and cohesion that can result from multimodal practices, but to tap it, we need to face head-on the pedagogical conventions and beliefs we strain against.

We have come to value multivalence in composition as a kind of definitional stasis on which other aspects of teaching rhetoric and writing rest. Simply making the case that “multivalent” composition is composition with “multiple meanings or values” is insignificant compared with the need to articulate multivalence with others. This activity holds the promise of getting teaching assistants and other instructors to deliver a curriculum that embraces multimodality and leads to a more complex definition of what counts as “writing.” It has everything to do with what we think the purpose of the composition class is, how we see the roles and identities of “teachers,” and what counts as appropriate “end products.” More specifically, we understand that multivalent composition refers to multiple meanings of composition as the field to which we belong.

Yet getting students to embrace multivalence as a legitimate way of turning abstract goals into realized ones is not easy. Nor is using such a long-term process to sustain a first-year composition curriculum within institutional contexts that demand measurable “achievement.” Although we cannot always revise those contexts or elude the material conditions that shape our jobs, we can inspire a new way of thinking and talking about achievement that doesn’t preclude hybridity but more systematically draws on its critical potential. Thus the three of us have also come to value multivalence in composition as a kind of critical invention that puts us into conversation with our own and others’ ideas, and this same kind of invention underscored the work we did while mentoring incoming teachers to teach first-year composition from two different approaches that grew out of the first-year curriculum reform at our institution, Purdue University.

Our goal with these teachers was the same as with our students— not to enculturate them to a particular style of teaching (or writing), nor to promote one kind of textbook/genre over others, nor even to make them believe in one approach and discount others, but rather to form the kinds of intellectual habits of mind that would lead them to their own grounded and cohesive practice. To encourage them to move through and beyond the discomfort of new tasks and accept that their principal task is to figure out the principal task. Our hope was that they could view what they were doing with unfamiliar genres as a kind of Arwillian productive knowledge making (Arwill 1998), specifically because it represents strategies that are guided by flexible and changing principles (ibid.,
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48), and it potentially repositions teaching as helping students reach an “alternative destination” rather than a fixed path (ibid., 69), in turn helping all of us to arrive at a richer understanding of the occasion and possibilities for writing.

This position, we realize, is difficult for some educators to accept, and over the years we have advocated for it, each of us has become versed in some or another argument against it that emerged in local contexts—most notably that campuses are not uniformly equipped, teachers are not technically expert, and curricula dedicated to critical writing cannot also accommodate multivalent aims as they are delivered through unfamiliar technological contexts. Our goal with this chapter is not actually to laud a way of teaching on which we have come to rely, but neither is it to take up each of these arguments. Rather, our goal is to articulate how we have arrived at a way of rethinking “expertise” in the context of multivalent composition that we think ultimately serves our students, teachers, programs, and discipline. We do not need more material and technical support to break through the inertia of changing perceptions of writing. While changing the perception and culture of technology on campus is useful, what we really need is a philosophical change in how we see our relationship to technology so that a new teacher doesn’t walk into a smart classroom and do the obvious—trade the old overhead for the new LCD, repeat, and rinse. If teachers begin to theorize writing and teaching in terms of the multiple charges we face instead of in terms of an expertise we hope to achieve—in short, if we make it our and our students’ goal to think multivalently—maybe we can better temper our technological contexts with rhetorical invention.

OPENING PARENTHESES

Here’s an epigraphic invitation: travel back in time, circa 2001, to David Byrne’s digs in NYC; arrange to observe him as he begins to play with PowerPoint as a joke for an upcoming book tour; keep on the lookout for his gradual realization of PowerPoint as a medium for “artistic expression”; ask what’s happening? and wait for it.

There is something inherently interactive and playful about the models of direction by artists like Marcel Duchamp and George Brecht, which the above epigraphic invitation plays on. It represents how the three of us—as friends, teachers, learners, and collaborators—thrive on the tensions that emerge in our professional lives, whether we’re talking about writers creating hybrid genres, teachers learning how to become better teachers, or a discipline being informed by its progressive talk and somewhat less progressive practice. We hope this chapter will help us more honestly reflect on what we mean by “emergent,” to, in turn, more accurately define “multivalence” and rethink what it means to be “expert”—to consider the potentiality of expertise as an art and of multivalence as a pedagogy. By considering why it can be difficult to bring teachers on board to a multimodal, multivalent type of pedagogy, we hope to argue more explicitly for its value.

To be clear early on, we advocate composing multimodally, not for what it helps us and our students to avoid in writing for academic and extra-academic contexts but for what it enables them to take on in those contexts. We advocate a rhetorical dexterity that comes from students having to grapple with the hard questions of how to enact those academic and extra-academic expectations in a new way. We are not aiming for a mere swapping out of genres or assignments—that is, pixels for paper because we think paper is limited. We see our roles in the classroom as helping teachers and students cultivate the critical capacities they need for writing, thinking, and participating in spheres where they are. Like David Fleming’s (1998, 183) idea of rhetorical education in “Rhetoric as a Course of Study,” we understand these critical capacities to be “productive and critical powers”—competencies resting somewhere between theory and craft. It requires frequent observation, reflection, and sustained inquiry. It is a kind of information literacy that often results in public or civic outcomes. And in our case, it involves emergent processes and unfamiliar genres.

In talking about definitions of writing, the field(s) of composition, and hybrid discourses, we realize that we’re not breaking completely new ground here. Since Stephen North’s The Making of Knowledge in Composition (1987), if not earlier, writers and thinkers have been trying to map networks of values in the field of composition, but very little is decided in our study of writing. The portrait is in flux, and so are we as audiences and contributors. But there are situations that we face, especially when we have the responsibility for training or working with new writing teachers that make such a fluctuating portrait untenable and counterproductive—for us as assumed authorities and for those mentored who often assume that authority is the endgame they and their students deserve. The trick is to enact an idea from Bill Readings (1996, 171) without imposing it as a mentor or sounding too mystical: “Change comes neither from within nor from without, but from the difficult space—neither inside nor outside—where one is.”
composition at the visual turn. In response, or by example, Shipka (2005, 284, emphasis in the original) characterizes multimodal composition as a "three-dimensional layering of words and visuals—as well as textures, sounds, scents, and even tastes" that does not preclude attention to written language or rhetorical sophistication.

For Shipka (ibid., 290), this layering—or this “purposeful uptake, transformation, incorporation, combination, juxtaposition,... of words and visuals”—is not only complex enough to require its own framework for goal formation and attainment, but is inventive as well. This framework, in turn, leads to the uptake of new (or hybrid) genres in its defiance of “any easy attempt to categorize [assignments] by quality or kind” (ibid., 293). In other words, composing within a multimodal task-based framework heightens students’ critical engagement and rhetorical flexibility, leading to what Shipka calls a more sophisticated way of attending to what, why, and how students compose for the audiences and contexts they do (ibid., 293). Our understanding of multimodal composition, then, pushes us to help students develop productive, rhetorical, generic ways of responding to others’ reactions—in turn helping us avoid a focus on what these assignments lack.

While we are doing all that, we also have to work through how technology is evolving in our classrooms, in our students’ lives, and in mass-produced texts that inform our teaching and mentoring and the claims made about them (even when we do not adopt these texts). This is the moment to intervene in these claims. We look at textbook publishing trends over the past ten years, and we notice a pattern. Following an explosion of visual literacy books at the turn of the century, a new breed of writing textbook has emerged, arguing for the “naturalness” of visual literacy for today’s college students who have grown up in the age of the image (McQuade and McQuade 2000; Atwan and Hacker 2003; Faigley et al. 2003). Ironically, this “naturalness” is what we fight against. These visually stunning and complexly designed books claim to appeal to and build out of the languages our students already speak and live in a multimodal and highly visual world. But in adopting them for our own classrooms, we have realized that the dirty little secret of the visual and electronic turn is that our students’ abilities to multitask, their familiarity with navigating rich textual worlds, and their comfort with using multiple communication devices do not always ensure (and sometimes impede) the reflective acts that characterize the sophisticated rhetorical work we want them to do.
One need not be hooked on a “visual turn” in composition studies to see that Shipka (2005, 278) is noting—in Kress’s moment, and in “the occasions for, as well as the reception and delivery of, the work they produce”—an opportunity to intervene in a different sign system and technological climate with student writers. We also note an opportunity for proactively theorizing the best way to draw on emerging technologies for recasting expertise in how to teach critical, rhetorical, and even linguistic skill. And, like Shipka, we agree that our interventions need to do more than “simply expand the media and communicative contexts in which students work,” creating a greater awareness of the ways “systems of delivery, reception, and circulation shape (and take shape from) the means and modes of production” (ibid., 278). Too often we assume our students have thought through and theorized their own literacy practices. On the one hand, anyone can create a website or brochure with minimal knowledge of a what-you-see-is-what-you-get (WYSIWYG) application or template; on the other hand, we cannot say they are “creating” it until they have figured out and deliberately applied a methodology that guides the why and the how of their choices. This presents an interesting dilemma for bridging the “educational digital divide” that Mary Leigh Morbey and Carolyn Steele describe in chapter 10 of this edited volume: once it becomes apparent that our students’ lived experiences are inadequate for what we recognize as truly rhetorical and critical work, we are more tempted to retreat or resist rather than take on the hard work of developing an appropriately multivalent pedagogy.

It is a concern for materials and modes of delivery that further helps us to deconstruct expertise for the processes of learning through composing that we value and want to more carefully teach, such as questioning, building a conceptual language, experimenting, building theory, and posing more questions. Our students are no closer to expertise in these often visually and electronically based media than they are outside of them until they have an exigency for adaptation. And, we would argue, neither are we. As teachers, mentors, and administrators with multimodal interests, we add another level of complexity to the scene of teaching when we add new teachers in unfamiliar environments, carrying out technologically rich course objectives or program goals. We often run up against new teachers’ desires to avoid the technology because they do not feel “expert” in it (and thus cannot solve the problem of teaching writing once and for all). But for us, as experienced academics who are assumed to be on the side of expertise, it is not a matter of becoming expert. It is a matter of 

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This idea, coupled with the student projects that emerge from it, allows us to talk with new teachers about how to develop composition forms that don’t depend on an expert use of a specific technology, the latest software update, or the most cutting-edge gadget. Sometimes ink on cardboard is more appropriate than digital video to get your message across. In fact, multivalent composition as we see it may live and thrive somewhere in the interstitial tension between the Dumpster and the iPhone as living archives, between accident and intention, between novice and expert.

Because the idea of the expert underlies so much of what gets written and disseminated in composition, we see an opportunity here for breaking new ground, or repurposing the grounds we have come across. We’ve inherited an acculturation and apprentice-based understanding of how knowledge is made in a university education (Nussbaum 1998, 15–16), whether we characterize such knowledge as created or inherited. There are signs that an uncomfortable awareness of this reality is getting attention in various institutional contexts. For instance, in November 2004, Cynthia Martin, the chair of developmental English and an assistant professor at the Community College of Denver, designed and mediated an online discussion entitled “Partners in Teaching Excellence: A Model for Transformative Mentoring.” From the module’s introduction, here is her analysis of what we would call an apprentice-based conception of mentoring:

Typically these [GTA] mentor programs involve a hierarchical relationship between a senior faculty and a graduate student or new hire, in which the senior faculty acts as sponsor or “wise one” who socializes the new faculty . . . , provides career development . . . , or simply helps the new teacher “cope.” . . . At the Community College of Denver, we believe that all teachers—from those with experience to those in training—benefit from on-going critical reflection on classroom practice and student learning. Going beyond these traditional models of mentoring, we seek to improve teaching practice for both the new teacher and the mentor. Our experienced faculty mentors co-participate with new teachers in the process of learning and growth based on the assumption that the experienced teacher has as much to discover as the new teacher does.
intended audience, who better to work with a student in PowerPoint than a teacher with little PowerPoint experience? Through our mentoring experiences with a new multimodal curriculum, we noticed an interesting and very practical phenomenon: when we invited our students with experience (at the university or in any context) in a particular medium or piece of software to teach part of a class, other students saw their peer’s knowledge being valued as equivalent to the teacher’s instructions. To some extent, the class got decentered and more occasions arose for other students to demonstrate areas of expertise. The teacher got a chance to see how a familiar user worked with a medium. And, best of all, the experienced student got to demonstrate a set of examples that she or he put out there for a larger audience to see and use. It was an attractive strategy for getting students involved, dispersing authority, and avoiding unfamiliar territory in a curriculum that foregrounds rhetorical sophisticated in multiple media. However, if we simply default to fetishizing the expert teacher and/or expert student, we run the risk of reinscribing a technique, a template, or a genre without considering its situated appropriateness because of our difficulties relinquishing disciplinary power. This, to us, perpetuates a cycle of expertise that depends on learning by example more than learning by doing. It positions the teacher and the role she or he assumes as the goal for authority in the class and for authority in a particular subject matter. It privileges how-to presentations over interactive demonstrations, which in turn privileges passive modeling over improvisation and experimentation.

MULTIVALENT PEDAGOGIES

What we are advocating, then, is a pedagogy that shifts the point of academic departure from analysis to invention from the beginning of a first-year composition class. This will involve working with what we don’t know as rhetoric and composition teachers—that is, creating class projects that ask teachers and students to theorize composing for unfamiliar media (such as weblogographies, photo essays, or movie trailers), spending large chunks of time at the beginning of a class finding and associating initially disparate texts, and challenging the hold that “academic clarity” has over writing pedagogy so that teachers and students can reinvest in first-year composition classes as sites for producing the unfamiliar through students’ personal aesthetics, and as sites for regularly interrogating the pedagogical terms we let drive us. “Mastery” may come later or not at all for all those invested in such pedagogical scenes.
Whatever the case, first-year writing can be explicitly about the study of language by people who might be reimagined as refugees (Haynes 2003, 687) from identities that are built either on foundational reasoning or on accidental happenings—identities that are not dependent on moves toward complete mastery of certain genres (as students) or certain teaching strategies (as teachers). To think in such a way defines the middle ground (of students and teachers working where they are) as its own epistemic space, rather than as a mere transitional space necessary to confront and overcome on the way to somewhere else. This is writing and teaching not for authority's sake but for invention's sake.

What we want for our writing students is not new or controversial at all. We want them to be rhetorical, to think carefully about what they want and need to say, who needs to hear it, and (here comes the potentially controversial part) how those two things affect the composition that gets produced. We want our students to take noticeable risks with multimodality, to compose something other than a traditional analytical essay if that's what makes sense. The devil we know allows us to compose blindly and in a vacuum. Too often, our students have chosen their forms for the wrong reasons—either refusing to do anything other than an essay because of fear, or choosing the “alternative” assignment because, for them, it's familiar and a way to avoid too much work and thought. PowerPoint was easy in high school, so they’ll do it again—never mind that their audience would never have an occasion to be in a room somewhere watching it. What our curriculum aims for is that students come to understand multimodal composition as a normal kind of intellectual engagement, where they have to choose more selectively and reflectively—that, for every situation, they would come to see several options, not just one, and that they would choose not based on a memory of “what is familiar” but based on an understanding of what is successful or exigent. Understood this way, essays and ethnographic portraits and weblogographies require us to think and rethink how we might use them.

Yet while the “shifting” pedagogies themselves are not new, we know that multivalent approaches to pedagogy have not yet caught on. What we still lack is sufficient explanation, justification, and demonstration of their epistemic gains. How do they call up and call upon, over and over again, the knowledge-making processes we most value? And why is it so hard for new (and returning) teachers to believe it when they do? We likely cannot dispose of the “expert” because the business of education demands progress in measurable student outcomes, wanting to define the changes that occur for students as additive. Also, attempts to learn outside of this box may be looked upon suspiciously as naïve attempts to ignore the situatedness of learning and our dependence on the ostensible roles of teacher and student. Even when we look at a composition text that is trying to do something new, the idea of the expert pops up.

For example, when Colin was trying to design a graduate curriculum for a class titled Composition Techniques, he drew several ideas from Anne Wysocki, Johndan Johnson-Eilola, Cynthia Selfe, and Geoffrey Sirc's 2004 collection, Writing New Media. One way Wysocki (2004, 20) frames the book is in the terms of Stuart Hall who describes the taking of a position and how we retrospectively come to know who we are through the acts of composing. Wysocki (ibid., 20) connects this position taking to the materials of composition: “I argue that—because in acknowledging the broad material conditions of writing instruction we also acknowledge the contingent and necessarily limited structures of writing and writing instruction—people in our classes ought to be producing texts using a wide and alertly chosen range of materials—if they are to see their selves as positioned, as building positions in what they produce.” Wysocki is talking about how writers can embody more meaningful positions and how we can materialize messages in ways that don’t pretend to distill abstraction and thought into a sensible and familiar form like a first-year composition “essay.”

Wysocki (ibid., 20–21) then draws on Andrew Feenberg’s ideas about alternatives to “system-congruent design” (designing around the familiar) and “expressive design.” The resulting craft still “requires one to gain expertise,” but Wysocki (ibid., 21) highlights how an expressive conception of design can redefine the designer’s relationship to the objects she or he uses and the resulting self. Wysocki does not simply reinscribe the expert here. She’s doing what we’re doing—extracting the idea of multivalence (in terms of forming positions through work with objects) from an idea of craft that is still defined by the careful becoming of an expert crafts person. Alternatives need standards to set them off; invention emerges from the uniform. But if a demonstration of expertise is what we’re after, because it is an imposed or an assumed measure of self-worth, then we risk a loss of enjoyment and surprise in learning—especially in a first-year college writing class—that teachers and students need.

When you think about the readers and writers of any given text, there is always the potential for multiple readings, contradictory values, and multiple modes of delivery (whether intended or unexpected). Writers have their audiences and intentions as do readers, and even texts, we might think, harbor desires about what they can be. In one sense, when
we suggest the phrase “multivalent composition,” we are not announcing
the dawn of a new age in the teaching of writing. We are not announcing
the end of the analytical essay. We are calling for a perceptual change on
the part of ourselves (as teachers) and our students as people trying
to become better at writing and meaning making in any genre. So another
way to think about multivalent composition is to talk about what it is not
and why the perspective it values is worth consideration.

- It isn’t always an expert use of materials and technology. An experimental hybrid
  of materials and technologies might look odd and unfamiliar because what it
  represents is in part a dimension of a new combination of materials,
  modes, and messages.

- It isn’t always stick. An advertisement indebted to MasterCard’s “priceless”
  model may not be a perfect replica ready for magazine publication or TV
  airing. And it probably won’t be a simplistic inversion and criticism of cor-
  porate culture, mass-production either.

- It isn’t always finished. This is not because the student has been a slacker, or
  the teacher is simply in love with the concept of a work in progress. The
  project isn’t finished because it has not played to all its potential audiences
  outside of the context of the classroom in which it was created.

- It isn’t always “linear” or traditional in its modal development. An essay doesn’t
  have to become a screenplay for a short documentary film. A short video
  documentary can become a mixed-media essay, a researched argument
  paper can become a children’s book, and so on.

- It isn’t always bound by the assignment. It’s one thing to have a student begin
  a project by trying to avoid certain requirements, like doing a personal in-
  terview. It is quite another to have a student experience multiple ways of
  collecting information about the profession of nursing and then make a
  proposal for why including personal interviews isn’t appropriate to the proj-
  ect as it has developed for her.

Again, to be clear, we do not advocate composing multimodally as a de-
valuation of traditional academic genres, but rather as a validation and
encouragement of the kinds of rhetorical experimentation that result in a
first-year composition experience where students are full participants in
the work. Multivalent composition is an idea of composition (as the work
or works we do) that enacts several meanings or values in the classroom,
in public discussions, in the larger university, and in the world.

ENACTMENTS

We were heading in this direction while working in the single-
semester first-year composition curriculum at Purdue—helping students
blend the idea of a newspaper profile with an architectural space to design
a box that analyzed the “ins” and “outs” of a gated community; trans-
forming an argument for a liberal arts education into a letter from the
trees that students hung around campus to get student attention; touring
areas of local graffiti art to get classes thinking about the variety and
functions of student writing that take place on a college campus. The list
of examples goes on and on, but the real impetus for us and our students
came when we had the opportunity to showcase student work, which re-
quired that teachers and students work to convert class projects to a pub-
clic, daylong presentation modeled after conference poster sessions.

As we worked with individual and group projects, we saw questions
emerge that reflected the kind of agility we value: How do you frame and
re-present a video mockumentary for a daylong presentation? How do
you make an essay interactive when the student is interning out of state
and unable to be present at the event? How do you represent a multi-

cally authored research project in a two-dimensional display? Do you dis-
play a set of rhetorical t-shirts virtually through a website or physically
with hangers and fishing line? How do you make your critical exigency
pop in a room full of sophisticated projects, movement, and noise? To
address these questions with our students is only possible when we have
built a pedagogical space that involves learning through adaptation and
creative juxtaposition while suspending the notion and reward of being
“expert.”

This suspension with new teachers is productive for us because it
causes us both to expand our range as writing teachers by enacting ques-
tions of critical pedagogy and epistemology. That is, it enacts our very
notions of expertise, yet more than once we find new teachers rejecting
or resisting this act unless it leads to a consensual notion of what it means
to “teach writing.” How do we then mentor new teachers into an under-
standing of the acts of invention, reflection, and reinvention that are at
the heart of our teaching of multimodal composition? How do we get
them to accept expertise not as an arrival but an arriving? Based on two
approaches to teaching composition—a rhetorical humanities approach
and visual ethnography—we discuss the principles that have helped us
frame this reinvention of expertise in our composition classrooms and in
our mentoring practica.
Enacting Multivalence in a Rhetorical Humanities Approach

What we're calling a “rhetorical humanities” approach to teaching composition is one which invites students to ask questions about our purposes and relationships to other people and institutions. We do this by reading difficult texts, which take on these types of questions, and we spend time thinking and writing about what we think. These questions matter if we see the classroom as a place for thinking. By foregrounding the rhetorical nature of asking them, we rearticulate what it means to do humanities work in composition—that is, using language to figure out what we think, what others think, and what we want to do with all that information. In this way we can productively and actively engage life. And though it may not seem like it to some, all this thinking actually does have everything to do with writing, if we can think of writing as “composing our thoughts.” We constantly think-write-act through multimodal, always multivalent, compositions. Unfortunately, we only have most of our students for a semester or two, so we can only focus on asking a few questions—about the purposes and functions of higher education and work in our lives. What we hope they internalize is a habit of mind, a sense that they can act on exigency, and they can participate meaningfully in processes of inquiry. We want them to see the value of the humanities and rhetorical conceptions of being and acting in the world. Big goals indeed, and it is fair to ask, where is the writing in all this?

Colin and Jonikka had been using this approach for more than twelve years, but when the Introductory Composition program at Purdue revised the goals, means, and outcomes of first-year composition, they got a chance to think about how first-year composition curricula and students’ rhetorical goals can benefit from thinking about writing in broader terms, as more than words on a page. It didn’t hurt that around this time Colin took up painting. So, rather than assigning several essays throughout the term, they began to think in terms of “projects”—students would compose four major projects and a reflective cover letter to accompany the end-of-semester portfolio.

The first major project of the sequence is designed to shake students out of their comfort zones and get them thinking about what it means to have their own message, a real audience that cares (or should), and a form that will help them deliver their message. This assignment—a “portrait” of themselves—is completely unexpected. It attempts to do what the literacy autobiographies or technology inventories that they have used do at the beginning of a class—build out of what students know or can remember. The difference is that the portrait asks students to deliver the familiar in an unfamiliar form from the beginning. There is no leading up to mixed media or multimodality throughout the semester. It’s the first project through which a student has to “compose a self-portrait that will make use of several technologies” readily available in the class “in order to discover and present aspects of who you are by considering yourself in relation to your surrounding culture.” Once students have begun to orient themselves to the class and its goals, projects begin posing questions about the purposes and function of higher education in general and universities in particular. What are their social functions? What makes a university different from a two-year college or a technical school? Students read chapters from Stanley Aronowitz’s (2000) The Knowledge Factory and Bill Readings’s (1996) The University in Ruins alongside articles written about the value and changing role of liberal education. They begin to think about how they might shape their own education according to their own goals and vision of the experience, which is something most of them had not given a second thought to. At this point, they write a standard essay— their own theory about the purpose of higher education and the university (fig. 11.1). Felipe Camacho’s poster enacts key elements of
the rhetorical humanities approach, including extensive e-mail conferences with his instructor and a reflection piece in which he describes the theoretical springboard that led to his third and fourth projects. Because this poster was created for the showcase of student work, it also contains an instructor’s reflection.

This is their theoretical springboard to the third project, which asks them to take a look around their own university and locate a problem they see related to their ideas about higher education—for example, too few engineering students do study-abroad (a group of people don’t value something this student thinks should be valued), nursing students don’t realize there are different types of nursing programs (liberal arts versus technical programs) that might better meet their needs, and so on. They then work to effect change on campus (or off campus at area high schools, if that’s where the audiences are), to argue for the value of their own visions and priorities. To do this, students have to talk to real people on campus, to students, and to community members. They have to find relevant, credible information through any number of sources, both conventional and unconventional. And they have to figure out who their audience is, who has the power to make change, who needs information, and why current methods for reaching that audience might not have worked. (A typical university brochure doesn’t really capture anyone’s attention when you get fifteen in the mail every week for three months.) Then comes the fun part—students put their theories to work.

This third project offers another opportunity for multimodality. Colin and Jonikka have both had students create T-shirts as their “end product” out of an understanding that their peers—their audience—were much more likely to pay attention to a shirt than to another brochure (fig. 11.2). Others have created radio spots, videos, proposals to college administrators, Myspace sites, student organizations, board games for new college students, and more. The point is that the medium makes sense for the message and the audience. The difficulty is in learning these new genres at least in part on their own, without a lot of traditionally directive help from the instructor. In the end, students write a reflective cover letter for this project explaining the exigency for the project, its roots in the earlier theoretical project, and the rationale for the rhetorical choices made in its creation. This metadimension allows us, as teachers, to see what the students have learned, even if the actual thing—the T-shirt design or the cardboard viewbox or the interactive website—doesn’t yet do everything the student hoped it would. Such a project foregrounds how messages change from medium to medium, from one context to another.

Most important, it asks students to produce knowledge through medium instead of defaulting to an “essay” format that reflects more than invents.

The students then move into a theoretical discussion of the nature and purpose of work in our world, from the micro—themselves and their families—to the macro. They have to design their own research question based on an issue of interest to them; the only caveat is that it must have something to do with the (huge) topic of work. Students can produce a more traditional researched argument essay for this fourth project if they wish, or they can choose to create their own purposes, audiences, and forms to meet the rhetorical goals of their research project and discoveries. And, finally, students reflect on their work for the semester and create a cover letter—with us as their audience—where they can write about what they’ve learned (or not). This, too, can be a multimodal project if the student chooses, with examples including soundtracks to a written portfolio, video documentaries of writing processes, architectural/metaphorical plans for the mind of a writer, and a series of paint-by-numbers head silhouettes with instructions on how, and how not, to color.

Enacting Multivalence in Visual Ethnography

Research and Writing through Ethnography, an approach Tarez uses, relies on the empirical observation of texts, people, and the world as a way
of realizing that real inquiry can emerge from the “data” a writer collects alone and with others. Originally based on Bonnie Sunstein and Elizabeth Chisler-Strater’s Fieldworking (2001), this approach operates on the principle that observation, like other forms of invention-based inquiry, is a useful method for students to write themselves into current issues because it allows them to recognize and reflect on information in many forms—textual, visual, and interpersonal. The same habit of mind that we would want students to enact in a rhetorical humanities approach also gets enacted here. While similar approaches can result in only traditional genres and/or a strictly social-scientific orientation to writing, Tarez has framed her curriculum as a journey in information literacy, where assignments and genres are subsumed to (and grow out of) broader goals or phases of rhetorical involvement.6

Tarez’s approach asks students to pursue a semester-long inquiry project in a local field site or subculture they select. Students conduct between ten and twenty hours of observation over the semester, take field notes, conduct interviews, collect relevant images and artifacts, do archival and bibliographic research into their subculture, and ultimately develop a final project centered around a question they think is intrinsic to their field site. Along the way students compose several shorter projects and consider how to incorporate information from diverse sources in order to write in greater depth about an issue or a problem. Over the semester they keep a weblog on which they provide periodic updates in multiple modes (analytic and reflective) for an audience outside of the classroom, sometimes negotiating sensitive content with a reader’s need for information and their own evolving biases about the work. At the end of the semester they compose a digital portfolio to showcase their work along with a one- or two-page rhetorical analysis in which they evaluate their own success as ethnographers, writers, and visual rhetoricians over the semester.

In revising and modifying the approach over eight years, Tarez has found that the ethnographic research process, as a whole, is an appropriate metaphor for students’ rhetorical development, in much the same way that Colin and Jonikka use the rhetorical humanities approach to challenge students’ notion of “relevant, credible information.” Tarez’s course is organized by five units of inquiry that represent ethnographers’ reflexive relationships with their subjects—understanding contexts, defining the inquiry, envisioning the project, invoking other voices, and making (it) meaning(ful)—with each unit in turn centered around a major composing assignment and a series of minor assignments. The major assignments encourage conscious navigation of the various phases of ethnographic inquiry, while the minor assignments build students’ understanding of abstract concepts (for example, developing research ethics, locating dissonance in physical spaces and artifacts, understanding “argument” as dialectical communication) and move them toward building a working knowledge of information literacies (that is, identifying information needs, accessing information, evaluating and using information effectively, and contributing to a body of information through their own projects).

The field-working portfolio acts as a thread for the course, allowing writers to make sense of each unit’s rhetorical purpose and providing them with a space for reflection. At the end of the course their “big” ethnography provides a focused look into their subculture by drawing on the different forms of observation, reflection, and inquiry they have conducted all semester to argue—visually and alphanumerically—for that subculture’s relevance. It is at this point in the course when students typically realize the cumulative purpose to navigating all five units. By the time they write the final project, they have learned to position themselves ethnographically, argue visually, synthesize multiple viewpoints, and “updraft” their observations in an ethical and accessible way. Their final rhetorical analysis invites them to use field notes and artifacts to tell two stories of their work: the story of their subculture, its plots, its movements and players that emerged from what they learned; and the story of their own role as a participant-observer in an unfamiliar place, including how they did or didn’t fit into the subculture, where their archival research aligned or maligned with what they observed, and how—as rhetoricians—they chose to construct their final project for sometimes disparate audiences. For example, Erin Schefeske’s portfolio in fig. 11.3 presents a visual synthesis of the different components in her ethnographic study of the Purdue Child Development Lab School that ultimately led her to become interested in how curriculum can be designed to build self-esteem, despite her initial beliefs to the contrary.

In the year that Tarez used this approach with a group of new and incoming instructors, two projects seemed to reflect the rhetoricity of visual ethnography and its mutuality as a learning tool for students and teachers alike: the verbal/visual portrait, which was a major assignment in the second unit of the course (“envisioning the project”) that ended up serving as a synthesis project in the middle stages of students’ research,
Multivalent Composition and the Reinvention of Expertise

subculture in a unique way—in fact, whose perspective their research project needs. Like project one of the rhetorical humanities approach, it is designed to foster students’ growing realization of what makes the unfamiliar familiar about their subculture (or vice versa), and it pushes them to synthesize potentially dissonant and unconventional information as they triangulate facts from multiple sources for the first time. In preparation for guiding students through this act of triangulation, Tarez and the teachers she was mentoring studied different systems of invention heuristics before designing their own heuristics to use with students in class. These heuristics needed to help students arrive at a new point of dissonance that would then inspire the next point of their research, while also helping them identify a visual medium that best fitted the subject of their portrait.

This exercise led to several productive outcomes beyond the portrait assignment. For example, one student manipulated a digital photograph taken from her subculture in six different ways to arrive at a compelling sense of place, which then motivated her to repurpose her final paper as an advocacy project. Another student tried to construct a pathos-laden brochure on behalf of his field site but found that he was better equipped to refocus his research question more empathetically on the role of a single individual in that subculture rather than on depicting the whole place itself. One group of students completed direct and project-based service-learning at a local food pantry, for which they constructed a volunteer handbook that was inspired by their study of physical spaces. To demonstrate the pantry’s holistic approach to subsistence and community education, students organized all of their information around this spatial map, which highlights the many functions of a single organization. Just as in writing this chapter we had to bring certain sections to closure to see where new developments occur, composing what they think one audience might consider a convenient “end point” helps our students to get at the essence of another beginning point. This is critical to our understanding multivalent projects as having inventive potential even when they result in fairly unfamiliar products. This may also be critical to our understanding multimodal assignments as encouraging—rather than masking—a simultaneous realization of higher-learning, rhetorical, and compositional goals that guide our writing courses each semester (fig. 11.4).

Similarly, the Rhetoric of PowerPoint workshop grew out of a need for relevant, dynamic models of the kinds of applications that this approach to learning would require students to use, and also the kinds of thinking we want our students to do as users of these applications,
especially since we as teachers are still learning how to use them in compelling and situationally informed ways. Each semester she uses the approach, Tazez alternates between reading a full-length ethnography with her class or watching an ethnographic film and asking students to compose visual presentations of what they learn. This project gives her students an opportunity to witness different representations of research and question how certain audiences explicitly and implicitly influence those representations. Practically speaking, it allows students to collaborate on articulating visually how they do or do not understand what the ethnographer is trying to achieve. But if it is done consciously and reflectively, the PowerPoint project enables students to do more than just report; it can put them in the driver’s seat should they want to use that medium to enact, re-present, or talk back to what they think did or did not work in the author’s visual depiction of the subject. It is the juxtaposition of written or filmed arguments with the genre of student presentation that moves this assignment beyond merely a response or a summary. To express their learning, students have to learn a way to present their findings to peers in yet another format, one that hopefully draws on how the “readings” have asked to be read.

So that students and instructors don’t shy away from letting the application help them determine that delivery (that is, to discourage them from merely transcribing a traditional essay onto a series of slides, or ourselves from expecting the same kind of linearity in a PowerPoint as we would a physical poster), Tazez encourages them to theorize the best way to use PowerPoint for visual depiction. Students read, unpack, and discuss several online articles by Peter Norvig, Edward Tufte, David Byrne, and Julie Keller about the controversy of PowerPoint before evaluating a series of amateur and professionally rendered PowerPoint presentations. Students then develop their “rhetoric”—a system determining everything from purpose and arrangement to layout and appearance—by critically examining the message, method, and medium of those presentations. Invariably, the students end up generating a list of criteria they feel should guide productive use not only of that program but also of web browsers, image editors, and word-processing software. Tazez uses the same activity when mentoring new instructors, urging them to generate a list of pedagogical uses for different technologies that supplement their instructional goals, rather than the other way around. She asks the instructors, in other words, to experiment with thinking from material to idea instead of letting an instructional goal—students will incorporate technology into their writing—define the use of technology as a “given” before its kairotic potential is explored.

INVENTING MULTIVALENCE

Other contributors in this collection point to the widespread possibility for us in rhetoric and composition to explain our multivalent teaching from a transdisciplinary perspective—that is, to embrace this as a viable project for the evolving rhetoric and composition tradition without sacrificing key disciplinary or historical goals. For example, in citing Heidegger and Lévy, Mary Leigh Morbey and Carolyn Steele mention in chapter 10 that we have available to us a language that helps position what we do as “theorizing from interspaces” between science and design, between literature and technology, and even between philosophy and art. In other words, where multimedia integration is concerned, we now have other options besides the “computers versus thesis statements” debate. Either or becomes both/and as we consider how technological environments and technological contexts retain (and in many cases enhance) our students’ exigency for developing rhetorical literacy. But if transdisciplinarity allows us to effectively acknowledge creative, synthesized approaches to knowledge production, what holds it back? Why hasn’t this pedagogy taken off?
Perhaps teachers need a stronger understanding of what makes this “knowing” a hybrid art. When it comes to assessing our students’ writing, we sometimes still fight against the tendency to separate our competence from performance as measures of student success, or to measure them using the same assessment tool. When it comes to mentoring our teachers, we have to work hard to invite productive discussion of failure or to invite dissonance and discomfort into the practicum. When it comes to developing assignments, we (in the discipline) may still be straining against purely literary conceptions of genre and not seeing that even our social-epistemic and/or transformative understandings of genre are bound by historically limited beliefs about what counts as a trustworthy text, an idea that Susan Miller (2008, 107) takes up in her critique of feature-driven views of print texts. In short, we haven’t done enough to complicate rhetorical identity, rhetorical pedagogy, and rhetorical moments—haven’t done enough to imagine (or accept) kairos as indicative of what’s missing rather than indicative of what conditions are there (ibid.).

As composition teachers who value multimodality as rhetoricity, we have found that before dealing with the opportunities that these approaches afford them, our students weren’t always “focusing” or “inventing.” More often they were calling up a familiar memory of some similar or conventional task and choosing what Melanie Kill (2006, 213) might call a “safe complicity” by reworking it, in the process robbing themselves of the opportunity to locate and solve a real problem in their writing. Our desires in teaching first-year composition go beyond the desire for repeated enacting (ibid., 214); it isn’t enough for us to assign projects that ask students to use unconventional genres to do conventional things. Knowing a genre means more than just conforming to rules—it means knowing “how and when to deploy not only its conventions but also, and perhaps more importantly, the variations it enables” (ibid., 218). Inventiveness with a genre means playing with “the relationships between that genre and related genres, the paths they follow and the moves they make” (ibid.). Teaching a genre, then, means letting go of an assurance of how others see us in familiar roles. In the same way that our students may spend an open-ended literacy narrative assignment by writing about the awkwardness of writing it, we find our ways to not let go of the subject position we think our students (or others in the university) have asked us to assume (ibid., 223). Kill’s idea of employing “uptake” (drawing on Anne Freadman’s elaboration of J. L. Austin’s use of the term) is inventive because it provides mentors, their students, and their teachers with a way to become less secure in the subject positions they occupy.

If we can suspend traditional notions of expertise in first-year writing situations, we take productive risks that we will:

- learn from our students as much as they learn from us,
- be surprised by the forms of writing that are produced and that we must learn to evaluate,
- strengthen and promote the idea that first-year writing is just a first year in college, suspended between a composing past and future, and
- foster students to develop their adaptive, rhetorical skills early in their post-secondary education so that they may be public intellectuals during and after their lives at colleges and universities.

We find that the “rhetorical humanities” and “visual ethnography” approaches to teaching composition overlap in their emphasis on using visual means to help the writer position herself and others, to position acts of inquiring and writing, and to consider the tensions between medium and message. At each stage of their research projects, students are faced with the questions of “What am I seeing here?” or “What’s the difference between the ‘real’ and the ‘perceived’?” or “What makes my subject unique?” or “How can I best arrange my information so that my reader sees it, too?” Our projects involve observing and participating in the intellectual work of a community, and they contain some aspect of argument as public discourse, research as service learning, or writing as social action. For example, students might compose a research study on affective behavior aimed at special educators or compile a lexicon of “insider” terms and urban legends to share with “outsiders.”

But while we do ask students to articulate how they see a composition hanging together, this does not have to require traditional expertise in design principles or terminology. Those can emerge from class discussions and analyses of each other’s work as much as from “handbooks” and “how-to” guides. This does not require a teacher to design individual workshops for each type of media or mode that students are using. Nor does it mean we have to put PowerPoint students with one another or group the nursing majors together when it comes time to generate feedback. That assumes that familiarity and similarity are more helpful than dissonance or fresh perspectives, which we don’t think is the case.

The idea of multivalent composition requires us to reinvent that notion of “knowing” or “conforming” that we as teachers may desire, that our students may fixate on as an educational goal, and that new or future
teachers may desire as a necessary step toward being a teacher (as opposed to thinking of oneself as always becoming a better teacher). The same goals we express for our students resonate with our hopes for new teachers: moving beyond binaries in figuring out difficult problems; recognizing that dissonance begins with what they see (and hear or feel in response to something); letting an issue guide but not drive their inquiry; devising rubrics and other evaluative tools with which to define their own learning goals; understanding sources as “voices” that need to be brought into mediated conversation with each other and their own (beyond just locating facts to support a preconception or premise); and breaking out of familiar generic molds long enough to flounder and reach out for a new foothold. Ultimately, we hope these kinds of experiences would equip teachers to think more independently as evaluators of unfamiliar genres—and beyond that, to realize that the intellectual work of teaching can be an inexpert becoming. This inexpert becoming—or reinvented expertise—looks the same for new teachers as it does for our students:

It challenges pedagogical devaluation by avoiding the theory-practice binary (Salvatori 1994) in favor of creating sites for intensive rhetorical experimentation. Furthermore, it realizes theory not as an abstruse separation from practice but as the triangular intersection between the questions of “what,” “why,” and “how” we teach and write the way we do (Berthoff 1981, 41).

It leads to creative, transparent forms of resistance because it is centered on writing projects that are contextualized in broader questions of definition and exigency (that is, How many ways are there to “write”? What are the familiar modal and material associations with my specific question?).

It deals inventively with resistance by encouraging students, teachers, and mentors to be less secure in the subject position they think others want them to occupy, in order to reveal a subject position that participates more genuinely and—we hope—proffers a lasting rhetorical agility (Kill 2006, 223). For example, rather than capitulate to a teacher’s and student’s desire to simply be “trained” in the most efficient way to incorporate technology (a familiar outcome that doesn’t recognize the pencil as technology), we would rather they spend a good deal of time considering the questions of technology emerging in a composition class: What counts as technology? What can technology affect? How are we affected by technology?

It relies on the idea of language as an impermanent space for identity where we need only temporarily dwell instead of permanently reside. Especially for its invitation to reflect (that is, our multimodal assignments almost always generate and emerge from reflexive writing), it presents opportunities to rethink the assumption that descriptions of experiences and events are universally shared, to take more ownership of a composition by working harder to clarify its purposes and bring readers along in cooperative understanding, and to understand that genres are not always fixed, determined, and stable.

It complicates the notion that certain kinds of tasks should only occur in certain kinds of spaces. For example, rather than focusing on the computer as the “locus of [students’] discomfort” (Duffelmeyer 2003, 299), we might rethink how we can adapt a familiarized computer lab space and repurpose the objects within it to better meet our needs for a particular class.

In writing, at least, it pushes students and teachers to consider how the acts of holding, storing, and indexing information and ideas affect the projects that emerge from them. When we think about how information is stored and how that storage affects meaning, the archive becomes an “arc-hive” of activity. Students and teachers can then more easily see how collecting is not about establishing expertise but building a network of potential.

CLOSING PARENTHESES

There is a strange ghost in our attempts here to reinvent expertise for ourselves, our students, and the teachers we mentor. In a field that pursues “self-efficacy” (Pajares, Johnson, and Usher 2007) as a good sign for progressive cognitive development, in a field where some scholar-teachers are suggesting that we do more theorizing with students about first-year composition (Downs and Wardle 2007), and in a performance culture that more and more values assessment to the detriment of engagement, we realize that an argument against notions of expertise in first-year composition may come across as counterproductive or, worse, as a naïve offshoot of a student-centered expressivism. That is not what we intend. Context, still, is everything.

However, at this juncture, the learning contexts in which we promise “expertise” in writing have lost the cohesion required for hybridized innovation. We see a need to regain that cohesion, not to fulfill the promise but to disrupt it, and one way to do this—beyond what we already suggest in terms of relinquishing our fixations on singularity in what counts as writing or technology—is to realize the evaluative possibilities in it. We suggest using reciprocal reflection to disrupt and to raise—rather than to avoid—contentious and productive conversations about how to
determine when something has been done well. Practically speaking, we see nine components of evaluation writ large that can be more deeply theorized or understood by teachers and students who grapple with the question of "expertise" in multivalent composing:

1. **Challenges of Representation**—such as when writers realize their descriptions of experiences or events are not so universally shared.

2. **Situatedness and Contextual Nature of Writing**—such as when writers have to work harder to articulate the significance (the "so what?") to someone less invested in their project.

3. **Ownership**—such as when the reciprocal reflective process demands that writers clarify their purposes and supporting points or rethink them altogether.

4. **Active/Unstable Genres**—such as when writers' and readers' understanding of genre is challenged beyond narrowly defined "types" of writing but as socially constructed forms.

5. **Style and Delivery**—such as when writers experiment with different forms of delivery to achieve the desired interaction between what they write and how it is written.

6. **Organization and Coherence**—such as when writers rely on the organization (for example, logical structure and coherence) of their piece to give the reader clues about its main point or significance.

7. **Dissonance (Points of Stasis)**—such as when writers see conflicts or problems emerge in what they might at first assume to be a stable or mundane situation.

8. **Process Awareness**—such as when writers get into the habit of remembering how they act and think when putting their compositions together, and whether that process was effective.

9. **Active Reading**—such as when writers and their peers realize that reading involves different forms of seeing—that is, noting and solving conflicts in one another's writing.

What this demonstrates, we think, is that enacting multivalence through rhetorical humanities and visual ethnography means focusing less on the generic differences between textual and visual and more on theorizing about a writing process even as students and teachers are experiencing it for the first time, and toward—not away from—being able to determine the efficacy of that process.

In other words, teaching ourselves to question what we do when we use the visual to "enhance" the alphanumeric is critical to our understanding multivalent composition as knowledge making, in lieu of arriving at a very fixed understanding of what "textual" should or shouldn't encompass. It means equipping students and teachers to critically understand problems through research and to understand what they want to achieve—and how it can be achieved—with others. It also means opening the lines of communication and work we've suggested here as productive and satisfying by framing our acts of learning and how we approach any act of composition. But we're thinking that each teacher has to find or call on a memory and story that allows him or her to show other people how he or she sees learning taking place in the world.

Like the memories of those we learn with. For Colin it is the memory of being in a graduate class taught by Dick Fulkerson, someone he knew had a name on important articles but was mostly a teacher on the way to becoming a friend. Although it was not easy for him to share, Dick had put five versions of a review article he was writing on the class bulletin board during the course of the semester, referring to the drafts sometimes, mostly criticizing what he saw as their shortcomings, in order to have a working example of writing for his students. Colin read the drafts closely and commented on them the way a coworker pitches in to solve a problem, or the way someone comes to the aid of a family member without thinking through the reasons. Working on personal projects with your students is not a necessity, nor is it something that a teacher should take on regardless of specific class dynamics, the culture of pedagogy in a department, or the amount and range of his or her teaching experiences. But for Colin it has become a means for promoting feedback and making room for others to talk about and question his writing while he is questioning theirs.

And the stories of how we adapt and invent. Tareq was able to witness a group of new and incoming instructors embrace (on their own) the idea that teaching writing required creativity, initiative, and engagement. This realization stemmed from the instructors' need to creatively adapt assignments that they thought were too sophisticated for students to grapple with but that they ultimately worked through in tandem with their students. One instructor adapted the verbal/visual portrait to create her own self-portrait assignment that she felt gave students more time to
think about self-image and renderings of self, and aligned with her own interests in writing poetic portraits. In preparation for the final project, when students had to synthesize all of the data they had gathered over the semester for a thesis to emerge, another instructor devised a complex heuristic using visual and alphanumeric prompts to help students consider different rhetorical arrangements for their “data” and to start generalizing from all the details. As a result, Tarez’s visual ethnography mentoring group ended up compiling a set of resources to pass along to other teachers and curriculum builders who were new to the approach and new to technology.⁸

And the public moments when writing classes and the work we do take on the gravity of a happening. When Jonikka, Jennifer Courtney, and Shirley Rose organized the first annual Showcase of Student Writing at Purdue, Jonikka knew that people across campus were wary of the change to a four-credit composition course and did not know what to expect from the new first-year composition course. At the time, Jonikka was in the middle of writing her dissertation, arguing that writing program administrators need to become more actively involved in articulating the goals, work, and value of their writing programs to people outside those programs. On the day of the event, faculty and administrators from all over campus came, and they were surprised at the different kinds of projects the students were working on—from traditional essays on the “market-driven university” to interactive websites to cardboard boxes representing students’ portraits of themselves to their families. The dean of the college came twice that day, and what those who came witnessed was the (often invisible) intellectual work of a program—the way that first-year students engage in their own intellectual work as well.

And then there are your stories—which we look forward to hearing more about.⁹

NOTES

1. Contrary to the notion that composing in multimedia necessarily draws students’ attention away from language, the kind of work we propose new teachers do may enhance students’ understanding of what they do with language as “symbol-using” (Kenneth Burke, via Enoch 2004). By this we mean that traversing unfamiliar genres for making sophisticated arguments can potentially heighten students’ sensitivity to all of the ways they must make their stances more critical, and all of the ways that language is used in conjunction with (or in lieu of) other media.

2. Here’s how Shipka (2005, 184–85) might encourage us to convert our writing assignments into communicative tasks: (1) do not foreclose inquiry by signaling the specific ways students are to successfully accomplish the task; (2) do let the student come up with the scope and purpose of the work; (3) do not pre-determine the methods, materials, and technologies they need to employ. Its most signature features are that students take responsibility for generating solution-procedure sequences, or steps, or complex action sequences (ibid., 186), and that students decide how, why, where, and even when an argument will be experienced by its recipients, especially when the argument is made based on outside or archival sources. For example, when Shipka’s student Prakas received a fairly simple lexical assignment to look up in the Oxford English Dictionary, Prakas decided to create his own audiovisual rendering of the word “scarce” because he felt that his rendering was a “prototype for a ‘truer,’ or more interactive, version of the OED” and of the lexical task (ibid.).

3. Geoffrey Sirc offers one such activity in “Box Logic” that offers an alternative to the “integrated coherence of college essayist prose” he sees as “increasingly untenable” (in Wysocki et al. 2004, 123). For his “Basic Box” activity, Sirc asks students to bring together a visual object and a text so that they comment on each other, making the student a multimodal “composer” who learns to invent connectivity in more than just words (ibid., 129–33). A pedagogy of juxtaposition, then, allows us to play with potentials instead of always boxing our message, style, and so on in an assumed ideal of the college essay or academic discourse.

4. See, for example, Dyehouse, Pennell, and Shamoon 2009 and Anderson et al. 2006.

5. What follows is a description of the curriculum Colin and Jonikka used at Purdue while teaching first-year composition as a one-semester course; they have since gone back to teaching the typical two-semester sequence at the University of Texas–Pan American, where the goals for the composition program are more traditional at the moment. The lessons of the curriculum they describe here are informing the revision of those goals, although a one-semester course for first-year writing is a long way off.

6. What follows is a description of the curriculum Tarez used at Purdue while teaching and mentoring first-year composition as a one-semester course. The unusual five-day-a-week format allowed for extensive work with technology and one-on-one conferencing. She has since adapted it for a community-service writing course at Indiana University that promoted various arts of research for community-based writing; lessons described here reflect the adaptation.

7. By “reciprocal reflection,” we mean something like this, concretely described: a writer creates a text, then reflects on it by writing an analysis of what she thinks the text accomplishes; a reader then views the text and writes his own
analysis or interpretation of what he thinks the text accomplishes; finally, the writer reviews both analyses and reflects on the differences, in the process determining what could be changed and why those different interpretations might have occurred. And the cycle doesn’t have to end there. In this way both reader and writer are reliant upon each other for making meaning out of a particular evaluation event.


9. We welcome you to continue the conversation at our companion blog—http://multiv.blogspot.com—where you can find links to assignments and feedback activities, student projects, and our continuing discussion of what our idea of multivalence holds for composition and mentoring pedagogies.

REFERENCES


