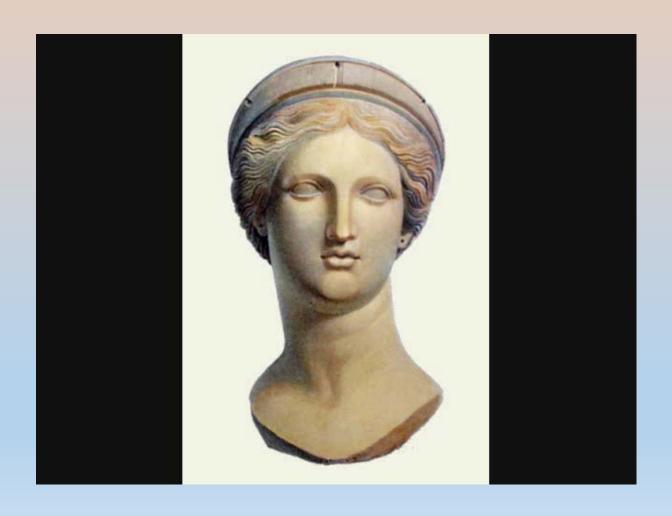# Encouraging a Different View of Writing:

Transitioning to a Multimodal Model in WAC

Presented by: Dr. Deborah Coulter-Harris,
University of Toledo

https://youtu.be/nDkkG0cEpHw

Introduction

- Increased focus on multimodal elements prepare students for jobs in the real world.

- How to meet these demands? redesign curriculums/assignments, implement professional development workshops, take strategic action to educate faculty

- **Mr. Paul Conner:** will argue that the subject matter in multimodal WAC classrooms should be action-oriented: a poster session, website, or graphic memoir.
  - connect with local communities in a call for action.

- **Dr. Anthony Edgington:** Director of Composition at the University of Toledo, will discuss methods writing program administrators can use to better educate experienced and novice writing instructors, along with themselves, about the value in creating a stronger focus on multimodal writing assignments in writing classrooms.

The Argument: Writing to Compete

- **Generate innovative projects** that engage creative, techno-literate, organic capacities of new generation of writers.

  - Train relevant writers in competitive global environment.

- New writing opportunities in future electronically-based.

  - Writers should **incorporate new modes** across WAC curriculums.

  - Future **workplace writing demands multimodal inventions**, integration of visual genres/technologies.

- Increased focus on multi-modal methods necessary for today's classrooms:

  - Ability to **synthesize/express ideas** in exciting new ways.

  - Boosts students' **creativity** and **strengthens writing voice**.

Experiment beyond Conventional

- ***Multimodal composition utilizes media*** other than print on paper for communication and structure.
  - Blogs, PP presentations, poster sessions, creating and writing about YouTube videos, Podcasts, visual arguments via PP slides, brochures etc.: other ways to make arguments and enter critical discourse. In multimodal composition, **printed essay does not govern communications.**

  - Multimodal composing: uses wide range of semiotic resources, includes combination of images, sound, color, animation and *text* (Takayoshi, Hawisher, & Selfe, 2007, pp. 1-12).

  - Cognitive and socially situated choices students make in compositions today.

Experiment beyond Conventional

- Students across disciplines: knowing in literacy capabilities:
  - embraced rapid changes in human communication.

- Future employments demand experiential learning: focus on real world writing:
  - hyper-textual/multimodal in nature.

Experiment beyond Conventional

- Innovative, multimodal projects for business writing class:
  - **Advertising portfolio** includes: unsolicited sales proposal, all types of original marketing documents, brochures, magazines, a DVD video mock-sales pitch, and PowerPoint presentations that includes music and YouTube videos of Toledo.

  - Another multimodal activity: advertising campaign to sell product on the Home Shopping Network.
    - Students created sales pitch, wrote/filmed ad, posted to YouTube, uploaded to new class Facebook page.
    - Process memo.

Experiment beyond Conventional

- **Specialized Facebook pages for specific courses:**
  - growing **library** of open-source information on specialized topics,
  - training ground in **summarizing and analyzing** information,
  - place to upload students' self-produced videos on specified subject matter,
  - tool to develop sophisticated, cogent, and respectful responses to others' analytic comments and summaries of electronic texts,
  - place **to build community** among students,
  - lesson to **analytically summarize** the articles in preparation for longer analytic research assignments.
- Comments/responses to Facebook postings engaged students in further **analysis/ debate** and taught them to take **rhetorical position.**

Experimental Facebook Pages

https://www.facebook.com/Composition-I-Global-Food-Water-and-Demographic-Crisis-419693638068075/ **

https://www.facebook.com/International-Information-Agency-309947025711357/

https://www.facebook.com/CompIINaturalSciencesAndMedicine/ **

https://www.facebook.com/ScientificTechnicalWriting/

Experiment beyond Conventional

- Ancient orators knew **importance of visual vividness.**

- In his *Rhetoric,* Aristotle describes importance of words/graphic metaphors that "set the scene before our eyes," defines graphic as "making your hearers see things."

- Aristotle defines rhetoric primarily as invention, "discovering the best available means of persuasion," and multimodal composing fosters expanded array of available means.

Nurturing a Unique Voice

- Cultivate authentic, organic, unique, creative writing voice.

- Young writers force themselves to write in voice that is pretentious, unnatural; perceived is expected in college classes.

- Introduce multimodal discourse: Personal memory-narrative: relies on a student's unique avenue of expression, personal experience, and remembrance of past while employing alphabetic with other modes of expression.
  - original drawings that represented the scenes they had painted with their words, blending painting and written expression together, or inserted graphic images from the Internet.

Nurturing a Unique Voice

Multimodal Narratives teach students to:

- embrace their linguistic differences, but elevate linguistic choices;
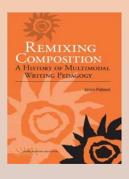
- develop a consciousness of ethos and pathos;

- select topics unique to their own experience;

- write in a conversational style;

- develop creative visual texts that respond to and integrate with the written word.

Evolving Pedagogy

- Coevolution among multimodal forms of communication and writing projects in our WAC/WID courses that emphasizes varied modes of linguistic expression.

- Addition of multimodal projects:
  - enriches student knowledge/analytic skills,
  - improves ability to convey meaning,
  - prepares them for real-world employment in a variety of disciplines,
  - allows students to compress meaning (i.e. to integrate the alphabetic with the graphic).

Evolving Pedagogy

- Multi-modal writing should express:
  - an awareness of context, purpose, audience in students' major disciplines and selected future occupations.
- Social contexts should also be a component in assessing a multimodal assignment's "effectiveness" (Inoue, 2005).
- Faculty can grow standards for multimodal assignments; assessment tools can evaluate the multi-elemental interrelationship of modes in a multimodal text such as:
  - clarity, persuasiveness, arrangement, choice of medium, use of imagery, animation, layout, use of hyperlinks, use of and appeal to senses, and relevance within a specific social context.

Evolving Pedagogy

- Instructors should:

  - assess proficiencies students already possess regarding available, multimodal means.

  - assist students in acquiring multimodal metalanguage that enhances, improves, and coordinates with their basic literacy competencies.

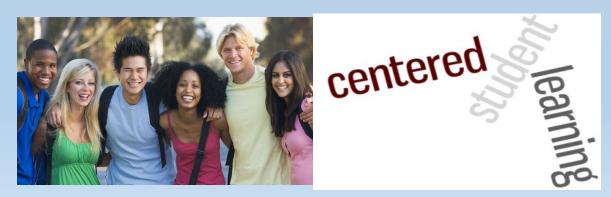- Multimodal classroom - zone that connects to students' real worlds.

Evolving Pedagogy

- Palmeri (2012, p. 156) concluded that multimodal writing:

  - **stimulates innovative expression,**

  - instructors should add multimodal composing into every class in students' majors.

- Palmeri defended multimodal composing as unique because it "employs a process-based pedagogy that is specifically informed by the field of composition studies"(p. 157).

Multimodal within Social Context

- Encourages students to **form perspectives and analyze issues** in contemporary society via multiple communication modes.

- Writing from a multimodal perspective: "may well encourage a critical rethinking and reformulation of the relationship between text and society" (Baldry and Thibault, 2006, p. 1).

- Graphic elements in multimodal composing constitutive of contemporary reality, but, according to Machin and Mayr (2015), they influence and preserve a society's ideologies (p.19).

Multimodal within Social Context

- Multimodal practice:
  - activates awareness of relationship among modes, learning, and identity.

  - allows pedagogy of multimodal composing to respond to the needs of students

    from diverse backgrounds.

  - aligns with student-centered approach to teaching/learning that justifies fresh

    forms of rhetorical invention that influence contemporary writing pedagogy.

Concluding Argument: Suggesting Experimentation

- Never been time in history when students had so many rhetorical choices.

- Multimodal writing:
  - amends concepts of scholarship in universities and colleges, particularly in WAC/WID writing classes,
  - engagement in this form of writing elevates students' interests and digital abilities, validates their rhetorical choices, and amplifies social change and its influence on academia (Simon, Acostic, & Houtman, 2014, p. 66).

- "Instead of writing to learn, composing to learn gives space for multimodalities and engagements in the composing process that could support content engagement across disciplines" (Cole, 2015, p. 205).

Concluding Argument: Suggesting Experimentation

- Not proposing every WAC/WID or other course engage every assignment as a multimodal activity.

- Proposing that multimodal **experimentation** is needed.

Fin

Contact Information

Dr. Deborah M. Coulter-Harris

Department of English Language and Literature

Telephone: 419-530-4416

Email: Deborah.coulter-harris@utoledo.edu

Amazon Author's Page with Bio: http://www.amazon.com/Deborah-M.-Coulter-Harris/e/B00E5LY54M