregnancies and the different rates from 1976-96. I have just started looking over that website but so far what I have found is good information and will be helpful for writing my report. A study will be done of individuals with children to see when and how old they were when they had their first child. I am still working on the questionnaire, but I will also be doing a background on each person I interview to see what type of education they have had, if they are/were married and for how long, etc.

(9/06) I have a lot of data over the last 50 years, that I need to turn into graphs. I also need to finish reading a few articles then take what I can from them and use it in my powerpoint. I have started my powerpoint but I don't have much done on that. I just ran with it and tried to make it the best I could./ No because in the papers I have written in the past I have had tons of instructions and guidelines to follow so I didn't ever really have to think to much about it.
documents about education and how that has affected pregnancies that I need to finish reading. I am not going to do a survey because I have enough data that justify what I need to answer my question. Then I just need to organize everything and put things into place.

| Kline  | 2 | I am going to do mine on South park. I will be submitting my project proposal tomorrow afternoon. I have already started on my website...its going to be pretty cool. :) I think I have some pretty good ideas. As soon as I get the basics down on it I will email you the link. | Why has Eric Cartman evolved from season one to the mastermind in season nine, yet he is still in the 3rd grade? | General website about South Park |

To explore my question I will go to the source which is Trey Stone and Matt Parker. I have already been looking on the comedy central website (www.comedycentral.com) and have found some interesting information about the makers of South Park and what sparked their interest in making the show. I have also looked on the TV guide channel, where I found a complete list of all the South Park episodes. I have looked on the internet to see if anyone has done a similar study but I have not found anything yet. My

When I started the project I focused manily on backgrounds and graphics, because they were giving me such a hard time. Then I focused on the seasons to make sure the information for every episode was on there. Then I started on the bios but I didn't want to spend too much time on that. I had videos to go with each character but FreeWebs made them unassenceable to viewers so that caved in. Most of my graphics FreeWebs wouldn't let me put on the site. / For Project One I manily focused on information. For Project Two I tried to focus on the graphics,
main source of research will be watching each episode from every season. I have seen most of the episodes several times but I think if would be beneficial to refresh my memory and to take notes of any significant thing Cartman has done or any major event that happened during the show. Also while I am watching each episode I will see whether Cartman's moral values change as he gains more knowledge. which didn't really work for me, so I should have focused on the writing.

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<th>Kline</th>
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<td>Does technology act as a placebo in actually learning to develop new skills?</td>
<td>They are all faster and cheaper, but how personal are they? With out human contact are we becoming more distant and how is this affecting our interpersonal communicatio skills?</td>
<td>To explore my question, I plan to make a survey and test as many people as I can. The survey will include questions such as: Have you played Guitar Hero? Have you every played a guitar? Which would you be more prone to pursue? Etc. I will also research various video game sources such as Sony, Microsoft, and Nintendo to see what demographic they market too. I will also look for articles on Jstor and Ebscohost to</td>
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| Meecher | 1 | Im thinking about writing on the way parents can promote values and good morals into their children. I will be looking at the lifestyle of the parents. The influence of the media. And the attitudes and opinions of young people about traditional values. | How much control should parents have over the decisions their teenagers make? (9/06) I looked on lexis nexis and did more research to try and narrow down my topic more. I feel it is much too general and I'm brain storming on an area to focus on. | I would like to take a deeper look into the life of a common teenager, and seek to answer the question of whether or not they are becoming more disobedient to their parents. | I plan on interviewing parents and asking them questions about how they taught their child and disciplined them, how they felt about their parenting of teenagers and ask them what they would do differently if they could do it again. I will also interview a local high school principal or superintendent and ask questions regarding the behavior of teenagers and how that relates to their home life and how their parents have raised them. I plan on surverying 15-17 year old teenagers from a high school regarding how they feel about the way their parents influence their choices, also ask if they are grateful for their parents rules in the home, and many other similair questions. I plan on researching through an online resource like Lexis Nexis and also | The first thing I did was think of a general topic that I could write about. The idea came to me to write something about teenage behavior. I pondered on the idea and tried to think of a specific question I could ask to focus on a specific topic. I tried to come up with a question from the time that the assignment was first introduced until a few days before the project was due. My interviews and surveys took place about a 3-4 days prior to the due date. I had a tough time getting my interviews and surveys to coincide with my topic, I wish that I had a specific question in mind before I did my surveys and interviews, unfortunately I had a general idea but my question changed part way through my project. The decisions I made were, "what should I write about? how
The process for creating this text was different from other papers that I have done. The type of writing I did was very similar to when I did my science project. The posing of a question, gathering data, experimenting, and then a conclusion or a result.

Meecher

| 2 | I'm going to use this discussion board as a place to brainstorm. I had thought about writing about how we can influence people through the words that we use. For example, the case where the parents introduce their child as "shy" does that label actually make you shy? The impression can last for years or even months. What are the effects of using acronyms? 10/11 -- I am thinking about writing about the use of acronyms. I still have to decide on what to focus on specifically. I will talk about where my interest in acronyms came from. Should I even use acronyms in my speech? | One of the changes that happened to me was the way that my speech became very different compared to the way I communicated when I was at home. Why did my speech change? (narrative) | I need to consider ideas of what needs to happen for there to be effective communication when using acronyms. For instance, the speaker and the listener must have some type of common ground or base of knowledge to where they can make the same connection when acronyms are used. A farmer's acronyms will not be the same as a lawyer from New York City. Also, do people who use acronyms assume None. | None. |
a lifetime. Giving compliments on the other hand can really develop a person and influence them to act in different ways? Or maybe I could write about the different words that a culture comes up with for the same object. For example we may call it a water fountain, where people in Wisconsin call it the bubbler. I am still trying to think of a good topic, I would appreciate your feedback on my brainstorming. Thanks

| Meecher | 3 | N/A | Technology in the building industry has greatly changed the levels of production. Today a jobsite is full of expensive equipment | None. | None. | N/A |
such as lasers for leveling purposes, high tech calculators, and other types of equipment. I would like to write about how this technology is replacing the human mind and also the need for practical experience in the industry. I took courses in college to learn the basics of construction. The classes I took taught how to use this new technology. I now have a dependence upon these instruments and tools. It is interesting how the skills and knowledge of a carpenter that lived 10 years ago can be replaced by this new technology that can calculate and estimate for you instead of thinking it up on your own.
| Owsley | 1 | I was thinking about doing "How music effects each person, individually". I want to do something with music, but I was not quite sure what. | Why is it hard to communicate with disabled and/or handicapped people? | Why do people shy away from communicating with disabled people? | To explore my question, I plan to do research that will provide me personal information in this subject. I will look for information that can help me draw conclusions on how students interact with disabled people on campus. I am going to do a couple of interviews with people that I know, in regards to living with a disability, and how they are treated. I also plan on researching the programs available here at Ozark Tech for disabled people and that makes them feel. I met a man named Jason today, who is in a wheelchair. He has some sort of physical problem with his posture. He also suffers from Bipolar Disorder. He will be one of the people that I interview. There are also, a few books that I am going to read that | The first thing that I did, when developing this project, was create a basic outline for my initial paper. That was on August 30th. When I decided to switch to a Power Point shortly after the proposal, I made a different outline. After my outline, I created a Communication Survey that I gave to my friends, family and others, periodically. I did some research off and on during the process on the internet. After I had all of my data, I started on my Power Point presentation. /The process that I used for this was like no other project that I have done. I have never researched a question like that before, and it was very hard to find information about my topic. |
pertain to the communication process between “normal and “abnormal” people. I would also like to take a survey that includes some of the following questions: On a scale of 1 to 5, how comfortable are you with carrying on a conversation with someone that has a serious disability? On average, how many disabled people do you see during the day? And of those, how many of them are alone? I feel that by taking an overall survey, I can get to know some of the problems that we face when we see these people.

(9/04) Here is the basic outline for my paper. I want to state the problem and present some facts about them. Then I want to present some insight from fellow classmates, family members, etc., as well as people who are suffering from these disabilities. By this point I want to state some
Skurat Harris 536

Owsley 2

I am planning on doing the literacy difference between homeschooled students and public schooled students. By looking at the reading test scores as well as other literacy scores, I can better understand the difference between the two.

Why is the reading/literacy level so different between different styles of schools?

With the options of public schools, private schools and home schools, we see a wide variety of results in the students and the way they communicate. What I want to look at is what is being done in these schools, and what we can learn from them?

In this project, I will have to take in consideration the average of all students. Realizing that each person is different, I can get a basic idea of how students react in certain situations. I am also going to take in my experiences with homeschooling, as well as my older siblings who attended a private school for several years.

The steps that were taken were as follows:

I started by collecting data on different "school info" websites. These sites were able to provide basic info like the number of schools, teachers and students. I was able to see scores and statistics that pertained to the topic. After collecting this I then started by writing down some of my own experiences with home schooling. I talked to others about these ideas within literacy and how it affected them in their educations. I began typing the paper and the rest is history.

The process for creating Project Two was a lot different than the process that I used for Project One.
Skurat Harris 537

Owsley 3 N/A I am going to be evaluating the world of Facebook and how it affects college student's lives. One of the most used processes used today to get to know people is an online profile based website called Facebook. Students are more apt to meet people and step out of their comfort zones on Facebook, as opposed to face to face. This then leads to an opportunity for more than just a side communication; it becomes more of an addiction. The main thing that needs to be considered is the technological world that we live in. With all of the many ways to communicate with others, it is often easier to choose texting or online profiles (Facebook, Myspace, etc.) to communicate, rather than to actually talk to a person face to face. The idea of a website or other technological advances owning you is very prevalent today. Why is that? I intend on finding out. N/A

Raneman 1 I actually had a different idea that I thought would go a little better, and maybe a little easier. I thought that I... Has the way that teachers teach formal English to kindergarten students changed? What would happen if we were unable to communicate with each other effectively? To explore my question, I plan to do research that will provide me with examples and facts to support the idea that the teaching of formal However, when I sat down to do this project I absolutely could not make myself do it all at once, I bet it took me a good 8 hours all together to...
could do how do we learn to communicate, like are we taught by our parents, or are we taught by our teachers, and if so, what specifically are we taught by our parents, such as slang. I honestly think that this is a better idea for me.

The major responsibility for teaching communication to children in our country falls on the school system. There have been many changes in our educational system in the last generation, mostly positive, but also some negative. For example, the insufficient teaching of formal English, that could one day have a negative effect on our society.

English has, in fact changed. I will look for information that can help me draw conclusions about how schools and teachers affect this vital time in a student’s life. At this point in time, I am looking through articles on the Internet that have done studies in on how Elementary school curriculum is changing. Currently, I am reading an article by a professor from Cambridge University, in which he examines how the English Government is now controlling the curriculum in Early Childhood programs. An additional website I am looking at examines Elementary schools English classes from the view of a linguistics analyst, in which he determines how effective the classes are in teaching “formal” English. For future research, I am going to contact a woman that I know that teaches

finish it. My process for creating my text was to do my Proposal, which we did partially in class on August 30th. I looked on EBSCO host for my sources, which I saved on my drive at school, and not on my flash drive like I should’ve. So when I went to get my sources to do my paper I didn’t have them, and I could not find them on EBSCO so I had to make an emergency trip to school to save that document to my flash drive, which was on a Saturday. I then did my my proposal on August 30th in class, which was not hard because I had a template to use, which was in the form of the sample proposal. I then submitted my proposal on August 31st. I worked on my paper the whole weekend of the 8th and 9th. I finally finished it, and submitted my paper on the 10th.
| Raneman | 2 | I thought that possibly for project 2 that I could do how a syllabus portrays what the teacher expects from you such as for an English class /for example: How does the syllabus inform you of how your papers would be set up, and how they would be graded. Not necessarily the grading scale, but what the teacher wants you to include in your paper like the Point Example Evidence method. The teacher could also include if this is not | Are the objectives that teachers come up with to put on their syllabus different from what is really learned in the class? | The first class of the semester is definitely the most difficult class period that a college student will experience. Often times the syllabus that the teacher hands out is full of technical terms, complicated objectives, and goals that the teacher has for the class. The complicated syllabi could be used as a scare tactic to ward off students who are not willing to work hard enough to do what the class requires. The syllabi could also be used as a roadmap (10/11) What I am going to do is to take 2 classes, for instance, this class, and say my public speaking class. First of all I am going to analyze the objectives that are listed in our syllabi. I will then take the objectives and break them apart into what we have and have not covered. After that I will determine what part of the course the objective is supposed to cover. I will then try to decide if I think that the objective is related to the course or not. I would then conclude whether or not the objectives that are used in the syllabus are the same as what is learned by the student from the class. | My process was very jumbled. I looked at the syllabi for the two separate courses the day before I started the paper, I then began the long process of thinking about how I was going to put what I wanted to say on paper. I used specific examples that we had done in our health class in previous weeks, and used these examples in my paper, which made me feel like I was using the PEE structure effectively. /I had to decide what to say about how the objectives related to the syllabi and to the class, I just used my own personal experiences to determine what I would put in my paper. /The | Kindergarten, and find out what her opinion, or experience with this subject is. at noon. The decisions that I had to make were what sources that I used in my paper, as well as when I was going to do my paper. / As far as when I was going to work on my paper, I just did it whenever I had time. |
| commonly known then when and how they will teach it. | for what the teacher plans for the class to do over the course of the semester. However, that is not how the student usually perceives the complex objectives. (describes purpose of syllabi first) | (P2) To explore my question, I plan to do research that will provide me with examples and facts to support the idea that some syllabi have objectives that will never get taught and why. I will look for information that can help me draw conclusions as to why this happens. At this point in time, I am examining syllabi of classes that I have had in the past, and trying to determine whether or not all of the objectives listed on the syllabus were taught. Currently, I am speaking with other students at OTC to see if they have noticed the same trend, and to see if they think that it affects the class quality. I am also planning on analyzing one of my classes and try to determine if I can pick off the syllabus which objective the teacher is lecturing or teaching about. For future research, I am going to interview a college professor, and get their opinion of why the process for creating the text for this project was not the same as project one because in project one I had sources and an interview to base my theories on. In this project I had to use my own personal experiences and didn't have concrete sources except for the syllabi to base my evidence and examples on. |
| Raneman | 3  | N/A | How useful is online banking to Great Southern Customers? | We all strive to make our lives more efficient and convenient, but are all the things that we consider “helpful” really helpful, or do they hinder more than help? | To explore my question, I plan to do research that will provide me with examples and facts to determine if the online banking website is helpful to the people that use it. I determine the ways that the website is used. At this point in time, I am looking back on my own experiences with online banking, since I have had two different online banking accounts on two different sites, I am going to compare their efficiency. Currently, I am looking at all of the features of the Great Southern online banking cite, and determining what the functions are used for, and how effective they are. I am planning to look at my own bank account and see if I can figure out just what exactly some of those N/A |
| Spoker | 1 | I am not sure what I am going to write about. I have some ideas but am not sure if they go along with what the assignment is asking. Some ideas that I had are: /Is learning achieved better by visual or audio aids over by books? /Is text messaging more efficient than actually calling a person? /Are children more creative if involved in some sort of music than if they aren't? /Then if I use one of these questions how exactly would I word them? | Does the use of emoticons and text speak help create emotion when using text messaging?” Then you might ask how are these helpful, you might even ask, “Does the use of emoticons and text speak help create emotion when using text messaging?” Well I will answer this question, explaining what they are, how they are used in showing emotion in a text message and how when using them emotions are easier to understand. (9/05) I figure I would start out talking about text messaging, how it is used what ways people text, like are full words used most of the time or do most people use text speak. Does text messaging actually make it easier to relay a message with an emotion, and if it does does emoticons better show that emotion. When explaining messaging, use research I have done about just reading a message with emotion, over hearing that emotion, is it the same or different when doing either. To explore my question, I plan to do research that will provide me with statistics on the use of text messaging. After finding these stats I will use them to answer questions on: how often text | Steps I took was figuring out something I could easily find research for and would enjoy writing about, researching that topic for good info, putting it all together so that is made sense, then writing it to fit all together. Process I used similar to other papers was research paper formula, I felt pretty comfortable with this so I thought I would do it this way, stating my points and then following those points. |
messages are used and how often emotions are misunderstood and how useful emoticons and text speak are to understanding text emotions. I will also do research to better understand how emotions are understood with just the use of words. This will help me to understand if words are enough to understand or know what emotion is being felt. I will look at web sites for information on how the brain reacts to words versus pictures when deciding on an emotion. I will also research the different emoticons that are used in text messaging and will ask which one are most frequently used and the emotion conveyed. I will then research text speak and it's use and usefulness. This will help me to explain the difference between everyday speak and text speak, the extent to which it is used and the helpfulness or hurtfulness it has.
| Spoker | 3 | I'm not really sure what I want to write. You had said one day something about people liking school and not liking school but coming from the same background .... So I guess my question is why do sometimes the people that are good students and that understand things easily and learning come easy like school the least or don't do what they should to stay in school or succeed in school or just don't like school, whereas people that

| Are online classes equally as beneficial as in room classes | This is where online classes come in handy, it’s convenient, can be done after work, and only requires a computer, But is this type of learning as effective as classroom learning, does it really better you? Does it really get you all the knowledge you need? | In order to answer this question I will have to look at the statistics of college students that take online classes and the results of those classes grade-wise compared to in a classroom. Also I will have to look at criteria of both, are they the same, are teachers stricter in a classroom. Also I will talk about learning in an online class, does it really work, or does it depend on the student. A student that is a dedicated student might learn more than a student that is just in college because their parents want them to be or because they know they have

| N/A |
do like school seem to struggle the most. I think this would be a narrative, but I just would have to figure out how to put everything together.

(10/11) -- My topic is differences in liking or disliking school. I broke it down into likes and dislikes. Likes being the like of school, learning, teachers, people in school, extracurricular activities. Dislikes of the same things. Then I also broke it down into social influences. Whether those influences be family wise, or community. Influences of partying, drinking, drugs, different social atmospheres.

to have some sort of degree and don’t really care how they get it. Is an online class easier than in a classroom, whether it be because the student is not being heavily watched or because a student can always have help be it a book or a friend. Does the fact that the student can use a book make learning easier, or does it just depend on the type of learner the student is.
different social upbringings. And tie that into if that made a difference in doing well in school and working at it or doing well and not working and not progressing. /Just on a side note, I can not think of a good title for my paper. I'm having a hard time breaking it down into a short not difficult to understand statement or question. Because I know what my question is but the ways I write it are confusing after I read what I write. I can use my long question but I am afraid it will be too much? Any ideas? /Here's exactly what I am trying to explain: How some people enjoy school, but have to work hard at
it in order to succeed, whereas some people don't have to work hard to succeed and are naturally smart. Those that struggle keep trying and some that don't stop trying. I think that breaks it down?

<p>| Willard  | 1 | I think that a fitting topic for a proposal such as this would be, well, &quot;Proposing&quot;. My question would be what the best way to handle such a thing would be. Or &quot;If I were to propose how would I do it?&quot; The problem with this question is that the only sources I could really have would not have scientific evidence, but rather would be an observation type of research to find an answer. Also I | Is there a right or wrong way to produce a proposal? | With interview data from a sample of two proposal writers, and an observational study among various many students and people of the working force, I used relevant questioning to estimate the norms of proposals, the styles that one can take, the amount of people in today's world that currently write proposals, and the different projects and topics that may need a proposal. | To explore my question, I plan to do research that will provide me with statistics. I will look for information that will help me draw conclusions on the favored topics of students today. Currently, I am involved in an observational study of typical students. I will do several interviews with a demographic sample of students and research what they would do as, after all, they are the experts. I will do my own research for the first two questions addressed in the paragraph above. And for the other four, I will conduct interviews a studies to further delve | Well I spent all of my time prior to writing doing interbrain brainstorming, never letting my ideas make it out onto paper until the day came to write the paper. I tried to do an outline while in class one day but I met such a brick wall that it wasn't even funny and made me irritated/irritable. So basically I thought and thought until I had an idea in my mind of what I wanted to do. Pretty much I did what all the experts warn against, I didn't practicing the pre-writing I wrote about, I didn't draft a draft that was a rough draft, I didn't have an |</p>
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<th>Willard</th>
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<th>I have only had one thought about a topic; that is, does media (television, news, tv shows, movies, etc...) try to tailor their message for someone who may not be able to read anything or even understand certain symbology? Will they put something onto the TV for all to view and then describe and explain it for the illiterate? Or are the people that cannot read or write all too often forgotten about and they just fall through the cracks?</th>
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<td>Does the media of today try to tailor their message toward those that are illiterate or are they still blind to it? We shall explore a typical day in the life of one who cannot read or write words.</td>
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<td>To explore my question, I plan to do research that will provide me with observations. I will look for information that can help me draw conclusions on how much media does change based on where it is portrayed. At this point in time, I am not really doing a darn thing, save writing the proposal; I plan, however, to view various websites, magazines, and television channels with an eye out for changes in a similar message. I also plan on focusing on different countries to see if there is a difference (I'm going to ruin the climax for you because I like doing that, there is). I believe that there has been a major shift in the media of today, and it is something that needs to be explored further.</td>
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| | | Throughout the assignment I was constantly thinking of my topic and of what I would like to have in my final project. That is how I write a paper (or do anything really) is I live it through in my head for a vast majority of whatever time is allotted to me, then I take the brief life I lived and gather all the ideas I had into a conclusion. Doing it this way leaves me short on time almost everytime. I usually end up doing it the day before or the day of a test or major assignment. Nonetheless, when it is finished one can imagine the gratitude I, and every student like me, go through. It is not hard for me to imagine due to the fact that I still have not started my paper until the day it was due, I guess being down to the wire gave me all the motivation to finish it that I needed.
cracks? /My topic may change if I have an epiphany or something but that seems to me to be the most fun.~Tim~

(10/09) -- I am actually doing cultural literacy so I could show the relationship between written media and spoken media and various symbols thereof. I have no idea what you wanted with this post. See you Thursday

(10/11) -- You already know what the various many levels of literacy are that I am going to cover. Within this paper though, I think I will focus more on the general idea of media (e.g. a News Program or the Newspaper etc...). But I

some research done on this in the past, doubtful that it was any scholarly research with the hypotheses and the whole bit, but I might draw on that if I can find some. For future research, I am going to look at such things as magazines from around the country and some that are obviously meant for a specific crowd, magazines like Forbes and/or Popular Mechanics etc... I know you don’t like paragraphs ending with “…” so I added this one.

experience it to this bery day./ /Well, most of the topics within this section I have already covered in the last. The process is that I thought about it until the day it was due and then wrote the presentation. I made the decision to do it this way because it was comfortable to me to put it off until the very end, I think that may be when I shine the most. The process, however, was vastly different that that of Project One. In One I actually did some reasearch and put some effort into it. I spent time on the internet looking up sources and material that I could implement into the project. The medium of that project was quite different than that of Two; haha I would like to see a Medical Journal done in a flashy Slide Show though. /But as I have previously said, the research that was done for Two was mostly done as I typed the presentation. I decided to do a
remember in my youth how News Programs would merely talk about the news, almost as if someone was just reading the Newspaper to you (and perhaps that was just the news channel that I watched but I am not sure), but now it seems that with every story they have pictures and video feed, often live, to help backup their story. Doing this, will help an illiterate person, little by little, to better understand what the news anchor is talking about. For example, if they are talking about a hurricane that happened in and to Metro City, USA, then there is a good chance that an illiterate would not presentation because I felt that it would be much more beneficial to provide some pictures to support my case. Also, PowerPoint allowed me to do a step by step type of presentation whereas doing that in an Essay form would have proved difficult. I have never really done a PowerPoint in a real classroom setting as a real assignment so it was fun to see how well I could do by your standards. I don't believe there were many, if any, external influences with this project. Most of it came straight from the brain as I typed.
really know what they were talking about because they may or may not know what a hurricane is (it being a less popular word than "flood" or something). But, if they tell their story and show us some pictures or video feed of it then everyone, the blind, deaf, and illiterate will understand what they are talking about; and they will likely be able to tell where by said video feed if the video shows any landmarks that are recognizable.

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<th>Has technology become “invisible” to us today?</th>
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<td>To find answers to this question, and more, I plan to do what every youth does, go directly to Wikipedia and do not stop or collect $200. No, I am merely playing, but that last sentence will likely be a part of my argument. I plan to observe more deeply than</td>
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usual the course of my day, and the day of those around me. I plan to do somewhat of an observational study and compile my ideas into something that I can be proud to sign my name on and call my own!
## Appendix GG: English 102 Section 124 Student Anticipated and Achieved Questions and Anticipated and Achieved Processes

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<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>P#</th>
<th>Initial Q</th>
<th>Q in Proposal</th>
<th>Q in paper</th>
<th>Process Anticipated</th>
<th>Process Achieved</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Akins</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>How does one's age and level of education affect their job position and amount of respect they are shown in the American business workforce?</td>
<td>You have to ask yourself, how does someone's communication, age, and level of education affect their job position and amount of respect in the business workplace?</td>
<td>To answer the question I plan on first conducting a survey of business owners and employers, and employees/ workers. The survey will include many of the questions listed above as well as background information regarding age, gender, job status, and their rating of personal success.</td>
<td>The process started when I began creating topics. The only things that interested me had to do with recent, personal experiences in life. I took these ideas and brainstormed different ways that they tied into knowledge and communication, which were the only guidelines for the project. When the project One Proposal was assigned, it was much easier to organize the ideas into a possible project. The questions that I had to answer and ask myself for the proposal were very helpful in narrowing down the topic I had chosen. It also helped me put together the survey that I planned on conducting. I completed the proposal on the day it was due and printed out a bunch of the surveys to carry around and give out. During the week of September 3rd, I went on a road trip with my husband for his job. Along the way I passed out the</td>
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on including my own personal experiences and knowledge on the topic in personal opinions and stories of my experiences (which is where the interest in the topic came from. (::)
surveys to anyone I could. I thought this would be the best way to gather a broad range of participants from different areas, so that there wouldn't be a bias in the results. I was able to find participants from Restaurants, Banks, and Gas stations all the way from Springfield, to St. Louis, to Cape Girardeau. I also surveyed a few of my family members and in-laws.

Being the World's Biggest Procrastinator, I didn't begin the final project until about Thursday, September 6, which only gave me 4 days to complete the project. I began with the PowerPoint presentation of the data from the survey so that I would be able to reference it easily in the paper. On Sunday night I set aside a big chunk of time to really work on the paper portion of the project. I would really get going on an idea for awhile, and then I would just draw a blank on where to go next. I was having a hard time tying all of the different
ideas into a logical order. I got a bulk of the information done, finished my works cited, and decided that the next day I would work on tying it all together and making a conclusion. The next day, Monday, the due date, I still could not put together the last set of ideas and conclusion. I’ve never had this much of an issue with a paper. If I put my mind to it, whether the end result is good or bad, I can at least get it done. I think that I was so focused on the P.E.E. structure that I was unable to let the ideas and thoughts flow freely. In my past experience with papers, I’d like to think that I had unknowingly followed the P.E.E. format because it is what composes a good argumentative research paper, but I had never really focused on it in the way that it was presented in this class. I kept writing and rewriting, second guessing myself, and by midnight Monday, the project wasn't done.
| Akins | 2 | After clearing up some issues and discussing the possible topics with you, I'm going to approach project two as a narrative with analytical qualities. Using past experiences from school, I will analyze their effects on my current distaste for school and the process of going from liking school to not liking it. I'll submit the proposal shortly, and then (hopefully) have the project done on time. | How have my experiences, good and bad, with education and literacy shaped the way that I look at and feel about education today, and have my feelings affected my education as a whole? | Wrote a narrative detailing her history with learning | There will be almost no research involving sources other than myself and my family to complete this project. Most of the information needed will come from my own personal experiences throughout my school years. I may need to reference my mom and dad to help with ideas from when I was very young and that I might not remember very well. The outside sources that I may find helpful will be psychology related resources. These may help me determine how and why the things that I experienced affected me the way that they did. Most of the narrated and personal information will be based on my own memory, with some help from tangible sources such as report cards, test scores, school projects, and self evaluations from SPECTRA. | None. |

| Bree | 1 | None. | How reliable are self interest test in comparison to the actual career path I have chosen for myself? | How accurate are self interest tests? | To explore my question, I plan to take two different self interest test. The first test I have chosen is one that can be found off the OTC website. It is under the resources link labeled coin career library. While taking the quiz I plan | I went by the steps given to us in the process of the project. I did the proposal, took some notes on some websites (which were no help at all to me, but probably should have been included for the... | None. |
to pay close attention to some of the questions asked. After taking this quiz, I intend on finding another self interest test off of the internet. I'll probably google "self interest test" and take one of the tests offered through that particular search engine. I will also pay close attention to all the questions asked during this quiz for future use. After taking both quizzes, I will compare my results with the career path I have chosen for myself. Next, if my results are different I'm going to find out why. To do that, I'm going to start over with quiz one and determine which questions were significant in deciding the particular outcome given. After, finding one of these questions I'm simply going to change my answer. For example if a question asks, Do you like working in groups? Instead of clicking yes, I'm going to click no. By doing this, maybe I will get a different outcome. Then, I will repeat this with quiz two, and compare my results with my chosen career path. It is my believe that one or two questions out of the whole quiz
| Bree  | 2  | I was thinking maybe doing something involving the wording of ballots. I think this is going to be a little over my head. I wanted to know what you thought. I searched the internet for a little bit and could find no sample ballots. The only things I could find are initiatives that were changed on the ballot due to the bad wording. Would that be enough to right a paper on? I guess I was going to try and do the Aristotle method you discussed in class. I can't really think of anything else. | Is putting your child in a private institution for grade school worth the extra money and does it help them get a leg up for the coming years of school? | (Does a narrative of her and her boyfriend’s experiences with different schools.) I have often wondered how my elementary education differed from others. Andrew’s was a great learning experience for me. I wonder if every other child had the same type of experiences I did. My fiancé and I sat down and discussed these issues and came to the conclusion there was a drastic difference in his elementary education in comparison to mine. | To explore my topic I'm going to talk to Matt a little more about his school, maybe give him a series of other questions and see how they compare to my answers. I'm also going to call one of my old friends from that school who continued her private school education and see were she's at. I started public school in seventh grade so I wonder if being at a private school helped her get into better colleges or what. | None. |
| Bree  | 3 | I know with project 3, I wanted to write about how technology is good and also not so good. Yes technology growing is good for companies. They save money and time but at the cost of losing face to face communication. Sometimes meeting face to face gives you more ideas about what kind of people you are dealing with, by watching there nonverbal movements and facial expressions. I think face to face is the better way to go. I think email is good, but face to face communication is getting forgot about in the computer world.  
(except with web cams which I have no experience) |
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<td>For project 3, I have decided to look at the email side of communication. Is it really that great or are there some drawbacks?</td>
<td>As a society, we are more connected than ever, but as individuals we feel more secluded and alone. Technology has connected and disconnected us all to some extent. Face to face communication is the best form of communication, but e-mails are quickly taking over. E-mail can be unclear, impersonal, but can be a very useful tool when used appropriately.</td>
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<td>I was going to take some of my own personal experience with email into account, maybe an example were email works and on that didn’t work. Also I plan to talk to my mother about her experiences with email. She’s in networking so she does a lot of emailing.</td>
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<td>Gratton</td>
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<td>When you first asked for a question, my first question that popped into my mind was, &quot;How do butterflies know which kind of butterfly to 'mate' with? Do they see in color? Do they have enough of a mind to know 'I am big and orange not blue with black outlines'? Do they even mate at all? Do they just lay an egg before they die, and that eventually turns into a caterpillar/butterfly?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gratton</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Why do some teachers discipline their students and others do not?</td>
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able to give. I will try another one of those email interviews and see how teachers stand on the subject of being able to punish their students themselves instead of sending them to the principles office. We all know they are going to be like me and wish they could beat the hell out of their students from time to time. If my teacher could have/would have beaten the hell out of them for me, man I would have been so proud of her. And I would have felt better too. 😊

| Skurat Harris | 562 | able to give. I will try another one of those email interviews and see how teachers stand on the subject of being able to punish their students themselves instead of sending them to the principles office. We all know they are going to be like me and wish they could beat the hell out of their students from time to time. If my teacher could have/would have beaten the hell out of them for me, man I would have been so proud of her. And I would have felt better too. 😊 | memories. |
| Gratton | 3 | N/A | (didn’t do proposal correctly) | N/A |
| Harms | 1 | Currently, I do not know what my idea might be for my proposal. | Do cell phones really cause brain tumors/cancer? | None. |
| | | (Misinterpreted the third proposal and wrote about the game instead of about what she would do for the paper.) | Rumors of cell phones causing diseases such as brain cancer have been circulating since cell phones became such a commodity to the American public. However, these rumors have never daunted our hunger for cell phones and the betterment of cell phone technology, as it seems they come out with | My questions mainly will focus on events or research that may not yet be published in books. My biggest resource for this project will be the internet. There are many legit search engines that are available online that will provide me with the most current findings and research. However, I may be able to use the Library Center as a resource as well if I have a question related to something that may already be published in a book. |
The question that I will be analyzing is whether or not any kind of exposure to music can help to improve someone’s literacy, or whether music can affect a person’s literacy at all.

I think that I will have to search pretty hard to find as much information about this topic as I would like to answer my question the right way. I will definitely have to use the Library Center as a main resource, as hopefully there will be many books that at least discuss something that could help my research. I will be using any periodicals if possible. Another main resource for me will be the internet, and I will use the search engines under the “resources” tab at MyOtc. Also, I may be able to work in an interview or a poll or something of the sort.

First, I did a broad search online (I don’t remember dates) just seeing what kind of information I could find regarding my project. I tried several key words and key phrases to bring up different kinds of information based around the same central idea. After I found some articles that helped me frame the project, I used the Resources tab on the OTC Website (mainly I used JSTOR, Lexis Nexis, and EBSCO Host) to find more specific information regarding my project. Lexis Nexis yielded the best articles for my project as the things I found with the other search engines either were not full articles or did not help me with my research at all…. decided not to use a lot of the information I found using those resources (search engines) because it either offered little in the way of evidence/information or the source didn’t seem credible enough to

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<th>Harms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Harms</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>None.</td>
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| Hermenez  | 1   | None. | How do young people vs. older people utilize the internet? (8/28)—i actually changed my proposal majorly, i should have it done by Friday, it still pertains to internet but mainly computer networking. | Does high sexual activity in individuals ages (18-99) contribute to overall healthier life? | Sex is an everyday activity, and if it is not it should be. Why? Sexual activity plays a very important role in mental, physical, and emotional health. To conduct research and collect data I intend to pass out surveys with a series of questions on them. From these questions I can combine all the necessary information and derive an answer to my main question. I also will be conducting research on the O.T.C. resources page for different articles that support my idea. To support this idea even more I will also browse the internet and obtain some respected articles and opinions. | The process i used didn’t really consist of much, I gathered some required information from some people and jotted it down on paper. I Downloaded a few articles and read a couple of books. If i would have put forth the effort than my process might have been a little bit more complex. I am used to writing papers only. I am not real familiar with power point, hyper links, graphs, web pages or any of those others forms my project could have taken. In the past I was
always given a topic and told to write about it. All I had to do for these papers was to sit and start out on paper and write until I felt the beginning stages of carpal-tunnel. When I went to type it up in Word I would just fix problems as I typed. After reading over it several times to proofread or change things in order for them to make sense I would then turn it in. Much different to what I had to do for this paper because I was never required to want a proposal, nor did I ever have a choice as to what form my project/paper would take. I like the freedom to choose but not when it comes to education. I would rather be programmed and learn from experience afterward.

| Hermenez | 2 | Does where as well as how an individual grows up impact his/her literacy level? | Does where as well as how an individual grows up impact his/her literacy level? | Are you Literate? I ask this question to arouse thought on the specific subject of literacy and how people in a sense become literate. How do people become literate and how | I intend to speak with my boss and ask her the aforementioned questions. When all the information is collected, I can then begin to compare the information with my own answers and experiences. | does with the first paper just about something entirely different. |
What is the benefit of having a technological advanced cell phone and how does it change the way I communicate with it?

Why is my phone better than yours?
Well I don’t really know; however, I do intend to find out by analyzing said piece of technology from a personal level.

I will probably use the phone I got to answer these questions especially because I still have not figured out how to utilize all of the features it has.

I wrote about a new phone I had purchased and why it was beneficial to me. Since I had the phone in my possession, I could explore the technology it provided me with. Because of this, I was able to brainstorm ideas to include in the paper. Playing with the phone until I figured out how to use it was how I utilized brainstorming, which provided useful because I was able to explain the phone better. I even copied a picture of the phone for the reader to better observe the uniqueness of the phone.

What is the public and or private school system doing to prevent future child molesters from being able to

What is the school system doing in order to prevent sexual predators from becoming future employees?

This brings me to the question that a lot of people are wondering “What is being done to prevent sexual predators from being hired

To explore my question, I will be doing research on the internet, reading various articles in newspapers and or magazines as well as possible interviews.

The process I used for creating my text was to first chose a question that was interesting to me as well as something I could relate to. Once I chose a question then I did some
| Marsh | 2 | First off I want to say that I'm still not exactly sure what I want to write about for project 2. But I am thinking about elaborating on what Rubin mentioned in her article specifically about the communication between teachers and students. I really didn't have a process for this project because I was so confused so what I did to try and understand what was expected was I asked you questions, then I read the overview you posted for the project, listened to the comments from my classmates when we had our class discussions, read some articles in the text and came up with a topic based on brainstorming on how to answer my question. After brainstorming I did my research, then I wrote my paper. I decided to interview various school employees because I felt that by doing these interviews I would be able to find the answers to my questions or at least get help as to where to look for the questions. Part of the process for this text was similar to papers of the past because I had to do research and then come up with a conclusion based on my research. However this process was different from others in the past because I've never wrote a paper based off of Point, Evidence and Explanation. |
| Skurat Harris | 567 | become teachers? into the school system?" |

For this project I intend to explore the theory of student/teacher interaction in an effort to judge whether or not this theory had any effect on how hard students work at achieving above average grades.

So the question I will attempt to answer is “Does student/teacher interaction have any effect on how successful students are in the class?”

I will be using my own experiences as a student by giving examples on how I achieved better grades in classes with student/teacher interaction, interviewing one or two teachers on what they expect from their students and what they think their students expect from them, interviewing a couple of students to see if they have had
I am a struggling college student who at times feels reluctant to participate in class activities because I don't always understand what is expected of me. With that being said I also have not always felt comfortable with going up to a teacher after class to re-explain an assignment that I didn't understand because I don't feel as if he/she would take my eagerness to understand and learn as serious as I do. Therefore I usually end up receiving a lower grade on an assignment or class than I would have received had the lack of communication not been an issue.

I honestly for this project over the past I will use my own on all of the above. I decided to write about student/teacher interaction and if that had any effect on students and I used my past experiences because I felt that student/teacher interaction did have an effect on how well I did in class. No the response for this project was not similar to the response for project one because for this project was based off of my own personal experience and project one was based off of research and others experience.
I have no clue on what to write about for this project. For now I guess I could write about my experience with the online chat and how I didn’t think I would like it at first but now I do. I could write about how for me talking online is much easier than talking face-to-face because I don’t have to look at the person or see their facial expressions. I don’t know I need another day to think about this more.

I intend to analyze a popular web page such as myspace, facebook, or blackplanet in an attempt to find out whether or not the web page is useful. I will also try to answer the question of whether or not these web pages use me or if I use them.

Few class periods we have been discussing the effects of technology on society. There were even vague hints made at the possibility that technology was beginning to control us. I contend that this has already happened. The most recognizable case of this is social networking. Every day someone else finds and becomes addicted to a social networking site whether it be myspace, facebook, or in my case blackplanet. For those of you who are not familiar with blackplanet it is a website much like facebook and myspace where you can chat, write blogs, create, and customize your own personal web page etc.

I am thinking about doing something along the lines of differences. Does technology affect how difficult it is for Speakers of Other?

Would the students benefit from having more of it introduced into the...

To explore my question, I will mainly draw from my own personal experience and the experience of others.

I knew as soon as the assignment was given what I was going to use for a topic, so I was able to “take the ball.
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<th>Languages to learn English?</th>
<th>classroom or would it detract from the lessons?</th>
<th>teachers that teach ESL as well as students that are taking the ESL classes. This will be done through interviews and through research online: websites and emails and such. The information gathered in these interviews will give me much-needed insight into the ESL process, and it will be from both the teacher side and the student side. I am also currently reading an Idiom Dictionary and Language Dos and Don'ts from Around the World.</th>
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<td>Between languages and using Idioms as an example. I am interested in this idea because I feel confident that I can provide information and expertise in this area because I am a tutor for ESL at the Ozark Literacy Council here in Springfield. And the information that I do not have myself, I have the contacts and the resources to come up with the answers.</td>
<td>Languages to learn English?</td>
<td>classroom or would it detract from the lessons?</td>
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| I started making phone calls the very next day to set up interviews with faculty at the Ozark Literacy Council. Some of them, I did on my lunch break from work, but one had to be done at night, so I did that one on September 4th, when I came to English class to find that there was no class that day. I also researched online and at the MSU library between work and school a few times. Specific dates are not easy to recall because most of it was done on my way to somewhere else, a few minutes at a time. Most of the typing was done the weekend before the project was due because I had to purchase a version of Microsoft Office so that it would be compatible with what the campus has. /Most of the decisions I had to make were to keep from scrapping the work I had done so far and going back to the drawing board. I had to go from “why English is such a hard language to learn” to “would technology have any effect on the
I thing that I will discuss my version of a predominantly American culture right at the start of the project. I can look on the internet and find some photos of people in each of the social classes, ones that are the stereotypical for the class, so that with just one look, it will be clear what they are. Does the American culture create degrees of literacy, like a modern caste system? I intend to prove that, in or society, we have preconceived notions as to a person’s literacy based solely on what we see. Most of my evidence will be drawn from my own past experiences, as well as the experiences of close friends and family. I will do an informal pole to see if others share the same thoughts, biases and values that I have experienced. There may be some research to see if anyone else had approached this subject in the past. Much of the text came from numerous government websites that track demographics. I searched through raw data and found pieces that coincided with my project and, more specifically, the photographs in the project. I also used some excerpts from Chicken Soup for the Soul books to help make my point. I had to decide what data and what photographs that would work to
understood who they are. I will explain the different levels of literacy, and how each class fits into each level. Then I will go on to tell how, at different points in my life, I was one of these people in the photos. I want to do an online poll to see what people associate with each photo...once I figure out where to...

send the message that I wanted to send. Then I had to decide what order to put them in and what data to put with what photo. For the most part, I had a picture of the completed project in my head. I envisioned it, or maybe it was just the message that I saw. Either way, I had to make decisions that would create the reaction that I desired in the reader, to make them come to a realization about themselves.

Mathes 3 N/A Do we use technology or does technology use us?

There are dozens of forums out there that allow people to meet in an environment that allows them to communicate. I'm sure that everyone has had a chance to use programs such as ICQ, Yahoo Messenger, or AOL Instant Messenger. Maybe they have even hosted a web page, a blog, or kept in touch with family and friends through their MySpace.

I will go to the ever-popular MySpace community and pick a web page out at random to do the evaluation on. However, I will make sure that it is a person that actually USES their web page to draw traffic and to communicate so that I have more to analyze.

N/A
Once this new environment’s full potential is realized, it’s sure to revolutionize education as we know it.

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allow me to see what changes this brings to the industry and what they think the future of comics holds them. I submitted the final project at three minutes after midnight. The biggest decision, besides deciding on a topic, was what information to leave out of the final draft. I collected a lot of information but I wasn't sure how to tie all of it in without sounding like I was just listing facts. I couldn't come up with a way to incorporate everything in a smooth flowing manner. This entire process went exactly as it has in the past on other papers.

| Mitchner | 2 | (Brainstorms different characteristic of Superman) | Why is Superman a symbol of American culture? | Regardless of how few or how many details a person remembers of the Superman origin and legend, everyone knows who he is and what he stands for. Adored, worshipped and admired by so many Americans, the Man of Steel stands apart as one of the greatest symbols of American culture the world has ever seen. | A vast majority will come from my own knowledge and study of Superman. Online resources and websites on Superman and the history of him. Actual Superman comics. DC Comics website. Interviewing/asking people their opinion of Superman | My first steps were mostly spent going over ideas with you through our individual discussion board. I am always hesitant to start a project without feeling like I have a complete grasp of what it is about and what is expected. After I had confirmation that I had a good idea and a basis to start with, then I started researching through the internet. I visited different websites that discussed the many aspects of the Superman legend. Most of the websites were |
focused on how Superman was an icon for the American people. The rest of the websites were further investigation into the Superman legend to compare what similarities and differences there were that could relate to actual people and gain their admiration. After I felt I had enough information, I began writing a copy of my final draft for the discussion in class. My rough draft wasn't as organized as it should have been so I spent that entire class period trying to work through it and reorganize it into a closer example of the final draft. After I had my paper as close to finished as I could get it, then I started on the final draft. The biggest decision was deciding what information was relevant to my paper and the direction I wanted it to take. There were all kinds of comparisons that were made to every aspect of Superman. A lot of the comparisons were religious, which many of them had relevance
to my paper, but there was also a large number that seemed to be grasping at straws. One website said that the fact that his cape just came out of his suit and not clasp around the neck was a symbol of angelic wings which made him closer to a religious symbol than a hero. Another even tried to make a comparison about his suit being primary colors. I never did figure out exactly what they were comparing it to so needless to say, I left it out of my findings. I came to realize that this project was different because most of my information was based on other people’s feelings and thoughts and not just concrete facts and statistics. The process for this project was very similar to the process for the first project. I did a lot of the same type of research and visited similar websites. I followed the same basic layout for finding information, working my notes into a rough draft and then revising and writing a final
I will be looking at the changes in my life as well as the changes in the lives of others because of online banking.

The majority of my research will come from my experience with online banking through my bank. I will further investigate the options available through my bank’s website www.bankmw.com as well as other banks’ websites. I will look into how many people use online banking and what the advantages are for them. I will also visit actual branches of different banks to find out what incentives they have to get people to use online banking and what benefits they receive from that.

With my question I was planning on focusing on children under the age of 13, so 12 and under. I have thought about listing reason that children go to counseling in the first place, parents, divorce, bullied, behavioral problems, etc. Do you think that, that will be too broad? When I

Does counseling really help children? Is counseling effective for children? To explore my question, I plan to do research that shows me statistically how many children attend counseling. I believe that if I can come to a conclusion on how many children participate in this, that it might help to answer some of my other questions. I also would like to research and come to a conclusion as to why children seek counseling in the first place. With those main questions answered I believe that it with give me a better insight as to what the primary

Well it took me most of the time to find a topic, most topics that I came up with in the beginning I thought were too broad. The topic that I ended up choosing was almost impossible for me to answer in this amount of time. When I finally decided on a topic, I went home and Googled my topic. I had a hard time finding anything on one type of counseling, there are hundreds of different types of counseling and I was trying to focus
used the term “effective” I was considering that to be successful?!
Do the child benefit from the counseling?
/I did have a question on the interview process; exactly how many people would I need to interview? I know of at least six people that could be interviewed. /I don’t know, I thought that I had this narrowed down enough, but I guess I don’t. I would really appreciate some critiquing if at all possible.

problem amongst these children is. I would like to find out what region of the United States has the highest participant and success rate. I plan on starting my research on the internet by visiting counseling websites and gathering information there. Then I can further my research by doing a few interviews with children who do attend counseling, maybe they can give me a better insight. I’m sure that I will be able to find a few books at the library that help me out as well.

on all of them as a whole. I think that that was one of my first problems. I tried to find research every night but I couldn’t find any research that focused on counseling as a whole. I was very frustrated throughout this whole assignment. When I thought that I had found some useful information I began doing my interviews. I interviewed a couple of people a day and then tried to mingle that in with my information. I then had to decide if I wanted to do a paper or a PowerPoint, I decided to go with a PowerPoint. Then I began building my slides little by little. Finally I felt like I had done all of the research that I felt that I could do, given the time and information. I don’t feel like I proved any question right or wrong but I think that I did give some insight on my question. But I was a little disappointed that I could not reach a conclusion. // I made many decisions like I stated above,
PowerPoint or paper. I also had to decide when I thought that I had enough information. I had to decide how I wanted to put it all together or what steps I wanted to take within my PowerPoint. Trust me I had a million questions going through my head. Will I pass? Is this right? Is this how she is expecting it to be? Etc. //This process for crating the text was a little different for me.

| Prince | 2 | Why are children’s TV shows teaching them other languages, such as Spanish, these days? | Why are children’s television shows teaching them multiple languages, in this day and age? | Why do children’s television programs teach them foreign languages? | In order to explore my question, I plan to begin my research on the internet. I want to look for information that will help me to better understand these television programs. If I can come to a conclusion on what programs are airing, then I feel that I can further research those programs individually. This will in turn, give me some background information on these programs. Then I will be able to draw a conclusion on a few of my questions. After I feel that I have done adequate research of these programs individually, I want to view some of these programs. I plan to watch them and analyze them for my research. Along | None. |
with watching these programs, I plan to interview or speak with children that have watched these programs. Speaking to these children will help me to better understand how they perceive these programs. I will ask them questions about these programs. When I have finished all of this research, I feel that I will have adequate information in order to come to a conclusion on my question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Project 3</th>
<th>Thoughts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Prince | 3 | I haven't really thought about project 3 to be perfectly honest. I knew it was coming but I wasn't sure what to think about it. After class tonight I have a little bit better understanding of what I can do. What do you think..... I could talk about the MSN homepage because I see that page every time I log onto the internet. I could talk about all of the buttons that I do not.

Are individuals using cell phones or are the cell phones using the individual”?

Are individuals becoming addicted to their cell phones?

In order to explore this question I plan to begin my research on the internet. I want to find out statically how many individuals actually do have cell phones. If I know how many individuals have cell phones, I feel that it will help to better understand and demonstrate my research. After I have obtained my statistics, I want further my research by looking at what make cell phones so intriguing to an individual. I will explore the many functions that a cell phone can serve, as well as find out what the advantages of these things are. When I have obtained all of the information above, I feel that I will have a better understanding.
use, as you said…. I could use the idea of the cell phone or another piece of technology that I CANNOT live without in my day to day life. Examples: cell phone, computer, DVR on satellite… Other than these ideas I don't know what else I might be able to focus on for this project. To me, this is what I understand to be the basic essentials for this project…. Please feel free to give me ideas, let me know what might work or what you think might work better, any advice would be greatly appreciated!!! (I don't see a response from me.

<p>| Roden | 1 | Has the use of instant messenger software dropped and what are causes? | Has the use of instant messenger software dropped? | Has the use of online instant messenger software decreased? | To answer my question I am looking for statistics. I will most likely find some answers on technology related websites such as cnet.com and | I first did the research by creating an online poll. I then went out looking for a free place to set up a webpage. I had used |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skurat Harris 582</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

zdnet.com. I may be able to find articles from the last several years on Lexis-Nexis. I might be able to find research on the question. I have considered e-mail AOL, Yahoo, and MSN to find out if they have any statistics on use but don’t know if they’d be willing to release the information. I will most likely find most of the data by creating my own survey and sending it to my own contacts. I will use a free online survey webpage. From this I will be able to create graphs to use in my final project.

Angelfire/Tripod about 8 years ago. It didn’t work as well as it used too. I had the format of the page basically set up before I had all of my facts in. //I put the data into graphs that I could use on my webpage. To do this I used Excel, I’m sure there is a faster and better way. I added the text last.

| Roden | 2 | First Generation College Students or Religious Literacy | How is wealth related to literacy? | None. | I’m going online. I’m sure the academic databases have good info. There are also several literacy organizations that have websites with info. | None. |

| Roden | 3 | I have been following this webpage for about nearly five years now. I am just amazed at how gas Princes vary from town to town and haven’t found a real pattern to it. | What is the value of the features of www.missourigasPrinces.com and do they make it worth using? | None | I will have to consider my own experiences with the webpage and analyze the different features that it offers to form my own opinions. I will also research other’s experiences. | N/A |

(Has several
| Shelley | 1 | None. | Why are Facebook and MySpace “addictive” for some people and not others? | Are websites like Facebook and MySpace replacing face-to-face conversation? | To find answers to my question I will look all over the internet! I have been reading an article from the University of Alberta titled, “Cyber Psychology & Behavior”. This study addresses the hypothesis that frequent Internet use produces social and psychological difficulties. I also will be going straight to the source and looking at how students communicate on Facebook and MySpace! This will really help to see the different types of conversations and the depth of peoples “addictions”. I will conduct a survey asking students about their Facebook and MySpace usage. This survey will circle around my questions above. What age group they fall under and their gender. How much time they spend on the internet and what they use it for? I have not yet created this survey, but these are the building blocks I will use in doing so. I am also in the process of searching for more studies that show how being addicted to these internet sites can harm students communicational | The first thing I did was make a survey. Then I went around to friends, family and co workers and had them answer the survey. I did this so I would have a range of people. After I collected my data I started looking online for other case studies that were similar to mine. Then I started putting my PowerPoint together. Sorry I really don't remember dates to any of this. I think the biggest decision I had to make was my survey. I didn’t know who to direct it too or what to even have on it. That took sometime to put together. |
Shelley 2 Why do I want to write about inmates and lower education? For this project I am going to look at 4 criminals’ life and backgrounds to see if they were under educated. I think this is really going to grab the reader's attention and help me come to an awesome conclusion!

I am starting to enjoy this project! No more confusion! LOL For now…

Skurat Harris 584

Table

| Shelley | 2 | Why do I want to write about inmates and lower education? For this project I am going to look at 4 criminals’ life and backgrounds to see if they were under educated. I think this is really going to grab the reader's attention and help me come to an awesome conclusion! I am starting to enjoy this project! No more confusion! LOL For now… | Does being in prison have anything to do with having a poor education? Will you end up behind bars if you don’t have a high school diploma? | To explore my question, I plan to do research to help provide answers to my questions above. I will look for information to help me draw a conclusion for if being in prison has anything to do with having a poor education. Right now I am looking for articles to help me find the answer I need. So far I have found tons of articles that have statistics like 59% of federal inmates are high school dropouts and three-quarters of the state inmates are high school dropouts. These stats are from the article The Dropout Problem in Numbers. I will also start looking on EBSCO to see if there are any other studies like this. I am really excited to start the research on this topic. I think in today’s society we really need to reach out and give everyone a chance to have an education! | The process for creating the text was very easy… I really didn’t have a process. LOL I just gather my information from books and websites and put them on my page…. I tried to make it look nice and flow from one slide to the next. /I first had to decide if my project would be good in a PowerPoint or a paper. After I thought about it, I decided that a PowerPoint would be great for the information I had gathered. My next decision was how to put the information I had gather into the PowerPoint… LOL That was hard because I didn’t know where to start. (This is where I like direction. I like to know how you want me to put it together…) After deciding what went where I just had to tweak and fine tune everything… This was exactly the same process I used for project one… You would think I should have it down, but… |

Shelley 3 Here we are Does the using How does To explore my N/A
back to the beginning! LOL I have no clue what i am going to write about!! LOL I guess I could do something about Facebook again and how I have found a lot of people I went to school with and rekindle some what seemed to be list friendship's... i don't know! LOL I don't do a lot on the internet besides facebook and MySpace. i am addicted to Petfinder.com too... If I could I would adopt ever Basset on that site! I get on there at least once or twice a day to see all my babies! HELP I have no clue. I am going to go look at the assignment thing and write another post... Okay after looking back at that i think I will do the facebook

FaceBook control you or are you in control of using FaceBook?

email affect people?

question I will use the evaluating Web Page Technique page you have provided for us. I honestly don’t have a clue what to write right now… I really needed some feedback from Thursday’s class to help me understand what I need to do… LOL I know I am always the one who is lost and confused, but I only want to do a good job! It would be really awesome if you would give me some feedback and let me redo this, because I know this is not what the assignment is asking for...

//I can tell you that I think I want to analyze FaceBook and see how it encourages use and to see if the website uses people… Other than that I am lost… Sorry that I don’t have more for you.
thing!

Shelby 1 I have an idea, but I'm having a difficult time putting it into words. Basically, I don't understand why many "strict" Christians (fundamentalists) are unwilling to consider a more historical/critical view of the Bible. Many take it so literally that they lose sight of the big picture.

What is the context of biblical references to homosexuality?

Asking these questions helped me to develop a historical/critical view of the Bible. I also learned that verses taken out of context could be used to justify hate and inequality. This paper is going to focus on three passages in the Bible that are often used to condemn homosexuality: the story of Sodom, the Leviticus Code, and part of St. Paul's letter to the Romans. Before beginning, it is worth noting that the Bible makes very few references to homosexuality. It is not mentioned by Jesus whatsoever.

To explore my question, I plan to do research that will provide me with historical information. I will look for information that can help me draw conclusions about the context of biblical references to homosexuality. I may conduct interviews or surveys to help me analyze general perception. I am currently re-reading parts of Mel White's Stranger at the Gate: To Be Gay and Christian in America. Mel White was a well-respected ghost writer for Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, and the late Jerry Falwell before coming out. I will likely cite information from his books and/or websites. I also searched the Internet and OTC's Resources Database for information on the subject. I may use information from a U.S. News and World Report article I found on Opposing Viewpoints. I will also draw from my own personal experience.

I don't have the best memory, so it's difficult for me to remember specific dates. In general, I found it's best for me to stick with brainstorming techniques (like clustering) to hone in on topics. Our in-class discussions were fun, but they were very broad. Sometimes I would have a good idea of what I wanted to do, and an in-class discussion would make me doubt myself or my basic understanding of the project. The decision for my question came from following my heart. I write best when I write about something I'm passionate about. I completed the project in essay form because religious scholars seem to write essays. I included a couple of hyperlinks to make it modern (similar to its view). I didn't use spreadsheets because my information was not statistical. PowerPoint didn't seem appropriate because my question was based on text, not images. A webpage might
Skurat Harris 587

| Shelby  | 2 | None. | What are some of the Christian symbols in our everyday lives, and how do they help socialize Americans into Christianity? | What are some of the Christian symbols in our everyday lives, and how do they help socialize Americans into Christianity? | To explore my question, I plan to take a digital camera with me everywhere I go over the next few weeks. I will take pictures of as many things that remind me of the Christian faith as possible, and may ask a couple of my close friends to do the same. I will then analyze the pictures for their meanings, messages, and affects. //I am currently taking pictures. I will try to take at least one weekend

I decided to use PowerPoint because I felt images would be more powerful than text in communicating my message. The process was different than Project One because I had to wait to make most of my decisions until the pictures were taken. All I knew in advance was that I wanted to take as many pictures of symbols that reinforce Christianity as... |

---

have worked, but I would want to be more of an “expert” before going public. Writing an essay allowed me to say what I wanted to say. //The process for creating the text was similar to a process I’ve used before. I just started writing once I had a topic (question). I had an idea of the research I was going to use, but waited to see what came out first. Basically, I wrote a persuasive paper that incorporated research data. It’s easier for me to incorporate data into my writing than to write to accommodate data. I have to get my basic thoughts out first.

Shelby 2

None.

What are some of the Christian symbols in our everyday lives, and how do they help socialize Americans into Christianity?

What are some of the Christian symbols in our everyday lives, and how do they help socialize Americans into Christianity?

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I decided to use PowerPoint because I felt images would be more powerful than text in communicating my message. The process was different than Project One because I had to wait to make most of my decisions until the pictures were taken. All I knew in advance was that I wanted to take as many pictures of symbols that reinforce Christianity as...
trip, and will search the Internet for state and national images that I cannot personally capture. Possible. To me, they had to include symbols in our personal lives, community/region, and nation. //Again, I'm not good with specific dates, but I started carrying my digital camera and camera phone with me almost immediately. I started taking as many pictures as I could, but found it difficult to take them through the week (I couldn't always stop to get really good pictures). Because of this, I took most of the pictures during the last two weekends before the project was due. Once I had the pictures, the text started falling into place. I used the Wednesday and Thursday before the due date to make and arrange slides, set up transitions, and add music. The due date itself was used for completing my notes. //The most important decision for me was the choice of music. Music is an important part of my life, and I often communicate through it. My close friends know to pay attention to the songs I play because they often
give insight into what I'm thinking/feeling at the time. I'm a huge fan of 80s pop, so I immediately tried *It's A Sin* by the Pet Shop Boys when I found it in my library. I didn't like it at first because I thought others would think I was admitting to sin when I wasn't. I tried *One Of Us*, *None Of Us Are Free*, and *Like A Prayer* before deciding on *It's A Sin* when *None Of Us Are Free* didn't work. In the end, I felt like the symbols were saying "it's a sin" to be different whether it really is or not. Also, I often feel like "I've always been the one to blame" because it was me who chose not to conform (which cost me in terms of relationships with friends and family). The music made the project for me.

| Shelby  | 3 | Another example is online dating, which led to my first serious relationship and the experiences/lessons that came with it. | What types of people use online dating sites, and why do they use them? | Are there specific types of people who prefer to meet others through online dating? | To explore my question, I have launched an Internet survey using Zoomerang (which I have not done/used before). I forwarded the URL to people in my online address book, and asked them to do the same at random. I will also give out the N/A |
The survey, which contains questions like the ones above, will close next weekend (November 17-18). Once the survey closes, I will analyze the results and write about them. I will also share my own reasons for using online dating sites in narrative form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Therons</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Does it matter that I have changed my idea on my project? It was really hard for me to pin point my question, it seemed to vague. So I have changed it to capital punishment and should it be abolished.</th>
<th>Should capital punishment be abolished?</th>
<th>Should the death penalty be abolished?</th>
<th>To explore my question, I will be using a variety of sources. I will first survey a wide range of people by means of race, sex, values, etc. I will interview family, friends, coworkers, as well as fellow students that live in and or the surrounding area of Springfield, Missouri. I will first ask for my audiences demographics so that I could get an average of views. I will also research the internet in the form of search engines for statistics and facts supporting both sides of the argument. Finally, I will interview an investigator from the Springfield Medical Prison. He has worked with numerous inmates on death row as well as take part in some executions in the state of Missouri.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

I started by changing my initial idea of what I was going to do. I then surveyed people from school, my work, my father's work and my neighborhood. I then thought I should try to do something challenging, something I hadn't done before SO that is why I chose // I made the decision to change my idea when I couldn't narrow down the broad category of love and the perfect spouse. I then decided to do a survey to get an idea of what everyone was thought of the idea. I chose to use a power point compared to just a regular paper to collagen me to something higher. // To some degree yes because I had to
start the writing process such as brainstorming but it got trickier when trying to compose the power point.

| Therons | 2 | How would "The stress of college to society" and go in to the Prince of college, the personal will to go to school and the success of going to school vs. no higher education? Just an idea... | Is College worth it? | I come from a family that the girl marries a rich husband and then quits everything to take care of their family. I wondered if I am following in that footsteps, should I really waste the time going to college when I won’t apply the degree because I will be a stay at home mom? | I will interview people that have gotten their degree and did not get their degree and ask them “are you happy where you are at or do you wish you would have gone/have not gone”. // I will research the OTC, MSU and DU websites for the cost of tuition. // I will research my career in criminal investigation through search engines on the internet for annual salaries in my area, required training and education, etc. | None. |

| Therons | 3 | N/A | I will be exploring the world of cell phones. I am going to analyze the ways the cell phone had involved throughout the past years including Prince, complexity, options etc. | (Talks about the history and present of cell phones in general.) | I am going to Prince compare on different cell phone websites, ie: AT&T, Sprint, Alltel, T-Mobel, etc. I will survey people from work, and school, teens to senior citizens. I am currently looking to switch cell phone carriers and this exploration will help me in my findings. I also find cell phones annoying because it seems like it is to easy to get a hold of people. | N/A |
Appendix HH: English 104 Final Analysis Project

Points Possible: 200
Due date: Sunday, April 30 (posted to Individual Discussion Board under “Papers”)

For your next activity, I would like you to put your problem solving and analytical skills to the test!

Write a report about your experiences with this simulation and the simulation’s relevance to your learning and to game design.

Keep a log of any activities that you or your group complete. Use the log to consider and address the following questions when discussing the simulation in your report. You will want to do a chronological description of the events prior to/during the simulation to help your reader understand your role in the project.
If you follow these guidelines, you should be able organize and write your report:

Introduction
- What is the purpose of this report? Why was it requested? What is the main point/conclusion/recommendation you reach in this report (statement of purpose)?
- What is the specific area(s) of the simulation are you studying? You should look at one particular aspect of the game to focus on as you analyze the simulation (i.e. small group dynamics, game theory, psychological effects of role play, etc.).
- What was your group’s experience while preparing for and running the simulation? What strategies did you use? What did you discuss in your group meetings? How did you delegate work? How did you solve problems? What research did you do, and how did you do it?
- How did you, your group members, and others in the class participate in the simulation? What happened when the simulation actually ran? (The more details/specifies you can include the better.)

Discussion
- What is the purpose of your discussion? What is/are the conclusion(s) you reach at the end? (short introduction to your discussion)
- How do your sources (either those articles from Blackboard or from your own research) relate to your experience with the simulation? Since we are doing research in an “academic” community, please only use sources from academic journals or reliable books and websites in your analysis.
- What specific examples from the simulation explain the points you are trying to make with your sources?
- How does the learning from the simulation fit into the overall plan of the course? Look back at previous projects. What skills from those projects helped you complete project 3? Which didn’t? Provide specific examples.
Conclusion/Recommendation

- What is the purpose of the report (restated) and the conclusion you reach? Was the simulation relevant to your learning? Why or why not?
- If the simulation was relevant, how? What did you learn from the experience? What evidence can you give to illustrate what you’ve learned?
- Do you think that simulations are a more or less effective way of teaching technical writing than traditional methods? Why?
- How did the simulation meet your expectations? What elements did you think were missing? What would you do to make the simulation more productive and effective? How realistic is the simulation compared to the “real world”? In what way was it similar? In what ways was it different?
- What did you learn in this class? What did you wish you had learned? In what ways did you develop as a writer in this course? Not develop?
- What are your recommendations based on your research and conclusion(s)? How can future students or I implement these conclusions?

Document your sources using MLA formatting (both in-text and in the Works Cited page). You can find help with documentation at the Purdue Online Writing Lab link at the bottom of the “Handouts/Readings” section on Blackboard.

A final tip: Use headings and subheadings to help your reader through your main and minor points. Always use them between main points and make sure that headings are clearly differentiated from subheadings in the report. Remember that the document should be not only clear and concise but also visually appealing.
Appendix II: Sample Coding

See the following pages for a sample of initial coding from an Individual Discussion Board, a group discussion board, and a student reflection paper.
the same if not better. The emotions of the human voice mixed with the intonations of the English language in our class would certainly add a new dimension to the discussion that typing can never add. Not to mention that spoken word comes before written. Many cultures don’t even have written language, and they are much better at articulating than we are.

Mostly, I believe that this article wants us to believe that online discussion adds rather than detracts from the class, but I have to disagree. I believe that if classes were changed to group discussion (rather than listening to the teacher) we would be able to be guided by the teacher and learn more effectively than online. The face to face classes need renovation. It isn’t “online” that is improving class, it’s the discussion and argumentation with peers.

I agree that the online conversations improve situations where students are being “muted”. They allow them to say what they want without retribution. But online conversations don’t improve us. Everyone should learn to voice their opinions in person and not listen to the dominant group. The dominant group is hardly ever right. What is the point of opposing someone online if you are too shy to do it in person? There is no practical application of online courage to speak out. If you can’t speak your mind in person, but you can online, then what are you going to do if you disagree with someone… go home and write it in blog? We need to get the courage to voice our opinions, with our vocal chords, and loud yells, with swearing mixed in if we disagree.

Online writing can be a very good way to teach a different aspect of composition. It’s importance is dependant on the individual’s opinion of what one should learn in writing, and the final outcome and application of one’s knowledge. Obviously, if a student wishes to be a web designer, or to have a job that requires time spent online, then education in the various ways that writing is used online would be vital to their education. If a student is going to have a job that requires no online interaction, then it may or may not be useful. Because internet use is so prevalent, many would desire to develop online communication abilities. The use of hyperlinks in online databases such as Wikipedia are an interesting new way to teach about a subject. They allow the reader to immerse into different areas related to the main subject. Users of Wikipedia can explore ideas for hours in an endless chain due to the hyperlinks used. To some degree future generations will have to learn internet use if they want to be a part of the mainstream society. Avoiding its use would cause the individual to be left out of many things. The use of the internet is not necessary today, but in the future it will probably be a requirement if one wants to stay in the mainstream of business and education. The application of the internet to one’s life is something that each individual will have to decide if they want. Those who accept it will probably have an easier time in employment and in social situations. Those who refuse to use it will become more obsolete as far as the mainstream society goes, because they will lack the skills required to keep up with modern times.

As much as I agree with your sentiments, I have to believe that humanity will not limit its adoption of technological answers to biological problems. If you look at history, you can see that humanity has always done things that they can see are detrimental to their society, even to the point that it causes their downfall. (Rome, WWII Germany, The Soviet Union, etc.) Although we can see that
Response to Project One

February 16, 2007

Introduction:

I believe that the grade I received matched my expectations. I felt like the comments you gave held a lot of truth to them. At first, I thought this assignment was going to be rather boring. It did not interest me in the least bit. However, as I began to write about my childhood experiences with literacy, I saw that creating this paper was a great way of remembering my past. As much as I enjoyed writing project one, I did not feel like I gave myself adequate time to look over and edit it. Therefore, my expectations for my graded work were syntactical and grammatical errors. This assignment was nothing like my English 103 class. We did not learn about interviews or different formats a paper can be put into. I think this is beneficial to me as a writer because I’m getting to experience different ways of writing. I would not want to learn the same thing this semester as I did last semester.

Process:

Since I love free writing, my writing style was not the way that I should write. I usually just write out whatever comes into my mind. However, this paper I needed to plan out before I began to write it. When creating the text, I had to decide which topics I needed a plan.
## Appendix JJ: Table of Sample Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focused codes</th>
<th>Theoretical categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grammar</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixing errors</td>
<td>Students relegating complex grammatical systems or editing tasks to simple fixing or correction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making corrections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking habits</td>
<td>Students referring to usage as habitual or something with which they had difficulty, sometimes when that difficulty was not evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with correct usage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Questioning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic instead of question</td>
<td>Students would frequently suggest a topic for research instead of posing a question for investigation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving questions unanswered</td>
<td>A number of students would research a question but fail to draw a conclusion that answered the question or was substantiated by the data they gathered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good or Bad Writing</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related to grades</td>
<td>The quality of writing was often related to surface-level concerns and justified by the earning of a good grade, which was the purpose of most writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related to errors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently related to audience</td>
<td>Rhetical concerns were rarely noted when students discussed the quality of writing, which was often noted as being what students did in class, not in their everyday lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrequently related to purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing relegated to “typing”</td>
<td>Several students, particularly in the community college classes, answered that technology made writing easier because they could type faster than they could physically write.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encountered technical problems</td>
<td>Practical concerns most often dictated what forms of technology students used for a project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software more difficult than anticipated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time limits technology use</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media used for “fun”</td>
<td>Students in some cases indicated that they chose a particular form of media or software because they enjoyed using it or they anticipated the audience would enjoy seeing it used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word processing not technology</td>
<td>When asked about the technology students used to complete projects, they would often mention that they used “no” technology, even when they had obviously used word processing software.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology as salvation</td>
<td>Students held a variety of attitudes about the technology that they were inundated with and used on a daily basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology as “necessary evil”</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>