News

“Cultivating Puzzlement: Teachers Who Transfer from the High School to College”
Doug Hesse

Upcoming Conferences and Events

Upcoming Speakers
Patricia Bizzell, Tuesday, April 19

Upcoming Conferences
PCA/ACA Conference, April 8-11, New Orleans, LA
CCCC, March 17-20, 2010, Louisville, KY
Submission Deadline: May 8, 2009
Technical Communication Summit, May 3-6, Atlanta, GA
Computers and Writing, June 18-21, UC, Davis, CA
WPA Summer Workshop and Conference, July 12-19, Minneapolis, MN
International Society for the History of Rhetoric, July 22-26, Montreal, Canada

Summer Institutes
Digital Media and Composition, June 4-16, 2009
The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH
Writing Center Summer Institute, July 12-17
Temple University, Philadelphia, PA

Faculty Profiles

DU Writing Program Faculty as Presenters at “Her Story, Our Story” – the 14th Annual DU Women’s Conference
Carol Samson

Program Profiles

Interview with Linda Tate, Author of Power in the Blood: A Family Narrative
Carol Samson
Students Want to Know

Eric Fretz
Linda Tate

Students Want to Know: Why Do I Need to Buy this Expensive Textbook?
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John Tiedemann at the Agora
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Writing Program Hosts Open Mic Night
Kamila Kinyon

Student Writing
**WRIT 1122**
Geoffrey Bateman and John Tiedemann:
-- A Service Learning Blog: [DenveRhetor](#)

Jennifer Campbell: [Position Statement](#)
-- Karina Benziger's [Position Statement](#)
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Heather Martin: [The Subvertisement](#)
-- Jayne Illovsky, "Following in the Wrong Footsteps" [PDF](#)

**WRIT 1133**
Rebekah Shultz Colby: [Research Article](#)
-- Kevin Harris, "Using Facebook in the Classroom" [PDF](#)

--- [Writing Faculty Scholarship](#)


---. "Afterword: From Plainchant to Polyphony." In Ostergard, Ludwig, and Nugent. (See Ludwig, below.)
---. Sustainability after the Honeymoon: Lessons from an Innovative Program in its Third Year." CCCC. San Francisco. 12 March 2009.


-- "Consultant Training in a Post-Process Writing Center,"
-- "Training Writing Consultants to be Visual Rhetoricians,"
CCCC, March 11-14.

Carol Samson, Kelli Custer, Casey Rountree, and I spoke at the College Language Arts Society (CLAS) conference, a gathering of (this year) 330 Colorado English teachers, most of whom were high school teachers. Carol Samson framed her remarks around a study of teachers that focused on their career progressions, using it to talk about her own rich teaching life and her coming to DU; if you don't change, you get embittered, and the varied perspectives in our program encourage change. Kelli Custer explained how her sense of puzzlement when she taught in a Florida high school (“who are these guys?”) was mirrored when she came to DU (“who are these guys?”) and that teaching in both settings required knowing the identities of students. Casey Rountree talked about how his “temporary” teaching job at Smoky Hills HS turned into a seductive four-year stint; he contrasted college teaching with high school in terms of how the former allows/demands more attention to certain kinds of questions and cited our Ma and Pa Kettle Do Research project, in which we counted grammar mistakes, and its implications. The audience was small, which allowed the presenters to be conversational and allowed us to hear stories from our audience members, who included two legendary Colorado teachers, one of them a past National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) president. We made some good bridges to other teachers in the state, and I was fascinated by insights I gained about what’s happening in the schools. There are some fine teachers out there.
Six DU Writing Program faculty members participated in the 14th Annual DU Women’s Conference. Titled “Her Story, Our Story,” the conference was held on Friday, March 6, at the Driscoll Center and The Women’s College.

As part of the program, day-long activities included exhibits in Driscoll Gallery, table displays of artwork and crafts and jewelry made by women who have an interest in women’s issues on a global scale. One table of note was a quilting exhibit created by Professor Frédérique Chevillot, who displayed a handmade quilt fashioned of patchwork squares that repeated a single photograph of Nelson Mandela’s face. Surrounding the Mandela photographs, African folk images of people and animals made from black-and-white fabric created an active frame. Chevillot purchased the material in Africa on a recent study trip, and she explained that she bought the material from a woman who had a bolt of cloth with only a few pieces left. She said that other women had made vibrant dresses from the Mandela-printed fabric.

At the conference luncheon, the keynote speaker, Opalanga D. Pugh, a professional storyteller who has facilitated workshops around the world, played an African chime instrument and spoke of the sorting out of cultural tales. Having lived as an exchange student at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, West Africa, Pugh has studied tribal storytelling and dance. She currently works as a facilitator and presenter for mental health organizations, outdoor education groups, and corporate businesses. She told stories about learning to see that what appears to be a loss may, in fact, be a “necessary loss.” She sang the tale of a traveler who learned that the tragedies he was witnessing were not what he had thought, that the sadness and loss he perceived were important and necessary to growth, and that he needed to re-investigate the context in which these events happened to establish their contextual meanings. She also told a tale of a group of women who sat in silence and stillness, absorbing knowledge from a communal source. When they had assimilated the silence, they re-entered the world using the poise of the quiet lessons, the silent and bonding time, to teach other women to find some great and transcendent place above the fray. She asked the luncheon guests to consider the origin of their given names and to see that life is a process of “sorting stories.” She said the United States is presently sorting out the stories it must live. She said that all stories must be examined and that some stories must be left behind, be abandoned in order that growth and progress can occur.

The break-out sessions in the afternoon were centered on working with women’s stories. Three members of the Writing Program – Geoffrey Bateman, John Tiedemann, and Eliana Schonberg – led a group discussion.
entitled “Writing with Women at The Gathering Place.” Along with two members of the staff at The Gathering Place, they discussed the way that the university makes contact and sets up such a program. In this case, the DU faculty staffs a writing program for The Gathering Place, a daytime shelter in Denver that provides support to women and children affected by poverty and homelessness. The panel discussed the trust that must be established between the volunteers and the clientele as the women come in to get help in telling their stories through the writing of personal letters and memoirs. Members of DU’s Writing Program faculty and Writing Center staff assist the women in preparing fundraising appeals and grant reports, in preparing resumes, and in experimenting with short fiction.

Three other Writing Program faculty members – **Linda Tate, Heather Martin, and Carol Samson** – formed part of a panel called “Our Stories Aloud: A Reading of DU Women’s Narrative Works.” Linda Tate read from *Power in the Blood*, a memoir published March 2009. It is a family and cultural history told in a narrative form, and it brings to life several generations of the Cherokee-Appalachian branch of Tate’s family. Tracing the family from 1830 to the present, it is an unflinching, but loving, account. Tate read from a section about her grandmother who ran away from her family to become a carnival worker – a “carny.” [See interview with Tate in this issue of the Writing Program newsletter.] Heather Martin read from a novel that chronicles the lives of five women and their experiences with a mythical object called Latimer’s Stone. The section she read told the tale of a child who would listen to the terrifying stories told by her Irish grandmother, wondering if the pagan tales were to be whispered below the ears of her god or if they were to be used to escape the waves of criticism from her husband and sons. Carol Samson read a short story entitled “Goose Summer,” a philosophical tale of a woman who sold greeting cards door to door. The story explores the human need to save and to collect objects of memory, objects of singular merit, objects for which no copy can be made. It is a story that seeks to understand the moments where love assaults nothingness, where absence is brought back into living presence.
Interview with Eric Fretz

Linda Tate:

Eric Fretz: I was a first-generation college student. In fact, I had no intention of going to college. I was planning to go to work with my father, who was a realtor. My mom encouraged me to go to a small Mennonite college in Pennsylvania, my home state. It's been a long road.

Did you think right away that you’d made the right decision to go to college?

I almost quit at the end of my first term, but my mom made me go back. At the end of my first sophomore term, we read Camus's *The Stranger*. The world of ideas and literature got me excited. Then I started reading Thomas Hardy and William Faulkner. I didn't become an English major, however, until my senior year.

What was next for you?

I went to Penn State for a master's degree in American Studies. That's when I discovered American literature. I met a great professor there -- a classic '60s radical. He shared with me the work of Melville, Hawthorne, Whitman. That whole world opened up for me.

Where did you get your doctorate?

At Michigan State University in the Department of English. The American Studies program was also in that department.

What was the focus of your dissertation?

Performing selfhood in America from the colonial period to the antebellum period. I started with Copley's portrait of Paul Revere and ended with [P.T.] Barnum. I also looked at Anna Cora Moat, an actress, Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*, and some of Emerson’s essays.

Where was your first job after graduate school?

I taught at Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa. I was in the Department of English -- I was the Americanist on their staff. I taught 19th-century American literature, but I also taught courses on Vietnam War literature, literature of the American Dream, and African American literature.
Did you teach writing?
Oh, yes! I taught composition. I loved teaching comp.

Why?
I’m very utilitarian. I come from a family of German businessmen and bankers, so I have a strong feeling that all of this should lead to something. I liked helping students develop the skills they’d need to succeed. I liked sharing with them the nuts and bolts of college writing – and having fun along the way. Colleagues used to tease me that there was always laughter coming out of my classroom. I always thought if it’s not fun, what’s the point?

But you left Loras and went back to Michigan State. Why?
After I got tenure at Loras, I felt there were other things I needed to do. I enjoyed my time at Loras, but I just didn’t feel that’s where I should ultimately be. I was more interested in community-based learning than in teaching literature. I still loved teaching literature and still miss teaching it – but I was also really interested in service learning.

At Michigan State, I taught in the Writing, Rhetoric, and American Culture program, which services first-year writing courses. I taught courses on Midwest literature and race and ethnicity. That’s when I really started doing service-learning. That’s where David Cooper was, and he became my mentor. He taught me how to do this work. I don’t know what I would have done without Cooper. He asked me to team-teach a course – wanted to do a service-learning course with me. I wasn’t sure I wanted to do it – it would take a lot of time. This was a real kind of crucible moment for me. Thank God, I said yes!

Why did you say yes?
Because I generally say yes to things that intrigue me. I thought the course could either go disastrously wrong or gloriously right. It went gloriously right.

We designed and put on a National Issues Forum. It changed everything I thought I could do in a course. Students were writing in my office. They were working with Cooper. They were calling and faxing community partners. They graded their own final projects, and Cooper and I offered our assessments as well. So even the evaluative process was deliberative and collaborative.

This is still the most exciting course I’ve ever taught.

What was next?
I went to Colorado State University (in Fort Collins) as the assistant director of the service-learning program. I reinvented myself within higher education and learned how to be an administrator.

I then went to Naropa University, where I started their Community Studies Center. I started that program from scratch.

What brought you to DU?
I was at a Campus Compact conference in Denver and heard Frank [Coyne] and David [Lisman] talking about DU’s Public Achievement program. Their project reminded me of Harry Boyte’s Building America, a book which asks “How do you do the Aristotelian model in the classroom? How do you tap into community organizing in class?” That’s what Frank and David were doing with the Public Achievement program.

What is the Public Achievement program?
Public Achievement is a school-based civic engagement project. College students or adult volunteers work with small groups of middle or high school students. They help the students do community-based research, teach students to be community organizers. In this way, the students build powerful community relationships with adults.

Many people think that children are empty ciphers – that they only consume and complain. But in reality, children have a great deal of interest in and capacity to work through issues of great concern to them – issues like bullying or racism, discrimination against youth, and even seemingly mundane things like the quality of their school lunches.

Public Achievement moves away from regular school – Paulo Freire’s idea of the banking model of education. Instead, Public Achievement taps into the self-interest of the kid: what’s bugging you? It’s civic agency for children. But this is also a cascading system because it works the same powerful way with the college students who work in the program.
A high percentage of the kids in our Public Achievement program receive free or reduced lunch – it’s not hard to find these types of schools in DPS [Denver Public Schools]. Our coaches would never otherwise have a chance to know these types of kids. That’s what diversity is – working with people who are different from you.

**What kind of writing do you do as part of your work at DU?**

I do a mix of utilitarian writing and thought-piece writing. Language is a war and self-contradictory. For example, we’ve recently developed a new logo for CCESL. It’s rather unusual, and most people will ask, “What the hell is that?” We’ll need to explain it to folks.

In so many areas, either you let people tell you who you are or you tell people who you are. That’s why writing is crucial.

I write a lot about what we’re doing and pass my written ideas around to the staff. These aren’t dictums – they’re more like opportunities to start conversations about what it is that we’re doing.

That treatment will eventually get turned into the director’s notes in the newsletter or phrasing we’ll use in our syllabi.

**Why is there such a need to describe what CCESL does?**

When you say you teach history or teach English or teach writing, people have a general notion of what you mean. But when you say you work in the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning, there are a thousand notions about what we are.

It’s a fun challenge – I’ve lived these tensions in my life. I’ve lived the purely academic life, and I’ve also had the mix of the academic and everyday political life. We [CCESL] are looking for people who can appreciate the university as a universe of ideas and practices, people who also want to live the tensions.

**Tell me about the “thought-pieces” that you write.**

This year, I’ve written four essays. Two of them were in the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*. One is a chapter in a book on trends in service-learning. One will appear in the *Michigan Journal for Community and Service Learning*. All but one of these essays were co-authored.

Actually, when I taught at Loras, I got tired of writing. I was more focused on teaching. I found that I just didn’t want to write about Anna Cora Moat for the rest of my life. It wasn’t until about three years ago that I reacquired my voice.

Now I always do collaborative writing – I’ll never write alone again. I need other people to push my thoughts. This summer, for example, I wrote with my friend Nick Longo. We used Google Docs and wrote back and forth.

The stuff I’m writing now is way more impactful because there’s a larger audience for it. For example, I wrote a piece on power. It’s on a public achievement website. That piece gets so many hits – people across the globe access and use those ideas.

**To what degree do you think students interested in social justice professions need to develop their writing skills?**

We’re about helping students develop public ideas in the tradition of the Greeks up to Hannah Arendt. It’s a deep, rich tradition. It wasn’t just invented in the 1960s. It’s important to have a skillful public life, and a significant portion of this is articulating your ideas on paper. Those who have a public life have ideas; they communicate and inspire other people around those ideas.

I think Barack Obama is a perfect example – the Gamaliel Foundation community organizer and trainer. Obama is a great warrior and a great orator. That’s not the be-all and end-all of public life, of course, but what’s missing for some is the collaborative piece, the ability to see a plurality, the Aristotelian notion of politics with a small p – not a struggle for scarce resources but a collaborative, negotiated set of relationships and decisions.

**What advice would you have for these students? How can they develop their writing skills so that they can be most effective in social justice professions?**

Take as many classes as they can from you guys [the Writing Program]!

I know we need to create the free spaces for students to develop these skills. The Morgridge Community Scholars
is one such free space where students can come together with faculty and work on community development. I’d encourage students to take advantage of those opportunities.

I feel that, as teachers, you make a social contract with students. You are educating the next generation to participate skillfully in a democratic society.
Interview with Tom Knecht
Linda Tate

Tom Knecht is an assistant professor of political science at DU. He holds a bachelor’s degree in political science from Stanford University and a PhD in political science from the University of California-Santa Barbara. His research interests include American foreign policy, public opinion, and the American presidency. His book, Polling the Reins of Power, is currently under review. In Fall 2010, he will take a position as assistant professor of political science at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California.

Where did you go to school?
I did my undergraduate degree at Stanford and my graduate work at the University of California-Santa Barbara. I was in political science all along. At Stanford, I was in a program cross-listed between history and political science. I saw myself as a history major until I counted and saw that I was a political science major. As an undergraduate, I didn’t see a huge divide as a discipline, but in graduate school I did.

I’ve always been interested in the questions political science looks at – questions of war and peace, questions of how people arrive at the decisions they do. I enjoy college students and the process of teaching. Teaching is about as rewarding as you can possibly get.

What courses do you teach at DU?
I teach a bunch – American Presidency, American Congress, Interest Groups, a Core course on American Public Opinion. We look at this in terms of political context and in terms of social issues – sociology, psychology, public opinion, and marketing. I teach a simulation class on American Government – each student plays a member of the House of Representatives for the quarter. I teach a first-year seminar titled Politics of Sports. I teach a SOCS Foundation course on Power and Justice.

What kinds of writing assignments do you incorporate in these courses?
I have a lot of varied writing assignments from traditional research papers to short reaction pieces. In my simulation class, students draft bills and write press releases. Students like these assignments. When writing a bill for this course, you have to proofread your bill and include everything from soup to nuts. You can’t get the bill through the committee otherwise – this simulates the committee process and the floor vote. In my first-year seminar, students work on a cooperative learning assignment. They take notes on readings and make presentations. They then write up a group response. Writing is a collaborative endeavor. This is such a hard skill to teach, and we really need it in the academy.
What are your research interests? To what degree do you have to be an active writer to accomplish your research goals?
I work as a collaborative writer in my research. I’m working on a paper with Lisa Martinez [DU assistant professor of sociology and criminology] on homelessness. Lisa and I are on the same page – she’s great to work with. Currently, I’m working with a co-author on academic tolerance – this piece of writing is in the infant stages. I have also written quite a bit with students. In my Participation and Representation course, students could write a big research paper, and I would come on as co-author and try to publish it. Three students took me up on this offer. We asked, “Can we predict who will vote for a third-party candidate?” We’ve presented this research at the Midwest Political Science Association meeting.

What’s challenging about writing collaboratively?
Deadlines – people are busy. Setting a firm deadline you can both work with is challenging. It’s also challenging when your co-author has different ideas than you do, but that can also be a tremendous opportunity. When you reach an impasse, it opens up enormous opportunities. You always think it’s going to be easier because you can divide the labor, but it’s actually really demanding. Someone else is truly invested and can give you feedback you wouldn’t get otherwise. It enriches your writing. You have to pick and choose your partners carefully. You have to have respect for each other.

When you visited my Honors Writing class in the spring, you told them that, as an undergraduate, you were drawn to political science for the ideas you could explore but that when you got to graduate school you discovered that your research would have to focus much more fully on quantitative research. Can you say more about that?
Political science is becoming much more diverse when it comes to methodology and epistemology. My training as an undergraduate was positivist in epistemology. My graduate training was empirical. This was a big shock after coming from a program where questions of methodology were secondary. At first, I went into it kicking and screaming. I didn’t understand how to apply a non-normative framework to a normative endeavor like politics. My research has been both quantitative and qualitative. My research has been in the mainstream of the discipline. I’ve become very comfortable working in the empirical tradition.

Do you teach students non-normative, non-positivist approaches to DU students?
In my Public Opinion class, students actually go out and do polls for an organization. They write a survey, administer the survey, write up the results, share with the community partner. The most difficult writing you’ll do is survey writing. The final project is the report on the survey – some of them write 50-page reports.

Tell me about Polling the Reins of Power, the book you’re currently writing.
It looks at whether presidents listen to our opinions or whether they [the presidents] shape our opinions. It uses a mixed method – both quantitative data and qualitative data. What motivates the study is that there is a really strong correlation between public opinion and foreign policy. This could be due to three reasons:
1) Presidents use a bully pulpit.
2) Presidents just happen to have the same opinion [as the public].
3) Presidents abandon what they want and listen to the public.
Each of the causal pathways can explain the strong correlation. Instead of preference, I look at public attention – and it turns out that there are fairly predictable periods of public attention.

What advice do you have for students as they write in your courses and other political science courses?
Work on it! Writing is a skill that you really need to perfect and hone through practice, repetition, diligent study. The expectations I have for student papers and the expectations they hold are very different. The key variable is the student’s willingness to work at it.
Students Want to Know:
Why Do I Need to Buy this Expensive Textbook?
Heather Martin

For me choosing a textbook is, unfortunately, not unlike choosing who to vote for in a major political election — or a season of American Idol for that matter. At first glance, it might seem as if the process would always end with a clear, satisfying selection since I have the freedom to decide what I want to do with my pick. However, a closer examination reveals that the list of possible choices is actually quite small, and while each of the “finalists” has appealing aspects, no “candidate” is without shortcomings. So, just like everyone else who wades into this process, I consider every variable I can and pick the one that has the most strengths and the fewest flaws. And while sometimes at the end of a quarter I’ve felt like I ended up with a “Sanjaya” of a textbook, and not the “Jennifer Hudson” edition I was hoping it would be, looking back it’s easy to identify wonderful ideas and readings and structures I have gleaned from every textbook I’ve ever used. And that’s what keeps me excited about having the opportunity to make my next choice.

-- Casey Rountree

When I consider whether or not to choose a textbook and which one to choose, I try to weigh how much the book might help with student learning. I often choose to put together a large group of readings on my own which I think will both help and interest students, especially for WRIT 1122. For WRIT 1133, where we study in depth a variety of research methodologies, I choose a text which I feel will cover the topics thoroughly and that will provide a springboard for class discussions. When I require a text and assign readings, I certainly expect students to do those readings as they will help them to learn and progress in the course.

-- Kelli Custer

When a faculty member assigns a textbook, but doesn’t use every chapter, it’s not out of negligence, but because most schools, and therefore most textbooks, use the semester system — many textbooks are designed to supply material for 20 weeks of classes, while we only have 10-11 weeks, and must choose what we feel is most significant from the book.

-- Alba Newmann

Many good reasons exist for not using a textbook in this class. However, two clear benefits for my using a textbook are as follows: 1) the textbook provides a way of structuring our investigation into the various types of writing available for college-level (and beyond) writing; and 2) the textbook, written by at least one author, provides another voice about writing. In the class, we interrogate the presumptions about writing on the part of the author(s) and then place that interrogation into a discussion with our class’ presumptions about writing. The end result, I hope, creates a richer, more complex understanding of writing. Of course, the emphasis in my courses is always on the production of student text, so if a textbook interferes with that, I will move to another book, or abandon a book altogether.

-- Matt Hill
DU Students Use Open-Mic Night to Speak out against Racism, by MaryKate DeGraw

The tables at the University of Denver’s Sidelines Pub & Grill were all turned around and chairs disregarded the normal order, all in order to face the small, black stage hidden in the corner of the restaurant. For that evening, the end of the day of February 24, 2009, there was an open-mike night at the popular collegiate grill.

The night of student poetry, narrative, and drama opened with a DU writing professor explaining the purpose of the event as a way for students to express their views and reflections on the world around them, or merely what came to their mind as they spoke. It was to be, essentially, a night of student participation in the rhetorical discussion on the issues that define our world.

The first performance was by a small group of students from the campus organization, Asian Student Alliance (ASA). The skit they performed, entitled “Insolidarity”, was a silent visual drama tracing the history of discrimination against Asian and Asian-Americans in the United States and asserting the importance of society’s (and especially the Asian community’s) rejection of such treatment. Though not the traditional rhetorical means of persuasion in which the rhetor vocally attempts to influence his audience, the use of displayed language on posters and in a slideshow in the ASA skit made just as strong impression on the audience as the strongest of spoken words. The title of the skit explicitly explained the purpose of the short drama, as well, so there was no misunderstanding that the 5 students of various Asian ethnicities were performing in order to unite all peoples, and especially Asian peoples, in a violent societal rejection of the historical prejudices against Asians, prejudices that still pervade in modern America.

From the brief yet powerful facts that were displayed on posters dropped in rhythm to the strong base of background music, to the slideshow exhibiting moving images of Asian oppression in America with short explanations, the skit elicited first extreme interest in the words and images presented, and then emphatic nods of approval from the crowd. For within three minutes, the ASA educated the audience on the history of Asian discrimination—from the mistreatment of 19th century Chinese railroad workers, to the WWII internment of thousands of Japanese Americans, to the very current stereotypes attributed to the Vietnamese after the Virginia Tech shootings—demonstrated the burgeoning Asian movement to resist such racially unjust treatment, and extended an invitation to all ethnicities to help combat such discrimination. Insolidarity—or unity in working towards a common goal—was, as the skit showed, necessary to prevent the horrific incidents that stain America’s past from staining our own modern times.

The remainder of the night’s speakers seemed to follow the theme set forth by the ASA. Following the drama, a student approached the stage, was introduced as “Don”, and began reading a narrative poem. Like the ASA mini-production, the original poem Don read addressed the presence of prejudice in Denver. Don’s poem narrated a recent
bus experience he had and what he learned of himself because of it; he noted what his views had been and the assumptions he automatically made of the people who got off at the Colfax station (Colfax being a notorious center of fear in the Denver Community), and, in the poem, proceeded to question those perceptions, both in society and in his own person. Don’s poem discussed how he, during his bus ride, had automatically associated the people exiting the train on Colfax as somehow being connected with crime and poverty, and in general, merely inferior to himself simply due to the geographic location of their destinations. Of course many of the people exiting on Colfax were different than himself, Don recognized; many were women, and many were older, and many were of a different race. Yet how much was he missing by writing them off so quickly? As the conclusion of Don’s poem asked, how much could we learn if we all actually talked to someone different than ourselves?

Like Don, and the ASA, the other speakers that performed that night all addressed the issue of race and the influence it still has in our world, in politics and in our personal lives and perceptions. One speaker, Russell, gave a moving performance of slam poetry. In addition to his obvious, jarring talent in writing, Russell’s content stirred strong emotion, as well. Focused primarily on the futility of politics and the corruptness of government in social policies, Russell’s poetry concentrated mainly on the seemingly inevitable path many a minority citizen’s life seemed to have. In one brief line, he summed this by bluntly and quickly stating, “The skin is the sin.” His observation of the lack of opportunity and fairness in our society, still, left Russell repeating throughout his poem, and ending his performance with the same, brief remark, “Days of the Despair.” Russell’s poem was strengthened by a second performance of slam poetry by a Denver local, Lorenzo. Lorenzo focused on the same inevitability of minority citizen’s lives. Many minority citizens were essentially trapped by society; by the neighborhood they lived in, by the school they went to, by what language they spoke, and most of all, by what color their skin was. As he narrated a story of a gang-banger from the first person, Lorenzo moved the crowd to visible emotion in describing the youths trapped in neighborhoods where not joining a gang was not an option, and a day without violence was a day out of the ordinary.

It was the last speaker, however, that truly connected all these events to DU. Though not as emotionally moving as the ASA skit or the student poetry, Sarah’s reading of a recent essay she wrote centered the audience on the idea of racial inequality at DU, inequality expressed merely through numbers. Racism, as Sarah pointed out, had to be combated, yet by isolating ourselves (the DU community) from major groups of different ethnicities, we, as a school, were perpetuating a form of racism ourselves, exclusionism. Though surely none of the participants and none of the audience were racists, Sarah’s opinion that DU—its administration, its faculty, and its students—should take a more proactive role to diversify our university was widely received as fact.

And so, with Sarah’s conclusion on the path DU should take, her peers’ consensus on such a path, and an excerpt from the Vagina Monologues, the open-mike night at the Pub was ended. Though the night passed shortly—the event was only an hour and a half long—the views expressed merited further contemplation and action; the audience seemed to recognize this as the usually rambunctious college students left the restaurant in primarily serious, reflective moods.

Posted by Geoffrey Bateman at 11:27 AM
WRIT 1122

Position Statement: Multi-Media Literacies in Composition

Jennifer Campbell

Throughout Unit Two, we have been investigating the role that multiple media and digital literacies can or should play in writing instruction. How should Media and/or IT be used by professors to deliver content? What types of multi-modal activities can support various parts of the writing process? What kinds of multi-media/digital literacies are necessary for success in today’s academic and professional worlds? Should students be expected to create multi-media or digital texts? If so, what kind, and what are our expectations? How much student IT knowledge can we assume? And how much class time should be spent on IT instruction? Does all of this just get in the way of the real writing skills students hope to tackle in first-year writing? Should there be a separate class that deals with digital rhetorics? We’ve been asking a lot of questions.

There is a specific audience that wants to hear your answers. Five members of the Writing Program Faculty have been awarded a grant from the Center for Teaching and Learning to study possibilities for integrating multi-modal composing in writing instruction, develop multi-modal curricula and best practices for DU’s first-year writing sequence, and design professional development opportunities to help all Writing Program faculty make better use of multi-modal technologies in their classes. Our course goals are already ambitious, and we have limited resources, so the research committee will need to determine our top priorities for integrating innovative delivery and composing options. We would benefit from student input to help us focus our research and implementation.

You will write a formal statement, addressed to the Multi-modal Writing Committee, in which you take a position on some aspect of multi-modal presentation or composing in the first-year writing sequence. You can answer one of the questions mentioned above. You might define key literacies for success in your major. You might argue for the inclusion of a particular media or technology and how it could be used to support course goals. You might tell us how to avoid “Creepy Treehouses” as we engage new technology in pedagogy. It’s up to you to decide what you think the committee needs to know.

Of course, we’re all educated, research-oriented types, so we’ll expect you to support your definitions and positions with solid evidence. You should draw material from the multiple print and web-based texts we have read throughout the unit. (The work you’ve already done on summary, synthesis, source integration, and citation will help with this). You can also include relevant personal experiences and observations as evidence for your claims. We plan to integrate our multi-modal curricular revisions next winter, so your future classmates will benefit from you making a rhetorically-effective argument about what types of literacy instruction are in their best interests.

We’re also busy, so please restrict your arguments to about 4 pages. English studies folk prefer MLA style, with in-text citations and a Works Cited page.
Position Statement

Since advanced technology has shifted the learning atmosphere within classrooms, the University of Denver’s Writing Program should incorporate blogs, wikis, and podcasts to improve student’s writing skills. Wikis, podcasts, and blogs encourage students to tailor their text according to the specific audience reviewing the new technology which is a key component to motivate students to write in a more sophisticated manner. In addition, these applications encourage student engagement outside the classroom since they are based on the internet and easily assessable. Writing in different rhetorical situations and platforms for public audiences will enhance students’ writing skills to meet the standards and goals of the Writing Program by integrating these technologies.

The article “Embrace the Wiki Way!” by Matt Barton advises professors how to use wikis best in their classrooms. Wikis are “simply websites that erase the boundaries between authors and readers” (Barton 1). Anyone is able to access the edit button on the wiki to change or update it, and each version is saved under its history. Original authors are notified when their pages are modified and can either accept the alterations or undo the additions. When planning a class project with either a “bibliographic format,” “a statement on behalf of the class,” or even a “reference guide,” teachers can invite students to share, comment, and add anything to the wiki that would benefit the rest of the class.
Wikis are easily accessible to both students and professors as a website that can be updated for everyone to view. This is a very useful within or outside a classroom setting and depicts another type of rhetorical platform students would benefit from. The engagement of new technology in and outside the classroom is critical; wikis demonstrate great a tool that further includes students in active learning and enhances content delivery which is a primary goal of the Writing Program.

Doug Dangler, Ben McCorkle, and Time Barrow express their views on podcasting, in the article, “Podcasting and the Classroom Audience.” They conclude that podcasts allow instructors to teach beyond classroom time by engaging students in supplemental material that is not covered in class, such as class reviews, reflections on discussions, and further explanations that can be posted on the Internet. These podcast applications help build a collaborative, interactive atmosphere that promotes active learning outside the classroom. Educators can also post on the internet, “recorded interviews with professional colleagues on topics germane to the class” (Dangler, Mccorkle, and Barrow 2). My own experience in an online Business 1040 class confirms the success of podcasts since my professor posted a couple on Blackboard further explaining how to work with Microsoft Excel. The clip was established in Excel with my professor’s voice in the background demonstrating with the mouse how to create a pivot table. It was helpful to listen and understand while experiencing the visual demonstration of what to do. Students will experience a greater education and appreciate the encouragement of engaging outside the classroom as they witness professors properly deliver content through podcasts.
Charles Tryon emphasizes the use of blogs within first-year writing seminars in his article “Writing and Citizenship: Using Blogs to Teach First-Year Composition” while Tryon advocates the important activity of web logging in a first-year composition class to engage his students in writing for a public audience. By emphasizing that “writing matters,” students became active participants in productive discussions, confirming Tryon’s aspirations of his students accurately understanding the “interactivity in the blog world” (Tryon 128,130). Advanced technology today allows students to engage in new ways of learning and actively participate in innovative learning experiences. Students benefit from writing in a more serious manner for the public audience that views blogs. Tryon claims that using blogs will, “instill in [his] students that much of the writing that they will do in their academic lives and beyond will require them to make and support arguments…” (128). He hopes to “help students become invested in their writing, to give them a sense that writing-and citizenship- matters” (128). Productive conversations, arguments, and constructive feedback between students resulted when discussions, articles, and kindled questions immediately appeared on the blogs. This proves the blog’s effectiveness since students felt a passion to write about important topics, blogging is also a valuable tool that emphasized the foundations of rhetoric.

Public audiences are essential for students to improve their writing skills since students are pressured to think through their work before submitting it on the Internet through blogs, wikis, and podcasts. Tryon discovered that when bloggers failed to review their work or express their arguments creatively, endless feedback and criticism emerged from other blog writers. Therefore, Tryon and his students were able to compose a set of
rules and approaches for writing in a blog setting, which maximized their potential to write successfully for a larger audience. Although some students found the Internet intimidating, other’s expressed an alter ego and succeeded in blog writing; these “students felt validated when outsiders commented on their blog entries” (Tryon 130). Similar to blogs, podcasts created by a student for a public audience within a first-year composition class foster critical thinking and improve writing techniques with basic elements of rhetorical analysis.

When creating a podcast, students must consider the delivery of the information more because “situation expectations [need to be] established between the podcaster and his or her audience” (Dangler, McCorkle, Barrow 2). According to Dickie Selfe, these expectations are the advantage of using podcasting in class assignments rather than other forms of digital audio (qtd. in Dangler, McCorkle, and Barrow 2). Authors of podcasts need to be aware of the “long-term organization and commitment that goes along with [the project]” because peer and instructor evaluation will require revising (Dangler, McCorkle, Barrow 3). Authors need to consider the logos, ethos, and pathos in their work before submitting it for the public to make sure they evoke the right emotions from listeners. The additional component of a public audience inspires students who post on blogs and create podcasts to improve their writing skills since their work is being reviewed and assessed by people other than the professor.

Since many of the professors at University of Denver may not be as technology savvy as needed to understand blogs, podcasts, and wikis for class assignments, DU must consider a training course in advanced technology for educators to know how to deliver modern technologies. The future benefits of professional development through a
technology-training course in order to use the applications in class outweigh the cost for a preparation class. Although there may be hesitation to put in the time, effort, and resources into a training course, professors and students will gain the advantage within school and future professions of being “consumers and producers of media products in the future” (Dangler, McCorkle, and Barrow 3).

Blogs, podcasts, and wikis represent the latest technology being engaging students inside and outside the classrooms to improve their writing skills because the key element of a public audience heightens students desire to write effectively. These applications will help demonstrate the concept of analyzing and writing in different rhetorical situations using basic elements such as logos, ethos, and pathos and produce writing that effectively provides evidence from many sources. The University of Denver’s first-year writing composition class will be at a greater advantage if professors and students are exposed to these different technologies as they improve writing skills with the aspect of public audience and create engagement within and outside the classroom to meet the goals of the Writing Program.
Works Cited


Dangler, Doug, Ben McCorkle, and Time Barrow. “Podcasting and the Classroom Audience” Expanding Composition Audiences with Podcasting. 9 Feb 2009

Position Statement

Winston Churchill once stated that “there’s nothing wrong with change, if it is in the right direction.” Change is exactly what the DU Writing Program is contemplating today. With technology advancing faster than the academic world can manage, there has been increasing debate about the role that technology, in particular the Web, has in the academic classroom. Many instructors today have already taken action on this dilemma, fully integrating technology into their research and writing programs. Professor Elizabeth Sommers from San Francisco State University emphasizes the benefits and possibilities the Web offers in her article “Can Anybody Play? Using the World Wide Web to Develop Multidisciplinary Research and Writing Skills.” Charles Tyron, author of “Writing and Citizenship: Using Blogs to Teach First-Year Composition,” describes in his article the methods and benefits of using blogs in writing composition classes. Although the path to successfully integrating technology into the classroom will undoubtedly include substantial challenges, the DU Writing Program faculty must seriously consider and evaluate the undeniable benefits Web-based technologies can offer to the achievement of their goals.

As the DU Writing Program strives towards enabling its students to affectively write in different kinds of rhetorical situations, it’s important to understand how the Web and its related technologies can assist in accomplishing this goal. Having observed the progress and development of her own students, Sommers asserts that the Web “gives us a new forum, a new
playing field on which to think simultaneously and creatively about form and content, [and a way] to present and select information” (60). Using the Web as a writing platform, students are introduced to different circumstances in which to direct their writing. Sommers found students to slowly move away from the standard-research essay “to begin writing and exploring in new forms, experimenting with new challenges and possibilities” (65). Tryon has used this non-traditional idea in his classroom as well, allowing blog communities to serve as a topic of discussion and analysis in the form of rhetorical analyses. He considers blogging sites as platforms for “argumentative writing” and insists that analysis and participation in blog communities offers a connection “between the classroom and so-called real world” (128). The DU Writing faculty should use the Web, as Tyron has done, in order to offer students non-traditional methods, situations, and topics of writing that relate to the real world so that they may become “invested in their writing [and] give them a sense that writing – and citizenship – matters” (Tryon 128).

Writing in different kinds of situations undoubtedly brings with it diverse audiences and ways of interacting with those audiences. The participatory culture of the Web allows students to more easily communicate with and write for these different audiences. Students are able to “participate in a wide variety of ways” using the Web to learn how to “respond to one another’s work” (Sommers 62, 64). Tyron states in his article that students will “take writing more seriously if they are writing for public audiences on the Internet” (128). The collaboration and participation, especially between peers, involved in writing on the Web, such as in a blog community, will institute “instant feedback” between peers and even the public (Tryon 129). This community culture of blogging, and of the Web as a whole, should be of great interest to the DU Writing Faculty. If students are to be able to both receive and offer writing feedback in a
useful manner, then web blogging needs to be considered as a valuable tool in accomplishing these goals.

Working with the Web encompasses many useful elements to an academic writing class. Along with allowing participatory feedback and a variety of situations to write in and about, the Web has the potential to teach students how to appropriately cite a variety of sources. Sommers claims that “using both online and print sources, students learn to cite e-mail messages, Usenet groups, Web sites, books, electronic and paper journals, and peers’ online comments” (65). Possessing the ability to cite and incorporate these materials is essential to student’s education because the Web is “one of the media, perhaps the primary medium, in which our students will communicate in the future” (Sommers 62). By incorporating the Web into the Writing Program, the DU Writing faculty would be able to instill these skills in its students and prepare them for the technological world ahead of them.

Citing and incorporating sources is clearly an important skill that students must grasp, but it will be of little use if the sources have little or no credibility. The DU Writing Faculty should take notice to the potential the Web has to offer when evaluating sources and their integrity. Sommers explains that her students were able to “assess the value of sources, appraising their authority and accuracy in part on the scholarly reputation of the publisher, the use of other sources presenting an argument, the author’s reputation in the field, and the strength of corroborating studies” (64). By conducting these types of evaluations, students can comprehend rhetorical terms like logos, ethos, and pathos that will prove useful in their academic research and writing tasks.

Of course, change never comes easily, especially in such a crucial area like academics. There are various assertions and arguments against integrating some Web-based technologies
and ideas into the classroom. The most prominent one, discussed in Stephanie Vie’s article “Digital Divide 2.0: “Generation M” and Online Social Networking Sites in the Composition Classroom”, has to do with digital literacy. Vie cautions that students “lack critical technological literacy skills” that inhibit their ability to “define, access, evaluate, manage, integrate…and communicate information through real-time, scenario-based tasks” (10, 13). Not having a thorough understanding of technology and its uses places a huge burden on instructors teaching a technology-integrated course. The solution to this problem is not simple, nor is it restricted to only one option. Vie argues that classes should integrate social networking sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, into the curriculum in order to improve this digital literacy, although this is only one possibility. As a student at the University of Denver, I would argue that students, being as encouraged and engaged with technology as they are, will enthusiastically learn skills rather easily in the class and can and should be assisted by instructors when needed.

Instructor assistance brings up another issue as well. Some instructors might see technology as a disruption to the curriculum and the methods in which to teach it. The technological factor of a class could be “problematic for a traditional teacher who prefers to remain the primary authority in the classroom [and] expects a homogeneous group of students” (Sommers 66). Simply put, if an instructor has students who all possess different levels of digital literacy, then there is no general or established comprehension level which ultimately puts a greater stress on the instructor. Change does not come without some sacrifices, and I believe that although the time required to teach Web-based technologies is significant, it should not be ignored because of an unwillingness to dedicate the needed time and effort that is necessary.

As the future of the DU Writing Program is debated, it’s important to examine the costs and benefits of the Web, its various uses, and its potential to fulfill the goals developed for the
DU Writing Program. Tools like Web blogs and social networking sites allow students to use rhetorical writing in a creative way while being actively engaged and interested during the process. The participative feature of the Web brings students together and encourages them to actively read, edit, and offer instant feedback on each other’s writing. An abundance of electronic media on the Web offers students the ability to become familiar with using, citing, and integrating these sources. In addition, students can understand rhetorical terms like ethos, pathos, and logos when reading and integrating these sources. Unfortunately, there are also problems associated with academic Web use. The unequal distribution of digital literacy between students is a significant factor, as well as some instructors’ hesitation to put forth the required time necessary to help struggling students. The DU Writing Faculty should incorporate Web-based technologies into the writing curriculum because, although the costs of using the Web are not insignificant, the benefits clearly fulfill the goals of the DU Writing Program, and do so in a way that certainly prepares students for the digital world ahead of them.
Works Cited


In Heather Martin’s sections of WRIT 1122, students spent time looking at different forms of visual rhetoric to learn how images and text work together to create different types of arguments. One assignment asked students to design a subvertisement, or parody, of a popular ad campaign or product. Students chose ads that were catchy and interesting, but also problematic in some way. To critique the ad, they made small, but impactful, changes to the original advertisement. The results were powerful and visually compelling arguments, capable of surprising, disturbing, and entertaining readers.

Here is a Jayne Illovsky’s analysis of her subvertisement, "Following in the Wrong Footsteps" of an Abercrombie and Fitch ad:

"Prom...a night of magic and romance...for your genitalia," says Kyle, 16, of Gainesville, FL. What Kyle says may be true, but the talk about having sex on prom night leaves some teens feeling stressed or pressured. Laura Rupp, R.N., an educator with the Chart Teen Task Force, in Hannibal, MO, says both guys and girls feel a lot of pressure to have sex on prom night because it seems like a "tradition." "They see it as...something that everyone does," she explains. "Boys feel more pressure from their peer groups about having sex than from their partner. Girls feel more pressure from their partner. It could very well be a tie on who is more pressured, though."

Peer pressure in junior high and high school is inevitable. It can be positive or negative, but there is an impact either way. Negative peer pressure is a universal fear in parents because it is unavoidable. It is present in all different cliques, and it can range from pressures in sex and relationships to drugs and alcohol. Some teenagers will know when something has gone too far but what about the subtleties in the advertisements surrounding them? Negative peer pressure has the ability to impair good judgment and even cause one to doublethink their common sense. From the study shown above, peer pressure for sexual intercourse is a problem at an age as early 16. Girls and boys are feeling obligated to have to sex on prom night purely because of tradition. Also, it may spare them the humiliation at school the next day if they fit into the crowd with “everyone” who did. At this age, teenagers are struggling to create and find their own identities. The normal reaction for them is to observe others and see how they are dealing with these issues. Insecurity and curiosity are impertinent factors as well. To be safe within this insecure time, teenagers start to follow a “culture of conformity” usually formulated by different clothing companies. Originally, this was a way to keep self-conscience teenagers safe, but unfortunately certain advertising companies have taken it too far. Abercrombie and Fitch is one of those clothing companies. They advertise a “culture of conformity” for clothing, as well as sex appeal.

Abercrombie and Fitch’s advertising campaign caters towards a broad range of 11-18 year olds. During these peak years kids need something to latch on to, even if it is such a controversial company. Abercrombie discriminates when it comes to hiring employees and models. They even refer to their employees as models. Also they had been in a lawsuit in 2004 for discriminating employees and potential buyers. The clothing is also made very poorly. Abercrombie has practiced some very unethical working techniques by exploiting workers as well. Despite the actions of the company and the disapproval from parents, this 11-18 year old group is still intrigued. Maybe the reason why they follow this brand is because of how controversial it is. The advertisement I found is of a young man and a young woman. The advertisement is a black and white picture, photographed casually. For all we know the man and the woman could be as young as 16. They are only wearing Abercrombie jeans. Both of the models are half-naked. Intentionally, both of the models are racially white and signify the “typical” American teenager. The male in the photo has dominance over the female while the female has an indecisive stare on her face. The dominance that the male presents seems to be a tradition in the Abercrombie and Fitch advertising campaign. By making this theme of dominance come across so casually, girls are unsure if it truly is “right,” so they tend to just go along with it. This carefree, sensual persona Abercrombie and Fitch is presenting is captivating to these kids. Also, from the brand being shunned by parents, it makes it more enticing. The advertisement I chose uses the rhetorical appeal of
pathos. It is directing the viewer to think that if they wear Abercrombie and Fitch jeans, they will have sexual appeal; and that sexual appeal is something that they want to have. This is indirectly instilling sexual pressure in these kids. It is telling them that the "typical" American youth should be sexually involved; that it is "right" to be in a relationship.

For my subadvertisement for Abercrombie and Fitch I used the same photograph from the advertisement that I found. I want to show the truth of what the picture is relaying. Using this photo I am using the rhetorical appeal of pathos. Instead of the emotion of sexuality, I want to emphasize the emotion of uncertainty. The look on the female’s face can be representing apprehension. I want the audience to wonder what she is thinking, maybe even the lack of emotion so ever. It looks as though she is not thinking anything. Underneath her arm I have the question: "Is she ready?" This will evoke a thought from the viewer and then they will rethink the male’s role in the picture. I want the viewer to see how Abercrombie should not be using this placement of their models. The dominance that a male has can be extremely daunting and even scary to some women. When it comes to sexual pressures, many girls don’t know what they should be feeling, or what is right. Women need to know that they have the right to wait until they feel comfortable. At the bottom I have a statistic of peer pressure pertaining to relationships, which plays upon the rhetorical device of logos. It reads, “Statistics on peer pressure for sex reveals approximately 50% of 12-17 year olds feel pressured in sex and relationships, according to The Kaiser Foundation.” This study was conducted less than a year ago, in April 2008. From this statistic, it will open the viewer’s eyes to how young the children are who are affected by sexual peer pressure. To finish my advertisement, at the top, I added Abercrombie and Fitch’s logo of a moose and the letters “A&F”. When only given a glance, my ad is perceived as an actual Abercrombie and Fitch ad. Once given a second glance, the viewer will see the words “Appease and Follow” under the “A&F”, and that is when the message will formulate. These two verbs are the connotations of peer pressure in high school and junior high that formulate in my mind. One, giving in to peer pressure, is solely appeasing what they think others want to see. Then, when it comes to following, one will go to great lengths to copy a certain group or trend perceived from the media. My subadvertisement encompasses the truth of what Abercrombie and Fitch is ultimately selling: peer pressure.

Abercrombie and Fitch targets a naïve and inexperienced group of both young males and young females. Between the ages of 11 and 18 is when peer pressure is the most significant in an individual’s life. These years are the key times when young teenagers are establishing themselves and searching for belonging. Abercrombie should change their campaign only to a slight extent. They can still encompass and sell the idea of a carefree American youth, but they need to take out the sensual aspects. All of their advertisements with couples should be removed. Their advertising campaign should be individuals or groups of people in their photographs. It does not matter if they keep some of the male models half-naked, but they should not be able to show half-naked females. Some of these female models are 16, and it is not appropriate. It is giving “normal” teenagers the idea that they must be that attractive without a shirt on. If Abercrombie and Fitch were to rework their advertisement campaign, they would keep their potential buyers as well as gaining new ones. They would still have to deal with their racial discrimination issues, but parents will be more accepting to the clothing line. It would be a gain to the company because it would give them a newly found respect, which is exactly what they need.
Is she ready?

Statistics on peer pressure for sex reveals approximately 50% of 12-17 year olds feel pressured in sex and relationships, according to The Kaiser Foundation.
In this assignment, you will conduct research in your major and then write about this research as if you are writing an academic article in your major, using the writing conventions that are considered acceptable in your major. In other words, after working hard to conduct your investigation on writing and research in your major for your mini-ethnography, you are going to put it all together and actually perform research acceptable to your major and then write about it using the writing conventions of most academic articles in your major.

**Article Components:**

1) **Abstract:**
   -- Summarizes your study

2) **Introduction:**
   -- Briefly establishes the purpose of the study; it includes your research question and describes what you are studying

3) **Literature Review** – for the literature review, you will need to find 3 academic articles related to your research topic:
   -- A brief argument for how your research question is answering something new that has not been studied before in quite this way. In other words, the review of the literature should say why your research is important. You need to show that there is a “gap” in the previous literature and show how your research will fill this gap. You will need to find at least 3 academic primary research sources to establish your gap.

4) **Methods** (unless you are writing a text-based research article):
   -- Who was included in the study? What was your selection criteria? Why did you choose these participants? How did you conduct your study? Why did you conduct your study in the way that you did?

5) **Results** (*optional):
   -- What was the data? Include as many details from your qualitative or quantitative data as possible without interpreting them.

6) **Discussion** (you might not title it this, but all articles should do some sort of analysis, whether it is of a primary text or of qualitative or quantitative data):
   -- in light of the light of the research you have done – both the textual research for your literature review and the research you conducted on your own -- how would you interpret your results? How does all this information together answer your research question? In what ways, does it not answer your research question? How would you revise your study in the future to better answer your research question?

7) **References:**
   -- A citation page of your 3 academic sources

8) **Appendix** (*optional):  
   -- Any raw data or pertinent research instruments that would help researchers better evaluate the validity of your study.
Using Facebook in the Classroom

Abstract

This research study evaluated the number of students who log on to social networks in two different college classes. The first step in the research process was observing and counting the number of students logged on to a social network, logged on to some other website, or paying attention in class compared to the total number of students in the class. Once completed, seven interviews were carried out asking students about why they choose to log on and what they do when online. Results showed that as class progressed, the number of students choosing to log on to a social network increased linearly and the number of students paying attention to lecture decreased accordingly. From these results, I proposed a few different ideas about how teachers can reverse this distracting trend of social networking in class.

Introduction

College students all around the country rely on social networks, specifically Facebook and MySpace, to stay connected with friends, family, peers, co-workers, etc. However, this trend has made its way into the college classroom. Most colleges require their students to have a personal laptop that they are to bring and use in class. This has consequentially led to an increase in the number of students logging on to the internet in class browsing any number of sites on the world wide web: checking the door buster sales at Nordstrom's, reading the newest and juiciest celebrity gossip hot off the desk of Perez Hilton, playing those truly addicting games on addictinggames.com, watching the newest YouTube hit video, catching up on last week's episode of The Office, replying to an e-mail
sent by a long-lost friend, and most prominently... Facebook. Social networks are the ultimate distraction. Their power to entice students’ attention is second to none, like nothing ever seen within the world of education. Nevertheless, can teachers use this distracting discourse to their advantage?

The purpose of my research is to analyze how the use of social networks in a college classroom affects students’ learning, concentration, and ability to retain knowledge. I intend to explore how teachers and professors can utilize social networks to better connect and help further the knowledge and learning capabilities of their students and peers. I believe that logging on to social networks in the classroom currently hinders the focus and knowledge intake of students, but that it can, in the future, help teachers and professors better interact and connect with students.

**Literature Review**

Researchers argue that teachers connecting with students on online social networks could help improve self-efficacy and self-regulated learning in college students. Through these online connections, teachers can promote students’ motivation to learn, participate, and interact in classroom settings. Joy Bowers-Campbell (2008) contends that teachers can help improve self-efficacy and self-regulation of their college students by utilizing social networks, Facebook and MySpace, to connect on a more personal level. Although many researchers see Facebook as destroying modern discourse and damaging students’ ability to learn and decipher complex texts, Joy Bowers Campbell is sure to note that people everywhere love Facebook and this should be taken advantage of to improve learning techniques and create more communication between teachers and students in the new communication age. Communication is key in education. Knowing how students
communicate with each other and how they respond to people of authority, specifically teachers, aids in furthering their learning because education thrives on individualistic connection rather than a stringent connection.

J.P. Mazer, R.E. Murphy, and C. J. Simonds (2007) continue this rationalization by evaluating the effects of a teacher disclosing themselves, on a social network such as MySpace or Facebook, to their students and peers. The students’ motivation was measured and results showed that a teacher’s elevated self-disclosure leads to an elevated level of motivation and learning for their students. The final research article, written by K. Subrahmanyama, S.M. Reichc, N. Waechterb, and G. Espinoza (2008), evaluated adolescents’ and young adults’ actual usage of Facebook and MySpace. Researchers wanted to know how people use social networking sites to further their social networks and offline networking abilities with friends, family, and any other peers. The findings proved that participants use Facebook and MySpace to connect and reconnect with family members and friends. However, the results also showed that emerging adults utilize different online means of building different parts of offline and online social connections.

These three articles answer the question of my research of how social networks can be utilized to enhance students’ learning. My research revolves around the implications of Facebooking and MySpacing in class while the articles about teacher disclosure take this one step further, articulating how these implications can be made advantageous. My research, however, fills two different gaps that previously went untested or unanswered. I will be studying why students choose to log on to Facebook and how this affects their concentration and learning. The previous research only recognized the proposal that teachers can utilize social networks as a tool to enhance learning, but failed to answer how
to successfully harness this tool. I fully intend on providing some possible options derived from my research concerning the actual use of social networks in class.

**Methods**

My research juxtaposes both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to best answer and determine a possible solution for my research question. To initiate the research I chose a seat at the back of the classroom in two of my classes, Modern Britain and Analytical Inquiry, to observe what the other students in front of me are really doing on their laptop while the teacher lectures. Modern Britain meets on Monday and Wednesday afternoons for two hours while Analytical Inquiry meets for an hour each day, Monday through Thursday. I chose these two classes because students regularly use computers in each; all students use computers in Analytical Inquiry and most use them in Modern Britain. I first counted the number of students in each class and then tallied how many of these students had laptops in front of them. On the first day of observation, I watched and observed over my peer’s shoulders and noted their computer usage. Research observation notes and censuses were taken on how many of the students who had laptops present were logged on to a social network or website not pertaining to the class as opposed to the students who were typing notes, and in some cases both. I remained impartial by not telling anyone I was completing research. On the second day of research, I continued to gather more data on the number of students logged on to social networks in class. None of the observations will include scrutinizing what each student actually does on Facebook.

After each class got out, I selected three to four students to interview about their computer usage in class. These students were selected first based on if they had a class
immediately following the class I observed. Students who did have a class were automatically taken out of the possibilities for interviews because of their need to arrive in their next class on time. From the remaining students, I selected those whom I witnessed as solely logged on to a social network during class, shifting back and forth between notes and a social network, or any other usage of the computer. Two of the interviewees were close friends of mine and the other five were just acquaintances. The questions asked go as follows:

1. What social network do you prefer?
2. How much of your typical time in class do you spend on this site?
3. What instigates you to log on?
4. Do you multi-task? Do you switch attention back and forth?
5. Do you do it to pass time or are you being productive?
6. Do your logging-on habits depend on the class?

These questions were designed to uncover students’ motivations for logging on to Facebook and how it affected their learning and concentration in class. Interviewees waited outside the classroom as I executed brief, five-minute, and individual interviews inside the room.

Results

After observing the computer usage in my Modern Britain and Analytical Inquiry classes, the results were tallied and the trends were obvious. The data explicitly prove my hypothesis that logging on to social networks in the classroom hinders students’ ability to focus and absorb knowledge. I took data every ten minutes over a period of 50 minutes in each class and created graphs with the totals of each of the three measured variables:
number of students on a social network, number of students on another website, and number of students doing notes or class work. As time increased, students’ attention spans fell the opposite direction, decreasing rapidly. Two clear trend lines exist on each of the four shown graphs, the first being the decrease in amount of students spending their time paying attention to the lecture and the second being the increase in students logging on to the social network of their choosing. The number of students browsing another website shows no relevancy or relationship to the other two variables.

The black graph totals the aggregates from the previous four graphs and the shown linear trend lines precisely define the uncanny trend between students on social networks as opposed to those paying attention in class.

The interviews I conducted supplement the data and graphs. Each of the seven students I interviewed admitted to logging on to a social network in class: Facebook, MySpace,
Second Life, Twitter, etc. The seven interviewees spent different amounts of time logged on to a social network. Some responded that the class they were in or what they were doing in that class determined the amount of time spent social networking during that class period while others claimed to stay online for the entire class. Most of the students' motives to log on were to simply socialize; social networks are true to their name. Students do everything from instant message online friends, to posting wall posts, to checking photos, to updating personal information, to Facebook stalking, to numerous other of the growing options Facebook continues to pump out. When asked if they were able to multi-task, the subjects had a wider spectrum of answers. A select few give their undivided attention to social networking – their life. For these students, Facebook is an addiction; they can’t get enough of it and spend the entire class period ignoring the lecture and class assignments. No balance between academic progress and social networking exists. Most of the interviewees, however and thankfully, said they switch their attention back and forth between a social network and their professor's lecture. They value their education cost-wise and recognize the fact that it is their choice to learn and expand their knowledge. Professors exist to encourage and pass on knowledge. Students can either choose to accept it and take full advantage of it or not.

Discussion

Because social networks are obviously so widely used while students are in class, can teachers use this distracting discourse to their advantage? The study done by J.P. Mazer, R.E. Murphy, and C. J. Simonds (2007) examined whether self-disclosure might facilitate a better connection between students and professors and in turn develop affective learning, classroom climate, and student motivation. This study suggests that a higher self-
disclosure by teachers leads to higher levels of focus, motivation, and learning in the more comfortable atmosphere of the classroom. If professors were to disclose themselves to students by means of a social network, they may be able to regain the students’ attention because of the growing desire to learn and pay more attention in class. While this would not curb the problem entirely, it may be a first step to pulling students’ attention away from Facebook and back to the content of the class. Professors must also be careful about their level of disclosure so as not to lose credibility among students. Disclosure of a professor over a social network should allow students to get to know who the teacher is both personally and professionally. Teachers can get to know their students while students get to know their teachers, creating a constructive communication learning experience on both ends of the hierarchy. When students can connect with their professor, they are more likely to be engaged in class because the majority of students say their logging-on habits depend on the teacher and class interest.

There are any number of reasons why students may choose to log on to a social network during class. The biggest reason is probably boredom. Some classes are simply boring and the only way a student can bear to get through class without falling asleep is Facebooking. It has become such a fad that students develop more or less of an addiction to social networking and class is the perfect place to check up on the latest updates. This raises the question about if teachers with boring classes would rather have their students asleep OR awake and on Facebook, but that’s at the discretion of the teacher and would require a whole different research study to analyze. Another reason students log on to Facebook is that students do not value their education as much as they should. It is a daunting fact that college is expensive and some students are ignorant of the amount of
money their “daddy” is spending to educate them, especially here at DU. Although this is not all students, it certainly represents a large majority of the students.

There is no denying that students love social networking, specifically Facebook. So why not use their own remedy as a professor’s remedy as well? Professors are always searching for new ways to connect and communicate with students, keyword being communicate. Stripping down social networks of all the extras, knickknacks, and fancy applications reveals the basic function and idea behind social networks – communication. Professors have yet to take advantage of this channel of communication with students. Professors have certainly embraced email as a primary form of exchanging messages and important updates with students, but why not use the more preferable, at least in the student’s mind, Facebook? Email already seems to be making its way out of the “social lives” of college students. Using Facebook to communicate with students may allow professors to reach out to a larger segment of the student population. Within the realms of Facebook, professors have numerous options of ways they can interact with students. They can create a “Facebook Group” for the class where they post homework assignments, readings, class notes, and even reminders about, well, anything. These reminders could notify students that a paper is due in two days or that midterms are a week away or that there is a new reading posted. An infinite number of options exist. Most teachers have some sort of webpage that already gives this information, but why not consolidate and put the information on Facebook? Students are basically guaranteed to be on Facebook anyway so why not use it for educational purposes as well? However, students’ acceptance of this idea may be minimal, which is why further research trials need to be done to test how it works and evaluate the effectiveness and perception among students.
My research falls short of answering questions concerning the effectiveness of Facebook as a tool for students to connect and communicate with their teachers. My testing population was minimal and needs to be much larger in order to come up with accurate generalizations about how students use Facebook and other social networks when they are in class. I need to interview many more people, at least several hundred, and observe more than just two classes. The data coming from the two classes may be quite skewed because in one of the classes computers are required for each student, while in the other class, computers are optional. A broader range of class types needs to be evaluated and observed in order to come up with a more accurate conclusion about how much of a distraction Facebook truly can be in a classroom setting.

With social aspect information technology advancing at the rate that it is in this current age, educationalists must keep up with the advancements in order to best connect with students. Educators can easily choose to ignore the fact that students obsessively utilize social networking technology in the classroom or they can choose to take advantage of this phenomenon and explore new ways of reaching out, connecting and communicating with students. The possibilities are endless and the outcomes of improving education are even more promising.
References


Appendix A

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Appendix B

Interviews – Wednesday February 18th, 2009

Analytical Inquiry

Subject 1
1. What social network do you prefer?
   -Facebook mostly
2. How much of your typical time in class do you spend on this site?
   -Depends on the class, usually averaging around half.
3. What instigates you to log on?
   -Boredom, teachers can get so monotonous and Facebook is my release.
   -It gets me through so many classes.
4. Do you multi-task? Do you switch attention back and forth? Why or why not?
   -Sometimes I take notes and Facebook at the same time.
   -I don’t dedicate ALL my attention to Facebook.
   -It costs a lot to come here, I need to get at least some of my money out of my classes.
5. Why do you log on?
   -It’s the only way I can get through class without falling asleep.
6. How does your choice of social network affect your ability to learn in class?
   -I can usually retain just as much information as I would if I weren’t logged on to Facebook.
7. Do your logging-on habits depend on the class?
   -Yes of course.

Subject 2
1. What social network do you prefer?
   -Facebook, MySpace, Second Life, Twitter, etc.
2. How much of your typical time in class do you spend on this site?
   -Usually the entire class
3. What instigates you to log on?
   -I thrive off of social networks, I wouldn’t survive without them.
4. Do you multi-task? Do you switch attention back and forth? Why or why not?
   -Rarely. Facebook gets my full and undivided attention.
5. Why do you log on?
   -Why not?
6. How does your choice social network affect your ability to learn in class?
   -My presence means I learn.
7. Do your logging-on habits depend on the class?
   -NOPE!!!

Subject 3
1. What social network do you prefer?
Facebook or MySpace
-I'm thinking about deleting my MySpace.

2. How much of your typical time in class do you spend on this site?
- I just check it to see if there is any epic new drama or to see if I have any new wall posts. Sometimes I respond, sometimes I don’t.

3. What instigates you to log on?
- Gossip

4. Do you multi-task? Do you switch attention back and forth? Why or why not?
- Yes, I usually pay more attention to the professor than I do to Facebook, unless there is something truly juicy.

5. Why do you log on?
- To keep informed

6. How does your choice social network affect your ability to learn in class?
- It doesn’t have any effect. Well maybe when there is something like totally risqué.

7. Do your logging-on habits depend on the class?
- I usually log on in every class.

Subject 4
1. What social network do you prefer?
- Facebook

2. How much of your typical time in class do you spend on this site?
- I keep logged on the entire class, and only use the site if someone I want to talk to is online.

3. What instigates you to log on?
- Friends that are online. Staying in touch.

4. Do you multi-task? Do you switch attention back and forth? Why or why not?
- I’m the queen of multi-tasking!

5. Why do you log on?
- Talk to friends

6. How does your choice social network affect your ability to learn in class?
- Sometimes I zone out if I’m talking to someone cool or funny. I delve into Facebook chat.

7. Do your logging-on habits depend on the class?
- Usually not

Modern Britain
Subject 1
1. What social network do you prefer?
- Facebook and sometimes MySpace

2. How much of your typical time in class do you spend on this site?
- Depends on what we are doing in class. Sometimes it’s the whole class, sometimes it’s never.

3. What instigates you to log on?
- Socializing with the rest of the world

4. Do you multi-task? Do you switch attention back and forth? Why or why not?
Again, it depends on what the class is doing.

5. Why do you log on?
   - Socialization and to counter boredom

6. How does your choice social network affect your ability to learn in class?
   - I choose what I want to learn and what I do not want to learn. I am my own motivation.

7. Do your logging-on habits depend on the class?
   - I choose wisely, depending on the value of the class.

Subject 2
1. What social network do you prefer?
   - Facebook is the only way to go.

2. How much of your typical time in class do you spend on this site?
   - It’s rare that I’m not logged on.

3. What instigates you to log on?
   - I love everything about Facebook.

4. Do you multi-task? Do you switch attention back and forth? Why or why not?

5. Why do you log on?
   - I’m addicted.

6. How does your choice social network affect your ability to learn in class?
   - All my classes are a waste of time.

7. Do your logging-on habits depend on the class?
   - Are you kidding? OMG no.

Subject 3
1. What social network do you prefer?
   - MySpace or Facebook

2. How much of your typical time in class do you spend on this site?
   - Different everyday. Usually no more than like 5-10 minutes.

3. What instigates you to log on?
   - Just to check up on the latest news and photos

4. Do you multi-task? Do you switch attention back and forth? Why or why not?
   - I usually log on when the teacher isn’t lecturing or when we aren’t doing anything that Facebook will pull my attention away from.

5. Why do you log on?
   - It’s fun to stay connected and informed.

6. How does your choice social network affect your ability to learn in class?
   - I don’t let it affect my learning.

7. Do your logging-on habits depend on the class?
   - Depends on what we’re doing in specific classes.
Interview with Linda Tate, Author of *Power in the Blood: A Family Narrative*

Carol Samson

Linda Tate, faculty member in the DU Writing Program, has recently published a family narrative, *Power in the Blood*, which traces the lives of her great-great-great-grandparents, her great-great-grandparents, her great-grandparents, and her grandparents and parents. Many of her family members lived in the land between the rivers (now the Land Between the Lakes) on the border between Kentucky and Tennessee. In the memoir, which is part fact and part imaginative recreation, Tate allows her ancestors to create their own oral histories with distinct voices that show storytelling itself is a birthright. I interviewed Linda at the University of Denver on March 9.

Carol Samson: First let me say I finished this book over the weekend, and I know that it was published on Friday, March 6, 2009. I want to tell you that I find it to be a powerful and tough-minded piece of writing. I know it took you ten years to write it.

Linda Tate: Fourteen, actually. I stand corrected. (Laughs.) Fourteen years to write. . . . It is a fine work, and I have a few questions about it. In the “Author’s Note,” you explain that the book is based on years of painstaking research aided by “artistic acts of the imagination.” The first sentence in *Power in the Blood* states: “Grandma Fannie died when I was five, but now I get word that she is still alive.” Clearly, that sentence has the factual conjoined with the imaginative. It is a haunting sentence. It says that the dead make appointments with us. Could you explain how this worked, how you were “called” to write this book by certain “hauntings”?

Well, hauntings is a great word for this. That opening scene was based on a recurring dream that I had for many years. It was a progressive dream. I would dream that she, my grandmother, was alive. I would dream that I had heard something about where she was. And I would get a little closer to her. And finally I got to the house. And finally I got inside the house. And finally I got into the kitchen where she was. The last time I had that version of the dream it was as I wrote it: she looked at me and did not know who I was. I do still dream that she’s alive and that she hasn’t told me that she is. But she’s living in some different houses now. But I do still dream about her now. I have had that dream for twenty years, I imagine.
Do you recognize the houses that she’s in now? Or are they completely foreign houses?
No. Completely foreign houses that are of the imagination.

Does she still call you “Dancing Bear”?
No. She doesn’t recognize me. No.

The word “hardscrabble” appears again and again as an adjective for the lives of the people who lived in the land between the rivers. From your research, the artifacts you collected and documents, could you define the lifestyle of your great-great-grandparents and grandparents in terms of your historic research? What is their “hardscrabble” existence?

Yes, so it would be my great-great-great-grandparents, my great-great-grandparents, and my great-grandparents. My great-great-grandparents, as far as I can tell, were sharecroppers or tenant farmers, meaning that they did not own their own land and they farmed for someone else. That, in itself, is a hardscrabble way to live because that system was designed so that you would not come out ahead, and you would stay beholden to the farmer who owned the land. In addition, I did find out that my great-great-grandmother, Louisiana, who tells part of the tale, was a domestic worker, and I found that out on a census document because it lists your occupations. She was the only woman listed as white in the entire land between the rivers who was also listed as having “domestic servant” as an occupation. Anyone else who had that designation was black. And from all the research I did on what that area was like at the end of the 19th century, that fact, being white and doing domestic service reserved for blacks, was considered an extraordinarily, one might say “humble,” but they might see it as “humiliating,” line of work. It was considered lower than low. So for her to work outside her home as a “domestic servant” as a white woman was . . . that was the lowest place that she could possibly be. That suggests to me that their lives were hardscrabble. I believe they were involved in subsistence living. I don’t know if their cabins had . . . well, I imagine that they had puncheon floors made out of logs, but they may have been dirt floors. They were very humble circumstances.

Often in the book, the women teach the women how to keep the humble spaces quite pristine. I remember the one little girl who was five who had to sweep and keep the room clean and in order.
Right.

And the artifacts, you actually held some.
I was going to say – women passing down tradition. Probably my most prized artifact is the family cornbread recipe which is in the book. My grandmother Fannie wrote the recipe down because, I guess, my father was frustrated that my mother wasn’t making the cornbread just exactly as he experienced it growing up and asked his mother to write it down for my mother. And that’s the only thing I have in Fannie’s handwriting – that recipe. And it’s conjecture on my part, but cornbread was certainly a major staple of Cherokee and other American Indian nations. I imagine that that recipe was passed down to Fannie through other women in the family. So that’s a very tangible artifact. Another artifact that I did see was the bonnet that had presumably, as far as we know, belonged to Nancy who was my great-great-great-grandmother, so three greats back. She would have been born about 1825, and her bonnet still exists. And what also still exists is the story that has been passed down of someone who is deceased now, but who, as a little girl, remembered seeing Nancy tie her hair up at night and tuck it in her bonnet to go to sleep. And then for me to actually hold that bonnet was amazing. Talk about linkings across time!

I wanted to ask you about the cornbread because I read the recipe, but I didn’t know what it was you put on the griddle first. “Steriten”?

Oh, shortening.
She had her own spellings for things: “shorten.” She spelled it some way.
Then you get the griddle really hot. Then the cornbread goes in . . .

Yes, in the “sklit.” The skillet. The “sklit” with the “shortnen.” (Laughs) It is a good recipe.

(Laughs) I might have to try it . . . Now, Henry James said, “The truth must be invented.” In the book you allow two narrators: Louisiana Armstrong, 1902, and Fannie Tate, 1963, to tell extended tales of their personal histories. Louisiana says that she was a woman of the old ways with a birthright in stories and that she will tell her tale in a “slant way.” I found her to have a poet’s sensibility. She is the one who spoke of landscape of mountain people having “clouds at [their] feet.” She watched her dark-skinned mother comb her hair and tuck it in a bonnet. She described her river journey in a canoe, related her own aging and dementia. Could you describe how you came to “invent the truth” of Louisiana’s voice? How did you hear her? Find her dialect? Let her talk to you?

That’s a great question, and it can be answered on so many levels. Let me talk first about the language, how I let her voice sort of come into being. My field as a scholar is Appalachian literature, so I’ve read vast amounts of literature from the 20th century but also some documents from the 19th century, and I have spent a lot of time in that area. So partly it is my scholar’s ear, knowing what many of the speech patterns were. I also grew up in a family that, and in a church that, had a connection to those areas; and so I grew up with many elders in my family who had speech patterns that I just absorbed growing up. I wouldn’t have known I was doing research, of course, but I was listening with a keen ear. My sister also is an incredible mimic, and so she and I have just mimicked – for each other’s amusement – various speech patterns. And I listened a lot, when I went and spent time in that area with family, I listened to how they phrased things. And there is a wonderful writer, she just died, her name was Verna Mae Slone. And she lived in Eastern Kentucky. I had the privilege of meeting her. I think she was about 95 when she died. She was an untrained, self-taught writer. She wrote an autobiographical book, called Rennie’s Way, but she also wrote a book, How We Talked. It’s a compendium in dictionary form of slang and idiom. And she split it up: words related to food, words related to play, words related to work. And it’s a treasure trove of how language was spoken. And the final thing -- this was a real find -- I spent a lot of time in the Kentucky State Archives. They do not have the county records on microfilm. They have the actual court documents that were written by hand, and they wrote down verbatim the testimony that people gave. I was there looking for documents related to my family, but you couldn’t tell what the documents were at a glance. You had to open each thing up and skim it to see what the names were. And it was all in 19th-century script. It was laborious. It took me probably three weeks to make my way through the boxes. But in doing that I would come across these cases where people were talking about difficult lives. Of course, they were in court. They were talking about crime. They were talking about difficult domestic situations; and I looked at the language they used to describe that. The most amazing thing I found was a woman who had lived just a few miles from where my great-great-grandparents would have lived. She was an elderly woman. She was experiencing what seemed to be pretty severe abuse at the hands of her son. It was a case of elder abuse. And she was testifying in court. The main thing that the lawyers entered as a piece of evidence was a diary that she kept. She had no paper, but you know the banks would give you a calendar or something like that, and she would write on the back or in the margins. I found 200 pages of this woman’s diary. I read how she described the weather, how she described her daily chores. And that collection was immensely helpful in imagining how someone would tell a story.

It was 1902?
It was probably 1890s but close to that time.

And was the woman poetic?
A little. I think I gave Louisiana a flavor of her. So that answers the question of language.

For me, the portrait of Fannie was the most complex and, again, haunting of the portraits. Somehow she told her tale and expected me to see the holes in it. She willingly explained her wildness and her conversions and her moral choices; and yet all the while she was doing that, I found her to be unreliable or, at least, a teller of half-truths. It’s rather like Nelly in Emily Bronte’s Wuthering Heights, who narrates a story larger than what she herself can understand. I found Fannie’s section to be that kind of a remarkable creation. How did you come to hear this grandmother who you loved and lost at age five and who you had to discover in the process of writing the book? Did you just let her be, let her go? Her section reads like she took command of your pen and wrote it.

Thank you for that question. As you can imagine, coming to terms with Fannie was huge. She was my hero as a little girl, and she was a safe adult for me in a frightening childhood. And I obviously grieved her passing enough
that, thirty years later, I decided that I would embark on this journey to find out more about her. I had no idea what I would find out. People ask me how to do family history; and I’m happy to share some of the trade secrets about how to do it, but I must tell them to be careful – because you may find out things you don’t want to know. Fannie turned out to be a cruel person, and I didn’t know that about her. When I was writing her story, she was just larger than life. I knew about the carnival, and I knew she had run off from her family. But in my growing up years, I only knew she had been abused, and I romanticized it. I just understood that she was liberated and that she became free. I didn’t know what she had done to her children. I did not know a lot of her extreme behavior. So when I found it out, I didn’t write her story for a long time. I was coming to terms with it personally. But when I did write it, I tried to think of how she would see her story. She would not condemn herself. She would feel justified in what she had done. At the same time, I wanted the reader to know that I do not condone what she did, and I tried to put her out there as she is, as she was. And it also helped me understand, in my trying to understand my own father, that none of us is wholly good and none of us is wholly evil. I understand that we are complex creatures, and we all – in whatever way – are making choices that we must assume at the time are appropriate choices for us.

I agree. I did feel as I read her that she would tell things that, had she thought about them or had she assimilated why Harv, for example, comes and takes the girls back, well, she might have understood herself. But there were just moments when you showed us that the people in the context around her were reading her in a different way than she was seeing herself. Then, there was that marvelous character Herschel, her husband, who keeps bringing her up to understanding in a quiet way as best he could. When I finished the Fannie section, I thought Linda Tate has done some amazing things here because it is hard here to write a character who, as I say, does not understand all she is saying and won’t stop telling you about it.

(Laughing) Well, she is larger than life in how she tells the story, too. She was . . .

Mythic.
Yes, mythic in her own way. And I imagined that she would just go on and on.

And I do think that, as you say in the end of the book, you can stop carrying her bones. You have put the bones down. But I do think the reader picks the bones up. You gave us so much to consider. Since I finished it yesterday, I have had to come to terms with her in my life . . . Then towards the end when you regroup and you recount your process in writing and your research methodology, when you show that some of her tales are challenged and some are corroborated, we get another reading of Fannie.

At one point in the narrative, your Uncle Henry warns you to “be careful what you ask for, Linda.” In many ways, you, like Louisiana and Fannie, come to understand that “you look out one day and you’re living with meanness.” You show that school work and reading and writing was a way to deal with pain and meanness, that in the end writing/researching/inventing voices was what led you to a kind of peace. It was a way to go to a hiding place and let the world go. Louisiana hides under her daughter’s house. Fannie goes to the kitchen in the basement. You went to dark corners and to journals. Did the writing of this book bring peace of mind? Have you stopped carrying the bones, as you call it?

Yes, it certainly brought me peace in many ways. I don’t think the journey will ever be over. I don’t think I’ll ever be fully able to put them to rest. It’s just that, right now, there’s yet another stage, another moment in the book’s life as people are beginning to read it. I have a very sweet and lovely life. I would not have that life if I had not gone on the journey of writing the book. It was a really, really difficult journey, and I like to think that if I had known when I started how things would come out, particularly, how things would come out in my life, I like to think I would have done it over again, but (laughing) it was really rough along the way.

But the reward is yours and, then, mine. Well, it is stunning. I would imagine that having articulated it, you have a different perspective. You can hold it at a distance outside yourself, if not find peace.
A friend of mine was recently reminding me of a line from Faulkner, which I will probably get wrong: “The past is not dead. It is not even past.” So the past is always there. The things that happened will always have happened, and, you know, there is no final peace.
But you know what I thought? In the last chapter when you all go up to straighten up the graveyard and to put the fence around it and your relatives are all there and you mark your territory, I thought to myself, “If Linda had not had a researcher’s mind and a poet’s soul, these people would not have been there all together with the table and the big dinner.”

Oh, and we would not have had Lucy. Oh, she was such a marvelous person. She passed away a few years after I met her. But I would go and visit her, and she would make me these wonderful meals. And she was a quilter. And I would sleep under piles of quilts she had made. And she was just the sweetest, most loving aunt, and to think that I wouldn’t have found Lucy. And Henry, my uncle, would not have found Lucy.

Yes, and the reader sees what the project brought to so many people. The honoring of that idea, that “the past is not even past.”

Now, a final question, I would imagine that the end of a ten-year project . . .

(Laughs) Fourteen . . .

(Laughs) Yes, let’s, get that right: the end of a fourteen-year project . . . well, the end is a relief and a sadness: so much energy, so much planning, over. What will you take on next? What is your next project?

I don’t envision myself writing another book any time soon. I am totally exhausted and drained. This book went through five full and different drafts. And it was intense in so many ways. With the publisher — two drafts. To get it ready for the publisher — I did three. There were two people who helped me a lot with it. One was Lee Smith . . . I think she is one of the most important novelists writing in Appalachia today. Lee read the first attempts I wrote of Louisiana’s tale and the second full draft [of the book]. She also helped me when it was time to think about a publisher, and a blurb from her is on the back of the book. And the other person who has read everything along the way is my best friend Jennifer Soule, who is a poet. The press had a marvelous copy editor who really absorbed the vision of the book and helped me bring it to fruition. He helped me with some conceptual things, the craft and the voices, the fine tuning. But I don’t imagine another such project (laughs). I may do some book writing again, many years down the road.

And you’re about to go on a trip to Ohio to celebrate the publication of Power in the Blood.

I’m going to the Appalachian Studies Association Conference. The Appalachian Studies field in general, both the conference and the Center where I was a Rockefeller Fellow (the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia), those organizations and, more importantly, the people in those organizations were hugely instrumental in supporting me and encouraging me and just, well, you know, it is an appropriate place to launch the book. I’m going to the conference in Portsmouth, Ohio, on the river. I’m flying to St. Louis. I’m meeting my mother and sister, and they’re going with me. I’ll give a reading of the book on Saturday morning, March 28, and then that afternoon there will be a book-signing.

And the title, Power in the Blood . . . which is from a hymn?

Well, you know, I grew up with all of these hymns. These hymns rattle around in my mind. I kept thinking of “Power in the Blood,” which, you know, is a really rousing hymn, and I can’t even read that section in my book, the conversion scene, out loud without starting to sing that hymn because it’s so catchy, as Fannie would say, and lively. Truth to tell, as Fannie would say, it’s a lively piece. It’ll draw you in.

As we finish, I want to thank you, Linda. Your book, too, is a “lively piece that’ll draw people in,” and I think it attests to what Fannie, as a young girl, says about learning, about overwhelming tasks, about wonder. At one point, with a simple wisdom, she says: “It’s a whole heap of things to be knowing in the world, ain’t it?”
In Fall 2007, John Tiedemann, a faculty member in the Writing Program, along with Ann Dobyns from the Department of English and Darrin Hicks from the Department of Human Communication Studies, founded a research group called “Agora.” Inspired by his participation at a 2007 Summer Institute conducted by the Rhetoric Society of America and held at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Tiedemann collaborated with Dobyns and Hicks to establish a similar forum at DU. They determined that the format would not take a broad, conference-style design but would, in Tiedemann’s terms, become a discussion forum, a place “to exchange ideas, not merely to exchange postures.” Tiedemann set up a website, set a first meeting date, and selected the group’s name, choosing “Agora” because the term expresses a spirited forum, a crossroads where neighboring tribes, crossing boundaries, meet as equals.

Having been active for over a year now, the group gathers two to three times a quarter to discuss selected topics such as the “Rhetoric of Global Polity,” to review specific texts such as Making Things Public or specific theories of important figures such as Richard McKeon, and to allow time to consider individual academic projects and proposals. Participants meet in the afternoons and evenings, taking turns guiding discussions on communication theory or argumentation or public good issues.

With steady attendance, Tiedemann sees sustainable progress in that there is a core group of 12 to 15 participants made up of DU faculty, graduate students, and staff, as well as academics who visit from Regis University and the University of Colorado-Denver. The group encourages “tribes” of all sorts. In fact, Tiedemann says, “The further afield the visitor, sometimes the more interesting the discussion becomes. . . . I learned about 18th-century political theory from a visiting UCD professor who helped me to flesh out my understanding of the relationship between the rhetorical tradition and the democratic one.”

In some of its most invigorating sessions, the group has looked at the writings of Bruno Latour, Paolo Virno, and Hannah Arendt, and it has addressed, among others, questions of deliberative democracy and of methods of “saving persuasion” as per Bryan Garsten’s book. In the near future, the group will continue to look into bringing nationally known speakers to campus and to take up the topic of Cicero in sustained discussions at their own contemporary version of that antique “crossroads” of verbal exchange and camaraderie.
On Tuesday, February 24, the Writing Program hosted an open mic night on diversity. Held at Sidelines Pub, the event was attended by a number of students and writing program faculty, including organizers Heather Martin, David Daniels, and Kamila Kinyon. Speakers were introduced by former poetry slam winner Russ Takeall. The event was a success, with dynamic performers and a lively interest from the audience.

The first performance was by a group of students from the campus organization Asian Student Alliance (ASA). Their skit, “Insolidarity,” demonstrated discrimination against Asian-Americans. Through a slideshow and posters, the skit illustrated scenes from the history of Asian discrimination, ranging from the mistreatment of 19th-century Chinese railroad workers, to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, to the stereotyping of Asians after the Virginia Tech shootings. The skit left viewers with an urgent call to action -- to work in solidarity against discrimination: “If we are passive and do nothing, nothing happens. Rough it out and ask questions. Stand in solidarity for change.”

A number of inspired readings and performances about race, class, and gender followed “Insolidarity.” Race and class were central themes of the narrative poem “Light Rail Ghetto” by Don, who related a bus experience in which he made assumptions he later regretted about people exiting at Colfax station, a destination he had automatically associated with crime and poverty. Russ Takeall then presented a slam poem focusing on the corruptness of government social policies in which minorities feel like “state property” in “days of despair.” A second slam performance by Lorenzo also focused on the sense of entrapment experienced by minorities.

A more humorous tenor followed in the *Onion* article read by Jeremy. According
to this satire about post-election changes in racial climate, the nation's blacks have experienced “beaming Caucasians” making eye contact on the street or on buses. Respondents stated that they are “petrified by the change” and “can’t be in a bar when the news is on.” Following these quips about the nation’s climate, the next speaker, Sarah, focused on DU through her essay on racial inequality. Sarah stressed that rather than focusing on a mascot change, we need to reach out to other races and diversify our university. Next came an excerpt from *The Vagina Monologues*. This duet focused on the discrimination that women face through such atrocities as female genital mutilation, which is purportedly practiced in twenty-eight countries. *The Vagina Monologues* performers encouraged the audience to attend the full event later in the week at DU.

It was great to hear another lively and provocative open mic night at DU and to later see students responding to the event in writing. Mary Kate De Graw, for example, posted her response to the event in a blog posted for Geoffrey Bateman’s writing class. As this and other DU open mic nights have demonstrated, DU students are making their voices heard about social issues of consequence.