

Skills for Citizenship? Writing Instruction and Civic Dispositions in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract: This article offers an overview of a first-year writing course in Aotearoa New Zealand, Tū Kupu: Writing and Inquiry, which forms part of a core Bachelor of Arts (BA) curriculum with “citizenship” as a key theme. I situate the course in the context of the tertiary sector in Aotearoa New Zealand, and the social and political contexts for teaching here, analysing how these contexts deeply inform the sense of “the civic” that we engage in writing instruction. In particular, I account for neoliberal trends in higher education and the complexities of citizenship, including the multiple and sometimes competing kinds of belonging, participation, and publics we invoke when we name citizenship as a teaching focus, and the role of writing in their enactment. My broadest claim is that this set of complexities is a useful one to illuminate the multifaceted work of writing instruction in this country. In addition, in three sections, this article works through some of the institutional and policy demands on writing instruction, the competing accounts of citizenship that we might engage, and how our assignments, text choices, and workshop pedagogy model civic engagement and frame writing in terms of inquiry and collectivity, amid shifting frames and hierarchies of belonging, and questions about the role of the university.

Whāia nei te ia o te kupu i whakatauākīhia e Tā Āpirana Ngata

Ko tō ringa ko te rākau a te Pākehā

Hei ora mō tō tinana

Pursue the essence of Sir Āpirana Ngata’s quote

Put your hand to the pen

As a means to well being

This epigraph was given to our first-year writing course as part of a curriculum development process, and begins our course guide, welcoming students and establishing a bicultural foundation to the course – as does the course title, Tū Kupu: Writing and Inquiry. For students and teachers of

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writing, and for me writing now, it's a challenge: to come to wellbeing, and to cross worlds, is to ask much of writing. It's an evocation, not of a static form but an act – and the conviction or bravery needed to reach out to write. And it's something of a whakataukī within a whakataukī, a proverb within a proverb: a reminder of the intertextuality within which we write, how we engage with the speakers and writers that came before us. I begin with a consideration of this epigraph as it indexes some of the context and possibility I'll discuss in this account, one account of many possible, of teaching writing in Aotearoa New Zealand.

My focus here is on some of the complexities of teaching writing for “citizenship” outcomes, a goal now set in curriculum and programme architecture at Massey University where I teach, but also one that is necessarily open-ended and in tension with other demands on writing. These complexities include the multiple and sometimes competing kinds of belonging, participation, and publics we invoke when we name citizenship as a teaching focus, and the role of writing in their enactment. My broadest claim is that this set of complexities is a useful one to illuminate the multifaceted work of writing instruction in this country. In addition, in three sections, this article works through some of the institutional and policy demands on writing instruction, the competing accounts of “citizenship” that we might engage, and the civic work of writing pedagogy, in turn, to sketch this scene in some detail.

The context in which Tū Kupu is taught deeply shapes its engagement with citizenship. Massey offers a complex and interesting teaching context: teaching across both distance (fully online) and internal modes, on multiple campuses; teaching students from the Bachelor of Arts (BA), the Bachelor of Communication, the Bachelor of Health Sciences, and a variety of other programmes; and teaching students with vastly different educational experiences, levels of tertiary readiness, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and initial enthusiasm for writing. There are approximately 1000 to 1500 students and 20 to 25 staff involved annually in the delivery of all offerings of Tū Kupu. The course is taught out of a School of English and Media Studies but is designed to serve students studying all disciplines in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and also disciplines in the Bachelor of Communication (which requires engagement with areas of study in both Arts and Business). Despite resource constraints, we have managed to retain a small-group workshop teaching model. Given Tū Kupu is a compulsory first-year course, the team welcomes a highly diverse cohort whose relationship with the university is neither an easy nor a settled one; we do our best to respond to individual needs and academic interests, and we undertake elaborate engagement and completion initiatives, in part through the delivery of the course as a workshop that enables a great deal of individual student contact and pastoral care, and formative feedback. This is not only a commitment characteristic of our discipline; I see it as part of the work of the course to meet its obligations to society at large, in acculturating students to the university and supporting their transition, to enable diverse learners to access and succeed at tertiary study. Beyond our immediate institutional context, however, the context of the tertiary sector in this country, and the social and political contexts in which we teach, deeply inform the sense of the civic that we engage, and it is primarily these contexts that this article will elaborate and analyse, in its account of writing instruction.

Framing Skills and Citizenship in the New Zealand University

Universities in Aotearoa New Zealand have historically lacked a liberal arts model for undergraduate degrees that would help underwrite and articulate generalist outcomes. Like many other Antipodean universities, Massey has recently engaged in a process of rearticulating the purpose and nature of liberal arts education (here known as Arts, particularly in terms of the flagship qualification of the BA), and restructuring degree programmes as a consequence. The

exigence is in part the increasingly common framing of the value of undergraduate education in terms of employability outcomes for graduates and the centrality of STEM subjects to the national economic interest, which has put pressure on the historically flexible structure of the BA degree.¹ In my own institution, the redesigned BA now takes *citizenship* – national and global – as a governing idea structuring a number of core courses, and informing graduate outcomes that invoke agency in public and professional contexts (Massey University, 2014, 2017). The first-year writing course, which previously stood alone as a compulsory course, is now part of this “core,” though not as one of the citizenship courses; rather, it is placed in a category of “transferable skills” courses (it is one of two, along with “critical thinking”). That is, though the writing course can pick up and engage the key themes of the citizenship courses – identity, responsibility, and agency – at the institutional level, writing’s value and meaning is primarily as a flexible skill set that students might enact in any place.

We can see this in the framing of the course outcomes and description in terms of general academic skills:

This course introduces students to cultures of writing and inquiry in the Humanities and Social Sciences. It is designed to help students write effectively at undergraduate level by practising a variety of writing tasks, including analytical, persuasive, and research-based writing and argumentation. Students will learn practices of writing, research, peer-review and revision that have application in the university and broader contexts.

Likewise, the outcomes propose that students will

- demonstrate competence and confidence to undertake writing tasks required at university and beyond;
- use writing and inquiry with academic sources to explore problems and questions important to academic disciplines;
- demonstrate an understanding of how writing strategies vary in different contexts and develop reasoned and evidence-based positions in a range of genres and modes;
- use effective strategies for generating ideas and for drafting, revising, and organising text;
- and demonstrate grammatical competence and stylistic awareness, and employ conventions of academic writing and citation appropriate to the university.

The pedagogy of Tū Kupu has been developed to enable students’ development of writing practices through intricate processes of drafting and revision in response to feedback. Assessment tasks require students to develop detailed strategies for navigating the production of academic prose: students are prompted to use a precise vocabulary to describe key moves in academic argument and to employ such moves in the development of their own academic arguments; to select and represent textual evidence to support reasoning and to synthesise multiple sources in the service of a distinct position; to employ invention strategies, including heuristics such as stasis questions, to develop thinking; to use syntax, style, and form to pay sustained, careful attention in writing, to explore a topic from multiple angles, and to make one’s perspective subtle and nuanced; and to experiment with sentence-level style and use syntax and punctuation to achieve rhetorical goals, particularly to embed complexity, manage degrees of certainty, and create emphasis. Students are also asked to engage with research to develop information literacy and strategies for locating and working with sources.

In the discourse of the institution, the community or civic dimensions of these practices are often submerged, as such skills are often framed as discrete, able to be transferred and applied where needed, and instrumental. Indeed, the increasing prominence of writing instruction in the

university could be interpreted as an institutional shift in this direction; in Aotearoa New Zealand, given the overlapping timeframe of neoliberal reforms in the tertiary education sector and the beginnings of widespread university writing courses, writing instruction might be seen broadly as the pedagogical work of the university turning increasingly towards the flexible skills valued by the marketplace, the commodification of knowledge, and even increased testing, monitoring, and accountability in relation to students. Literacy has deep associations with the neoliberal framework of “transferable skills” and associated regimes and logics of accountability that feature so prominently in discussions of how today’s university educates in the public interest. Composition scholars have expressed ambivalence at this designation, which simultaneously elides democratic rationales for our work in favour of a focus on employability outcomes – and yet to some extent promises security, status, and resources less available when writing instruction is seen primarily as serving the disciplines rather than as a key outcome in itself. Some scholars have considered how we might “redirect” (Linda Adler-Kassner & Susanmarie Harrington, 2010, p. 94) frameworks of accountability to our own ends while others signal the risk of having those logics determine our sense of the public value of our work (see, for example, Tony Scott & Nancy Welch’s introduction to *Composition in the Age of Austerity*, 2016, p. 6). In his discussion of English teaching and teacher education in the context of neoliberal education reforms in the United States, Jory Brass (2014) has noted the tension between literacy, and education more broadly, as “objects of public policy” (p. 113), and the understanding of literacy as a social practice developed via New Literacy Studies and related scholarship, with its deep concern with variability in context and with the political freight of literacy and language; he traces the increasing prominence of technical-instrumental conceptions of education that downplay both debates about the purposes of education and the ways literacy education is ethical and political (p. 122). We might also recall Henry Giroux (2010) on the consequential lack of language for understanding, or indeed the disavowal, of “pedagogy as a productive force that creates particular modes of knowledge, agency, values and social relations rather than merely as a refined practice for emphasising the measurement and quantification of classroom practice” (p. 353). In subsequent sections here, I elaborate the texture and orientation of writing instruction in some of these terms; such critiques might well be applied to a higher education context, where we are also concerned with the public purpose of education and the nurturing of public life and of democracy – even if a long-running concern with “basic skills” is now being layered with a concern over the future of work such that literacy bears a slightly different burden as the object of policy at this level.

Aotearoa New Zealand’s universities have experienced significant reforms in the past few decades, most notably towards the massification of tertiary education, with many similarities in that regard to developments in the United Kingdom and Australia. While there are notable historical examples of writing instruction in the colonial university (see, for example, Gerrard, 2013), it is generally assumed that literacy took on new prominence as a concern in New Zealand universities once the institutions began to serve a significantly larger and more diverse student population. Writing instruction here has been located within English departments and in various discipline-specific curricular sites, as well as in student support services, though generally without the elaborate writing-in-the-disciplines initiatives found in the United States that are designed to build coherently across multiple levels. A full historical account is outside the scope of this article, but of note recently are two policy shifts: first, moves by the previous centre-right Government to consider the future of tertiary education via their Productivity Commission, and second, a very recent initiative by the newly-elected centre-left Government to introduce free tertiary education for students who have not previously studied at that level. Both have significant implications for writing instruction.

To consider the “future of tertiary education” debate for a moment, key priorities in the New Zealand Productivity Commission’s report (2017) were increased flexibility for students, increased competition and innovation in the sector, and the potential decoupling of research and teaching in the university’s mission. The proposals for reform generated much anxiety in the sector, and there was also concern at the lack of attention to universities’ special character, including the role as “critic and conscience of society” as enshrined in the *Education Act* (1989). While the change of government means the report’s more extreme recommendations are less likely to be implemented, the discourse around the purpose of the university on which it draws is likely to persist. Adler-Kassner and Harrington discuss the link between accountability and national productivity in discourses about education in the United States; the same link surfaces here with increasing attention to return on public investment, and that return being seen in terms of economic outcomes, placing certain limits on universities’ ability to be self-determining and to frame their work primarily in terms of the broader public good. New Zealand universities do not face quite the frequency or reach of external metrics, such as those derived from standardised admission testing, of students and programmes found in the United States. However, the (all publicly-funded) universities do now find themselves, as Sean Sturm and Stephen Turner (2011) have argued, increasingly engaged in the ranking and measurement practices that define the “template” university, a global phenomenon. Thus, perhaps they offer parallel opportunities to redirect some of the accountability imperative to more nuanced public discussion of graduate outcomes and literacies (see Gerrard, 2017).

As a counter-point, the move of the new Government to make undergraduate education free for first-time tertiary students represents a renewed focus on equity and access, and a language around undergraduate study we have not seen in some time. With 2018 the first year of implementing this policy, the ramifications for student access and achievement have yet to fully emerge. However, it seems reasonable to assume that, though outcomes and skills are likely to be no less a focus now, this sense of a new age of public good, in which undergraduate education is taken to be so common as to be almost entirely publicly, not partly individually, funded, does offer literacy teachers new ways of articulating the purpose of their work. While the lament or nostalgia for a golden age of democratisation and expansion of higher education so prominent in the United States (see Nancy Welch, 2016, p. 135, on the post-World War II era) has no precise equivalent here, there is a perception that years of declining or static funding have had consequences for the equity imperative and the sense that undergraduate education has a crucial public function; those notions have been somewhat overshadowed by the pressure to monetise research, to gain competitive research funding, and to compete for international students. Core teaching work here has risked being marginalised (and performed by more marginally-employed staff) as lucrative research and enterprise functions have taken prominence, as Welch describes occurring in the United States. Scott and Welch (2016), in their introduction to a volume that describes in detail the decline of funding that supported both institutional and community writing initiatives with clear “public good” objectives, argue that “audit culture” not only shapes practices but teachers’ “agency and philosophy of program administration”: “composition as a field needs to grapple with how the material conditions and mandates of neoliberalism and austerity are shaping our scholarly assumptions, commitments, and horizons” (p. 12). It seems possible that pedagogies here may shift in response to a population of students relocated from the position of educational consumer to a framework more concerned with participation and rights.

“Contested and Conditional”: Negotiating Citizenship

The attempt to reframe undergraduate education around the framework of citizenship might be seen as a nostalgic gesture in itself, however. As Bill Readings (1996) diagnosed two decades ago,

the oft-repeated claim that the University is too research-oriented and has given up on teaching is actually the product of a nostalgia for a subject whose ‘experience’ might serve to register and synthesize the University as a whole – a student whose parcours could embody and unify higher education. (p. 126)

The invocation of “citizenship” might be seen as an attempt to return that subject to the centre of the university’s work – a relatively holistic vision of what we’re about, in the midst of talk of matrices of graduate outcomes and a future of micro-credentialing.

Citizenship is certainly a slippery concept when taken as educational object, despite its frequent invocation. Amy Wan offers a usefully complex and historicised account in her *Producing Good Citizens: Literacy Training in Anxious Times* (2014), demonstrating how literacy can function to serve the idea of a national public, and as a technology to manage that public: she “constructs a history of work-oriented citizenship in literacy learning spaces, thus complicating the liberatory and participatory notions of citizenship commonly taken up by contemporary educators” (p.3). For Wan, literacy is a lens to examine anxieties about citizenship, a term that in its conceptual “ambience” can serve many masters. In addition, her attention to work as a mode of civic engagement promoted through literacy instruction makes evident that such seemingly compromised modes are not fully extricable from or oppositional to our ideals of participatory or liberatory citizenship. Wan’s analysis leaves us questioning the aptness or lucidity of citizenship as an object of our teaching. Such questions only deepen if we also consider Aihwa Ong’s (2004) argument that higher education in the U.S. has shifted from a project of “democratic nation building” to one of “globalizing values linked to democracy and also to neoliberalism” (p. 55), with the traditional focus on “inculcat[ing] Western humanist beliefs and nationalist values” being challenged by “a stress on skills, talent, and borderless neoliberal ethos” (p. 57). For Ong, there is a dissociation between the university’s work in producing democratic subjects and neoliberal subjects – as she so neatly puts it, “a profound tension and potentially radical disjuncture between an equality of rights that stresses equal opportunity and diversity at home and an equality of worth that stresses equal opportunity and diversity globally” (p. 66). Ong’s “questions for research” seek more detail about how different disciplines and pedagogies have negotiated or found balance within this problematic, and what forms or norms of subjectivity might be thus promoted.

Indeed, some aspects of Massey’s version of the BA might be read as an attempt to return the local and national to the centre of the curriculum, as a counterpoint to the borderlessness described by Ong – or even as symptomatic of a displacement of an equity project in enrolment on to one in curriculum. In any case, writing instruction offers a particular perspective on tensions within and between national and global ideas of citizenship, and adds texture to these potentially elusive concepts. A brief account of some of the national and transnational currents shaping Tū Kupu will serve to exemplify some of the politics of the placed-ness of writing, and, in turn, the ways in which writing instruction in Aotearoa New Zealand might be seen as affiliated to local, national, and transnational projects – despite the injunction to inculcate “transferable skills” for global employability.

Firstly, the bicultural framework governing Aotearoa New Zealand’s public institutions makes it imperative to acknowledge and engage with a Māori worldview. In the current course materials,

Māori knowledge and experience are discussed in some of the examples of both professional and student texts, many students choose to write about topics that concern Māori knowledge or experience, and some of the readings offer Māori perspectives on literacy and on academic inquiry. Various pedagogical and procedural initiatives are also embedded in course delivery: for example, we have regularly offered “learning community” tutorial groups for students who identify as Māori, groups which in distance mode frequently use te reo, the Māori language, in forum interactions. As we further develop the curriculum for the new BA, we are considering additional questions: how could this engagement with Māori perspectives be more elaborate or structured? How could we attend in a first-year course to issues such as multilingualism in academic writing, how academic genres have evolved (or might) to reflect different cultural paradigms and embrace indigenous knowledges, how the process of inquiry might vary across different cultural paradigms, how knowledge-making in the university might connect to different communities, and so on? This is especially important given that the learning outcomes for the course propose that students should consider how writing produces knowledge, and how writing varies in context, both areas where a Māori worldview must be acknowledged. Lastly, to the extent that the first-year writing course is taking on an “acculturation to the university” function, we might ask: how do we introduce the university as something other than a Pākehā² institution?

The context of Aotearoa New Zealand resists any uncomplicated invocation of citizenship in an educational setting; Aileen Moreton-Robinson’s (2009) key question in the context of Indigenous Australia – “[D]o citizenship rights enable or constrain Indigenous people within society?” (p. 63) – resonates strongly here, where citizenship as a framework does not always reconcile with indigenous self-determination. Morgan Godfery (2016) argues that “for Māori, citizenship is and has been contested and conditional” (p. 4), and Māori forms and practices of belonging layer uneasily over (and indeed often go unrecognised by) the forms of citizenship offered by the state, despite the potential argument that “a form of citizenship that does not recognise and provide for Māori systems of belonging is a breach of the Treaty [of Waitangi]” (p. 6). For Godfery, teaching “citizenship as contested ground” (p. 7) is crucial to any civic pedagogy in this place (see also Nathan Matthews [2016] on the importance of engaging broader concepts of “cultural citizenship” and participation beyond formal political processes, as well as complicating the notion of the “generic ‘New Zealand citizen’” [p. 11], if our interest is in social and indeed decolonial transformation through citizenship education). While critical pedagogy has drawn our attention to how curriculum can marginalise, here the challenge is not only “inclusion” but consideration of whether parallel frameworks of belonging might be offered to students, and how the university, often a manifestation of the dominant public, might come to meet te ao Māori, the Māori world.

While there is a significant institutional commitment creating space for these questions, even if their answers are not easily grasped, the institutional environment around a first-year writing course also inevitably engages in a set of countervailing, homogenising measures that primarily concern “standards” of language use. Some of the issues around multilingualism, for example, are delineated as largely the terrain of a different but equivalent course: Academic Writing in English for Speakers of Other Languages. For pedagogical reasons, the university directs some students for whom English is an additional language into this course, before or in lieu of the “mainstream” first-year writing course. While the pedagogical rationale is a reasonable one, the ease with which these somewhat contradictory impulses – the imperative, indeed aspiration, of biculturalism and bilingualism, but the management of linguistic diversity more associated with international students – sit alongside one another is telling. I would argue that all students would benefit, though, from explicit attention to the placed-ness of writing evoked by these dynamics. We might take

writing as a practice of citizenship and as a site whose dynamics illuminate tensions and disjunctures within civic spaces, troubling the ease with which, as Karen Pashby (2011) discusses,

the assumed subject of GCE [global citizenship education] pedagogy is the autonomous and European citizen of the liberal nation-state who is seen as normative in a mainstream identification as citizen and who must work to encourage a liberal democratic notion of justice on a global scale by ‘expanding’ ... their sense of responsibility and obligation to others linearly through the local to national to global community. (p. 427)

Shifting frames and hierarchies of belonging – civic and instrumental, local, national, and global – are felt in the everyday experience of working in this university, too, with its multi-campus setting linking a rural town, unwieldy new suburbs by motorways in a sprawling city, and a reinvented polytechnic campus on or near the site of gardens for an ancient pā³ and a colonial prison (see Robin Peace & Fiona Shearer, 2017). The sleek industrial look of new developments sits side by side with the arcoroc mugs and faded décor and bureaucratic strata of earlier decades, persisting, while these various New Zealands are layered with an institutional rhetoric of “the new New Zealand,” where the affiliates of the university “take the best of New Zealand to the world.” And the weird grandeur and simplicity of that rhetoric contrasts with the glimpse of so many lives in progress that is distance teaching en masse: people urban, rural, imprisoned, impoverished, working and caregiving – and overseas distance students turning their attention back to Aotearoa New Zealand, reconnecting through our teaching, making local meaning for themselves, most vivid in the moment when two distance students read each other’s online introductions and exclaim, “We might be whānau.”⁴ A number of local scholars have recently considered what deepening understanding of the historical and contested placed-ness of the university might mean for writing and for pedagogy (see Ingrid Horrocks, 2016; Peace & Shearer, 2017). And as Sturm and Turner (2017) argue, reading the university as “placed” is not only an act of historical understanding and questioning:

it is to see it as an uncommon commons, an eruption of place in the “non-place” (Augé 1995) of the globally convergent university of excellence. That commons might even presage an Oceanic undercommons (Hau’ofa 1993), of indigenous peoples across the Pacific, which they share with each other, but not necessarily with non-indigenous peoples – though they might otherwise “share” the same place. We also attend to people and place in the university setting as models for worlds and ways of being other than neoliberal ones, to generate possibilities and explore their grounds. (p. 308)

Writing instruction can refocus us, to pick up Readings’s terms, on the role of the university “to preserve the status of the social bond as a question” (1996, p. 187), rather than idealising or simplifying community – not only in the sense that any citizenship curriculum foregrounds the contested and multifaceted nature of that identification and belonging, but that a focus on writing recalls us to the civic as act, practice, in the making. The pair of “writing and inquiry” – with the elusiveness of that “and” – intends to evoke this dynamism. Tū Kupu takes writing as inquiry, as the pursuit of complicated questions, as well as a performance of existing knowledge; writing as opportunity to try out the intellectual possibilities of style, genre and mode, and experimental arrangement and juxtaposition; and writing as argument, in various flexible forms. Students encounter key genres and conventions of university writing and are prompted to understand their logic, but they also engage in writing to learn: for example, they are asked to develop strategies for using writing to engage with difficult texts and for working with that difficulty rather than ignoring challenging material or simplifying, and they practise inquiry through critical reading and through refining a topic to a research question to a thesis in response to research. Such work sees writing

not merely as the vehicle for students to represent their learning, but as a means to engage in the academic environment, and in public contexts too, with more depth and subtlety. While to some degree the invocation of citizenship might be read as symptomatic of an anxiety about the function of undergraduate education, it is also a question of genuine work – and a question not only of the value of the civic but also of the place of the university and of undergraduate education in relation to it. As mentioned earlier, the *Education Act* (1989) ensures the role of universities in New Zealand as “critic and conscience”: the discussion that follows sketches how Tū Kupu’s assignments and pedagogy frame university-level writing in this style.

Writing Instruction and Civic Dispositions

In this last section I elaborate how our assignments, text choices, and workshop pedagogy model civic engagement and frame writing in terms of inquiry and collectivity. Our assignment sequence broadly corresponds to the themes of identity, responsibility and agency that the whole citizenship core is concerned to elaborate, and is thus concerned with both participation and belonging, and with how writing might negotiate this “contested ground.” While some of the course topics might register as nationally significant, they are not necessarily to be addressed in terms of a non-differentiated national public or national interest (see Godfery, 2016, p. 7), and indeed are often problems or questions where different communities and stakeholders have to be considered and the state’s role or actions questioned. While writing valued as a skill for its generic quality, its transferability and application, is an idea that will inevitably surface in our classrooms, its inherent value as a means for engaging the civic demands a constant concern with value and purpose.

The examples discussed in the next paragraph come from the first assignment in Tū Kupu, which requires submission of two linked writing exercises: a summary of a short but complex text, and a response to the text that discusses personal experience with implications for a broader audience. These exercises model, in an accessible way, key habits of mind underlying writing in the university: careful reading of complex material, identifying and prioritising the key ideas of a text, establishing an investment in the ideas of a text, and using the ideas of others to generate further ideas, questions, and dialogue. These exercises also gently introduce students to the value placed on complexity and multiple perspectives in academic writing and some initial strategies for negotiating these in prose, concerns that are addressed in more depth in subsequent assignments. Readings for the assignment vary each semester, but consistently take up the BA core theme of identity and the BA core priorities of digital literacy and attention to the university as a site of identity formation, by having students write in response to readings that address cultural identity, student identity, and identity in digital environments, and connect personal experience to a larger conversation. These exercises are also supported with discussion of writing process and writing anxieties, so students also reflect on the writing practices they bring with them to university and their sense of themselves as student writers.

As an example of how this work engages writing as a civic practice, I’ll discuss student writing in response to an excerpt from Alice Te Punga Somerville’s *Once Were Pacific: Māori Connections to Oceania* (2012). From an indigenous perspective, Te Punga Somerville reflects on narrative as foundational to one’s sense of self and community – and, in turn, history, with “naming as an act of memory” (p. 213) – and the multiplicity or layeredness of such stories, of a particular kind in a colonial place. She discusses tensions between national and transnational belonging by attending in detail to the language politics of place. Students regularly took up this theme of writing as an act of articulating identity in ways that, even in a brief response, captured complex dynamics between local, national, and transnational kinds of belonging. Consider the student who writes about Māori identity and the importance of connecting to it through literature and media, especially while living

outside of Aotearoa New Zealand; the student who discusses the importance of family records and letters in keeping a sense of family identity continuous over generations of migration and settlement, with its fragmentary effects; the student who ends her narrative of recovering a sense of Māori identity and home through story, with a pepeha;⁵ the Moroccan student who writes about tensions and emancipatory potential in language use, in the context of colonial history there; the Palestinian student who imagines connecting through story to a homeland she has never visited.

Even if one reason for working with the Te Punga Somerville text, then, is to specifically enfold a Māori perspective on writing into the course, an intellectual interest deriving from a national/bicultural framework, acts of student writing open this frame outward to transnational connections among indigenous peoples, comparative stories of migration, dislocation, and loss, and the role of language in bridging distances, spatially and temporally. These students raise questions about what literacy is for, and the answers they offer concern collective aspirations as often as skills with exchange value in the knowledge economy. The rhetorical practices invoked here concern circulation and reiteration as often as they do individual composition, capturing some of the range and complexity of writing as a civic act.

The second assignment, a rhetorical analysis, asks students to engage in critical reading of a piece of academic writing, and to analyse conventions and strategies of effective and responsible communication in academic contexts; through this analysis, students are prompted to recognise and describe writing strategies available to academic writers that can then inform their own writing practice. Students are also asked to move beyond reading for information to read and interpret analytically, to develop a critical stance, and to develop strategies for reading difficult texts. The articles analysed are written by Massey researchers and collaborators, showcasing the College's disciplines, as well as meeting criteria such as accessibility to a non-expert audience, relevance to students, capacity to generate productive connections to the next assignment, and relevance to the themes of the BA core. The articles selected are some that engage with public debates about issues in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand society and culture – for example, Darrin Hodgetts, Kerry Chamberlain, Shiloh Groot, and Yardena Tankel's writing on "Urban Poverty, Structural Violence, and Welfare Provision for 100 Families in Auckland" (2014) – to make evident the connections between academic conversations and broader public conversations, and to enable students to use their knowledge of the public debate to inform analysis and, in turn, argument.

This work also asks students to note the difference in tenor between academic and public debate and the prose tactics that enact this difference, and how the academic take on these issues is often one that tries to explore, complicate or disrupt the assumptions of the public debate. Zizi Papacharissi (2016) has noted how the mobilisation of feelings of "belonging and solidarity" (p. 310) is increasingly significant in the formation of publics; she attends to "connective" action as well as collective, as part of tracing the contours of civic spaces beyond the traditionally deliberative: "while emotion has never been absent from the construction of political expression, romanticized idealizations of past civic eras magnify the significance of rational discourse and skim over the affective infrastructure of civic engagement" (p. 320). By extension, we grapple with civic education when we facilitate identification, empathy, or position-taking in the course of analysis and argument, and in inviting students to see themselves as voices or audiences in a public. Bringing quotidian practices of public debate, and some of the terms and limits of contemporary publics, into the analytical framework as points of comparison allows students to consider discursive norms. This is of course a common undercurrent in the teaching of writing, but a citizenship-themed curriculum allows for its foregrounding, especially in considering who gets to speak and is spoken for, how to represent the voices of others, how to work towards complexity rather than a simple consensus, and how to write with strong feelings of affiliation or distance.

Agency and authority continue as key principles in the final assignment, where students develop a thesis-driven argument essay informed by research. This assignment understands argument as a key way to enact agency in academic contexts and beyond, and demonstrates processes of inquiry and writing by which writers engage in “conversation” with one another to produce knowledge. Students are asked to represent source texts with complexity and appropriate citation, to use evidence from sources to support reasoning, to synthesise multiple source texts in the service of a distinct thesis, to account for counter-arguments or alternative positions, and to develop and sequence material effectively in thesis-driven essay form. Students choose a topic for their argument that is connected in some way to the article they worked on in the previous assignment, so they can use that article as one of their academic sources, and so that the thematic resonance with the BA core and the engagement with the College’s disciplines continues. In order to refine their understanding of the topic through research, and, in turn, develop a thesis, students undertake a process of inquiry, beginning with locating appropriate additional sources, which may include journalistic or policy texts in addition to academic sources.

We explain this sequence to students in the following way:

[W]e see both academic and professional/public applications for analysis and argument, in that both these modes give you the capacity to use writing to think deeply, to challenge constructively, to engage in conversation and to develop knowledge through conversation. Knowing how to use analytical and argumentative language allows you to better define, understand, and respond to the challenges of our time (and convince others to think and respond, too). . . .

Lastly, this assignment sequence helps you develop agency in public and professional spheres in the sense that it helps you analyse how writing is working and how to adapt your own writing to be better received in different contexts. This is a goal of flexibility – but it doesn’t undermine your agency to choose to push your audience’s thinking, or to adapt your writing to serve local needs and goals. How exactly you employ this ability to be flexible and to adapt your writing in your life after study will be up to you.

By proposing that some of the characteristic values of academic writing have broader application – from addressing an audience respectfully, to drawing on others’ texts thoughtfully and fairly, to writing in accordance with one’s own views and values (which one might want one’s audience to share) – we mean to evoke agency and responsibility to others in civic arenas, and to locate academic writing as part of a broader civic textual ecology (see Jenny Edbauer’s [2005] account of rhetorical ecologies, resting in part on the understanding of any place as a “circulation of encounters and actions” [p. 12] and, following Warner, of publics as in part created through textual circulation, not predetermined). Some balance is struck, and some open-endedness ensured, between asking students to assume multiple perspectives and critical distance, and to develop idiosyncratic writerly objectives – learning to take on the forms and purposes of academic writers as one’s own, but in the context of one’s own interests (see David Bartholomae, 1986). The writing workshop model of delivery also asks students to act as a community of learning, in both online and face-to-face environments; in both settings, students share their work with each other and practise critical and constructive reading of each other’s work. The workshops in general model a process of drafting and revision through discussion and feedback that requires students to be regularly present in order to be able to get to know their classmates, and their classmates’ writing, well, so that they can give their peers constructive feedback, as well as benefit from working step by step towards each assignment.

As Sturm and Turner have argued (2011), the university can be a place of community that is “a non-countable but real good”, enacted most crucially in teaching, as a site of “encounter” whose ends cannot be entirely determined – and thus perform not only an academic but a “civic education”. Similarly, Elizabeth Ellsworth (2005) prompts us to consider the potential civic dimensions of pedagogy:

If teaching is about thinking and not complying with the one who holds the superordinate knowledge . . . then for pedagogy to put us into relation with each other in ways we have never been before, for pedagogy to be a democratic civic pedagogy, it must create places in which to think about “we” without knowing already who “we” are. It must keep the future of what our engagements with those places make of us open and undecided. (pp. 94-95)

It is important to seek to preserve this openness and multiplicity, and, in turn, something of a critical orientation to the concept of citizenship itself, in claiming the civic as a space of teaching. Writing instruction in Aotearoa New Zealand can take up social and cultural issues in New Zealand life in depth and allow students to explore how personal identity and issues of academic and public concern can overlap and be mutually informing. As G. Thomas Goodnight, Minhee Son, Jin Huang, and Ann Crigler (2017) argue, following Dewey, teaching students skills in argument and deliberation is necessary but insufficient, given the importance of community and identity as motivation and means for civic participation: civic education should foster “a sense of self-worth built on identification and informed doing ... [and] cultivate the material, affective, and networking practices that situate and shape students into active members of a community” (pp. 213-214). This is one set of connections between wellbeing and writing that writing instruction might aim to foster; identifying “citizenship” as a learning outcome might risk prescriptiveness, but in a writing classroom grappling with multiple scales and sites of knowledge-making and public life, we are open to its give and take.

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Notes

- ¹ In Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, the Bachelor of Arts has not traditionally included any minimum requirements for science subjects, and relatively few breadth or general education requirements
- ² The term refers to “New Zealander[s] of European descent” or, as a modifier, more broadly, “English, foreign, European” (Moorfield, 2018).
- ³ The term here refers to a “fortified village” (Moorfield, 2018).
- ⁴ The term here refers to “extended family” (Moorfield, 2018).
- ⁵ The term refers to a “set form of words” (Moorfield, 2018), here the part of a customary introduction of self where the speaker offers a genealogy and account of places of origin.

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