PUBLIC WRITING: BRINGING RELEVANCE, TRANSPARENCY, AND
TRANSFER INTO THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

by

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ABSTRACT

Composition courses frequently are not classes students choose voluntarily; FYC classes, in particular, are usually mandatory. Because of this, students may think of the writing that they do in these classes in about the same way many of us thought of Algebra or Physical Education classes growing up: as little more than a chore. Writing is an active pursuit that allows people to understand and interact with their world, but students who are forced to churn out formulaic essays will find it difficult to believe that writing is anything more than an imposed exercise. Inviting students to experience the active nature of writing through public writing assignments allows students to practice writing that engages with the world. Public writing pedagogy allows instructors to involve students in enacting rhetoric through real rhetorical situations, to demonstrate specific genres that react to common situations, and to prompt students to consider how they may approach future situations through reflection. Surveying a number of platforms for public writing appropriate to varying levels of composition courses, this project provides an aid to instructors who wish to implement public writing pedagogy in their own classrooms.

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INTRODUCTION: A CALL FOR PUBLIC WRITING

Difficulties exist in the teaching of required freshman composition courses. Most of our students will never major in English or in Rhetoric and Composition. Many of our students don't really think of themselves as writers and don't want to be in a required writing course. In spite of these obstacles, students will often leave describing FYC as one of the most useful and interesting courses that they took in their first year. In these courses students may learn to understand their own minds and to communicate what they find to the world; little could be more rewarding. However, it is undoubtedly true that, early in the semester and periodically throughout our time with these students, instructors find themselves defending the course of study and what we want our students to learn. We feel this need because our students often do not understand how learning the proper implementation of a thesis statement relates to their future as engineers, chemists, entrepreneurs, or psychologists. Often, they don't see how learning the proper means for citing sources in MLA format will be of any use once they move forward to pursuing a career. Because the benefits of FYC are not immediately clear to students, being able to demonstrate the importance of what students are learning becomes of foremost importance.

I played baseball a little when I was much younger. When a person starts out learning how to play that game he or she begins by learning the mechanics of throwing the ball, of batting. I remember playing catch back and forth with my dad for hours. Without a question this practice improves the skill of a beginning player. No doubt, it even keeps veteran players sharper as could be demonstrated by watching professional

players performing drills. But at a certain point, one can be the best in the world at playing catch and it doesn't make that person a good baseball player.

The same thing can be said for writing. Students learn best by enacting real rhetorical situations in their writing course. My contention is that public writing, or writing intended for public consumption and meant to have an impact on the world, can be an invaluable tool in the composition classroom for increasing students' investment in their work and for teaching rhetorical concepts crucial to students' ability to write outside the classroom.

I begin by providing a brief overview of the field in the form of a literature review. Then, in Chapter One I seek to answer the question, what is public writing? In doing so, I am seeking a more precise, even if perhaps broader, definition of public writing than what exists in the field at the present time. At present, public writing is subsumed within conversations of social-service learning, literacy for life, or genre. Whereas each of these can be important tools from which an instructor may draw, we must understand what public writing is outside of these related pedagogical spheres in order to better understand the independent attributes of public writing pedagogy.

In Chapter Two, I demonstrate the benefits students gain from publically-directed writing assignments. These benefits range from increased student investment in assignments, reinvigorated focus on audience awareness, recognition of possible avenues for publication, and enhanced ability to adapt to different rhetorical needs presented by differing rhetorical situations. With some help, these factors help students begin to transfer what is accomplished in the classroom into their public lives.

In Chapter Three, I discuss where we can go to make student writing public. In this chapter, I offer a number of venues for publication and ways we can increase the public profile of student writing. These extend from university venues to community-based locales and finally to world-wide outlets.

Finally, I conclude by offering practical advice for how to go about implementing public writing pedagogy in composition classrooms, including a course description for a FYC class in public writing. Public writing provides instructors with an excellent opportunity to extend students' gaze beyond the classroom while demonstrating the power of writing in the world. In what follows, I make evident that public writing pedagogy can be of great value to instructors of composition.

LITERATURE REVIEW: WHAT IS PUBLIC WRITING ACCORDING TO

CURRENT COMPOSITION SCHOLARSHIP?

Prior to the Process revolution of the late 1970s and early 1980s, writing instruction focused primarily on the finished product, an essay that typically conformed to the five-paragraph model so many of our students know so well. During this time, instructors frequently spent the majority of their class periods lecturing, most often on grammar and style, and sent students home to do whatever it was that they did to complete assigned themes. Often students were asked to read model essays, often professionally written, or literary pieces and were meant to try and use the formal lectures given in class to bring their writing up to that level.

This pedagogical school is referred to as the Current-Traditional paradigm of the teaching of writing. Typically, the descriptions of this set of teachers has been written by those who came after, usually those from the Process movement. I am typically nervous about accepting depictions of philosophies described by those who superseded them as I don't doubt there were thoughtful teachers who helped students grow into decent writers during the Current-Traditional era. The Process movement was undoubtedly formed by some teachers who had previously taught writing formulae through lecture formats. But, the fact that, as described in Chris Anson's "Process Pedagogy and Its Legacy," teachers at one time were more focused on a final product, that those teachers lectured in class more than they had students writing, and that many instructors focused on literary pieces and analysis rather than public genres is apparent (212); particularly because it often continues to occur today. Most of the field of composition was created in reaction to

Current-Traditional pedagogy and seeks to guide our current writing instructors beyond these practices.

In the 1980s, the process school began to move writing instruction past the practices of the Current-Traditional school. Theorists like Donald Murray, Ken Macrorie, and Richard Larson, among others, were more interested in what students were doing as they wrote than they were with students' final products. Murray, for instance, proposed a basic three-step process of prewriting, writing, and rewriting that many, including myself, still use today (Anson 216). In many ways, process pedagogy led to the birth of the many varied forms of composition pedagogy that currently exist. The process movement's focus on writing as a means of exploration and the importance of the students' activities in learning to write are at the core of everything we do now. Chris Anson, who wrote the chapter on process pedagogy in the recent edition of *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, states "at base, process pedagogy is designed to help students *engage* in their writing to develop self-efficacy, confidence, and strategies for meeting the challenges of multiple writing situations" (226). I don't doubt that such a sentence would still be accurate if WAC or genre or even public writing were substituted in place of the word "process"; in fact, I argue for something very similar in Chapter Two of this piece.

From process pedagogy came a proliferation of other theoretical frameworks and focuses for composition pedagogy. Whereas process pedagogy had instructors shift their focus from a product to the students themselves as they created a wider variety of texts, cultural and critical pedagogies that flourished in the 1990s shifted that focus from the

classroom to the world outside. Critical pedagogy had theorists and students considering the imbalance of power structures in society and, particularly, in the classroom. Paulo Freire, whose most influential book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* challenged the common model of students as banks into which teachers deposit bits of knowledge, proposing instead a model where students generate content by casting a critical eye on various themes or ideas (i.e. marriage, poverty) (George 78). Though he was not, himself, a compositionist, Friere's alteration of the power structures common in the classroom, as well as the revolutionary political critical theory he advocated, had a powerful impact on the field.

In 2005, Paula Mathieu, a prominent public writing theorist, recognized the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies and its continued critique of current-traditional pedagogy as being influential in leading to the "public turn" she notes composition had taken (George, Lockridge, and Trimbur 100). Cultural studies' emphasis on popular culture, political culture, and the media engages students with varied public spheres. Both critical and cultural pedagogical models challenged the university-centric model of teaching, shifting the focus of writing courses away from written papers performed for a grade and toward writing pursued to look critically at the world and imagine something better. From here, it was a natural progression to begin directing student writing away from teachers as audience and toward the world with which students were engaging.

And so we have a very abbreviated look at how Composition studies has come to take that public turn Mathieu mentioned and has moved to public writing as a means of instructing students. In what follows, I consider many of the primary discussions within

the field of public writing, from questions of what public writing looks like in and out of the classroom to the well-represented discourse over service-learning. In addition, because my project aims at expanding the discussion of public writing beyond discussions of service-learning, I also touch on pieces from the fields of rhetorical pedagogy and genre studies that may inform this broadened definition.

The theory behind how public writing works in society at large, and how we approach it in the classroom, is a significant area of public writing research in the field of composition. Some of these pieces concern public writing pedagogy in a general sense and others are focused on service-learning. As much of the research in public writing primarily relates to service-learning, I begin by separating out those that are more generalized before discussing articles and books specifically invested in service-learning.

Among these theorists who examine public writing more broadly are Susan Wells who, in 1996's "Rogue Cops and Health Care: What Do We Want from Public Writing," focuses on Jürgen Habermas' theory of the public sphere, in addition to the adaptation of that theory by Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge, to discuss issues concerning public writing and how we may seek to apply it to composition classrooms. Relying on Habermas, she defines the public sphere as "a discursive domain where private individuals, without the authority of state office, debate the general conduct of social and political business, holding bodies accountable at the bar of reason" (Wells 327). In spite of its pervasive influence on the mythology of our democratic society, Wells calls into question whether such a universal public forum even exists and certainly whether students may access it. She also notes, I think importantly, that instances of impactful

public speech are most often "temporary or unstable" (Wells 326) and that it is therefore difficult to create real opportunities for students to participate in public writing that may have a real influence on their world.

Wells notes that, rather than a single public sphere existing for any given topic, there are many public spheres, all constructed to deal with particular problems or interests. Part of the public writer's task, therefore, is to construct their own public space and to populate this space with an audience of interested people. She uses Bill Clinton's 1993 Health Care speech as a model for audience-creation. She also notes some of the important conditions which must be met to aid in the creation of such public spheres, particularly focusing on how public writers must build networks of connections in creating small spheres of public interest in a piece and work to connect their small sphere to other small spheres to grow that network of connections that will mean an increase of exposure for anything written by the author and for whatever cause the author takes up.

Wells focuses on four broad concepts around which public writing may be implemented in the classroom. First, the classroom itself may be viewed as a replication of a public sphere. In the second, the class looks critically at public discourse. The third strategy is to produce writing that is directed at a public space. Fourth is the service-learning model. For all of these she offers benefits and limitations. Wells' article is one of the most cited in discussions of public writing, influencing the thinking of much of the field.

In "Public Writing in Gaming Spaces," Matthew S. S. Johnson first seeks to define public writing before demonstrating a powerful form of public writing, as he sees

it, happening in and surrounding video games. In his 2008 article, he alludes to a number of scholars within the field, particularly Brian Jackson, who have noted that public writing, and even first-year composition classes in general, should seek to "teach students how to be good citizens" (qtd. in Johnson 270) and that the goal of the writing produced should be to change the world (272). Johnson recognizes the difficulty in accomplishing this task and, importantly, cautions us that the failure of student writing to have an impact on the world may actually teach students that their writing doesn't matter. He cites Rosa Eberly's differentiation between public and protopublic writing classrooms, where public classrooms have as their primary goal to impact the world and protopublic classrooms present publication of writing as an option, but are rather meant to be a place where students train at public discourse.

Johnson then describes gaming environments as places where people compose in public with the purpose of changing their online worlds. This occurs in-game in certain massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs) and in online communities built by fans and focused on certain games. Important concepts introduced during Johnson's description of public writing in gaming environments include a discussion of Robert Putnam's work showing that television has led to a decrease in civic engagement and the idea that reciprocity between author and the public is important to public writing. This reciprocal transaction is posited by Johnson as an alternative to the idea that public writing must seek to change the world.

Amy Goodburn and Heather Camp, in 2004's "English 354: Advanced Composition: Writing Ourselves/Communities in Public Conversations," provide a model

for one method to approach the teaching of public writing in an advanced composition classroom. They describe how in their course on public discourse in which students explore writing concepts ranging from the difference between public and private discourse, and the three principle critical terms: narrative, representation, and genre. The authors guide the reader through how these terms are used to help students understand how to write themselves into public discourse communities. The article may interest an instructor looking for a basic model for a course that looks critically at the concept of writing publically.

In *Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World,* Nancy Welch discusses public writing, and public speech in general, within the present-day context that has seen the advent of free-speech zones and powerful private interests encroaching on public space. In that 2008 book, she looks to models of public speech from the recent past, seeking to use them to inform modes of public rhetoric; she is hoping to find a way to cut through the barriers that are constructed to keep activist voices from piercing through. Throughout she makes powerful arguments for how to create a space for public discourse in a world that increasingly works to prevent it. Welch's book makes an excellent text for classes on public activism and selections from the book are excellent triggers to discussions of building an audience.

Where Welch is focused on the broad context of our specific time, Christy Friend in her 1999 article "From Contact Zone to the City: Iris Marion Young and Composition Theory" focuses on a more abstract conceptual model for public writing. She describes a metaphor for public writing centered on the urban environment of the ideal city, as

posited by Iris Marion Young, as a metaphor for the public space. Cities are complex spaces in which differing social groups live in direct proximity to one another and in which individuals from those groups regularly interact. Cities have public spaces like parks, neighborhoods, and buildings which bring individuals together to experience the joys these landmarks provide. Cities impress upon their inhabitants the pleasure of encounters with new experiences, which further draw out their inhabitants. Finally, the publicness of cities forces people to interact (Friend 660).

The model of the city provides a useful description of public space as constantly moving and changing and yet simultaneously creating spaces for interaction. Friend contrasts this metaphor with that of the prevalent model of the contact zone, which she sees as a more limited metaphor. Whereas the city imagines a variable environment, of the type previously described by Wells, the contact zone represents a more stable discourse community (662). We may understand that a discourse community is ever-changing, but typically the term community, with its rural undertones, is not associated with rapid change. Further, as it is often used, the contact zone "tends to emphasize reading and critical analysis at the expense of encouraging students to articulate their own responses to issues" (Friend 666). She notes that the spatial metaphor of the contact zone describes the shape of arguments, but fails to help students to understand how to enter one (Friend 667).

Joseph Harris, in his 1989 work "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing," had similar thoughts, proposing the concept of the city over the more limited community. For him, the city is diverse where a community suggests homogeneity. He

argues for community to be used primarily for more local groupings of people and city used as an apt metaphor for more diverse discussions.

Each of these scholars speak to the theory of public writing and how it is defined and characterized to our students. Some describe public spheres and ways to conceive of public writing in the classroom (Wells, Johnson, Goodburn and Camp). Others are concerned with describing the landscape for our students so that they may understand how to enter the public space with their compositions (Welch, Friend, and Harris). These theorists write generally about public writing; those to come speak more specifically about one type.

The most well-traveled road in the study of public writing is clearly that of service-learning with several questions dominating the discussion. Key among them are: 1) what kinds of service-learning projects may be done, 2) what can be their benefits, and 3) how might we develop fruitful and sustainable partnerships for service-learning? Within these larger questions may be several smaller ones, but I use those three to frame my depiction of the field.

Nearly all pieces on service-learning address the question of what students may gain from these types of courses, but I make mention of a few studies in particular that effectively highlight some possible answers to this question. One book of particular importance is the Linda Adler-Kassner, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters volume *Writing the Community: Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in Composition.* This authors of this volume, through a series of shorter articles from varied authors, characterize the field as it stood in 1997, speaking to many of the positive uses of service-

learning, while also highlighting difficulties. Most of the articles include illustrations of different service-learning projects, from Nora Bacon's article describing Stanford's Community Service Writing program's work with *Esperanza,* the newsletter of a refugee center called South Bay Sanctuary Covenant (SBSC), to Wade Dorman and Susann Fox Dorman's work with several local Baton Rouge organizations using real-world writing. Other articles are focused more on the theory behind service-learning pedagogy. All speak to significant benefits of service-learning varying from increased student-engagement to a greater contextualization of rhetorical concepts.

Nora Bacon, in her 2000 article "Building a Swan's Nest for Instruction in Rhetoric," described an instructor named Nancy and her experience launching a Community Service Writing course. The course requirements posed a challenge as the objectives required Nancy to incorporate not only the community service component, but also a writing about literature piece and preparation for a standardized writing test at the end of the semester. Nancy entered the course thinking that students would benefit primarily from instruction in form and grammar as these factors would be important to their community partner. She spent a good deal of time teaching this and found her students to be resistant to the instruction. The students were primarily concerned with learning what would be different about the kinds of writing they would be doing in the community service component. What Nancy thought were skills that would transfer to any context, the students found to be superfluous.

In the second semester, Nancy revised her curriculum. Rather than focusing on sentence-level issues, Nancy shifted focus primarily to issues of audience. The

community service component caused the ability to make rhetorical choices accounting for audience expectations a crucial ability to hone. She spent a great deal of time with her students reading a wide variety of texts, analyzing the specific reasons why the authors had constructed them as they had for purpose and audience. Nancy also brought in concepts from classical rhetoric and pragmatics. The immediacy of needing preparation for writing to a public audience had a clear impact on Nancy's students. The revised instruction made students aware of concepts they needed for the community service component, and performing them cemented the lessons.

More recently, Deborah Silverman produced a study in 2012 from the public relations field based on qualitative surveys and quantitative data in which she attempted to determine the effectiveness of service-learning projects in her Public Relations writing courses. She identifies some of the proposed benefits of service-learning before outlining the kinds of questions she asked students and clients and sharing the data. Of particular interest is that 83.9% of students believed that the service component helped them to understand course content, 69.1% said they were more interested in the course because of it, and 72.9% rated their written communication skills as "very good" or better. Silverman does not disclose what the written communication skills ratings were prior to the class, which seems an unfortunate oversight. Further, she finds that 85.2% of clients believed that the students "brought fresh new ideas to their organizations," and 59.3% "felt students lightened staff workloads" (Silverman 6). The median grade for the service-learning classes was higher (87.72%) than the non-service-learning alternative (80.04%) (Silverman 6). These studies were done over a four year period and included

81 students and 27 clients (Silverman 3). As students wrote genres like public releases and fundraising appeals which can be common in composition courses as well, these statistics are surely relevant to public writing courses and particularly to service-learning-based courses in our discipline. The statistics provide service-learning advocates with specific numbers to underscore their claims about the benefits of these programs.

In his 2012 article "Quintillian in New Orleans: Post Katrina Service-Learning in an Advanced Writing Course," Ryan K. McBride describes a service-learning program he organized and executed at Tulane University in which students in an advanced writing course prepared a curriculum and coached debate teams in lower-income middle schools in New Orleans. Tulane maintains a strong commitment to student service, requiring a minimum of twenty hours of service-learning work during the freshman or sophomore years and another twenty hours during the junior and senior years. McBride used texts from classical rhetoric to background his students' preparation of their curriculum. Because the students were, themselves, preparing to instruct young people in rhetorical practice, these texts became more important to the students as they planned to coach the debate teams. McBride closes by detailing the importance of a long-term commitment to such a service-learning project both to the success of the program and for the interest of students involved.

Catherine Gabor approaches service-learning with a very different group of students: basic writers. Many service-learning courses are designed for more advanced students, but in her 2009 article, "Writing Partners: Service-Learning as a Route to Authority for Basic Writers," Gabor details a program she coordinates in which her basic

writing students write letters back and forth to elementary school students in local Title I

classrooms. The opportunity to communicate with someone attending college provided

benefits to the elementary students that were fairly plain to see, but the interesting benefit

to Gabor's students was the opportunity to write to an audience over whom they were

able to adopt a sense of authority. Gabor paired the unit with discussions and assignments

on home literacies versus academic discourse. The letters gave the basic writing students

an opportunity to write in informal language. In addition, the sense of authority they

were able to adopt—one they might never have had the chance to adopt writing essays to

a teacher—allowed them a sense of confidence in their writing that they wouldn't

otherwise have had.

  The line between public and private writing can be a fuzzy one, and though

Gabor's project is service-learning, the writing of private letters may not technically be

defined as public writing. However, the students were able to write for a new type of

audience, one who would offer a measure of feedback, and thus, for our purposes, these

letters are a form of public writing.

  In a slightly different vein, in the 2007 article "Raising the Bar for Classroom

Publication: Building a Student Press Initiative," Erick Gordon describes his work with

the Student Press Initiative (SPI), an organization he founded. SPI partners with high

schools to produce curriculum-based publications themed around specific genres. He

describes various benefits and successes of SPI, particularly centered around student

investment and opportunity to study specific genres. Such organizations could create a

similar opportunity for partnerships involving production and publication of student writing.

Pieces by Adler-Kassner, Crooks, and Watters, Bacon, Silverman, McBride, Gabor, and Gordon offer a solid background in service-learning projects as well as concepts that may be taught using service-learning courses. Some offer specific examples of what kinds of service-learning projects are available. Silverman describes various organizations with whom her classes were able to partner within the field of public relations. McBride details a project partnering with a middle school debate team. Gabor describes a partnership with an elementary school. Most of the time service-learning is done either with advocacy groups or with educational organizations. These groups are often eager to partner with colleges, as both sets of organizations frequently operate under budgetary constraints and welcome additional volunteer aid. I have described some of the kinds of service-learning projects which may be attempted, along with their benefits and drawbacks; next, I outline studies on the primary concern associated with service-learning: how do we set up sustainable and fruitful partnerships?

Paula Mathieu, in her 2005 book *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition*, speaks at length about the challenges and benefits of service-learning partnerships and public writing. Among the difficulties with service-learning partnerships is the development of reliable strategies for implementation between the instructor and the partnering group. Mathieu proposes that rather than thinking strategically, which implies thinking in advance of rigidly laid strategies to be applied throughout the semester, we must proceed in these partnerships tactically. Tactics are

general guidelines that are flexible enough to be changed as the situation changes. This

tactical approach can run counter to the institutionalized tendencies of the University.

Throughout the book, Mathieu describes her work with various initiatives and the ways

she has implemented public writing and service-learning in the classroom. Her model of

hopeful tactics is widely influential among scholars researching the question of

sustainability and successful service-learning partnerships.

In 2013, Jessica Restaino and Laurie JC Cella edited a volume entitled

Unsustainable: Re-imagining Community Literacy, Public Writing, Service-Learning,

and the University in which they carry forward this discussion. The volume includes

articles on the question of sustainability and value in service-learning partnerships.

Chapters range in topics from the value of short-term projects to difficulties in

establishing community literacy programs to classroom pedagogy. Authors argue for the

value of programs that fell short of perfection, as all service-learning partnerships are

certain to do, asserting that students still may gain from such experiences. The general

theme of unpredictability is pervasive through most of these examples as it is throughout

most all discussions of service-learning.

Ellen Cushman, in her 2002 article "Sustainable Service Learning Programs,"

focuses on the professor's role in crafting service-learning partnerships that last. She sees

this as an under-addressed area of research within the field, at least at the time of her

writing. Cushman focuses on how professors need to think of and approach these

partnerships and what those professors might be teaching. Then, she describes one such

program she attempted with the Richmond Community Literacy Center. She stresses the

importance of professorial engagement and commitment not only to the goals of class pedagogy, but also to the needs of the partnership program.

Skolnikoff, Engvall, and Ferrara, in their 2010 article "Lots of Moving Parts: Is Service-Learning Sustainable in a College Classroom?," focus on the potential pitfalls of service-learning partnerships, asking whether such relationships may be sustainable. They describe their program's history with service-learning and offer examples of some of the difficulties those programs have faced. Largely, they leave the question unanswered but do offer good advice concerning how such a partnership may proceed.

Much earlier, in 1989, Marcia L. Hurlow detailed for her field—journalism— some of the developments among English compositionists at the time in the Writing across the Curriculum movement in her article "Role for Mass Communication in 'Writing Across Curriculum.'" She describes a project, incorporating some of these WAC concepts, in which an economics class produced a series of articles for the campus newspaper. Hurlow details difficulties with the project, argues the importance of open partnerships between groups seeking to accomplish such a project, and then outlines the numerous benefits gleaned for students. The project placed the students in a real rhetorical situation in which they were required to tailor a particular message to an audience with significantly less specialized knowledge and to implement specific genre conventions associated with newspaper articles. On the theme of implementation of a successful partnership, Hurlow notes that she had seen several similar projects attempted at the school that met "with more or less success depending on how well the expectations of all parties were established before the projects began" (Hurlow 57). Hurlow

recognizes the importance of mutually agreed upon expectations for the success of a partnership. Though this is not specifically a service-learning project, this article relates to many others involving outside public writing partnerships.

As my project aims to go beyond the traditional definition of public writing which has most often been associated with service-learning or civic engagement, a number of works from outside the realm of public writing gain relevance to this discussion. Many articles and books from fields like rhetoric, genre studies, and writing about writing may apply, but I focus on the couple of pieces I found most relevant to a discussion of public writing from the fields of rhetoric and genre studies.

Lloyd Bitzer's "The Rhetorical Situation," while a much older source from 1968, is still crucial to a discussion of writing directed publically. Bitzer's primary claim is that communication becomes designated as rhetoric not by any particular attribute of the text but by the situation which calls it into being and to which it is a "fitting" response. Bitzer recognizes a number of key concepts concerning rhetorical discourse. These concepts include that rhetoric is a response to a situation; that a speech or piece of written rhetoric gains significance by the situation that called it into being; that such a situation, therefore, must exist for rhetoric to exist; that not all rhetorical situations lead to the composition of rhetoric; that a situation is defined as rhetorical based on whether or not it "invites" a response through communicated thought which might change the situation; that such a response is defined as rhetorical based on its being a "fitting" response; and that the situations constrain what the rhetorical response may be. He suggests that it is entirely the situation, and not the rhetor, that determines the response; I suspect it is rather a

combination of the two variables as it is the rhetor who perceives the situation. Situations, as rhetors are influenced by them, are not objective realities, but are rather perceived by those rhetors. Thus, it is impossible that rhetors should not be a part of determining a response as it is the rhetor's perceptions that determine the position and shape of that response. The question of whether it is the situation or the author which determines the response to a rhetorical situation could provide a fruitful classroom discussion, should the text be assigned as a reading for students.

Bitzer also discusses three important elements of the rhetorical situation: exigence, audience, and constraints. Exigence is defined as whatever imperfection requires a remedy. A rhetorical exigence is, therefore, an imperfection that requires remediation through a rhetorical response. As part of his definition of rhetorical exigence, Bitzer requires that a rhetorical response has the capacity to change the situation. I would posit that a rhetorical exigence only requires a belief in the rhetor that the situation may be changed through rhetoric as there are plenty examples of rhetoric which do not meet with the opportune moment in order that change may occur. Ignoring this distinction leaves the field open to ambiguity in defining rhetoric; there will be instances in which an author composes an argument to an audience for a purpose—a rhetorical activity by most definitions of the term—that does not qualify as rhetoric because it turns out the argument was doomed to fail. An argument need not effect change in order to qualify as rhetoric.

Finally, Bitzer defines the rhetorical audience as those "capable of being influenced by discourse" who may serve as "the mediator[s] of the change which the

discourse functions to produce" (8). Constraints are the factors which may prevent change. These may be ideas in the zeitgeist, certain laws, or people. For the sake of this project, Bitzer is useful primarily to frame the sort of rhetoric we seek to teach in a classroom centered on public writing. The rhetorical situation is key to any attempt to embody the public situations students, or anyone else for that matter, must face in writing into the world. Because of this, Bitzer grounds much of my discussion on gains in rhetorical abilities gleaned by students through public writing.

In addition to Bitzer, authors previously mentioned including Bacon and McBride note the impact of rhetorical studies on a study of public writing. Genre studies is particularly important to a study of public writing as genres are classifications of writings that have formed around common public rhetorical situations. Therefore, genres provide models for students to study and easier ways to understand how an author may choose to respond to a situation.

Peter Kittle and Rochelle Ramay produced a fruitful study in a chapter from the 2010 book *What is "College-Level" Writing? Volume 2: Assignments, Reading, and Student Writing.* In the chapter titled "Minding the Gaps: Public Genres in Academic Writing," the authors explore the pedagogical impact of public writing in classrooms. One a high school teacher of English and the other a college professor, Kittle and Ramay were particularly attuned to the needs of students transitioning from high school to college, so much of the article focuses on how public writing pedagogy through genres better equips high school students for that transition. The authors demonstrate the improvements to student writing through study and implementation of a public genre, in

their case the "My Turn" article in *Newsweek*. Kittle and Ramay offer a sample of one of Ramay's high school student's writing early in the year and then a sample of her writing on a similar topic after having participated in a public genre-based curriculum (107-11). As expected, the writing is more focused and engaging in the later piece. One may ask whether a good writing instructor should usually anticipate such improvements in a student's writing over the course of a year of school, but the specific improvements tie in perfectly with the kinds of benefits that can be gleaned from a focus on public writing. The authors end by highlighting six of the most important benefits of teaching through public writing genres: increases in student investment, immersion in genre, student exposure to complexity of audience, improvements in implementation and understanding of research, additional purpose to revision, and increases in public intellectualism (Kittle and Ramay 115-6).

Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff, in the 2010 book *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*, deliver a thorough explanation of genre studies. In Chapter Eleven of that book, "Rhetorical Genre Studies Approaches to Teaching Writing," Bawarshi and Reiff outline some reasons for teaching rhetorical genres before pivoting to an in-depth look at how to go about teaching genre to students. They provide guidelines for analysis of genres, important questions to ask in helping students to think critically about genre (Bawarshi and Reiff 193-7), and ideas for teaching alternative genres (Bawarshi and Reiff 200-2). Particularly important to a discussion of public writing is the brief section on "Teaching Genres in Public Contexts." In this section, Bawarshi and Reiff outline projects by various instructors in which they have

taught publicly-directed genres beginning with genre analysis and moving to production (205-6).

Elizabeth Wardle calls into question many of the claims traditionally made by genre theorists. In her 2009 study, "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?," she determines that general skills transfer, the goal of instructors in genre studies, often fails to occur. She proposes that, rather than simply teaching students to write various genres, which results largely in students knowing little more than how to produce that specific genre, the FYC course should be modeled around the concept of writing. Instead of teaching students to produce a few narrow forms, Wardle argues that we should be teaching "how people use writing, how people learn to write, how genres mediate work in society, how 'discourse communities' affect language use, how writing changes across the disciplines, and so on" (Wardle 784). Students engaged in this type of pedagogy are learning how writing works rather than how to perform a specific task. This fits appropriately with a study of public writing as students are then asked, in their assignments, to carry out a task using this newfound knowledge. Writing about Writing, as proposed by Wardle and Douglas Downs, fills in the cracks of more limited genre studies, helping students to recognize how to use genres to accomplish their own rhetorical purposes.

Angela Rounsville, Rachel Goldberg and Anis Bawarshi, in their 2008 article "From Incomes to Outcomes: FYW Students' Prior Genre Knowledge, Meta-Cognition, and the Question of Transfer," come to many of the same conclusions as Wardle concerning general skills transfer. Using data from a University of Washington study,

the authors note that, based on students' knowledge of written genres prior to entering

FYC courses, high-level transfer between genres designated as school genres or work

genres rarely occurred naturally (Rounsville, Goldberg, and Bawarshi 106-7). The

authors note the importance upon giving an assignment in FYC courses of first asking

students to reflect upon written genres they have done before that might help them in

completing the task at hand (Rounsville, Goldberg, and Bawarshi 108). This reflection,

which lines up well with Downs and Wardle's writing about writing, may help students'

cognitive pathways to link between previously studied genres and the activities they are

currently attempting. As this becomes a common thinking pattern, the likelihood of high-

order transfer increases.

Research in the field of public writing is expansive. Studies range from

discourses on the theory of public writing and how it is applied in the world and in the

classroom to the large number of service-learning studies. In addition, as I recommend

an expansion of the definition of public writing, studies in rhetoric and genre studies also

exert a powerful influence. Having surveyed the ways in which the field has approached

public writing in the recent past, I now discuss how to define the term, public writing,

and the ways in which the field's current application is incomplete and potentially

limiting.

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT IS PUBLIC WRITING?: A CALL FOR AN EXPANSION

OF THE TERM CONSIDERING CURRENT DEFINITIONS

When Kathryn signed up to take a writing class centered around public writing, she was excited. She had been writing on her Tumblr for years and had developed a pretty extensive community of readers. Whenever she had a clarinet recital or took a family vacation, she would journal about it online, posting pictures and videos and reflecting on the experiences. When she saw a movie or heard a song from a new band, she would post a review and communicate back and forth with friends about it. And at the age of 16, when her dad died, giving voice to her thoughts and feelings through her online journal was a crucial part of her grieving process, helping her to process her emotions and to get encouragement from friends who read what she wrote. Kathryn knew the value of writing to a public community and was thrilled with the prospect of learning more.

What she found when she got to her public writing class left her more than a little disappointed; the course was primarily about politics and community service. The public writing communities to which she was introduced were invested in spreading literacy in communities and doing good work. Kathryn cared about these things on some level, but this didn't match up with her own experience of writing publically. She thought of writing into the world as an opportunity to express her thoughts concerning the widest scope of her own human encounters with the world she lived in. All her teacher seemed to value was politics.

Would it be a wonderful thing to bring young people like Kathryn into discourse communities on civic issues? Does our society desperately need more young people involved in critically thinking about and speaking to our communities on publically important issues? No doubt, the answers to these questions are yes and it is extremely important that young people become involved in building our society. As I plan lessons for my own argumentation classes, when searching for a model essay, I usually pull in a text relating to an important public debate from current events, having them confront issues and conversations that they might otherwise ignore. I also recognize that public writing can make this interaction a reality. However, as a composition instructor, my primary job is not to increase the civic engagement of my students. My job is not to get my students into the community doing good work that needs to be done. My job, rather, is to teach students to think clearly and to communicate their thoughts effectively in the world (see Appendix A).

In the previous dramatization, Kathryn is a young person who has a great deal of experience writing publically. Many young people write into specific communities on a day-to-day basis. We may argue about the scope of their observations or the quality of the communication, but today's students probably write more in their free time than previous generations did. Cynthia Haven, in an article covering the Stanford Study of Writing, reported that of the 15,000 pieces of writing collected for this comprehensive study of student writing, only 62% of that writing was for classwork. She quotes Andrea Lunsford, who spearheaded the project, as saying that students are "writing more than ever before in history" (qtd. in Haven). But though Kathryn was involved in writing

outside of the classroom, like many of our students, she was also not particularly interested in becoming more civically involved. Could that change over time? Absolutely. And this would be a wonderful development. But we can't make it our jobs to change our students' interests. It puts an unrealistic, and likely unproductive, burden on our shoulders as writing teachers.

In the seventh edition of *The Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing* the section on public writing is titled "Service Learning, Civic Engagement, and Public Writing" (Reynolds et al 245). As can be noted from the literature review, much of the field of public writing in the last twenty years has been narrowly focused on social service. I argue for a broader—and yet more precise—definition of public writing. Extensive benefits can be gleaned from the application of composition pedagogy focused on public writing, as I demonstrate in Chapter 2. We do a disservice to ourselves and our students when we define public writing so narrowly as writing that is civically engaged. After outlining this broader definition of public writing, I delineate a number of differing levels of the publication of writing that are crucial to a discussion of public writing applied to composition pedagogy. Finally, I outline some of the general problems presented by public writing pedagogy. More discussion of problems specific to particular types of public writing come in Chapter Three when those specific forms are discussed.

Why Are We Drawn to the Civic Engagement Angle?

Matthew S. S. Johnson, in his article "Public Writing in Gaming Spaces," provides a useful model for understanding why a broader, more inclusive definition of

public writing will be useful. Early in his piece, Johnson points to speeches and articles ranging from Brian Jackson to John Clifford and Elizabeth Ervin to note what few of us would try to deny, that our field has something of an activist streak (Johnson 270). Perhaps some would argue that this activism doesn't have to have a partisan slant, but it is clear that many of us would like to, as Jackson puts it, "teach students how to be good citizens" (qtd. in Johnson 270). We are teachers who do much of our work in the realm of ideas and in getting our students to feel increasingly capable of dealing with those ideas. Fostering the capability of thinking critically through important issues is a significant part of what we do in composition.

Therefore, it should not be surprising that, when discussing writing for a public audience, members of our idea-focused discipline would be drawn more readily to more activist, community service avenues. Certainly, community service writing gets students to interact critically with their world and forces them to write to an audience on whom they may have an influence. We see exposing our students to the sorts of things they can do in the "public sphere" to impact their world as a way of demonstrating the importance of writing. We see students dealing with complex ideas and writing to change their world. Occasionally, a piece of student writing actually does lead to change, like the one Susan Wells uses to open her seminal "Rogue Cops and Health Care: What Do We Want from Public Writing?" in which a student from her program, having been harassed by corrupt police officers, wrote a complaint and soon reforms occurred in the department (325). This speaks to the ambitions we have for our students; it is action we would love to see carried out by those we teach.

Johnson describes Christian Weisser, a scholar who suggests that public writing is "characterized [...] by its ability to transform society" (272). Given our field's desire to instruct our students in citizenship, this statement should not surprise us. But, Weisser's characterization leads Johnson to the very question I had when I read his assertion: what, exactly, happens when our student's public writing *doesn't* manage to change the world?

Susan Wells follows her illustration of the student confronting a corrupt police department with the recognition that the transformation of the department in question likely had as much to do with the Rodney King incident as it did with the student's complaint, which was the twenty-third made against the officers (326). Nancy Welch's *Living Room*, a book-length discussion on the place of public speech and writing in the increasingly private turn of the twentienth to twenty-first century, opens with a lengthy example about the protests against the Iraq War, detailing the failure of a specific public protest (1-4). Both Wells and Welch argue for a form of public writing, but clearly it is true, as Wells points out, that public writing is tied up into *kairos*, or the opportune time for rhetoric to successfully persuade, and that often it isn't yet time for change to occur (326). So if we are so focused on civic engagement and having students write to make change, what happens when change doesn't occur? Does it teach our students that their voices can't make a difference?

Given the history of civil disobedience and the difficulties faced in working and, more importantly, writing for the civil good, we can demonstrate to our students that their writing can have an influence. Instructors may teach students about how important *kairos* is to the efficacy of any persuasive piece through examples of writing—Martin

Luther King's *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* comes to mind—that had an impact.
Examples from well-known points in history demonstrate to students how writing that
meets with the opportune moment can make real change in the world. However, these
are not the only types of writing that qualify as public.

Broadening our Vision of Public Writing

Having raised the concern over what may be the unintended implication when
student writing fails to create change, Johnson describes an online forum, or a set of
forums, where people very much like many of our students are performing a very real
form of public writing: gaming spaces (272). He suggests writing produced by gamers
for "official gaming web sites, fan sites, or general gaming sites" should be recognized as
writing produced for a specific audience (272). These types of writing would certainly
seem to be public, however Johnson still privileges types of writing involving civic
participation, albeit virtual, as he looks to demonstrate how in-game textual creation has
an impact on a virtual world (274). Having pointed out how tenuous the gains of civic
engagement writing may sometimes be, and seeming to turn toward other sorts of
writing, why does he feel the need to continue to privilege civic engagement? The
primary purpose of Johnson's piece is not to put forward a broader paradigm for public
writing, but merely to demonstrate how writing in these gaming situations meets many of
the prime criteria to qualify as public writing. Johnson cites authors like Christian
Weisser who argue that public writing must seek to change the world it is written into.

Johnson demonstrates that these gaming compositions may have such an impact on the virtual world.

However, this gets at an important issue. Do the kinds of writing that such gamers produce in the out-of-game online sites not have an impact on the world? As someone who has played a number of console games, I have used numerous online walkthroughs—a comprehensive descriptive piece in which a writer details optimal modes of completing a game—in progressing through more complicated games. These writings enrich a player's encounter with a game and enliven the experience by directing the player to parts of the game that otherwise might have been missed. It may not be as satisfying to we who imagine our students writing revolutionary social pieces, but this is a public exchange.

If a writer were to put together a review of a game, detailing that author's opinion on how complex a storyline was or how enjoyable the gameplay, would not the author's audience be better informed as to whether or not they would enjoy such a game? This review would be public by most definitions of the term. Using a gaming review to teach strategies for writing to an audience would allow composition instructors to speak to students who may not be interested in producing a piece on current events.

We must broaden our definition of public writing beyond the civic engagement-focused forms to instead recognize any genre of writing meant for a public audience as public writing. Most of the genres found in our WAC textbooks, like the review, the profile, or the proposal, can and should be considered pieces of public writing. One does not write a review for oneself; it is written to have an impact on an audience. One does

not write a profile for oneself; again, it is written to have an impact on a public audience. All of these genres may be framed as public and should figure into a discussion of public writing pedagogy, whether they are written as part of a civically-engaged advocacy program or simply composed for a blog.

Differing Levels of "Publicness"

Given this more broadly cast definition of public writing as a piece of writing intended to impact an audience, various levels of "publicness" found in writing assignments should be acknowledged. More discussion of the relative benefits of each of these levels follows in Chapter 2. Obviously, the least public form of writing in composition classrooms, outside of certain configurations of journal writing which might be written by the student and for the student alone, would be assignments written either for no specific audience or with the instructor as the presumed audience. The student is charged with a task which may be of value, but the exercise does not seek to put the student into a situation they may face outside the classroom.

Perhaps one of the reasons many WAC genres are typically left out of discussions of public writing is that, in the classroom, they are only conceptually public. This is the second level of "publicness." Johnson, in his aforementioned piece, refers to the work of Rosa A. Eberly who, writing in a more literary context, proposed that we may seek to make our classrooms "protopublic spaces" where students could practice public discourse, perhaps even choosing to seek publication, but where they were not forced to

endure public scrutiny if they chose not to (273). Classrooms which were protopublic might provide for the option of publication but would not require it.

In such a protopublic assignment, the student is asked to envision themselves writing to a particular audience, but with the understanding that the piece itself will likely never be delivered to such an audience. Sometimes this is a result of lack of options for publication. When written in a composition classroom, a review, as with many other genres, is typically imagined by student and instructor as intended for a general or specific audience, but they will, in reality, end up in an instructor's filing cabinet or a student's hard drive. Most of our students don't work for a magazine, newspaper, journal, or website on which these genres would typically be made public. This likely also plays into why social service genres are more typically associated with public writing. Within our democratic society, at least according to our shared national mythology, every citizen has an equal voice. Therefore, professors and students can envision their proposals or arguments having as much impact as anyone else's if the argument is made well. Genres that are typically written and published by a more select group of people may, therefore, seem to be less public.

Protopublic assignments include the conceptual framework of a public piece. Sometimes the instructor may be non-specific about the intended audience, suggesting that the students write to a "general audience" or to a "scholarly audience." Often, the instructor may suggest a more specific audience to which the piece should be written; for instance, many instructors have their students write a piece for a specific campus publication. It is also possible to allow the student to choose what audience he or she

wishes to target with a specific piece. I personally enjoy choosing this option for

protopublic versions of my FYC Proposal project (see Appendix B for an assignment

sheet). However, none of these protopublic writings need ever be actually published nor

would the student necessarily be writing with an intended push for publication in mind.

The final level would, obviously, be actual public writing written and published

through some sort of public forum or often for a partner outside the classroom, like a

university newspaper or a community action group. This type of writing would be

written for a specific audience based on whatever sort of publisher for which the piece

was intended. Again, the assigned writing may be of any genre the instructor or the

student chose, so long as the piece written was matched to the purpose of the publication.

Unlike protopublic writing, public writing is intended throughout the process to be

presented to a public audience. Depending on the medium, sometimes the final project

may not be accepted for publication, but the intention of the author is that the piece be

published.

The Problems, They May (or Rather, Will) Arise

A discussion of public writing that did not forefront a number of the problems that

may arise when seeking to implement one form or another of public writing in the

classroom would be woefully inadequate. Any pedagogical tool may be fraught with

difficulty, but those involving publication can be particularly difficult. We have already

mentioned the difficulty with *kairos* and what happens if student writing doesn't lead to

real change. The prescription of added instruction in the history of such writing can aid with that problem.

Beyond this, clearly many students are not comfortable with making their writing public. This is particularly common among less experienced students who haven't had time to build up confidence in their ability to compose. In my first year of teaching FYC, one of my students absolutely refused to allow any of her classmates to read any of her rough drafts for peer review. No amount of reassurance that the classroom was a safe space where all students were learning and where no one would judge her could convince her to relent. Given examples like this one, I would not recommend requiring any assignment to be fully public in FYC. Protopublic writing projects where students may choose whether or not to publish may be extremely beneficial and many students may even seek publication, but a publication requirement may be too much for many inexperienced students.

However in later, more advanced courses, ones which are not general education classes all students are required to take, public writing may be safely and productively instituted. When such a course is attempted, instructors must be up front about what will be required of the students early enough in the semester that they may drop with minimal inconvenience should they decide that such a course is not for them. If it could be made clear in the course title or in an online description, that would be helpful, but certainly by the first day this should be made clear.

Another significant problem facing instructors implementing public writing is finding forums through which students may publish. Most campuses have varied types of

student publications, so the answer may be as simple as becoming informed of what is available. In addition, community service organizations in the area may be of use. Finally, the internet provides free forums for public writing.

Additional problems may be posed by any of these options. Student publications can be exclusive. The internet can be unpredictable. In the introduction to Paula Mathieu's *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition*, a book on the benefits and challenges of community service pedagogy, Mathieu spends several pages considering ways to refer to the great "out there" beyond campus before settling on "the streets" (xii-xiv). The differences, and the perceptions of differences, between people in separate socio-economic strata creates a host of difficulties between those in disadvantaged situations and those "coming to help." Finding a public forum can be difficult and once one is found, any such forum brings with it a unique set of challenges. In Chapter Three these difficulties are discussed in more depth, and potential solutions are recommended.

Conclusion

Public writing is a useful tool for teaching students a number of rhetorical skills. In discussing public writing, we must be careful not to limit ourselves to only a select number of genres and forums for writing related purely to civic engagement. Too narrow a definition of public writing restricts the types of writing we may teach as public and detaches us from students who write publically outside of community service genres. Public writing, as has been defined here, should be inclusive of all types of writing that

are intended for a public audience. In terms of pedagogy, this manifests in pieces written for publication or, often, in protopublic pieces which are imagined for a public audience, generalized or specific, but not ever necessarily meant for publication.

In the following chapter, I offer a more in-depth discussion of the specific benefits of public writing to the student and the opportunities for rhetorical instruction presented to the instructor. Both public and protopublic forms of writing and writing assignments are considered.

CHAPTER TWO: WHY ASSIGN PUBLIC WRITING?: PUBLIC WRITING

PEDAGOGY'S BENEFITS TO INSTRUCTION IN RHETORIC AND GENRE

STUDIES IN PURSUIT OF TRANSFER

"Write at least five paragraphs on the American Dream. Is it achievable today?"

As Brandon read his writing prompt, he gave his best attempt to call up what he knew of the American Dream. He had vague concepts of everybody in the country with two cars, a couple of kids, and a dog. Thinking back to class lectures he recalled that this dream had to do with opportunity and that some people had a hard time accessing that opportunity. He remembered a reading that the class had discussed on how the rich were making a great deal of money while many of their lower-level employees couldn't make ends meet. It was complicated because these executives might make more money, but they may also have certain skills that bring more money into the company. Because of this, maybe they've earned that money. At the same time when their employees couldn't pay their bills on their meager paychecks, it affected how much time they had to spend with their kids and whether or not their children could concentrate at school due to malnutrition. This meant that the kids of poor people were more likely to be less educated and to become poor adults working the same kinds of jobs their parents worked. The opportunities of the American Dream would not be open to them.

Brandon had grown up poor. He had a pretty good connection to these readings. Having thought for a minute over the topic, he set out to brainstorm and outline. He figured he could talk generally about the meaning of the American Dream for his introduction, maybe telling a story for a hook. Next, he needed to lay out what his body

paragraphs would be about. He figured the first paragraph could be about high executive pay, the second on low pay for lower-level employees, and the third could be on the cycle of poverty. He would close by saying that the American Dream is a noble idea, but it is hard to achieve today.

The student imagined above appears to be dedicated to his studies. He has done at least one reading on his prescribed topic and has shown himself capable of applying that outside material to a question posed to him. As five-paragraph essays on the American Dream go, Brandon's might be a tolerable effort. If he does a good enough job bringing together what he knows and writes in an organizational and grammatical structure that conforms to basic norms, his paper might get a very good grade.

But we should ask whether or not anyone would actually want to read this, or any, five-paragraph essay on the American Dream. As a matter of fact, it is hard to imagine that the best of writers, given a rather trite topic like "the American Dream" and a five-paragraph form engrained into them from an early age, would be likely to put together a piece that very many readers would eagerly pick up. Yet, this is the situation we unintentionally create for our students when we hand them written prompts like this one. The instructor has given no purpose for writing on this topic; there's no audience and no surrounding context. It would be hard to imagine Brandon, unless he is a truly exceptional student, composing anything but a generalized essay regurgitating much of what he's read on the topic, providing minimal opportunity for engagement with the concept, and written to provide the teacher with evidence that the student has been paying attention and knows enough to be passed on to the next class.

This sort of non-public writing assignment creates for our students a mistaken conception of what writing is and what it does. Outside of the classroom no forum and no reason exists for writing like this. Inside the classroom, excepting entry-level writing courses, no forum and no reason exists for this kind of writing. Writing is active. Writing seeks to accomplish a purpose for an audience. Public writing assignments enact these concepts of writing and provide students with a framework within which they can produce more useful material and learn much more about writing as it happens in the world.

In what follows, I demonstrate the benefits of designing writing assignments and framing instruction around public writing. Particularly, I focus on benefits gleaned by our students in the forms of rhetorical abilities enacted and practiced, increases in student investment gained, and higher levels of transfer acquired from the classroom to other contexts. In doing so, I reveal many of the most important reasons for implementing public writing as the primary focus of instruction in composition classrooms.

Public Writing and Rhetoric

In the story that led off the chapter, Brandon was able to think in a fair amount of depth about the topic of the American Dream. He had the capacity to deal with information from readings, from class discussion, and from his own life in brainstorming content for his essay. Once he had his ideas together, he plugged them into the five-paragraph formula with which he was most familiar and he was ready to draft an essay. No doubt, he may have been able to compose well-constructed grammatical sentences

and excellently formatted paragraphs. But at a certain point, we have to ask ourselves whether our students need to know more as writers.

Public writing assignments, be they public or protopublic, offer us the opportunity to teach a fuller range of concepts than more traditional writing prompts. Assignments can be structured around real-life situations and scenarios, be they non-academic or academic ones, in order to immerse the student more fully into a writing situation. In doing so, students gain experience with considering and making rhetorical choices.

As much as we can, instructors should craft public writing assignments that ask students to interact with the rhetorical situation. As discussed by Lloyd Bitzer, the rhetorical situation primarily includes an audience, situational constraints, and the exigence which calls writing or rhetoric into being (6). Composition instructors must acknowledge each of these concepts in some way as they construct and explain assignments. In Brandon's American Dream essay, no audience was identified; unfortunately, our students often are asked to write prompts like this where they are given no named audience to whom they are to direct their writing. In a situation like this, the only audience that could be identified would be the professor as he or she is the only one the student is likely to think would be interested in such a piece of writing.

Giving students an audience to whom they are writing is crucial to getting them to enact writing as it would exist in public spaces. Outside of the classroom, human beings almost never write without an audience in mind; only specific types of private writing like journals and, perhaps, artistic work are composed without much consideration of audience. In business, people write to clients, to potential clients, to fellow employees, or

to bosses. Journalists write to describe events or issues to audiences of viewers or readers. Reviewers, scientists, government workers, and teachers all write with considerations of audience running through their heads helping to determine the words they use, the complexity of their descriptions of events, and their tone and stance choices. Students who are not asked to write to specified audiences may be crippled when they seek to write outside of the classroom.

It isn't only non-academic writing where audience is a prime consideration, however; audience is crucial when discussing and composing assignments enacting academic writing, as well. David Bartholomae, in many of his writings, is emphatic about how important it is to consider the situatedness—how a writer is positioned with respect to audience and surrounding context—of our students. In arguing against the expressivism of Peter Elbow, he writes about the emphasis on personal writing divorced from academic concerns, saying that the "open classroom" is "an expression of a desire for an institutional space free from institutional pressures" (Bartholomae 64). We who have advanced in academia know how complex that particular public sphere is. We know that, simultaneously, several rhetorical audiences must be addressed when proposing a presentation to a conference, when presenting for departmental meetings, or even when writing a paper for a class. In graduate programs, a possible destination for many of our students, professors will read and grade student papers, but also administrators may hear of the things students have written. Some of those people may be writing reference letters for those students to other universities or for jobs. In addition, those papers may likely be submitted to academic journals for publication,

which provides an entirely different set of potential audiences. The same considerations apply to those in academia who have completed their degree work. Always we are working with an audience who will consider the things we say, and always we must consider them as we write.

Beyond such pragmatic concerns, students are writing into a public space when they compose academic work. They may have an important idea to add to the storm of voices in the academic atmosphere and if they are unaware of what will cause an audience to dismiss them, then their text may be set aside and their idea may never rise above the clatter. If they are unaware of how to appeal to such an audience, they may never get attention. Audience considerations are crucial to anyone who writes and must be a key component in writing assignments and in instruction in writing.

Variation of audience is necessary when constructing assignments. Students can't be expected to grasp the importance of audience and how to make choices through audience-based considerations if they aren't exposed to different audiences with differing expectations. In addition, it may be useful to vary the specificity of audiences. The inclination in many circles, and maybe particularly in discussions of public writing, is to make the audience for a given assignment as specific as is possible. This way students know more particulars about their audience and have more to consider rhetorically in writing. This can be useful, but it should not be overlooked that often writers don't know many specifics about their audience. A political blogger on *DailyKos* will know a considerable amount about his or her audience before that author composes a post. *DailyKos* is a left-leaning political blog and most of the regular readership likely have

similar viewpoints. In a post arguing for new gun control laws, such a blogger will not need to argue that gun control is a good idea, but rather why a specific measure, or set of measures, would be the best proposal. However, should such a blogger write on a personal blog where he or she is seeking a more general audience, that author may have less specific information to consider and must write a blog that appeals to a broader audience. Giving our students experience with writing for broader, less specific audiences is needed in addition to the more specific ones so that our students may practice both skills.

Also important to considering audience in framing assignments is the idea that writers don't always have a pre-formed audience to whom they are writing. Bitzer speaks of the rhetorical situation as a time or place where something that is imperfect in the world is addressed through the word, be it written or spoken (7). In considering the rhetorical situations of the assignments we create, perhaps we should also include situations where students are asked to find an audience themselves. Susan Wells speaks of public spaces as "discontinuous and associated with crises" (326). Enacting a situation where students find their own audience and carve out their own space within a particular public discourse community, like the review blog unit detailed at the end of this project, proves to be a crucial rhetorical skill. All of this is impossible if we are simply asking students to write to their teacher for a grade. This audience is insufficient to teach our students what they need to succeed in their chosen field, or to communicate their thoughts into whatever discourse community they enter as their interests grow.

As important as audience is, other rhetorical considerations arise as we reflect on the rhetorical situation and how it may apply to assignments. Bitzer refers to the importance of exigence in the formulation of rhetoric (6). In Brandon's assigned prompt, there is no mention of a reason for the writing he is doing, constituting a very real missed opportunity especially with a topic as rich as the American Dream. In Brandon's situation, given that all he has to work with is a topic and the assumption that he is writing his assignment for his teacher, what is he to assume is his motivation? The only one available to him is the motivation universal to students in writing for the classroom: the grade.

It is from exigence and situation that writing derives purpose. If we do not offer students a situation into which they write and if we do not either give them or help them to find motivation or exigence, then their writing has no rhetorical purpose. Purpose determines a great deal of what any writer writes. It is a significant factor in what stance an author takes in approaching the audience. One of the readings I begin with in my own classes on argumentation is Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." In that piece, King's purpose is to communicate to his specific audience, a group of white preachers who wrote against the things he was doing in Birmingham, about the purpose of his activities in that city and what he and his movement sought to accomplish. He needed to convince these people, who were at the time considered moderates, of the justness of his activities. Given his audience and purpose, he wrote in a measured stance, certainly elocuting the emotional gravity of the situation, but carefully avoiding any direct attack on the pastors (King 341-5). When students are asked to consider how they

might have wanted to respond to those pastors given the situation Martin Luther King was in, they are usually honest enough to admit that they would not wish to be measured. Perhaps this was true for King. Analyzing King's rhetorical situation and seeing the text that he produced gives the students a chance to recognize the kinds of choices writers make regarding stance. They can see how those choices arise out of the rhetorical situation and how audience and exigence play a crucial role in constraining what should be written in order to accomplish a particular purpose for a particular audience. Transferring these concepts into publically-directed argumentative assignments makes audience, exigence, and constraints real for students in ways that more traditional prompts could never accomplish.

A couple of other rhetorical considerations should be mentioned beyond Bitzer's rhetorical situation before shifting to other benefits of the use of public writing, although I note that rhetoric continues to figure in throughout the remainder of our discussion of the benefits of using public writing to frame assignments. Broaching the rhetorical concept of *kairos*, mentioned in Chapter One, is a necessity when teaching public writing. At times, the world simply isn't prepared to address the topic of a persuasive piece. This is perhaps a weakness of Bitzer's discussion of the rhetorical situation; he talks about exigences as only being rhetorical when discourse will lead to a change in the imperfection to which the discourse was directed (7). The world is much more complicated than that. Sometimes a rhetor may perceive a problem which might be addressed by discourse, but the discourse fails. Ten years later, someone else may try and succeed. I always ask my students if they think that prior to any civil rights

movement which has, at least in some measure, succeeded, if people in previous generations didn't probably have the same problems and even express the same thoughts. Time produces changes in the larger public sphere and in particular ones. An argument that wilts on the vine in one generation may flower in the next. *Kairos* has a role to play in composition. If students aren't prepared for the potential failure of their work to lead to immediate change, they may assume that writing cannot accomplish anything. Therefore, *kairos* is an important concept to discuss in the public writing classroom.

Public Writing and Student Investment

Rhetoric continues to figure prominently throughout the proceeding discussion of the benefits of public writing; appealing to the public is, after all, the very essence of rhetoric and of public writing. However, other important benefits to the use of public writing in the classroom are apparent. A prominent one is the increased student investment that can frequently be derived from a emphasis on the public nature of writing. Focusing again on Brandon and his discussion of the American Dream, the primary exigence this student had in composing his essay was to get a good grade on his assignment and move forward to the next class. If he were interested in the topic, perhaps he might derive some pleasure in the writing of it. However, the student knows every bit as well as we instructors do that the end result of such a piece of writing is a grade in a gradebook and a paper in a teacher's filing cabinet. Should the student be interested enough to take action on the topic, it is not in this class's essay where this action will be taken; this piece of writing is merely an exercise.

A significant weakness of writing in the classroom is that the student typically knows that the project is written for the classroom and will end in the classroom. This doesn't provide motivation that goes beyond the grade. Writing has the potential to be much more than that; I deeply wish for my students to recognize that their writing can change their world in very real ways.

But much of the time students are unable to see the potential power of their writing. Many students identify writing as only what is done in the classroom and think, therefore, that they don't write anywhere else. Jessica Raley illustrates in "'Not That Kind of Writing': A Conversation with One Student about Writing in High School and Beyond" that students regularly say that they don't write outside of class and then proceed to write in very complex ways in their personal lives, online, and to accomplish tasks (9). When Raley asked a student named Pablo about complex pieces of writing related to web design that he was doing outside of school, he responded that he thought differently about such work because it was "not really like *that kind of writing*" (13), in this case referring to the kind of writing done in school.

The way we've taught writing has conditioned students to think of "writing" as the kinds of things done in the classroom. When I begin my lesson on essay organization, I always start by asking my students to describe how an essay should be organized and they almost invariably spout out the five-paragraph model of writing essays. This Current-Traditional model is what they know of writing. When I write that formula up on the board and ask them to think back on anything they've ever read and

whether or not it fit that model, students enthusiastically respond that they have never seen a five-paragraph essay outside of school.

Public writing assignments challenge the preconceived formulae planted inside many of our students' heads by previous instruction. Instead of writing to a professor for a grade, students are asked to write for a specified audience for a purpose. Instead of writing a formulaic essay, they may be asked to write a pamphlet to try to rally support in the community for a youth center, or a proposal to petition the local government for changes in traffic laws. They might write a movie review for a particular audience and post it online. In all of these ways, students begin to recognize that writing is more than they've been taught. They begin to see every specific writing task they accomplish as having a specific purpose far beyond the acquisition of a grade and progression through a program. Brandon, when asked for a paper on the American Dream, thought back to his reading and completed the assigned task. However, if he were asked to find an instance in his own community in which the American Dream was out of reach to a specific group of people and then to propose a solution, he might connect with this activity more readily. Public writing shifts student perception of assignments from busy work to something that matters to them in their lives. This shift can only lead to an increase in their own buy-in to what is being taught. Students are more enthusiastically invested in public writing than they are in traditional prompts.

This rise in investment will likely occur with public or protopublic writing. However, actual public writing to a real audience raises this investment even more. Nora Bacon composed an article, described earlier in the Literature Review, profiling "Nancy,"

a professor piloting a community service writing course at San Francisco State University. The particular course Nancy piloted was a complicated combination of academic writing, writing on literature, and community service writing for a local community group. Early in her experience, Nancy felt that studying formal features of text production, particularly grammar and organization, was going to be important (an assumption she later learned to be false). However, when she taught these lessons, which bored her students, she was empowered to say that the reason for doing this was that "'because you're being freelance writers you're expected to know certain things about grammar and punctuation…And these people that you're working for, they're not going to check up on you. They trust you. It's your responsibility to know this stuff'" (qtd. in Bacon 594). Nancy found herself to be wrong in the assumption that grammar and form would be of primary importance, but how much more authority is carried by the idea that the student's work will be weighed by a public audience? This may sometimes produce anxiety, but it can also make audience a much more real concept. Suddenly, students have much more reason than they did before to work hard.

However, public writing provides more than simply added pressure. In some cases, when students pursue public writing, real changes may be made based on the work they've done. Candace Doerr-Stevens et al. describe a proposal project done in the high school setting in which students worked collaboratively online on prewriting for written proposals they produced on the school's internet safety policies. This was a topic the students themselves had chosen. The students were also informed that the resulting proposals would be presented to the local school board and taken under advisement. As a

result of the project, changes were made by the school board to the internet policies (Doerr-Stevens et al. 33-5). The authors recognize that the students were more invested in this project than most and attributed this change to both the topic that piqued the students' interest and to the fact that the students knew that the proposals were going to be directed to an audience that could effect real change (Doerr-Stevens et al. 35). This meets Bitzer's definition of an audience as people "capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change" (8).

So, two pieces of information matter here and both apply generally to public writing. First, public writing is directed to a real audience beyond the classroom. When students know that their writing is going to do more than be graded by a professor and take up space in a file, they are more likely to work hard at it. When students know their writing may lead to positive changes in their world, it shifts how they view writing and how they view themselves. Suddenly, our students begin to see themselves as agents capable of making their world a different place than they found it. This newfound agency benefits them as they seek motivation working on their projects and helps them to view writing as important and useful in their lives.

Second, Doerr-Stevens was able to set up her assignment in a way that allowed her students to choose their topic together. In Brandon's American Dream theme, it seemed as if Brandon may have connected with that topic. In every class, someone will not. Perhaps many won't. Many public writing classes are organized around genres like review, proposal, and profile. Because these pieces may be written on any topic that fits the genre, instructors have the opportunity to allow public and protopublic assignments to

be open, topically. Students can choose to write a review on anything that interests them or to propose whatever change matters most to them. This takes the onus off of the instructor to try to find a topic that will spark his or her students' interest and curiosity. Instead, students may find a topic and the instructor is able to direct attention to a discussion of writing that appeals to the audience for the purpose chosen.

In all these ways, student investment is enhanced through the use of public writing in the composition classroom. Here, perhaps more than with any of the other benefits, the more public the project can be, the more likely student investment increases. When students know their writing will be read by an actual audience and may have a real impact, they are more likely to care, as the students in the Bacon article did (595). Real public writing allows a student to deal with a real audience and to know that the project may have a real impact. But even protopublic writing gives the students an opportunity to write about what they care about and to view their writing as something which could influence their world. Both protopublic and public writing allow students to view the whole rhetorical situation and to understand more fully what is being asked of them, which can only aid in their investment. In all cases, these sorts of public assignments help to increase the interest and buy-in from students for these assignments.

Public Writing and Transfer

We should now consider how to frame courses and assignments in public writing. Public writing assignments seek to expose students to a diverse set of rhetorical situations in order to help students understand the components of rhetoric they may use to meet the

expectations of audience, and to realize their exigence and purpose. Often this means that studying and composing varied genres of writing will be most helpful as ways to frame courses. Genres are written forms which address specific rhetorical situations found in varied contexts. The study of genres is a useful way to tie together a course on public writing. It also aids in demonstrating to students ways in which authors have responded to particular public moments.

Peter Kittle and Rochelle Ramay studied high schoolers learning to write by analyzing and seeking to duplicate writing in a particular genre, in their case the "My Turn" column in Newsweek. This is obviously a very specific genre with a fairly specific audience with specific expectations. Kittle and Ramay describe the work of one student, providing a sample of her writing about her family prior to the genre unit, and then a piece written with the "My Turn" genre in mind. As would be expected, the second sample ends up being more focused, more complex, and significantly more interesting to read (Kittle and Ramay 102-9). Kittle and Ramay note similar increases in student investment as suggested previously, but they also note benefits gained through immersion in a genre. Students in the course outlined by Kittle and Ramay analyzed and questioned choices made by authors of the multiple models they read through. They were able to recognize common elements of these pieces and see how audience impacted choices the authors made. They understood the use and importance of research in persuading an audience. Even revision was more important as they began to think of how they could best appeal to their audience (Kittle and Ramay 115-6). Kittle and Ramay note that, "The 'habits of mind' supported when students compose in public genres such as 'My Turn'

columns, in short, lead them to proficiency in the kinds of thinking, reading, and writing expected of students in college-level courses" (115). Study of public writing and public genres offers benefits that transfer to writing done in other contexts after a particular course.

It may not be quite so simple, however. Nora Bacon noted that in previous conceptions of the composition classroom and in more traditional assignments, instructors were assuming that the "generalizable skills" learned in composition classes— things like paragraph organization, grammar, and syntax—would translate to later classes (Bacon 589-90). This assumption has been repeatedly challenged by scholars like Elizabeth Wardle. In her article "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?," she describes a study in which she surveyed assignments from a number of FYC instructors. She saw several problems in the way genres were assigned, but also came to the conclusion that, with the wide variety of genres written in the disciplines our students leave FYC to pursue, it is unrealistic to expect transfer to simply "happen." (Wardle 780). She recommends a course restructured around writing about writing in which students learn how writing works rather than merely how to produce specific genres (Wardle 784). In doing so, students learn about how genres are employed to communicate for a given purpose to a given audience.

In a similar study, Rounsaville, Goldberg, and Bawarshi interviewed students about the genres of writing they knew prior to entering FYC. They found that the genres students mentioned rarely crossed over from one area of life to the other (for instance from work to school). Further, they found, like Wardle, that what they termed high-road

transfer, or cognitive transfer of skills from one task to another that isn't closely linked, did not usually occur naturally. Their recommendation is intentional reflection on assignments and questions from the instructor that guide students to consider how to transfer previously learned skills. For instance, when an assignment is described in class, one might ask what prior written tasks might have asked students to do similar things and how they might use that experience to help them with this new task (Rounsaville, Goldberg, and Bawarshi 108).

So might it also be true that student writing of genres directed to a public audience will also fail to transfer beyond the public writing course? I suspect if the study of genre is too limited and done without intentional reflection, the answer is certainly in the affirmative.

What Nancy, from Bacon's study, constructs for her Community Service Writing class as a remedy to this problem is a focus on "texts" and specifically a multitude of different kinds of texts with differing audiences and differing expectations (Bacon 600). Nancy has her class analyze an assortment of different texts and genres in order to see more clearly how writers must make different choices given different contexts. This leads to an increase in emphasis on rhetoric and helps her students learn to adjust to the widely varied kinds of writing they are forced to do in her class. Completing several different kinds of writing projects also helps students understand what is expected in varying rhetorical situations and helps them to address new situations when they arise either outside the classroom or in different fields. In such a way, public writing, with its

emphasis on genre and the ability to adapt to multiple rhetorical situations may aid greatly in helping students transfer important rhetorical skills to other contexts.

Conclusion

As we've seen, public writing has a powerful impact on conceptions of writing and on the skills that can be gained from writing assignments. Instead of teaching twenty students how to create twenty nearly identical essays on the American Dream, a varied study of differing rhetorical situations and the methods writers might use to meet those situations make writing something real that may allow students to enhance their impact on the world. These outcomes should encourage instructors to make their assignments and their instruction more focused on public writing situations as a means of teaching students to appeal rhetorically to an audience, of encouraging student investment, and of aiding in transfer of the skills they gain.

CHAPTER THREE: WHERE DO WE MAKE WRITING PUBLIC?: A SURVEY OF

LOCATIONS FOR PUBLICATION AND THEIR RELATIVE ADVANTAGES AND

DRAWBACKS

Cora was a brilliant computer science major. She consistently impressed her

professors with her engagement in classes and with the software she could create. As a

junior, she created an app for a biology major friend that, using his cell phone, allowed

him to catalog various plant species, store a picture, and save the GPS coordinates of the

exact location where the plant had been found. She won departmental awards and was

universally considered to be the most promising student in her program.

Cora was also passionate about issues of poverty. She had grown up in a stable,

middle-class family. She was comfortable and happy. River, Cora's freshman

roommate, hadn't been so privileged. Whereas Cora's parents were paying her way

through school, River was attending college through grants and loans she would have to

pay back herself. She had to work third shift at a gas station to pay for food, leaving her

precious little time to study. Due to the stress of this hectic routine, toward the end of the

fall semester, River had a bad respiratory attack where her larynx became inflamed and

caused her airway to close up. She had to spend a couple of nights in the hospital and ran

uninsured bills above $20,000. Before she met River, Cora hadn't thought much about

people who didn't have money. River's story made her viscerally angry.

Eric was a smart computer science student who started the program at the same

time Cora did. Cora had tutored him through his databasing class, but once that class was

over he excelled nearly as well as Cora. When Cora won departmental awards, Eric was

consistently honorable mention. He was very good, but without the natural talent that Cora seemed to have.

During his senior year, Eric started a blog in a writing class. The topic of the class wasn't anything he was particularly passionate about, but his experience with blogging encouraged him to start a tech blog soon after. On it, he discussed projects he was developing, fostering a community of fellow computer geeks online who would talk daily, in comments, about coding. These fellow computer scientists helped Eric to learn, through collaborative discussion, and improve his work in his field, all while making important connections. Not long after graduation, Eric was invited to help create a start-up financial app in London due to connections made through his blog. A couple of years later, he got a call from a number he didn't recognize; somebody at Google had been reading the blog and wanted him in for an interview.

In the last semester of her senior year, another student at Cora and Eric's school, Serenity, took a class that allowed her to write for a local homeless shelter. She enrolled to fill a final writing requirement and nearly dropped the class when she found out what it involved. But, as she worked at the shelter, primarily writing pamphlets asking for donations from citizens of nearby suburbs and from the financial districts, Serenity developed a love for non-profit work and a particular interest in homeless advocacy. Her experience propelled her into a lifetime of work helping to establish homeless advocacy programs in urban areas across the country.

Lessons learned by living life outside of a classroom sink in deeply. But, without the guidance that can be found in the classroom, one may not know what to do with the

passion gained. During her time in school, Cora was ahead of Eric in her computer science program. Through her experience with River, Cora came to care deeply about poverty in a way that hadn't occurred to Serenity. Eric and Serenity were able to find avenues through which to explore their passions and communicate through public writing. Cora might find similar avenues independently; that certainly happens. But with the doors that writing can open and with the potential so many of our students, like Cora, possess, I see no reason to leave that to chance.

Many of our students see writing as something that they do in class. In the last chapter, I alluded to a piece by Jessica Raley in which she notes this very fact, that students claim that they do little writing out of class and then proceed to enact complex forms of literacy beyond the classroom (9), failing to identify what they were doing outside of the classroom as writing. For these students, writing was what one did in school (13). The majority of young people are on some form of social media, and writing is a part of their social lives through these means. Many students care about current events and may have meaningful things to say on these issues. Writing publically can open doors for these students outside the classroom. Exposing students to places they can write publically may help them to recognize this.

Having demonstrated previously what public writing is and how it can be beneficial to teachers and students, in this final chapter I demonstrate some of what is available to us as composition instructors to make our assignments and what we do in our courses more public. I design an expansion, outlined in Figure One, through realms of publication in public spheres beginning with campus opportunities, moving outward to

our surrounding communities, and finally extending to fruitful realms world-wide. In doing so, my goal is to highlight benefits specific to each realm, possible drawbacks, and ways that instructors may maximize the varying means of making writing public offered through these spheres. Teachers who make writing public gain the opportunity to acquaint students with a variety of audiences, contexts, and purposes they may adjust to rhetorically, allowing instructors to highlight varying rhetorical situations and help students, as stated in Chapter 2, to internalize methods of adaptation to situations they will confront in the future.

World
  –Wikis, Blogs, Social Media

Community
  –Service Learning
  –Undirected Writing

Campus
  –Classroom Publications
  –Campus Publications
  (Newspapers, Journals,
  etc)

Fig. 1. Realms of Publication.

<u>Campus: The Closest Realm of Public Writing</u>

The nearest opportunity for publication of student writing is the university campus. Few compositionists have been writing, in recent years, about campus publications however, these forms of public writing offer a number of benefits that are lacking in realms further afield. Student anxiety is a significant barrier to any public writing project. In Chapter One, I mentioned the student in a FYC class who refused, no matter how she was encouraged, to read her paper for a small group for peer review, or even to have it read by one of her classmates. For this type of student, there may be no help short of experience. However, in most cases, students tend to feel more comfortable making writing public on campus, in a place where they are surrounded by other students they can identify with more readily, than they would in a city square among people with whom they are less familiar.

Further, when students are in the stage of analyzing genre and preparing themselves for audience expectations and the rhetorical choices they will need to make based on the readership of the specific campus publication, they will be less intimidated reading pieces by other students who may be nearer to their own level of experience and expertise. Students commonly respond differently to writing that is written by peers than they do to that done by professionals. Often it takes them some time to become comfortable critiquing classmates' papers, believing as they often do that they don't have the level of authority required to respond to other peoples' writing. It takes even more time and experience for them to gain enough confidence to feel capable of critiquing writing done by people that they view as "professionals." Public writing projects carried

out on campus have students partnering with other college students and writing for an audience mostly comprised of peers. Their models will often be work done by students writing at a similar level to their own. The balancing of the authority in the relationship between students and the campus publication may, again, reduce anxiety.

Different campuses offer differing opportunities for publication through varying university mechanisms. However, classroom publications—ones run either by the instructor, a group of instructors, or an outside group—can be useful mechanisms for publication that fit most settings. Erick Gordon is the founding director of Student Press Initiative (SPI), an organization that works with high schools to produce "curriculum-based publications that grow from highly specified genre studies in the classroom" (63). Gordon's article, "Raising the Bar for Classroom Publication: Building a Student Press Initiative," describes his work with SPI and states the group had published more than thirty books from 2002-2006, featuring over a thousand student projects (63).

Gordon describes some of the various genres instructors used to teach and around which the publications were based. In most cases, the genres involved were very specific blends of previously established genres—for instance, the *Coring the Apple* publication which combines memoir and review to allow students to tell the story of their experience with a subject alongside their detailed critique of it (Gordon 64-5). Such a project allows students to gain experience with the conventions of multiple genres and to understand how to meld them to the particular audience of the publication for the purpose of an entertaining critique.

A single instructor could undertake a classroom publication of this type, but such a project would be accomplished more productively by a group of instructors. These publications give students an opportunity to project their voice beyond the classroom in a way traditional assignments do not, as these compilations are distributed throughout campus. Certainly, students may wonder exactly how many people will pick up a volume of student writing. Because of this, this form of writing may be less public than other, more institutionalized forms of campus publication. However, the longer such a publication is produced and distributed within a campus community, the more awareness it will garner. Gordon noted that, "each subsequent year that I published *Coring the Apple*, it was more recognized in the school's community" (65). Students who produce a piece for a long-standing publication will be increasingly aware that there may, in fact, be an audience for their work, leading to a potential increase in student investment in the projects.

In addition to classroom publications, outside sources like campus newspapers and literary magazines often provide students with an opportunity to take their writing public. Marcia Hurlow, a professor in the field of Journalism, wrote a piece detailing a number of attempts to pair WAC-style instruction and projects with campus outlets like the school newspaper. She describes one such project in which an economics professor wishing to have his students produce featured articles for a series in the campus newspaper approached her. He felt that this would force his students to communicate knowledge on economic issues in language accessible to those without previous instruction in economics nor with knowledge of specialized terminology (Hurlow 57).

Having a real audience that was different from the instructor—who would have this specialized knowledge—forced the economics professor's students to react to the needs of this new audience. No matter how students are asked to pretend otherwise, they are aware that their teacher understands whatever technical jargon they may want to use in their papers, making the need to simplify the language a less pressing concern. The needs of this real audience impacted the writing processes of these students.

In talking to the economics professor, several obstacles occurred to Hurlow and these problems would arise in any similar project. First, school newspapers have editors and they couldn't be forced to take such projects without undermining the identity of the paper as "student-run." Second, the newspaper needed the pieces to fit the genre conventions of the medium. If the instruction did not adequately prepare the students to write a piece that fit the newspaper, then the pieces would not be appropriate to print (Hurlow 57). Communication of the needs and expectations of both sides was key.

This leads to an important point for any public writing project designed for publication in an outlet run by an entity outside of the classroom: such projects require an open partnership between the instructor or group of instructors and the group who will publish the pieces. Hurlow alludes to other similar projects that met with differing levels of success, characterizing success as based in "how well the expectations of all parties were established before the projects began" (57). If those expectations are not understood by both parties, then the needs of one or both parties may not be met and the project will fail.

In this particular project, the editor had to be allowed the ability to accept, reject, or edit each piece. Thus the students were aware that their work was to be submitted for publication, but were not guaranteed of that the newpaper would publish it (Hurlow 57). I see this as a net benefit for the project, as these match the rules of the rhetorical situation typical for a newspaper article. As they write, students must be aware of a complicated network of audiences from the professor, to the newspaper editor, and finally to the readership of the paper that they must appeal to in accomplishing their set rhetorical purpose. They become a part of a collaborative team of compositionists in that their piece may be edited by the publication's gatekeepers. This provides a unique opportunity to students to be placed in the real rhetorical situation of a writer or journalist seeking publication.

In addition to an open partnership between instructors and publishers, a project involving a campus newspaper requires a partnership with the students who are writing. In Chapter Two, I noted that increased student investment could be an expected benefit of public writing pedagogy, as students recognize more fully that a real audience may read their writing. Such investment may not occur unless it is encouraged. Instructors must remind students of the increased stakes of these assignments as they craft project descriptions and assign writing-to-learn reflections on what exactly students are trying to accomplish. Many times students will grasp the public nature of these projects naturally, but transparency always helps to encourage students to recognize that they are writing for a real audience on whom they may have a real impact.

The exact form of public writing project an individual instructor is able to pursue, as stated previously, will be dependent on what is available to them at his or her universities or what the instructor able to create. Searching for partners to aid in creating these opportunities is important. Likewise, an instructor must gauge student anxiety. In FYC classrooms, students may not be ready to have their work publically distributed. If so, proto-public assignments may be preferred, allowing students to choose whether or not their work will be made public. Giving students the option can, however, complicate partnerships with outside publications that may need a certain number of projects to warrant printing a final product. Open communication with partners, as well as encouragement to students that writing is a public activity and that they shouldn't be afraid to add their own voices, will be that much more crucial to the success of proto-public projects.

Community: Moving out from the Center

Moving outside the borders of campus has been commonly recognized as a part of the mission of the university. Colleges are meant to be institutions that increase the knowledge and culture of the surrounding community, not only of those enrolled. For the sake of our communities, encouraging students to get involved outside the university is something for which we should all continually be striving. Universities like Tulane even require undergraduate students a certain number of service hours during their time in school. Many students seek out this sort of program, as Ryan McBride notes when he describes a service-learning project he heads at Tulane University. He states that "a

significant number of students continue to cite the opportunity to help the people of New Orleans rebuild as a motivation for attending Tulane" (McBride 563). McBride's article was published in 2012, seven years after Katrina. Such requirements constitute an important means of reaching out for institutions often characterized as distant from their communities. Just as necessary for those of us invested in our students' continued growth is that they also benefit from this work. Service can bring students out from the insulated communities that universities often become; it engages them in activities they might not otherwise experience with people they might not otherwise meet.

For many years, the community beyond the university has represented an important opportunity for composition instructors seeking to employ public writing. In the first chapter, I argued that public writing should not be limited to civically-engaged writing. But even though it shouldn't be the only forum for public writing, service-learning can be intensely educational and motivating for students in ways that few other types of public writing could ever be. As seen at Tulane, service-learning allows students to see writing that they produce employed to benefit their society in tangible ways. Service-learning projects offer students agency as they write to accomplish important work in the community.

But how can we accomplish this type of project? Just as was the case with campus-based public writing opportunities, the community in which a university is based will dictate what service projects will be available. As seen in the Literature Review earlier, a great deal of writing has been done concerning service-learning projects. For the most part, these have been centered in partnerships with community advocacy groups

or with other educational institutions in the community (grade schools or adult-learning groups), the groups who most readily have need of volunteer help and who benefit most greatly from such partnerships.

A number of different approaches have been attempted with service-learning and public writing for community advocacy. Paula Mathieu describes a class she taught on the "Literatures of Homelessness," which culminated in undirected public writing projects, ranging from artistic pieces to articles published in *Spare Change News*. Mathieu was intimately involved with the street paper, *Spare Change News*, one of a type of papers published by homeless advocacy groups in many urban areas that are then sold by the local homeless population for a significant portion of the proceeds (77-9). Mathieu's involvement with the paper made them a logical partner for service-learning and writing for the paper immersed the students in issues related to that community.

Deborah Silverman writes about service-learning partnerships in Public Relations Writing courses. Students in her Public Relations Writing courses were able to partner with thirty-eight different nonprofit agencies including a food pantry, a substance abuse organization, a city housing agency, and many others (Silverman 3). These students, predominantly PR majors, produced projects including "news releases, organizational newsletters, web sites, fundraising appeals letters, and brochures" beyond what untrained volunteers could create (Silverman 7). These community-based projects allowed Silverman's students the opportunity to write many of the genres of their field for groups that would use the students' work to present their organizations to the community.

Both Mathieu's and Silverman's curricula involved students in writing projects based in actual rhetorical situations relevant to the topic of those courses. Public advocacy writing can be accomplished in coordination with advocacy groups, like those described by Mathieu and Silverman or sometimes written independently for the community. For example, some of the art projects composed in Mathieu's class were published in *Spare Change News,* but others were simply written to the community and explained through in-class presentations (Mathieu 78). This option offers instructors who do not currently have a community partner an opportunity to pursue public writing, though many of the student investment and rhetorical benefits may be limited without the real rhetorical situation presented in service partnerships.

In addition to advocacy service-learning projects, many partnerships involve outside educational organizations. Ryan McBride from Tulane University runs a program in which advanced composition students design a nine-week curriculum for a middle-school debate team with whom they work twice weekly in coaching sessions preparing the middle-schoolers for a debate tournament. McBride's students must produce an understandable curriculum for the middle-school students, in addition to lesson plans for coaching sessions. These require an understanding of rhetoric to teach the students as content and to help the coaches to communicate with their students (McBride 562). McBride's project, here executed in an educational setting, allows students the opportunity to invest in a group of young people. This investment will motivate them as they produce a rhetorical curriculum for that group. Further, they are writing to an audience with less experience and less perceived authority than they have.

This is an audience consideration that will impact the writing of lesson plans and course documents.

Catherine Gabor describes another program partnering with an outside educational entity. In Gabor's Basic Writing course, students correspond throughout the semester with elementary school students via letters (51). They must choose subject matter that may interest young children and speak in language that will be understandable and appealing. In addition, the program allows the students to write from a position of authority. This would not be possible with a traditional project written to a teacher.

Each of these projects offer students an opportunity to write for a public audience and to do work that benefits the community outside their university campuses. Mathieu and Silverman involved students in partnerships with advocacy groups that allowed them to compose in varied genres to impact community issues. McBride and Gabor connected college students with outside learners, building a rhetorical situation that encouraged students to invest in the development of young people. Whatever the site of these public writing projects, they immerse students in real rhetorical situations that go far beyond what is typically possible in the classroom. That said, what do we teach as our students participate in these partnerships?

Pairing the pedagogy with the specific type of service is of primary importance. Mathieu taught a class on literatures of homelessness that was primarily crafted to get her students engaged in conversations on those issues (Mathieu 66-7). McBride taught his service-learning course in which students prepared middle-school children for a debate using ancient rhetorical texts like Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Quintillian's

Institutio Oratoria as primary readings (McBride 564-5). Not only did this prepare the students to craft documents and prepare lessons using rhetoric—particularly as so many of these early rhetoricians were primarily interested in how to teach—but they also added useful content which those students could use as they coached middle schoolers. In both cases, the content of what the students would produce and the content of the course were linked. If students fail to engage with the mission of the agencies they serve, then the benefits of such experiences—increased engagement, sense of agency, etc.—begin to evaporate rapidly. Teaching students content that relates to the agencies' missions sparks discussion and aides instructors in engaging students with the goals of their partners.

Service-learning writing courses are not without problems. A significant amount of research on service learning focuses on how to create sustainable service-learning projects or whether sustained partnerships are even possible. In many cases, part of the problem stems from inadequate commitment from either side of the partnership. Ellen Cushman notes, "Service learning programs that have sustained themselves have incorporated reciprocity and risk taking that can best be achieved when the researcher views the site as a place for teaching, research, and service—as a place for collaborative inquiry—with the students and community partners" (43). As noted in the previous section on partnerships with campus organizations, communicative cooperation must occur between the instructor and the outside partner. However, that becomes more complicated with service-learning partnerships in the community as the mission of the organization and the mission of the university may conflict. Cushman states that the professors must be involved enough with the organization that they understand it as

intimately as the students come to (43). Mathieu, for instance, was intimately involved with the street paper *Spare Change News,* where she sent so many of her students. This made it easier for her to understand the needs of the street paper her students partnered with and how her students could help to meet those needs.

Cushman puts the onus for maintaining the partnerships largely on the professor through involvement and sustained commitment (43). This is an absolute necessity. And yet, sometimes commitment on one end is not enough. Skolnikoff, Engvall, and Ferrara tell a story of a community partner that underwent significant turnover during their project including "two complete changes of administrative leadership" (30). The potential for instability in service-learning projects leads Mathieu to characterize ideal partnerships as needing to be "tactical" rather than "strategic." She describes strategies as stationary; they are built in advance and reliant upon knowing where all the moving parts of a given scheme will be at any given time. Grounded in Michel de Certeau's description of the term, Mathieu describes tactics as flexible and based in the realities of every changing moment (16-7). The kairotic flexibility of tactics is in line with the functioning of rhetoric in the world—an excellent lesson for our students—and is more realistic in balancing the unstable variables of a service-learning partnership.

Universities, which are so often dependent on institutionalized plans, may not be keen on giving up enough power to pursue partnerships designed around tactics. Tactical relationships require no small amount of risk. What if our partners don't come through? How do I plan a semester around a partner whose needs may dictate a shift in focus? We must keep in mind that our partners are taking no small amount of risk as well. They

may rightly ask, what if these students are unreliable or produce substandard work? What if the professor doesn't adequately prepare the students for this experience? The service-learning relationship is characterized by risk on all sides. Adequate communication, managed expectations, commitment, and flexibility are absolute requirements in dealing with this risk. Also required is an understanding that the risk is counter-balanced by the rich, potential reward for students, partners, and instructors of a successful partnership.

World: The Online Realm of Public Writing

Online public writing may be the most controversial of the realms to which we may direct student writers. William Burns, a public writing scholar who writes about the importance of physical space in public writing, notes of blogs that they may "be seen as the ultimate in disembodied public spaces as the transparency of technology has erased spatial and physical repercussions of presence and occupation, constructing spaces of spectacle rather than ones that encourage intervention into everyday life" (37). He then notes, "if one is to construct an effective counterpublic it has to be located somewhere in material life" (Burns 37). This gets back to the questions asked in Chapter One. For some, the crucial point about public writing is its capacity to change the world. Even by that measure, I may argue to William Burns that there is ample evidence of people using online social networks to coordinate protests (the Arab Spring protests and the Occupy Wall Street movement to name two) on the ground. That said, beyond those sorts of questions, as a teacher of writing my first job is helping my students to learn writing and

rhetoric, not how to organize counterpublics and protests (see Appendix A). Whereas it is certainly important to consider how public writing may enhance its impact on its audience, online forms of public writing can be useful in the classroom and should not be dismissed off-hand simply because their impact on the larger public sphere is harder to determine.

In the past decade, online spaces have grown dramatically as places for students to write. Maria Kuteeva, a scholar who has focused on the role of the internet in academic discourse, notes that the increasing influence of the internet as a student medium has led to the proliferation of new genres and discourse in the academic community (46). As Web 2.0 technologies have expanded, the internet has become fertile ground for connectional and collaborative discourse. Many students may not view what they do online as argumentation of the same type they do in class. This is in line with the conversations Raley had with students about what they identified as writing. When discussing writing that occurs on Facebook in one of my own classes, one student described the arguments on that site as "electronic screaming matches" (Featherstone).

Yet amongst this chaos, productive work may be going on. Brian Jackson and Jon Wallin studied the comments posted on a YouTube video of a student being tased at a John Kerry event in 2007. They catalogued 500 of the comments that followed the video, finding that 66% of those comments made an argument with claims and reasons concerning what the viewers saw and 53% were written in response to another comment that had been made, demonstrating the potential for back-and-forth dialogue. Finally, 40% of the comments catalogued made a statement attempting to create "stasis" or a

common ground around which users could productively hold an argument (Jackson and Wallin W388). Jackson and Wallin's findings demonstrate that, in the majority of these comments, productive argumentation occurred.

In describing the internet's value to public writing pedagogy, I focus primarily on two types of web 2.0 technologies, wikis and blogs, that have gotten the most focus amongst compositionists. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others may also provide fertile ground for public writing in similar, if somewhat more limited, ways to wikis and blogs.

In her article "Wikis and Academic Writing: Changing the Writer-Reader Relationship," Maria Kuteeva defines wikis as a "platform for collaborative writing" (46). She further describes the basic functions of wikis as "creating and editing texts, linking different pages through hyperlinks, inserting images and links to other sites, tracking changes and comparing different versions of the text" (Kuteeva 45). Wikis allow users to collaboratively compose an expository document describing a subject and linking to other information on related subjects. When a different user has a new idea to add to the content of a page, it is vetted by other users based on the credibility of the source of that information.

In this way, wikis are an analog for what we do in the public rhetorical situations of academic discourse. In an article about ethos in wiki spaces, James J. Brown describes Essjay, a frequent contributor on Wikipedia who attempted to use fraudulent credentials as a professor in order to derail discussions in the editing forums of various sites. Brown details a particular exchange in which Essjay attempts to use his credentials to claim that

the definition of "imprimatur" in *Catholicism for Dummies* should be believed over other, more authoritative sources. He claims that he "often assigns [it] to his students" (Brown W249-50). Over time his assumed authority is overridden as others bring additional sources to refute his position.

As illustrated in Brown's example, James Purdy proposes that students who are encouraged to post on Wikipedia gain the opportunity to see "the recursive, dialogic, messy nature of knowledge-generating practices" and "be[come] more comfortable engaging in these practices" (357). Having students work collaboratively to create wikis drops them directly into a public rhetorical situation which acts almost exactly like the academic discourse community acts. Students get practice appealing to that community in its own language: through good research and the formal language of an encyclopedia-type article. Students understand the complicated audiences of wikis: those who read the site to get information and those read to co-edit. The audiences of academic discourse are similar; those who read academic articles to learn the information for the first time and those who are interested in how the article can inform their own work. With these similarities in mind, wikis prove to be a profoundly effective arena for teaching the public discourse of the academic community.

Whereas wikis effectively mimic academic discourse through a collaborative, expository genre, blogs can be grounds for more persuasive public genres, as well as for interaction about the topics discussed. Jamey Gallagher characterizes the blog as "an inviting, broad, and 'baggy' or 'fuzzy' genre" (286) and notes several genre conventions including informal language, intertextuality, personal address, and the "rhetoric of the

provisional" by which he means a sense of response and questioning rather than direct persuasion (Gallagher 287). Blogs have become a genre, or more likely set of genres, unto itself based around an informal pursuit of ideas. They can be playful. They can exist in conversation with other blogs and texts from other contexts. They can allow students to communicate in a way many of them already feel comfortable.

Similar to the comments sections analyzed by Jackson and Wallin, blogs allow for immediate audience feedback through comment sections. Ideally, a small community forms around a blog with people who are able to discuss whatever is posted by the original blogger. This can be difficult to replicate in the classroom depending on how many students are enrolled. Twenty students in a FYC classroom cannot be expected to read blog posts from every student and to comment substantively, certainly not if they have to read anything else. But, a carefully planned project—perhaps breaking students into smaller groups and having them respond only to members of that group—involving feedback from their peers offers students direct audience feedback from someone who is not assessing them. This can be exceptionally useful to students as a way to encourage reflection over how they have been received and an effective way of making the project more public.

Finally, an understudied factor in personal blogging for the classroom is that of communication of identity. Each blog may be personally formatted and designed by the students. They may choose a template design or customized color schemes and individualized formats. They may write brief personal statements introducing themselves and their blog space. Opportunities like these allow students to present an online identity

to the viewer of the blog through visual and textual rhetoric. These may be heightened

by the genre convention of personal address mentioned by Gallagher. He notes that

"each entry that I looked at also hailed the reader as if he or she were listening to

someone speaking" (Gallagher 289). Such a personal form of rhetoric naturally

communicates something of the identity of the blogger. If the blogger is aggressive, that

will come through in the tone of the personal address. If the blogger is cordial and

friendly, as in the case of the blogger Gallagher describes who began a personal address

with "As y'all know…" (qtd. in Gallagher 287), then that will be evident as well. This

assumed persona builds the ethos of the blogger, which is an important concept to share

when discussing blogging with students seeking to appeal to their public audiences.

Both blogs and wikis offer varying benefits as tools for public writing in the

classroom. Using web-based forms of public writing is, in some ways, less complicated

than service-learning partnerships or even partnerships on campus. Blogs and wikis

allow students to communicate with an entire world full of people. In fact, the story

written above about Eric the blogging computer science major was largely true (though

adapted to fit the larger story). A dear friend of mine really is being courted by Google

because someone who works there read his tech blog.

But often when writing online, students may feel as if they are casting their voice

into a swirling chaos of other voices. That is because they are. Because of the

overwhelming number of blogs and wikis, these media may fall short when compared to

other forms of public writing in the level of student investment. Students are likely to

feel that, with all content web users have to view, it will be impossible for their site to

build an audience. Still, as these sites add one viewer and then another and another, they become a valid medium for writing into the public discourse. Although they may lack the immediacy of experience that in-person forms of public writing possess, internet-based forms are useful and continue to grow as a force in public writing pedagogy.

Conclusion

Considering the many rhetorical benefits of involving students in these numerous forms of public writing, instructors must be careful not to expect the mere fact that students are writing publically to automatically deliver these benefits to students. Careful attention must be paid to highlighting the benefits of these means of publication. In order to glean rhetorical benefits from any public writing project, students must be encouraged to recognize what choices they are making rhetorically in the ways they adapt their compositions to a given audience for a given purpose. In order to glean student investment benefits, teachers must instill confidence and agency in our students so that they may see that their writing can impact the world. In order to help our students understand how to transfer these benefits to other contexts, we must present them with a variety of genres and audiences and have them reflect thoughtfully about how the authors, and indeed how they themselves, make choices to adapt to new contexts. Good experiences must be paired with excellent pedagogy or else we will miss an opportunity to help our students recognize how to make use of the rhetorical tools they have to deal with the wide variety of situations they will face now and in the future.

Giving students access to these public writing opportunities opens the world to them. It gives them the opportunity to see what their writing can do when they send it outside of the comfortable confines of the classroom. Public writing can turn intellectual curiosity into real-world activity. In the closing chapter, I note some practical ways of implementing public writing in the composition classroom, in addition to offering a model for a FYC course based in public writing.

CONCLUSION: HOW DO WE MAKE PUBLIC WRITING A PART OF OUR

CLASSROOMS?

In the previous chapters, I have demonstrated the what, why, and where of public

writing pedagogy. In the first chapter, I recommended an expansion of the definition of

public writing from the civically-minded service-learning genres of writing to anything

written to impact a public audience. In the second, I demonstrated the many benefits that

public writing has to offer our students. In the third chapter, I outlined some of the places

where student writing could be made public from the campus to the community to a

world-wide audience. Throughout, I have sought to offer solid advice for proceeding, but

in what follows I outline specific steps to be taken to implement public writing pedagogy

in the composition classroom. I begin with a couple of specific questions any instructor

must ask themselves in order to gauge the scope of their public writing course. Then, I

close by offering a brief course outline for a public writing course for the FYC classroom.

The first factor in any public writing course is the level of the students. Throwing

a group of FYC students into a high-level advocacy partnership is difficult and likely

inadvisable. It leads to problems for the partner and problems for the students; all of

which leads to problems for the instructor. The level and venue for publicity must be

chosen carefully and, should there be an outside partner, expectations of what students

may realistically be expected to accomplish must be established between the instructor

and the external organization.

The second factor is how much of a commitment the instructor feels capable of

making. An adjunct instructor who plans on leaving for another school in a semester or

two should consider whether they have time to commit to building a partnership with an organization they may not have access to later on. It is also legitimate to ask the question, if a professor is teaching a 5-5 load of classes and has little to no support from other instructors who are willing to help in the planning of a larger service-learning project, can such a professor commit at the level required to coordinate such a partnership? Service-learning projects in the community take consistent communication, careful planning, and the ability to spend a great deal of time adjusting to the demands of partners whose needs and abilities may change during the course of the project. Instructors must ask themselves if they are prepared for the commitment required to take on a service-learning approach to public writing pedagogy.

So, work out these determinations. Figure out exactly how public you feel you and your students are capable of going. If necessary, begin to look for partners. Asking around your department, you will find that most professors, as part of their own service requirements, are involved with some kind of community group. They may be a resource in helping you make initial contacts. If you make contact with a group and they don't feel they could use your help, ask them if they know of any others that might. This may lead you to the organization which does fit. Also, don't overlook local schools and other educational programs. They will often jump at the chance to partner with university groups. All of these may be avenues to finding the partner that fits your program the best.

Regardless of whether you choose to go the service-learning route or pursue a campus partnership, or if you feel that protopublic assignments would be a better fit for

your students, you must remember that the benefits of public writing won't materialize from the simple act of having students write for a public audience. Instructors must be transparent in creating a curriculum that highlights the many rhetorical tools and choices available to students as they write for this audience.

In what follows, I describe a basic skeleton outline for a FYC course focused on public writing as I have defined it. I have chosen a first-year course for many reasons. First off, FYC courses are more common at many universities than advanced ones. But, more importantly, I chose FYC because I don't expect them to be as public as advanced courses would be. As I have mentioned before, I am skeptical as to whether first year students are prepared enough, on average, to handle a public writing curriculum centered in service-learning. As I have taught students who were nervous about sharing their writing with their own classmates, I recognize the use, at this level, of providing a private or protopublic option for inexperienced students. Courses based in truly public writing and service-learning should always be identified explicitly when students sign up for them.

Why choose to describe a course that is less public in my piece arguing for more public writing? Primarily because the specific context of a more public, advanced course is likely going to determine the way that course comes together. To get more public, you typically need outside partners. When dealing with outside partners, you always need to remember what Mathieu said about tactical relationships. An instructor cannot come to a service-learning partner and say "this is exactly what kind of writing my students will do for you." If the kinds of writing such a teacher decrees their students will produce for the

partnering group do not fit that group's needs, then there will likely be no partnership, or at least not a fruitful one. Rather, instructors and partners should be working together to determine what the students can produce that would be most helpful to the partnering group. These negotiations will determine the assignments that will be a part of the course. Therefore, it would be almost impossible to describe beforehand what an advanced public writing course built around an outside partnership will look like. Furthermore, it could provide an unhealthy impression to those who read this piece and try to model a course after what I describe.

With student anxiety and the need for tactical partnerships in mind, the FYC course that I describe is built around mostly protopublic assignments, with perhaps a few web and classroom-based public composition opportunities. The course looks much the same as any other present-day composition curriculum. However, you will note how the outward, public focus of the assignments, the added readings, and some of the lessons highlight many of the rhetorical concepts mentioned in Chapters Two and Three in order to help students to understand how they may manipulate language, often through specific genres, in the hopes that these abilities may be transferred to writing they do as they continue through the university and into the world beyond.

The course I describe centers on four genres, as many courses do. These are the profile essay, the review, the proposal, and the letter to the editor (see figure two). I do not choose these genres because I think them to be overwhelmingly better than any other genres I might have chosen. They are fairly usual WAC genres. Primarily, these were chosen because they are outwardly focused to begin with; however, many other genres

would also fit a public writing classroom model. Assignment sheets for each of these

projects can be found in Appendix B.

Increasing Public Focus of Assignments

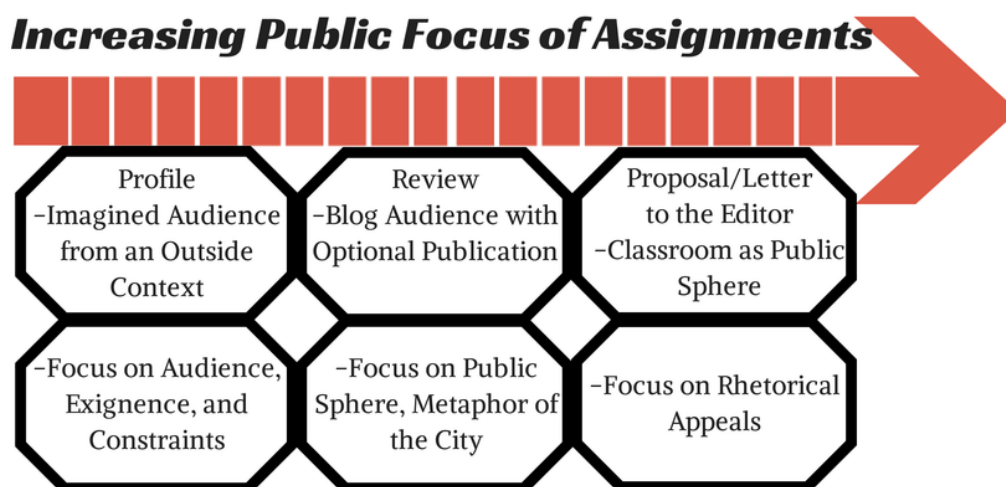| Profile –Imagined Audience from an Outside Context	Review –Blog Audience with Optional Publication	Proposal/Letter to the Editor –Classroom as Public Sphere
–Focus on Audience, Exigence, and Constraints	–Focus on Public Sphere, Metaphor of the City	–Focus on Rhetorical Appeals

Fig. 2. Increasing Public Focus of Assignments

Having chosen the genres, you must next decide what sorts of audiences to choose

for the assignments. The audiences should be varied in order to allow students the

opportunity to shift their writing styles to meet the different needs and expectations of

varied groups of people. Also, it benefits students to have at least one assignment, if not

more, in which they choose an audience themselves. Choosing an audience and seeking

to carve out a place within that chosen public sphere for one's own work is a rhetorical

act and one that students rarely get classroom-based practice in performing. Assignments are often written for an audience a professor chooses or they may occasionally ask a student to determine what audience is appropriate for their piece, but it is rare for an instructor to ask a student to identify how he or she would attempt to build an audience for a piece. This is a rhetorical task public writing assignments are uniquely positioned to illustrate. Therefore, audiences for the assignments I list vary and students are asked to consider how they may position a piece within a public sphere.

Students begin writing a profile essay to a professional audience; I tell students to write as if they were employed at an advocacy group and are writing a profile of a person their organization is considering as a potential spokesperson. As purpose is important as well, I note that the audience is not interested, in this case, in their opinion on whether or not the company should align with the subject of the profile, but simply wants a detailed description of the person and their activities; distinguishing a profile from a review is difficult if this distinction is not made. The students may choose the person to profile, increasing their interest in their projects. This topical freedom is extended in each of the assignments to follow.

The profile project is primarily designed to ease students into the class and familiarize them with the course's basic focus on rhetorical choices made through public writing. I recommend an introductory text in the rhetorical situation, most likely Bitzer, as a way to introduce them to the basic terms of audience, purpose, and constraints and how authors interact with those variables as they compose a text. In addition to Bitzer, students read and analyze numerous models, preferably with different audiences and

purposes. For instance, one model profile might be written for a newspaper article meant to inform the general public of the work of an important philanthropist and, perhaps, to solicit donations; another might be written for a politician to help him or her to determine whether or not to seek a public endorsement from a particular group. The models demonstrate to students the different ways authors bend genre to their own and to their audience's needs. This profile project is defined as protopublic, at best. It is public in conception, but there is little expectation that students will publish these papers. The next assignment is considerably more public.

The review genre sees the students writing, or at least potentially writing, to a more public audience: an evaluation project on a personal blog. Blogs are a forum of public writing that allows students to take very specific measures to increase viewership. In order to keep this project protopublic, I recommend using wordpress.com or some other blogging site that allows students to make the blogs private, though I encourage students to be willing to publish. Regardless, the blog format allows me to focus on a little emphasized rhetorical ability: building an audience.

At this point, in the interests of discussing public spheres and how to carve out space within them, I bring in Susan Wells' "Rogue Cops" article, as well as Christy Friend's "From the Contact Zone to the City" and Joseph Harris' "The Idea of Community in the Study of Writing" as focus texts. Students get an in-depth look at the complexity of public spheres from Wells' article and discuss a few ways to build an audience in the world. Friend and Harris both emphasize the metaphor of the city as a means of conceptualizing the way individuals and groups of individuals interact within

the larger public. Wells' article may be difficult on its own, so providing the rich metaphor of the city, in place of the more typical, but often less accessible "discourse community" may help to make Wells' discussion of public spheres easier to grasp.

All of these texts help students focus on how they get their writing noticed in the world. The blog format provides students with actual means of increasing publicity for their posts. These functionalities include tagging, the blogroll, and sharing of posts through social media. Tags are words related to the topic of the post added through the tagging mechanism that allow other users interested in those topics to search and find your blog post. The blogroll is the blogging equivalent of a friends list. If you add other blogs to your blogroll and participate in discussions on other blogs, then other people may add you to their blogroll and increase your viewership. This is the digital equivalent of networking as described by Wells. Finally, as social media sites are some of the most trafficked sites in the world and as one's friends on social media are likely to be interested in what one has to say, sharing blog posts on sites like Facebook or Twitter often greatly increases a post's viewership. This, like the blogroll, is a means of networking. Instructors should emphasize not only how these blogging functions enhance the publicity of the individual blog site, but also what real-world analogs of these digital functions might be in order to help students see how to write publically in the physical world as well as the digital.

The publication component of the project should be a part of a student's grade, as it matters as much to public writing as any other rhetorical skill. However, if a student wishes to keep his or her blog private, this poses a difficulty. I recommend a composer's

commentary for this project in which a student tells the instructor specifically how he or she would seek to increase traffic to the post. The commentary allows students who don't want to publicize their work to get the benefit of learning about how to accomplish this task without forcing them to do it. The composer's commentary is also a useful way of getting students to describe rhetorical choices they made with visual rhetoric, as these are of increased importance in an online space.

Finally, the audience for the piece should be an informal one as blogs are generally informal spaces. Much like the profile project, instructors should provide models from varying sources and written to varying audiences. Among these should be examples from other blogging sites. In fact, I would likely ask students each to bring in an example of a review that they enjoyed from a blog as a way of immersing them in the blogosphere. With the focus on building an audience added to rhetorical concepts from the previous unit, the emphasis on public writing is amplified in the review blog. It continues into the next unit.

The final two genres I mentioned, proposal and letter to the editor, are combined into a large interconnected unit. Within public discourse, one genre of writing often leads to the creation of different genres by other people. With this in mind, students work collaboratively in this final project—something else common to writing in public—in the planning and drafting of a proposal written to an audience of their choice. The audience they choose must be capable of helping them to accomplish their purpose. Choosing their own audiences, the students gain an increasing level of agency over their projects. Again, a composer's commentary may be useful to allow students to explain to the

instructor how they have chosen an audience, how they might seek to increase the piece's exposure to that audience, and what rhetorical choices they have made in tailoring the piece to appeal to their audience. In these ways, students continue to exercise the rhetorical concepts they have learned in the previous units.

In addition to a continued focus on model texts, assigning the chapter in Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* dealing with rhetorical appeals is helpful. As the proposal genre and the letter to the editor that follow are persuasive genres, these appeals become increasingly important. Also, discussing kairos as mentioned in Chapter One is crucial in order to help students understand how persuasion must meet with the opportune time in order to be successful. This paired with texts that met with success like King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" may prevent students from coming to the conclusion that their writing can't have an impact.

When students complete their written proposals, they shift gears by restructuring their previous proposals into oral multi-media presentations given in-class. The students are asked to imagine they are presenting to some sort of public works group like a city council. Models remain necessary with a focus on the rhetorical shifts to be made in taking material from a written text and delivering it orally.

Finally, students write individual letters to the editor based on one of their classmates' presentations. In addition to the benefit of getting students to provide their classmates with a more attentive audience for their presentations, the letter to the editor also demonstrates how one form of discourse can lead to another.

Some might argue that the previous blogging project is more public than the proposal/letter to the editor unit as blogs have the potential to be viewed by more people than are found in a classroom. However, students' experience of the publicness of their writing is likely greater in the classroom-based proposal project as the classroom is transformed into a miniature public sphere during the presentation portion of the unit. Students receive immediate, face-to-face feedback from their audience as they present their proposals to a classroom of spectators. Then, students react directly to those presentations through letters to the editor. The immediacy of this feedback amplifies the students' experience of the publicness of the proposal, even if there is the potential that more people might view the blog.

In closing, it is crucial, as Wardle reminds us, to include writing-to-learn exercises in class that help students to reflect on the rhetorical choices they are making as authors. When looking at models and discussing the choices other authors have made, ask them to write reflectively about how a piece might be changed if it was written to a different audience. Ask them to think about how some of the tasks they accomplished in the profile unit might be useful in the evaluation unit. Be transparent about pointing directly to transfer in asking how students might go about recognizing the expectations basic to genres of writing and audiences in their own field. These sorts of reflective writing tasks and transparency in discussing what it means to transfer from the genres of one situation to those of another are crucial to helping students to accomplish high-level transfer of rhetorical skills as mentioned by Rounsville, Goldberg and Bawarshi.

All of these assignments have a public focus. The profile has them writing about a person outside of the classroom to an external imagined audience. The review blog post provides students with a chance at an actual outside audience, should they choose to pursue it. The proposal/letter to the editor unit turns the classroom into a miniature public sphere. This progression is illustrated in Figure Two. But students are not, in any of these assignments, required to compose anything that must see a public audience outside the classroom. Further, this assignment sequence does not require much of an additional commitment from the instructor, as a service-learning curriculum certainly would.

Still, students are exposed to writing as an active pursuit that may help them to have an impact on their surrounding environment. They still get the benefit of learning about how to build an audience and how to make rhetorical choices based on their audience's needs and expectations for the accomplishment of a purpose. They gain exposure to a variety of genres and see, through assignments and models, how they can manipulate genre to meet their goals. Further, seeing how writing may work in the world makes writing more important to them, hopefully leading to an increased level of student investment in the content of the course.

Public writing pedagogy is a complicated way of teaching with many different variables to consider. It has to be. The audiences and the purposes and the constraints with which authors must contend every time they pick up a pen or sit down at the keyboard are every bit as complicated as the pedagogy required to teach students how to deal with these rhetorical concerns. Public writing in and out of the classroom allows

students the opportunity to enact real rhetorical situations. It gives them practice with the rhetorical tools that they must take up every time they write. It also demonstrates for our students how useful and important writing can be to them as they explore and influence the world around them. Their ability to publicly write in the world they encounter once they move on to other stages of life will be crucial to our students' success. It only makes sense that we would ask them to try it out once or twice before they get there.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY'S ENGL 1010:

LITERACY FOR LIFE OBJECTIVES

1. Students will gain knowledge of composition as a field of study that involves research about writing and how it works.
2. Students will define and illustrate key concepts in composition studies: rhetorical situation, exigence, purpose, genre, critical analysis, audience, discourse community, reflection, context, composing, and knowledge.
3. Students will read and analyze various types of text—print, visual, digital, and audio.
4. Students will complete writing tasks that require understanding the rhetorical situation and making appropriate decisions about content, form, and presentation. At least one of these tasks will give students practice distilling a primary purpose into a single, compelling statement and ordering major points in a reasonable and convincing manner based on that purpose.
5. Students will get practice writing in multiple genres and in response to real world writing situations. They will use appropriate rhetorical patterns and strategies to achieve their purpose.
6. Students will conduct basic research necessary for completing specific writing tasks, learning to distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources and between fact, opinion, and inference.
7. Students will improve their ability to generate a writing plan that includes prewriting, drafting, rewriting, and editing.
8. Students will develop the skill of constructive critique, focusing on higher order concerns, including matters of design, during peer workshops.
9. Students will know how to use their handbook as a reference tool.
10. Students will develop their own writing theory (based on the key concepts) that they can transfer to writing situations in other classes and in life.

APPENDIX B – ASSIGNMENT SHEETS

Project #1 – Profile Essay

CONTEXT AND EXIGENCE

You are employed at an advocacy group. Your boss asks you to compose a profile of an individual the group is considering as a spokesperson.

AUDIENCE

A committee determining whether or not to align their advocacy group with a specific person. **Your instructor is NOT your audience!**

PURPOSE

Your bosses want to know whether or not an individual would be an appropriate choice for group spokesperson. As this is a high-profile position, the advocacy group needs to know this person's public profile. What important projects has s/he been a part of? What is this person's background? Is there anything negative in this person's history that would prevent the group from considering him or her?

Keep in mind, however, that a profile is not a review. The committee wants to make a decision themselves and, therefore, you are only to report on the individual's history; you are not to argue for or against this person's hiring as spokesperson.

Project Requirements

Due Dates:

Length Requirement:

Percentage of Final Grade:

PROJECT EXPECTATIONS

You are to choose a prominent person to profile. Next, look for pertinent information about this person and present it in profile format. Remember that a profile is different from a comprehensive biography. You are looking to outline specific information about your chosen subject's history that is pertinent to his or her public profile, not cataloging every event from birth to present. Also, remember to report events objectively and avoid argumentative language.

POSSIBLE PROCESS

1. Choose a prominent person to profile.
2. Research the subject's personal and professional history, looking for information that is pertinent to whether or not the individual would or would not make a good spokesperson.
3. Think about organization before you start writing. Maybe create an outline. You can change the organization as you go as long as you look back at your outline and see that it is still fits together.
4. Don't get stuck at the start; get something down on the page. If you are stuck on an introduction, try starting with a body paragraph.
5. Find relevant and useful visuals (or possibly audio) that augment your written work.

6. In revision, make sure that your language choices are appropriate to the audience, make sure your report includes only pertinent information, and make sure that this information is organized logically. Be sure to include appropriate citations for information taken from outside sources.

Project #2 – Review

CONTEXT AND EXIGENCE

You run a personal blog on which you occasionally post reviews. A public event, local business, or product has caught your attention and you choose to review it.

AUDIENCE

The broadly focused readership of a blog. **Your instructor is NOT your audience!**

PURPOSE

To compose a descriptive evaluation of your chosen subject.

PROJECT EXPECTATIONS

In your review, you may choose to evaluate a public event (i.e. a concert or public gathering), a local business (i.e. a store or a restaurant), or a product. For whatever you choose to review, the evaluation should include descriptive detail in order for your audience to be able to envision your subject.

GENRE-BASED EXPECTATIONS

As a good starting point, it would likely be useful to get to know the genre of your subject well prior to writing about one specific instance of it. In other words, if you choose to review a pizza place, then it would be useful to have experience with several other pizza restaurants. If you review the most recent iPhone, but you have no experience with other smartphones, you can have no frame of reference from which to evaluate and cannot write an effective review.

Be specific with the criteria you are using to compose your evaluation. It is not enough to simply say the subject is good or bad. By choosing specific criteria on which you may base your judgments you can demonstrate concrete ways in which the subject performs admirably or fails.

Project Requirements

Due Dates:

Length Requirement:

Percentage of Final Grade:

BLOG-SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS

The blog medium allows an author to communicate in ways beyond simple text. You are expected to make use of at least one of these means of communication. Possible non-language-based forms of communication easily implemented into a blog post include visual images, graphic data, video clip, or audio. These will be graded in part based on whether it is implemented and also on how effectively they add to the argument being made.

COMPOSER'S COMMENTARY

Just as important, the blog is a public writing medium. If you would prefer to keep your blog private, that option will be available to you. However, building an audience for a piece of writing is an important rhetorical activity and blogs offer a number of different ways to publicize your writing and increase your audience.

All students will write a composer's commentary in which they explain the ways they sought to (or would have sought to) increase the audience for their piece. In addition, students will explain how the visuals they use are meant to appeal to their audience

POSSIBLE PROCESS

1. Choose a subject for review.
2. Research the subject, and others like it.
3. Think about organization before you start writing. Maybe create an outline. You can change the organization as you go as long as you look back at your outline and see that it is still fits together.
4. Don't get stuck at the start; get something down on the page. If you are stuck on an introduction, try starting with a body paragraph.
5. Find relevant and useful visuals (or possibly audio) that augment your written work.
6. In revision, make sure that your language choices are appropriate to the audience, make sure your piece is organized around specific criteria, and make sure your descriptions include solid descriptive details. Be sure to include appropriate citations for information taken from outside sources.

Project #3 – Proposal

CONTEXT AND EXIGENCE

You've noted a problem you feel needs to be addressed. You have chosen to join a local action group to help to propose a solution to the problem.

AUDIENCE

Choose your own audience, but keep in mind that the audience you choose must have the power to help accomplish your purpose. **Your instructor is NOT your audience!**

PURPOSE

You are seeking to make change. To make this happen, you need to describe the problem, outline a solution, and show that your solution is best.

PROJECT EXPECTATIONS

This assignment will be largely your own construction. You will get together in a group and choose a controversial issue or a local problem on which to write a proposal. You will choose the topic. You will choose your intended audience. I only ask that you choose a significant enough group of people that appealing to this group may have some impact. You will choose the media with which you will communicate to the audience you have chosen on the topic you've agreed upon. Be sure that you choose a form of media that is appropriate for reaching this audience.

This assignment must incorporate some aspect of multi-modality. This means that the work must include some aspect of non-textual material. Think about the different ways you could construct a piece that could convince members of your community to agree with your proposal. This may be as simple as writing a column for a newspaper or a blog post that incorporates pictures with the text. Perhaps you may include data in the form of a table or graph. Or maybe you could come up with some other means of communicating your message (video, storyboard, etc.). Again, this project may be produced in whatever medium is appropriate to communicating your message to your audience.

In addition to the final product, I ask that you write me a description of the rhetorical situation that includes your intended audience and specific rhetorical choices you have made to appeal to your audience. Also describe the way you will increase the profile of your piece and why you have chosen the medium you picked to communicate to this audience.

Project Requirements

Due Dates:

Length Requirement:

Percentage of Final Grade:

GROUP WORK EXPECTATIONS

The group work component is an important part of this project. Groups will be graded on the quality of the final product and also based on student evaluations of the contributions of each group member. Each student will rate the contribution of each other member. The purpose of these evaluations is to allow students to let me know whether each member pulls their weight. Be honest in your evaluations and don't let yourself get taken advantage of.

POSSIBLE PROCESS

1. Choose a problem you proposal will address.
2. Research the problem and solutions previously selected.
3. Based on the research, choose an audience that can help you to accomplish your purpose.
4. Think about organization before you start writing. Maybe create an outline. You can change the organization as you go as long as you look back at your outline and see that it is still fits together.
5. Don't get stuck at the start; get something down on the page. If you are stuck on an introduction, try starting with a body paragraph.
6. Find relevant and useful visuals (or possibly audio) that augment your written work.
7. In revision, make sure that your language choices are appropriate to the audience, make sure your piece is clearly organized, and make sure you include solid descriptive details. Be sure to include appropriate citations for information taken from outside sources.

Project #3.5 – Proposal Presentation

CONTEXT AND EXIGENCE

Your initial proposal has been noted by a public works group (like a city council, if it applies to your chosen project). You have been asked to present your proposal to be considered at one of their meetings.

AUDIENCE

The public works group most appropriate to your chosen problem. For instance, if you have chosen Gay Marriage as an issue to address, a state legislature may be most appropriate. If you propose a new drainage system for MTSU, the university administration will be your audience. **Your instructor is NOT your audience!**

PURPOSE

You are seeking to make change. To make this happen, you need to describe the problem, outline a solution, and show that your solution is best.

PROJECT EXPECTATIONS

In this project, your group will be adapting the proposal you have already written into a **ten-minute multimedia presentation**. You will present this material using some form of multimedia aide. This may be one of the programs we have looked at in class (powerpoint or prezi) or you may also attempt some other presentation aide.

GROUP WORK EXPECTATIONS

The group work component is an important part of this project. Groups will be graded on the quality of the final product and also based on student evaluations of the contributions of each group member. Each student will rate the contribution of each other member. The purpose of these evaluations is to allow students to let me know whether each member pulls their weight. Be honest in your evaluations and don't let yourself get taken advantage of.

In addition to the group evaluation, each member will be evaluated for his or her individual contribution to the presentation. Be sure that each group member makes as equal as possible a contribution to the performance of the presentation.

Project Requirements

Due Dates:

Length Requirement:

Percentage of Final Grade:

Project #4 – Letter to the Editor

CONTEXT AND EXIGENCE

You have been in attendance at the presentation of one of the proposals it has struck you as particularly important. You choose to write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper in order either to lend your support or to argue against to the proposal you have chosen.

AUDIENCE

You have multiple audiences. You are writing to the editor of the newspaper, hoping to piece is worthy of publication. You are writing to the general population of the town that reads this paper. Finally, you are also writing to council members encouraging them to adopt your chosen position. Your piece should be appropriate to convince members of all of these audiences of the validity of your position. **Your instructor is NOT your audience!**

PURPOSE

To change minds and bring people to your side.

PROJECT EXPECTATIONS

You've watched the proposals and now it is your chance to give your opinion. Choose one of the proposals that impacted you. You will write a short piece in which you add your voice to the discourse community by arguing your position on the issue. It will be important that you have taken good notes on the presentations in order to argue your position effectively. Be certain that, while arguing your position, you address positions contrary to your own. If you agree with the proposal that was presented, tell why you think it is better than other alternatives. If you disagree, why is your position better than the one you argue against?

Project Requirements

Due Dates:

Length Requirement:

Percentage of Final Grade: