CHAPTER 4.

SCAFFOLDING FOR COLLABORATION AND MULTIMODAL ASSIGNMENTS

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In this chapter, the authors describe **activities that support collaboration** *used in online, real-time learning. Specifically, the authors suggest that students can learn best when their ability to interact and collaborate with others is deliberately supported through in-class activities. In describing this "better practice," the authors address themes of accessibility and inclusivity and professional learning for online teachers.*

FRAMEWORKS AND PRINCIPLES IN THIS CHAPTER

- **GSOLE Principle 1.2:** Use of technology should support stated course objectives, thereby not presenting an undue burden for instructors and students.
- **GSOLE Principle 1.3:** Multimodal composition and alphabetic writing may require different technologies; therefore, those involved should be appropriately prepared to use them.
- **GSOLE Principle 3.4:** Instructors and tutors should migrate and/or adapt appropriate reading, alphabetic writing, and multimodal composition theories from traditional instructional settings to their OLI environment(s).
- **GSOLE Principle 3.5:** Instructors and tutors should research, develop, theorize, and apply appropriate reading, alphabetic writing, and multimodal composition theories to their OLI environment(s).

GUIDING QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU BEGIN READING

- How can online writing instructors best teach and support collaborative writing projects?

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- What kinds of assignment sequencing and scaffolding would provide the structure and accountability for successful collaboration in online writing classes?
- What kinds of assessment and feedback would best encourage healthy, shared collaboration in online writing classes?

INTRODUCTION

"One of the things that Nicolleti's chapter suggests is that monuments may not remember events as much as bury them beneath layers of national myth and explanation—what are some obvious examples of this?"

Michael looks out expectantly at the Zoom room. Most of the participant boxes are black, with only a handful of disinterested students choosing to leave their cameras on.

After a slight pause, he goes on: "We're raised to respect and trust the rhetoric of monuments and to embrace their stories as our own, but what happens if a monument doesn't remember an event so much as it portrays a biased narrative of an event?"

A disembodied voice comes out from one of the black boxes: "So, monuments could be persuasive the same way that other images are . . . but since they're monuments we trust them more and question them less." Soon, another voice chimes in, but ultimately the discussion is a bit strained.

After the conversation pauses, the other two instructors, Amanda and Ashleah, explain the task of today: to start work on the final assignment in the course, the Monument/Memorial (Re)Design Project—a collaborative project where students select an existing monument or memorial, present a photo array of the current design, analyze the rhetoric of the current design, develop a model of a new design, and provide a rationale for their choices.

When the three of us (Ashleah, Amanda, & Michael) worked together designing this course, we were worried about the logistics of assigning a large-scale project in an online environment, especially given the challenges that collaboration can often present regardless of the course modality. Since we were teaching in a real-time online environment, we knew that including a collaborative project at the end of the semester would be difficult due to the distance and different access needs of students. However, we didn't want to just toss out the project because it represents a culmination of several key themes in the course, such as rhetorically informed visual production, argument, analysis, and design. It also meets many of our course's goals, and students have historically enjoyed the project and done excellent work on it. Thus, we decided that the best way forward was to weave collaboration into

the fabric of the course, allowing students to work together in small groups over the entire semester so that they would have the opportunity to learn and work through the course content together.

This chapter will detail some of the practices that we engaged in before and during the semester as we worked strategically to make our course and this assignment more accessible and engaging for online students. In the brief narrative above, we offered a small glimpse into the class session where we first introduced the Monument/Memorial (Re)Design Project. We wanted to demonstrate what our classroom was often like when we held discussions as a large group—the image of darkened screens and disembodied voices is one that many instructors who teach online real-time learning have experience with. This interaction, however, is a stark contrast to what happened once the assignment was redesigned to more intentionally scaffold online collaboration. One component of this scaffolding was small student groups.

As instructors who have experience in both online and face-to-face environments, we have become increasingly aware of the differences between classes delivered in various modalities. One of the most significant questions we faced while co-teaching was whether our assignments—three large multimodal projects, one of which (described above) was collaborative—were still feasible in an online environment. Our teaching team was committed to multimodal composition as a foundational element of our curriculum and pedagogies, but we were also mindful of the challenges students face in online classes and the various access challenges that they may face such as financial constraints, job and family responsibilities, unpredictable schedules, health issues, etc.

However, as we articulated in our other chapter in this collection, Chapter 12: "Open-Media Assignment Design to Address Access and Accessibility in Online Multimodal Composition," we saw multimodal composition as a way to make our course more inclusive because students could respond to the assignments using more than traditional text-based compositions. We were also conscious of warnings to keep writing central to online classes, such as those offered by the authors of CCCCs *A Position Statement of Principles and Example Effective Practices for Online Writing Instruction (OWI)* (2013). Bearing this in mind, we decided to make all of our assignments multimodal and open platform, meaning students could compose their multimodal assignments using whatever tools they chose, including non-digital ones. Since our assignments were multimodal and open-platform, students had the agency to choose the genre, modality, and tools they would use to compose their assignments and could base those decisions on their individual skills, comfort levels, and access needs.

Once we determined how to approach multimodal assignments in the course, we were faced with the challenge of whether to include, exclude, or revise the final project in the course, the collaborative Monument/Memorial (Re)Design. Collaborative projects can be challenging in any modality, but especially so in a digital distance environments like an online course. In our experiences, students tend to embrace multimodal projects but are ambivalent at best regarding online collaboration. We determined that the best way to get students engaged with the course content and each other was to create opportunities for them to work together in small groups throughout the semester.

Facilitating meaningful collaboration, especially in online environments, is a struggle that many instructors face. Our biggest advantage in this regard was the synchronous online environment where students met with us via Zoom for approximately three hours a week over a sixteen-week semester. This advantage meant that we could set aside time inside the course for groups to meet, plan, and compose together while we circulated between breakout rooms offering guidance where needed. We also knew that even with the ability to facilitate group activities during class, we would likely still encounter some hurdles as the semester progressed. Therefore, we entered our course redesign open to change, acknowledging that we would have to be flexible with some aspects of the course to make the class accessible and engaging for students. In response, the "better practices" we offer in this chapter are scaffolding strategies developed to support students' collaboration and multimodal composing in a synchronous online class. Most notably, we'll focus on two areas: 1) creating opportunities for students to participate in supportive learning communities, and 2) scaffolding sequences of readings, activities, assignments.

SCHOLARSHIP, THEORIES, AND PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE OUR APPROACH

The support structures we created to guide collaboration and multimodal composition are informed by the Global Society of Online Literacy Educators' (GSOLE) *Online Literacy Instruction Principles and Tenets* (2019). The first principle of online literacy instruction (OLI) is that it should be universally accessible and inclusive, a goal that is easier to espouse than implement. While universal accessibility and inclusivity aren't fully attainable, they are a "north star," so to speak, a direction rather than a destination, and one that we plan to continue pursuing as long as we teach. The tenets under this expansive first principle—specifically two and three—are relevant to our scaffolding strategies:

Tenet 2: Use of technology should support stated course objectives, thereby not presenting an undue burden for instructors and students.

This common warning challenged us to consider if our commitments to collaboration and multimodality were central or peripheral to our curriculum and pedagogy. The stated course objectives (see below) include the production of—and not just the consumption and/or analysis of—multimodal artifacts. Collaboration, while not specified in the course objectives, is foundational to our understanding of literacy learning. The difficulty in this tenet is determining what constitutes an "undue burden for instructors and students." Our position is that the support provided through the scaffolding strategies in this chapter make the technology use more accessible to students in addition to streamlining our workload as instructors.

Tenet 3: Multimodal composition and alphabetic writing may require different technologies; therefore, those involved should be appropriately prepared to use them.

As with the last tenet, the scaffolding we provide for students is designed to help students develop competencies in various production technologies. Both group work and in-class instruction work toward this goal, though we acknowledge that some students need to avail themselves of available resources outside of class. In addition to online help, our institution provides support through an in-person and online Digital Studio to assist students working with various composing technologies (McElroy et al., 2015). And as our other chapter in this volume details, another commitment we have is to allow students to make choices on composing technologies, so they can determine which technologies best meet their particular circumstances.

Much like the OLI Principle 1, we found that two tenets of OLI Principle 3—which states that instructors should regularly reevaluate online courses to support best practices—were particularly applicable to our better practice of providing scaffolding in online courses.

Tenet 4: Instructors and tutors should migrate and/or adapt appropriate reading, alphabetic writing, and multimodal composition theories from traditional instructional settings to their OLI environment(s).

As we've stated previously, we don't assume that course content and pedagogy need to remain identical in face-to-face and online classes. While the course

descriptions and objectives may remain consistent, how we teach in different environments should reflect the affordances and constraints of the setting. Therefore, we advocate for instructors to consistently evaluate what is and isn't working within the class with an eye toward student learning and performance. We should be open to revising our approaches to teaching when necessary. For example, if collaboration and multimodal composing don't work for our students, we should look for ways to incorporate more resources for students into the course to support their learning. If there isn't a way to build more support for students into the course, then we should be open to eliminating collaboration and multimodal composing entirely and replacing them with something that will better suit our needs. We shouldn't hold any assignment or activity as more important than student learning and success. In our case, we would rather try keeping collaboration and multimodal composition in place with scaffolding for student support before we cut them from our curriculum.

Tenet 5: Instructors and tutors should research, develop, theorize, and apply appropriate reading, alphabetic writing, and multimodal composition theories to their OLI environment(s).

Similarly, we commit to continually investigating and exploring new ways to teach and learn in online environments. In addition to the growing body of publications on OWI, we're grateful to communities such as GSOLE, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), and others that provide forums and platforms for practicing online literacy instructors to meet and share ideas about online education.

Though this level of reflection on our courses might seem like a lot of labor, many changes we made as a result ended up decreasing our workload because we were able to streamline and prioritize content and delivery.

COURSE CONTEXT AND LESSON

While the course and assignment we describe are from an upper-level college class, we believe that the better practices could apply to many online courses where students engage in collaboration and/or multimodal composing. While our upper-level students are in a program focused on editing, writing, and media—which has given them more experience in producing multimedia and multimodal projects—digital composing skills are becoming more common for

students at all educational levels. The principles of scaffolding we advocate for in this chapter remain relevant despite the class level or institution.

Additionally, certain local events preceding the shift to online teaching during COVID-19 provided us the unique opportunity to build a teaching team. The graduate students (Amanda, Amory, and Ashleah) were selected to co-teach with Michael because of their teaching excellence and our graduate program's commitment to mentoring. This teaching collaboration generated reflective teaching conversations that lead, for instance, to writing these chapters together. However, on a more local level, it provided us weekly opportunities to talk together about the process, students, assignments, online components, and more. This is a rare treat for instructors, and we acknowledge the privilege of this collaboration.

As we also detail in Chapter 12 of this collection, Amory and Michael were teaching the class face-to-face in the spring of 2020 until the sudden shift online for the second half of the semester with no time to prepare and few resources for support. In our institutional context, emergency online teaching meant synchronous delivery that still met on the same days and times that we met face-to-face before the shift online. Our institution had recently invested in a professional site license for Zoom, which allowed us to use it for class delivery, small group work, discussion, and screen sharing. Canvas is our university's learning management system and our central "hub" for the course. We used Canvas to distribute online materials such as readings and resources, to organize students' collaboration and communication, and as a place for them to submit completed assignments for us to grade and respond to. We also used software such as Google Docs for workshops, collaborative activities, and class notes. By the time Amanda, Ashleah, and Michael taught the next semester together in the fall of 2020, we knew that the course would be delivered online and had time to prepare for it.

Course Goals

Our syllabus states:

> Visual Rhetoric is designed to give students an introduction to rhetorical thinking and analysis, an introduction into visual thinking and analysis, and hands-on experience creating and manipulating images for a variety of audiences, purposes, and situations. By the end of the term, students should be able to . . .
>
> - Apply rhetorical principles to a variety of linguistic and

non-linguistic texts in a way that communicates their ability to provide insight about the texts;

- Use visuals to find and communicate meaning;
- Find, manipulate, and produce a variety of visual texts that communicate to targeted audiences;
- Use a variety of digital platforms to deliver visual media via the internet; and
- Create thoughtful, academic projects in a variety of media for different audiences.

As noted, the outcomes for the course define the need for multimodal production. While collaboration doesn't appear in the outcomes, it's central to our teaching philosophies and pedagogy.

Assignment Sequence

The course consists of three multimodal projects: 1) the Investigative Photo Essay, 2) the Visual Identities Project, and 3) the Monument/Memorial (Re) Design. The first project highlights how visuals communicate, the relationship between images and texts, and the ideological nature of images. The second project explores visual representations of an individual or collective subject position (e.g., race, ethnicity, nationality, social class, gender, sexuality, disability, religion). Finally, our Monument/Memorial (Re)Design Project is the culminating assignment for the course. This project allows students to synthesize what they have learned in the class to produce the four components:

1. the selection and visual representation of a monument or memorial,
2. an analysis of the original design,
3. a redesign of the monument/memorial, and
4. a rhetorical rationale for the redesign.

While this chapter will briefly touch on the reflective work that surfaced in students' rhetorical rationale reflection document, reflective practice is an important better practice of learning regardless of modality. Christopher Etheridge and Heidi Skurat Harris further unpack the link between reflection and metacognition Chapter 14 of this collection on data literacy, highlighting reflection's ability to connect students' past experiences and knowledge with new knowledge.

While working on this project, students read about public, collective memory; the constructed nature of history that is reinforced through monuments/memorials; and several case studies of monuments such as the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial, the Montgomery Civil Rights Memorial, the Joe Louis Monuments, and the

9/11 Memorial. Students choose the media for the redesigns and have used digital technologies such as video, websites, Photoshop, and Prezi as well as analogue technologies such as Legos, popsicle sticks, clay, drawings, paintings, and sketching. The project is described this way to students on an assignment sheet.

Monument/Memorial (Re)Design Project

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to explore how monuments and memorials reflect values and interpret history. You will also practice collaboratively investigating a visual representation of public memory that constructs and is constructed by (Fleckenstein) various and contested histories (Rogoff), and you will practice applying the visual rhetorical design principles we have learned throughout the semester.

Tasks

1. Select a current monument or memorial and provide original images from numerous perspectives of the selected site.
2. Write a visual analysis of the current monument or memorial (approximately 1000–1500 words). This analysis should include:
    a. the history of the event or site associated with the monument/memorial,
    b. an analysis of the original design's rhetorical choice and impact, and
    c. references to secondary sources and/or visual rhetorical principles.
3. Create a visual representation (e.g., models, drawings, scripts, performances, etc.) of a rhetorically-informed redesign for a new monument or memorial using visual design principles from the class. Your group can determine the media and technology used for the visual representation of the redesign.
4. Write an explanation of the rhetorical choices made in the redesign and how it is meant to be experienced by various viewing publics (approximately 1000–1500 words).
5. Submit your group's complete Monument/Memorial (Re)Design.
6. Write and submit an individual Self-Reflection Cover Letter, which will explain your experience, your contribution, and your learning on this project. You might answer the following questions:
    a. What have you learned about yourself as a learner and as a team player?
    b. How can you apply what you learned in this activity to new situations?

c. Describe your most successful or least successful interaction with your peers.
d. How did this experience challenge your assumptions and stereotypes?
e. What was the best/worst/most challenging thing that happened?
f. How would you do this next time?

Criteria

Though the individual criteria of the project will be evaluated on a four-point scale, the final project itself will receive a holistic score that includes a consideration of all components of the project in relation to one another, as shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1. Grading rubric for Monument/Memorial (Re)Design Project

Criteria	Comments	Points Received	Points Possible
Insightfulness of the original design photos			4
Thorough analysis of the original design using relevant sources			4
Thoughtfulness and creativity of the re-design			4
Strength, unity, and depth of rhetorical explanation of the redesign			4
Comments			
Overall Grade			

Better Practice 1: Build Interactive Support Groups

Despite the challenges of collaboration in online environments, we wanted to provide students with opportunities to engage with each other and the course materials. From experience, we know these multimodal assignments are meaningful to students because they often result in showcase artifacts for their professional portfolios. Yet, without strategic scaffolding, or intentional opportunities for students to engage with each other over the course of the

semester, we don't believe these communities are likely to form on their own, especially in online classes.

Strategy 1: Create Opportunities for Student Collaboration

The scaffolding of collaborative work was conceptualized early in our teaching team's conversations about the course, and we designed it to begin immediately in the semester even though the major collaborative project wasn't due until the end of the term. We were committed to developing an online learning community in which students knew one another: their names, their working styles, and their ideas. In our own preparation for online teaching, we read the warning that online instruction can easily become one-on-one interactions between the instructor with each student, which is not sustainable, and that it is more challenging to foster a community in online classes where students interact with one another in meaningful ways (Bourelle et al., 2015). We knew the challenge that students would face when collaborating online, but we also knew that introducing a project that demanded high levels of collaboration later in the semester could set students up for frustration if we didn't foster those relationships early on. Building a learning community was a necessary and natural component for success in the course.

The first aspect of community scaffolding for us was to foster what we call Inquiry Groups, which would be intentional from the outset of the class and remain consistent throughout the semester. We were initially worried about the risks of creating these groups early in the semester, such as students dropping out of the course or anticipating social conflicts. In our case, we were fortunate that neither of these happened; however, we were prepared to shift people around in the first few weeks of class as needed, which would still provide plenty of time for the groups to work together.

We began by developing weekly, low-stakes tasks asking students to work together on course material. These small assignments allowed us to see how students engaged with each other and to work on establishing healthy group dynamics. We embedded interactions for the Inquiry Groups into all aspects of the class since we were leaning on them to provide an intentional community where students would benefit from the stability of a few close relationships throughout the semester. Their Inquiry Groups became the place that they could turn to if they were struggling, if they missed course content, or when they needed a sounding board for their ideas.

Our first scaffolded collaboration was on the first day of class where students introduced themselves to one another—without the use of any written or spoken words. In a face-to-face class, we would have asked students to form random groups. However, this was a bit harder to facilitate in a Zoom room, so we used

Zoom's "break out" room feature to place students into random groups instead. Next, we gave them six to eight minutes to develop a slide or make a drawing that they would show their group members. Then, the hardest part: they were to remain silent as their group members spoke aloud what they thought was being communicated by the images. Only after a time did we let them affirm, correct, or complicate the interpretations. This activity introduced students to the peers who would likely form their Inquiry Group, but by the time they reach the Monument/Memorial (Re)Design collaboration, they will have worked together consistently to establish relationships, build rapport, and learn each other's strengths and weaknesses.

An example of this rapport can be seen with one of our groups that chose to redesign "Christ of the Abyss," an underwater statue designed by Italian sculptor Guido Galletti that was placed in the Mediterranean Sea in 1954. The students proposed a redesign that would move the statue to a new location in a museum exhibit, making it more accessible to the public. These students had been working together throughout the semester on discussion boards. They had also been regularly talking in breakout rooms during in-class discussions. By the time this high-stakes project came around, they were familiar with each other and their working styles. In their initial draft, they created a website that housed elaborate designs of the museum layout, including a 3D video tour of the exhibit. Yet, their effectiveness as a group was fully demonstrated when they made a late-stage decision to overhaul their project's delivery after receiving peer feedback on the limitations of their media platform. The week the project was due, we planned an in-class peer review day in which each group submitted a full draft of their project. Then, the groups were divided to review other groups' work, using a Google Doc to house their review and feedback. After spending the semester responding to and reflecting on each other's choices in these digital spaces through discussion board posts, students were primed and ready to provide in-depth feedback on their peers' projects. The "Christ of the Abyss" group received feedback about the need for more context about both the original monument and their redesign. Each group wrote a reflection on the feedback they received, and the "Christ of the Abyss" group can be seen processing the responses of their peers:

> We plan to use all the feedback we received because it was really helpful! Some of the feedback we hope to apply is:
>
> Transferring over to Wix so we can have a better design.
>
> Expanding on our analysis so we can [have] more information from the readings and why we went with this monument design.

> We also want to add more pictures and other visual items to add to the quality of our website design.
>
> We want to make sure we will have a good balance of information and visuals on the website.

The group went on to transfer their project to a new host site, accomplishing their goals by including extensive written explanations of the original monument, their proposed redesign, and several visual design examples. Without the scaffolding provided in the ongoing Inquiry Groups, we believe this group could not have managed such a comprehensive revision in an online class. However, since they knew each other well and had developed a working rapport, they were able to successfully bring this new vision to their project.

Strategy 2: Re-Vision Teaching Practices with Students

In addition to the regular working relationships student form in Inquiry Groups, we have revised other components of the class to scaffold active, supportive communities. Since we are mindful of the cognitive overload for students and instructors working in online environments (Mayer & Moreno, 2003), we also re-visioned our use of discussion boards. In the face-to-face class, discussion boards had been used primarily for students to demonstrate some engagement with assigned readings through a series of questions. These discussion boards were largely non-interactive between students; yet, as instructors, we read them to get a better sense of what content from the readings students connected with, where they had challenges, and if they could apply the abstract ideas to concrete examples. In the face-to-face setting, the discussion boards, despite their name, weren't used to foster interaction, which would happen more within the classroom setting.

Our first attempt at more meaningful dialogue on discussion boards was to break the assignment into two posts a week. Since we still met synchronously, we matched the posts up with the two class days in this way:

> **Week 1 Discussion Board Post**
>
> **Description:** Each week, you will complete two Canvas discussion board posts. The first post is due Tuesday by 8 a.m. and will usually ask you to engage with the course reading, viewing, and activities. Your second post will be due by 8 a.m. on Thursday and will respond to your inquiry group members on how these class materials apply to the larger project on which you are working.
>
> Breakdown:

> Tuesday: What concepts from the readings/viewings from this week were most meaningful to you? What resonated? What did not? What aspects of the material are most confusing? How do you think these ideas could or should be used/considered in your larger project?
>
> Thursday: Read through what your Inquiry Group members wrote in their discussion board posts for Tuesday. Respond to the posts, especially the question about how the materials from this week might relate to the larger projects on which you are currently working. We'll give you time at the end of class to discuss these projects and how you might be applying these principles.
>
> **Evaluation:** These posts are graded as complete/incomplete. Each week the discussion board posts are worth a possible 100 points total:
>
> Tuesday post complete: 50 points
>
> Thursday post complete: 50 points

At the start of the third week of class, we checked in with students and asked them for feedback on the way that the discussion boards were designed and realized our students weren't as excited about the design of this assignment as we were. Thanks to their thoughtful feedback, we realized that Thursday's response was a struggle for many students because of the quicker turn-around for reading and response. Many students would need to read far in advance to keep up because of external factors such as jobs or childcare; several would only have access to technology or the internet at certain times in the week.

As Asao Inoue succinctly puts it in *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*, "Creating healthier, fairer, more sustainable assessment ecologies in the classroom is not always about the classroom" (2015, pp. 294). We quickly saw our students' point. Based on their feedback, we determined that it would be better to shift back to students choosing one prompt to respond to each week and that they could use the second post to connect to the larger assignment. After listening to the students, three major revisions were made to the discussion boards to make them more accessible:

1. students only needed to make one original post a week and could choose which day to respond,
2. responses to their group members focused on applications to the major assignment, and
3. the evaluation was altered to a modified complete/incomplete scale.

Here is a sample of a revised discussion board assignment:

> **Discussion Board Post (Peer Response Format)**
>
> **Description:** This week we will conduct peer review of Major Assignment 1: Visual Representations of Identity project, which is due on Thursday October 8th. To give you more time to read and respond to each other's drafts, the due dates for this week's posts are different from what you're used to, so be sure to mark your calendars!
>
> Tuesday's Task: By 8 a.m. on Tuesday, October 6th, post a working draft* of your project to the Discussion Board. You'll upload a link to your website, your presentation file, your video, etc. We will give you time during class to meet with your groups to discuss your working drafts and any context or specific issues you'd like your group members to keep in mind.
>
> *Note: a working draft is a full version of your project that is ready for substantive feedback.
>
> Thursday's Task: By 8 a.m. on Thursday, October 8th, view your Inquiry Group members' drafts and post a brief reply to each group member (this means you'll make roughly two to three posts, depending on your group's size*). Remember, when engaging in peer review, you should position yourselves as an audience member. Think about your experience viewing, exploring, or listening to their project. Your replies should include:
>
> A **quote** from their project that stood out to you. This could be a bit of audio from a video, text from a presentation/website, etc.
>
> A **comment** that answers two questions: 1) What is working? 2) If this was your project, what would you do differently?
>
> A **question** that critically engages with their project. These questions could be practical about a choice they made in their design or production OR they could be more theoretical about their argument or positionality. Remember, stay curious and ask critical questions.
>
> *Note: We do not have a required reading for class on Thursday to give you more time to respond to each other's drafts. Like Tuesday, we will set aside time in class on Tuesday for your Inquiry Groups to meet and discuss feedback on each other's projects.

Evaluation: Total 100 points

100/100 points: draft and peer review comments posted on time.

75/100 points: draft OR peer review comments posted late.

50/100 points: draft AND peer review comments late.

50/100 points: draft OR peer review comments missing.

Better Practice 2: Sequence Readings, Activities, and Assignments

In addition to scaffolding the active, supportive community, we also considered how we might intentionally scaffold the readings, activities, and minor assignments in the online class to help support students in a class that required both collaboration and multimodal composing. While our examples above were to illustrate building scaffolded communities, they also begin to demonstrate what we mean by scaffolded assignments. Note, for example, where we described how the discussion board posts pointed students toward applying the class readings and viewings to the production project on which they were working at the time. As a teaching team, we agreed early on to combat the cognitive overload students face in an online class by scaffolding assignments in three ways:

1. clarifying connections between the readings, activities, and minor assignment and the major projects,
2. cutting out extraneous readings, activities, and minor assignments that did not relate directly one of the three major projects, and
3. creating checkpoints along the way to provide accountability to provide opportunities for formative feedback on the major projects.

Strategy 1: Build Connections Between Assignments

In addition to the readings and viewings we listed in the assignment description for the Monument and Memorial (Re)Design Project, we had students participate in two minor assignments during this unit that we designed to help them generate ideas and practice applying concepts in ways that modeled the work they would need to complete on the larger project. The two minor assignments were on vernacular memorials (makeshift memorials created by individuals rather than institutions, or individual expressions such as tattoos or car decals) and ideographs. The vernacular memorial assignment challenged students to expand their view of monuments and memorials to include local, personal sites of remembrance. This assignment was meant to be a relatively small exercise that would let them practice "noticing" monuments and memorials around us that we often overlook. Our description of this minor assignment is as follows:

Vernacular Memorials Project

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to practice identifying vernacular memorials, analyzing memorials as visual artifacts, and bringing into view memory spaces that may have become invisible to us because they are so common. All these skills will help prepare you for the monumental memorial project, which will ask you to identify, analyze, and redesign a monument or memorial as a group. In this assignment, you will . . .

- Select a vernacular memorial.
- Identify its function(s) and purpose(s).
- Explore its relationship to traditional public memorials.
- Reflect on how it engages with audiences and collective memory.

Tasks

- Create a Google Slides presentation.
- Find an example of a vernacular memorial and place one or more images of it on Slide 1 along with its title or a brief description.
- On Slide 2, write down your thoughts on the following questions:
  - How does the memorial function?
  - What might you assume about the person/people who created it?
  - How does it represent memory?
  - What purposes might it serve for various audiences?
- On Slide 3, cite or attribute any materials used in creating your presentation, such as images or texts.
- Post your Google Slides on your Inquiry Group's discussion board.
- Review your peers' posts and reflect on the posts as a whole, using the following questions as a guide:
  - What similarities or differences do you see across your memorials?
  - To what extent are these memorials more personal than a traditional public memorial?

Criteria

100 Points Possible:

- Completed Google Slides: 75 points.
- Completed Responses: 25 points.

This project, which would take only an hour or two to complete, was designed to facilitate invention and to get students to become more aware of public memory spaces in their everyday lives.

Another minor assignment that we decided to keep in the online course is an ideographic mix. In response to a challenging reading called "Representative Form and the Visual Ideograph" by Janis Edwards and Carol Winkler (1997), students were asked to create an ideographic remix of a popular monument or memorial. As Edwards and Winkler describe, an ideographic remix happens when an artist or composer appropriates a well-known image and remixes usually to make a political statement by associating the value of the original image to the remixed image, challenging the value of the original, or both. The example they use in the article is the famous photo-turned-monument of the U.S. soldiers raising the flag at Iwo Jima (featured as Figure 4.1). To understand ideographic remix, students must first identify the context, values, and message of the original and determine the rhetorical effects of remixes that trouble the original. Like the vernacular memorials project, the ideograph project contained ways of thinking and composing that we thought were helpful steppingstones towards the larger monument and memorial project.

Figure 4.1. The famous photo-turned-monument of the U.S. soldiers raising the flag at Iwo Jima (available in the public domain).

Figure 4.2. Emily's reimaged ideograph.

For example, in Figure 4.2, Emily used her ideographs project to analyze and reimagine Alfred Eisenstaedt's iconic photo "V-J Day in Times Square" and Lt. Charles Levy's "Atomic Cloud Rises Over Nagasaki, Japan." In this remix, Emily layers the colorized version of the people kissing over the original atomic cloud photo with the words "Make Love Not War" (shown as Figure 4.2). Emily's remix demonstrates her understanding of context, values, and messages of the originals. The background image of the atomic cloud standing in for the devastation of war, while the two people kissing represents pure relief and hope at the end of WWII. Emily's reflection also noted that the positive feelings she attributed to the two people in Eisenstaedt's photo came at the cost of the devastation represented by Levy's photo of the atomic cloud, further establishing her full consideration of the contexts of the two images, which were taken a mere five days apart in 1945.

While designing this image, Emily intentionally chose to highlight the two people in color for aesthetic design and heightened visibility. She also wanted the contrast to represent her own understanding of the original images and her chosen quote: the two people in the photo are colorized because they represent hope for the future. While creating this image, Emily learned a good deal about how to combine and manipulate images, which was a skill that she later used when working with her group on their Monument/Memorial (Re)Design to

create images for their project. This minor assignment gave Emily a deeper understanding of a key concept in the course, practical knowledge for how to approach analyzing and remixing images, and an opportunity to experiment with different platforms and technical skills in order to create a deliverable product.

Ideographs Project

Purpose

The purpose of this assignment is to practice identifying ideographs, visually analyzing images using the principles we've learned in class and designing visuals with an argument in mind.

Tasks

1. Create a Google Slides presentation.
2. Find an ideographic image and two to three remixes of it. Put those photos on slide 1.
3. On slide 2, write down your thoughts about these two questions:
    a. What is the original context and meaning of the image?
    b. What is the current context and meaning of the remix?
4. Make your own remix on slide 3. Take the ideographic image you analyzed and remix it to make a new argument. On the same slide, write a short (two to three sentences) explanation of the new meaning.
5. On Slide 4, cite or attribute any materials used in creating your presentation, such as images or texts.
6. Post your Google Slides on your Inquiry Group's discussion board.
7. Review your peers' remixes and share your thoughts on their work.

Criteria

100 Points Possible:

- Completed Google Slides: 75 points.
- Completed Responses: 25 points.

Because students often choose to engage in cultural critique within the Monument and Memorial (Re)Design, we thought this assignment would prime them for the clever creative work they might engage in since many students select public memories that have flattened historical figures or events such as depictions of the Civil War, Civil Rights, American Independence, the Holocaust, etc. We kept both projects in the online version of the class because they offered students the opportunity to explore core concepts in depth that would likely be helpful to generate and focus on ideas for the larger project. We also intentionally mirrored

the task and criteria of the assignments, which helped limit confusion while also streamlining our assessment of them.

Strategy 2: Develop Regular Checkpoints for Major Projects

Finally, we created scaffolded readings, activities, and minor assignments through developing a regular and intentional pattern of feedback that consisted of checkpoints, workshops, and conferencing. One of our concerns about education more generally but also specifically about online education is that coursework might be getting reduced and simplified in ways that undermine some of the experiences in relation to brick-and-mortar education. Of course, we need to be vigilant about accessibility and mindful of the busy lives of our students. At the same time, we don't want to lessen or otherwise devalue the online experience. While it's a hypothetical case, imagine if our face-to-face classes had collaboration, interactions, and multimodal composition while our online class contained only self-paced modules with multiple choice quizzes and tests for assessment? If online education isn't as rich and productive an experience as in-person education, we undermine the value of the online educational experience. Therefore, in our commitment to a robust course that includes collaboration, interaction, and multimodal composing. Moreover, we know that students need accountability and formative feedback in order to stay focused on the larger assignments throughout the full time-period we have allotted for the project. Part of the value of these larger, creative multimodal projects is that they can't be completed the night before the assignment is due. They have components that require time to think, develop, consider feedback, revise, and edit if they want to have the type of showcase pieces they'll want to include in their professional portfolios.

In response, we developed checkpoints and other graded activities that would ensure that students would begin working right away, have opportunities for formative feedback from our teaching team and their classmates, and develop their work over time. We scheduled these at minimum every other week, but many times, we had something due weekly. To make this manageable for us as instructors, the checkpoints and assignments had to be relatively quick and easy to evaluate and provide feedback. A first checkpoint for an assignment might be for students to identify the topic for or site of the first project in just a sentence or two; this initial idea could come in the form of writing, video, or brief conference even within a class period using a breakout room. By creating expectations and rewarding students for their efforts, we nudge them along to ensure they have early momentum on the projects and receive the feedback and technical support along the way to expect and reward them to work throughout the project.

In face-to-face instruction, but even more so in online education, providing scaffolding like checkpoints assists students in managing these larger projects and gives instructors the opportunity to see along the way which students are making good progress and which are struggling with anything from ideas to production to time management. These short check-in times don't take long, but they provide us with a wealth of information to help support students as they develop the knowledge and skills to participate in these more ambitious projects. While not all online classes need to be this ambitious all the time, we hope at least some are, especially when students get into classes that are closely related to their personal and professional goals. Otherwise, we run the risk of minimizing students' educational experiences and undermining the value of accessible education.

REFLECTION ON PRACTICE AND CONCLUSION

One of the most difficult tasks we faced while working on the design of our course was finding ways to cut down and revise content in a way that would still allow us to meet the course goals and outcomes that we wanted and finding creative ways to build community and support that wouldn't put an onerous burden on ourselves or our students. We were starting to "think holistically about what classroom writing assessment is or could be for teachers and students" and "seeing classroom writing assessment in its entirety, not just parts of it" (Inoue, 2015, p. 9). Thanks to Michael and Amory's experiences in the spring, we knew that we would have to do quite a lot of revision to the course to make it align with the best practices for teaching online. Even with careful planning and the best intentions, things still went awry, as tends to be the case in any given semester. If something was broken, we listened to students before determining a course of action together, and this act served to strengthen discussions and lessons in the larger class.

The overarching frame of our course is interconnected, relying on strategic scaffolding throughout all aspects of the course. For example, we were very intentional when choosing readings and revising low-stakes projects for the course, ensuring that both always contributed directly to each other. The strategic scaffolding with minor projects and readings, components were designed to build on one another as we progressed through the semester. We also used the major projects to help us frame the units of our classes to create a tangible, specific vision for everything we did in class or online. If we could make a recommendation to other instructors hoping to implement collaborative and non-traditional projects in their online courses, we would urge them to be flexible in course design, responsive to students' needs, and intentional with each assignment and reading.

We owed many of our successes to the advantages we had as a three-person team who had both time and experience on our side as we planned. Some of the practices we used here may not be feasible for an individual instructor to attempt, and the agency that we had over our course content and design was a privilege that many instructors may not share. Even so, our chapter offers a snapshot of one approach to building meaningful learning moments and communities in digital environments and many of our practices are adaptable across contexts and modalities. In an in-person, real-time learning course, soliciting regular updates or feedback on the course throughout the semester could help instructors identify and address problems early, function as a form of accountability for students, or some combination of both. Another example is creating long-term small groups to foster community in larger classrooms, regardless of modality.

The most important thing for determining the value and usability of these practices is the instructor's individual and institutional context. There's no one-size-fits-all solution to scaffolding a writing course. Taking the time to articulate what we wanted our students to learn and how we wanted to help our students to learn is what inspired our re-visioning of this course. The ongoing reflection and discussions we had amongst ourselves and with students helped us make decisions that centered student experiences, scaffolded their learning, and fostered collaboration—all in the interest of building a sense of community and support in a distanced environment.

MOVING BETTER PRACTICES ACROSS MODALITIES

- **In-Person, Real-Time Learning:** feedback on the course can be collected by providing time in class for students to discuss assignments or expectations in small groups before discussing it as a larger class.
- **Online, Real-Time Learning:** feedback on the course can be collected by providing time in class for small group discussions in breakout rooms or through anonymized quizzes or surveys. In both options, discussing the concerns that students bring up can help instructors make helpful adjustments or clarifications to the course schedule or assignments.
- **Online, Any Time Learning:** incorporate conferences or email "check ins" with individual students to discuss their progress in the course or set up an anonymized quiz or survey to collect feedback from students. A third option might be to have students respond to smaller, group discussion boards rather than a large class-wide one. Checking in with students enrolled in online, any time courses and creating opportunities for them to engage with each other in smaller

settings can help the class to feel less impersonal and more like a learning community.

- **Hybrid Learning:** any combination of the above suggestions could work for this modality. For instance, instructors could use the times that they meet face-to-face with students as an opportunity to check in with them regarding their progress or they could do the opposite and allow students to check in via a survey or quiz as one of their online assigned tasks.

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