"WITH": ARTICULATING A RESTORATIVE COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY

by

CYNTHIA DUGGAN MWENJA

MICHELLE BACHELOR ROBINSON, COMMITTEE CHAIR
DILIN LIU, COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR
JAMES MCNAUGHTON
JENNIFER STOLLMAN
CINDY TEKOBBE

A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English in the Graduate School of The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2017
ABSTRACT

In this project, I trace commonalities between the fields of restorative practices and composition pedagogy, then articulate a first-year writing course design to enact the resultant restorative composition pedagogy. I provide a thick description of the course design, syllabus, assignment sheets, and daily activities, then I analyze pre- and post-semester surveys from students who participated in the course. Using information from the student surveys as well as other artifacts from the semester, I conclude that restorative composition practices can offer a model for meeting composition pedagogy goals by providing an inclusive, egalitarian, and respectful classroom experience.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family—immediate, extended, and chosen—who stepped in and stepped up to help and encourage me as I worked and wrote. In particular, I dedicate this work to Mwenja, Janine, Suze, Marian, Rosalyn, Lillian, and Mama—it may not have always been graceful, but we got through it together. Much love to you all.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am happy to have the opportunity to thank those who have helped me to complete this research project. Thanks first of all go to Michelle Bachelor Robinson, who championed my work before we ever met, and continued to remind me of my purpose throughout my coursework and this project. Thanks also to Dilin Liu for agreeing to co-chair and for modeling an engaged, supportive teaching and mentoring style. Additionally, I would like to thank all my committee members—Cindy Tekobbe, James McNaughton, and Jennifer Stollman—for their kind attention to and support of this project, and for agreeing to work with me on a very tight time schedule so that I could accept the job of my dreams. I would like to thank Sara Whitver for being a fabulous, helpful sounding board as I developed this project. Thanks also to Luke Niiler, Amy Dayton, and James McNaughton for responding thoughtfully and critically to early versions of this work; their collective comments helped tremendously as I developed and revised this project.

I very much appreciate the support and friendship of my fellow graduate students—thanks go to all of them for their friendship and willingness to engage with my ideas. Lastly, thanks to the students in the Fall 2016 English 102 class at the University of Alabama who participated in this study; I literally could not have completed the project without them.
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restorative Practices</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Project</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A REVIEW OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AND COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY LITERATURES</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Community</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repair as Needed</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transform When Possible</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extending Restorative Practices</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOWARD A RESTORATIVE COMPOSITION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positionality</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-research</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering Data</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Research</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing It Up</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Conclusion</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Social Discipline Window ........................................................................................................... 4
2. Writing Process Chart ................................................................................................................ 86
3. Grade Distribution, Fall 2016 English 102 Class ..................................................................... 108
4. Pre-semester Survey Question One ........................................................................................... 115-16
5. Pre-semester Survey Question Two ........................................................................................... 118
6. Pre-semester Survey Question Three ......................................................................................... 121
7. Pre-semester Survey Question Four .......................................................................................... 123
8. Pre-semester Survey Question Five .......................................................................................... 125-26
9. Pre-semester Survey Question Six ............................................................................................. 127-28
10. Pre-semester Survey Question Seven ....................................................................................... 129
11. Pre-semester Survey Question Eight ....................................................................................... 132
12. Post-semester Survey Question One ......................................................................................... 137
13. Post-semester Survey Question Two ......................................................................................... 140
14. Post-semester Survey Question Three ...................................................................................... 143
15. Post-semester Survey Question Four ....................................................................................... 145-46
16. Post-semester Survey Question Five ....................................................................................... 147-48
17. Post-semester Survey Question Six .......................................................................................... 149-50
18. Post-semester Survey Question Seven ...................................................................................... 154
19. Post-semester Survey Question Eight ...................................................................................... 157
20. Post-semester Survey Question Nine ....................................................................................... 160
INTRODUCTION

At their best, first-year composition classes enable students to improve their abilities to participate in an essential part of the human experience: communication. To take part in civil society and in the work force, people around the globe must now master an incredible array of communication skills and tools. First-year composition classes can help university students to learn these skills, which are vital to professional success as well as to effective participation in local and national affairs. According to the Council of Writing Program Administrators, students should emerge from first-year writing classes proficient in “rhetorical knowledge,” “critical thinking, reading, and composing [including source evaluation],” “composing processes,” and “knowledge of conventions” (“WPA Outcomes Statement”). Effective first-year writing classes can help students develop these proficiencies, as well as help them to see how to apply the skills in many other rhetorical settings in their lives.

First-year composition classes do not always reach their full potential in helping students learn these skills. Many students respond to the content with claims of uselessness and dullness, and oftentimes this response is a result of some instructors not making clear the connections between class work and other composition tasks. As Mike Rose discusses in Lives on the Boundary, students from many socio-economic and cultural backgrounds do not see themselves represented in their readings or in the academy. As I have seen in my own teaching, some students believe that they are irredeemably “bad” writers or that there is only one “proper” way of writing that applies in all circumstances. Many English instructors focus mainly on the
“errors” in student writing, so students may feel defeated and unable to improve. Such experiences stand in the way of students receiving the full benefit of first-year composition instruction.

The field of composition pedagogy does provide insights into more effective strategies that instructors can use to work with their students. Composition researchers such as Patricia Bizzell and Lisa Delpit have explored avenues for welcoming students from many socio-economic and cultural backgrounds into the classroom, as well as for providing course content that the students will perceive to be relevant and useful. Composition scholars such as Asao B. Inoue are re-evaluating grading practices so that assessment is more transparent and fair. The composition classroom can be an inclusive setting which mentors writing development, no matter who the students are and what the venue is. When students develop a wider array of composition skills, they can enter a larger number of discourse communities and use their composition and communication skills to improve their workplaces and the larger society. If our students are to have access to the vital tools of communication, we must realize that, as composition instructors, how we teach and communicate with our students matters. We can provide an inclusive and egalitarian classroom space where they can learn to improve their methods of communication and to transform themselves into capable rhetoricians. When we do provide such spaces, they reflect the ideals of Restorative Practices.

Restorative Practices

Within the field of composition studies, scholars have long examined multiple ways to include the full spectrum of students who enter the composition classroom; however, much of this scholarship remains contained in the small world of composition scholars and has not been
taken up by many who are often outside the field but are actively teaching composition classes.
The field of restorative practices offers a viable model for grounding composition pedagogy in collaborative, inclusive methods. As Ted Wachtel, founder of the International Institute for Restorative Practices, states on the International Institute for Restorative Practices website: “The fundamental premise of restorative practices is that people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes when those in authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them.” “With” implies values of collaboration and cooperation, respect, and inclusion. Wachtel enumerates the terminology various fields use for the same basic ideas: “In the criminal justice field the phrase used is ‘restorative justice’; in social work the term employed is ‘empowerment’; in education, talk is of ‘positive discipline’ or ‘the responsive classroom’; and in organizational leadership ‘horizontal management” is referenced.” Each of these disciplines uses its own terminology to highlight the practical benefits of working together in mutually supportive ways. For composition, I propose the term Restorative Composition Pedagogy, or RCP, and strive in this project to articulate what that might mean and how it might look.

To more fully explain the concept of “with,” Wachtel discusses the “social discipline window,” in which teacher control of the classroom, defined by “limit-setting” and “discipline,” is charted on one axis from low to high, while teacher support, defined by “encouragement” and “nurture” is plotted on the other axis (see fig. 1). In this model, low support and low control combine to create an “irresponsible” and “neglectful” authority figure characterized by the descriptor “not.” A “not” teacher would simply neglect teaching duties. By contrast, permissive authority figures, according to the chart, combine high support and low control; this style is described as “for.” Such a teacher might have trouble setting limits and holding high standards
for student work; in composition classes, permissive instructors might spend a lot of time editing their students’ submissions. Another corner of the chart indicates the punitive authority figures who exhibit high control and low support. This model, described in the social discipline model as “to,” exemplifies the “deficit” paradigm many students have experienced in English studies classrooms. In these settings, students are seen to have shortcomings in thinking or expression that teachers must identify.

Fig. 1. The “social discipline window” (Wachtel).

By contrast, restorative teachers establish both high levels of support and high levels of control in the classroom, working “with” students so that they have agency and are engaged in class work, or are “more cooperative and productive,” in Wachtel’s terms. Many composition scholars describe restorative strategies, and their work aligns with restorative principles. Perhaps because we lack a practical framework for application, however, much composition classroom practice has yet to catch up with composition theory. In theory, we embrace collaboration, cooperation, and inclusiveness, but, very often, our internalized classroom teaching models lead us to more punitive, neglectful, or permissive teaching styles.

I suggest that by recognizing the philosophical ties of current composition and rhetoric scholarship to the restorative practices model, composition instructors can access a body of
knowledge which will inform their teaching practices on levels ranging from classroom organization to subject matter. Restorative practices not only can provide a unifying lens for various composition pedagogy theories, but can also go further to guide teacher and student social interactions that pedagogical theories do not directly address, such as how to relate personally to the students face-to-face and electronically. It is particularly important to provide this unified strategy for composition instructors because, though the bulk of current composition theory embraces a fundamentally restorative approach, my experience indicates that many freshman composition instructors rely on more familiar authoritarian models in their actual classroom practices.

As restorative practices scholars Bob Costello, Joshua Wachtel, and Ted Wachtel describe in Restorative Circles in Schools, restorative practices provide a set of proactive and responsive conflict resolution tools. The proactive side consists of creating an inclusive and egalitarian community which welcomes every individual as equally valuable and respect-worthy. In a composition classroom, this can mean that instructors work with, rather than against their students, taking their writings as serious objects of study. We can consider their input and points of view, and we can realize that they come from a variety of cultural, economic, educational, geographic, and dialectal backgrounds—and we honor all of those experiences.

As restorative pioneer Howard Zehr outlines in The Little Book of Restorative Justice, restorative practices also respond to harms done or conflict within the community. In a composition class, this can mean responding to students’ beliefs that they are “bad” at writing or grammar, or that their way of speaking is “wrong.” It can also mean simply helping students to address errors in their work. Other harms that can occur in composition classes are intentional or unintentional plagiarism, tardiness, and rudeness or laziness in peer review, to name a few of the
most common. Interpersonal conflict can arise between students or student and instructor. Instructors may inadvertently ignore or discount students’ points of view. All of these challenges can be addressed publicly or privately through dialogue and restorative action appropriate to the situation. The responsive side of restorative practices can simply lie in “putting [things] right,” as Zehr says (28), or it may lead to larger transformations. In composition classrooms, these transformations may be the improvements students make in their writings and their composing processes, or transformation may be realized in new views of themselves and others, or in finding practicable personal solutions that they themselves can implement to help address long-standing social problems.

The field of restorative practices has grown out of the restorative justice movement, which is chiefly concerned with responding to criminal acts. By contrast, the field of restorative practices mainly seeks to create strong communities which support their members. When such a community is established, if and when conflict occurs, the group responds to those conflicts with dialogue and restorative action rather than blame and punishment. Restorative practices are being implemented in schools, community organizations, and business settings. Though restorative practices as an educational model has gained some traction in recent years, there is no extensive exploration of how this model might manifest in a composition classroom. My work in developing Restorative Composition Pedagogy, or RCP, builds on the growth of restorative practices in education, focusing specifically on the restorative opportunities presented in composition classrooms.

Restorative practices itself is a new area of scholarship, with only one accredited program—the International Institute for Restorative Practices—offering advanced degrees in the field. Within this emerging field, several scholars, such as Ted Wachtel, Laura Mirsky, Margaret
Thorsborne, and Peta Blood, have specifically examined the application of restorative principles in educational settings. While these scholars recommend that educators spend the majority of class time on “preventing issues” by “building healthy relationships” (Thorsborne and Blood 43) or on “proactive” student engagement (Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel 47), they often focus more closely in their writings on specific strategies for working through classroom challenges. As I have read and digested the writings of restorative scholars, particularly those who focus on restorative practices in education, I have distilled the main ideas into this concise statement: *In restorative settings, facilitators work with all members of a group to create an inclusive and egalitarian community, to repair harms done to individuals or the community as needed, and to transform individuals and the community when possible.* All of my classroom practices are rooted in fulfilling this articulation of a restorative approach.

Restorative Composition Practices enact a set of strategies that can be described simply as “good teaching”; however, some quite good teachers have more authoritarian teaching styles, and some teachers who truly strive to be inclusive may not fully enact restorative principles. RCP can be differentiated from other pedagogical approaches in that every aspect of the class, from content to the style of social interactions, is chosen to communicate inclusiveness, egalitarianism, and respect for every member of the group. For example, in previous classes, I was a supportive, engaged teacher, but I did not invite students to work with me to make decisions about their research subjects or the grading rubrics; in using RCP, I include students in class decision-making as far as possible. Likewise, in previous classes, I may have shamed students who came to class late or unprepared; in using RCP, I approach them in a more respectful way. With RCP, I still hold students to appropriate standards of behavior and
scholarship, but I invite them to join the classroom community as we define those standards together.

RCP also extends the goals of first-year writing. In my current program, the mission statement for first-year writing states that the “program will develop deliberate, innovative, and versatile student writers” (“Mission Statement”). RCP posits that, in order to meet the goals in a writing program, teachers must develop a classroom setting in which as many students as possible can reach the program’s standards. Building on Wachtel’s idea presented above that “people are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes when those in authority do things with them,” RCP has two complimentary goals. The first is to create an inclusive and egalitarian community, restoring the community and individuals as needed. In meeting this goal and providing a space in which all students are able to learn and thrive in a cooperative setting, RCP imagines that teachers can better help a wider variety of students to meet the outcomes standards for the writing program.

Inclusiveness is a broad term that I would like to take a moment to examine. Students come from a broad array of cultural and geographic backgrounds, and they speak a number of English varieties. They identify as members of many “races,” and some have visible physical differences while others have invisible “disabilities.” They come in all shapes and sizes. They represent a variety of genders and sexual orientations, and they come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds with varying educational achievements. On top of this range of differences, students also learn in many ways: some learn kinesthetically, some visually, some aurally. An inclusive class aims to include all sorts of people by providing assignments and activities to appeal to and welcome people from as many backgrounds as possible.
Another term which merits examination is “connections.” Within restorative practices, members of the group are invited to become part of a community, thereby creating social connections with one another and with the group as a whole. The goal of a restorative response after conflict is to re-integrate individuals—both those who have been harmed and those who have done the harm—into the community, restoring their connections to the group. RCP extends the idea of “connection” beyond the classroom to other stakeholders, including the campus and the wider community surrounding it. Classroom activities are designed to promote connections between individuals in the class, and course assignments ask students to identify and articulate connections between historical campus events and current public rhetoric.¹ I ask students in the post-semester survey about their sense of connection to their classmates and to the campus, but I did not give the students a clear idea of what that term might mean. In the conclusion, I discuss ways I could re-word these questions to make the idea of “connection” more clear to those I survey in future research.

When I have taught using a restorative and inclusive approach in previous terms, students almost uniformly say that they value this way to teaching; as survey results in Chapter Five show, the students in the researched class did, as well. They report feeling that their ideas are respected and that they feel welcomed to the class. Almost all of them say they appreciate the process of writing development supported by class work and peer discussions. Some students do not choose to participate at times, but when they see that the class work and multiple drafts help them improve as writers, such students often become more open to taking part in class activities. Ultimately, though, I can make the class as inviting, welcoming, and respectful as possible, but each student must decide on their own how much they want to get involved.

¹ I describe each element of the course in Chapter Four.
The Project

In developing Restorative Composition Pedagogy, or RCP, I have drawn on the best parts of similar models to create an interactive, inquiry-based first-year composition course. The course begins by giving students an orientation to classroom expectations and technological applications so that every student knows how to be part of the classroom community. This transparency is restorative in that it allows all students to participate in the class on equal footing. The course continues with a unit focusing on Translingualism; this unit communicates that many varieties of English exist, and each is appropriate for particular rhetorical situations. As we discuss Translingualism, we also interrogate the features of the dominant discourse community in the United States. These discussions lay the groundwork for discussing the ways that identities—among them, gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, and others—can have bearing on language use and access to social power. With this grounding in Translingualism and descriptivism, the course begins a class-wide conversation about communicative inclusiveness which continues throughout the semester.

Students then complete Literacy Narrative Interviews, thereby putting every student in “subject position,” to use rhetorician Jacqueline Jones Royster’s term from “When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own” (555). The classroom community is strengthened when students read their classmates’ narratives to write a grounded comparative analysis of their classmates’ work. The remainder of the semester asks the students to participate in an extended inquiry-based project based in the rhetoric of an explosive civil rights event on the university’s campus. The project allows students to explore questions that are both relevant to their own lives, as well as based in the context of the institution. Throughout the course, students interact with each other during every class section to develop their writing and analysis skills. They also
focus on their own and each other’s writing as objects of study; this aspect of the course
demonstrates respect for student writing and for the students as writers. In creating an inclusive
and egalitarian community which respects each student’s communicative skills and fosters their
development as rhetoricians, the nature of the course is restorative.

As I developed the course and planned to research its results, I was guided by two
questions: “Can restorative practices provide social benefits to the students, teachers, and
institutions, benefits which may be overlooked by current composition pedagogies?” and “Can
the use of restorative practices in the composition classroom improve the ways students perceive
English as a discipline, themselves as writers, and their sense of justice in everyday life?” To
answer these questions, I taught the RCP course I had developed to a second-semester English
Composition class in the fall of 2016.

In this dissertation, I gauge the effects of RCP for the students and myself. Each element
in the semester is designed to display restorative principles of working with all members of the
group and to be inclusive and respectful of the multiple identities represented. The semester is
intended to develop connections between members of the group through participatory
cooperation and dialogue. My goal was to create a strong classroom community in which each
stakeholder has rights and responsibilities as a member of a group. The big ideas are to include
everyone who wants to be included, to use dialogue and restorative action to re-knit the
community after conflicts or harm happened, and to continue to use dialogue and transformative
action when the community identifies weaknesses in itself or the larger community.

I completed an IRB proposal for the study, and twenty of the twenty-four enrolled
students signed consent forms to allow their writings to be used in this project. This semester
provides one model of how RCP can look in action. While others could use my work in their
own teaching, it is not offered as a course design per se but as an enactment of a pedagogical stance. This semester’s syllabus is one way that “with” can inform pedagogical practice.

In the upcoming chapters, I ground the project in disciplinary literature from restorative practices and composition scholarship, then use student writing and other artifacts from the semester to demonstrate the pedagogy and to assess its effects. In the second chapter, I interrogate composition theory through the lens of restorative practices, then turn to specific composition classroom methods that can be taken from that field. Next, in chapter three, I discuss the methods used for the project, including the qualitative methods of thick description and open-answer pre- and post-semester surveys. I also use information from the students’ literacy narratives and final semester reflection papers to complicate their survey answers. In the fourth chapter, I draw on a variety of the semester’s artifacts and information to support a robust description of the course. I go on to discuss the major patterns that emerged from coding and analyzing the data. In the final chapter, I use student responses to support my conclusions that RCP can help students see themselves as competent rhetoricians, become better communicators, and strengthen their connections to their classrooms, campuses, and wider communities. RCP can also be restorative to teachers by reducing their grading burden and allowing them to join the students in classroom inquiries.

When I came to graduate school with the intention of speaking, teaching, and writing about Restorative Practices, I did not know that they would align so well with composition pedagogy. My goal in earning a Master’s in Composition and Rhetoric was to have better tools to articulate Restorative Practices generally. However, as I delved more into composition scholarship, I found alignments with Restorative Practices within each assigned book and article. I also found a profound disconnect between the ways composition scholars theorized teaching
and the ways my fellow graduate students (and many instructors from other English sub-disciplines) perceived and taught composition in their classrooms.

With this project, I lay the groundwork for my continued professional focus on the juncture between restorative practices and composition pedagogy. In my career, I hope to not only use these ideas in my own classrooms, but to articulate and promote them to composition teachers from all walks of English life.
A REVIEW OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AND COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY LITERATURES

Restorative Composition Pedagogy’s idea of “with”\(^2\) can be used as a simple rule of thumb for composition instruction and can help to organize new developments in the field as they emerge. It additionally includes respect for instructors, whose needs are often neglected in classroom scholarship. RCP and the “with” rule of thumb can also guide instructors in navigating situations they face that are “off script,” so to speak—not covered in scholarship, but real and needed solutions nonetheless. As I stated in the introduction, my thumbnail definition of restorative practices is this statement: *In restorative settings, facilitators work with all members of a group to create an inclusive and egalitarian community, to repair harms done to individuals or the community as needed, and to transform individuals and the community when possible.*

This shorthand can provide an epistemology for composition instructors in answering questions such as these: Does this element of the semester plan, syllabus, or personal interaction style work to create community? Does the element repair harms done in the current classroom or previously? Does this element improve the classroom or the larger community? These ideas also align quite well, and even overlap, with the scholarship of critical pedagogy, feminist rhetoric, and social constructivism; however, my readings have focused on composition studies, so it is those scholars that I address in this project. The wealth of composition scholarship in general is too extensive to engage for this project. Therefore, I have elected to engage composition

\(^2\) See Ted Wachtel’s Social Discipline Window, fig. 1 in the Introduction.
scholarship that can be situated into one of the three scholarly conversations, that of “create community,” “repair as needed,” and “improve when possible,” so here I examine the ways composition scholars align with restorative practices when viewed through these lenses.

Create Community

Restorative practices begin by creating community for all interested stakeholders (Thorsborne and Blood 43). Composition instructors can create community by actively welcoming students to the classroom, by providing time for collaborative work, and by modeling respect for every student. Writing pedagogy scholar Mina Shaughnessy gets at this fundamental principle in “Diving in: An Introduction to Basic Writing,” which she wrote after changing her teaching practice in response to her experience with open admissions classrooms. She says that, instead of thinking of some students as “remedial” (234), instructors must embrace a new way of teaching writing in order to understand, include, and teach students from a variety of backgrounds. She says that such instructor remediation comes through dialogue with students as well as mutually learning with them. Such conversation and collaborative learning is at the heart of restorative processes and therefore must also be at the heart of a restorative composition pedagogy.

The community that is created within a restorative classroom must be self-reflective so that it continues to expand to include all sorts of people; the instructor must not presuppose that everyone comes to the classroom with the same cultural backgrounds or assumptions. Education researcher Lisa Delpit, in “The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other Peoples’ Children,” discusses the need for white instructors to listen—really listen—to the experiences of others so that they can change their teaching practices and ensure that all students
can gain access to the dominant discourse. Delpit says that instructors do not have to provide such access in a way that makes students lose their original discourses; she rejects the either-or dichotomy in favor of a model which recognizes and values all the discourses that students embody. Such inclusion and recognition of multiple ways of both speaking and being is also part of restorative practices, which seek to mediate between multiple points of view to create a model which best serves all involved.

Respectful dialogue between members of a group helps to create an inclusive community, and dialogue is one of the chief strategies of a restorative approach. Composition pedagogy scholar Kenneth A. Bruffee, in “Collaborative Learning and the ‘Conversation of Mankind,’” discusses the epistemological implications for collaborative learning. He says that, as writing instructors, “our task must involve engaging students in conversation among themselves at as many points in both the writing and the reading process as possible” (402). These conversations help students to better understand the assignment as well as their own thinking, and these dialogues, Bruffee says, can draw students into conversations about larger social issues.

Restorative practices rest on collaborative problem-solving, and such problem-solving can only occur through conversations in which the participants respectfully engage with each other. For these reasons, Bruffee’s suggestion for encouraging continuous conversations between class members fits squarely within a restorative paradigm.

Within restorative spaces, everyone is included who wants to be included, and each participant is expected to give and receive respect (Zehr 36). Such respect must include respect for each other’s literacies. In “Blinded by the Letter: Why Are We Using Literacy as a Metaphor for Everything Else?” composition and rhetoric scholars Anne Frances Wysocki and Johndan

---

3 See “Extending Restorative Practices below.
Johnson-Eilola suggest a revised conception of “literacy.” They say, “This reconception is thus not about handing down skills to other who are not where we are, but about figuring out how we all are where we are, and about how we all participate in making these spaces and the various selves we find here” (735). Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola clearly interrupt the hierarchy of the professor as gatekeeper and replace that idea with an inclusive, non-hierarchical one which examines the multiple literacies and identities represented in the classroom. Their vision parallels the restorative vision of creating an inclusive and egalitarian community, and it adds the idea of interrogating the relationships between literacies and identities.  

Inclusiveness and Egalitarianism

Many composition pedagogy scholars focus on the ideas of inclusiveness and egalitarianism in the writing classroom. In “Composition Studies Saves the World!” composition and rhetoric scholar Patricia Bizzell says, “Instructor and students alike found that what was needed was not a one-way acculturation process, but a two-way, indeed a multidirectional process of collaboration and change” (178). In Bizzell’s description, everyone in the class, including the instructor, works together and learns from one another to create something better; these ideas absolutely match a restorative approach. This sort of inclusiveness and mutual development can create a place where students feel comfortable and unafraid to make mistakes. Writing pedagogy scholar Peter Elbow, in “Inviting the Mother Tongue: Beyond ‘Mistakes,’ ‘Bad English,’ and ‘Wrong Language,’” says that “the writing classroom can be a safer place for [nonmainstream] language than most sites of language use—a place where, for a good deal of the

---

4 This interrogation of literacies and identities is part of the classwork in the translingual unit I describe in Chapter Four.
time, students can put out of mind any worries about whether anyone might consider their language wrong or incorrect” (643). Restorative composition practices seek to affirm the students’ current language uses while simultaneously teaching them how to access and control a wider array of English varieties and rhetorical strategies. This balance of affirmation and mentored development provides the kind of linguistic safety Elbow describes and this study explores.

While many individual instructors have not yet fully embraced the idea, the leading organization of composition professionals asserts that people who teach composition classes should recognize and respect the linguistic diversity in their classrooms. In 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication published the position statement, “Students’ Right to Their Own Language.” This statement says, in part, “We affirm the students’ right to their own patterns and varieties of language…. We affirm strongly that instructors must have the experiences and training that will enable them to respect diversity and uphold the right of students to their own language.” This affirmation of inclusiveness and respect for linguistic diversity, as well as the statement of support for instructor support and development, are both restorative in their thoughtfulness for classroom stakeholders. More recently, world Englishes and composition scholar Bruce Horner and his colleagues have built on the CCCC’s statement as well as developments in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, or TESOL. In “Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach,” Horner, et. al. define a “translingual approach to writing instruction” as one which “sees difference in language not as a barrier to overcome or as a problem to manage, but as a resource for producing meaning in writing, speaking, reading, and listening” (303). This approach “asks of writing not whether its language is standard, but what the writers are doing with language and why” (305).
language use respects the many varieties of English as well as recognizing that no single language variety is appropriate for every rhetorical situation. These views on language variety and use are so fundamental to restorative composition pedagogy that I begin the semester with a translingual unit so that the remainder of the class can be grounded in these essential ideas.

Restorative approaches also eschew traditional structures of social power; each individual is included equally within the group (Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel 22). Linguist and language scholar Mary Louise Pratt calls for literature instruction which allows repressed or ignored voices to be heard. In “Arts of the Contact Zone,” she outlines a new sort of teaching which includes voices from all sides of social “contact zones,” or “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in context of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (34). She says that classrooms that employ this method will need to have “ground rules for communication across lines of difference and hierarchy that go beyond politeness but maintain mutual respect” (40). Restorative practices provide a model for this sort of communication, wherein the facilitator helps members of the group discuss challenging subjects while respecting and including the variety of views in the classroom.  

Literacy scholar Patrick Hartwell says that the current move in composition classrooms is to devolve power from instructor to students. In “Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar,” he reviews a variety of grammar instruction methods and assumptions, concluding that the formal teaching of grammar does not improve student writing. He says that “the thrust of current research and theory is to take power from the instructor and to give that power to the learner” (228). This sharing of power among the members of a class matches the restorative practices model.

---

5 For more on this subject, see “Extending Restorative Practices” below.
In moves that align with restorative principles, some composition scholars hope to decrease the hierarchy in the academy generally. In “The Public Intellectual, Service Learning, and Activist Research,” rhetorician Ellen Cushman calls on “public intellectuals” to “combine their research, teaching, and service efforts in order to address social issues important to community members in under-served neighborhoods” (329). She says, “Public intellectuals challenge the value system of academe by starting with the assumption that all language use and ways of knowing are valuable and worthy of respect” (335). These assumptions Cushman outlines mesh with restorative ideals, and, as she points out, they have implications beyond a single classroom.

Repair as Needed

A restorative composition classroom can foster respectful dialogue through instructor modeling, classroom expectations, and thoughtful instructor-mediated practice, as well as by classroom content and curricula which demonstrate the value the instructor places on inclusion and respect. Implementing such ideals in the composition classroom is potentially restorative in two ways: it can help current composition instructors to repair their own composition pedagogies if those pedagogies are exclusive or hierarchical, and it can potentially begin to heal ruptures that students outside the mainstream may have felt in previous composition classrooms. Feminist rhetorician Jacqueline Jones Royster, in “When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own,” calls for composition and rhetoric scholars to “teach … and talk across boundaries with others instead of for, about, and around them” (564). She says that we must find ways to let everyone in our classrooms, research settings, and institutions move into “subject,” versus “object” position, and we must find ways to actually listen to, understand, and respect points of view other than our
own. In restorative settings, groups work together to allow just such an exchange of ideas. Each person speaks for him or herself—moving into subject position—and the group collaborates to decide on actions which meet everyone’s needs. While many students come to composition classrooms with full confidence in their speaking and writing abilities, others enter freshman composition having been told that their ways of speaking and writing are “wrong,” or “sub-standard” or “bad.” A restorative composition classroom can re-frame their understanding of themselves as being fully competent rhetoricians in their home English varieties while continuing their development in the English varieties expected from students in the academy.

In creating inclusive communities, restorative practices also create relationships between members of the community. Writing pedagogy scholar Nancy Sommers concentrates, in part, on helping composition instructors to attend to the students behind the writing. In Responding to Student Writers, she discusses improvements in grading practices which can result from redirecting instructor attention from the writing to the writer. She says, “Everything shifts when we transfer the focus of our comments from the paper to the student, from monologue to dialogue, and from instructor-centered commands to instructor-student partnerships” (xiv). These changes in grading practices can help to improve the relationships between instructors and their students, and these improved relationships can provide an atmosphere in which students feel more supported in developing their writing.

For students to feel heard and included, the restorative classroom must seek and value their input. One way to do this is through using their writing as part of what is studied in the class. Journalist and writing pedagogy scholar Donald Murray discusses this strategy in his essay, “Teach Writing as Process Not Product.” For Murray, student writing should form the basis of pedagogical classroom inquiry. While many composition instructors might not go so far
as to only focus on student writing, including it as a respect-worthy object of inquiry demonstrates respect for the students and their compositions. This creation of an environment in which student writing is valued is an act which aligns very well with restorative principles of respect and inclusion.

Another repair that restorative practices can offer is that of expanding the understanding of those involved by providing insights that can come from hearing other viewpoints. In a restorative circle process, each person discusses the subject under consideration from his or her point of view (Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel 23). These multiple points of view add up to give each participant a much larger understanding of the subject at hand. Rhetorician Richard Coe, in “Beyond Diction: Using Burke to Empower Words—and Wordlings,” talks about the ways people’s understanding can change in response to “re-wording” or re-naming a subject or idea. He says that putting words on things constitutes power and communicates worldview. In creating a space where our students can respectfully listen and encounter other worldviews, we give them opportunities to re-think the way they see others’ experiences.

Transform When Possible

One way to transform composition classroom pedagogy could be to teach students to use the principles of Rogerian argumentation. Carl Rogers, in “Communication: Its Blocking and Its Facilitation,” says that communication is facilitated when people listen to each other in order to truly understand another point of view rather than listening to respond. A restorative approach absolutely depends on participants listening to the other viewpoints represented in the group. In Rogerian argumentation, authors must re-state opposing positions so fairly that people holding the opposing views agree with the characterization. This sort of close listening and ability to
fairly state another’s viewpoint align with restorative ideas of dialogue and respect. Rogers goes on to say that, when people can fairly re-state alternate views, grounds for mutually-agreeable solutions to problems within a group can often be found. Instead of trying to prove that other points of view are wrong or misguided, the point of Rogerian argumentation is to recognize other points of view and to try to synthesize multiple viewpoints in creating solutions. While people in restorative circles are encouraged to speak only for themselves (and so do not re-state other people’s positions), writers need to have this ability to ethically summarize other stances. Rogers’ focus on respectful acknowledgement of other people’s points of view definitely aligns with restorative practices. In Rogers’ paradigm, the goal is consensus, but in restorative practices, the goal is often to simply hear all points of view. For example, during classroom discussions about race or gender equality, my goal as the facilitator may be for students to hear one another’s experiences and points of view. By contrast, when we need to make a decision as a class, as when we create an assignment rubric together, we do need to reach consensus by the end of our discussion. For these reasons, RCP aligns with the mutual respect exemplified in Rogers’ model, though the goals may vary.

In contemplating where improvements can be made, restorative practices also consider stakeholders outside of the participants in a particular setting (Zehr 45). For first-year writing classrooms, these stakeholders can include administration, the university community, or the wider society. Writing and rhetoric scholar Ellen Cushman, in “The Rhetorician as Agent of Social Change,” encourages instructors to think about the literacy needs of those living in communities surrounding the university. She sees instructors as having a civic duty to use their

---

6 I cover student response to challenging classroom discussions in Chapter Five, and I discuss the process of developing grading rubrics in Chapter Four.
positions to empower people both inside and outside the campus. Such concern for external stakeholders is reflected in restorative practices. When people think restoratively, they consider everyone who will be affected by an action, whether the stakeholder is physically present in a particular discussion or not. Similarly, in “Kitchen Tables and Rented Rooms: The Extracurriculum of Composition,” literacy and composition scholar Anne Ruggles Gere calls for a transformation of composition scholarship so that it includes the study of writing practices and composition instruction outside the academy. She says, “As we consider our own roles of social agency, we can insist more firmly on the democracy of writing and the need to enact pedagogies that permit connections and communication with the communities outside classroom walls” (91). This sort of transformation, which considers ways to meet the needs of an expanded circle of stakeholders, upholds the restorative goal of transforming the community when possible.

Composition scholar David Bartholomae presents a transformed writing course curriculum which can, in turn, make room for student transformation. In Facts, Artifacts and Counterfacts, Bartholomae reimagines a writing course as a space which welcomes students into the academy, treating them with respect. He writes, “students can learn to transform materials, structures and situations that seem fixed or inevitable, and that in doing so they can move from the margins of the university to establish a place for themselves on the inside” (41). Bartholomae’s model embodies the restorative ideals of inclusiveness and respect for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or language use. This author shows that, by treating students with respect and mentoring them in developing the skills they need, a wider variety of students can find room for themselves in the academy.
Extending Restorative Practices

Many composition scholars are already working in ways that fit within a restorative construct, and the field of restorative practices can provide strategies to use in composition classrooms. One of these strategies is in explicitly setting the ground rules for respectful interactions. As restorative practices scholars Bob Costello, Joshua Wachtel, and Ted Wachtel say in *Restorative Circles in Schools*, instructors must “present clear guidelines and goals for discussions” that students “are expected to participate” and be respectful; everyone “need[s] to feel safe to share their ideas” (26). By addressing these ideas “proactively,” these authors say, instructors can “dispel many potential problems” (43). I provide these expectations in writing in the syllabus so that we discuss them on the first day of class. After this initial attention to these ideas, I model respectful interactions and remind students of the rules on the rare occasions that a reminder is needed.7

Another crucial restorative strategy beneficial for composition classes is the use of circles. In restorative circles, everyone in the group sits in a circle and has equal opportunity to participate in the discussion (Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel 22). These circles can play many roles in the classroom, such as checking in with the students about course content (38) and clarifying ideas (45). These authors say that “circles encourage problem solving” and that they should be “collaborative [and] engage students to get their input and opinions on things” (47). While circles operate proactively to create an inclusive and egalitarian group, they can also help students consider ways to address harms or improve the community. The ideas driving restorative circles—everyone has the opportunity to participate in the discussion as equally as

---

7 See Chapter Four, “Syllabus,” for more discussion.
possible—permeate RCP. Whether the students discuss a given subject in a small group or discuss a matter with the whole class, every student can voice an opinion and be heard.

While much of the focus in restorative settings is on proactive work which creates community—thereby sidestepping some conflicts—the restorative approach also provides a model for response when instructors or students face classroom challenges. Rather than focusing on blame or punishment for wrongdoers, a restorative approach focuses on using dialogue and repair of harms done to restore the community. Restorative justice pioneer Howard Zehr says that a restorative “view of wrongdoing emphasizes the importance of making amends or ‘putting [things] right’” (20). The process of “putting right” respects all involved, as well. As Zehr says, “one basic value is supremely important: respect” (36). In restorative spaces, instructors show respect for students even when working through challenges, and they ask for respect in return. To consider a common example: students often arrive late to class, and instructors respond in a variety of ways, from ignoring the behavior to shaming the student publicly. A restorative response could be to quietly ask the student to stay for a moment after class, then calmly inquire about the reasons why the student has been tardy. This strategy respects students and gives them an opportunity to address causes of tardiness with the instructor; through dialogue, instructors and students may be able to solve the problem collaboratively. Even if the student was tardy for no particular reason, this sort of respectful conversation will increase the likelihood of the student’s timely arrival in the future.

Restorative scholarship offers a road map for individual and group restorative conversations. Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel offer guidelines for these kinds of dialogues. The first and most simple way of initiating a restorative conversation is by making an “affective statement,” which, these authors say, “are simply expressions of personal feelings” (12). The
affective statement I use the most in the classroom is, “It is hard for me when people talk at the same time” (Mwenja *Semester Notes*). Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel say that “Affective statements help clarify boundaries, provide feedback, and build empathy” (12). While restorative practices do provide more formal options for very serious behavior, the other strategy that has been useful to me as a composition instructor is the use of “small impromptu conferences” in which “a few people meet briefly to address and resolve a problem” (13). These conferences can involve the instructor and one or more students as appropriate to the circumstances. Within these meetings, the instructor asks the student to talk about what happened, consider who may have been affected by the event, and offer solutions for making things right (10). These sorts of respectful conversations can help students change problematic behaviors and reintegrate into the classroom community. These informal meetings can also help students to address challenges they experience in developing their compositions as well as helping students to correct errors in their work. These uses of small conferences may not always be to “repair harms,” but they do “address and resolve” different kinds of “problems,” in Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel’s terms.

Additionally, many ideas described in restorative practices literature can be observed in current composition pedagogy and practice. Frida Rundell, in “‘Re-Story-ing’ Our Restorative Practices,” discusses hallmarks of restorative practices that she has observed in restorative social work. One of these principles is that of cooperation rather than coercion. As we invite students in to the process work of the composition classroom and create relationships which support their learning processes, we do hope to inspire their cooperation. However, I must note that, as long as academic spaces include the assignment of grades and course work by the instructor, there will still be some element of coercion in composition classrooms. Restorative practices can change
student-instructor relationships in a practical sense. Other restorative principles that Rundell discusses are those of informed consent and access to information. Best academic practices already call for instructors to provide the information that students need via complete and correct syllabi and clear assignments and rubrics. These practices give students the control to make their own decisions about participation in the class, and such practices mirror restorative principles.

Restorative practices seek to first prevent conflict within a group by building strong relationships, then to repair those relationships and reconnect the community if conflict occurs. Margaret Thorsborne and Peta Blood, in Implementing Restorative Practices in Schools, state that it cannot be enough to use restorative practices to respond to isolated disciplinary instances, nor even to create single classrooms built on restorative principles; entire schools, they say, must be transformed so that all decision-making within the school is guided by principles of inclusive community-building and reparative response to conflict. Craig Adamson and John Bailie, writing in “Education versus Learning: Restorative Practices in Higher Education,” agree. They say that critical classroom pedagogy facilitates flexible, collaborative, and transformative processes in which students learn through dialogue with one another. Adamson and Bailie go on to state that academic institutions are ideally poised to facilitate such learning. However, Thorsborne and Blood warn that such changes must grow organically within the institution; they cannot be imposed from the top down. Instructors and administrators must be exposed to these ideas over time, and they must be able to try restorative strategies as well as discuss frankly with colleagues the ways things worked and did not work. In short, in implementing restorative practices,

---

8In Chapter Four, I describe some of the ways that I diminish traditional classroom hierarchies via the collaborative creation of grading rubrics, peer review, and transparent grading practices.
instructors and administrators will have their own challenges and experiences, and they must themselves have access to a restorative space to process these experiences.

At least one other scholar is already working to apply restorative ideas in the field of English. Multidisciplinary scholar Maisha Winn, in “Towards a Restorative English Education,” explores the application of restorative circle processes within community literacy programs. Her goal is to use literature and writing—in any English classroom or community literacy setting—to seek justice and restore peace both within the students’ lives and beyond the classroom walls. By contrast, I have developed a composition pedagogy which is informed at all levels by restorative principles; in my work, I weave the strands from composition studies and restorative practices scholarship to create a classroom experience that creates inclusive and egalitarian community, repairs the community and its individual members when needed, and improves both the classroom community and the larger community when possible. In the remaining chapters, I describe the course and evaluate how well it met these goals for the Fall 2016 semester.
TOWARD A RESTORATIVE COMPOSITION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As I better understand the ways restorative practices inform my pedagogy, I have become increasingly aware that restorative practices can influence my research methods, as well. As I have stated, I summarize key principles of restorative practices with this definition: *In restorative settings, facilitators work with all members of a group to create an inclusive and egalitarian community, to repair harms done to individuals or the community as needed, and to transform individuals and the community when possible.* Here, I more clearly tie the elements of this summary to restorative scholarship. This overview captures the ideas of people in positions of authority working “with” people rather than doing things “to” or “for” them, as restorative scholar Ted Wachtel describes in the Social Discipline Window. ⁹ This definition also incorporates the value that restorative practitioners place on inviting input equally from every individual within the group, as restorative researchers Bob Costello, Joshua Wachtel, and Ted Wachtel emphasize in *Restorative Circles in Schools: Building Community and Enhancing Learning* (23). Additionally, when harms are identified as having been done to individuals or the group, restorative practices address those harms by repairing them as far as possible. Restorative justice pioneer Howard Zehr discusses a variety of ways that the various stakeholders can work together to identify and repair harms done throughout *The Little Book of Restorative Justice.* Additionally, though my definition does not specifically address this point, within a restorative approach, people speak for themselves; Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel cover this idea, too.

⁹ See fig. 1 in the Introduction.
These principles have driven not only the development of RCP, but they have also influenced the research methods I have chosen to use for this project.

Since restorative practices strive to recognize each individual within a group, a restorative classroom research project must give voice to all class participants and their individual experiences as equitably as possible. One way that I have done this is by inserting portions of the students’ texts that I analyze in Chapter Five so that readers can read the students’ words in conjunction with my analysis. Recent composition studies research parallels this focus on individuals and their experiences. In “Narrative Turns in Writing Studies Research,” composition scholar Debra Journet covers the “narrative turn” in the humanities generally (15), writing that “composition research [has] started to emphasize the social contexts and personal histories out of which writing arises” (14). In a restorative setting, these “social contexts and personal histories” will include all the members of the class. Journet also cautions that researchers may feel compelled to make the research fit a “transformational arc” (19). Providing the students’ actual responses has helped me to resist this pull and to present the results—which admittedly, do include some transformations—as objectively as possible.

Fairly balancing the input and viewpoints from the various stakeholders has been a complex task. In developing a restorative research stance and practice, my goal has been to equitably represent my students, their texts, the class experience, and my teaching. Ethnographer Bonnie Sunstein speaks to this challenge in “Culture on the Page: Experience, Rhetoric, and Aesthetics in Ethnographic Writing,” in which she explores the “liminality” (178) of representing both herself and her informants in “experiential,” “rhetorical,” and “aesthetic” ways (189). As she says, “In composition studies … we enter a tangled tension—between presentation and representation—between our informants, their texts, ourselves, our texts, and our readers”
(178). As I have documented and presented the Fall 2016 semester in Chapters Four and Five, I have been guided by the restorative idea that every voice must be valued and represented as equally as possible in a restorative setting. This idea of striving to represent all points of view in balance with one another has helped to relieve some of the tensions Sunstein outlines.

Positionality

One way to be fair to myself, my students, and my readers is to begin by being explicit and transparent about my own positionality and research stance. Within restorative settings, people speak for themselves, sharing their personal experiences and perspectives. The idea that a declaration of positionality, or an explicit statement of one’s multiple identities, is part of the responsibility in scholarship that has recently gained traction in writing studies research. In “Turning In upon Ourselves: Positionality, Subjectivity, and Reflexivity in Case Study and Ethnographic Research,” literacy researcher and ethnographer Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater “explore[s] how the ethnographer’s stance-position-location affects the entire ethnographic process” (117). She argues that “The concept of positionality includes the ethnographer’s given attributes such as race, nationality, and gender which are fixed or culturally ascribed…. The disclosure of [these] attributes is … an integral part of the data” (116). Writing studies researcher Mary Sheridan agrees, stating that “ethnographers need to disclose in the final written document their positionality and the decisions they make” (79). In keeping with these norms, I offer an overview of my “fixed or culturally-ascribed attributes”: I am a white American Southerner, a cis-gendered female, a lower-middle-class progressive, a sister of a homosexual man, a middle-aged mother of five mixed-race girls, and I have been married for twenty-three years to a Kikuyu tribesman.
From the vantage point of these positions, I have seen harms done to individuals, such as my brother and immediate family members, who are often seen as “other,” or outside the mainstream. As a white person from the deep South, I have also seen the harms done to the social fabric of my home state when poor people, Black people, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and other minorities are excluded from full civic participation and have little voice in politics or policy-making. My experiences, stemming from the confluences of these positions, have led me to wholeheartedly embrace restorative practices as a valuable tool for establishing healthy interpersonal and society-wide relationships as well as repairing those relationships when necessary, appropriate, and possible.

This positionality directly informs my research stance, which is to always seek ways to implement in my research restorative values of inclusion, equality, respect, and repair of harms done. In “Community-Based Research and the Importance of a Research Stance,” rhetorician Jeffrey Grabill discusses the ways that a research stance drives decisions about the research itself. Grabill says that this “identity statement” outlines “researcher identity,” “purposes as a researcher,” and “questions of power and ethics” (215). Building directly from my statement about positionality, my “researcher identity” is that of a restorative scholar; I will continue to find new research situations and contexts to explore through a restorative lens. The restorative framework has provided a guide when “questions of power and ethics” have arisen in researching and reporting. I have, as far as possible, shared with my students the power of assessing the results of the semester by presenting their voices along with my own, and I worked to preserve the integrity and intent of their words as I took them from their original contexts for my analysis. This outlining of my positionality represents a thread of reflexivity which I weave throughout this project. As historian and ethnographer Patricia A. Sullivan says in “Ethnography
and the Problem of the ‘Other,’” “Self-reflexivity [is] the explicit rendering of one’s own theoretical and political assumptions and beliefs as well as one’s experiences and emotions in the process of fieldwork” (106). In reporting the research from this project, I offer insights from self-reflection, as well as reflecting on the project and process of writing up the information.

Pre-research

Of course, work must be done before beginning a research project. My pre-research involved developing and articulating RCP theory, developing a first-year composition syllabus to enact and test the pedagogical framework, and participating in the Institutional Review Board process for project approval. I also evaluated various research methods and chose the most appropriate ones for this work. In “Making Ethnography Our Own: Why and How Writing Studies Must Redefine Core Research Practices,” Mary Sheridan outlines the stages of ethnographically-oriented composition research. She says that first comes “a pre-research stage where ethnographers gain a deep understanding of issues they think will be most salient” in addition to gaining approval for an IRB proposal (76). While I continue to deepen my grasp on the ways that restorative theory and composition pedagogy can work together in a first-year composition classroom, in the pre-research stage, I made solid connections between the two fields.

Theory Driving the Research

This project grew from my increasing recognition of the many philosophical ties between restorative practices and current composition research; this recognition led me to articulate the ways that the two fields align and to shape a composition pedagogy based on that alignment. As writing studies researcher Mary Sue MacNealy states in Strategies for Empirical Research in
Writing, “theory … can be defined as a belief that is the basis for actions…. Theory often provides the stimulus to do a certain research project; and when the project is complete, its findings must be shown to refute, support, refine, or have no effect on the theory that set the research project in motion” (11). The confluence of restorative theory and composition scholarship has led to this project, and the results of the project have helped me to further refine and validate the approach.

Throughout the process, I have considered as many stakeholders as possible. In the pre-research stage, the most important stakeholder is the university’s Institutional Review Board, who has the power to prevent research projects from moving forward. With support from my dissertation director, I developed an IRB proposal which was approved in the Fall of 2016. Other important pre-research stakeholders are the department within which I teach and the members of my dissertation committee. The university First-year Writing Program, or FWP, provides a great deal of latitude for teachers to develop innovative pedagogies and teaching methods (Mwenja Semester Notes). As long as syllabi and assignments fulfill program outcomes, teachers may meet the standards from a variety approaches. As a result, I have been able to create RCP and research its outcomes under the auspices of the department. The members of my dissertation committee have also helped greatly by encouraging me to clearly articulate RCP and how it fits into and builds on current composition scholarship.

In creating the pedagogy, syllabus, and research project, one of the most important goals I had was to repair harms that may have been done to my students in previous English classes—or at the very least, not to cause more harm. Sullivan tells a story about meeting a college athlete who, when he found out she was a writing teacher, said she was his “worst nightmare.” She goes on to reflect on that comment “[this statement] implies that writing teachers can and do inflict a
kind of damage” (107). By welcoming students from all linguistic backgrounds into the classroom experience as well as clearly articulating the ways students can wield English varieties associated with power in American society, I hope to undo and avoid the sort of damage Sullivan describes: the feeling many students have that the composition teacher is a “nightmare” and the composition classroom is an unsafe place for anyone who does not speak or write in accord with prescriptive norms.

In completing this project, I have gained insights to share with composition teachers and writing program administrators. As others join me in developing courses which reflect restorative principles, we can build a body of knowledge to further inform classroom practices. Sheridan says, “Writing studies research often focuses on educational contexts with the goal of offering policy” (80). While this single classroom case study cannot yet offer generalizable conclusions to drive policies for classrooms or programs, it does offer a case study as a possible model, as well as insights and potential avenues for future research.

Because this project presents teacher research from only one classroom experience, the results should not be threatening to the FWP or to the university, but RCP does have the potential to challenge “current-traditional” classroom teaching methods. I will need to be mindful of this potential challenge as I move into another university context to continue my research and teaching. In “Social and Institutional Power Relationships in Studies of Workplace Writing,” community literacy researcher Jennie Dautermann recognizes such difficulties, saying, “writing studies that address social issues can appear threatening to the institutions and organizations under study and thus threaten researcher access as well. We have not yet found adequate ways to critique the assumptions of institutions and cultures while depending on their good graces for the continuation of the work” (242). In developing and sharing RCP, I am not motivated by a desire
to critique current practices; rather, I reframe best pedagogical practices in restorative terms. However, part of the reason I have begun to articulate RCP is that many who teach composition may not keep abreast of developments in composition studies, and they may interpret RCP as a critique of their classroom practices. In communicating this model to other teachers, departments, and universities, I will use restorative principles of respect and dialogue to diminish any threat they may perceive.

Gathering Data

Once I completed the pre-research tasks, I was ready to gather the data that I describe in Chapter Four and analyze in Chapter Five. Sheridan states that “In the second stage [of writing studies research], ethnographers gather extensive qualitative and quantitative data from multiple perspectives” (76). As a classroom case study, my research uses ethnographic methods, falling under the umbrella of empirical research. Such research, MacNealy says, “refer[s] to a carefully designed project to systematically collect information about an event, situation, or small group of persons or objects for the purpose of exploring, describing, and/ or explaining aspects not previously known or considered” (197). In the pre-research stage, I “carefully designed” this project to “collect information” about RCP, which—as far as I can determine—has not been previously explored.

Since I am developing RCP as an outgrowth of both restorative practices and composition pedagogy, the only way to gather information on its outcomes is to do my own teacher research. This project is action-based teacher research, which can be considered a sub-set of ethnographic or case study research. Most of the information I gathered is qualitative, such as a thick description of the course and content, an examination of class documents, and a
discussion of pre- and post-semester surveys and other class writings. I do, however, flesh out the research with a limited amount of quantitative examination of the survey data. This strategy aligns with MacNealy’s observation that “Although research projects can be categorized as mainly quantitative or qualitative, many projects use some data of each kind” (44). This project focuses mainly on data collected via qualitative methods borrowed from ethnographic and case-study models.

One of the goals of ethnographic research is to capture moments or observations so that they can be more closely examined. In fact, I came to realize that a great deal of meaning was captured in the unplanned moments between the classroom activities as well as in the unscripted moments during office hours. In “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” Anthropologist Clifford Geertz states, “The ethnographer ‘inscribes’ social discourse; he writes it down, in so doing, he turns it from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence, into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be re-consulted” (6). Such ethnographic accounts can give composition researchers insights into our work and the ways in which composition classes affect our students; I certainly found this to be the case as I analyzed the collected data.

I use the ethnographic tools of thick description and artifact analysis to communicate as clearly as possible how restorative practices has informed course content and presentation. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz copied the phrase “thick description” from language philosopher Gilbert Ryle and explores the concept in his 1973 essay, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.” Geertz says, “The claim to attention of an ethnographic account does not rest on its author’s ability to capture primitive facts … but on the degree to which he [or

---

10 I discuss several of these moments at the close of Chapter Four.
she] is able to clarify what goes on in such places, to reduce the puzzlement” (5). As I describe and analyze this semester of RCP, my goal is to clearly state what happened in the classroom, why those events happened, and what we may learn from these classroom happenings that may apply in other classrooms and institutions.

While my methods are based in ethnographic research, the project design can be more accurately described as a case study. The methods of ethnographic research and case study research overlap a good deal, but case studies generally examine smaller groups of people over shorter amounts of time as compared to ethnographies. MacNealy says it in this way: “a case study usually investigates one event … [and] is usually conducted over a fairly short period of time—usually a semester or less” (198). Using this yardstick, my study fits into the case study paradigm. The development and planning of this research also agree with case study norms. MacNealy states, “A case study … involves a plan for studying or investigating a topic or problem, and data are then collected along the way rather than retrieved from memory at the end of a project” (196). To meet these criteria, I developed a theory to drive the syllabus, and then I vetted the syllabus in a pilot semester before systematically collecting the data during the official, IRB-approved research semester.

A teacher-research case study is the best way for me to capture and convey information about RCP, with many strong points in its favor. MacNealy describes “advantages of case study research” in these ways: they can provide “a holistic view of an event or situation,” “rich detail,” “information that cannot otherwise be collected,” and “A more precise definition of research questions” (199). In exploring the semester through thick description, I have provided both a
broad view and “rich detail” of the class experience. As I processed the data, I gained insight into the ways that I can refine and focus future research questions.11

Because university-level composition classes are almost always taught one semester at a time, they lend themselves well to case study research. While this project falls within disciplinary norms of composition studies, the knowledge developed may not yet be useful in other composition classrooms. As MacNealy states, because of the limited scope of one case study, the “results are not generalizable” (199). While the results of this single project may not be applicable in other settings, I will be able to gather useful information to guide both future teaching practices and future research. As I form future projects, I can develop a body of knowledge that can become more generalizable. MacNealy’s final point about “disadvantages” of case studies is that such “research is often regarded as non-scientific … [and] subject to researcher bias” (199). I have taken great care to avoid researcher bias and have, as far as possible, presented the findings fairly, without favoring a preferred outcome. To meet this goal of avoiding researcher bias, I have been scrupulous in upholding the highest standards for case study research by planning and testing the course design in a previous semester, carefully collecting student writing and my own daily logs for analysis, and clearly describing the outcomes of this preliminary study as tentative. MacNealy recommends all of these strategies for researchers to conduct the strongest case studies possible (201-2)

11 I discuss refinements to the research design in the Conclusion.
Thick Description

In Chapter Four, I describe the Fall 2016 class setting, syllabus, semester plan, and daily routine in great detail, relating each facet of the course to restorative principles. By so doing, I provide a clear picture of the choices I made in designing, developing, and implementing RCP. In this portion of the project, I rely on three questions offered by Bonnie Sunstein and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater for researchers to consider in thickening the descriptions in their work. They advise researchers to first “ask descriptive questions of your data—about informants’ rituals and routines, about how people and places interact”; the authors encapsulate this idea in the question, “What’s going on here?” (361). As I describe the various elements of the semester plan, I answer this question regarding what happened within the class. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater say that researchers should also ask, “Where’s the culture?”; this question, they say, “refers to descriptions of language practices, place observations, background research, and artifacts you’ve gathered in the field to understand the group and its history” (361). The idea of looking for the culture may seem more applicable to researchers who study established writing or language communities, but I have used it to examine the ways that a restorative culture has been embedded in the course content and communicated to the students. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater’s final question, “What’s the story?” they say, “includes a description of what we would like to call twin tales—your informants’ perspectives and your own perspective on the research process” (361). I used these ideas as I balanced between presenting the views and input from the various stakeholders—my students, the institution, my reflections, and the course content—to provide a holistic overview of the course.
Teacher Research

As a restorative teacher, my goal is always to work with my students to encourage changes in their writing development and in the possibilities they imagine for using rhetorical principles in their lives. I use both restorative theory and composition scholarship to meet these aims. In “Composition from the Teacher Researcher Point of View,” teacher research scholar Ruth Ray says that “What distinguishes teacher research … is its collaborative spirit, its emphasis on the interrelationships between theory and practice, and its interest in bringing about change—in the teacher, the student, the school system, the teaching profession, the field of study, and the practice of research—from within the classroom” (183). In this section of text, Ray captures the heart of my work. While I have not invited my students to collaborate in the research writing, I have posed direct questions to elicit their views on the efficacy of the course. Additionally, for me, theory and practice are always intertwined; practice must be informed by theory, and theory needs the expression that practice provides. Lastly, I am keenly focused on bringing about positive change for all the classroom stakeholders that Ray amply outlines, and I do believe that classroom practice can create change far outside the classroom walls.

While there has been a good deal of focus on “student-centered learning” in composition studies and in education scholarship more broadly, my scholarship values both teacher and student, balancing the focus between the two. In “Revisiting Teacher Research,” writing studies researcher Lee Nickosan says that, in classroom research, teachers should “learn not only about our students but also—and crucially—from them…. The aim of teacher-researchers is a deeper understanding of student writers” (111). At the same time, a restorative stance values all members in a group; the experiences of both teacher and student are respected. I extend Nickosan’s point in this way: One goal of restorative research is to understand how the students
come to classroom bringing past experiences with them and how students interact with restorative course content. At the same time, I explore the ways that the teacher’s time and experience is valued within a restorative classroom setting, too. MacNealy gets closer to the way I understand my teacher research, saying, “a major area of interest is the behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes of the students. Just as important in teacher research, however, are the practices, assumptions, values, and beliefs of the teacher” (243). In using thick description and grounded analysis to explore the results of my research, I have begun to identify valuable information to benefit both students and teachers in future composition classrooms.

In developing this teacher research, I use ethnographic tools, but I follow the lead of other composition scholars in adapting the methods for the goals of my research. I use survey data, thick description, artifact analysis, and grounded examination of the data to pursue my own research aims of defining and analyzing RCP in action rather than writing an ethnography of the class. As Sheridan states, “many writing studies scholars openly acknowledge that they do not conduct what anthropologists may consider ‘true ethnographies,’ but rather they adopt ethnographic perspectives or use ethnographic tools” (80). My focus is the testing of a new composition pedagogy theory and practice. I am interested in student culture only insofar as it allows or prevents students from being full participants in my composition class. Sheridan points out that we need not feel limited by other scholars’ views on our work. She says, “Because methods are … flexible practices meant to be understood and adapted for present needs, we in writing studies should … feel confident to adapt these methods so they are appropriate to our forums, uses, and practices” (82). This willingness and ability to be flexible in the application of methods makes sense because we are taking anthropological and sociological methods for use in composition scholarship, which has different disciplinary questions and goals.
For this project, I have employed almost all of the methods recommended for teacher researchers to use, such as examining “syllabi, handouts, lesson plans, and lecture notes,” “logs of activities and conversations,” and “reflections on their activities” (MacNealy 243-44). In Chapter Four, I describe and examine each of these artifacts from the research semester. MacNealy also states, “Sometimes teachers also administer questionnaires to their students in order to learn attitudes at the beginning and/ or end of the semester or year, information on past experiences, and information on beliefs or things learned in prior classes or writing situations” (245). This is exactly the type of information I have solicited from my students in the pre- and post-semester surveys; all of the items MacNealy lists are included in the information gathered.

To ensure that my research is as credible as possible, I have met the standards for strong research in composition studies. I have triangulated the data as far as possible from the various documents and artifacts collected, and I spent prolonged time documenting the various aspects of the research setting. I devote a chapter to thick description, and I clarified my positionality and stance above. In Chapters Four and Five, I have included negative and discrepant information, both within individual student accounts and in their responses to the course. All of these elements represent the ways composition researchers can employ “rigor” when borrowing and mixing methods, according to psychologist and mixed-methods researcher John Creswell, writing in Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods (196-7). Creswell also recommends member checking, or getting feedback on my project from participants. Member checking, because it invites review by participants in the study, fits nicely into the restorative paradigm, but time and logistics have prevented me from using this method for the current project.
Writing It Up

After planning the research and gathering the data, I have written up an account of the research in two major pieces. The first, Chapter Four’s thick description of the semester, grounds the decisions I made about classroom content in restorative principles. The second, Chapter Five’s analysis of student response to the course, gives voice to the class as a whole and reports their beliefs about how the semester supported their writing development. In the Conclusion, I draw tentative inferences about the course and student responses. Sheridan says that “The third stage, the writing-it-up stage, is often the most challenging … [because] ethnographies require researchers to draw upon highly rhetorical moves to persuade readers that the researcher has … gotten it right” (Sheridan 76). My goal is to be as transparent and scrupulous as possible so that my readers do feel that I have indeed “gotten it right.”

The student surveys and essays were given to me with the identifying information redacted. Numbers were randomly assigned to students who agreed to be a part of the study. Though the redacted information did indicate gender (for pronoun usage), I elected to employ gender neutral pseudonyms, as an exploration of gender is beyond the scope of this project.

Grounded Research

My motivation for conducting this research project was to evaluate the results of RCP in action. For this reason, I wanted to learn what the data told me rather than interpreting it from a pre-specified theoretical standpoint. Researchers who choose to find patterns that emerge from their data—rather than examining data through a pre-determined lens—are said to be using a “grounded” approach to research. Sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss developed this grounded research methodology in the 1960s; for them, it was a recursive method in which data
collection led to theory development (Higginbottom and Lauridsen 9-10). In the years since Glaser and Strauss published their first work using grounded methods, scholars have extended and adapted the framework for use in a variety of disciplines. For writing studies researchers Christina Haas, Pamela Takayoshi, and Brandon Carr, grounded research means that they “did not bring to the analysis any specific, previously developed schemes for analyzing discourse” (54). In a similar vein, I have examined the collected data to see what it indicates instead of interpreting it through the lens of a given theory—even a restorative one. In writing up the research, I looked for connections between pieces of data rather than forcing my interpretations on the information. I particularly wanted to avoid assuming that students had experienced restorative results and interpreting the information from that viewpoint. Haas, Takayoshi, and Carr state that their grounded research strategy is “particularly well suited to descriptive studies … designed to generate accounts of writers’ experiences, writing practices and contexts, and written texts” (52). Their description drove my model of looking at “writers’ experiences” in a “descriptive study,” further confirming the applicability of using the grounded approach to find and organize the actual trends present in the research information.

Ethical Issues

The focus on inclusion and egalitarianism within the field of restorative practices leads directly to a consideration of research ethics and fair representation of student voices in my classroom research. I have been grappling with these questions for several years; my marginal notes on the first page of Cheri Williams’ “Dealing with the Data: Ethical Issues in Case Study Research” ask, “Could restoration provide a meaningful guide to ethical dilemmas?” I read this essay in a 2015 composition research methods class, and the comment was in response to
Williams’ experiences with “specific dilemmas and [her] struggles with and attempts at ethical behavior within each situation” (40). The answer to that question in the margin seems to be that restorative practices can provide some ethical guidelines for composition studies research, particularly on the level of inclusion and letting students’ words speak for themselves, but there are other ethical considerations that restorative practices relate to only tangentially, such as a temptation to force the results into a triumphant narrative or taking care to situate results in broader contexts. The use of “with” as a yardstick, however, can guide almost all ethical decision-making: throughout the process, I have continued to weigh whether the decisions I have made in sifting and reporting the research are decisions that support and benefit both the individual students and my work as a teacher.

By extending the idea of creating inclusive and egalitarian community, an ethics of restorative composition research would demand that the students and I are, as far as possible, allowed to speak for ourselves in the research reporting. While Williams says, “the ethnographer’s paramount responsibility is to those she studies” (44), I would argue that my responsibility is not only to those I study but to myself and the institution as well. Sullivan gets at a more nuanced and larger picture when she says, “the question is … whether the ethnographer has a right to appropriate an other for the sake of knowledge and can ‘speak for’ another without compromising the other’s own powers of representation” (103). As I coded and wrote this research, my goal was to let the students speak for themselves as much as possible; by doing so, I demonstrate my credibility in representing and “speaking for” them. Sullivan asks, “how might we conceive the act of authorship so that it neither privileges nor occludes the author’s agency in the account of the other she renders?” (109). This question leads back to the restorative idea of creating a community which includes each member; here, the research needs
to include teacher and student, researcher and those who are studied—a broader picture than Williams presents.

By being continuously aware of the potential pitfall of imposing my singular viewpoint on the students’ experiences, I have avoided the sort of problem that Thomas Newkirk criticizes in Linda Brodkey’s “On the Subjects of Class and Gender in ‘The Literacy Letters.’” In his own essay, “Seduction and Betrayal in Qualitative Research,” Newkirk states that Brodkey “has so privileged her own reading of the letters that we hear nothing from those, subordinated in the educational hierarchy, who engaged in the correspondence” (11). My goal is to move away from the “educational hierarchy” and toward a more egalitarian representation of the results; however, this specific project cannot represent completely co-equal research because the students will not be full co-authors with me in the finished project. Sullivan discusses researchers who assume that “knowledge is constructed in a collaborative relationship with those being studied” (109). I can imagine that a fully-realized restorative research would include collaboration and co-authorship with the population studied, and I will explore that idea in future classroom research. Newkirk says that Brodkey’s work, along with that of “many others,” “would benefit from polyvocality, a chorus of competing and perhaps irresolvable readings of the same ‘text’” (12). I offer some level of “polyvocality” in this project by offering quoted material from each student in Chapter Five and in the Conclusion, but the final text will be a single-authored piece—as is appropriate for a dissertation.

Ethics Outside of Restorative Practices

As human beings, we often make sense of information through the use of story, and this predilection can lead us to impose conventional story lines on research findings. Debra Journet
states, “composition narratives are often marked by transformational arcs, in which students or teachers or researchers come to realize something significant about the nature of reading, writing, teaching, or learning” (19). While I have found that some students have been transformed by RCP and participation in the class, I have been careful not to impose this sort of overly positive interpretation where the analysis does not in fact support it. This tendency to impose a narrative structure that may not fit the data does not seem to be covered by any specific restorative principle, but I have taken care to avoid this pitfall nonetheless.

Another challenge I have managed has been excluding information that I remember from class interactions but is outside of the official data collection. As Williams states, “Researchers often find themselves in difficult positions because of the intimacies they have developed with respondents” (44). As is normal with any class, I got to know some students better than others, and a core group from the class under consideration came quite regularly to office hours. In coding data, I was tempted to deepen the official information with additional insights because I know who some of the respondents are, even though the data has been redacted. I have had to discipline myself to interact solely with the available data and ignore other information I may remember outside of it.

Another ethical factor that does not necessarily fit neatly into a restorative framework is that of situating the project in the institutional, social, and political contexts. As Jennie Dautermann says, “Any adequate understanding of the dynamics of written communication within a discourse community depends on some grasp of the political and social forces which shape the production (and reception) of the texts that appear there” (241). These considerations seem to tie more closely to presenting the rhetorical situation of the class and the students’ writings rather than restorative considerations per se.
Whether or not I can tie specific ethical research actions to one of the three prongs of creating community, repairing it when needed, and transforming it when possible, “with” has provided a reliable rule of thumb for ethical decision-making in this project. MacNealy identifies possible ethical issues in using excerpts from student writings: “potential problems arise from this practice [including] the image of the student that is created by the quotation and misinterpretation or misapplication of the quotation” (249). As I wrote the research, I continued to envision myself as working “with” the students, thereby creating a fair image of the individuals and their work. Similarly, I kept in mind the idea of reporting “with” them to ensure that I carefully interpreted and responsibly applied their words. A fully-realized restorative research practice might give the students an opportunity to interact with and speak back to the final text. Along these lines, Williams recommends collaborative research, in which “researchers develop an interactive, dialogic, reciprocal relationship that mitigates the strictures of traditional, imperialistic hegemony” (51). The realities of working within the academic sphere will definitely limit my ability to conduct truly collaborative research with a group of students about their own writing and experiences, but having the goal of more collaboration could open more potential avenues of working together in future restorative research.

Working “with” my students can also be construed as enacting an “ethic of care,” which is phrasing used in at least two composition research publications. Sullivan recommends “an ethnographic practice motivated less by the will to knowledge than by an ethic of care…. In these studies we find a type of research that is not only about the other but for the other, a research practice that is concerned at the level of methodology—and not simply in its implications—with the good it might do” (111). Certainly, I hope to participate in the continued
improvement in composition pedagogy and restorative practices, and my motivation stems from such “an ethic of care.” Similarly, in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*, Jacqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch also recommend “an ethics of hope and care linked to responsible rhetorical action” (148). This excerpt indicates the clear and potentially rich relationships which I can explore between RCP and feminist theory in future research.

Chapter Conclusion

As platforms for composition continue to multiply in online, social, and professional spaces, opportunities for writing research—and accompanying ethical questions—will also multiply. Ray calls for more attention to ethical “issues that occur when a single person, the classroom teacher, inhabits the space between teacher and researcher” or “action research—forms of inquiry that are initiated, conducted, and published by the teacher” (291). I continue to strive to be sensitive to the demands of each role—teacher and researcher—and to potential tensions between the two. Newkirk also states that “Ultimately those of us in the university must question the automatic belief in our own benevolence, the automatic equation between our own academic success and ethical behavior” (14). As an academic over-achiever, this trap is one I could easily fall into; reflecting on the research and process has helped me to honestly examine the ethical choices I have made throughout the project. Additionally, because RCP has “benevolence” at its root—explicitly stating that it is an inclusive and egalitarian practice—it would be tempting to assume that those employing the method always make moral decisions. I have needed to continually re-assess my fairness to my students as I have reported their words and actions in this project; this practice will be crucial as I develop further restorative projects.
Finally, I will conduct a series of similar research projects in the future to build a body of generalizable information about RCP. MacNealy says, “a teacher research project … aims to describe, as fully as possible, what happened in one teaching situation …. When the field develops to the place that many such descriptions are available, patterns and trends can be identified that could lead to principles for improving instruction” (243). In addition to developing usable information for composition instructors, I also hope to be true to the value of creating community by presenting the results to as many stakeholders as possible. Ray says, “One way for a researcher to be accountable to the local school and community is to publish the results of literacy research through speeches to the school board, in-service presentations, and articles in newsletters and newspapers that reach students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community organizers” (298). Ray’s suggestions point to the ways that researchers can disseminate information to stakeholders outside of the classroom. As I continue to share RCP with a wide range of stakeholders, the ideas may help to inform education policy within a range of institutions.

Just as I have chosen composition teaching methods and practices to align with restorative theory, I have also chosen research methods that support restorative values of inclusion, egalitarianism, and respect. These methods have been employed in previous composition scholarship, and they demonstrate thoughtfulness and respect for the research participants. In the following chapters, I examine the data generated in this teacher-research case study of my Fall 2016 first-year composition class.
As stated previously, in working to synthesize restorative principles and communicate them succinctly, I have developed this definition: In restorative settings, facilitators work with all members of a group to create an inclusive and egalitarian community, to repair harms done to individuals or the community as needed, and to transform individuals and the community when possible. This definition, drawing on the work of restorative scholars such as Howard Zehr and Ted Wachtel, captures the heart of restorative theory. In every way that I could imagine, I built the Fall 2016 class on restorative principles outlined by Zehr, Wachtel, and others. The primary driving principle for the course is the idea of “with” drawn from restorative practices scholar and innovator Ted Wachtel’s Social Discipline Window. As I created the class, I made choices to communicate that I was working “with” the students and encouraged them to work “with” each other. Many of the activities and principles I describe below stem from this single principle.

The next major principle driving course creation is the principle of “preventing issues from occurring [by] building healthy relationships” described by restorative practices scholars and researchers Margaret Thorsborne and Peta Blood in Implementing Restorative Practices in Schools (43). They say that restorative practices clearly offer strong tools for “managing difficulties and disruptions” and “repairing serious harm”; however, a restorative approach

---

12 See fig. 1 in the Introduction.
mainly focuses on offering “relational practices in classrooms” for “developing social and emotional capacity” (44). By concentrating on building relationships in the classroom, Thorsborne and Blood say, restorative teachers will decrease the amount of time needed to address classroom challenges. As I developed the content of this semester, I chose elements to foster social bonds in the classroom, or as I say in my definition of Restorative Practices, to “create inclusive and egalitarian communities.”

The final driving principles for the creation of this course are those which undergird restorative circles. A circle is a powerful restorative practice that can fill many functions. As restorative practices scholars and innovators Bob Costello, Joshua Wachtel, and Ted Wachtel say in *Restorative Circles in Schools: Building Community and Enhancing Learning*, circles can be used for “students to get to know each other better” and “to deliver and process course content” (24). These authors say that circles can be used to “check in” with how the students are doing or feeling (37), and they can be used for “student-driven review” (45). When circles are used in these ways, they build the sorts of social capital that Thorsborne and Blood say restorative teachers should promote.

Restorative circles rest on certain fundamental beliefs. Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel say the first of these is the belief in “equality—literally everyone in the circle has equal seating” (22) and everyone receives “equal time and attention” (23). The equality of the circle seating reinforces the ideal that every member of the group participates on equal terms. These authors say that the arrangement of the circle, in which “everyone can look one another in the eye,” creates “safety and trust” (22). Such “safety and trust” is built over time, as students see that they are respected and included. Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel go on to state that circle participants feel both “responsibility” and “ownership” in the circle process (22-23). They feel responsibility
because they have “a chance to play a role in the outcome of the circle” (22), and they feel ownership because “collectively, the participants feel the circle is theirs” (23). Lastly, the authors say, the circle structure reminds the leader to be a “facilitator” instead of a lecturer (23). As I developed the Fall 2016 course, I continuously strove to embed these ideals in every facet of the content and activities. While the Fall 2016 class never actually moved their chairs to a physical group circle format, in large part, the course I describe in this chapter is essentially an ongoing, proactive restorative practices circle.

In creating a restorative composition pedagogy, I am extending the bounds of established restorative educational practices. Many restorative practices scholars are focused on responding to disciplinary concerns and only mention in passing the broader implications for every aspect of the curriculum. As a result, I am often only able to give tangential support for specific classroom practices, though they are firmly rooted in restorative theory as I articulate it. Additionally, I envision “repairing harms done” as both responding to interpersonal difficulties and as helping students identify and correct errors in their work. Clearly, errors are not harms, but harms done and errors made both need to be addressed. Lastly, I see “improvement”—in composition, in scholarship, and in rhetorical analysis—as falling under the broad head of “transformation.” While RCP can help to bring about other sorts of transformations, as I discuss in this chapter and the following ones, I believe that improving one’s compositions through the use of a writing process is one aspect of the transformations that RCP can offer.

The Setting

Most English classes at my university are housed in a three-story yellow brick building that sits diagonally across the street from one corner of the campus quad. The front of the
building features eight imposing, two-story cement pillars, and charcoal grey lamp posts on either side of the double entrance doors. Low shrubs line the front of the building; bikes crowd the rack to the left of the entrance steps. A simple sign to the right of the steps provides a clear listing of the College of Arts and Sciences departments housed in the building. A smaller gray sign with engraved letters at the bottom of the left lamp post says that the building is named for a secessionist and, later, U.S. Senator. The sign does not say that he owned slaves.

Five white concrete steps lead to the building’s front double doors. The entrance hallway, other than its fifteen-foot ceilings, is simple, with slim air units on either side of the hall and a medium-sized trash can have tucked into the corner. Those who enter the building through the front entrance face an imposing stylized, cubist-inspired portrait of a Black woman. The portrait, painted in cream, brown, and black, fills most of the wall space from floor to ceiling. The placement of this portrait, on prominent display in a building named after a secessionist, highlights the historical tensions still at play on this campus in the heart of the former Confederacy. In addition to enacting Restorative Composition Pedagogy, this course is designed to help students interrogate some of these inherited tensions and to imagine personal ways that they can contribute to “address[ing] the resulting harms,” to use restorative practices pioneer Howard Zehr’s terminology in *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (17).

The classroom in which I taught, down a first-floor hallway to the right, has creamy-white walls, medium gray carpet, and two narrow exterior windows which run from counter height almost up to the ceiling. The windows are inset, with deep ledges below the bottom sills; I had to climb or jump up onto the ledge to open them on warm days. The classroom door opens to face across the back of the room toward one window. The light gray student tables are grouped in six sets of two; each grouping seats four students in black molded-plastic chairs. Three sets of
tables line up against the back wall, with the other three sets parallel them just past the middle of the room. The teacher’s podium, a blocky computer control center with a slim monitor on top, sits diagonally across from the door, near the second window. Across the front of the room from the podium, a locked gray cabinet holds twenty-four Macbooks in upright charging station slots; an additional student desk and chair are placed between the two. The smart podium controls the ceiling mounted projector, allowing teachers to display content from the monitor or the document camera onto the large screen, which lowers at the front of the room. When the screen is not in use, a white board is available on the front wall of the room.

The layout of the classroom affected the social structure of the class as well as some of my pedagogical choices. After the first day or two, each student had settled into a specific chair to sit in each day; this phenomenon meant that each table had a group of four that began to build social bonds, and later these bonds extended outside of class. Some tables created groups on social media applications like *GroupMe* (Rumi), while others drafted their assignments together outside of class (Drew). When students were late to class, their tablemates sometimes texted them to find out where they were (Dakota). Once, a student had been admitted to the hospital, and she sent the news to me through a tablemate (Mwenja *Semester Notes*). The table sets also provided convenient clusters for students to work in pairs or small groups. I usually have my students move around the room and work with a variety of classmates much more often in my classes than I did in this one, but the tables gave the class a sort of small group stability that was challenging to interrupt. Additionally, the groups formed strong working relationships, so I did not feel the need to disturb the social structure. An interesting result of the classroom map is that this class had three students who knew, well before the end of the semester, that they would not

---

13 A map of the room is included in the appendices.
be able to pass the class; however, all three continued to come to class until the final week (Mwenja Attendance Record). None of these students said so outright, but I believe that they felt pressured by their tablemates (who probably did not know that these individuals would not pass) to continue attending.

The class space helped me to implement the restorative curriculum on a technological level as well. Through sheer luck, this room was one of the two “technology classrooms” in our building; these classrooms make a laptop available to each student during class. In this way, I could plan online activities with confidence, knowing that students who did not have laptops to bring would still be included. As Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel say, one of the crucial tenets of restorative practices is for every participant to be able to take part equally in the group (22). The technology classroom ensured that the students could have equal access to technology at least within the classroom setting.

The section I researched¹⁴ was a fall second-semester first-year writing class; at my university, this course is called EN 102. A fall EN 102 course can contain an interesting mix of students. Some students have failed EN 102 previously and are repeating the class; these students often seem less academically motivated than many of their classmates. Other students have earned AP credit for EN 101 and are first-semester freshmen enrolled in a second semester first year writing class; this group tends to have graduated with honors from high school and to be very motivated academically. In the fall 2016 section, the bulk of students fell into the second

¹⁴ Note on verb tense: I follow the MLA standard of using the present tense when writing about texts; such texts will include information from other scholars as well as student-composed documents. In this chapter and the next, I also use the present tense to discuss ongoing classroom practices that I repeat from semester to semester; however, I use the past tense to refer to specific events that happened during the researched period. In places, this practice may make it appear that I change tense within or between paragraphs, but this tense usage differentiates between my usual classroom routine and experiences within this specific course.
category, with sixteen of the twenty-four students being first-time freshman (Mwenja *Detailed Roll Sheet*). The remaining eight were continuing students, and at least two of those had not attempted EN 102 previously. Judging from my experiences in previous and subsequent semesters, I believe that this preponderance of higher-achieving first-year students aided in the success of this study. Of the twenty-four students, eight presented as female and sixteen as male. The majority of the class appeared to be white Americans, but we did have one Black male student, one Black female student, and one international male student from Vietnam. Domestic students came from Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee (Mwenja *Semester Notes*). Declared majors included dance, journalism, nursing, English, pre-med, and three types of engineering: civil, mechanical, and chemical. The group also included a male cheerleader and two members of the university marching band. Students had experienced varying levels of high school quality; some had written a great deal in their high school courses, while others had done virtually no writing in high school. Most students said that all of their high school writing was timed in class and not revisited; no student in this class had had the opportunity to engage in a writing revision process in high school. While my students in other semesters have often reported that they only did timed writing in high school, this group was atypical in that none had engaged in a process writing course design prior to this class.

**Syllabus**

Much of the content in any First-year Writing syllabus at my university is dictated by the First-year Writing Program (FWP), which is clearly a major stakeholder in classroom policies and procedures. Zehr briefly covers the idea of “stakeholders,” saying that community members and entities—“those with a stake or standing in [an] event or [a] case”—are “stakeholders” (13).
Stakeholders, Zehr says, should have input in decision-making, and both the FWP and the university fill this role in first-year writing classes offered by the school. The FWP provides clear guidelines for the bulk of the syllabus, requiring specific verbiage and information for sections such as student learning outcomes, grading policies, and attendance requirements. The FWP administrative team has worked diligently to develop policies that are transparent, fair, and easy for both first-time and experienced teachers to implement. By providing consistent standards and thoughtful policies, the program includes teachers in a community of professionals who engage in similar work. While these FWP practices were not motivated by restorative theory, they tie into the sorts of transparency and collaborative work that Thorsborne and Blood discuss. The university as a whole requires other syllabus elements such as the academic misconduct statement, the disability statement, the weather protocol, and a statement about campus-wide standards for civility and respect to be shown to every individual on campus. Such statements indicate that restorative ideas of inclusion and respectfulness are beginning to be recognized standards at educational institutions, even if they are not explicitly tied to the restorative practices movement.

Instructors in the FWP program do have flexibility to insert their own elements into the syllabus structure. The first instance of this in my syllabus is in the “Office Hours and Location” elements. Instructors in the program must hold office hours, but they schedule them when and where they would like. The Fall 2016 section was scheduled Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at 2:00 p.m., and I originally scheduled my regular office hours for 12:45 p.m.-1:45 p.m. on each class day. Several students had classes scheduled during that time, so after discussing options with them, I adjusted office hours to begin two hours before class and to run for an hour and a half on Mondays and Fridays only. This adjustment met the students’ needs for accessible office
hours as well as my need to have a bit of time between office hours and the beginning of class. In “Transforming School Culture with Restorative Practices,” Laura Mirsky discusses several instances in which teachers talk with students to adjust classroom routines (31-60). This conversation and adjustment at the beginning of the semester demonstrated to the students the types of solutions that could emerge from the restorative methods of dialogue and collaborative problem-solving.

Graduate Teaching Assistants in the department have two office spaces available. I chose to hold office hours in the room with a more relaxed social and conversational space. In the other office, GTAs tend to be quieter and more focused on working independently. The physical space in the room I chose is more welcoming, as well; students enter a living-room inspired area which holds a leather couch, four low-slung upholstered arm chairs, a coffee table, and side tables. On the far side of the room-dividing two-sided bookcase, this room has a round conference table with six stationary office chairs next to a bank of windows, which let in a lot of light. The last portion of the room has desks where GTAs can work individually or meet with students. This room arrangement can accommodate as many as eight student-teacher conferences, and people are generally conversing, so students feel that there is room for them to be there and that talking is allowed and encouraged in the space. This space supports the sort of “small impromptu conferences” that restorative scholars Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel describe (13). Office hours provide the time for teachers and students to “meet briefly to address and resolve a problem” (13). Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel place such conferences on the “Restorative Practices Continuum” between less formal actions such as “affective statements” and more formalized meetings such as “formal conferences” (12). By making ourselves available in office hours to
talk with our students and help them address their writing challenges, we take part in established restorative practices.

One of the drawbacks of the cozy GTA space is that opportunities for private discussion can be limited. Because students in previous semesters had needed to speak with me privately about sensitive topics, I include this note next to “Office Location” in the syllabus: “Please be aware that this is a shared office space.” This note allowed two students during the semester to ask to meet in a different location so that they could discuss with me private information regarding physical and mental health issues that had bearing on their abilities to participate in class. Each understandably wanted to discuss their situations privately, and this notice on the syllabus made them aware that they needed to ask to meet in a different space for privacy.

Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel say that “small impromptu conferences” may at times be more effective when conducted in private (13), and these students needed to be able to discuss and resolve their challenges without an audience.

The FWP has a standard course description for each class, which teachers can customize by adding information about the specific course section. After the standard verbiage, I added the following to this portion of the syllabus: “This section is based in restorative composition practices, meaning that we will work with each other this semester to include every member of the class and to respect our multiple means of communication.” Even though I knew that students would not be familiar with the ideas of restorative practices, I wanted to present the ideas driving the class from the beginning of both the syllabus and the semester. I also wanted them to know right from the start that an important goal of the class was to enact restorative principles of inclusion and respect. As Thorsborne and Blood state, “if we are working successfully with young people … three things need to be present: support (teaching explicitly
what is needed), *high expectations* (pressure that comes from a relationship of mutual respect) and *insistence* (the motivation and persistence that comes from a relationship of mutual respect)” (34). This statement in the syllabus communicates the “support,” “high expectations” and “insistence” that the semester will hold.

Another restorative principle is for members of a group to present their individual points of view while at the same time paying attention to others’ experiences, such as occurs in “proactive circles” (Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel 21). In practice, the entire course is an extended proactive circle, in which everyone in a group is included and contributes to discussions on equal footing (22-23). To establish the importance of balancing this give and take in the class, I added this phrase to the course description: “We begin the semester by examining our own relationships to English literacy and composition, then compare our experiences to those of others.” This information let the students know on a practical level what to expect from the early part of the semester; it also let them know that we would value their experience and ask them to consider other experiences too. To let students know what to expect for the later part of the course, I concluded the course description with this information: “As the semester continues, each of us will identify our own research interests within the class theme, then synthesize the findings in composing the semester’s various assignments.” Again, I knew that the students would not fully grasp what this information meant, but I wanted to begin to lay the groundwork for the semester ahead.

Required course texts are listed in the syllabus; all teachers in the FWP must require Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommers’ *A Writer’s Reference* as well as a rhetoric text. For the rhetoric, I chose Sylvan Barnet and Hugo Bedau’s *From Critical Thinking to Argument*, largely
because it has a chapter on Rogerian argument.\textsuperscript{15} This text is also generally easy to read and features handy checklists of questions relating to each chapter, which help students to think more deeply about the book’s content. \textit{From Critical Thinking to Argument} includes information common to most rhetorics, such as critical reading, argument analysis, developing arguments, and source usage. Lastly, Barnet and Bedau’s book has a chapter on visual rhetoric in addition to a chapter on “Rhetorical Analysis of Nontraditional texts.” For these reasons, I selected it to accompany the required handbook.

The next section of the syllabus is “Other Required Course Materials.” This section is optional for teachers, but I understand that some financial scholarships will only pay for items listed as “required” on a syllabus. As a result, I try to include everything that I think my students might need to support their work in the class, including physical supplies and access to technology. In thinking through student needs and listing them here so that they will be provided by scholarship monies, I aim to convey that I am supportive of students’ success. This attention to details that can have an impact on student success reflects the sorts of concrete actions that restorative teachers can take, thereby creating a “culture of care and respect,” to use Thorsborne and Blood’s phrase (43).

Another way I communicate this “culture of care and respect” is by using the Dyslexie font wherever possible. I provide this information in the syllabus: “You may have noticed that the font on this syllabus looks a little different. As part of my effort to provide an inclusive class environment, I use Dyslexie font for all printed materials.” I go on to provide background information about this font, which was developed to decrease the issues that people with dyslexia

\textsuperscript{15} I discuss Rogerian argument in Chapter Two.
experience when reading. Students—even those without a dyslexia diagnosis—have responded very well to the font, saying that it makes course materials very easy to read (Mwenja Semester Notes). Using a font which helps people with dyslexia to more easily participate in the class communicates that this class has been designed to consider the needs of as many students as possible. The use of this font embeds the idea that the course is a sort of extended “proactive circle.” As Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel state, “literally everyone in the circle has equal seating” (22). This font choice demonstrates my commitment to making student access to course content as equal as possible.

Another way that I give students equal access to information is by providing a grid in the syllabus outlining information about the semester’s major grades. This grid has columns for major grade assignments, word count, due date, and percentage of final grade; it also includes blank columns for students to fill in throughout the semester, one labeled “Grade Earned” and one labeled “Weighted Grade.” Since the online gradebook is not correct until the daily grades are entered at the end of the semester, I tell the students that they can keep track of their progress on this grid throughout the semester. They are able to see the remaining grades to be earned, whereas online, they see their current average, which can be misleading. Prior to the mid-term grade submission, I take class time to pull up this chart and talk students through calculating their grades. By mentoring them in keeping track of their grades, I demonstrate my support of their progress and communicate the idea that I do not want to spring any unpleasant grade surprises on the students, either at mid-term or the end of the semester. In “Restorative Approaches in Scottish Schools,” restorative scholars Gwynedd Lloyd and her colleagues define

---

16 The constraints of the dissertation submission process prevent me from attaching the original syllabus in Dyslexie font, but interested readers may find a sample at dyslexiefont.com.
a “restorative approach” in part as “developing school ethos, policies and procedures that reduce the possibilities of … conflict and harm” (138). As far as possible, I strive to enact “policies and procedures” that reflect this strategy of preventing conflict by means of providing clear expectations and explanations, such as those represented in the grade chart.

The standard departmental syllabus includes directions to students in case a teacher does not come to class or if issues arise between student and teacher. I grouped these two statements together in a section called “Follow Up” and added a third bullet: “I am glad to discuss the grades you have earned with your work. Before coming to office hours to discuss your grades, make sure you have carefully read my comments and the rubric attached to your paper.” I included this statement to communicate to the students that I respect their points of view and am willing to talk about their grades; at the same time, I respect myself and want to decrease or eliminate any “first response” emotional interactions about bad grades. I also allow the students to revise every major paper except the last. This opportunity decreases the students’ emotional reactions to bad grades because they know they can improve their final paper grades if they choose to do so. By telling the students the rules concerning discussions about grades, I exhibit Thorsborne and Blood’s definition of “support,” which is “teaching explicitly what is needed,” as well as these authors’ definition of “high expectations,” or “pressure that comes from a relationship of mutual respect” (34). I clearly communicate respect for students’ wishes to come to discuss grades as well as my expectation that we will both approach the conversation with respect for each other.

In addition to establishing policies designed to enact restorative principles, I include a statement outlining the big ideas of restorative practices in the syllabus. It begins, “In restorative

---

17 This policy is covered in depth below under “Grading.”
composition practices, teachers and students work collaboratively, cooperatively, and inclusively to complete activities and assignments. All participants should expect to both give and receive respect and to view all class members as equally important and valuable.” These ideas are based in the tenets of restorative circles. As Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel state, “By fostering inclusion, community, accountability, responsibility, support, nurturing, and cooperation, circles restore these qualities to a classroom…. As a consequence of fostering relationships and a sense of belonging, academic performance, too, flourishes (24). I have constructed the semester as an extended proactive circle in which students are expected to participate as respectful equals, and their academic work almost always benefits as a result.

The restorative practices syllabus statement continues, “By focusing on what is working well in multiple drafts, restorative composition practices emphasize strengthening student compositions.” Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel give advice to teachers about this use of collaboration, saying, “You can get students to ask one another for assistance to help them complete their work” (48). Additionally, those who take part in restorative practices intend to make improvements. Zehr calls this, “putting things right” (28). Instead of focusing on the deficits in their own and others’ writing, students in my classes focus on how to make their compositions better, and this statement lets them know right away that this perspective will be expected of them.

I know that this restorative practices statement will not mean much to students at the beginning of the semester, but it became a touchstone that I needed occasionally during the semester. From time to time, as folks were talking over others or were texting during class discussions, I simply said something like, “Remember that we began the semester by saying that we would respect each other in this class.” During this particular semester, this gentle reminder
was all the students needed to hear in order to return to participating attentively and respectfully in the class. Thorsborne and Blood call this sort of reminder a “relational practice in the classroom,” or reminders of the class guidelines that can help to prevent bigger challenges from developing (44).

I added a section labeled “Success!” to the syllabus. With the four points in this section, my goal was to demystify the way to earn a strong grade in the course as well as to set expectations for student behavior. Students can feel excluded from academic spaces when class expectations are implicit or not fully articulated. Mike Rose, *In Lives on the Boundary*, addresses a myriad of ways that underprepared or working class students need explicit instruction regarding expectations in the academy. By including this section, I hoped to make every student from every background feel included by having the “inside scoop.” The first bullet point, “Be prepared for and attend every class period,” might appear to be unnecessary; university students should know that these actions are required to do well in classes. However, students in composition classes seem to split into two general camps: those who feel they know everything they need to know about writing, and those who feel they will never be good at writing. Both sorts of students need to know that there is value in preparing for and participating in class and that doing so will help them to be successful. The second “success” bullet point, “Actively participate in every class,” continues the thought of the first. The first principle offered by Lloyd and her colleagues as they outline a restorative approach is this statement: “The importance of fostering social relationships in a school community of mutual engagement” (138). Everyone in a restorative space collaborates on the work of the group, so to be successful in a class organized around RCP, students will need to routinely take part in the work of the class.

---

18 Students articulate both responses in the semester surveys analyzed in Chapter Five.
The last two bullet points under the “Success” header are suggestions to both visit my office hours and visit the writing center at least once per unit. In previous semesters, I had required students to come to office hours and go to the writing center a certain number of times. Students tended to skip the requirement, thereby losing daily grade points, or they resented taking part in the process, so they did not get much out of it. As a result, for this semester I decided to highlight these suggestions in the “success” section and to award extra daily grade points for each office or writing center visit students made. I also made a point of publicly complimenting the first student who went to the writing center. By the end of the semester, I almost always had at least one student, and commonly several, during every office hours session, and I regularly received writing center reports showing that my students were using that resource as well. This experience underscores the idea that working “with” the students—by offering incentives for them to engage in helpful habits—is more effective than a more heavy-handed approach of deducting points if they do not do so. In other words, I moved my expectations away from the authoritarian, or the “to” square of Ted Wachtel’s Social Discipline Window—by punishing students for not taking advantage of the Writing Center and office hours—and to the restorative, or the “with” part of the diagram, by rewarding students for taking these actions.

Teachers in the FWP are also given discretion regarding the use of technology in the classroom. In the syllabus, I group several technology-related issues under a heading called “Technology Matters.” The first point in this section is “I will respond to your emails within twenty-four hours on weekdays and forty-eight hours on weekends.” With this statement, I communicate that I will respect students by responding to emails in a timely manner; at the same time, they should not expect instant answers when they send an email. This statement gets back

---

19 As discussed in the Introduction.
to Thorsborne and Blood’s idea of making expectations clear; it also simply lets students know what to expect, again making them feel like part of the group by having the rules clearly explained to them.

The second point under “Technology Matters” regards the use of electronic devices. It says, “We will regularly use laptops, cell phones, and/or other electronic devices in the classroom, and all use must be directly related to our class activities.” This portion goes on to ask that students use devices for class work and not to have offensive material on display during class. I continue to struggle with balancing electronic device use and misuse. I know that students are probably doing other things on their devices during class, but every time I have actually confronted a student about being on a device, they were doing something class-related at the time. Perhaps because of the atmosphere of mutual respect established by the class, the students in this research semester were generally respectful of this policy. Other restorative teachers report similar experiences. Laura Mirsky says that one of the teachers she interviewed states, “there has been little need to discipline her classes” because she used restorative approaches to establish “responsibility and respect” with her students (“A SaferSanerSchools Update” 78).

The last bullet under “Technology Matters” is the departmental statement about the use of Turnitin. Instructors who require students to submit their work electronically must insert this statement in their syllabi. The statement lets students know that their work will be included in the Turnitin database and that the program will look for “textual similarities” to other documents. The departmental statement includes the words “ideally before the submission of any final draft”; I made this phrase bold to communicate that I use Turnitin as a teaching tool rather than a trap. During the unit before they submit their first major assignment, I open one of my own
papers that had been submitted through Turnitin to show students how to look at the originality report. We then talk through how to fix accidental plagiarism. This exercise communicates to the students not only that I have the tools to detect intentional plagiarism, but also that they have access to tools to help them use sources ethically. These habits continue to communicate the “culture of care and respect” (Thorsborne and Blood 34) developing in the classroom; they also reflect my role as a “facilitator,” in Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel’s term (23).

Assignment Instructions, Unit Plans, and Unit Arcs

While each unit focuses on a different writing task, they all have the same general shape. Before distributing the assignment sheet and detailed unit plan, I lead the students through an activity in which they interact with some of the concepts they will use to create the final piece of writing for the unit. For example, before the students received the literacy narrative assignment, they participated in small and large group work examining the ideas of literacy and of narrative. Once they have been grounded in the context for the assignment, they receive the new unit plan and assignment sheet20. I generally ask the students to read and annotate the assignment sheet, writing down questions they have as they read. We then address all of the questions together as a group so that they all can benefit from the answers. This sequence of events is designed to give students the grounding and tools they will need to write a successful composition in response to the prompt; I am working “with” the students to help them develop the strongest submission possible. I am also providing “explicit criteria” (Thorsborne and Blood 51) for the students to meet, then using group discussion to “process course content” as Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel suggest (24).

20 The unit plans and assignment sheets are included in the appendices.
Once we have reviewed the assignment sheet and the unit plan, which is a daily calendar outlining the homework, readings, and activities for each day in the unit, we review the writing process. We discuss what research and organization might mean for the specific assignment. For example, research for the literacy narrative is self-reflection, while research for the annotated bibliography is traditional library research. We also look at the dates that they will need to bring drafts to class. I require three drafts before the final submission of each assignment, and I ask them to submit this process work in a folder on the due date for each assignment. The process work is always worth 10-20% of the final paper grade.

This close attention to and requirement of multiple rounds of drafting reinforces several key ideas for the course. The first is that I take them seriously as writers. Composition researchers and scholar David Bartholomae, in *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts*, discusses the importance of elevating student writing to being a serious object of study; her says that doing so “can give students a view of themselves as readers and writers so that they may begin to transform the roles that they play” (15). I embed the assumption that the students will take on habits of successful writers, and the class structure encourages them to embrace this view, as well. The attention to multiple rounds of drafting—and the hefty percentage of the final grade that the process earns—also communicates the idea that using a writing process is vital to their success in the class. This process draws from Donald Murray’s description of process writing in “Teach Writing as Process Not Product,” in which he says that students will ideally do “prewriting, writing, and rewriting” (5). By directing the students through this process, I mentor them in creating strong pieces that they and I enjoy reading; we are all thereby respected as members of the class, as well as the writing community.
Another way that I include students as co-participants in class decision-making is in creating the grading rubric together. This process relies on the restorative principle of collaborative problem-solving. As Laura Mirsky says in “Transforming School Culture with Restorative Practices,” “When you solve problems with [the students] rather than coming down from ‘on high’ they buy into it much better” (47). Additionally, the practice decreases the hierarchal structure of the classroom, making it more egalitarian to fit the value of equal participation in the group the Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel highlight (22). The first time we create a rubric, I ask them to work in small groups to develop a list of ways that a piece of writing should be judged. We collate the lists on the board, and then we compare them to the more general or standard rubric I adapted from the FWP, which provides areas for evaluation in “Invention, Purpose, and Audience,” “Content and Research,” “Organization and Development,” and “Conventions.”2 Each section in the rubric has a scale from “Exemplary” worth 100% of the section down to “Unsatisfactory” worth 50% of the section; in this way, the worst grade students can make is 50 if they have submitted a piece that approximates the given assignment. The students see that each of the ways they have brainstormed are included in the rubric. I ask them to return to their groups to establish how much each section of the rubric should be worth in the overall grade, and then we negotiate between the answers of each group. In the negotiation, we discuss the reasons they have for valuing some sections more than others. This practice not only invites the students into collaboration in setting the standards for the course, it also invites students into defining the values of the class. In these ways, the process of allotting percentages

---

2The standard rubric is included in the appendices.
to the rubric’s sections with each new assignment continually works to re-create the egalitarian classroom community.

To make the grading process as transparent as possible, once we have agreed on the rubric, the small groups use it to evaluate a model text. This transparency demonstrates the “support” of “teaching explicitly what is needed” that Thorsborne and Blood recommend; it also communicates the “pressure that comes from a relationship of mutual respect” that these authors term “high expectations” (34). As a large group, we again compare the results from the small groups and the reasoning behind their decisions. This grade-norming session gives the students insight into how I will use the rubric to evaluate their final drafts, making the expectations for the class transparent. After reviewing the assignment, collaborating on the rubric, and assessing a model text, we work as a class to develop some part of a text that meets the assignment guidelines. We may develop a thesis and topic sentence structure for one of the first two essays, or we may develop the analysis portion for the annotated bibliography. In every unit, we practice together an important part of the assignment so that they feel confident in replicating the process on their own. This process of “scaffolding,” as described by psychology researchers Wood, Bruner, and Ross in “The Role of Tutoring in Problem Solving,” supports students to increase their abilities to complete the writing process on their own.

Following each unit, we begin the next class period by doing some on-demand writing about what worked well in the previous unit and what the students hope to see more of in future units. Even though they give their feedback in writing in this case, this invitation continues the conversation about course content and again shows that every student is a member on equal footing. As Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel say, participants in restorative circles “both give and listen to feedback” (23). This exercise shows that their feedback is welcomed; I further reinforce
that idea by incorporating their ideas as much as possible into future units. At the very least, I thank them for their feedback and let them know I read their requests, even if I cannot fulfill them. For example, one student asked if we could do some creative writing during the semester. I replied that the semester plan did not include creative writing, but I encouraged the student to take a creative writing course in a future semester (Mwenja Semester Notes).

Daily Routine

Just as each unit has a typical arc, each day has a reliable routine. To encourage participation in daily class activities, I follow the FWP model in awarding daily grades. These grades are given for individual on-demand writing and daily collaborative work. In my FWP classes, daily grades account for 20% of the final semester grade; this relatively large percentage communicates to the students how much I value their participation in class; it rewards them for taking part in “the community within the classroom,” to use Laura Mirsky’s term (“Transforming School Culture” 53). They also work harder to articulate their ideas when they work in small groups or pairs because they must create a record to be evaluated.

The first daily grade students can earn in each class is the daily “bellringer,” a short piece of on-demand writing. The bellringer has several functions. First, and most practically, it is designed to get students to class on time. They know that this activity is an opportunity to earn a daily grade that they will miss if they come to class late. Second, it provides an opportunity for students to write a low-stakes response in which they only need to think about the content rather than surface concerns such as grammar or punctuation. Third, it is an opportunity to write every day in a course where the content is writing. I tell them that they receive a full daily grade for responses that answer the prompt, half a daily grade for skimpy responses, and an extra half daily
grade for particularly insightful responses. I use these bellringers to pose a question that we may spend the class period answering, to assess whether they read the assigned readings, or simply to check with how they are doing or where they are in their writing processes. I tell the students early in the semester that these are part of our ongoing conversation and that I do read and often respond to what they write.

After the bellringer, I take a moment for what I call “housekeeping,” which is a term I borrowed from theatrical productions I have been in. During “housekeeping,” I take roll, answer miscellaneous questions, and go over the upcoming work in the unit. Students appreciate having a dependable time set aside to give attention to their concerns, and this habit is another way that I communicate my support for them in the class. At the end of the housekeeping portion of class, I review some part of the syllabus or class policies. Even though they have interacted with the syllabus to get the highlights on the first day of class, I know that they need to go over some of the information several times before they fully understand. In setting aside time for daily policy review, I make sure that they know the rules and expectations of the class. This practice does not rule out all mistakes or misunderstandings, but it does reiterate expectations for every member of the classroom community, again reifying not only Thorsborne and Blood’s definitions of “support” and “high expectations,” but also their definition of “insistence,” which they describe as “the motivation and persistence that comes from a relationship of mutual respect” (34). I persist in reviewing classroom expectations so that the students will be motivated by the supportive relationship to fulfill the demands of the course.

---

22 Several students discuss this appreciation in the surveys analyzed in Chapter Five.
The First Day of Class

On the first day of class, my goal is to use the day’s activities to actively demonstrate and enact RCP. Other than briefly touching on the portions of the syllabus that refer to Restorative Practices, I do not tell students about RCP; I show them. First, I welcome students to the class, literally saying, “Welcome!” Having written my name and the course number on the board, I make sure that everyone is in the right place. I tell students that my name is Mwenja, and they can call me “Ms. M” or “Ms. Mwenja” and that they can say Mwenja by saying Hm…when’d’ya get back?” Each of these elements is designed to put the students at ease and to make them feel sure of themselves in a new space; these are first steps toward building an inclusive community and Thorsborne and Blood’s “culture of care and respect” (43).

To begin establishing the view that each student is an individual within the classroom community, I ask them to choose a partner and discover one way they are very much the same and one way they are extremely different from each other. Many ice breaker activities could help them to begin getting to know each other, but this one begins the semester long examination of the ways human beings can simultaneously be similar to and different from one another, individuals within a group experience. It also introduces the students to the core concept that they will “give and listen to feedback, thereby “build[ing] confidence and a sense of responsibility,” as Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel state (23).

After sharing the answers that they discover, I break them into eight groups and assign each group a syllabus page to examine. Then I ask each group to develop an effective and artistic way to communicate the most important points on their page to the entire class. I suggest that they could use art, drama, music, poetry, or movement to convey their points. They have about ten minutes to digest the information and create a presentation, and then each group shares their
work. The Fall 2016 class created two drawings, one mime, four skits, and one rap (Mwenja *Semester Notes*). This activity demonstrates that, right from day one, the students will participate in creating and communicating class content and that their voices will be heard, included, and valued; these are core restorative principles articulated by Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel. These activities also communicate that they can expect to be active during every class throughout the semester and that we will stay and work together through the entire class period, even on days like “syllabus day,” which many students consider “skippable.” Before the students leave on the first day, I make sure to tell them that once they receive the syllabus and return to class the next class period, the syllabus becomes a contract. This is another way to ensure that they know the rules of the community we are building together, providing the clear expectations and transparency recommended by Thorsborne and Blood.

The Arc of the Semester

This semester is divided into six units, with units two through six each culminating in a major grade assignment. In scheduling the units, I had a goal of spacing these major assignments evenly throughout the semester. Additionally, because the university community is very invested in the football program and this course met in the fall semester, I scheduled the submission link to be available online well before the due date, and then the final draft was due on Mondays. This schedule allowed students to choose to wrap up the assignment and submit before starting the weekend’s tailgating, or to enjoy Friday and Saturday football-oriented events and finish their work for this class on Sundays. My goal in providing this flexibility was to communicate my respect for their lives outside of the classroom and my assumption that they could make responsible choices as adults; this element of course design is another way I communicated that I
was thinking of and working “with” the students in the sense of Wachtel’s Social Discipline Window, as well as further creating a “culture of care and respect” (Thorsborne and Blood 43).

Introduction to the Course

Many teachers assume that all students entering the university directly from high school are completely comfortable and competent in the use of technology. I had been among such teachers in the past but found that many students needed direct guidance and instruction in how to use the various facets of technological applications. As a result, I schedule a “technology orientation” on the second day of class in which I use the classroom projector to show the students how to log in to their personal university webpages, then how to find their university-sponsored email and class web pages. This technology orientation is crucial in providing information for students to participate in the class on equal footing, a core restorative principle covered by Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel (22). In the class web page, I show them in “student view” where to find the syllabus, where to find the folder for the current unit, and where to find the reading folder. I then click through to each element so they could see what they will be looking for when they check the schedule or complete homework. This “technology orientation” does not take long—so as not to bore those who could have figured it out on their own—but it does reassure those who are less experienced with using online academic platforms, and it again gives students confidence that they have the information they need to participate as full members of the class community.

Similar technical orientation in the unit includes our first visit to the library, in which the students receive training in using Word, RefWorks, and the university Box system. Many first-year university students feel quite comfortable in using the Office Suite of computer software,
including Word; others do not have much experience at all in using these products. The digital reference librarians at the university can provide enough basic training to help those who need it, while offering advanced tips and tricks to engage those who are ready for them. After this session, all of the students said how beneficial it was (Mwenja Semester Notes). Providing this information on Word and RefWorks usage is another way in which I explicitly expose students to the information they need in order to take part in the class on an equal footing.

I also ask the digital librarian to provide information about the university Box system, a free online storage space, so that students can take responsibility for their work throughout the semester. As Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel state, restorative practices participants not only receive the social and academic benefits of a restorative approach, they also take responsibility for their part in the community (24). The librarian guides the students through the process of setting up their accounts and uploading the Word documents they created to their new Boxes. I then tell the students that, since they all have their accounts, I expect them to create all work for the course within those accounts. I go on to say that “when your printers fail, when your hard drives crash, when you leave your computer at home, your work will still be accessible online, and you can easily print it from any print station on campus” (Mwenja Semester Notes). As Zehr says, within restorative communities, stakeholders have both “rights” and “responsibilities” (16). Maintaining an online Box is one way that students can take responsibility for their actions by having reliable access to their class work. I also let them know that, if their work is not available in Box, I will assume that it was not done; in this way, students are held accountable for their actions.

Since I had noticed in previous semesters that some students seem to have difficulty going to unfamiliar spaces, I tried a new strategy for this semester: I set aside a class period to
walk to the GTA office and to have a short tour of the Writing Center. In the class period before the tours, I asked students to let me know privately if they had any physical limitations that would prevent them from active walking and stair climbing; none did. This check-in was another reminder that a class goal was to be mindful of individual students’ needs. As it turns out, one student was in the process of being diagnosed with a chronic health problem that did make extended activity a challenge, but she did not feel comfortable speaking up that early in the semester. On the day of the tours, we met in our classroom and walked over to the graduate student office, where I took roll and reminded the group that every visit throughout the semester—including the current one—counted for a daily grade. We then walked over to the Writing Center, where I again took roll and gave a daily grade reminder and credit. The Writing Center Director told them how to make appointments and what they could expect when visiting the Writing Center. These brief tours, again, gave the class explicit instruction in classroom expectations, aligning with Thorsborne and Blood’s “support” (34). Students in this class definitely took advantage of office hours and Writing Center appointments more often than students in other semesters, but I am not sure if they did because we went to those spaces together or because they could earn daily grades by doing so.

Translingualism

The semester begins with a unit stemming from Bruce Horner, Min-Zhan Lu, Jacqueline Jones Royster, and John Trimbur’s ideas outlined in “Language Difference in Writing: Toward a Translingual Approach.” This unit is designed to move students from a prescriptive view of English to a descriptive one, and the goal is to help them understand that there are many World Englishes which function well for communication in a variety of settings. In beginning the
semester by demonstrating to students that “correct” English usage is always mandated by the rhetorical situation, I enact acceptance of every English variety represented in the class and set the stage for welcoming each student’s communication style. This demonstrated acceptance of each student’s rhetorical abilities is particularly important in establishing the basic idea that every student is a respected and equal part of the classroom community, a required element of restorative circles given by Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel.

The big question of the unit is this: “Is there a globally correct standard of a single English?” When we begin working with the unit’s content, I ask the students to write their responses to the question, then we begin to interrogate assumptions about “normal” English speakers in the U.S. We first explicitly articulate attributes of the default “normal” American English speaker is, such as “young, white, male, Christian, able-bodied, and cis-gendered.” We then discuss whether the students in the class speak other Englishes than the one this “imagined normal” person speaks. The students in the Fall 2016 class all felt they could speak in a mainstream English variety, and they agreed that they also spoke other Englishes in different situations (Mwenja Semester Notes).

As the unit progresses, we look at writing taken from Kenyan and Chinese popular periodicals in order to examine English varieties more closely and to explore the rhetorical situation for each one. I build on the term “rhetorical situation” that rhetorician Lloyd Bitzer introduces in his 1968 essay, “The Rhetorical Situation,” and I define it for the students in this way: “Who is saying what to whom in what context for what purpose by what means?” In articulating the rhetorical situation multiple times, students begin to understand that all writing must be understood in its rhetorical context. Many students write, both at the end of the unit and
at the end of the semester, that noting the audience for texts they read and for their own writing was one of the key concepts they took from the semester.23

The final text for this unit, “Ain't No Thing: The Grammar of African American Vernacular English” by Lex Friedman, defines the linguistic terms “descriptivism” and “prescriptivism” by using examples from African-American Vernacular English, or AAVE. I use this text for two reasons. First, it offers discipline-specific language to encompass the ways we have talked about English varieties in class; we have examined language variety descriptively, without value judgment about the quality of any specific variety. This view of language use is restorative insofar as it includes speakers of all English varieties equally. We discuss the ways that other English teachers may have approached English prescriptively. Second, this text directly refutes the idea that AAVE—and by extension, any English variety—represents a lower quality variant whose adherents are lazy speakers of a “correct” English variety. Most of the students embraced this paradigm, though one resisted, writing, “I understand what [Friedman] said, but I just don’t agree with it” (Val).

The final class period of this unit is dedicated to exploring responses to the ideas we have explored up to that point. We address questions such as: “Who gets to say what is “right” in a given rhetorical situation?” and “How will the ideas in this unit help you when you encounter writing by people whose linguistic background is different from yours?” This class discussion is aimed at encouraging students to extend the inclusiveness they have encountered in our class to other situations where they will encounter people from many language backgrounds (Mwenja Semester Notes).

23 These responses are examined in Chapter Five.
Literacy Narrative

The Literacy Narrative has become a common initial assignment for university-level composition classes; it is so fully established in composition pedagogy that a “Literacy Narrative Writing Guide” is now included in *A Writer’s Reference*, one of the standard writing handbooks for student writers (37). The assignment often asks students to reflect on the ways that a specific literacy has impacted their lives, or how their access to a literacy was limited or enhanced by their life circumstances. In my classes, I usually ask students to interview each other to write each other’s narratives. In striving to preserve each other’s distinctive voices, the students naturally put each other into “subject position,” as Jacqueline Jones Royster asks composition scholars to do in “When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own” (29). I also ask the students to consider literacies beyond reading and writing so that they can appreciate skills and experiences their peers have that may extend beyond the classroom. Through the process of listening to and reporting on each other’s stories, the students begin to knit together the classroom community; this assignment is one of the many ways I enact the idea of the class as an ongoing proactive circle in which students can engage with the course content and develop social relationships as well.

In the Fall of 2016, my overscheduling of the semester, combined with the university’s football schedule, disrupted my usual routine. I had scheduled a week’s worth of library time to prepare for the upcoming annotated bibliography unit, and I knew we had to finish this unit and the next on time to make everything fit into the semester. I always allow time for the interviews in class because I do not want to penalize students whose interview partners could not meet at another time. When I told the students about the interviews, however, we discovered that many of my students had already planned to miss class on that day, some as official representatives of
the school. In order to make this assignment viable for all members of the group, I changed the assignment to a more conventional literacy narrative in which each student wrote about their own experiences. This change meant that the students did not gain experience in preserving another person’s words, but it did demonstrate that the class would be responsive to the student’s needs and situations. Mirsky says that this sort of collective problem-solving is ubiquitous in restorative practices. She quotes a student in a restorative class who says, “We talk about stuff as a group and we help each other out” (53). Working through this situation together to create a solution that worked for the class community gave students confidence that we could solve problems together.

In yet another way I strive to include students by giving them all of the information they need to do well in the class, I take a day to review English 101, particularly process writing and essay organization. To prepare to talk about writing processes, I ask them to write in class for a few minutes about the processes they have used in the past to write; we then discuss their processes and how their previous experiences compare to the model I suggest. My model builds on Murray’s suggestion of “prewriting, writing, and rewriting” (4). I divide “prewriting” into research and organization, and I divide “rewriting” into revision, editing, and proofreading. By further breaking the writing process down into parts with visibly differentiated goals, I again make the classroom expectations explicit, and I provide information the students need in order to participate as equals in the classroom. The acronym I use to help students remember the process is RODREP: research, organize, draft, revise, edit, proof. I write RODREP on the board, and we insert their previous writing practices in the structure; when completed, it looks something like this:
We discuss that, generally, their past processes have focused on the levels of “Draft” and “Proof.” In the fall 2016 section, most students reported that they had only done timed essay writing in the past, so we had a productive discussion about the ways strong writing needs time and attention to be developed (Mwenja Semester Notes).

Once we have reviewed English 101, I include the students in a community of writing practice by having them practice research and organization in class. For the literacy narrative, research is thinking and making notes about their memories of a specific literacy or literacy-related event. The students can then build on their class notes to develop a draft to bring to class for peer review. In this way, the students can begin the process when they are in a space to ask questions and to clarify their understanding of the assignment. Providing this scaffolding is another way that I show that I am working “with” the students to help them develop their own work.

Before the first peer review session of the semester, I ask the students to write about their previous experiences with peer review, and we record their responses on the board under broad headings of “Positive,” “Negative,” and “Mixed.” Students usually focus on the fact that they often do not get useful information from their peers. I tell them that peer review provides them some key benefits, even if they receive absolutely no feedback from their peers. The first benefit
is that, if they participate in the process, they will have developed three drafts of their papers, so their work will be stronger regardless of any peer feedback they may receive. The second benefit is that they can see the quality of their peers’ work and how the quality of their own work measures up. Lastly, peer review helps them to develop their own critical eye, which they can use to examine their own writing. Students often state at the end of the semester that their opinions of peer review have changed for the better, and many of the students in the researched course did as well.24

Before beginning their first peer review, we participate in a model peer review session as a group. For the fall 2016 section, we examined a model text provided by the FWP. We first discussed the idea that they should see their peer reviewer role more as a coach and less as a judge, so that their responses would focus on ways that their peers could strengthen the work, not on drawing attention to weaknesses of the text. This idea stems directly from the Restorative Practices attention on improvement rather than fault-finding, as outlined by Zehr (21). We then generated some specific language as a model for their own peer interactions. Students suggested phrasing such as “Could you explain this a little more?” and “This part may be getting away from your main point” (Mwenja Semester Notes). In the fall 2016 class, I also directly engaged some cultural differences by discussing a tendency that many Southerners have of conflating directness with rudeness. I reassure the students from the South that we can be both clear and kind, and that it is permissible to say things like, “I think your essay could be even stronger if you try this suggestion.” In this way, I help them to understand that they come to the class with a range of cultural expectations and that we can negotiate those expectations in considering each other’s work within the context of our shared community.

24 For examples of these comments, see Chapter Five.
Literacy Narrative Analysis

For the second unit, the literacy narratives are published on the class private web page, and each student chooses five narratives for a comparative analysis. I take time in class to have students upload their papers to the class blog. In the fall 2016 section, the students who were able to easily upload their work spontaneously began to help their peers who were struggling to figure it out; this moment was the first time I saw the groups at each table form supportive mini-communities (Mwenja Semester Notes).

As we review the assignment sheet, we discuss their options for analysis. They may develop a grounded analysis, or they may analyze the five narratives on the basis of race, gender, ability, or cultural background. To choose the five essays for analysis, students read most or all of their peers’ literacy narratives. In so doing, they gain a better understanding of the other individuals within the community and find their assumptions of others challenged in two directions. Those who imagined that everyone was more or less the same as they were said things like, “Upon reading my peers’ essays, I was mildly surprised…. [unlike me] almost everyone outlined some sort of struggle with reading, writing, or both” (Chris). Students who thought that everyone was quite different from one another said things like, “experiences are not as different as they may seem, regardless of the diverse group of students” (River). Either way, this assignment helps students to see themselves as individuals within our classroom community and gives them a better sense of the group as a whole, thereby “fostering social relationships in a school community of mutual engagement,” as Lloyd, et. al. describe (138).

At the same time, this paper is an analysis assignment, so it helps students to develop the critical thinking that comes with analysis. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) says in its “Framework for 21st Century Curriculum and Assessment” that students should be
able to “Manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneously presented information” (“NCTE Framework”). This assignment asks students to analyze and synthesize information from each other’s work. In preparing to draft the paper, we discuss the nature of analysis as an examination of “how” and “why” the narratives function as they do. We look for common themes in the narratives as well as looking for outliers. This close attention to their peers’ texts leads them to think more deeply about literacies and how those experiences can shape people. In requiring them to consider each other’s texts, the assignment demonstrates that they are generating texts and ideas worth examination and that they are writers whose words are respected and taken seriously. The assignment also communicates that there are real people behind the other texts they will find and quote from during the semester. By asking them to begin with quoting from and citing each other’s texts, I set the stage for them to see the authors they research later in the semester as individuals. These habits provide tools for the students to use throughout their academic careers and bring them further into the academic discourse community.

To further strengthen the students’ ability to participate in academic conversations, I introduce them to the claim-support-explanation model that the FWP teaches to entering GTAs. In this model, writers take care to back their claims with support from credible sources, then explain how the claim and the support advance the overall thesis. In the Fall 2016 section, we practiced in class by developing claim-support-explanation “chunks” (my wording) to advance this thesis: “The university . . . should provide free donuts and coffee to all students, faculty, and staff daily” (Mwenja Semester Notes). I told them that they could use online resources to find support for their claims or that, for this in-class assignment only, they could create fictional authors and texts for support. Small groups worked collaboratively to develop one claim-
support-explanation chunk each. After they developed their chunks, we compared their work so that everyone could see the array of options, and we arranged the “chunks” into a draft essay body. Later in the semester, they had an online assignment in which they developed their own draft in the same way, but taking care to use credible sources. By laying this groundwork during class for a later individual assignment, the course design again showed support for their development as writers and for their successful participation in the class.

During this unit, I introduce students to two resources we will use throughout the semester: Diana Hacker and Nancy Sommer’s book, *A Writer’s Reference*, and Richard Lanham’s “sentence paramedic” revising strategy (Brizee). As an instructor, part of my job is to provide my students with resources they can use to complete future writing tasks; giving support that students can transfer to other situations is another way that I show I am working with and supporting them as compositionists. *A Writer’s Reference*, a user-friendly writing handbook, offers clear instructions on topics from paper development to grammar. I particularly appreciate the book’s labeled tabs separating the sections. During this unit, I ask them to bring their books to class, and we use the information to support collaborative work while we are together; reading homework and accountability come later in the semester. Likewise, we work with Lanham’s “sentence paramedic” in class during this unit, then rely on it for peer review and editing work as the semester progresses. The “sentence paramedic” asks writers to focus on a few key steps to revise “lard” (Lanham qtd. In Brizee) from their compositions. Taking one sentence at a time, writers using the method identify prepositions and be-verbs as well as the action and the actor. To revise the sentence, they move the actor into the subject position, put the action into a simple verb, eliminate “unnecessary wind-ups” (Brizee), and eliminate redundancies. I knew that the
students were beginning to embrace this system when one wrote to another during peer review, “You need to sentence paramedic this section” (Mwenja Semester Notes).

Fall of 2016 carried a large amount of worrisome news, both on and off campus. National tensions ran high with the contentious election battle between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Students and players at university football games had joined in Colin Kaepernick’s protest by kneeling for the national anthem. A female student had been sexually assaulted on campus. All of this news added to the usual stresses of student life, such as balancing schoolwork with social life. To help students identify the support available on campus for them, I asked them to list such support in a bellringer, and then we shared the responses. They generated a comprehensive list of resources that they could all draw on as needed, from tutoring in the engineering department to counseling at student healthcare (Mwenja Semester Notes). We also took a quick look at a page on the university website which provides an extensive list of resources and reporting channels. Because we pooled our information, everyone learned about support options of which they were not previously aware, from science and speaking tutoring to mental health support (Mwenja Semester Notes). This exercise demonstrated that they had support not only within the classroom but also in the wider campus community.

Library Week

At my university, the EN 102 course curriculum focuses on developing and applying ethical academic research skills, and the library supports EN 102 instructors in this effort. The library employs reference librarians whose primary focus lies in offering training and guidance to first-year writing students. I always take full advantage of the offerings from these librarians so that my students see the act of going to the library—physically or online—and asking a
librarian for help as a normal and unthreatening activity. During the Fall 2016 semester, students went to a computer lab in the Gorgas Library for all three classes during the week between the second and third units. Prior to their time in the library, the librarian installed a “Library Resources” folder in our Blackboard course shell. The folder included a pre- and post-test, links to the “Ask a Librarian” online request form and the Gorgas website, and an “evaluating sources” worksheet. The folder also contained in-depth information in a link to the EN 102 lib guides and folders for students to find information to “Get Help” and “Find Sources.” The information in the library folder was extended and deepened in the face-to-face sessions. The library offers four options for EN 102 classes: “Basic Searching in Scout,” “Methods for Approaching Research,” “Assessing Sources,” and “Advanced Search Strategies” (“Library Guide”). The library asks that instructors choose up to three of the options, but I wanted my students to receive all of the information that the library could provide, so the librarian arranged the sessions so that the content from all four available sessions was covered in three class periods. Her class structure is like mine in that students have time to work both independently and collaboratively and that they receive information and apply it in their own work. By the end of library week, the students had learned how to find and vet sources for their upcoming annotated bibliography projects. By providing this extensive library experience, the course again gave students explicit instruction in the source assessment and use skills they need to apply in EN 102, thereby supporting their success if they choose to use the information. These skills are one part of the body of knowledge the WPA recommends that first-year students master (“Outcomes Statement”).

Since football is such a huge part of campus life, I purposely scheduled library week to coincide with Homecoming week. I had noticed in previous years that many students,
particularly those involved in Greek-letter organizations, were overloaded with extra-curricular activities during Homecoming week. For this reason, I told the Fall 2016 students that, during this busy week, they would have no responsibilities outside of class; they simply needed to attend and participate in the library sessions. This concession was motivated by my interest in working “with” the students as well as to “create a culture of care and respect” (Thorsborne and Blood 43). To balance the lowered expectations for the week, their work during the library sessions would count for double daily grades. The class had perfect attendance for all three classes that week; of course, I cannot know whether this was due to their relief at not having any other work due, their determination to earn the extra daily grades involved, or the general class orientation toward academic achievement.

Annotated Bibliography

To continue the semester’s attention to developing and applying ethical research practices, I ask the students to complete an annotated bibliography. This assignment separates the activity of research from the act of developing a research-based argument. As I introduce the assignment, I place it within the context of the semester, drawing attention to the idea that we began by focusing on each student as an individual with the literacy narrative, then we expanded to the class as a whole when we analyzed the narratives collectively. This assignment extends the context of the class to include the campus as situated in place and in time by anchoring our explorations in the rhetoric and rhetorical situation of a controversial event during the Civil Rights movement. In this event, a state official symbolically tried to prevent Black students from registering at public colleges and universities in the state.
We watched the video of the event in class, then I introduced them to Kenneth Burke’s system of Dramatistic analysis outlined in *A Grammar of Motives*. In analyzing the speech, the class identified elements of Burke’s “pentad,” including the multiple “Agents,” “Acts,” “Scenes,” “Purposes,” and “Agencies” involved (1298). Some of the “Agents” identified by the fall 2016 students included the state official as a person, the office he filled, the students trying to enroll, the university itself, the National Guard, and the National Deputy Attorney General (Mwenja *Semester Notes*). Students in this class noticed “Acts” such as speeches given by individuals in the video, the university’s providing a platform and logistical support, the U.S. President federalizing the state National Guard, and the Guard General asking the official to step aside. Some of the “Scenes,” or contexts, we discussed were the Civil Rights movement in the U.S. and in the state specifically, as well as a speech that the official had given earlier in the same year, in which he wholeheartedly espoused continued societal segregation. The students saw that the official’s “Purpose” was not really to prevent Black students from enrolling in state educational institutions but to communicate to the state and nation that he was committed to maintaining segregation in the state. Likewise, the students involved had the “Purpose” of enrolling in classes. Fall 2016 students identified “Means” such as television cameras and microphones, and audiences extending from local Black and white populations to the nation and the world.

After this intensive interrogation of the event via Dramatistic analysis, the students find journal and popular periodical articles pertaining to current local, state, or national issues relating to its rhetoric or rhetorical situation. They may choose to focus on the rhetoric of “state’s rights” or “federal overreach,” or they may focus on one of the elements of Burke’s “pentad.” By looking at the “Agents,” “Acts,” etc. involved in the video that we had reviewed and finding
connections to similar current situations, students narrowed their inquiries to a surprisingly wide variety of issues. Topics for the Fall 2016 class included racialized gerrymandering, class-based access to mental health care, exploration of the “Oscarssowhite” hashtag, and the gender pay gap (Mwenja Semester Notes).

Once they have done research focusing on their topic of interest, I ask each of them to bring a printed article to class, and we discuss ways to read for academic purposes. I ask one of them to share an article so that we can look at it together on the document camera. We look at the author, publisher, and date of publication, then quickly peruse the article’s sections to get an overview of the piece. Next, we begin reading and annotate together as we go; I read a sentence, then ask, “What words do we need to define here?” If someone needs a definition, I ask them to look the word up, and then I write a synonym above the word on the printout. After each paragraph, I ask the students, “What does this idea relate to? What does it make you think of? Do you agree or disagree with what the author has written here?” I write their answers in next to the paragraphs. We read and annotate as much of the text as we can get to in about twenty minutes; this practice is another way that I draw students into an academic discourse community by explicitly giving them the tools they need. This modeling practice is another example of the scaffolding provided by the course design.

Once we have completed the reading annotation exercise in class, we discuss the differences between annotating a text and creating an annotated bibliography. Since annotated bibliographies can take many forms, I review the assignment sheet with them so that they fully understand the writing task. I ask them to succinctly and fairly summarize the texts because writers often need to do this when they place their own thoughts in conversation with others’ writings; however, I want them to focus on the analysis to get them in the habit of thinking
through source selection rather than grabbing the first entry in a Google search. By providing the students with these guidelines for research, I expect them to join the academic discourse community and replace less thoughtful research habits they may have had in the past. This requirement for students to conduct ethical research meets standards given in NCTE’s “Framework for 21st Century Curriculum and Assessment,” which states that students need to “Attend to the ethical responsibilities required by complex environments.”

At this point in the semester, news outlets began reporting that “fake news” about the election had been circulating, so students became much more aware that it was vital to be scrupulous about vetting sources and their credibility. A bellringer from this part of the semester reads, “Why is it important to support our thinking with evidence from credible sources?” (Mwenja Semester Notes). Similarly, the first peer review asked students to answer these questions: “What kind of source? Why credible?” With these questions, I aimed to direct their attention toward ways to responsibly consume news and to participate in national public discourse. Another incident that happened at this point in the semester was that a white student at our university used a social media post to make a racist death threat against a fellow student, who is Black. The university was slow in responding and at first released a statement that appeared to support the free speech rights of the white student, though the university did eventually suspend the white student. In this class, we examine the ongoing tensions resulting from the state’s historic commitment to segregation, and this occurrence drew strong attention to the enduring relevance of the rhetorical situation we were examining.

As the unit goes along, we take several opportunities in class to discuss the students’ research, their research questions, and their questions about research, in both small and large group interactions. We also practice creating a Works Cited list and in-text citations in the MLA
style. This semester was the first one after MLA came out with the eighth edition of its style guide, so I was learning the new conventions along with my students. The first-year writing librarian and I had offered a training session for interested faculty members in the department, and I used that presentation to educate my students, as well.

After the students finalized their annotated bibliographies, I asked students to choose the entry that they thought would support the widest range of research questions and upload that entry to a class-wide annotated bibliography wiki on Blackboard. This requirement had the goal of reinforcing the idea that they are research collaborators and that they can both provide support to and draw support from their peers. To my knowledge, no student used the information provided in this collaboration, so I discontinued the practice after this semester.

Opinion-Editorial: Making a Research-Based Argument

Once students have completed the process of conducting ethical academic research, they are ready to use that research to support an argument. To get ready for this unit, we review the rhetoric and rhetorical situation of the video from the previous unit, then I ask the students to identify a problem within the rhetorical situation they have researched. As Zehr states, a restorative response will “focus on the harms done” and “use inclusive, collaborative processes” to “seek to put right the wrongs” (32-33). I further ask them to develop a restorative response that they themselves can personally take in regards to the situation. We discuss the fact that they have researched big problems that individuals cannot hope to solve on their own—and that I am not asking them to solve racism in the U.S. or the gender pay gap. I am asking them to think about how they could effectively address one small aspect of the issue by taking individual
action which can “put right” some small portion of the “wrong,” then to make a case for that action in an opinion-editorial, or op-ed written for the audience of the campus newspaper.

The students and I look at the information published by the Op-Ed project (TheOpEdProject.org) to provide models and a basic overview of op-ed structure. We discuss the correlation between the essay structure we have used in the first two major papers and the structure of an op-ed. Both types of writing provide an introduction and thesis, both use a claim-support-explanation model, and both wrap up by addressing “so what?” in the conclusion. By contrast, Op-Eds start with a strong lede or news hook to get the reader immediately interested in reading the piece; I have not asked the students to make a similar move in previous essays. I take this opportunity to point out that the underlying structure—introduction providing context, thesis making a clear and convincing point, body to expand on and uphold the thesis, and conclusion to say why their point is important—can extend to all sorts of writing, from emails to lab reports.

By making this point, I hope to encourage them to transfer the things they have learned in EN 102 to other writing situations in the future. As composition scholar Elizabeth Wardle says in “Understanding ‘Transfer’ from FYC: Preliminary Results of a Longitudinal Study,” students are more likely to transfer information and habits from first-year writing courses when they believe that “The assignment relates in some way to students’ interests/future” (78).

At this point in the writing process, I found that we needed to deliberately address the students’ collective history of only writing one draft of assignments in past writing classes. One of the harms that had been done to most of the students in their previous classes was that they had internalized an idea that they were “bad writers” because they did not produce excellent drafts on the first try. One of the students expressed this sentiment out loud before class, and I asked if others felt this way; almost every student agreed. I explained to them that writing is a
process and that few people write strong drafts on the first try. I then took time to read a chapter from Anne Lamott’s *Bird by Bird* titled “Shitty First Drafts.” In taking class time to directly confront the ideas about writing that they had internalized, I showed that I was working “with” them to develop their abilities as writers as well as directly addressing a fundamental misunderstanding many of them held.²⁵

To build on this class moment, I asked them to focus in that day’s peer review on ways that their peer could develop a “better argument, offer a better solution, or create a better way to argue” for the solution they proposed (Mwenja *Semester Notes*). This peer review exercise carries the assumption that they are looking at a draft in progress and that they will take their peers’ comments to make substantive changes to their work. In this way, the peer review asks them to enact the restorative principle of collaborative change, or, as Zehr states, to “use inclusive, collaborative processes” to make improvements (33). Chris took this exercise to heart, coming to office hours to ask how to develop an argument that would be persuasive to the target audience (Mwenja *Semester Notes*). In looking over her draft op-ed, she recognized that the progressive argument she had created about North Carolina’s transgender bathroom bill would not persuade the many conservative readers of the campus newspaper. Her final piece, “Here’s Why this Law You Don’t Care about Could Damage Your State,” offered an economic argument directed to the target audience. With this revision, Chris showed an increased awareness of how to use the rhetorical situation to better appeal to an audience.

²⁵ Several students say they value the process of creating multiple drafts; see Chapter Five for their survey comments.
Multi-Modal Argument

The class works with representatives from the campus media center to translate their op-ed arguments to multi-modal projects appropriate for social media; this process helps them to become better “citizen designers,” in Hilligoss and Williams’ term (230). After again reviewing the idea that the rhetorical situation can be described as “who is saying what to whom by what means for what purpose in what context?” we identify a variety of modes found in multi-modal compositions, such as pictures, color, font, and arrangement. We discuss how these elements can fit into and reiterate aspects of the rhetorical situation. After brainstorming and listing a variety of modes, we watch a sample persuasive video to identify more modes. For Fall 2016, we viewed “Tea and Consent,” a video produced by the Thames Valley Police to describe sexual consent in simple terms with a clear analogy. This video, which features uncomplicated line drawings and an accompanying voice-over, also gives students one model they could use for their own projects. Providing a potentially useful model for the upcoming assignment is another way I “scaffold” new concepts for the class.

During this exercise, I had my first confirmation that the Fall 2016 students had internalized the habit of assessing a composition by evaluating its rhetorical situation (Mwenja *Semester Notes*). For this exercise, I open the Ad Council website (AdCouncil.org) because it has a wide variety of persuasive multi-modal texts. I let the students choose which ad they would like to watch, again including them in making decisions about the class. We viewed an ad called “#IAmAWitness” within the “Bullying Prevention” ad campaign (“I Am a Witness Campaign”). This ad makes the argument that teens who witness online bullying can help to stop it by using an “eye” emoji promoted by the ad campaign. The students criticized the argument as entirely ineffective; students claimed that bullies would not be deterred by an emoji. The students also
criticized the art as being too childish for the identified audience of “teens” (“I Am a Witness Campaign). After we viewed this ad that we all perceived to have failed to persuade its target audience, I spontaneously asked, “Do you all see why it’s important for everyone to have some level of rhetorical education?” The entire class responded with a heartfelt “Yes!”

As I mentor students in learning to develop rhetorically effective multi-modal texts, I draw attention to the ways that images can work in different ways than words do. I also draw attention to the fact that some of them may struggle to put words on paper but may easily compose texts that rely on visual elements. To accomplish both aims, I bring several boxes of a board game called Dixit for the students to play in class. The playing cards for this game are textless pictures that can have ambiguous or multiple meanings. Each player is dealt six cards, and then the “storyteller” for the round decides on a sentence, phrase, or word to describe a card in their hand. The other players all choose a card from their own hands that can express what the storyteller said, then pass the card to the storyteller, who shuffles them and arranges them around the board. The catch is this: the sentence, phrase, or word must be specific enough that some, but not all, of the players will guess which card among the options was chosen by the storyteller.

This game helps students experience the ways that images can evoke many different words, and people can perceive images in different ways. In “Toward a Theory of Visual Argument,” rhetoricians David S. Birdsell and Leo Groarke debate the merits of assessing visual texts using traditional argument analysis. They do not come to a full definition of what may constitute a visual argument, but they do concede that recognizing the idea that visuals can also act

---

26 Students discuss their newfound rhetorical awareness in survey responses I cover in Chapter Five.
argumentatively “allows for a significant expansion of the theory of argument. Without this expansion, argumentation theory has no way of dealing with a great many visual ploys that play a significant role in our argumentative lives” (318). By participating in this game, the students are exposed to the idea that visuals work rhetorically, as do words; they also clearly see that some students have a particular gift for interacting with images. This activity is another way we can honor the multiple communicative abilities represented in the class.

Semester Reflection

Previous assignments during the semester have endeavored to connect students to the classroom, campus, and national communities; this assignment aims to connect students to themselves as future writers, asking them to analytically reflect on the ways their composition skills have developed throughout the course. To create this text, the students read the final drafts of the work they have submitted throughout the semester and use evidence from these texts to support claims about the things they have learned. They conclude the essay by imagining how they will use what they have learned in this course when facing future writing tasks. They use the same organization they have relied on throughout the semester, with the introduction, thesis, body, and conclusion playing the roles we have repeatedly discussed and practiced in class. The major difference with this assignment is that they are expected to complete the writing process on their own; they still submit their process work in hard copy, but we do not peer review it in class. If I have scaffolded the students well in their writing processes, then they will be able to complete this assignment on their own and potentially transfer these abilities to future writing tasks. Wardle’s work indicates that their use of the writing process will transfer if they encounter future writing tasks that are “engaging” (77). While I cannot control the level of possible
“engagement” in future writing tasks, I have provided “meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies” that Wardle says are beneficial to students even if they do not transfer specific strategies from first-year writing (82).

Short Responses

When I planned the ten short responses for the semester, I envisioned what I had done in previous semesters: assigning one-page pieces which responded to a reading or prepared students for the upcoming major assignment. These short responses give students a chance to practice the MLA style and to prepare for longer essays with a low-stakes submission. However, I found as the semester went along that the students really did not need these short response assignments; they were using the MLA style well, and they were being prepared for the major grade assignments through our daily work in class. Additionally, I had to put the class online twice, once so that I could attend jury duty and once for a family emergency. As a result, I re-configured the short response category to include the pre- and post-semester surveys (which I had originally planned to count as double daily grades), the two online assignments, and the four short responses that the students had submitted to that point. I communicated the change and my reasoning to the students. They were agreeable with the restructuring and the responsiveness to their accomplishments that it showed.

Restorative Grading

As a classroom stakeholder, I consider my own needs in balance with the needs of my students. As a result, my grading process for major papers begins not only with the assumption that my students need feedback that they will actually use, but also with the assumption that my
time is valuable and that my desire to read good writing is respect-worthy. I also assume that students deserve a fair and transparent grading process. In grounding the grading process in these assumptions, I demonstrate the restorative value that communities should consider the needs of multiple stakeholders. Within this paradigm, grading begins with the assignment sheets. When composing assignment sheets, I take care to clearly articulate my expectations for the assignment and to plainly outline specific steps students must take in order to put together a successful submission. In so doing, I enact Thorsborne and Blood’s restorative value of “support” by making classroom expectations clear. Before I begin grading the final drafts, I re-read the assignment sheet to make sure I am evaluating the papers by the same criteria that I asked students to use in composing them.

Over the past twelve semesters of teaching first-year writing, I have developed an efficient grading strategy that gives students the feedback they need and makes good use of my time. On the due date, I ask the students to submit their work two ways: by uploading to the Turnitin assignment link in Blackboard, and in hard copy, in a folder which also contains all of their process work. At a minimum, process work includes the three drafts they created to bring to the peer review sessions; it may also include brainstorming and other notes they made as they created their work.

When I start grading, I first print out twenty-four copies of the rubric that the class designed so that I can use the criteria we created together to assess the submissions. I then go to the Blackboard grading page to quickly scan each paper’s originality report and word count. This swift appraisal gives me a rough idea of how well the class as a whole understood and met the assignment, and this practice can help me to make allowances in grading if I see that many students made the same mistakes in developing their work. I also make a note on individual
rubrics regarding students who had problematic originality reports, who were short on their word counts, or who failed to submit their work in Blackboard. The evaluation of originality reports and word counts takes less than thirty minutes for a class of twenty-four.

Once I have assessed the work on the levels of originality report and word count, I close Blackboard and give my attention to the hard copies the students have submitted. Many teachers have success in grading electronically, and I have done and continue to do so in my online classes, but I personally grade much more quickly in hard copy. For each student, I first look at their process work to assess how well they participated in the writing process, and I score the rubric section regarding process work. If they did not submit process work, or if their “process work” is simply the same paper printed three times without revision, they receive zero in that category on the rubric. I then read the entire piece, underlining places on the hard copy where I think they could revise if they choose to take part in the revision process. I do not write on the paper while I underlined certain passages, but I do specifically address patterns under the appropriate sections on the rubric. For example, I might underline a topic sentence on the paper, then write on the rubric something like, “Make sure that each topic sentence advances your thesis and organizes its paragraph.” In this way, I am working with the students to identify places they can improve their writing, but I am not doing their work for them—I am working in the “restorative” rather than the “permissive” portion of Wachtel’s Social Discipline Window. I am also not wasting my time giving extensive feedback to students who will not use it. This practice encourages their writing process while valuing my time and attention.

Once I have reviewed the paper, I assess how well it meets the rubric’s criteria, and I add up the percentages the student has earned in each category. I finish grading each paper by writing a summative comment at the bottom of the paper. These comments begin with “Dear ____,” and
offer affirmation of what the student did well before giving suggestions for directions they could take in revision or in future writing. I sign each note, reinforcing the idea that I am communicating to the student as an individual about their individual writing process and development. This part of the grading process takes about ten minutes per paper.

As I grade, I feel free to assess each student’s work clearly and fairly, even if the submission earns a weak score, because I give every student the opportunity to revise all major grade assignments except the final one. Many teachers express concern that this practice will add to a teacher’s workload, but I have found that it saves me time. First, I do not waffle over grading because I am simply assessing a draft at a certain point in time—I do not need to worry whether I am being unduly harsh in giving a poor grade. Second, only a handful of students take advantage of the offer, so the little time I take in working through the revision process with them is amply compensated by the time I save by avoiding the writing of extensive commentary on their drafts.

For the revision process, I ask the students to read my comments on their rubrics closely, then to carefully consider where they could apply the comments throughout their work. They then make a revision plan to account for every place they could apply each comment and come to office hours to discuss their revision plans. They have two weeks to revise their work and to re-submit it along with the original final draft and graded rubric. I tell the students that this submission is a “sudden death” grading opportunity, meaning that if I get to a place where they have not applied the revision plan to their work, I will simply set it aside and the original grade will stand. This standard, again, respects my time, so that I am not re-assessing work that has not been fully revised; it also encourages them to take the process seriously. For students who make every suggested revision, I re-grade the sections of the rubric outside of the process work. The process work grade was not eligible for re-grading because I wanted students to take it seriously
the first time. I averaged the two scores the student earned outside of the process work, and the original process grade is added back to arrive at the final grade. While I borrowed the idea of grading in a rubric from the GTA training provided by the FWP, I developed the remainder of the strategy through trial and error, driven by the idea of balancing student needs for constructive and useful feedback with my own needs for grading in a way that respects my time.

The students have helped to construct the rubric, and they have used the rubric themselves to judge a piece of writing, so they know what is expected in each aspect of evaluation. The students who want to improve their grades come to the office and talk through their papers and my comments with me; those who are not interested in improving their grades do not. My time is spent in mentoring the writing of those who are receptive to it. As Zehr says, stakeholders have “a stake or standing in [an] event or [a] case” (13), and Thorsborne and Blood emphasize the need for classroom practices to involve “mutual respect” (34). This grading process is truly restorative in that it respects and considers the needs of every classroom stakeholder.

For the final semester grade, the FWP sets the grading policy for every teacher in the program. Students who earn a grade of A, B, or C for the semester receive the grades they have earned. Students who earn a grade of D or F receive a grade of “No Credit,” also called “NC.” The NC does not affect the student’s GPA; students who fail to earn a C or higher must simply re-take the course. Students are also awarded a grade of NC for exceeding the number of absences allowed by the program. For the Fall 2016 semester, students could miss up to six

---

27 I have since changed this policy to one in which students can re-coup the process grade by taking their work to the writing center for the three rounds of peer review and revision. The new policy is more in line with restorative ideals of re-integrating into the community by taking restorative action.
classes. The final grade distribution was slightly skewed to the A-range, but was otherwise spread fairly evenly. Final grades for Fall 2016 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>A+</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>A-</th>
<th>B+</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B-</th>
<th>C+</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>C-</th>
<th>NC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Fig. 3. Grade Distribution, Fall 2016 English 102 Class](image)

One of the NCs was due to attendance issues, while the other two resulted from students failing to submit major grade assignments.

Moments

RCP views the entire semester as rhetorical; each piece—syllabus, assignments, policies, class activities—communicates values of collaboration, inclusion, and restorative action. Another part of RCP is the teaching that happens in the unplanned moments—moments not covered in the syllabus, assignments, and lesson plan elements—moments before class, between activities, after class, in office hours, answering emails. Thorsborne and Blood attribute success in these moments as coming from a teacher’s “way of being” (57). They say that when teachers practice “seeing others as people,” all of their behaviors will be “informed by [this] way of being” (57). These off-the-cuff moments are the times that instructors show whether they are truly “with” the students, whether the classroom community really is inclusive, whether RCP continues in the challenging moments and difficult interactions. I close this chapter by relating a few of these moments to convey a sense of how RCP might fill this gap in composition pedagogy. Each planned piece of the semester is crucial to providing quality instruction, but we lose the students’ trust in ourselves and in our teaching when we mishandle the moments before, between, and after the planned activities.

In the Fall 2016 class, my job of making students feel comfortable and included was made much easier when one student spoke up before class began on the first day. The group at
his table had been looking at RateMyProfessors.com, where a former student had written, in part, “She's a straight gansta. This lady is so hip and should be teaching every English class at UA” (“Cynthia Mwenja”). The most outspoken student at the table raised his hand and asked, “Are you really a ‘straight gansta’?” This led to a laughter-filled class-wide conversation in which I asked the students to define the phrase. They eventually agreed that a good translation was “very cool person,” and I admitted that I was cool like their parents’ friends were cool, not like their coolest friends were cool. This pre-class conversational moment truly set the tone for the entire semester, in terms of lightheartedness, engaging group discussion, and serious consideration of inclusive language use.

The time before class starts can be crucial in loosening up the class and letting them know that we as teachers see the students as people. In the Fall 2016 class, the group sitting at the table nearest the teacher’s podium often talked before class about topics that were interesting to me, and I found myself drawn into their conversations as I got set up for the day’s lesson (Mwenja Semester Notes). Our interactions showed the others in the class that they did not need to be silent waiting for the class to start. Sometimes our conversations expanded to include many people in the room, and sometimes the other groups talked amongst themselves, but these before class moments helped us to avoid the awkward pre-class silence that can occur.

Likewise, the time just after class can communicate that instructors are still “with” our students. This class met Monday-Wednesday-Friday, so there were only ten minutes between classes. Because of this, I tried to end class a couple of minutes early in case a student needed to speak to me individually after class. If our conversation lasted a bit longer, I explained that we would need to move into the hall so the next class could start. I also let the students know if I needed to be somewhere else so that we could plan to meet during office hours.
By the end of the semester, I often had three to four of the students from this class—different ones each time—coming to office hours (Mwenja *Semester Notes*). Some wanted support with drafting and developing the current assignment; others wanted to discuss revisions. From the beginning of November through the end of the semester, I had at least two students from this class in every office hours session. Since there were so many, I sat at the round table by the window to accommodate everyone, and I worked with each student in turn. Sometimes I worked with a student, then they worked independently while I worked with someone else, then we discussed their progress and direction. These round table office hours developed organically, but they came to reflect the sense of community that had developed in the classroom. At times, the students in office hours would ask each other their opinions on their arguments or points. I had not planned to bring student collaboration into the office hours environment, but the students seemed to instinctively reproduce that paradigm in the office space.

As happens in all classes, at times the Fall 2016 students came to class unprepared. I knew that they knew that their final paper grade would suffer if they were missing process work, and I did not need to blame them for being unprepared. First, I make sure that we do activities in addition to peer review on the peer review days so that the students who are not reviewing drafts will get something out of class. Then, when it is time for peer review, I ask the students who have a draft for a peer to look at to move to one side of the room and those who do not have a draft to move to the other. I get the peer review group going, and then I sit down with each unprepared student just to check in. At first, they think I will berate them for not being ready, but they soon learn that I simply want to check to see if everything is okay, and if they are stuck in their processes. These moments of non-judgmental interest definitely communicate my intention
to work “with” every student. As Aspen says in his post-semester survey, “Even when I came to
class unprepared, I still felt included.”
AN ANALYSIS OF FALL 2016 PRE- AND POST-SEMESTER SURVEYS

In order to assess the effects of Restorative Composition Pedagogy for the students, I asked members of the Fall 2016 class to answer surveys at the beginning and end of the semester. The first survey provided a benchmark against which to measure the results of the second one. The surveys explore the students’ feelings about their own and others’ language use as well as asking them to share experiences of inclusion or of injustices in classroom settings. The post-semester surveys indicate that Restorative Composition Pedagogy is effective in teaching composition and rhetorical analysis; by the end of the semester, students almost unanimously say they have improved in the areas of writing and of evaluating the rhetorical situation. The post-semester surveys also indicate that the students experienced and appreciated the restorative practices orientation of the class. My overview of restorative practices states that “a facilitator works with a group of people to create an inclusive and egalitarian community,” and students say that such a community was created in our classroom. My thumbnail goes on to say that the community and individuals should be “repaired as needed,” and students say that their understanding of themselves as writers and of the field of writing have both improved. Lastly, my short description of restorative practices says that individuals and the community should be “transformed when possible.” While this goal is aspirational in some sense, a few of the students did report changing their majors as a result of the class, and several students who had not seen themselves as writers when they entered the class began to do so by the end.
In addition to the surveys, I collected formal and informal student writing from the course for this study. In some cases, the students gave information in these writings that supplemented or contradicted what they reported in their surveys. Where appropriate, I pull from these additional writings to complicate the survey results and give a fuller picture of the students’ attitudes and experiences.

Pre-semester Survey Results

This survey was designed to determine how students felt about themselves as writers and how they related to some of the key tenets of RCP before the semester began. Early in the semester, students answered questions about their experiences of judging others or feeling judged themselves for their communication skills; they also discussed their feelings about the field of English and their experiences in past English classes. Of the twenty students who agreed to take part in the study, eighteen completed the pre-semester survey. As a group, they began the semester with a typical range of feelings about English composition and writing classes and their language abilities, judging from my experience teaching first-year writing.

In responding to the pre-semester survey, students varied in the ways they answered, so each question has a different number of responses. Some students stuck very closely to the survey format, making clear how their answers related to each question. Others clustered their answers into paragraphs so that it was difficult to determine which portion of their work was an answer to a particular survey question. A few students wrote cryptic short clauses as answers or neglected to answer each survey question. For these reasons, the number of respondents to individual survey questions ranges from fourteen to eighteen.
Pre-semester Survey Question One

The pre-semester survey begins with a straightforward question for a writing course: “How do you currently feel about yourself as a writer?” (see fig. 4). Only one student responded with strong self-assurance: Ryan boldly states, “I am very confident in my writing skills.” Four others—while not as emphatic as Ryan—state essentially positive things about their writing abilities, saying things like, “I am a decent writer” (Taylor) or that they are “comfortable enough” (Pat). An additional four students express a mix of feelings about their writing abilities. Rumi “enjoy[s] writing” but “struggles” with mechanics. By contrast, Aspen “has lost almost all interest in writing” while still feeling “capable.” Marley says, “I am just not sure of myself.” Taken all together, half of the students judge themselves as somewhere between good and good enough in their writing abilities at the start of the semester.

The other half of respondents express mostly negative opinions about their own writing, with several also calling attention to a lack of confidence. Students in this group say things like, “I am not extremely confident” (Drew) and “I do not feel as strong about my writing as I hope to” (Riley). Others write even more negatively about their composing skills; Dakota uses the word “mediocre” in self-assessment, while Kennedy plainly states, “I am a truly bad writer.” Some of the negative responders “do not enjoy writing,” as River says, but others find difficulty in expressing their thoughts. Jamie says, “I have always had a hard time getting my thoughts into words on paper,” while Cameron expresses an “inability to fully explain my thoughts.” These students all voice common feelings that students in first-year writing classes often express.

These results seem to contradict the demographics of the class, however, with sixteen students having completed either English 101 or an AP class in high school; these achievements put them ahead of most entering university students. In previous courses that I have taught,
students have communicated the belief that they know all they need to know about college
writing when they come to English 102, and some of these students did later express this idea in
their final piece of writing from the semester. Although many voiced trepidation as the semester
began, several admitted later that they had not expected to learn much in the course. In the final
reflection essay, Chris says, “I came into this class expecting to breeze through the semester…. I
really didn’t expect to learn much more that I didn’t already know.” Likewise, Marley says,
“When I first entered this class, I felt that I already knew everything about English.” Jamie says,
“When I came into this semester I thought that I would be able to breeze through without having
to learn anything new.” These are the sorts of comments I have seen from former students who
enrolled in 102 as their first college composition course. Cameron shed some light on the
seeming contradiction in the Fall 2016 class. In his semester reflection, he states, “I managed to
get the lowest possible AP score to still receive credit for English 101…. So here I am with no
college experience, in a second semester English course and I am terrified, because the truth of
the matter is I am a terrible writer.” Despite this potential discrepancy between their past writing
experience and their feelings entering English 102, this class presents—judging from my
experience—a normal range of self-assessment from positive to negative, with about half of the
class in each of those camps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. How do you currently feel about yourself as a writer? (18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generally Positive: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am a decent writer” Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“confident in my ability” Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel pretty confident about myself as a writer” Peyton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“comfortable enough … I am able to write essays that clearly and concisely deliver any point that I am trying to make” Pat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My biggest weaknesses I feel lie within a limited vocabulary and inability to fully explain my thoughts” Cameron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am not extremely confident as a writer” Drew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would describe myself as not an elegant writer or even a good writer … I am a truly bad writer … I feel like I” Ainsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pre-semester Survey Question Two

The second question was designed to find out if students had experienced a hospitable environment in their past writing classes, asking, “Have you felt comfortable and welcome in past writing classes?” (see fig. 5). Slightly more than half of the students report that they had felt comfortable in their writing classes. Some of these students mention that their comfort was due to the “discussions” (Rumi) or because the group of students was familiar (River). Others mention the instructor as playing a role in establishing the classroom atmosphere (Cameron) or the content of the class as “a place to take a breath, relax, and let my creative juices flow” (Riley). While about half of the students feel that they are fair to decent writers and about half have felt comfortable in past English classes, the two groups are not identical. Some students, like Taylor, who feel good about their writing have felt uncomfortable in English classes. Other students, like Rumi, who have felt comfortable in English classes still do not feel that they are good writers. The data suggests that feeling good about one’s writing does not directly correlate to feeling comfortable in English class.

Several of the five students who report mixed feelings about their welcome in past writing classes indicate that they liked the classes—other than the writing requirements. As Val states, “I usually enjoy English classes except for the essays. I don’t enjoy writing.” Drew echoes Val, saying, “The majority of time I felt comfortable except when I was writing an essay and was pressured due to time constraints.” Others report being uncomfortable because they did not get the feedback they needed in order to improve (Dakota) or when “a large amount of creativity was
required” (Pat). Ryan feels it is “pointless” to analyze a book, so this activity made him feel uncomfortable. Examining the data in these mixed reactions points to various places that instructors can adjust the curriculum in order to help the students feel more welcome—by giving feedback to students who want to improve, by scaffolding projects that seem to be outside of their comfort zones, and by clearly discussing the relevance of the class work to their lives. Additionally, we can recognize that many students enter our classes with resistance to the subject we teach. RCP, by including students in the classroom community, can help to dissolve this resistance, even if a restorative pedagogy will not fully remove it.

These restorative strategies could also help the students who reported not feeling comfortable or welcome in past writing classes. While Taylor does not say why she felt uncomfortable, Ainsley calls attention to the lack of access to an instructor in an online class, saying, that “was one of the reasons I didn’t do very well.” RCP’s strategy of clearly showing that instructors are interested in working “with” our students could help students like Ainsley feel more included, even in online spaces. For example, when I have taught online, I have sent a welcome email and message to all of the students, then asked them to join a discussion board where we all introduced ourselves to the class. I then checked in individually with students who did not participate in the discussion board to show that I saw them as individuals and that we could communicate online. I have continued this sort of check in throughout my online courses to show that I am “with” the students in the online space. Students in online classes can have many reasons for not participating, but these strategies can help instructors to form relationships with students who do want more personal interactions.

Kennedy, who self-labels as a “bad writer” in response to Question One, continues that thought in this part of the survey, saying that his discomfort in writing classes was due to his
own perceived shortcoming of being “just not as good at making thoughts appear on paper.”

Kennedy does realize that instructors may have played a part in his discomfort, saying, “my past instructors have gotten upset with me for not using formal language.” Kennedy’s remarks indicate that inclusive instructors could support students like Kennedy in two ways. First, restorative instructors mentor the class in the process of writing, explicitly working with each stage of “making thoughts appear on paper.” Second, inclusive instructors must clearly demonstrate that each student’s way of speaking or writing is appropriate for some rhetorical situations and that all writers must adjust their English variety, style, and tone for each specific rhetorical situation. This scaffolding and inclusion will help students feel more comfortable and welcome in composition classes.

| 2. Have you felt comfortable and welcome in past writing classes? (18) |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Generally yes: 10        | Generally no: 3           | Mixed: 5                  |
| “I have felt comfortable in my writing classes” Chris | “I always felt uncomfortable in English and writing classes” Taylor | “I have always felt comfortable and welcome in my writing classes … [except when] we had to write thesis statements and I never got good grades on them, yet I was never told how to make them better” Dakota |
| “I always felt welcome and I enjoy discussions that are held in class” Rumi | [In a previous online class], I felt it was very awkward and that the lack of having an actual instructor was one of the reasons I didn’t do very well” Ainsley | “The majority of time I felt comfortable except when I was writing an essay and was pressured due to time constraints” Drew |
| “I’d always been taught that finding your voice is one of the hardest things to develop as a writer and I feel blessed to have found mine early on in my writing career” Marley | “I have not felt very comfortable in past writing classes. I always feel like I’m behind or just not as good at making thoughts appear on paper … my past instructors have gotten upset with me for not using formal language” Kennedy | “I have felt comfortable and welcome in every situation except those where a large amount of creativity was required to complete the task” Pat |
| “I was comfortable in [writing] class because it was with students I had gone to school with my whole life” River | “I feel confident in my writing abilities” Jamie | “All of my classes that required writing at the Capstone have welcomed and drawn me in…. [in high school] I felt uncomfortable in classes involving essays that analyzed a book … [doing that] felt pointless” Ryan |
| “In high school, my English classes were a place to take a breath, relax, and let my creative juices flow” Riley | “Yes, I have felt comfortable in my other writing classes” Peyton | “I usually enjoy English classes except for the essays. I don’t enjoy writing” Val |
| “I feel confident in my writing abilities” Rumi | “Yes” Quinn | |
| “There have been English classes that I have felt very comfortable in, and both due to instructors that I felt did their jobs incredibly well” Cameron | | |
| “I definitely always feel included and I always feel that if I wanted to share or ask questions I could” Aspen | | |

Fig. 5. Pre-semester Survey Question Two
Pre-semester Survey Question Three

I asked the next survey question to find out whether students felt confident in the varieties of English they speak and write. This question, “Have you always felt proud of the way you speak and write?” (see fig. 6) had seventeen responses, with results evenly spread across the spectrum. Four students did say that they were proud of both their speaking and their writing. Most of these students express intrinsic pride in both abilities, but Peyton says that pride comes “when I make good grades on my essays,” and Rumi speaks explicitly about how a professor helped her to feel “that [her] writing was great.” These two comments indicate that students need our feedback not only when their work is weak, but also when they are doing well; they may not have the insight to judge the strengths of their writing on their own. As Ted Wachtel points out in the Social Discipline Window, restorative instructors show “high levels of support” for their students, including giving them “encouragement and nurture.” In drawing attention to the things our students do well in their writing, we nurture their writing growth by letting them know what writing patterns and practices to continue in their future composition tasks.

On the other end of the spectrum, five students take pride in neither their speaking nor their writing. While Riley says that writing is not a strength or a weakness for her, others speak in stronger terms. Cameron states, “I very rarely feel confident or proud about my speaking or writing,” and Val says, “[writing] is not my strength” as well as “I have a hard time speaking in front of people.” These concerns seem to stem from acute self-consciousness, while Quinn focuses on his potential reader, saying, “I am very worried that the reader will not understand the main idea of my writing.” Most of these students do not say exactly why they were not confident about their communication skills; however, even without clear answers about their anxieties,

---

28 See fig. 1 in the Introduction.
instructors can better anticipate ways to scaffold projects so that students can develop more confidence. As I discuss in Chapter Four, I provide modeling, discussion, and practice for each part of every major assignment to provide such support as the students develop their work. Another four students fit in this category of not feeling good about their writing, even though this group feels they speak well. Most of this group also does not give clear reasons for these feelings, though Taylor says that “there have been cases in which peers were better writers than me.” By employing RCP tenet of using several rounds of peer review for each paper, instructors can allow students to see how their writing measures up to their peers’ writing, and students can learn how to improve their own writing through these experiences. In “Inviting the Mother Tongue,” writing scholar Peter Elbow recommends “at least three drafts on major essays” so that students can focus on “good thinking, organization, and clarity” in mid-process drafts (650, 651). By having students look at each other’s work on each of the drafts, I invite them into the practice of “engaging … in conversation among themselves at as many points in both the writing and the reading process as possible” that composition scholar Kenneth A. Bruffee recommends in “Collaborative Learning” (403). Exposing students to multiple examples of effective writing from their peers provides additional model texts as well as aspirational writing samples.

The last set of students answering this question report feeling good about the way they write but not about the way they speak. Jamie and Ryan take “speak” as a reference to public speaking, and both say that action is not “comfortable” (Jamie) or “a strength” (Ryan). Aspen does not clarify why he did not feel proud of his speech, but Ainsley states, “I have a strong Southern accent, and I think that makes people judge me.” Ainsley speaks about a common occurrence at this university, where only 43% of students are from Alabama (“Quick Facts”). In past classes, I have heard both native Alabamians and those from out of state say they have been
mocked for the way they speak. As instructors, we can model acceptance by employing the RCP concept of embracing linguistic diversity in our classrooms and in our sample texts, and we can take care to reiterate that all linguistic varieties are appropriate for specific rhetorical situations.

To set the stage for such acceptance, I begin the semester with a unit focusing on Translingualism and a descriptive view of language use. Within that unit, we interrogate the idea of a single “correct” English that applies in all rhetorical situations, and we discuss many appropriate situations for using diverse English varieties.

| 3. Have you always felt proud of the way you speak and write? (17) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Speak/ write yes: 4 | Speak/ write no, or not strong: 5 | Speak yes, Write no: 4 | Speak no, Write yes: 4 |
| [A previous professor] always made me feel that my writing was great” Rumi | “I wouldn’t say that the way I speak/write is one of my strengths but it’s not a weakness either” Riley | “there have been cases in which peers were better writers than me” Taylor | “I am not usually a very comfortable public speaker” Jamie |
| “I’ve always felt proud of my [writing] voice … I’ve also felt confident with the way I speak” Marley | “[I am] not always [proud of my writing] because … I am very worried that the reader will not understand the main idea of my writing” Quinn | “I am very rarely proud of the way I write … I speak eloquently” Chris | “I have a strong Southern accent, and I think that makes people judge me” Ainsley |
| “I feel proud of myself when I make good grades on my essays” Peyton | “I very rarely feel confident or proud about or proud of my speaking or writing” Cameron | “I felt proud of my writing up until about junior year of high school” Dakota | “While I see myself as a decent writer, speaking is a whole different story” Aspen |
| “I have always felt proud about the way I speak and write” Drew | “I have never been very proud of the way I speak and write. … It has been quite embarrassing because I always feel like I’m not as smart as the other students because I can’t write very well” Kennedy | “I don’t think that I write particularly well” River | “I have always been proud with my writing abilities, but speaking to a broader audience in not a strength of mine” Ryan |
| “I take pride in the way I speak and write!” Pat | “[writing] is not my strength … I have a hard time speaking in front of people” Val |

Fig. 6. Pre-semester Survey Question Three

Pre-semester Survey Question Four

Some of the students’ feelings about their own writing and speaking abilities may come from external feedback. In answer to the question, “Has anyone ever told you that the way you spoke or wrote was bad or wrong?” (see fig. 7). Nine of the fourteen respondents say they had

---

29 See Chapter Five, “Translingual Unit.”
experienced negative judgment about their speaking or writing abilities. Five of these students say that this criticism, whether about their speaking or their writing, came from their instructors. Ryan writes, “I had an instructor in 10th grade who told me that I struggle as a writer and that I really needed to improve,” and Jamie says, “The only time I have been criticized is from professors.” These students’ answers show the opportunity for RCP and for working “with” our students. We focus on strengthening their work rather than on criticizing their weaknesses. As composition pedagogy scholar Nancy Sommers says in Responding to Student Writers, “Our comments are written for specific purposes—to inspire, to encourage, to nurture, to evaluate—and are written to our students, who need respect and honesty, not harshness or mean-spiritedness” (5). As I comment on my students’ drafts, I point out what is working well, and I invite them into a conversation about places that might need more attention.

Other students discuss negative feedback from peers and family members. Riley says that her father criticized her “run-on sentences,” and River states that a peer told her that “the sentences that I say sometimes don’t make sense.” Taylor does not say that anyone denigrated her speaking or writing, but she could see that sometimes her “peers were better writers.” These comments show that our students come to us with internalized beliefs about both their abilities and shortcomings as writers and rhetoricians. As instructors, we need to recognize that many of our students carry these common beliefs about themselves, even when the students do not express them in class. In recognizing that many students hold negative beliefs about their communication skills, we can explicitly address such beliefs in the curriculum. One example of this could be giving students permission to write bad first drafts, directly challenging the mistaken idea that “good” writers write well the first time.
We must also recognize that not all students have had negative experiences with English. About a third of the students who responded to this question report that no one had ever told them that the way they spoke or wrote was bad or wrong. These students will still benefit from being part of a writing classroom community but may not need the same level of reframing or restoration that others could benefit from.

4. Has anyone ever told you that the way you spoke or wrote was bad or wrong? (14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No: 5</th>
<th>Yes, both: 2</th>
<th>Approved of speaking, faulted writing: 6</th>
<th>Faulted speaking: 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I can’t recall this happening” Chris “Never” Rumi “No one has ever had any derogatory comments toward my writing” Marley “No.” Quinn “I have never had someone tell me that the way I spoke or wrote was wrong” Pat</td>
<td>“The only time I have been criticized is from professors” Jamie “At my old school the instructors would want us to speak eloquently and proper and that is not how my mind works” Kennedy</td>
<td>“there have been cases in which peers were better writers than me” Taylor “Only in AP World History … I never had [a strong] thesis statement” Dakota “my father … has told me to stop using run-on sentences” Riley “Yes, several times.” Cameron “I have been told in the past that my writing has been vague by my literature instructor” Drew “I had a teacher in 10th grade who told me that I struggle as a writer and that I really needed to improve” Ryan</td>
<td>“I was told once, by a peer, that I mispronounce a lot of words and the sentences that I say sometimes don’t make sense” River</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 7. Pre-semester Survey Question Four

Pre-semester Survey Question Five

Student response to the question, “Do you judge others for the way they speak or write?” (see fig. 8), is also spread across the board. Four students say they are not judgmental at all; they seem to be a fairly kind and understanding group. Three students say things like “writing and speaking skills differ from person to person so it’s unfair to judge” (Aspen), or “everyone is good at something, but also terrible at something else” (Ryan). Rumi says, “I have many insecurities with how I speak and write and I try to be cautious of others”; she appears to give others the same sort of generous courtesy she hopes to receive.

Another group of five students appears to be quite judgmental of the way people speak and write, and there seems to be no correlation between their assessment of their own abilities and their judgment of others. Chris and Pat think of themselves as good writers—though Chris
says she is rarely proud of her writing—and both admit that they do judge others for their communication skills. Chris says that she gets “irritated” when “a story is poorly written,” and she has trouble “listen[ing] to what [people with thick accents] say.” Pat admits that, when he hears speech or reads writing that does not measure up to his standards, he has “slotted them at an intellectual level in [his] mind.” Quinn, who reports being somewhat unsure of his writing, also joins in this sort of judgment; he says that “How you write and speak is something that defines you… [when you do not do speak or write well], it shows that you do not care to have a good appearance.” These students imply that people who do not speak or write “well” have either intellectual or moral deficiencies. One goal of RCP is to encourage students to become open to multiple ways of speaking and writing so that they can hear or read other English varieties without assuming these speakers have some sort of deficit. Again, I challenge the idea of language “deficit” beginning in the Translingual unit and sustain the conversation about “correct” language use throughout the semester. As we explore each other’s texts early in the semester, followed by examining popular and academic sources later on, we discuss the ways that language use ties to the rhetorical situation rather than to a single, unchanging standard of “correctness” (Mwenja Semester Notes).

Two other students in this category say they judge others for both speaking or writing poorly—according to their standards—but they also judge themselves to be poor writers. Both Riley and Drew admit to judging others, even though they report negative feelings about their own writing. Others who say that they judge the writing of others fall into this category, as well. Of the four who say they judge writing but not speaking, two—Cameron and Ainsley—report negative feelings about their own writing in response to Question One. Cameron says, “I try not to be judgmental … however, I do find myself looking down on others who don’t write as well
as me.” Ainsley is less disapproving, merely stating that he finds it difficult “when [writers] use a lot of colloquialisms.” These responses indicate just how much people evaluate others based on communication skills, and many judge not only others, but also themselves. These students have internalized negative criticisms that I hope to relieve through RCP’s focus on creating a supportive writing community.

The last group of respondents to this question focus on perceived faults in others’ speech. They criticize “where some people put emphasis on certain words” (Dakota), “a Southern accent” (River), or “too much slang” (Jamie). Val says, “I try not to [judge] because some people don’t have access to all they need to become properly educated, but sometimes it kills me to hear people make simple grammatical mistakes.” Val’s response shows that people can understand intellectually that people come from a variety of backgrounds but can still have a more instinctual disapproving reaction to people who speak differently. Val may simply resist seeing people in new ways, however, as he is the only student who reacted disapprovingly to Friedman’s “Ain’t No Thing,” which outlines how AAVE is a legitimate English variety. In his response to this reading, Val says, “I understand what Friedman says; I just don’t agree with it.” Val’s response to the reading demonstrates the idea that everyone chooses whether or not to participate in a restorative classroom; the ideals are offered to but not imposed upon the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Do you judge others for the way they speak or write? (17)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No: 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| “I have many insecurities with how I speak and write and I try to be cautious of others who struggle” Rumi | “If a story is poorly written … I do become irritated…. if people have very thick accents, it becomes harder for me to … listen to what they say” Chris “Yes, I catch myself judging other people’s grammar and spelling often” Riley “How you write and speak is something that defines you and when you do not care to speak and write as well as possible, it” | “I have never judged others for the way they speak …. In some of my English classes, we were forced to grade our peers’ papers” Taylor “sometimes I do judge others based on the way they write. It’s usually the people that just don’t care” Marley | “I still judge a little but on where some people put emphasis on certain words” Dakota “before I moved to the South I judged a Southern accent” River “Sometimes I judge people when they use
“No, everyone has different ways of expressing themselves” Kennedy
“No, I do not…. everyone is good at something, but also terrible at something else” Ryan

shows that you do not care to have a good appearance” Quinn
“Sometimes I do judge based off of how people speak and write” Drew
“At one point or another, I have either peer-reviewed a student’s writing or listened to a speech and immediately slotted then at an intellectual level in my mind” Pat

“I try not to be judgmental of others writing, however, I do find myself looking down on others who don’t write as well as me” Cameron
“Usually when I have to work to understand someone’s writing is when they use a lot of colloquialisms” Ainsley
“Too much slang in their speech” Jamie
“I try not to because some people don’t have access to all they need to become properly educated, but sometimes it kills me to hear people make simple grammatical mistakes” Val

Fig. 8. Pre-semester Survey Question Five

Pre-semester Survey Question Six

Despite many students reporting that they feel they have shortcomings in speaking or writing—and many reporting that they have felt judged for those weaknesses—most students say that they have felt included in their past classroom experiences. Question Six reads, “In past classroom experiences, have you always felt included in the class?” (see fig. 9). Only two of the fifteen who respond to this question report ever feeling excluded. Ainsley says that he has generally felt included in his classes; it was only in the one online class he took that he “didn’t feel really included.” Chris says that she has not “always felt included,” but she does not see this as a bad thing. She says that she “learned” from feeling separate “to form [her] own in-depth opinions.”

The remaining thirteen respondents say they felt included and that this sense of inclusion related strongly to their academic success. Thus, before the start of our semester together, these students had already experienced benefits that stem from an inclusive atmosphere. They discuss the ways they feel when they are included, saying things like, “inclusion … gave me more confidence in my ability to excel” (Taylor) and “feeling included helps me pay attention better” (Dakota); others voice similar sentiments. Drew says that inclusion “helped me learn better.” These students had already recognized all of these benefits which align with the RCP value of
creating an inclusive atmosphere. The students in this section may have responded as well as they did to this pedagogy because they had previously enjoyed similar learning environments.

Some students point out the social benefits of feeling included. Rumi says that “Feeling included helps me … engage with others,” and Jamie says that “inclusion helps to instill a feeling of familiarity and comradery.” These social benefits can include “the opportunity for others to question my ideas” (Quinn), as well as being able to “ask a question without the fear of being looked down upon” (Pat). Kennedy points out that inclusion “gives the class opportunities to look at the way people view a same idea differently.” Just feeling included can open students up to participation in dialogue and willingness to perceive situations from other points of view.

As restorative practices scholar Ted Wachtel says, “human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them” (“Defining Restorative”). RCP, in striving to provide an inclusive atmosphere, can help students access these academic and social benefits.

| 6. In past classroom experiences, have you always felt included in the class? How was your experience of inclusion or exclusion helpful or not helpful to your academic success? (15) |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Included: 13                                 | Excluded: 1                   | Mixed: 1            |
| “My experience of inclusion was helpful to my academic success because it gave me more confidence in my ability to excel in my classes” Taylor | “I have not always felt included in the class … I think this helped me, because I learned … to form my own in depth opinions about writing and literature” Chris | “In all of my classes I have felt fairly included. The only one I didn’t feel really included would be my online class” Ainsley |
| “feeling included helps me pay attention better” Dakota                                        |
| “Feeling included helps me be able to express my thoughts and engage with others with writing” Rumi |
| “In my past English classes they have always had a very inclusive atmosphere” Marley            |
| “In the past I would say I often thrived in interactive classroom experiences” Riley          |
| “Inclusion helps to instill a feeling of familiarity and comradery so it is easier to open up and feel confident” Jamie |
| “feeling included helped me academically because I could be comfortable and focus” Peyton     |
| “inclusion was incredibly helpful to my academic success. It allowed me the opportunity for others to question my ideas” Quinn |
| “I have almost always felt included in my English classes” Cameron                            |
| “The inclusion increases social skills and ultimately helped me learn better” Drew             |
| “I have been included in past discussion in classrooms. I believe that they are helpful because it gives the class opportunities to look at the way people view a same idea differently” Kennedy |

127
Pre-semester Survey Question Seven

Eight students, or about half of the respondents, report favorable feelings toward the field of English. Judging from my experience teaching first-year writing, this proportion is normal for those who react positively to the question, “How do you currently feel about English as a field of study?” (see fig. 10); however, this half of the group directly correlates with neither the half that feel good about themselves as writers nor the half that has felt comfortable in past English classes. These students who have a favorable view of English say that the field is “essential” (Taylor) and “vital” (Riley); they “like reading and thinking” (Chris) and “have always enjoyed” English (Peyton). Many of these students would likely take the class even if it were not required; Chris and Quinn are actively thinking of majoring or minoring in English as the semester begins. Of course, students who enroll in First-year Writing because it is a required course may have mixed or negative feelings about the class. Five students say that they “do not mind” English (Rumi) but that they will not major in it. Cameron says that “a world without English … would be much worse than the world we live in now,” and Ainsley says that “English classes are a necessity for everyone to take.” This group of students seems to recognize the need for studying English while not being drawn to explore professions within the field.

Only two students report fully negative feelings about the field of English, and they both state that they are more comfortable with “math and numbers” (River) or “math and science” (Kennedy). My view is that students such as these, who perceive English to have no bearing on
math and science, could potentially be harmed by that perception. In seeing English as separate from hard science, they fail to see the rhetorical underpinnings of the sciences; they also fail to see that they will use English to communicate their work within their fields. One of the restorations I hope this class can make for such students is to repair their understanding of the ways that both composition and rhetoric undergird all of their work, regardless of their professional fields. Throughout the semester, we discuss the texts they encounter in their other classes, and we discuss the kinds of writings they see professionals in their disciplines compose. I ask the students to anticipate the ways they can use their knowledge of the rhetorical situation in their majors and professional lives; in these ways, I encourage students to see the applicability of course content to their future work (Mwenja *Semester Notes*).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive: 8</th>
<th>Negative: 2</th>
<th>Mixed: 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I believe that English is an essential field of study” Taylor</td>
<td>“I enjoy math and numbers …. what I struggle with in English is that there is no right or correct answer …. I find that very difficult” River</td>
<td>“Umm, well I know for a fact that I would never want to major in English but I definitely do not mind the class itself” Rumi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think it’s a very legitimate pursuit…. I like reading and thinking, and I also enjoy creating my own stories and ideas” Chris</td>
<td>“My opinions toward English as a field of study are highly positive” Marley</td>
<td>“I think that a world without English being a field of study would be much worse than the world we live in now. This being said, I don’t feel that it is a field of study with much potential for me” Cameron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Without English instructors we would be very shallow thinkers” Dakota</td>
<td>“I find vital for students to take English courses” Riley</td>
<td>“I am [not] proficient enough to consider an English degree… [but] I feel that English classes are a necessity for everyone to take … the workforce is looking for people who know how to intelligently write” Ainsley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My opinions toward English as a field of study are highly positive” Marley</td>
<td>“I find that very difficult” River</td>
<td>“English is a field of study that I like but am not in love with…. I am not a huge fan of writing” Drew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel that the written language of English is interesting in how we are able to convey emotion and knowledge through words” Jamie</td>
<td>“Personally I really don’t like English. It’s really not my strong suit. I’m really more of a math and science type” Kennedy</td>
<td>“Although English isn’t my favorite subject in the world, it’s also not my least favorite” Aspen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 10. Pre-semester Survey Question Seven

Pre-semester Survey Question Eight

While most students reply to Question Six by saying that they have felt included in previous classes, many have also noticed or experienced injustices in other school settings.
Sixteen students answered Question Eight, “Have you ever felt a sense of injustice in a classroom setting?” (see fig. 11), and slightly fewer than half indicate that they had not experienced an injustice. The other writing samples I collected for most of these students bear out their answers to this question, which range from a simple “never” from Drew to “thankfully I haven’t ever felt this way” from Rumi. By contrast, Taylor says “no” in response to Question Eight, but in an early assignment in class, she writes, “I have dealt with dialect prejudice numerous times throughout high school.” She goes on to write that she has seen that Southerners and African Americans are “viewed inferior because they do not speak properly.” Taylor’s answer makes me wonder if she considers “dialect prejudice” normal and therefore did not consider it an injustice. Because of Taylor’s answer, I also wonder if there were other everyday injustices that this group of students had experienced, but that they may have considered to be too inconsequential to mention. As I note in the Conclusion, I will adjust the question in future surveys to better situate the idea of “injustice,” as well as to more explicitly tie the question to English classes.

Slightly more than half of the students answering this question did report classroom or school injustices. Four students call attention to injustices they had experienced as part of a group; three of these discussed a classroom situation. Chris says that “often the entire class was punished for one person’s bad attitude,” and Marley talks about “a math instructor … [who] verbally degraded students in front of the class.” River talks about challenges in taking poorly designed tests. This range of experiences underscores the reasons that RCP strives to inform every facet of the class as well as the unplanned moments. Instructors who work “with” their students will discuss an individual student’s bad attitude privately with the student. RCP is
designed to encourage rather than “degrade” students. Additionally, working “with” students implies the support of making tests and assignments as clear as possible.

The other student who discusses a group injustice talks about a school culture in which students whose “parents were employed by the school or … [were] on the school’s board” were “more favored,” and “their punishments were less severe or even non-existent” (Ryan). Ryan’s example does indicate the sort of limitations in RCP that Margaret Thorsborne and Peta Blood cover in *Implementing Restorative Practices in Schools*, as I write about in Chapter Two. An individual instructor can only go so far in providing a restorative setting for students; other school stakeholders impact the students’ encounters as well. I hope to share RCP with English departments in many universities, including my own, so that more stakeholders take up restorative approaches in working with students, faculty members, and neighboring communities.

Only two students report injustices against themselves personally in response to this question. Riley feels that her statistics instructor “looked down” on her because she had a “creative and free spirit.” Riley’s experience highlights how critical it is that we strive as instructors to accept our students’ personalities; Riley perceives the instructor’s negative evaluation of her way of being as an injustice. The other student who discusses a personal injustice, Cameron, also points to an instructor’s shortcomings. He says that he “received a C- on a … very big essay, and got next to no feedback on it.” While we instructors must be respectful of our own time—giving useful and appropriate feedback at a point in the composition process that the students can actually use our input—we do also need to be transparent in our grading processes so that the students can see how we arrived at their grades. When we are clear about our expectations, even students who earn poor grades can see that the process is just. This
example demonstrates the “high expectations” Thorsborne and Blood describe that I discuss in Chapter Four.

The final three students write about injustices their peers received. Both Jamie and Quinn tell about instructors disregarding other students’ stances toward or interpretations of class content; these instructors imposed their views on the students. Val considers more systematic injustices in his answer, remembering students who “acted like they didn’t care”; he “wonder[s] what could’ve been if someone had cared enough about those sad and angry kids” to mentor them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No: 7</th>
<th>Yes: 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“No” Taylor  “All classes I have ever been in have been extremely inclusive” Dakota  “Thankfully I haven’t ever felt this way” Rumi  “I have never experienced an injustice in a classroom” Ainsley  “never” Drew  “I have personally never had a sense of injustice” Kennedy  “Never” Pat</td>
<td>“In high school, often the entire class was punished for one person’s bad attitude about the work we were doing” Chris  “I had a math instructor … [who] verbally degraded students in front of the class…. Eventually, a group of students brought his actions to the attention of the administration” Marley  “I took the first hard chemical engineering class … most of the test questions didn’t appear to have answers. We found that out after the tests when he told us that there were mistakes” River  “In a statistics class in high school I was looked down on by my instructor for my creative and free spirit” Riley  “[A friend got a low grade on a revision] because the professor had a bias against the point of view my friend took” Jamie  “[When a friend presented an alternative interpretation of a literary text] the instructor just said, ‘No, that’s not right’” Quinn  “when I received a C- on a paper at the end of the year on a very big essay, and got next to no feedback on it” Cameron  “some students [in my high school] were more favored than others by the faculty, especially if their parents were employed by the school or if they had a parent on the school’s board…. Favored kids were treated very differently. If they broke a rule, their punishments were less severe or even non-existent” Ryan  “Thinking back to high school, I remember seeing kids who acted like they didn’t care…. It makes me wonder what could’ve been if someone had cared enough about those sad and angry kids to show them how to live, learn, and to make their lives what they want them to be” Val</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 11. Pre-semester Survey Question Eight

As a group, the Fall 2016 102-021 class represents a very normal range of attitudes about themselves as writers and about their past school experiences for students entering a second-
semester first-year writing class. About half feel good about writing, about half like English class, about half have positive feelings towards the field of English. I had known from informal polling in previous classes that students in first-year writing classes generally fall into similar camps, but I was surprised that the portion of the class reporting that they felt good about writing was not the same portion who said they liked English class, and again, not the same portion who appreciated the field of English. While some of these students express negative feelings about their own and other’s language use, almost all say they had felt welcomed to their past English classes. They give normal examples of classroom injustices. Considered as a group, this class presents themselves as a typical first-year composition class at my university.

Post-Semester Survey Results

The post-semester survey was designed to evaluate student response to both the composition curriculum and the restorative underpinnings of the class. The survey asks students to weigh in on their improvements as “competent communicators,” and it asks if they felt “respected and included” in the class. The survey asks questions about how their feelings regarding other writers and the discipline of English have changed, as well as gathering information about the sense of connection they feel to the class and to the university. The survey concludes with a question about how they perceived “justice” in our classroom experience, and asks for any additional feedback.

While eighteen of the twenty students participating in the research completed the pre-semester survey, a slightly different group of eighteen completed the post-semester survey. This survey generally reiterated the first one, this time asking about students’ experiences during the researched semester rather than in previous classes. The post-semester survey also asked about
students’ feelings of connection to their classmates and to the wider university community, and it ended with an open invitation for across-the-board feedback.

Student answers in the post-semester survey align much more closely to the questions posed than they did in the pre-semester survey. Some students skip a few questions, so the numbers of responses range from sixteen to eighteen. When I assigned the post-semester survey, I told the students that they were free to format their responses however they liked; they could use any font, color, size, and embellishments, or they could handwrite if they preferred. The class expressed an incredible amount of joy at being allowed such freedom. Nine students chose to handwrite their responses; the remainder submitted electronic texts. Of the second group, five students played around with multi-modal choices. Jamie and Ryan both made the question font bold to distinguish the questions from their answers; Quinn did the same and also used an italics font for the questions. While I had not set any sort of page requirement for the responses, Dakota used a really big font in a move reminiscent of high schoolers who hope to fill up space. Lastly, Riley—the self-identified “creative and free spirit”—used a very small font and bolded the questions. She also used one custom bullet point—a Libra symbol—for the questions and a different custom bullet point—a yin-yang symbol—for her answers. While the students could certainly have made many more, and more creative, multi-modal choices, the joy they expressed in having all restrictions removed makes me determined to provide more such opportunities in the future. I hope to provide a balance of teaching them to recognize the generic expectations for their future writing tasks and of allowing them space to arrange some of the texts they submit in a way that gives them joy.
Post-Semester Survey Question One

Eighteen students answer the first post-semester survey question, “How has your view of yourself as a competent communicator changed over the course of the semester?” (see fig. 12). All respondents say that they feel their communication abilities have improved. This result indicates that, while RCP is focused on creating community and repairing harms, it also yields results expected from a composition class: students believe they have improved in their writing and communication skills. Three students say they have improved at least “slightly” (Drew), with Taylor saying that she “learned to communicate [her] arguments in essays better” and Quinn saying that he has “learned how to have concise and pointed arguments.” Since I focus on argumentation in the 102 class, these comments are fitting to that context.

The remaining fifteen students express their improvements in stronger terms. Some of them also refer to argumentation, but they join it to other ideas. Cameron states that he is “not only better at arguing [his] own case, but also at seeing the other side.” This comment demonstrates the RCP value of dialogue, of having the opportunity to speak for oneself, but also taking care to listen to others, as Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel describe in *Restorative Circle in Schools* (22). Kennedy says that he can “back up [his] argument with support,” and that he can “truly express [his] ideas now.” In the pre-semester survey, Kennedy says he had trouble “making thoughts appear on paper,” so this shift is big for him. Several students—Chris, Riley, Peyton, and Ryan—all say they are “more confident” or have “more confidence” in their writing. Ryan continues the thought, saying, “At the beginning of the semester, I felt nervous to voice my opinions.” This response seems to indicate that the semester’s work helped students to be assured in their communication choices. In a similar comment, Jamie says that he is “more comfortable as a writer,” and he ties that comfort to “being a better communicator.”
Several students remark on a new awareness of their audience. Tyler says that he now “know[s] how to write to a specific audience,” and Marley goes further to say that he “know[s] how to address any audience.” That is a big claim, but it shows his comfort in using awareness of the rhetorical situation to shape his work. Pat says that this awareness of audience makes him “able to convey his thoughts more clearly.” RCP encourages students to engage in extensive thoughtful and guided communication, both in speaking and in writing, and this consistent practice appears to have resulted in a keener awareness that students are addressing actual people when they write. In the classroom, this means that the students complete on-demand writing that I respond to within the week, so we have a continuing dialogue on paper. Additionally, the students collaborate on at least one activity—usually several—during each class period, then we share their insights as a whole group. Additionally, the assignments sheets state that they are writing to their peers, and the students know that at least three peers will read and comment on their work. All of these practices increase the students’ understanding that they need to consider the audience for their work. Aspen states this relationship between practice and results explicitly: “Asking us to work together and critique each other has definitely made me a more competent communicator.” I have had many students in past semesters, particularly introverts, who have complained about the amount of collaborative work I have asked them to do, but the students in this class voice over and over—in their reflective writing and in this survey—that the group work and the peer review were quite beneficial in their development as writers.

The final assignment for the class was a short reflection on the semester. The nineteen students who submitted these essays uniformly report they feel they have improved as writers due to the semester’s work; these responses mirror the information gathered from the post-semester survey. More than half of respondents say they have improved their use of a writing
process to develop their work; they say they value that process, as well. About a third of the students discuss an expanded sense of writing for an audience. Almost all of the students express an appreciation of peer review as we practiced it during the semester. River states that she has “less fear of writing” (“Writing” 3), and Quinn says that he has “become a better student” in all of his classes because of EN 102 (“This Semester” 1). Two students make broader claims about their improvements: Kennedy says that he will use the rhetorical situation to “understand the people that I will encounter throughout life” (“The Development of My Writing” 3), and Marley states, “This class … inspired me to become a better researcher, writer, and human being” (“Semester Reflection” 1). Regarding improvements as competent communicators, the students express similar sentiments in the semester reflection essays as they do in the post-semester surveys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. How has your view of yourself as a competent communicator changed? (18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Changed: 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel more confident with formulaic writing and following a thesis” Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I [am] more aware of my writing and to make sure that I’m not jumping around as much” Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[Now I] know how to write to a specific audience and how to clearly state my purpose” Tyler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“this semester really brought insight, and communications that were new to me, pushing me out of my comfort zone—but in a good way!” Rumi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I know how to address any audience … the Rogerian argument section of the Hacker helped me understand this” Marley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have a lot more confidence how I articulate what I am trying to say” Riley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have become more comfortable as a writer throughout this course … I have become a better communicator” Jamie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My skills as a communicator have vastly improved … Asking us to work together and critique each other has definitely made me a more competent communicator” Aspen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“this class has taught me to write and argue based off my own ideas and how to back up my argument with support. I believe I can truly express my ideas now” Kennedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Now that I have learned how to effectively write to my audience, I feel that I am able to convey my thoughts more clearly” Pat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This course has given me more confidence in being a competent communicator. At the beginning of the semester, I felt nervous to voice my opinions” Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“With practice and taking this course I feel improved overall” Val</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 12. Post-semester Survey Question One
Post-Semester Survey Question Two

All eighteen students answer the second question—“Have you felt comfortable, welcome, respected, and included in this writing class?” (see fig. 13)—with resounding affirmation. This result clearly demonstrates one of RCP’s strengths; the students agree that I reached restorative goals of being inclusive and respectful of each individual by using this pedagogy. While the numbers of those who agreed with the question were not very different from the matching question in the pre-semester survey about past classes, the quality of the agreement in this survey is striking. Thirteen of fifteen students responded to the pre-semester survey with responses like, “I have been included” (Kennedy), with a couple of students using the word “always” (Marley, Aspen). By contrast, most students in the Fall 102 class use absolute terms to say they felt comfortable and included: eight students say, “always,” while others use words like “extremely” (Riley) “incredibly” (Quinn), “100% of the time” (Aspen), “very much so” (Val), and “all of the time” (Taylor). These absolute terms seem to communicate the strength of the students’ feeling that the class operated with restorative values of inclusion and respect. Many students point to ways that both their classmates and I enacted restorative values during the semester. River says, “the students in this class feel comfortable sharing their views in a respectful and appropriate manner,” and Kennedy says, “This class … was a very accepting zone, and everyone was very respectful.” Pat states, “My peers have always allowed for me to present my ideas and thoughts in a safe environment,” and Ryan notices that he “felt respected during peer reviews even if a peer did not agree with [his] topic/ stance.” These responses are remarkable, particularly when we note that they are made at a time when our national discourse often provides a model of disrespect and division, during an inflammatory political campaign that has disrupted many relationships, and within a group of first-year students, who are not
always known for their tact or their fellow-feeling. Jamie engages this idea of civil discourse directly, stating, “I have always felt very comfortable in this class. Specifically when I have voiced controversial opinions to my classmates without having my opinions belittled.” Several students attributed this standard to my example. Chris says, “Mrs. Mwenja was welcoming, understanding, and respected every student,” and Peyton says, “my instructor makes sure everyone does.” Both Rumi and Quinn say that I was able to make sure everyone’s voice was heard, and this ability helped them to enlarge their worldviews.

I, and other instructors who take up this pedagogy, will need to continue to implement and study the ways that RCP creates community, thereby circumventing some classroom challenges, as well as studying how RCP responds to such challenges when they do arise. In response to this question, several students do mention situations that could have been seen as challenges in other instructors’ classrooms. Riley says that “even [her] ‘out-there’ ideas were welcomed.” This idea contrasts with the stories other students told in the pre-semester surveys about instructors refusing to accept students’ interpretations of texts. Aspen says, “Even when I came to class unprepared, I still felt included.” This comment points to a very important aspect of RCP: it responds to shortcomings and “faults” with dialogue and restorative action. When students come to class unprepared, I find ways to include them in the day’s activities. For example, students often come to class on a peer review day without a draft prepared. I know that this will happen, so I do several things. First, I never plan to spend an entire class period on peer review, so unprepared students will still be able to participate in and benefit from other activities that day. Second, when I am getting the class ready for peer review, I group those who are unprepared together so that I can check in with them to see what is holding up their progress, or they can discuss their ideas-in-progress with each other. Lastly, I allow students to take drafts to
the writing center to make up their process work, since that process work counts for up to 20% of their final paper grade. My goal in taking these steps is to restore the students to the writing community, rather than to blame, shame, or ostracize them for making a mistake. In welcoming them to and including them in the class, however unprepared they may be, I demonstrate that they will be included and that they can be part of the classroom community if they choose.

I can imagine critics saying, “But what about students who always come to class unprepared?” Certainly, there are students who do not ever prepare for class. They can still receive benefits from being in the class, and they would not receive these benefits if they feel blamed or belittled for a lack of preparation. Also, students receive the grades they earn. If they come to class unprepared, they are choosing not to participate in the writing process, and their grades will suffer because their work will be weak. Their grades will also suffer because they will not earn daily grades for peer review, and they will not earn points on their final papers for process work. Again, RCP instructors can invite students to participate—even make participating enticing by rewarding it with opportunities to earn daily grades and process points—but instructors cannot compel students to take advantage of these restorative opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Have you felt comfortable, welcome, respected, and included in this writing class?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Yes:</strong> 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“always … Mrs. Mwenja was welcoming, understanding, and respected every student” Chris
“I have felt more than welcomed, respected, and included in this class” Dakota
“always” Tyler, Marley; “all of the time” Taylor; “I have felt quite welcome” Cameron; “Very much so” Val
“always … Mrs. M. was quick to hear out everyone’s opinions, [helping] me view things with a different perspective” Rumi
“The class culture has been welcoming since day one. I believe that the students in this class feel comfortable sharing their views in a respectful and appropriate manner” River
“extremely … I even felt that my ‘out-there’ ideas were welcomed, encouraged, and always respected” Riley
“I have always felt very comfortable in this class. Specifically when I have voiced controversial opinions to my classmates without having my opinions belittled” Jamie
“always … my instructor makes sure everyone does and creates a good environment” Peyton
“Because of [Mrs. Mwenja’s] abilities to … make everyone’s opinion heard, I was able to learn so much more” Quinn
“I have felt comfortable [and] included due to the multiple discussions and group activities” Drew
“100% of the time…. Even when I came to class unprepared, I still felt included” Aspen
“This class … was a very accepting zone, and everyone was very respectful” Kennedy
“always…. My peers have always allowed me for present my ideas and thoughts in a safe environment” Pat
“always…. I felt respected during peer reviews even if a peer did not agree with my topic/ stance” Ryan

Fig. 13. Post-semester Survey Question Two
Post-Semester Survey Question Three

Of the seventeen students who responded to the pre-semester survey question about judging others for their speaking and writing, all but four said at that point in time that they judged others’ communication skills in some way. After participating in the semester’s work, some students may still judge others—I did not ask whether they did or not—but they all say that they are more respectful of the ways others communicate (see fig. 14). Those surveyed discuss various ways in which this respect has emerged, including more respect for writing or speaking styles, for opinions, and for cultural differences; several students discuss two of these ideas in tandem.

Seven students focus on their increased respect for other people’s communication strategies in their responses to this question. Taylor says she has more “respect for those who speak differently,” and Chris says she is more “respectful of other people’s ways of communicating.” Rumi says that she is able to “view all work equally—even if they don’t have all the grammar and spelling worked out.” These comments indicate that the students are more willing to overlook surface “errors” to engage with the ideas that an author presents. These remarks also indicate that the students know what the standards are in specific rhetorical contexts; this means that they should be able to meet the standards themselves, even if they are able to overlook perceived “deficits” in other people’s speaking or writing.

Four students discuss ways that they are more open to other people’s opinions as a result of the semester. As River says, “as a class we approach each opinion and dissect it to understand each part, instead of completely dismissing it.” This habit should help these students to be better critical thinkers, both within and outside of the academy. Riley states, “I definitely learned … when someone else’s argument was well-written with claims and support,” even when she
disagreed with the stance. Cameron says, “[This semester’s assignments] taught me to see conflicting ideologies with more respect.” These remarks indicate that the students are more able to see other people’s points of view; they can also respect people they do not fully agree with. Again, these findings are remarkable in the context of the current polarized national dialogues; these students indicate that they can listen across differences and respect others even when disagreeing with a specific viewpoint. They can also differentiate weak from strong arguments and tell when a rhetor has used credible evidence to back claims; these are skills these students can use as they navigate the media landscape.

Several students expand their answers to this question to include respect for social or cultural differences. Taylor and Tyler say similar things: “I am now less judgmental towards those who are different from me” (Taylor), and “I am open to … people who are different from myself” (Tyler). Val goes further, stating, “I’ve learned more about different cultures and how there are many differences but also many similarities.” Kennedy says, “This class has taught me how to respect different writings, and to think very hard about what they are saying because they probably come from different backgrounds than me.” Being more open to the ways that others communicate can allow us to participate in dialogues with more people. This ability to talk despite differences restores students to classroom community, but also to the university community and the currently-fragmented community of national public discourse. Students with these views of respect for other ways of communicating, other opinions, and other cultures can more easily include others and be included in the academy, the workplace, and the nation. Thus, realizing the RCP value of creating an inclusive community, through the continued collaboration and dialogue and respecting each individual, can have positive repercussions in other areas of these students’ lives—as well as positive repercussions for those they encounter in other spaces.
3. As a result of this semester’s work, are you more understanding and respectful of those who speak and write differently from you? (18)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes: 18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I have more understanding and respect for those who speak differently from me. I am now less judgmental towards those who are different from me” Taylor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I definitely feel more open-minded and respectful of other people’s ways of communicating” Chris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have almost always been respectful of the way others speak and write, but there is always room for more empathy and sympathy” Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“After this semester I am open to different writing styles and people who are different from myself” Tyler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This semester really helped me to view all work equally—even if they don’t have all the grammar and spelling or context worked out” Rumi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“as a class we approach each opinion and dissect it to understand each part, instead of completely dismissing it” River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This class definitely helped me to understand and be respectful of people who speak and write differently from me” Marley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I definitely learned … when someone else’s argument was well-written with claims and support. When a classmate and I happened to disagree on an issue I was able to respect their side of the argument” Riley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have learned to respect other people’s writing styles and opinions” Jamie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have a more interested view” Peyton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I hope I am” Quinn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[This semester’s assignments] taught me to see conflicting ideologies with more respect” Cameron</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have become more respectful when it comes to other individuals’ works” Drew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This course has taught me that everyone has a different writing style” Aspen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This class has taught me how to respect different writings, and to think very hard about what they are saying because they probably come from different backgrounds than me” Kennedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am more respectful” Pat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Absolutely” Ryan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’ve learned more about different cultures and how there are many differences but also many similarities” Val</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 14. Post-semester Survey Question Three

Post-Semester Survey Question Four

Seventeen students answer post-semester survey question four: “How have your opinions about English as a field of study changed over the semester?” (see fig. 15), with only three students stating that their opinions were essentially unchanged. Dakota began the semester with a healthy respect for the field and finished thinking “the field of English has always been a tough field of study.” Cameron began and ended the semester with mixed feelings, stating, “I enjoyed this English class more than most I have had to take but I know it still isn’t a field for me.” Pat did not answer this question on the pre-semester survey, but he says that he started the semester the same way he ended, “I still feel that English is important in everyday life, but that as a field
of study, it is not viable.” Even though these three students’ opinions did not change for the better, no student reports that his or her feelings about English changed for the worse.

Fourteen students say that their opinions about the field of English improved as a result of the semester, with several still reporting mixed feelings. Taylor says that she is “more tolerant of the subject,” and Rumi saying that she usually “didn’t enjoy English, but Mrs. Mwenja made it fun and enjoyable.” Val also falls in this category, stating, “This course has been one of my favorite English classes, but I know English isn’t really my strong suit.” Insofar as the goal of the class was not to recruit English majors but to include students in a restorative composition classroom, these answers are positive indicators that the class included even those who usually would not appreciate an English class.

Three students are considering changing their majors or minors as a result of this class. Chris, who began the semester pondering an English major, says, “I changed my second major from Food and Nutrition to English. I always liked it, but this class made me decide to pursue it as a career.” Ryan, who did not answer the corresponding answer in the pre-semester survey, says that he is “considering pursuing a minor in English.” Quinn, who began the semester thinking of an English minor, says that he “may not want to study English as a profession but [he does] want to include studying it in some way throughout [his] college career.” While recruiting majors was not one of my primary goals, I do enjoy knowing that I may have influenced an eighth of the class to pursue English studies as a result of my work.

Students also report an expanded view of what the field of English entails. Jamie says, “I think the study of rhetoric is valuable.” Marley states, “this class helped me to see just how prevalent it is even in majors that you would think have nothing to do with English.” Drew says, “I now feel that English is more necessary to be a more effective communicator.” Many students
entering college mistakenly imagine that English is simply about literature studies. These answers show that students in the course see that English has a much wider purview than they previously thought.

The two math and science students who responded completely negatively to this question in the pre-semester survey do report positive changes in their opinions about English. Kennedy says, “I appreciate it more,” while River states, “there are many different avenues in English that I would not have originally considered and I have gained more respect for the major as a whole.” A goal of RCP is to repair harms done (Zehr 33), and one repair I hope to achieve is a change in the world view that English is separate from and not essential to those in maths and sciences; judging from these responses, the class did meet that goal.

The semester reflection assignment did not ask the students to address how their opinions had changed, but two students did bring up the subject in their final essays. Aspen says that I made “a class subject [he] once disliked enjoyable” (“Semester Reflection” 2), while Chris states, “This class was instrumental in helping me to decide to make English my second major” (“Reflection Essay” 2). These comments match the responses that Aspen and Chris gave in their post-semester surveys.

4. How have your opinions about English as a field of study changed over the semester? (17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changed: 14</th>
<th>Unchanged: 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“before taking this class I used to hate English but now I am more tolerant towards [it]” Taylor</td>
<td>“I think the field of English has always been a tough field of study” Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I changed my second major from Food and Nutrition to English. I always liked it, but this class made me decide to pursue it as a career” Chris</td>
<td>“I enjoyed this English class more than most I have had to take but I know it still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have realized that there is not one standard English” Tyler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have always known I didn’t enjoy English, but Mrs. Mwenja made it fun and enjoyable” Rumi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“this class helped me to see just how prevalent it is even in majors that you would think have nothing to do with English” Marley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“This class did make me realize that there are many different avenues in English that I would not have originally considered and I have gained more respect for the major as a whole” River</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“before this semester I looked at English as undefeatable. I now feel that I have been equipped with the tools to adequately express myself through writing and English as a field of study holds an even greater priority in my education” Riley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think the study of rhetoric is valuable” Jamie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“I have a more interested view on English. I learned aspects that I have not studied before”
Peyton
“I realized that I may not want to study English as a profession but I do want to include studying it in some way throughout my college career” Quinn
“I now feel that English is more necessary to be a more effective communicator” Drew
“I respect English a lot more after this class” Aspen
“I appreciate it more” Kennedy
“This class has led me to appreciate English further, and I am considering pursuing a minor in English” Ryan
“This course has been one of my favorite English classes, but I know English isn’t really my strong suit” Val

isn’t a field for me”
Cameron
“I still feel that English is important in everyday life, bit that as a field of study, it is not viable”
Pat

Fig. 15. Post-semester Survey Question Four

Post-Semester Survey Question Five

I asked post-semester survey question five, “As a result of this semester’s work, do you feel more connected to others in the class?” (see fig. 16), to determine whether the students did feel that they had become part of the classroom community, since one of RCP’s goals is to establish an inclusive community. Additionally, students who have social connections on campus generally have better mental health, so these networks can make a stronger classroom community and support students in their emotional lives. Only one student, Val, says that he did not feel more connected to others in the class. An interesting note is that Val is also one of three students who did not earn passing grades in the class; he received a grade of “No Credit” because he did not submit two major grade assignments. I have to wonder if he did not feel connected to the others in the class because he did not engage in the work that the others did together. Alternately, it could be that Val lacked a feeling of connection to his fellow students, and that sense of distance influenced his willingness to take part in class activities.

The sixteen others who respond to this question say that they do feel more connected to the others in the class, and they offer a variety of reasons. Some students talk about the table grouping as a social unit. Chris reflects, “I can happily say that I am friends with my entire table
now.” River says, “I sit at a rather chatty table so that has made the class a lot more entertaining and interesting.” Aspen compares the experience to his other classes: “I feel more connected to class mates in this class than others. Being at these group tables … helped.” The table groupings were a physical attribute of the room that I at first perceived as disruptive to my pedagogy—they made it harder to have students move from group to group as is my usual practice. However, the tables also anchored the groups and really encouraged students to bond in ways that I had not seen in previous semesters.

While some students make generic remarks about feeling closer to the others in the class, others give specific reasons for feeling closer. Taylor, Tyler, Quinn, and Cameron all say that peer review made them feel more connected to their classmates. These remarks indicate that peer review is not only restorative in that it supports students in developing stronger work; peer review is also restorative in that it increases the opportunities for students to engage in constructive and respectful dialogue about their shared work. As Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel say, “Circles encourage problem-solving,” whether students work in small or large groups, and doing them on a “daily basis [helps] people learn the skills, build the trust and have the confidence they need to effectively respond” to one another (47, 48). Pat’s remark bears out this idea; he says that “hearing their ideas and beliefs” has made him able to “understand [his classmates] better.” Marley says that reading “everyone’s literacy narratives” made the connection for her.

| 5. As a result of this semester’s work, do you feel more connected to others in the class? (17) |
|---|---|---|
| Yes: 16 | No: 1 |
| “after peer reviewing their work throughout the semester, I feel more connected to my peers” Taylor | “Not really. Sorry” Val |
| “I can happily say I am friends with my entire table now” Chris | |
| “I definitely feel more connected to the others in my class…. I see members of my class all over campus” Dakota | |
| “Throughout the amount of peer review and group work I feel more connected to the people in this class” Tyler | |
| “Our group message we began at the beginning of the semester had begun to just be random talk” Rumi | |
“I’ve felt more connected to my table but also to the whole class. When we were to read everyone’s literacy narratives I felt like they were telling me the story” Marley
“I do feel more connected with the students at my table and the class as a whole. I sit at a rather chatty table so that has made the class a lot more entertaining and interesting” River
“Definitely. I have connected with so many of my peers through this class and built relationships with them outside of the class room” Riley
“Yes, I feel I have grown closer to the students in my class” Jamie
“I feel more connected to other in the class” Peyton
“Yes. I feel that the peer review work throughout the class was a very eye-opening experience” Quinn
“The amount of collaboration we had between students in peer review helped make some connections” Cameron
“I do feel more connected to others” Drew
“I feel more connected to class mates in this class than others. Being at these group tables and working together helped me get to know some new people” Aspen
“this class has been brought together and has made us more than just classmates” Kennedy
“I do. After hearing their ideas and beliefs, I feel that I am able to understand them better” Pat
“The three peers at my table all were very nice and I respected them greatly” Ryan

Fig. 16. Post-semester Survey Question Five

Post-Semester Survey Question Six

I posed the next question, “As a result of this semester’s work, do you feel more connected to the university as a whole?” (see fig. 17), to gauge the effect of our work in relationship to other classroom stakeholders. Universities strive to retain students, and students who feel connected to their campuses tend to continue their enrollment. I wondered if RCP, particularly the way that I ground the semester in the context of the university, would help students to feel connected to the campus community; if so, this could be a factor in gaining administrative support for the pedagogy.

The results for this question were not quite as strong as for the previous one. Five of the students who say they are more connected to others in the class say that they are not more connected to the university as a whole. Two other students who also say they are more connected to classmates say that they are somewhat more connected to the larger campus community than previously. Chris says that she is “more prepared to use the resources available,” and Cameron says that his submission to the Crimson White, as well as his research, helped him “learn more about the school.”
More than half of the respondents to this question, however, do report feeling more connected to the university, and they point to a wide variety of reasons for feeling these connections. Several students talk about Gorgas Library and its resources, including the librarians and the Samford Media Center; Tyler also mentions the writing center as a point of connection. Dakota says that simply seeing “people [she] know[s] from class all the time … makes this big school feel smaller.” One of my goals in taking the students to the various spaces on campus was to make the unfamiliar seem more familiar; this activity was one way I felt that I could demonstrate my commitment to working “with” them to take advantage of help they can access as students. These responses indicate that goal was met.

Three students point to classroom activities as holding the key to their campus connections. Peyton states, “I feel more connected to the University from classroom discussions.” Drew echoes and amplifies this idea, saying, “I do feel more connected to the university as a whole due to the topics we have discussed that relate to the university and all the students.” Quinn says “writing about many events that occur around the campus has caused me to care about them much more than I otherwise would have.” These answers show that some students may feel connected by interacting with campus spaces outside the classroom, but others may feel more connected by engaging the campus as course content.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. As a result of this semester’s work, do you feel more connected to the university as a whole? (18)</th>
<th>Yes: 11</th>
<th>No: 5</th>
<th>Mixed: 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I do feel more connected to the University because I see people I know from class all the time. It makes this big school feel smaller” Dakota</td>
<td>“No, I really don’t feel connected to the University as a whole” Taylor</td>
<td>“Not really. I do feel more prepared to use the resources available” Chris</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The classes we spent in Gorgas helped me to connect more with the University” Rumi</td>
<td>“Unfortunately, I don’t feel more connected to the University” Marley</td>
<td>“Slightly. I think by submitting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I learned about different resources on campus. I was able to become more comfortable with the resources that are available in the library … [and] the media center” River</td>
<td>“Not necessarily” Riley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“After this semester’s work, I feel more connected to the university because of being introduced to librarians, the writing center, and the man who came to speak to us about iMovie” Tyler</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Yes, I have learned how to use many of the resources on campus through this class” Jamie
“I feel more connected to the University from classroom discussions” Peyton
“I feel that writing about many events that occur around the campus has caused me to care about them much more than I otherwise would have” Quinn
“I do feel more connected to the university as a whole due to the topics we have discussed that relate to the university and all the students” Drew
“The library class session made me feel much more connected to the university and the resources that are provided for students. I had not even heard of the SMC before this class” Ryan
“I’ve always loved UA, but being here has deepened my respect for the University and I have a new home here on campus” Val

| “I can’t say this course has connected me to the university any more than I already was” | Pat
| “I do not think this class has made me feel more or less connected with the university” | Cameron

| to the Crimson White as well as doing some research on free speech conflicts on campus that I have learned more about the school” | Pat

Fig. 17. Post-semester Survey Question Six

Post-Semester Survey Question Seven

Since the entire semester is predicated on the idea of responding justly when challenges arise, the answers to this survey questions, “Did Ms. Mwenja handle classroom challenges in a just manner?” (see fig. 18) are particularly important. Sixteen of the seventeen students responding say that I did handle classroom challenges justly, but even the one outlier indicates that the classroom ran along restorative principles. Pat says, “I do not think Mrs. Mwenja had any classroom challenges. Everyone in the class was respectful to her and the peers.” Pat’s response indicates that the course design inherently upheld restorative principles—a group of first-year students without strong modeling and guidance will often act in ways that are not respectful of their instructors or their peers. Pat’s answer shows that the course content and structure supported students in choosing to interact respectfully. My experience in the past has been that students are not interested in the theory behind classroom practices; they simply want to take part in classroom activities. As the semester continues, they begin to see the benefits of the decisions I have made in setting up the course. Because my previous classes had
communicated their disinterest in delving into restorative theory, we did not discuss restorative practices at length in the Fall 2016 class; we simply enacted them.

The other students in the class say that I handled challenges justly, and they point to a variety of challenges that we encountered as a class to back their claims. One surprising outcome was the way students were struck by the way we dealt with rubrics in the class. Marley saw student control of the rubric as an example of a just classroom practice. She says, “I’ve never had a class that allowed me to change a rubric!” Other students identified moments when members of the class disagreed about how to weight the rubrics as moments of conflict. As Taylor says, “When challenges were brought on by rubric grading, Mrs. Mwenja made sure that everyone’s opinion mattered”; Tyler discusses a similar moment. These incidents illustrate the interlocking levels of restorative practices. The rubric itself is designed as a restorative tool to clearly present the academic expectations for the classroom community; it includes students by making expectations transparent and available to all participants. I extend the restorative nature of the rubric by asking students to be part of the process of deciding which sections to include and how much each section should be worth; this process invites the students to participate as equals in class decision-making. Lastly, in discussing how to shape the rubric for each assignment, we participate in a restorative process of dialogue and shared decision-making; hearing and resolving conflicting opinions is an integral part of the process. As Costello, Wachtel, and Wachtel say, restorative practices “create a cooperative atmosphere in which students take responsibility for their actions. Students respond because they feel respected and realize that what they say matters” (85). Creating the rubrics together demonstrates that their voices are heard, included, and respected.
Some of the students discussed the justice they felt they had received in my response to their personal needs. Chris says, “Mrs. Mwenja did work with me to give extensions and extra help when needed.” Several students had personal challenges during the semester and came to me privately to ask for both help and extended time to meet assignment deadlines. These are added examples of the ways that restorative instructors can work “with” students while simultaneously keeping students responsible to finish their work. Another way that restorative instructors can support students is in mentoring them in using unfamiliar technology and online applications. Val says that “There were a few times where [he] did a paper on time but couldn’t figure out how to turn it in and [I] helped [him] out.” Cameron remembers an adjustment I made to the class format so that he could still attend online when he was out of town at Thanksgiving; he had missed the limit of classes and his travel was already booked. When Cameron came to me with this request, I weighed his needs with the needs of the other stakeholders to find a solution that honored and included all—I moved the class online so that he and others could both travel and attend class that day. This is a strong example of the way that RCP can inform “unexpected cases,” to use Cameron’s words.

Other students discuss the ways that the needs of the class as a whole were met in a just manner during the semester. Ryan says that I “was always fair in grading.” This perception may well have been aided by the openness and transparency of rubric development. After we developed the rubric together, we used it to grade a piece of writing similar to the one they had been assigned. This practice allowed the students to see the grading process from the point of view of the grader and to understand the reasons I evaluated their work in the way that I did. Kennedy says that the process of having multiple opportunities for drafting and peer review was a just process that “taught [him] how to prepare and to write drafts.” River says that a moment of
challenge that I “handled specifically well was when students were struggling to finish the Op-Ed and the due date was extended.” When I saw that the entire class was having trouble meeting the deadline, I knew that the timeline should be adjusted to meet their needs. By doing so, I demonstrated that we were working together in the class. Riley says that “one of [my] main priorities was to always make sure that [they] were okay emotionally and psychologically.” By checking in with the class periodically on how they were managing the course load as well as how they were responding to troubling news events, I communicated that they were part of the classroom community and that their well-being was important to me. This practice is one of many ways that I communicate a “culture of care and respect,” as Thorsborne and Blood say (43).

The remaining students responding to this question focus on the way I handled classroom discussions throughout the semester in fair and even-handed way. Dakota states, “There are a few times that we have discussed tough topics and Mrs. Mwenja was able to speak about them in a way that was respectful and informative.” Students named such topics as “race” (Rumi), “sexism” (Jamie), and “gay rights” (Drew). Quinn states, “Whenever a conflict occurred, [Mrs. Mwenja] got everyone in the class to listen to both sides…. I think the entire class was very willing to listen to ideas because of this.” These comments get back to the ways that restorative practices are practices of dialogue, of listening to others and interacting respectfully, or as restorative practices scholar Laura Mirsky says, they “create the culture that says, ‘We talk about stuff as a group and we help each other out’” (53). Students in this class spanned the political and ideological spectrum, but they report feeling that I managed classroom discussion justly and that they could present their points of view without fear of attack. I hope that they are able to carry this practice of respectful dialogue into other discourse communities they join. These responses
are particularly meaningful to me as a far-left progressive; the students sensed my stances on a variety of issues but did not feel coerced into taking my view. At a time when colleges and universities are seen as centers for leftist brainwashing, this result is especially noteworthy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Did Ms. Mwenja handle classroom challenges in a just manner? (17)</th>
<th>Yes: 16</th>
<th>No challenges: 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“When challenges were brought on by rubric grading, Mrs. Mwenja made sure that everyone’s opinion mattered” Taylor</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I do not think Mrs. Mwenja had any classroom challenges. Everyone in the class was respectful to her and the peers” Pat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mrs. Mwenja did work with me to give extensions and extra help when needed” Chris</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There are a few times that we have discussed tough topics and Mrs. Mwenja was able to speak about them in a way that was respectful and informative” Dakota</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There was an instance where a group of students felt strongly about the percentage of a category on our rubric and she compromised so that the group of students would be satisfied along with the rest of the class” Tyler</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“When discussing race, several people had different opinions, and even though everyone didn’t agree, Mrs. Mwenja still listened to them and viewed their opinions equally” Rumi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We got to edit our own rubrics. I’ve never had a class that allowed me to change a rubric!” Marley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One instance that Mrs. Mwenja handled specifically well was when students were struggling to finish the Op-Ed and the due date was extended so that we would have a few more days to finish up what we were working on” River</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“One of Mrs. Mwenja’s main priorities was to always make sure that we were okay emotionally and psychologically” Riley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I believe she handled the situations in the class quite well. Specifically when addressing controversial issues that happened on campus. For instance sexism and racism on campus” Jamie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mrs. Mwenja always makes sure she is fair and just” Peyton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Whenever a conflict occurred, [Mrs. Mwenja] got everyone in the class to listen to both sides…. I think the entire class was very willing to listen to ideas because of this” Quinn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think she treated unexpected cases in a very just manner. I had reached my maximum absences quite early in the semester… This became a problem when I needed to be able to miss the Monday of Thanksgiving break. To fix the conflict, Mrs. Mwenja made attendance for the class an online requirement so that I could still go see my family” Cameron</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Mrs. Mwenja handled sensitive topics such as gay rights and racism in a manner that is not biased toward one stance. This way she made no one feel uncomfortable” Drew</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m not sure what classroom challenges constitute, but Mrs. Mwenja was awesome every day and always had the class under control” Aspen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“In the beginning of the class multiple people, including myself, were procrastinators and did not do drafts, but because of Mrs. Mwenja’s due dates for peer review, it taught me how to prepare and to write drafts” Kennedy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[Mrs. Mwenja] was always fair in grading” Ryan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I didn’t have much experience with computers thus I had some difficulties adjusting to using solely online stuff…. There were a few times where I did a paper on time but couldn’t figure out how to turn it in and [Mrs. Mwenja] helped me out” Val</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 18. Post-semester Survey Question Seven
Post-Semester Survey Question Eight

Seventeen students answer post-semester survey question eight, “If you came in to the class viewing yourself as a poor writer or grammarian, has that view of yourself changed?” (see fig. 19). Even though only nine had fully negative opinions of themselves as writers in the pre-semester survey, fifteen report making gains in their writing skills throughout the semester, including all but one of those who felt confident in their writing as the semester began. Only three students report feeling unchanged as writers. Chris, who had said she felt confident in her writing in the pre-semester survey, says that she still feels confident in her writing. Val, who received a grade of NC because he did not turn in two major grade assignments, says, unsurprisingly, “not much” in response to this question. Cameron says in the post-semester survey that he “struggled as a writer before the semester and still feel[s] like [he] struggle[s]”; however, he gives an expanded answer in the final semester reflection. In the last essay of the semester, looking back on his work, he says, “Despite feeling that I started the semester as a terrible writer, I believe that my skills developed.” He goes on to say, “I have grown quite a bit in the area of taking broad, unformed ideas in my head and putting them into words.” Even though Cameron says that he “still struggles” as a writer, he also believes that his “skills developed.” Despite reporting in the post-semester survey that he felt essentially unchanged as a writer, his semester reflection offers a fuller picture of his views on his writing development.

Of the eight students who report modest gains in their writing or grammar skills, three had said in the pre-semester survey that they were poor writers. Kennedy did get the message that writing is a process, saying, “because of this class I have been able to review my writing and grow.” Jamie says that, while his “opinion of [himself] as a writer has improved some,” he “still need[s] more practice with grammar.” By contrast, Drew says that his “view of [his] grammatical
skills became more positive over the course of the semester.” I wonder if these contrasting views on their growth in grammar usage results from my practice of focusing on revising the students’ writing and discussing grammatical choices within that context. Some students like Jamie may not see that practice as explicitly focusing on grammar, while others like Drew may perceive that practice did help them make better grammatical choices in academic English. Other students who report modest gains say that they have “added some variation to [their] writing” (Tyler) or that “focus[ing] on rhetoric … helped [them] as a writer” (Marley). Pat reports gains in “effectively conveying [his] messages to others.”

Seven students report strong improvement in their writing skills over the course of the semester, and three of this group saw themselves as poor writers when the semester began. Dakota says, “this class has taught me to have better process work and catch common errors.” River says that she ha[s] improved,” and Riley says she “ha[s] found a real passion for writing,” despite having “viewed [her]self as a poor writer before this class.” Students like these, who began the semester by viewing themselves as poor writers and have changed their opinion about their abilities over the course of the term, have experienced repair to a deficit view of themselves; RCP transformed their views of writing, the writing process, or their abilities as writers. Others who report strong improvements in their views of themselves as writers say they are “more comfortable” (Taylor) and, “more confident” (Peyton) in their writing abilities. My thumbnail description of RCP, as I offer in the introduction and in Chapter Four, is that facilitators work with groups to create inclusive and egalitarian communities, repair individuals and the community as needed, and transform individuals and the community when possible. The students who see themselves as better writers have experienced a transformation as a result of this semester of RCP. Whether they saw themselves as strong or poor writers when the semester
began, the majority of students in this semester taught with a Restorative Composition Pedagogical model saw themselves as better writers at the end of the term. This result shows that RCP met the goals expected of a composition classroom, in addition to meeting restorative goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improved a good deal: 7</th>
<th>Improved some: 8</th>
<th>Unchanged: 2</th>
<th>N/A: 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I think my writing and grammar has improved as a result of this class. I am more comfortable with my writing ability” Taylor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I came to this class viewing myself as an average writer, but this class has taught me to have better process work and catch common errors I have in my own writing” Dakota</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My writing overall has improved. Peer review helped” Rumi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I came into this class and thought I was a very poor writer. I don’t believe that I am a strong writer after this class, but I would say that I have improved” River</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I definitely viewed myself as a poor writer before this class but not anymore…. I am so much more confident in articulating myself… and have found a real passion for writing” Riley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I grew a lot as a writer in this class. I feel much more confident about my writing” Peyton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I initially thought I was not very good at writing but I do think that has changed in some meaningful measure” Quinn</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have always thought of myself as writing with proper grammar. I have added some variation to my writing over the semester but my grammar has remained the same” Tyler</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I always viewed myself as a good writer…. However, this class challenged me to think differently about my writing. I had never focused on rhetoric before and I think that helped me as a writer” Marley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My opinion of myself as a writer has improved some…. I still need more practice with grammar” Jamie</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My view of my grammatical skills became more positive over the course of the semester. It did not always reflect in my grade but I could tell what I needed to improve on” Drew</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Coming into this class, I viewed myself as a solid grammarian. This course has helped me improve to a very solid grammarian” Aspen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Before this class, I never gave much effort into the writing process, but because of this class I have been able to review my writing and grow” Kennedy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I now feel more confident in my writing skills and my ability to effectively convey my messages to others” Pat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I came into this class knowing I had good writing and grammar skills…. Mrs. Mwenja’s feedback improved my writing and grammar skills further” Ryan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I felt like I struggled as a writer before the semester and still feel like I struggle” Cameron</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Not much” Val (N/C)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 19. Post-semester Survey Question Eight

Post-Semester Survey Question Nine

Sixteen students answer the last, open-ended survey question, “What other thoughts do you have about the class structure and content?” (see fig. 20), with eleven responders saying generally positive things about the class. Some of these students gave general compliments, such...
as “the class overall was helpful and interesting” (Jamie), “the class ran at a high level” (Pat), and “it was a positive and enjoyable semester” (Drew). Others offer more specific feedback. Aspen states that they “always had things to do that had purpose behind them, not just busy work.” This comment indicates Aspen’s sense that I had chosen every element of the semester for a reason; I did not fill class time with content unrelated to the work we shared. Taylor says that I “made sure everyone in class got involved with the lesson.” This comment shows that the pedagogy did draw students into the classroom community. Riley commends two kinds of freedom: “the freedom that Mrs. Mwenja allowed us in writing about things we were passionate about and the freedom to think freely”; this comment indicates that my teaching style did come across as restorative rather than authoritarian. I guided the class but did not tell them how to think. Dakota says that she “wish[es] all [her] classes were [this] interactive,” again indicating that the classroom was inclusive and dialogic. Cameron and Kennedy mention specific aspects of the class, including “peer reviews [and] … opportunities for revision” (Cameron) and “how to express … arguments” and “how to prepare and organize [his] thoughts” (Kennedy).

Five students offer comments which contain constructive criticism that I can use to improve future classes. Three of these comments include positive remarks, as well. Chris says that “Class content was good but occasionally the class felt disorganized.” This remark was in response to the changes we made to the class calendar to help students meet assignment deadlines. While River had seen this action as a just response to class needs, Chris experienced it as disorganization. When I make such changes in the future, I will take care to communicate them even better by circulating the revised calendar via email rather than simply posting in in the online course shell and telling students about it in class. River says that “we started off a little random.” I think this was partly because the first unit splits its focus between an orientation to
the class and a focus on Translingualism and partly because the translingual unit does not end in a formal paper. I can adjust future semesters by having an introductory unit followed by a Translingual unit, and ending the translingual unit with a short paper. Thorsborne and Blood recommend that instructors take care to “teach explicitly what is needed” (34), and this adjustment will make course expectations more clear. Quinn says that “the only issue [he has] is that the arguments we made for the Annotated Bibliography continue for too long.” Most students say they are happy to do research once, then use that research to support two projects, so it may be that Quinn chose a topic he did not really want to engage with in a sustained way. I can help students avoid “topic regret” by having them complete some sort of interest inventory, then conference with them to discuss the inventories before we begin library research. This change should help them to choose topics that will keep their interest over the second half of the semester.

While Val did end up with an NC for the course, and his comments on this question focus on the things he needs to change for his own future work, he gives me some valuable insights to implement in future classes. He says that he “shouldn’t ever miss class.” While I do award attendance by giving daily grades to those who participate, I can call more attention to the ways that each class activity specifically scaffolds each major paper, so that students see each class period as valuable. Val also says that he “should adapt to technology.” This comment shows that I need to offer even more support to students as they learn to use the classroom technology. I should not assume that all students have facility or ease in using technology, and I should not assume that they will ask—I need to continue to demonstrate the technological applications I expect them to use, and to continue to invite questions and office hours visits.
9. What other thoughts do you have about the class structure and content? (16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generally Positive</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed or unclear whether positive or negative</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Mrs. Mwenja … made sure everyone in the class got involved with the lesson” Taylor
“I wish all my classes were interactive and had a more casual feel like this class had” Dakota
“the class structure and content went well” Rumi
“I enjoyed the freedom that Mrs. Mwenja allowed us in writing about things we were passionate about and the freedom to think freely in the classroom” Riley
“The class overall was helpful and interesting” Jamie
“The best parts … [were] the constant peer reviews … as well as the constant opportunities for revision” Cameron
“overall, it was a positive and enjoyable semester” Drew
“This class was structured very well. We always had things to do that had purpose behind them, not just busy work” Aspen
“this class was very helpful for me because it taught me how to express my arguments and it taught me how to prepare and organize my thoughts” Kennedy
“the class ran at a high level” Pat
“the class was structured well. I went in as a good writer and I came out with improvement and more confidence” Ryan

“Class content was good but occasionally the class felt disorganized” Chris
“The content of this class was very abstract and not traditional to any English class I have been part of” Tyler
“I felt like we started off a little random, but as the semester went on I felt like we were moving in a clear direction” River
“I think the class structure is well done. The only issue I have is that the arguments we made for the Annotated Bibliography continue for too long, as it spans three different assignments” Quinn
“I learned that I shouldn’t ever miss class. That I should adapt to technology and I shouldn’t procrastinate” Val

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opinion</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“No Credit”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students Who Earned “No Credit”

As I discuss in the previous chapter, students who earn any grade below a “C” in first-year writing at the University of Alabama receive a grade of “NC,” or “No Credit.” Students may also receive “NC” if they miss more than the allowed number of classes. In the fall 2016 102-021 class, three students received a grade of NC, and two of them agreed to take part in this study. It is particularly interesting to note that these students continued to attend class throughout the semester. Two of the NC were earned, and one was the result of excessive absences. In light of the class comments about feeling connected to the others at the respective tables, I wonder if these students found it less embarrassing to continue attending even after they knew they could not pass than to admit to their tablemates that they would not pass.

The two “NC” students who agreed to participate in the study both knew they would not pass the class because they each had not submitted more than one major paper. Despite these
lapses, Ainsley completed the semester reflection, and Val completed the post-semester survey. Both students say that they have learned skills from the semester’s work. Ainsley states that he has “learned to think about a topic from an unbiased viewpoint and explore multiple ways of addressing the topic at hand.” Val describes lessons that are less from the class content and more from hard-earned experience: “I learned that I shouldn’t ever miss class. That I should adapt to technology and I shouldn’t procrastinate.” The fact that both of these students, who knew they would not pass the class, were willing to continue coming to class and to write additional assignments—not to mention their agreement to participate in the study—speaks to the ways that each still felt connected to the class, even having earned an “NC.” Val does not say specifically why he feels more connected to the campus because of our semester together, but he does say this in his post-semester survey: “I’ve always loved UA, but being here has deepened my respect for the University and I have a new home here on campus.”

Chapter Conclusion

Almost all of the students in the Fall 2016 semester believe that their communication skills have improved as a result of participating in the class. Their opinions about the field of English have generally improved, and they feel that their writing abilities have improved. Additionally, the students appreciated the restorative aspects of the course, saying in very strong terms that they felt “welcome, respected, and included in the class.” They also report being more “understanding and respectful” of how others communicate, and they feel more connected to their classmates as well as to the university as a whole. They feel that classroom challenges were handled in a just manner, and they point to a wide variety of evidence for their assertions. Some students offered constructive criticism that I will address in future iterations of the course.
Overall, the Restorative Composition Pedagogy I employed for the Fall 2016 class met both composition pedagogy and restorative outcomes. I consider a few of the implications in the final chapter.
CONCLUSIONS

Every moment of a semester acts rhetorically to communicate the teacher’s attitudes and values to the students. These rhetorical acts—the syllabus, the lessons, the assignments, the activities, the emails, the office hours, and the moments between all of these acts—can create an atmosphere in which the students feel that the teacher is—or is not—working with them, and that each student does—or does not—belong in the class. The rhetorical act of inclusion is particularly important in a class such as first-year writing, where the subject matter is composition and rhetoric. Restorative Composition Pedagogy communicates the idea that each student already composes and speaks in rhetorically effective ways for specific contexts. The pedagogy then builds on that stance to teach students to compose rhetorically-effective texts for an expanded variety of situations.

RCP can provide an epistemology to undergird composition course content; it can also organize an understanding of current composition scholarship. This pedagogy provides a rule of thumb for composition teachers from many backgrounds to use. Some teachers may not keep up with composition scholarship, but they can be guided by the RCP ideas that in restorative settings, facilitators work with all members of a group to create an inclusive and egalitarian community, to repair harms done to individuals or the community as needed, and to transform individuals and the community when possible. These ideas can permeate every aspect of classroom methods and content, as well as giving the teacher a default attitude in working with the class during planned and unplanned moments.
In this study, I have described a semester that is not very different, in many ways, from those of many other composition teachers. Many instructors and professors teach papers such as a literacy narrative, a comparative analysis, and an annotated bibliography. Many first-year writing students are required to write research-based arguments such as the opinion-editorial, and many classes are moving toward including multi-modal content and projects. Collaborative writing is common in composition classrooms, as are multiple rounds of peer review. Likewise, student writing has become a serious object of study within the classroom and within the discipline. RCP has provided a structure in which I can enact the best of current composition scholarship while simultaneously striving to meet the needs of each student—even when the students are unprepared for class, even when they think that a composition class has nothing to offer them, and even when they give up because they think they are “bad” at writing. RCP also allows me to meet the students when they are at their best—when they want to dig more deeply into their choices as rhetoricians and compositionists, when they want to better understand how to target their audience, and when they want to explore writing as a career.

Reaching Restorative Composition Pedagogy Goals

The students came to the semester with a predictable variety of attitudes about writing, about their writing abilities, and about the field of English. In reading the pre-semester survey results, I was heartened to see that about half of the students responded positively to questions about these topics. Because English 102 is a required class, I often feel that one of my jobs is to make the entire semester into a sustained argument for the validity of course content. While I will continue this practice—so that the students can see the applicability of class work in other areas of their lives—the survey results let me know that about half the students already
appreciate the work we do together. The students in this class also report common experiences in regards to English usage and to fairness in the classroom. Many judged others and had felt judged themselves about their language use. While most had felt included in previous English classrooms, the majority had also experienced injustices at school.

At the end of the semester, an overwhelming majority of the students felt more confident in their writing abilities, and they reported more awareness of writing in a rhetorical context. They voice appreciation for collaborative work and for the inclusiveness of the large group discussions; they agree that, in our class, everyone’s voice was heard and respected. On the whole, the group say at the end of the semester that they are more respectful of other ways of communicating and of other points of view. They better see how to apply what they have learned in English class to other classes and situations. They built strong social networks within the class, and most feel more connected to the campus and its resources, as well. They see that the principle of justice was enacted in the class, and they draw from a wide variety of classroom interactions to support their claims that this is so.

As I reviewed the post-semester surveys and end-of-semester reflection papers, I chose snippets from each student’s writings that best express the strongest insights each took from the semester. Judging from these student responses, the Fall 2016 102 class met many RCP goals, among them the restorative goal of working with the individual students. RCP recognizes that the individuals within the classroom also have lives outside of the classroom. They bring their feelings about external events—both public and private—to class with them. Riley appreciates this recognition, saying, “Many [class periods] began with ‘housekeeping’ where [Mrs. Mwenja] would just check on us. It was very considerate and comforting, especially after major political and social events that occurred over the course of the semester.” I used the bellringer and
subsequent discussion every so often to get these feelings out in the open so that the students were then able to better focus on our work together. These strategies helped me to enact inclusion of the students as whole people. Jamie says that the ability to choose his own research focus reached him on a personal level, as well. He states, “I had never been asked to write an argumentative research paper about an issue that directly affected me.” The pedagogy includes the students as individuals, and this means finding a way to link to their individual interests, too.

The Fall 2016 class also met the restorative goal of providing time and space for the students to work not just with me, but with one another. Aspen says that the collaborative class work helped his composition skills. “Using the class time given to me to converse with my fellow students in order to further develop my drafts was a major key in my growth as a writer.” We used dialogue as a restorative tool to help students improve their writings. Aspen recognizes the beneficial results of drafting, then discussing, then re-drafting. The restorative ideal of working together fulfilled a composition class goal of writing improvement.

The course also helped students to repair their ideas about writing and about themselves as writers. Prior to the class, Riley thought that she could never master writing. She says, “Before the semester began I looked at composition as an undefeatable beast. I now feel that I have better tools to push myself to continuously grow as a writer.” Of course, no first-year student has fully mastered writing, but Riley now gives herself the label of “writer,” and she not only sees that she can continue to develop her writing, but she also envisions doing so. Kennedy also saw himself as a poor writer when the semester began, but saw a change once he engaged in the process reinforced by the class. In writing about the first time he completed the required process work—for the third assignment—he says, “I wrote multiple drafts, and each draft I put through peer review. The resulting bibliography was greater than I had ever thought I could write.” This class,
to some extent, repaired his view of himself as a “bad” writer by giving him instruction and practice in the habits of experienced writers. Kennedy did not finish the semester thinking of himself as a “good” writer, but he did see that he could achieve much more than he had ever considered to be possible before.

Many students come to a first-year writing class with fear about writing. They may have fear that they have nothing to say, that other people may disagree with their views, or that they are bad at the mechanics of writing in a formal dialect. River says that this course relieved some anxiety about writing, stating, “After this class, I now have less fear of writing.” Writing can feel intensely personal and inextricably bound up with emotions, particularly the emotion of fear. RCP does not purport to be a counseling practice, but it can provide space for students to voice the feelings they bring with them to class. In voicing these feelings, students may be able to recognize and move past the negative emotions that often hold them back from engaging in their writing; this seems to be the case for students like River.

The repairs that students like Riley, Kennedy, and River report seem to straddle the line between repair of mistaken ideas and transformation. A few students describe being transformed in some way by the class. Chris says, “This class was instrumental in helping me decide to make English my second major.” While Chris’ view of her professional future transformed as a result of the class, other students link their growth in writing with general growth as people. Rumi says, “Overall, this course has helped me develop as a writer and as a person.” Similarly, Marley says, “This class … inspired me to become a better researcher, writer, and human being.” Neither Rumi nor Marley state exactly how they became better people as a result of the class, but I hope that part of the growth they experienced is the ability to respectfully engage with unfamiliar ideas and with different kinds of people. In whatever ways these students see themselves
differently, they report that the course transformed them as people; this result reflects a positive outcome of the class.

In teaching with RCP, my goal is to create a restorative space for students to be “happier, more cooperative and productive” composition students, to use Wachtel’s terms. The students in the Fall 2016 class draw conclusions beyond this goal, directly relating restorative elements to academic successes. Some of the students discuss practical gains stemming from the class. Peyton says, “Coming into the class, I had trouble making the word count; now I have trouble not going over it.” Peyton’s comment illustrates the idea that he can better develop his writing because of the work we did together; the class helped him to express his ideas more fully. In an extension of this idea, Dakota says, “This was the first English class I have taken that has actually helped me lay a base for what I need to do when I write.” This comment shows that the class gave the students a solid grounding in composition strategies; many students did not have explicit instruction on writing development or process prior to this class. In giving the students tools to become better writers, the class enacts the restorative ideal of making the rules of writing success explicit.

Many students discuss the valuable effects that peer review had on their writing. Ainsley talks about the advantages of completing multiple peer-reviewed drafts. “The factor that I appreciate most about peer review is the fact that our papers get looked over three different times with increasing scrutiny.” Ainsley has noticed that the peer review sessions during the semester were designed to focus on revision, editing, and proofreading in turn, and he values the sustained engagement with the developing text that the practice provides. By contrast, Shay values the insights he gained from seeing his peers’ work during peer review. He says, “Analyzing the works of other peers helped [me] to see how other people wrote and conveyed their ideas, which
definitely helped me to take some of those ideas and put my own twist on them, with the goal that my own writing would be improved in the process.” Shay values the insights he gained from seeing his peers’ drafts-in-progress; this is another benefit that can stem from students sharing documents with one another. While many other composition class teachers require peer review, the peer review in this class—with its focus on helping one’s peer to improve the text in specific ways—seemed to reach students more effectively than their past peer review experiences had. Quinn expresses this common viewpoint, saying, “reading the work of others was something I always despised throughout high school, but the peer review section of this class helped my writing so much.” Many students responded positively to this restorative focus on collaborative improvement.

Several students discuss ways that they could apply the class content in other situations. Their observations indicate that they are thinking in terms of transferring the things they have learned in this class to other settings; such transference is a prime goal of first-year writing. Aspen sees that he could have used the practices from this class in previous ones. He says, “Looking back on my work from high school and other classes, I wonder to myself how much better my work could’ve been had I used the tools I learned from this course.” While it is too late for him to go back in time, Aspen’s observation shows that he values what he learned in the course and that he can see its usefulness. Dakota notices that she learned strategies other than writing in the class. She says, “Learning the beauty of process work has helped me in many ways, but the main problem it helped with is procrastination…. This has not only helped me in English, but in all of my other classes as well.” Dakota’s remark shows that the students have learned planning practices and development strategies that they can use both for writing projects and for other subjects.
After the work of the semester, many students in this and other first-year writing sections discuss the ways they begin to apply the idea of the rhetorical situation in settings beyond the classroom. This new way of seeing was one of Drew’s big lessons to take from the course. He says, “[Seeing connections] in shows and films … made me realize that the rhetorical situation is applicable to many other circumstances outside of the classroom.” As the students articulate the rhetorical situation in their everyday lives, they transfer and strengthen their rhetorical perceptions. These enhanced perceptions can help them to better participate in public discourse and in their professional fields. Peyton also envisions transference of the course content to other situations. He says, “I know that I can figure out how to write papers in the future that require different styles.” He has confidence that the work we did together gave him the skills to compose appropriate texts in response to a variety of rhetorical situations.

Room for Improvement

In keeping with the restorative idea of repair and transformation, I take a moment here to examine ways in which this study and the course could be improved. When I conduct future iterations of this study, I will collect much more demographic information to be able to explore the ways that gender, ethnicity, cultural and geographic background, class level, and high school AP course completion may relate to the students’ answers and experiences. For example, when I read about the students’ experiences with negative evaluations of their writing and speech, I wondered whether their geographical or cultural backgrounds may have played into these encounters. This research study did not provide insights on these levels.

Additionally, gathering demographic information will allow me to examine whether or not RCP relieves “stereotype threat.” As psychologist and researcher Toni Schmader states in
“Stereotype Threat Deconstructed,” “stereotype threat” consists of “subtle reminders” in academic settings … that presume the incompetence of certain groups” (14). As Schmader discusses, various research studies have shown that “anyone can exhibit impaired performance when reminded of ways in which they might be negatively stereotyped” (14). These effects “have been found to extend to those stigmatized on the basis of gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status” (14). According to Schmader, “stereotype threat” can be relieved in two ways. The first is by reassuring participants that “anxiety will not harm their performance” (16), and the second is by educating students about “stereotype threat” (17). Since RCP has a goal of explicitly including students from all backgrounds and recognizing the strengths that each individual brings to the classroom, it should relieve stereotype threat; gathering demographic information about the students will help me to assess whether RCP does effectively address “stereotype threat.”

The pre- and post-semester surveys also need some refinement. The students chose to respond to the survey instruments in a variety of ways. Some responded directly to each question, while others compiled their answers. Some students also skipped answers, but that outcome may be unavoidable in a survey. This variety of answers made it difficult for me to clearly match all of the responses to specific questions. As a result, in future iterations of this or similar studies, I will use a survey software program like NVivo so that the responses will be more uniform and easier to analyze.

I asked in the pre-semester survey how the students felt about themselves as writers, but the matching question in the post-semester survey asks about how their view of themselves as “competent communicators” has changed. I made this vocabulary change to try to capture how they felt about thinking rhetorically and about using multi-modal elements, but it meant that I couldn’t chart a clear shift from the first question to the second. If I choose to do a similar study
in the future, I will address separate questions about writing, rhetoric, and multi-modal composition in both surveys. Questions one and four in the post-semester survey also encouraged the students to make claims about the ways they had changed over the semester; both questions begin with “How has your view … changed?” Since this wording leads the students toward a certain type of answer, in future iterations of this project, I will need to ask, “Has your view changed?” to get less-biased feedback.

Additionally, I need to separate out questions that ask about speaking and writing. There were certainly students who felt they did both well, and students who felt they did neither well, but most of the students felt they did one well but not the other. I also need to clarify what I mean by “speaking”; some students thought I meant public speaking, which many people do not care to do. I had hoped to gain insights into how students felt about their everyday speech, so I will need to refine this question to reflect that idea.

Questions five and six ask, “As a result of this semester’s work, do you feel more connected to others in the class?” and “to the university as a whole?” but they leave the idea of “connection” undefined. In a re-creation of this project, I will situate the idea of “connection” within the context of our work together prior to asking these questions; this articulation might be worded along these lines: “In restorative composition pedagogy, students are invited to join an inclusive and egalitarian classroom community in which individuals feel connected to others within the group and to the group as a whole. As a result of this semester’s work, do you feel this sort of connection to our class and to individuals within the class? Has your sense of connection, or lack of this sense of connection, related to your academic performance in the class?” This wording could help to shed light on student perception of the ways that a communal learning environment does or does not support academic success.
In question seven of the pre-semester survey, I ask how students currently feel about English as a field of study. Many students answered as if I were asking them to consider changing their major to English. If I repeat this study, I will need to refine this question to ask something more along the lines of this: “How much do you use what you have learned in past English classes in your everyday life?” and then, at the end of the semester, “How much do you think you will use what you have learned this semester in your everyday life?” This verbiage should better yield the information I hope to gain.

Students did respond to question eight, about injustices they had experienced in the classroom, with anecdotes appropriate to the prompt; however, during class discussions and informal writings, stories of other sorts of injustices more closely related to language use emerged (Mwenja Semester Notes). Some students talked about being shamed through their low performance in the Accelerated Reader program, and others wrote about discrimination due to their language variety. In a repeat of this study, I will re-frame this question to focus more closely on injustices relating to English classes, and I will include a brief definition of injustice, as well.

Every course has room for improvement, and this one is no exception. I developed the semester’s plan as one way of enacting Restorative Composition Pedagogy, but this is not necessarily a course plan to be copied. The biggest adjustment I will make when teaching the class again will be to give the students more opportunities to have complete freedom in making multi-modal choices when composing their texts. They expressed such joy when I told them there were no rules at all for arrangement, color, or font choices in the post-semester survey; I believe that this joy could lead them to engage much more fully with other assignments. One
possibility could be to have them create a document which follows the MLA style guide, then let
them revise it multi-modally and discuss how their changes enhance the text.

To prevent students feeling that the class is “random” or “disorganized,” I will separate
the course introduction from the translingual unit, and I will take care to make any calendar
changes much more transparent. I will also strive to better mentor students in choosing topics for
the research section of the semester so that they are happy to sustain their engagement over
several assignments. Lastly, I will avoid assuming that all students of the “technology
generation” actually have technological competency, and I will mentor them much more closely
in their use of the technology required by the class.

I had known from previous experience that the physical aspects of the classroom can
affect the ways one teaches, but I learned during this semester that the space could also affect my
ability to teach restoratively. This classroom supported my goal of inclusiveness with the table
arrangement. Since the students faced each other at the tables rather than the front of the
classroom, the classroom itself communicated that the students could interact with each other as
well as paying attention to me. The table groupings encouraged social bonding, with
relationships extending outside the classroom and beyond the semester. The students could also
move to other tables to occasionally get fresh input from other classmates. The classroom
supported inclusiveness on the level of technology, as well. All students had equal access to the
technology they needed to participate in the class, including Word, access to Blackboard Learn,
and access to the internet. Lastly, the teacher podium, with its computer projection and document
camera, allowed me to be more easily transparent with my examples and expectations. When I
teach with RCP in the future, I will need to be aware that the space and technology set-up may
not support inclusiveness and transparency in these ways.
Implications

This study describes the experiences of one class during one semester. While the results cannot be generalized from such a small sample, the responses are promising. Judging from the student responses, the course did create an inclusive and egalitarian community which repaired at least some harms and transformed a few folks, too. The students report feeling supported in their writing development, and they unanimously say they felt respected and included. Most students improved their views of themselves as writers, including both those who come to the class resistant as well as those who already felt comfortable as writers. All but one of the students moved from a proscriptive view of language use to a descriptive one. The class engaged in respectful dialogue to such an extent that we really did not see interpersonal conflict or rudeness. The students say that the course was responsive to their needs, individually and collectively.

The course was responsive to my needs, as well. Many of the benefits I experienced came directly from requiring three rounds of drafts per paper. This requirement gave us ample time to revisit the assignment and correct any misunderstandings, so that the papers were largely on target by the time I received the final drafts. The multiple rounds of drafting also helped students develop stronger work, so reading and grading their submissions was much more enjoyable. Lastly, by taking time with the middle draft of early papers to view the originality report of an essay, I helped students to avoid unintentional plagiarism. I also demonstrated that I would know if they intentionally plagiarized anything that had been published before. As a result of these habits, I avoided spending time dealing with plagiarism cases. This class was also restorative to me because I really got to know the students as people through our classroom dialogues. I enjoyed our time together and looked forward to classes. By encouraging students to participate in an inclusive classroom community, I created an enjoyable space for our work together.
Future Research

This research study can lead to a variety of future research inquiries, but I can also use the data already collected to support several other projects. The next project I will complete with the research from the Fall 2016 semester will focus on Translingualism. I will ground a report on the translingual unit and the students’ responses to it in the current translingual scholarship from the fields of TESOL and Composition and Rhetoric. Both fields are examining the ideas of Translingualism in different ways, and this project could be appropriate for journals such as *Teaching English* or *Research in the Teaching of English*.

During the next academic year, I will start on a training manual for teachers who would like to use RCP in their own classrooms. The manual will be a revision of this dissertation, and it will include a more-developed interrogation of restorative grading, in conversation with current assessment scholarship.

Another potential project that I could pursue with this data would be an objective analysis of the student’s writing improvement. The students in the Fall 2016 course feel that they are better writers, but I could use NCTE outcomes to more objectively judge whether their writing did improve. However, even if such a study found that the students had not improved in their writing, they did develop skills and confidence to help with future writing tasks.

After developing projects from this research, I have in mind several other projects to explore restorative approaches in composition pedagogy. One of these is to look at how to engage in RCP in online classes; another is how to apply RCP across a department as a WPA.

Restorative Composition Pedagogy, as expressed in the teaching of this course, met both composition course goals and restorative goals. The students met the Student Learning Outcomes given in the syllabus, including rhetorical situation analysis, ethical source usage, and the
creation of research-based arguments. The students also worked with me and with one another to create an inclusive classroom community and to both repair harms and transform themselves over the course of the semester. This pedagogy, with its awareness of the needs of various stakeholders, holds promise for better outcomes for students, better quality of life for teachers, and better retention for institutions. I will continue to explore this promise in the years to come.
REFERENCES


River. “Reading is as Easy as Riding a Bike.” Dissertation Research Materials, Fall 2016. Typescript.


APPENDICES

Appendix A: Course Policies and Syllabus

Note: The layout of all class documents has been changed from the originals because the Dyslexie font will not translate across software platforms.

Office Hours
Mondays and Fridays noon to 1:30

Office Location Rowand-Johnson 203. Please note that this is a shared office space.

Email
cdmwenja@crimson.ua.edu

Prerequisites
Score of 3 on AP English Exam OR successful completion of EN 101 with a grade of C- or higher

Course Description
English 102, the second course in UA’s first-year sequence, introduces students to the principles of academic argumentation, advanced critical thinking, university-level research techniques, and source-based writing. This section is based in restorative composition practices, meaning that we will work with each other this semester to include every member of the class and to respect our multiple means of communication. We begin the semester by examining our own relationships to English literacy and composition, then compare our experiences to those of others. As the semester continues, each of us will identify our own research interests within the class theme of “Discussions at the Schoolhouse Door,” then synthesize the findings in composing the semester’s various assignments.

Student Learning Outcomes
By the end of the semester,
- You will develop a repertoire of diverse rhetorical strategies that will enable you to assess and appropriately respond to each assignment’s audience and purpose.
- You will locate assignment-appropriate sources in the library and online.
- You will synthesize ethically summarized, paraphrased, and quoted source material into academic arguments.
- You will learn and correctly employ at least one system of citation.
- You will continue to apply the writing skills covered by EN 101 (e.g., process writing; rhetorical awareness; appropriate content development, organization, and style; sentence-level conventions; and metacognition).

Required Texts
- Barnet, Sylvan, and Hugo Bedau. From Critical Thinking to Argument, 4th ed.
Other Required Course Materials

- Notebook, pens, and highlighters or device for note taking
- Pocket folder to store ALL DRAFTS—formal and informal—throughout semester
- Daily access to computer, Microsoft Word, internet connection, printer, and stapler
- Email address you check daily and cloud drive or an online account such as Dropbox

A Note on Font You may have noticed that the font on this syllabus looks a little different. As part of my effort to provide an inclusive class environment, I use Dyslexie font for all printed materials. Dyslexie was developed by Christian Boer to decrease the issues that people with dyslexia experience when reading. For more information about Dyslexie font—or to download a copy for personal use—go to Dyslexie.com. [Because of submission guidelines, this appendix uses Times New Roman font.]

Course Policies

A, B, C, No Credit Final grades for the class below a C- are given a mark of No Credit (NC), which does not reflect on your GPA but will require you to take the course again. You may also receive an NC for excessive absences; please see the attendance policy.

Academic Misconduct All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student. The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy will be followed in the event of academic misconduct. For complete information, please refer to the “First-Year Writing Program policy on Academic Misconduct” as shown in A Writer’s Reference.

Assignments Due dates are subject to change in response to the needs of the class. You will receive a detailed daily plan at the beginning of each unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Grade Assignments</th>
<th>Word Count</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Grade Earned</th>
<th>Weighted Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Literacy Narrative Interview and Report</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Sept. 9</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>(x .1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Narrative Analysis and Synthesis</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Sept. 26</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>(x .1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>1250</td>
<td>Oct. 24</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>(x .15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Opinion-Editorial</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>(x .15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Multi-Modal Argument</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Dec. 2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>(x .1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regular attendance in your writing class is vital to your growth as a writer. Regular attendance equals success. You should, therefore, strive to attend every class meeting. It is in class, after all, that you will learn the habits of good writers, as you will have ample opportunities for conversation, collaboration, questioning, revising, writing, etc. Occasionally, however, you may have to miss class. The First-Year Writing Program Attendance Policy makes reasonable allowances for such absences. Please review the following information carefully: You should not miss more than six class meetings for classes meeting three times a week, or four class meetings for classes meeting twice a week. You are considered absent any time you are not in class—no matter what the reason. The First-Year Writing Program does not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences. If you miss more classes, you will receive a course grade of NC (“No Credit”) for excessive absences. Your instructor is required to assign this grade, except in rare cases warranting a policy waiver. However, you may appeal an attendance-related NC grade to the Director of First-year Writing after grades have been submitted.

What You Can Make Up Making up missed work does not erase absences. Again, you should strive to attend every class meeting. You may make up major-grade work (such as papers or tests) if class was missed due to legitimate circumstances beyond your control (i.e., documented illness or medical emergency; a family funeral; activities at which you officially represent the University of Alabama). If such circumstances should arise, please promptly communicate them to and document them for your instructor. You may make up major-grade work missed due to absences for other reasons only with the consent of your instructor. You may arrange to turn in major-grade work in advance or online only if allowed by your instructor.

What You Can’t Make Up Class discussions, group work, in-class writing, or other daily class work in a writing class cannot be reconstructed. Therefore, daily work missed due to absence or tardiness cannot be made up. Missed daily class work will have a negative impact on your grade!

Daily Grades Daily grades make up 20% of your final semester grade. You will have opportunities to earn daily grades during each class meeting. Daily grade opportunities include attendance, homework, reading responses, bellringers, class work, peer review, and office visits.

Disability Statement If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability, but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, please call 348-4285 or visit Houser Hall to register for services. Students who may need course adaptations because of a disability are welcome to make an appointment to see me during office hours. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services before receiving academic adjustments.
Emergencies In case of an emergency, go to the main University of Alabama website, www.ua.edu, for general information. Following an emergency/disaster, I will communicate any emergency information concerning the course within Blackboard Learn. Expect to do classwork even if we are prevented from physically being in class together.

Follow Up If I am late and there is no notice on the door, please wait ten minutes then send someone to the Main English Office (Morgan Hall 103) to tell them I was not in class. If you have a problem with anything that happens in this class, please see me first. If we are not able to resolve the problem, please see Dr. Luke Niiler, director of First-year Writing. I am glad to discuss the grades you have earned with your work. Before coming to office hours to discuss your grades, make sure you have carefully read my comments and the rubric attached to your paper.

Grading Policy “A” work is generally regarded as excellent; “B” work is good; “C” work is competent; “D” work is marginally below college standards; “F” work is clearly below minimum college standards. Work that does not follow the assignment (though otherwise acceptable) will also receive an “F.” Work that is not done or not turned in is recorded as a zero. Your teacher will provide more specific grading criteria on assignment sheets and/or rubrics. All major papers will be graded and returned before the next major assignment is due. Freshman-level proficiency in writing is required for a passing grade (see ABC-No Credit policy above).

Papers are graded A through F with pluses and minuses as necessary. A+= 98-100; A = 93-97; A- = 90-92; B+= 88-89; B =83-87; B- =80-82; C+=78-79; C = 73-77; C- = 70-72; NC = 69 and below.

Missed Coursework See the attendance policy above for information about making up missed major grade work; late papers will be accepted in the cases outlined by the attendance policy. Missed daily work cannot be made up. When you miss class, it is your responsibility to come to office hours to get the information you missed.

Revision Opportunities You will have the opportunity to revise each of your papers except the semester reflection. Details on the process and re-grading will be provided in class.

Restorative Practices In a restorative composition class, teachers and students work collaboratively, cooperatively, and inclusively to complete activities and assignments. All participants should expect to both give and receive respect and to view all class members as equally important and valuable. By focusing on what’s working well in multiple drafts, we will emphasize strengthening your compositions. You will take responsibility for your work and actions, while the class as a whole will strive to be responsive to individual needs. If you have questions about restorative practices or about any portion of the course, please ask!

Severe Weather In the case of a tornado warning (tornado has been sighted or detected by radar; sirens activated), all university activities are automatically suspended, including all classes and laboratories. If you are in a building, please move immediately to the lowest level and toward the center of the building away from windows (interior classrooms, offices, or corridors) and remain there until the tornado warning has expired. Classes in session when the tornado warning is issued can resume
immediately after the warning has expired at the discretion of the instructor. Classes that have not yet begun will resume 30 minutes after the tornado warning has expired provided at least half of the class period remains. UA is a residential campus with many students living on or near campus. In general classes will remain in session until the National Weather Service issues safety warnings for the city of Tuscaloosa. Clearly, some students and faculty commute from adjacent counties. These counties may experience weather related problems not encountered in Tuscaloosa. Individuals should follow the advice of the National Weather Service for that area taking the necessary precautions to ensure personal safety. Whenever the National Weather Service and the Emergency Management Agency issue a warning, people in the path of the storm (tornado or severe thunderstorm) should take immediate lifesaving actions. When West Alabama is under a severe weather advisory, conditions can change rapidly. It is imperative to get to where you can receive information from the National Weather Service and to follow the instructions provided. Personal safety should dictate the actions that faculty, staff and students take. The Office of Public Relations will disseminate the latest information regarding conditions on campus in the following ways: Weather advisory posted on the UA homepage, Weather advisory sent out through Connect-ED—faculty, staff and students (sign up at myBama), Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA at 90.7 FM, Weather advisory broadcast over Alabama Public Radio (WUAL) at 91.5 FM, Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA 7. WVUA 7 Storm Watch provides a free service you can subscribe to that allows you to receive weather warnings for Tuscaloosa via e-mail, pager or cell phone. Check http://www.wvua7.com/stormwatch.html for details.

Success!

- Be prepared for and attend every class period.
- Actively participate in every class.
- Come to office hours at least once per unit.
- Visit the Writing Center at least once per unit.

Technology Matters

- I will respond to your emails within twenty-four hours on weekdays and forty-eight hours on weekends.
- We will regularly use laptops, cell phones, and/ or other electronic devices in the classroom, and all use must be directly related to our class activities. Please use these devices only for our class work while we are together. Additionally, please do not have material on screen that could offend your classmates or distract you from class activities.
- The University of Alabama is committed to helping students uphold the ethical standards of academic integrity in all areas of study. Students agree that their enrollment in this course allows the instructor the right to use electronic devices to help prevent plagiarism. All course materials are subject to submission to TurnItIn.com for the purpose of detecting textual similarities—ideally before submission of any final draft. Assignments submitted to TurnItIn.com will be included as source documents in TurnItIn.com’s restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. TurnItIn.com will be used as a source document to help students avoid plagiarism in written documents.
The University of Alabama is committed to being an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (www.ua.edu/uact) provides extensive information on how to report or obtain assistance with a variety of issues, including issues related to dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, sexual violence/Title IX violations, illegal discrimination, harassment, child abuse or neglect, hazing, threat assessment, retaliation, ethical violations or fraud.

The Writing Center, located in 322 Lloyd Hall, is a wonderful resource for students. They do not proofread papers or write papers for you, but they can help with overall structure, organization, development, and mechanics. Take a copy of the writing assignment sheet and any work you’ve completed toward the assignment if you go. Go to http://writingcenter.ua.edu/ for more information or to set up an appointment.
Appendix B: Classroom Map
Appendix C: Unit Plans

Unit One: Introduction to Our Course and Language Variety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>August 17 and 19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Reading Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Homework Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>In Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Syllabus, Q/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tech orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Language Varieties and Power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>August 22, 24, 26</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Reading Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Homework Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>In Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Pre-semester Survey Homework due online by midnight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meet in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tour grad student office and Writing Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Articles about China English posted on BBL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Bring a brief written description of each article’s rhetorical situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Continue Language Varieties Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “Ain’t No Thing” posted on BBL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• After describing the article’s rhetorical situation, write a 200-word response in which you discuss advantages and disadvantages of both prescriptive and descriptive stances towards language use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meet in Gorgas 104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Turn in printed reading response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tips and Tricks for UABox, Word, and References</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Week 2 August 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
<th>Homework Due</th>
<th>In Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Take about 45 minutes to respond to the prompt posted on BBL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Post your response by midnight</td>
<td>• Meet online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Unit Two: Literacy Narrative

## Week 3 August 31 and September 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
<th>Homework Due</th>
<th>In Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td>Online submission (previous unit)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Unit One Follow Up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduce Unit Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Bring <em>A Writer’s Reference</em> to class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Review EN 101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Create Rubric for Literacy Narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Drafting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Week 4 September 7 and 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
<th>Homework Due</th>
<th>In Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Labor Day—Classes Dismissed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Printed full draft of your Literacy Narrative</td>
<td>• Bring <em>A Writer’s Reference</em> to class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Introduction to peer review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Revision and Peer Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Printed revised draft of your Literacy Narrative</td>
<td>• Editing and Peer Review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Week 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reading Due</th>
<th>Homework Due</th>
<th>In Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td>• By class time, upload the final draft of your Literacy Narrative to the TurnItIn assignment in Blackboard Learn.</td>
<td>• Submit all notes and drafts in your process folder; include a hard copy of the final draft.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Assignment Sheets, Generic Rubric, and Revision Opportunity

Literacy Narrative (Major Assignment #1)

Introduction
Each of us has learned a great variety of literacies--reading and writing, using a variety of technologies, and participating in various social groups. Each of these accomplishments represents a type of literacy. This assignment asks you to catalogue your literacy experiences, then to compose a narrative—a well-told story—about the origins and development of one of your literacies.

Writing Task
1. Make notes about your literacy experiences. Think about reading, writing, and/or technology use; consider memorable accomplishments, moments, or instructors, as well. Keep a record of your notes!
2. As you review your notes, notice any themes that emerge. Characterize your literacy experiences with one overarching idea; this idea will be your thesis, or main point.
3. After deciding on the main point you can make based on evidence from your notes, write a 1,000-word narrative about one of your literacies. Arrange your narrative in the form of an academic essay:
   - Introduction Give context for your audience to understand your main point. Do not anticipate the argument by telling your audience what you will say in the body of your paper.
   - Thesis In the last sentence of the introduction, clearly state the thesis you developed.
   - Body Using the claim-support-explanation model we will discuss in class, develop several paragraphs which advance and support your thesis.
   - Conclusion Conclude by answering the questions “So what?” or “What next?” Tell your readers why they should care about what you have written. Do not summarize your paper.

Rhetorical Situation
You are a college freshman writing to other college freshmen. Your language should be clear but casual.

Documentation and Submission Guidelines
Use the MLA format we learned in the library session and as outlined in A Writer's Reference.

Keep every scrap of paper and record you have showing your writing process; submit these in hard copy on the last day of the unit. At a minimum, your process folder will include brainstorming and process work from class exercises, your draft outline with self and peer written comments, and your full draft with self and peer written comments.
Submit the final draft of your paper two ways: online via the TurnItIn assignment in Blackboard Learn as well as in hard copy in your process folder.

Grade Weight, Word Count, and Due Dates
This 1,000-word essay is worth 10% of your semester grade. Find draft and final due dates in the unit plan.

Comparative Analysis (Major Assignment #2)

Introduction  To successfully complete this assignment, you will draw on the following skills introduced in EN 101: critical thinking and reading, annotation, summary, paraphrase, quotation, and understanding of the rhetorical situation and rhetorical triangle. This assignment asks you to read all of the literacy narratives each class member just submitted, then write a paper presenting your analysis of key commonalities in class members’ literacy experiences. You could choose to see what themes emerge as you read the narratives, or you might choose to look at the ways gender, geographic location, race, or cultural background seem to have had an impact on the class’s literacy experiences.

Writing Task  Read every literacy narrative, noting the key ideas, themes, or incidents for each one. Decide which commonalities you will discuss in your analysis. Create a thesis statement which sums up the points you plan to make in your paper. Be careful not to respond to or judge the experiences; simply note the ways the narratives seem to line up. Draft your analysis using the following model:
• Your topic sentences will both clearly advance your thesis and fully organize the paragraphs they introduce.
• Your paragraphs will draw on specific textual support to back your claims, and will be organized by the claim-support-explanation model.
• Your introduction will give context for your argument and will end in an argumentative thesis.
• Your conclusion will be forward-looking, answering the questions “so what?” or “what next?”

Rhetorical Situation  You are a member of our class’s academic discourse community, so you may write in a “relaxed academic” dialect. Your goal in writing this essay is to demonstrate your ability to make and support a strong analytical argument.

Documentation guidelines  Your paper will conform to MLA formatting and documentation requirements. We will discuss these requirements in class; if you have more questions about MLA, you can consult your Hacker handbook or the Purdue Online Writing Lab at owl.english.purdue.edu/owl.

Grade Weight/ Word Count  10%, 1000 words
Introduction to Assignment
This assignment is geared towards teaching you habits of responsible scholarship such as finding and evaluating sources for researched writing. The broad research question for the class is, “What relationships exist between the rhetorical situation in Alabama or the U.S. at the time Governor Wallace took the ‘Stand in the Schoolhouse Door’ and the rhetorical situation in Alabama or the U.S. today?” After watching the video of the event, you will narrow your research question to a focused area of your interest, then conduct scholarly research in that area. Additionally, we will create a collaborative Annotated Bibliography. You will choose the article you found to have the broadest appeal and upload it to the class wiki as part of this assignment, thus making additional vetted scholarship available to your peers. We will interrogate the meaning of “credible” sources in class discussions, but for this assignment, “credible” means “found in a peer-reviewed journal” or “from an award-winning media outlet.”

Writing Task
1. Review Governor Wallace’s “Stand in the Schoolhouse Door,” then brainstorm your research question by asking “Who?” “What?” “When?” “Where?” “Why?” “How?” For example, “who” could be Governor Wallace, President Kennedy, the nation watching, students at the University, etc. If you chose the Governor as an individual, you could trace his influences on state politics through current times. If you chose the Governor as an office, you might connect Governor Wallace’s views on “state’s rights” to those that the current governor has expressed.
2. Develop a list of broader and narrower key words use in searching for credible sources.
3. Skim many article titles; open the interesting-sounding articles and read their abstracts. Allow your research question to change in response to the information you find.
4. Choose at least ten articles to skim; record the title and a brief summary. Of those ten, choose five articles that best seem to fit your research interests. You will need to find at least two peer-reviewed journal articles and at least two articles from credible news outlets.
5. Read each of the five thoroughly, making marginal notes, highlighting main ideas, and writing in dictionary definitions for words you don’t know.
6. For each of your final five articles, create a correctly-formatted MLA 8 Works Cited entry.
7. Create a two-hundred-and-fifty-word annotation for each article. Use this format:
   a. Summarize the article, making sure to highlight the author’s main points.
   b. Assess the article’s credibility, judging from the author, the publication, the year published, and from the writing itself.
   c. Describe the article’s relevance to your research question.
   d. Explain other research that this article could support, and discuss several potential arguments you could make with support from this article.
8. Choose the article that could potentially support the widest variety of research and upload that citation and its annotation to the class Annotated Bibliography wiki. Take great care to place your entry alphabetically among the other entries.
9. Turn in your personal annotated bibliography through the Turnitin Assignment on Blackboard Learn as well as uploading the article with broadest appeal to the class wiki by class time on the due date.

Rhetorical Situation You are part of an academic discourse community, sharing research with peers.
Documentation Use the MLA 8 style guide, as we have discussed and will continue to discuss in class.
Opinion-Editorial Based in Argumentative Synthesis Research

Introduction to the Assignment  News outlets—major and minor—dedicate space in which people who are not on the news staff can express their views on current events and social trends. These opinion-editorial (or op-ed) pieces are written by both professionals and concerned citizens. This writing assignment asks you to use your previous argumentative synthesis research to create an op-ed article for our campus newspaper, the Crimson White.

Writing Task  Using information from class instruction and TheOpEdProject.org, you will construct an op-ed piece based on the research you have already done for the argumentative synthesis. This article will use language that is engaging to Crimson White readers, and it will offer the solution that you developed in your argumentative synthesis. Use the arrangement guidelines given on TheOpEdProject.org, “Basic Op-Ed Structure” (lower left of the web page’s home screen), to organize your ideas.

Rhetorical Situation  Your audience for this paper is readers of the Crimson White. Use a dialect that will be engaging to this audience. Your purpose in writing the piece is to offer the solution from your argumentative synthesis to your audience. You may refer to yourself and your own experience in this assignment.

Submission  You will submit your final draft two ways: upload to Blackboard, and Email to the Crimson White at letters@cw.ua.edu, with a cc to me at cdmwenja@crimson.ua.edu.

Some of you have written about sensitive topics, so you may request that, if the editors choose to run your piece, they keep your name anonymous.

Documentation Guidelines  When you refer to a source in the op-ed, give credit in your text itself (rather than using an in-text citation) and enter the work in a “References” list, using the MLA citation format. See example below.

Citation Example  In the op-ed text:
As Barbara Kingsolver says in Animal, Vegetable, Miracle, “In my own life, I’ve had ample opportunity to reinvent myself as a city person—to pass, as it were—but I’ve remained tacitly rural-identified in my psyche.”

Attached to the op-ed for both submissions:

References
Multi-modal Argument (Major Assignment #5)

Introduction
The inclusion of multiple media frameworks in almost every facet of daily life demands that people become “citizen designers” of multi-modal compositions. Toward that end, this assignment asks you to translate the argument that you made in your op-ed to a persuasive short video.

Composition Task
You will create an original video which makes your argument multi-modally. You may choose to use animation, original or found video footage, or a combination of strategies. A representative from the Sanford Media Center visited class to orient you in the use of video software; the SMC will continue to be available to support you in developing and revising your work.

Part of your process will be to develop a storyboard, which is a graphic organizer detailing your plan for your video. As you develop your storyboard, make sure to follow the plan given in A Writer’s Reference pages 112-13. Your process work will include brainstorming notes and multiple storyboard drafts.

Rhetorical Situation
You continue to be a member of an academic discourse community, and your goal is to effectively communicate your argument to your teacher and peers. Additionally, this multi-modal argument should focus on persuading an online audience of college students nationwide.

Documentation Guidelines
You will need to cite ALL references and resources you use. This means you will make an MLA-formatted Works Cited list, and it will include citations for all information you provide in your video. The Works Cited list will also include citations for any images, video, music, or voice recordings you include, unless these elements are your original creations for this assignment. Include the Works Cited list as a still shot at the end of your work.

Grade Weight and Length
This two-to-three-minute video is worth ten percent of your final grade.
Final Essay: Reflective Analysis of Your Writing Process

Introduction
This assignment gives you the opportunity to think about your work this semester by analytically reflecting on how your composition skills have developed throughout the course.

Writing Task
You will write a Reflective Essay that examines what you have learned about your writing, critical thinking, and critical reading, and you will use evidence from your work this semester to support your claims. Rather than focusing on your professor, stay focused in this reflection on your own work, clearly explaining what you have learned about your own writing, and providing evidence from your writing in the course to support your discussion.

In your essay, answer these two questions:
1. What have I learned about composition, analysis, and critical reading through the process of working on my writing this semester?
2. How will I challenge myself to develop my compositions in the future?

Arrangement
Introduction Remember to provide context for your thesis in the introduction of the piece. Rather than telling the reader what you will say in the essay, give him or her context to understand the points you will make.
Thesis Develop a thesis which answers the questions posed above.
Body Paragraphs Taking care that your topic sentences advance the thesis and organize their paragraphs, use the Claim-Support-Explanation model to advance your argument. Make sure to back up your claims with clear quotations and examples from this semester’s essays. Additionally, make sure that you always follow your textual support with your explanation of how it advances your thesis.
Conclusion Make sure to tell your reader what you will do with the information you have develop in the reflection—tell your reader “so what?”—why you care about what you wrote, and/or “what next?”—what you will do with this information in the future.

Rhetorical Situation
Your audience for this assignment is solely yourself and your teacher, and the genre of the reflection is a narrative: one that tells the story of what you have learned about your writing while also presenting evidence of what you have learned.

Documentation Guidelines Give careful attention to using the MLA style guide as we have practiced and discussed all semester.

Grade Weight and Word Count This reflection counts as 10% of your final grade; 500 words minimum.
EN 102 Essay Grading Rubric

This rubric assumes that this essay is your own original work written for this assignment in this class.

Process Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Does the process work clearly demonstrate the development of the paper and include all drafts?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Invention, Purpose, and Audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Does the essay address the challenges articulated by its assignment?  
  • Does the essay identify, focus on, and convey a defined purpose to its appropriate audience?  
  • Does the essay demonstrate critical thinking and thoughtful selection of content for the intended purpose and audience?  
  • Does the essay display appropriate voice and tone for its intended audience and purpose?  
  • Does writing include variety in vocabulary, sentence length, and sentence structure? |

Content and Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Are main points well-supported with evidence, research, and appropriate rhetorical strategies?  
  • Is critical thinking used consistently and effectively to add value to the paper?  
  • Does the writer use strong and credible evidence? |

Organization and Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Does the introduction capture the readers’ attention, give necessary context for topic, and map the paper’s direction?  
  • Does the essay present a debatable thesis statement and support it with sound reasoning strategies while avoiding logical fallacies?  
  • Does the essay demonstrate logical organization and coherence both between and within paragraphs?  
  • Does the writer use the Claim-Support-Explanation model to organize the paragraphs?  
  • Does the conclusion go beyond the thesis to convey its significance and implications? |

Knowledge of Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exemplary</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Novice</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Does the essay employ appropriate syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling?  
  • Does the essay quote, summarize, and document sources correctly?  
  • Does the essay use an appropriate documentation style consistently and accurately? |
Paper Revision Assignment

Writers see compositions as continuously in process. A paper may “finished” to submit to a conference but then revised for submission to an academic journal. This way of viewing composition work means that a draft may be handed on a due date, but there will still be value in reviewing and revising the piece.

This semester, you will have the opportunity to revise every major paper except the last.

If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, follow these steps:

1. Closely read the comments on your grading rubric.
2. Carefully consider where you could apply the comments throughout your work.
3. Note every single place that seems to relate to every single comment.
4. Make a revision plan according to the notes you have made.
5. Come to office hours to discuss your revision plans.
6. Submit your revised paper within two weeks of receiving the graded rubric.
7. Insert the printed revised draft into your paper submission folder. Make sure the rubric and all of the previous process work and drafts are still in the folder.
8. You may give me the folder, or you may drop it in my box in the English office in Morgan Hall.
9. This is a “sudden death” grading opportunity. If I get to a place in the revision that has not been revised according to the comments on the rubric, I will set your paper aside and your original grade still stands. However, don’t let this discourage you from attempting revision. Even if you don’t get additional points for a specific revision attempt, the process will strengthen your future paper grades.
10. If you have made every suggested revision, your paper will be re-graded. The process work grade is not eligible for re-grading. The two scores you have earned outside of process work will be averaged, then the original process grade will be added back on to arrive at your final grade.
December 9, 2016

Cynthia Mwenja
Department of English
College of Arts and Sciences
Box 870244

Re: IRB # 16-OR-427, "‘With’: Articulating a Restorative Composition Pedagogy"

Dear Ms. Mwenja:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research.

Your application has been given expedited approval according to 45 CFR part 46. You have also been granted the requested waiver of parental consent. Approval has been given under expedited review category 7 as outlined below:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your application will expire on December 8, 2017. If your research will continue beyond this date, please complete the relevant portions of the IRB Renewal Application. If you wish to modify the application, please complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants. When the study closes, please complete the Request for Study Closure Form.

Please use reproductions of the IRB approved stamped consent forms to obtain consent from your participants.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the above application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,