

Abstract

DISSERTATION: Multimodality is...: A Survey Investigating How Graduate Teaching Assistants and Instructors Teach Multimodal Assignments in First-Year Composition Courses

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This dissertation identifies if and how graduate teaching assistants and instructors working in the field of rhetoric and composition teach multimodal assignments in first-year composition (FYC) courses. The research questions for this study were as follows:

- 1) In what ways do graduate teaching assistants and faculty teach multimodal assignments in FYC courses?
- 2) Are graduate teaching assistants, adjuncts, and contract faculty equally as likely as assistant, associate, and full professors to teach multimodal assignments in FYC courses?
- 3) What kinds of training do graduate teaching assistants and faculty receive to prepare them to teach multimodal assignments in FYC courses?
- 4) Do graduate teaching assistants and faculty feel the kinds of training they receive adequately prepare them to teach multimodal assignments in FYC courses? If not, what needs to change?

These research questions were investigated using a combination of online survey research methods and follow-up interviews. This study provides a broad and current analysis, as

well as a reflective picture, of the teaching of multimodal assignments in FYC courses. As a result of quickly evolving technologies, instructors have potentially more opportunities to teach multimodal assignments. However, in some cases, writing program policies and curriculum limit or make it difficult for graduate teaching assistants and instructors to assign multimodal assignments in FYC courses. Thus, this study investigated the ways current graduate teaching assistants and/or instructors teach multimodal assignments despite difficulties and limitations. It also investigated whether or not graduate teaching assistants and instructors receive any training or help in shaping their multimodal pedagogy and whether or not they feel this training or help was adequate. The findings indicate instructors are more willing than their departments to implement multimodal composition pedagogy. The findings also show that instructors teach multimodal assignments in their classrooms in various ways, including the use of different technologies and resources. Evidence suggests that despite their desire for more help from their departments, instructors teach themselves how to use such technologies and resources to implement their multimodal composition pedagogy. The study concludes that *how* multimodal composition pedagogy is implemented in a writing classroom is more likely an individual instructor's decision rather than a department's decision.