

Hidalgo, Alexandra. *Cámara Retórica: Feminist Filmmaking Methodology for Rhetoric and Composition*. Computers and Composition Digital Press. Utah State UP, 2016. Video book.

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Alexandra Hidalgo's video book, *Cámara Retórica: Feminist Filmmaking Methodology for Rhetoric and Composition*, unpacks the ways in which the fields of rhetoric and composition have engaged historically in film and video production. In looking toward the future of filmmaking, Hidalgo advocates that a fourth-wave feminist approach ensures the collaborative nature that encompasses all scholarship, stressing an intersectional and social justice approach. Hidalgo's work is not only a relevant contribution to maintaining a commitment to digital media production, but also to advocating for an ethical open-access initiative, providing transcripts, closed captions, and access to all with an internet connection through the venue of *Computers and Composition Digital Press*. The video book embodies a critical and theoretically rich feminist approach to filmmaking within rhetoric and composition, pushing us to author and to respond to moving-images and multimodal composing from a social justice and feminist approach as we engage with the world around us.

The first chapter, "Introduction to Feminist Filmmaking in Rhetoric and Composition" begins with a sleepless night in which Hidalgo finds herself nursing her son, Santiago, while simultaneously grappling with the contention between motherhood and academia. Possessing five years of experience as a filmmaker with seven short-feature documentaries, Hidalgo reflects on the ways in which the videos she has crafted of her sons and her life provide a sense of passion and fulfillment, yet do not count as "work" toward tenure and promotion. She then envisions a path in which she might combine her love of filmmaking with her career—harnessing her love of family in the creation of five films which she would make count toward tenure and promotion through the methodologies offered the chapters that remain. Hidalgo asserts that this video book, one of the five projects, is meant "to make it possible for viewers to make the film and video projects that speak the loudest to their hearts and minds and to make them in ways that will count towards multiple aspects

of their scholarship.” She immediately situates her video book alongside the voices of other new media scholars such as Michael Day, Susan Delagrange, Mike Palmquist, Michael Pemberton, and Janice Walker, pointing out that being a scholar “means engaging in reflective, well-informed practices that help us accomplish the goals of advancing and sharing our knowledge and what it means to write and be a writer.”

Though the fields of rhetoric and composition have made important contributions in moving-image scholarship, Hidalgo argues that there is still an inadequate representation of these kinds of works when compared to the robust consumption and production of moving-images within the public sphere. Referencing the fact that YouTube is the second leading search engine behind Google, Hidalgo maintains that twenty-first-century literacies, which encompass video and moving-images, provide a rationale for her choice of medium for her scholarship. She ends the first chapter by situating the terms that she engages with for the rest of the film, unpacking familiar concepts such as viewer, rhetorician, and feminism from a particular perspective that grounds the argument of the text. She also introduces ten scholars in rhetoric and composition who have created films and videos and explains her rationale for weaving excerpts from interviews with these scholars throughout the film

Hidalgo dedicates the second chapter, “The Principles of Feminist Filmmaking,” to an exposition of a feminist filmmaking approach. To situate her engagement with the term feminism, Hidalgo aligns herself with Susan Delagrange, who states that that that “feminism pays attention to equality and justice, to difference and empowerment, to access, to gender, but also to race, class, ethnicity, religion, ability, and other categories in which individuals or groups are under-represented, misrepresented, or not represented at all” (Delagrange qtd in Hidalgo). Hidalgo then addresses the difference between a feminist film and a feminist filmmaking approach: a feminist film is the *product*, while a feminist filmmaking approach is the *process* of collaborating, attending to social justice, and providing for participant well-being. She offers six guiding practices for feminist filmmaking:

1. Foster diversity in front of and behind the camera
2. Engage in an ethics of interdependence with crewmembers
3. Engage in an ethics of interdependence with documentary participants
4. Practice mentorship
5. Practice strategic communication
6. Address social justice

In discussing each of these guiding practices, Hidalgo addresses the ways in which she has made a conscious effort to embody the practices in her past and current work, referencing her documentary *Vanishing Borders* as an example of how a feminist filmmaking approach can be enacted.

Chapter three, "A Taxonomy of Rhetorician's Film and Video Production," unpacks the ways in which rhetoricians approach moving-image production as scholarship. To begin, Hidalgo references Adam Banks chair's address at the 2015 Conference on College Composition and Communication in which he emphasized the importance of "embrace[ing] technology issues, not as part of what we do, but as central to what we do" (Banks qtd. in Hidalgo). Hidalgo uses this assertion to frame the ways in which moving-image production has been and should continue to be an integral part of rhetoric and composition's scholarship. In order to categorize the ways in which this is achieved, Hidalgo offers a taxonomy of moving-image work for rhetoricians based on commitment-level to the medium. In this taxonomy, scholars are either identify lifers, by which she means scholars who view moving-images as a medium of choice, or casual offenders, by which she means those who may occasionally engage in moving-images. Hidalgo notes that casual offenders outnumber the lifers and often benefit from the mentorship that lifers can provide as experienced filmmakers. Next, Hidalgo names the kinds of production associated with moving images: video essay, remixes, documentaries, and experimental animation. Hidalgo further breaks down some of these categories, noting the different yet often overlapping genres of the academic versus the general interest documentary. Lastly, she distinguishes between supportive video (meaning video embedded within a larger text-based work) and standalone video, encouraging rhetoricians to produce more standalone videos, claiming, "the principle of feminist filmmaking that best applies to publication presentation is mentorship." Practicing mentorship to other lifers and casual offenders in supporting the production of standalone video is strongly advocated by Hidalgo as an inherent part of practicing a feminist filmmaking methodology.

Rhetoricians' experience with filmmaking technologies varies based on both access and engagement, Hidalgo explains in chapter four. While lifers may have more experience with editing software and greater access to professional tools, casual offenders are often self-taught or use trial-and-error. To provide support for her claims about rhetorical scholars' experience with filmmaking, Hidalgo integrates clips from the interviews she conducted as part of her qualitative study. While some of the interviewees, such as Don Unger, a graduate student at the time of the interview, used the resources of his institution, others, such as faculty member and lifer bonnie kyburz, collaborated with a student intern who had film production experience. Hidalgo references Alex Reid's assertion that "there is clearly a significant gap between having the basic technical skill and equipment to make a video and having the skill and equipment to make a *professional* video" (Reid qtd. in Hidalgo). In order to develop guidelines for how to make films as rhetoricians, Hidalgo asserts that we first need to get acquainted with the technology. Whether we are filming

with our iPhones or using software such as Final Cut Pro, the learning curve of the tools necessary to produce a film can be steep. Hidalgo also stresses the collaborative nature of filmmaking, arguing that the relationships among all who contribute to a film is reciprocal, with each contributor mentoring and learning from one another.

To support academic filmmaking, Hidalgo also offers in chapter four some strategies for financing, speaking to the ways in which others in the field have obtained institutional grants, paid out of pocket, or utilized the resources already available to them. Further, she discusses navigating copyright, particularly as it pertains to remix, and dealing with representation on mainstream platforms such as YouTube while also grappling with the power dynamic of advertisements. "From a feminist perspective," she argues, "it can be problematic to have ads placed on our work, especially since we have no control over what the ads are and they may advocate something we are against." These concerns raised by Hidalgo are relevant to how we engage with not only our scholarly identity, but also how we are to gain exposure in the filmmaking world. As in previous chapters, she discusses the value in repurposing other scholars' work as a practice of citation, offering the caveat that to do this work in ways that count toward publication, works cited pages and transcripts should be made available.

Wrapping up chapter four, Hidalgo reinforces the importance of accessibility to video production, advocating the resources like transcripts and citations, not only to help increase exposure of the scholars referenced but also help to increase access for viewers and the film itself as scholarship. In order to build this identity of a film as a scholarly conversation, Hidalgo also offers anecdotes and excerpts from interviewees about navigating the IRB process in filmmaking. Finally, she offers some guidelines for rhetoricians as they approach film and video production by providing tips in cinematography, lighting, framing, sound, music, transitions, and text. The chapter concludes with the note that while important to consider, "[o]ur guidelines should not be absolute or we'll shut the door on innovative work."

Building on the scholarship of pioneers such as Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher, Hidalgo uses chapter five to speak to ways in which we can make digital work count for tenure and promotion. Alongside Catherine Braun, Hidalgo argues that frequently our digital work is layered on top of traditional alphabetic text, often having the effect of "shutting down or postponing a lot of potentially innovative or important work while individuals create the scholarship that their departments will value" (Braun qtd. in Hidalgo). To address this limitation, Hidalgo offers an in-depth discussion of the genres of film and video scholarship and levels of community engagement. Hidalgo unpacks the existing opportunities for video work in conference presentations,

peer-reviewed publications, grant applications, film festival screenings, and university, classroom, and community-screenings. While not necessarily opportunities that directly tie toward peer review or tenure and promotion, Hidalgo claims that press coverage in the public arena, via venues such as NPR and newspapers, also helps to reach populations outside of academia and further demonstrates such work as both critical and scholarly. As part of a feminist filmmaking approach to scholarship, Hidalgo asserts that we need to focus attention on the crewmember work that we engage in because it is an important facet of the collaborative process of filmmaking. Having sections in our vitae in which we chronicle the ways that we've participated in other filmmakers' productions is part of what Hidalgo refers to as an "ethics of interdependence." In addition to screenings and community engagement, Hidalgo argues for the importance of online distribution and the circulation it affords for press opportunities and critical engagement. To conclude, Hidalgo argues that we can help to make our films count toward tenure and promotion by fostering more digital-friendly environments in our departments and beyond, showcasing her own tenure negotiation and work with graduate students' theses and dissertations as ways to be more supportive of new media work.

In the video book's final chapter, "The Future of Film and Video Production in Rhetoric and Composition," Hidalgo offers not only a narrative detailing the scholarly upbringing that led to her interest in filmmaking but also six contributions that rhetoric and composition can offer film and video production. From an eagerness to publish digital scholarship, to the pedagogical affordances of film and video specifically, Hidalgo discusses the ways in which rhetoric and composition has embraced digital scholarship, arguing, "although we haven't paid as much attention to film and video as we should, we have strong support systems set up for digital scholars. From robust mentorship to using the ethics of interdependence to transform departments into digital-friendly spaces, our field is uniquely positioned to nurture digital production." Hidalgo asserts that mentoring between lifers and casual offenders is essential, as is harnessing our field's commitment to social justice and the affordances of a feminist filmmaking approach. Hidalgo is optimistic as she looks to the future of rhetoric and composition and the new wave of scholars entering the field, stating "if we train more of our graduate students in film and video production, these newly minted lifers and casual offenders can take those practices to their departments as they start their academic careers at institutions across the country."

Although Hidalgo asserts in the beginning of the video book that pedagogy for feminist filmmaking is a concept that isn't discussed in this video book, I see it tied closely to her focus on mentoring. As someone hoping to mentor future members of the field, I'm excited to hear more from Hidalgo on the

ways in which we can teach and support feminist filmmaking practices at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. This work is not only an important contribution to our field's engagement with new media and multimodality, but it also pushes us to fulfill Banks's call to further embrace technology and to diversify both our collaborations and the scholarship we engage with in our own work. The methodology Hidalgo offers is one that makes intentional moves to showcase the collaborative nature of filmmaking while also focusing on feminist and cultural rhetorics scholarship in rhetoric and composition.

About the Author

Lucy Johnson holds a Ph.D. from Washington State University and in Fall 2018 will join the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire as an Assistant Professor of Digital Literacies. Her research focuses on visual and digital rhetoric, tracing early contact-era Latin American rhetoric and contemporary digital literacy and hybrid composing through the lens of decolonial theory. Prior to pursuing her PhD, she earned her MA in English Pedagogy at Northern Michigan University, focusing on the application of multimodal pedagogy within first-year composition. The contemporary component of her current research focuses on the Japanese Unicode system of emoji and the iterations of updates and design shifts within the keyboard as both a response to globalization and, in turn, the appropriation of its symbols.