ICaP new instructor readings: some annotations and context

Bradley Dilger, Summer 2015

Several of these readings were added to the list this year. I welcome your feedback and/or questions about any of these essays, or related texts you've encountered.

1. **Baron, Dennis. "From Pencils to Pixels: The Stages of Literacy Technologies." *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies.* Ed. Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe. Logan: Utah State UP, 1999. 15–34.**

    a) I have frequently assigned this essay in undergraduate classes—including the 106 you'll teach this Fall! Though some of the references are dated, "Pencils" can help students consider writing as a technology. That is, we often say things like "writing with technology," but that's redundant, as Baron's history of the pencil shows. Baron writes, "New communications technologies, if they catch on, go through a number of strikingly similar stages." Thinking of writing as a technology can help us understand the emergence of the web, social media, or the ubiquitous computing of smartphones by comparisons to previous technological changes Baron discusses (the emergence of telegraph and telephone, the development of film and television, etc).

    b) Baron also points out that we often understand technological change as a linear process of making things better and setting aside old ways of expression. But this is an oversimplification: we retain much of the character of previous media in new forms, even if they are radically different. Marshall McLuhan memorably described this as, "The content of any new medium is some older medium." This process has been called *remediation,* and as Baron describes, it's not unique to computing, though we sometimes act as if it is since we make nearly everything with computers these days. Baron's essay can help 106-ers learn to broaden the ways they think about the media they create, seeing the relations between media and learning to make decisions about mediation with more self-awareness. For example, social media sharing often involved the remediation of texts, images, or short video clips. What do these remediations carry with them?

2. **Elbow, Peter. "The Cultures of Literature and Composition: What Could Each Learn from the Other?" *College English* 64.5 (2002): 533–46.**

    a) Peter Elbow is well-known in rhetoric and composition, one of the key figures in the process movement, a 1970s change in writing instruction which sought to empower students by valuing their writing and focusing on methods and processes, not finished products. (You will see him cited in Harris, below.) He still retains a lot of influence, keynoting several conferences in the past few years.

    b) This essay is characteristic of Elbow's work in many ways. First, teaching is always close at hand, arguably the frame for the article, and central to its implications. Second, it is conversational, both in its informal style and in the internal backs-and-forths Elbow includes in the essay—such as including a comment from peer reviewer. Third, the piece makes a strong claim, but in a hedged, almost gentle manner. Finally (and this is largely the point of this particular essay), Elbow writes from has been called an "English studies" model, where all areas of English are valued and differences between particular focuses seen not as antagonisms but as disciplinary.

You can see this not only in his repeated call to draw from both composition and literature, but from his citations, which come from all over the field.

c) Elbow identifies many of the differences in English departments by contrasting between literary and rhetorical approaches to texts: literary analysis is less concerned with individuals and more with texts; composition is less concerned with identifying excellence or sophistication and more with enabling expression. Research methods differ broadly, too: empirical research is expected in linguistics, common in writing studies, but rare in literature. So composition and literature scholars who may work in the same department, or even share offices, are often different in important ways. This is not true in most academic departments, where foundational assumptions are shared (for example, all biologists agree that life is divided into cells and guided by evolution through natural selection—even though they study very different things). Your students may see the diversity in English as arbitrariness, not differences in ways of thinking.

d) Entering graduate school is often when English majors learn their field is separated into many different areas (literary studies, rhetoric and composition, linguistics, second language studies, film and media studies, etc). Don't worry if you learned this recently, or even if you are learning the distinctions between areas of English now. For our purposes, remember that your students will more than likely identify English with literature, even though the Common Core curriculum is introducing more non-fiction and media into high school classrooms. So while they may welcome the specifics of our writing about writing approach, both its research methods and engagement with everyday texts, it may still be unexpected and unfamiliar. Unfortunately, this can make teaching difficult, since students' expectations for their courses factor heavily into their effort and engagement.

3. **Harris, Muriel. "Collaboration is Not Collaboration is Not Collaboration: Writing Center Tutorials vs. Peer Response Groups."** ***College Composition and Communication*** **43.3 (1992): 369–383.**

a) Muriel "Mickey" Harris founded our Writing Lab in 1975 and directed it until 2003, and she remains active in the field of writing center studies, serving as editor of the *Writing Lab Newsletter.* When this essay was written, writing centers were still fairly rare, and many English departments were still investing considerable effort to grow theirs. You can see some of this history reflected in the essay, particularly in the first third, and in the audience, which is writing center directors and others interested in growing writing centers, integrating them into writing programs, and ensuring that composition instructors work in a manner which complements them. In other words, if it seems like Harris is arguing, "Hey, writing centers matter!" — well, she is. Fortunately this is much less necessary today than 25 years ago: writing centers have become a part of most universities and are growing in community colleges and high schools as well. (Today many writing centers use the term "consultant" instead of "tutor.")

b) Why, then, are we reading this essay? Because as Harris describes what she sees as the role of writing center tutors—the students or professionals who work in writing centers, sitting down with visiting students who seek help with their writing— she

highlights one of the issues we face in the conferencing which happens in 106. For Harris, "the tutor, then, is a hybrid, somewhere between a peer and a teacher, who cannot lean too much one way or the other." You all are hybrids too, both students and teachers, and also in the ways you'll engage students' writing. We may want to step out of our roles as teachers, and assume more of a coaching or advisory position. We may want our students to shed their roles as learners, and take on the agency and expertise of offering another student suggestions for their work. At these and other times, we need to recognize and facilitate the gravity of these changes.

c) With this in mind, then, Harris's piece highlights that situations which might seem very similar—two people sitting down to discuss some writing—are in fact very different. In combination with the ICaP conferencing manual and Newkirk's "The First Five Minutes," we hope to gain some insight into how conferencing, tutoring, and peer response are different, so that we may take up the roles which are most productive for these different situations, and encourage our students to do the same. As you read, consider individual and group directed activities, and how they ask for different types of engagement (conversation, silent listening, teacher or student control of the conference, etc). We'll talk about ways to help students do that too.

d) Note the essay concludes with a review of empirical research. An update of this article would do the same: offering advice about tutoring and writing collaborations, and about the nature of writing itself, based on what have we learned by helping students learn to write, collecting and analyzing student writing, interviewing students and faculty, and considering students' performance over time.

4. **Herrick, James. "An Overview of Rhetoric."** ***The History and Theory of Rhetoric.*** **Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2005. 1–30.**

a) Herrick collapses an extremely long history and complicated tradition into a very small space here (the 25 page introduction to a 300 page book), which is incredibly admirable. But of course, things will be left out, simplified, or merged. If you have experience with rhetoric as taught by others, or in your own classrooms, you may or may not see things which you recall, such as the division of rhetoric into five canons, or the types of appeals into *logos, ethos,* and *pathos.* Please don't hesitate to ask your questions about Herrick or rhetoric in general. While I am by no means our Local Expert in rhetorical theory (I'd suggest Krista Ratcliffe or Thomas Rickert instead) I am happy to help you resolve prior knowledge and experience with Herrick.

b) Same as the above point, but with our design and/or visual rhetoric readings in mind — though here my expertise is greater.

c) Our 106 curriculum will include quite a few of the concepts named here, both fairly concrete ideas such as rhetorical situation (see Marro and Grant-Davies in *Writing About Writing)* and trickier ones like power and community (see Brandt and Swales respectively). One easy way to see the relevance of what we're doing is substituting "writing" for "rhetoric" in Herrick. I think most writing scholars would agree with the result — writing is planned (8), writing tests ideas (16), etc. I also suggest imagining the "Social Functions" section as a way to see the goals for 106: we want to get students to see how rhetoric (writing) tests ideas, and assists advocacy, etc. so they can begin to perform some of those functions willfully. To do so, we will help them

consider many of the five relationships Herrick concludes with, like writing and ethics (24), and help them improve their skills in many of the techniques outlined in the "Rhetorical Discourse" section—planning, adopting texts for audiences, etc. Of course, your students will already have some experiences to build on in this regard.

5. **Introductory Composition at Purdue. *ICaP Conferencing Manual.* 2015.**
   a) This book was prepared by Stacy Nall and other ICaP staff in consultation with experienced 106 instructors, and continues the work of Harris's essay: differentiating between the potentials of individual conversations in office hours, the services provided by the Writing Lab, weekly conferences, and classroom activities such as studio time, peer review, and group work. You can also begin to learn how different approaches to conferencing, and different sizes of student groups, fit various rhetorical goals, such as learning relevant concepts, invention and idea development, as well as revision and rewriting.
   b) If you'd like more specific help with any of the content addressed here, we can discuss it during orientation or the first weeks of the semester. The previous edition of the conferencing manual might be able to provide some more help as well, and we'll hear best practices from Writing Lab representatives too. We will also learn how some experienced 106 instructors have used conferencing in their courses by reviewing their assignment sheets and discussing conferencing with them in the first weeks of the semester.
6. **Newkirk, Thomas. "The First Five Minutes: Setting the Agenda in a Writing Conference." *Writing and Response: Theory, Practice, and Research.* Ed. Chris Anson. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1989. 317–331.**
   a) While this essay is 25+ years old, first-year students still face many of the differences Newkirk sees between composition and other university courses. To cast his point in terms of transfer, when asked to work 1:1 with you, students may not have other university-based experiences to call upon. As a result, they may try to adapt approaches from high school, or simply wing it—with or without the ability to evaluate the results. I think we can see this in the first conference Newkirk shares (319–20).
   b) You might be able to better understand the attention to time management in the ICaP Conferencing Manual after considering the transcripts of conferences here. The second, at over 500 words, is at least four minutes of conversation. Add in time for participants to read each others' writing, and time is even more pressured. I think this contributes to the rushing Newkirk discusses. The clock moves very quickly when we are conferencing.
   c) Newkirk finishes with a rumination on ownership which rings true from the writing transfer research my collaborator Neil Baird and I conducted at my previous institution (and continue to publish about now). We found that some students do have the very binary model of ownership Newkirk takes issue with: they either relinquish control completely or entrench and refuse to compromise. We found that writers who were more strategic about ownership were better able to integrate prior skills, experience, and knowledge in new writing settings—especially when writing became

collaborative. Note also that he connects negotiation and ownership (318, 323): this negotiation can be internal (students figuring out what they want to do) or external (students and teachers hashing out common ground). Newkirk focuses on the latter here.

7. **Ortmeier-Hooper, Christina. "English May Be My Second Language, but I'm Not ESL."** ***College Composition and Communication*** **59.3 (2008): 389–419.**

   a) As I wrote in my opening email to you all, at Purdue you can expect to have several international students in your 106 courses, and perhaps students who would fit the "ESL" or "Generation 1.5" labels as well. This piece, in conjunction with some training we will have during orientation, and support you can get through our SLS program and the Writing Lab, will help you work more effectively with them. I confess that my training in this area is limited—given my prior institution's student body, I focused more on understanding first-generation students' learning needs. So I'm glad several of us have experiences to share, and I'm eager to learn from you all.

   b) Ortmeier-Hooper highlights not only linguistic but cultural differences faced by non-native speakers and writers. For example, she identifies some of Sergej's resistance to composition as his preference for the more examination-oriented academic cultures of Europe. I find these are extremely important, perhaps more so than language—but easily caricatured or stereotyped (e.g. Asian students are less likely to adopt the directness of American English writing). Hence her extensive discussion of identity negotiation, one form of the internal negotiation I mention above. Newkirk is acknowledged and cited in Ortmeier-Hooper's essay, in a very interesting passage about sense of self (400) which builds on his example of the philosophy student who is being changed by learning his or her field. We can start to consider, then, ways we might identify and react to specific tendencies in students, not only those who are identified in certain demographics. This can be difficult, so we will invest considerable time in it.

8. **Weaver, Constance. "Teaching Grammar in the Context of Writing."** ***English Journal*** **85.7 (1996): 15–24.**

   a) Weaver points out the frequency of demands for "teaching grammar," and I don't think they have declined in the 20 years since she wrote this. If anything, they have *increased* with the perceived decline in correctness thanks to short-form writing like texting and Twitter. I have seen "txtspk" in student writing only a very few times, and in all cases the students recognized it immediately and were horrified when I pointed it out to them. (On the other hand, I do regularly get emails which seem more like texts, but that's not a grammar issue.) In Steve Graham and Dolores Perin's meta-analysis of writing instruction, grammar instruction was the only technique found to correlate negatively with success — that is, it doesn't help and may in fact be counter-productive. Still, demands to teach grammar sail on.

   b) "Grammar" is often used as shorthand for many, many things—spelling, style, punctuation, usage, genre conventions—some of which you can see on the list of teachable elements (16–17). We face issues not named in this *English Journal* piece (an NCTE publication focused on grades 6–12) such as differentiating between different editorial styles (e.g. APA, IEEE, and MLA all capitalize titles differently) or

dealing with conventions which differ between countries (e.g. usage and word choice differences between American and British English). The amount of material we cover in 106 can force conversation about some of these issues to the sideline, so we'll spend some time talking about the differences between them, and I recommend you learn some of them on your own as well. I'll help.

c) Weaver touches on error several times but does not make it a focus of her work. Other composition scholars have, notably Mina Shaughnessy, who arguably founded study of basic or developmental writing, and Joseph Williams, whose *Style* is an extremely useful text. Robert J. Connors (Weaver gets his name wrong) and Andrea Lunsford are well-known for their study of error, updated by Lunsford and Karen Lunsford. These and other scholars ask: What makes one utterance a mistake, and one correct? What makes one preferable to another, though both are correct? What errors are most frequent? Why do some errors happen more than others? More often than not, the lines are arbitrary, which is one reason Weaver notes the behaviorist model of "practice makes perfect" fails—and makes our jobs complex. We simply can't explain how writing works in the same way physics teachers can explain thermodynamics. Indeed, "there are no miracles here," as she concludes.

9. **Yancey, Kathleen Blake. "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key." *College Composition and Communication* 56.2 (2004): 297–328.**

a) As you can tell from the annotations and glosses Yancey has included, this is the print version of Yancey's keynote address at CCCC 2004, which is the writing studies counterpart to the MLA Convention—the largest gathering in the field. Her talk was extremely well-received, and I recall multiple presenters invoking it in their talks. In 2004, Yancey was well-known for her work with electronic portfolios and web writing, and her address/essay underscored questions about students' writing which she continues to investigate in her current research on writing transfer: how do we productively acknowledge the skills, experience, and knowledge writers bring into our classrooms? Can we shape our courses so they offer value which transcends one type of writing, in one semester, in one or two buildings?

b) On the one hand, we can see this as a criticism: do we too often elevate our classroom-focused genres (research papers, close readings) and approaches (teacher-guided writing, structured collaboration) over others—and with what impacts? Our writing about writing curriculum follows suit, and many of the genre scholars WAW leans upon have used the term "school genres" to criticize these forms. On the other hand, Yancey's approach is generous and constructive, suggesting that networked writing offers a lot of freedom to move away from these traditional genres and approaches, so her talk can be read as encouragement too.

c) Section three makes explicit the implications of Yancey's argument for institutions: "At this moment, we need to focus on three changes: Develop a new curriculum; revisit and revise our writing-across-the-curriculum efforts; and develop a major in composition and rhetoric." A little on each of those. First, I think the "new curriculum" is pretty self-explanatory, and targets not only undergraduate general education but graduate study in English as well. Today Yancey and her collaborators

have developed a "Teaching for transfer" curriculum which they are teaching at multiple universities connected by an inter-institutional study.

d) Second, writing across the curriculum (or "WAC"): this is an active area of rhetoric and composition which seeks to encourage writing in all areas of the university, not only in writing courses. For WAC practitioners, writing is often both a tool for learning and a group of writing products and/or processes students learn as they develop their disciplinary credentials — that is, both a means and an end. Programs with strong WAC requirements are often better able to realize some of the goals Yancey's essay establishes, since they have more consistency in the writing which happens at the 300- and 400-level, as well as more means for assessing that writing.

e) Third, majors in composition and rhetoric have emerged at some universities, particularly those like Michigan State and Kentucky where writing programs became independent of English departments. Here I think Yancey differs from Elbow, who would rather see rhetoric and composition focus more well-represented in the English major. At Florida State, where Yancey teaches, rhetoric and composition is one of four concentrations in the English major, but neither literature nor creative writing students are required to take rhetoric and composition courses. At Purdue, we are a mix: rhetoric and composition is in English, but English majors are not required to take any rhetoric courses, and only one linguistics course. We have an undergraduate professional writing major which integrates some literature courses, but few literature students teach in it. (Okay, you may not need to know all this... but on the other hand, students may ask about future courses, and your teaching options here and at other schools are shaped by these larger trends as well.)

f) This fall, in both 505 and 106, we will learn more about two concepts Yancey briefly engages: activity theory, which is a framework for understanding the social nature of human action, and remediation, the interaction of media with each other (which I mentioned above discussing Baron). We'll get an overview during orientation and return for more in 505.