

Blended Environments: Teaching the Cultural of University through First-year Writing

Research questions:

- In the online First-year Writing course what university literacies are being taught?
- What aspects of university culture are first-year students learning?

Methodology:

- RAD inquiry, using textual analysis (coding) of student writing samples.
- critical engagement with the idea of blended learning (what does it mean to have blended learning be a student-led initiative, and to have student choose the blended learning option)?
- successful blended learning program requires alignment of institutional, faculty (Moskal, Dziuban and Hartman, 2012)
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Link with other research and points to take-away?

- The move to teaching writing online because of the emergency response to COVID-19 has presented a new level of complexity to our teaching.
- This work helps to consider the role of the first-year writing classroom at a small Ontario technical university as a site of learning not simply writing and discipline-specific discourse, but the culture of University.
- This situation presents a unique time in which to re-question University culture and how it appears/manifests when the University moves online.

Results:

- One key hypothesis that will be tested is how race and gender map on to the student experience online
- how University literacies and culture are resisted, challenged, subverted or embodied by different students.

Professional audience / Journals:

- Writing teachers, student advisors and administrators This work is just beginning and the workshop will be a wonderful environment to share and gain feedback.

Institutional Description: 1-2 brief paragraphs that describe the institutional factors that influence your research project (either the institution you are from or the institution in which your research is occurring). We will send you a set of questions a few weeks before the workshop to

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further prompt your thinking about how your context will need to be explained to fellow workshop participants.

- Ontario Tech University is a small Ontario Technical University (numbers from admissions and size relative to the other Ontario Universities and Canadian Universities as a whole)
- Most of the students are first generation, and many are from a South Asian background (More of the percentage of students with English as an additional language and length of time studying in Canada, also the identity of students as a whole at the University and FSSH)
- The focus of this research is in the Social Science and Humanities Faculty, which is usually located in the Downtown core of Oshawa.
- FSSH, focus is on Criminology, Forensic Psychology and Communication Studies
- Common first-year, new developments of programs - no departments because we are still very new and small University
- In Canada and in particular in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area) the pandemic has led to forced online learning for Ontario Tech (there are no face-to-face classes)
- We also are under a State of Emergency, all non-essential travel is restricted, stores are closed and people must work from home. This also includes day cares, elementary and high schools. Online learning is happening for the elementary and high school students with the help of parents, and family members. This means that many of the University students are helping with the online schooling of younger family members, in addition to their own learning. Our students might be working in an essential service or might be facing job loss due to the pandemic.
- The pandemic and the restrictions specific for the Canadian context are very important for this research.
- Blended learning is a key term being used by the University administration to describe our teaching and learning environment and the way our University might be positioning itself for the future
- No definition is used for blended learning and the academic discourse on blended learning is not part of the University's articulation of this practice

*Key Theorists: A one-page digest of **key theorists and frames used in the choice of methods and research design**; this should highlight between 2 and 5 main perspectives that guide your work: the scholars you cite most often, or the “schools of thought” you draw from. Each entry should be just a few sentences long—enough to give readers an understanding of your methods and analytic frames. *This framing will be particularly important in this workshop setting: we will ask you to emphasize this material in your actual workshop introduction.**

- (Bartholomae, D. 1985. “Inventing the university”. In *When a writer can't write: Studies in writer's block and other composing process problems*, Edited by: Rose, M. 134–165. New York: Guilford. [[Google Scholar](#)]; 1987; Bartholomae & Petrosky, 1986)
- Ron Owston (2013): Blended learning - special issue
- The idea of communities of practice is important to the ideas of building a learning community within classes - Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. M. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Glossary: A list of any potentially context/culture-specific terms, both practical and profound; the glossary collectively produced will be further discussed during the workshop itself.

- blended learning / teaching /classroom
- University literacies
- university culture