Digital First-Year Composition: Integrating Multimodality into a Writing about Writing Approach

Article · August 2015

2 authors, including:

Digital First-Year Composition: Integrating Multimodality into a Writing about Writing Approach

Brandy Dieterle[1]
University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, USA

and

Stephanie Vie[2]
University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, USA

Abstract
Within the field of Writing Studies, scholars have argued for first-year composition (FYC) as a content course rather than a general skills course; the former works to equip students with concrete knowledge of writing that will transfer to other literate practices and domains. However, this current approach to FYC does not focus significantly on multimodal composition. Researchers argue that students are already composing with digital technologies and teachers should help students develop critical and nuanced understandings of these technologies. This article brings these two conversations together by integrating multimodality into the Writing about Writing (WaW) curriculum: the integration asks students to study writing within online discourse communities and create ePortfolios with webtext essays. Furthermore, we argue such an approach upholds the aims of WaW to introduce students to the threshold concepts related to the field, including understandings of intertextuality and the rhetorical situation. This article concludes by discussing some challenges and pedagogical implications for a multimodally-enhanced WaW curriculum.

Keywords
Multimodality, Writing about Writing, New Media, Online Communities, ePortfolio

---

[1] Brandy Dieterle is earning her Ph.D. from the Texts & Technology program at the University of Central Florida. Email: brandy.dieterle@ucf.edu

[2] Stephanie Vie is an Associate Professor of Writing and Rhetoric at the University of Central Florida. Email: Stephanie.Vie@ucf.edu

Overview and Background

As a field, Writing Studies has long debated the role of the first-year composition (FYC) class in the academy and what the focus of this class should be. In recent years, scholars such as Charles Bazerman (2002) have sparked interest in reinvigorating the FYC class as a space for intensive focus on writing studies, a subject that should be considered a serious intellectual endeavor (p. 38). Similarly, Debra F. Dew (2003) called for rethinking the first-year composition curriculum as a content course rather than the more typical general skills course. Because general skills courses do not provide students with transferable writing skills as effectively as content courses do, Dew (2003) argued that content courses "should enhance skills transfer since our subject matter further enhances students' awareness of writing principles and practices as always linked to disciplinary content" (p. 95). This shift away from general skills to disciplinary content has helped move the field away from what Elizabeth Wardle (2009) has described as the "mutt genres" that typically populate FYC, those writing assignments that "mimic genres that mediate activities in other activity systems, but within the FYC system their purposes and audiences are vague or even contradictory" (p. 774).

Although this shift could be considered risky at the outset—given that FYC programs had largely accepted mutt genres as the typical assignments for teaching writing—this revised curriculum (often labeled "Writing about Writing," or WaW) makes great strides in asking students to become writing scholars for a semester as they read writing studies scholarship and engage with the same type of scholarly inquiry in which field-based scholars regularly engage. However, while the WaW curriculum questions common misconceptions of writing (Downs & Wardle, 2007, pp. 554-555), the curriculum speaks less to the role of multimodality in the FYC curriculum. Although there is a section on multimodality in the second edition of Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs' textbook *Writing about Writing*, released in 2014, this chapter neglects a significant focus on multimodal composing; instead, it mainly acknowledges digital literacy practices and the thinking of writing as a technology. We, the authors, do not intend to dismiss the work Wardle, Downs, and others have done to advance our field's thinking about the capaciousness of first-year writing, and we also realize the constraints associated with textbook publishing. However, we do believe that there is a great deal of learning possible in considering multimodality and multimodal composing within the space of the first-year composition course, particularly within the WaW curriculum. Rather than merely including a few articles and assignment suggestions, as the second edition of *Writing about Writing* offers, we propose a fuller integration of multimodality and digital literacy.

In the current WaW curriculum as it is frequently offered, students often compose traditional scholarship, similar to what can be found in our field's print journals. Indeed, Downs and Wardle (2007) described a typical WaW course as focusing on research-based projects that incorporate students' own primary research; this sequence includes typical moves like writing an annotated bibliography, composing a literature review, and conducting small-scale research projects relying on surveys, interviews, discourse analyses, and so on. Their main nod to multimodality includes an oral report of the student's research during the final weeks of the course (Downs & Wardle, 2007). However, multimodal scholarship and pedagogy are becoming increasingly prevalent in the field of Writing Studies. Cheryl E. Ball (2004), for example, has pushed for the recognition of new media and multimodal texts as scholarship and has written at length about opportunities for integrating multimodality into composition curricula. Similarly, Jody Shipka (2011) brought attention to a view of multimodal composing and multimodal texts

that further pushed the boundaries of text to include non-digital forms such as a dance performance or an essay written on ballet shoes. This attention toward multimodal composition has also been taken up by multiple professional organizations associated with Writing Studies: the Conference on College Composition and Communication (2004), in their position statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments; NCTE (2014), in their position statement that encourages the teaching of multimodal literacies; and the Council of Writing Program Administrators (2014), whose newly revised WPA Outcomes Statement now includes a focus on students' ability to "adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities" (Processes section, sixth bullet point).

In addition to a focus on multimodal composing within the field of Writing Studies, there has also been a trend towards arguing for the recognition and the development of students' digital literacies (see Clark, 2010; Pigg et al., 2013; Selber, 2004; C. L. Selfe, 1999; Vie, 2008; Yancey, 2004). Cynthia L. Selfe (1999) argued for paying greater attention to technological literacy in both our scholarship and our teaching. Much like C. L. Selfe (1999), Stuart A. Selber (2004) posited a "literacy landscape that students should be able to navigate" (p. 24), one that includes functional, critical, and rhetorical literacies; combined, these foster a critical consciousness of technology. Whereas C. L. Selfe (1999) and Selber (2004) focused more on the theoretical underpinnings of digital literacies, other researchers have examined the literacy practices (oftentimes digital) students already exhibit and have considered how those can be more fully embraced in composition courses (Clark, 2010; Pigg et al., 2013; Vie, 2008; Yancey, 2004). The everyday writing that students engage in, such as text messaging, e-mails, and lecture notes, "are part of a much more complex social practice that supports and sustains roles that [students] play in their communities and that are meaningful to them" (Pigg et al., 2013, p. 108).

To bridge these everyday writing and academic spheres, faculty must help students make connections between students' existing literacy practices that are prominent outside of school and the literacy practices needed to succeed academically or professionally. Kathleen Blake Yancey (2004) argued that literacy is changing, as is the 21st-century learner; writing is no longer limited to words on paper but can support a range of genres including e-mail, instant messaging, audio files, blogs, videos, websites, and so on. J. Elizabeth Clark (2010) in particular explained that we, as teachers, need to embrace these various technologies and tools, and utilize them to prepare students for the types of writing—the new media composing—that they face (either personally or professionally).

The remainder of this article will argue that there is a need for teaching students multimodal composition in a content course, like that proposed by the WaW curriculum. Taking this approach will not only introduce students to an important body of scholarship within Writing Studies, but it will also provide an avenue for students to further solidify their understanding of core concepts of the course. Furthermore, discussed here is one possible approach for integrating multimodality and new media composing into FYC, and also discussed are potential challenges teachers may encounter when doing so.

Review of the Literature

Multimodal and New Media Composing

Many scholars have discussed the use of multimodal and new media composing as a means for not only developing students' digital literacy skills, but also their creative and critical

thinking skills (Clark, 2010; R. J. Selfe & C. L. Selfe, 2008; Shipka, 2011; Takayoshi & C. L. Selfe, 2007; Vie, 2008). It is important, though, to realize the distinctions between new media and multimodal composing. New media, rather than being any kind of online scholarship or composing, was defined by Ball (2004) "as texts that juxtapose semiotic modes in new and aesthetically pleasing ways and, in doing so, break away from print traditions so that written text is not the primary rhetorical means" (p. 405). Multimodal composing, then, can be thought of as types of texts that utilize multimodal literacies and do not necessarily incorporate new media, such as "drama, art, text, music, speech, sound, physical movement, animation/gaming, etc." (National Council of Teachers of English, 2014, p. 17). This perception of multimodal composing that goes beyond the use of digital tools and technologies is one that Shipka (2011) advocated. For Shipka (2011), multimodal composition affords opportunities for students "to consider how they are continually positioned in ways that require them to read, respond to, align with—in short, to negotiate—a streaming interplay of words, images, sounds, scents, and movements" (p. 21). Her multimodal pedagogy adopts a process-based approach for writing in an effort to make the process more visible, which "provides us with ways of tracing the embodied, multimodal, technologically mediated and distributed processes out of which texts emerge" (p. 37).

While Shipka (2011) and Ball (2004) foregrounded theoretical and pedagogical understandings of new media and multimodal composing, other scholars go into greater detail about how and why teachers might teach these forms of writing. Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia L. Selfe (2007) argued for multimodal composition due to communication becoming increasingly global and cross-cultural, and discovering that print-based texts (that rely solely on text) may not be the most effective or appropriate for particular contexts for writing. Richard J. Selfe and Cynthia L. Selfe (2008) further explained that the turn to multimodality is, in part, the result of college faculty recognizing how elementary school teachers approach learning in their classrooms, "that students learn best when they read and compose in multiple ways, when they use multimodalities to identify new and effective forms of literacy (podcasts, digital video, audio essays)" (p. 84).

Similarly, Clark (2010) further argued for a new pedagogy, advocating replacing the traditional essay with digital rhetoric pedagogy that utilized new media composing to further develop students' digital literacy. Although she discussed several ways of incorporating new media composing, one she discussed at length was the ePortfolio. The ePortfolio, according to Clark (2010), is a digital record of student's writing over the period of a single course or even their entire time at a university, and serves as "an ideal bridge between traditional, essayistic literacy pedagogies and emerging digital rhetoric" (p. 29). Clark (2010) was careful to emphasize, though, that technologies are always in flux and what she proposed was merely what was popular at the time of publication.

Multimodality and the Writing about Writing Course

As explained earlier, Dew (2003) and Wardle (2009) called for the development of FYC programs that focused on writing studies as a discipline rather than teaching generic assignments with the hope that those writing skills would transfer throughout a student's college experience. Both of these authors illustrated the problems with the use of "mutt genres" (Wardle, 2009, p. 774) because oftentimes students had difficulty transferring the skills and knowledge to other writing contexts. In response, Wardle and Downs published a textbook, *Writing about Writing*,

that teaches FYC through the lens of Writing Studies and helps situate students within Writing Studies scholarship.

One goal of the WaW curriculum is to grapple with what Wardle and Downs (2013) described as threshold concepts in writing, which they've discussed in their own publications and also discussed for students in their 2014 textbook. Threshold concepts are those ideas and concepts about a subject that cause a person to completely shift the way he or she thinks about a subject once the concept has been learned. Ultimately, though, Wardle and Downs (2013) acknowledged that there may be different pedagogical approaches to teaching FYC, even based upon their proposed WaW curriculum. With this in mind, the authors advocated a WaW approach to FYC based upon these "underlying set of principles: engage students with the research and ideas of the field, using any means necessary and productive, in order to shift students' conceptions of writing, building declarative and procedural knowledge of writing with an eye toward transfer" (What Were We Arguing For, and How Did That Turn Into "WAW"? section, para. 8).

Although Wardle and Downs do not outright advocate an approach to WaW that incorporates multimodality, new media composing, or the development of digital literacy skills, one chapter of the book, which focuses on the threshold concept of writing being a natural activity, does address multimodality and digital literacy. This section, "Multi-Modal Composition: What Counts as Writing?" includes several essays about multimodality, sample student papers examining topics like text-messaging speak and online discourse, and suggested assignments. Yet, we, the authors, argue here that this section of the book, while it incorporates concepts and examples related to multimodality, is still largely bound within the constraints of print. As such, a fuller focus on multimodality in the WaW curriculum, one that integrates multimodal *composing* (and not just print-based writing with some inclusion of visual elements like images), better addresses calls for more multimodal and new media composing in the field. With existing research on WaW and multimodality in mind, this next section will further discuss the value of bringing these two conversations, typically separated from one another, together in a first-year composition course.

The Value of Combining WAW and Multimodality

Here we argue for combining WaW and multimodality by illustrating the ways in which pedagogical goals and objectives related to both of these approaches can work together toward accomplishing the same outcome: teaching first-year students about writing as a discipline that includes multimodal composing. As discussed earlier, Wardle and Downs (2013) proposed that curricula focusing on teaching writing as a discipline will be more beneficial for transferring knowledge from one writing task to another. To accomplish this, Wardle and Downs (2013) acknowledged that different teachers would likely take different approaches, but stated that engaging with the scholarship of the field is the core component of the curriculum. This suggests that any number of pedagogical approaches to the WaW curriculum are possible—such as here in this article, which focuses on a multimodal approach to the WaW curriculum—as long as the curriculum still teaches Writing Studies and aims to help students understand threshold concepts. As an example, Sarah Read and Michael J. Michaud (2015) proposed a Writing about Writing-focused professional writing course, what they labeled WAW-PW, as a "coherent and viable approach to teaching generalizable rhetorical knowledge that can be transformed across contexts, and workplace contexts, in particular" (p. 429). Similarly, a WaW curriculum that incorporates

multimodal and new media composition can retain the core focus on Writing Studies scholarship by engaging in foundational work by theorists who research technology's impact on literacy and composition practices.

Some of the core threshold concepts related to writing are defined early on in the textbook by Wardle and Downs (2014), and a multimodal approach to WaW still engages these concepts. The textbook *Writing about Writing* is organized around these threshold concepts, and they are as follows:

- …writing performance is informed by prior literary experiences, or in simpler terms, your reading and writing past will shape your reading and writing present…
- …writing mediates activity. In other words, that writing gets things done, makes things happen…
- …good writing is completely dependent on the situation, readers, and uses it's being created for…
- …writing is knowledge-making, that making knowledge requires ongoing and repeating processes, and that writing is not perfectible…
- …writing is by nature a technology. Writing involves tools, and writing is not "natural" (in a biological sense). (Wardle & Downs, 2014, pp. 7-8)

If as teachers and scholars of writing we accept that these threshold concepts are important to instill in students, then it follows that teachers and scholars additionally need to consider how bringing multimodality into the WaW curriculum can also work at instilling these same threshold concepts. For the first threshold concept (that writing is informed by past experiences), consider the types of writing in which students engage. Although this section of the book largely focuses on literacy sponsors when discussing prior experiences with writing, prior experiences with writing also involve communicating in multiple modes. The National Council of Teachers of English (2014) stated in their position statement on multimodal literacies that we, as communicators in everyday life, are already engaging in these literacies through art, music, animation, and so on. Additionally, Stacey Pigg et al. (2013) discovered through their study of the literacy practices of 65 students that students most frequently practiced literacy through text messaging, e-mails, and lecture notes. If teachers and scholars of writing are to understand these forms of writing as having value, as Yancey (2004) asked, then we would also accept them as being examples of prior writing experiences and can help students understand how those experiences influence the writing they are doing in the present.

Likewise, Pigg et al.'s (2013) study further supports the second threshold concept, that writing mediates activity, because the authors argued that the everyday literacies of students are coordinative acts, meaning they are goal-oriented and thus are mediating some form of activity. Similarly, R. J. Selfe and C. L. Selfe (2008) and Takayoshi and C. L. Selfe (2007) considered multimodal communication's role beyond the classroom environment, such as in the workplace, civic life, and across geopolitical borders. Writing in these various environments is a process of negotiating activity in some way, although it would likely vary from one environment and one context to another.

This brings us to the third threshold concept: Writing is context-dependent. As R. J. Selfe and C. L. Selfe (2008) and Takayoshi and C. L. Selfe (2007) pointed out, print-based writing may not be appropriate for all writing situations, thus showing a need for teaching multimodal composition. R. J. Selfe and C. L. Selfe (2008), as mentioned earlier, encouraged using multimodalities for identifying other forms of literacy, such as that of podcasts and digital video.

However, it is important to note the nuances of these different forms of writing and literacy. Ball (2004) pointed out that new media is more than just taking a traditional essay and putting it on the web. Instead, new media composition takes a different approach to writing than what is seen with print texts so that print is no longer the primary rhetorical means for communicating. Additionally, when Clark (2010) discussed incorporating specific technologies into multimodal composition, she was careful to emphasize that the writing tasks and the uses of these technologies are based upon what is popular and relevant at the time. The technologies, and thus the contexts for writing, continue to change.

The fourth threshold concept views writing as knowledge making. Shipka's (2011) multimodal pedagogy emphasized a process-based approach to writing. Additionally, returning to the first threshold concept regarding prior experiences, the writing process and the text that is produced will be influenced by the writer's prior experiences with writing, as Carol Berkenkotter (1983) observed when studying Donald Murray's process. Thus, the text that is produced will be the writer's unique way of creating and sharing knowledge on a subject. Knowledge making is also connected to the third threshold concept about writing being context-dependent. The text that writers produce will depend upon the situation in which they are writing so that they are creating and sharing knowledge that is fitting for the situation.

The final threshold concept, understanding that writing by nature is a technology, is the threshold concept that the authors linked to multimodality. Here, they argued that writing is not a natural process and is facilitated by tools like the pencil or even computers, which has fundamentally shifted our thinking processes as society transitioned from an oral culture to a print culture (Baron, 2009; Ong, 2002). This threshold concept pulls together all of the other threshold concepts because, for us, they are all evident in understanding writing being a technology. With our understanding in recent years that print-based texts may not be the most effective ways of communicating (Takayoshi & C. L. Selfe, 2007) comes an emergent understanding of writing as a technology that changes and shifts as new software and tools become available.

These five threshold concepts help us to understand how multimodality can work within the WAW curriculum, which advocates helping students develop a more nuanced understanding of writing. The next section explains the context for FYC courses where multimodality has been integrated into WaW, and the methods for using these classes as a site for research. We discuss the overall methodology for the research project detailed here, then offer one possible approach for a WaW-centered course that integrates multimodality and new media. Finally, we end this article by exploring some of the challenges and the pedagogical implications of such a shift in the WaW curriculum.

Methodology

This section details the incorporation of multimodality into the WaW-focused classroom at a large Southeastern university during the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters. A total of four second-semester composition courses have implemented multimodality into the WaW curriculum, discussed in more detail in the following section. During the Fall 2014 semester, the first time this revised curriculum was offered, some students expressed concern or anxiety over using technology to create multimodal essays. In response, students enrolled in the Spring 2015 semester courses were asked to complete a survey at the start of the semester that asked about their prior experiences with technology and multimodality. At the time the survey was given,

students had not yet been introduced to the concept of multimodality in the class, so the survey was useful for seeing how students, at the time they entered class, conceived of multimodality and composing with technology. This baseline information allowed the researchers to capture information about students' potential anxieties about multimodal composing and identify possible interview participants for the next stage of the research process.

The survey responses were used to select six students to interview further about their experiences with multimodal composition in the course. The interviewees were chosen according to whether or not they stated they had previously created multimodal essays in order to get a range of students. However, of the 31 students who responded to the survey, only three stated they had composed multimodal essays in the past and only one of those agreed to be interviewed. The remaining five interviewees stated they had not created multimodal essays in the past but were comfortable using technology. During the interviews, students were asked to discuss their experiences creating multimodal essays in more detail to determine what they were able to accomplish on their own, and also what they felt like they still weren't able to accomplish or what they still needed to know about multimodal essays.

The purpose of both the survey and the interviews was to determine students' prior knowledge of multimodal composing and their ability to navigate the tools in the course in order to compose multimodal texts. Understanding student perspectives allowed for the design of a curriculum that can integrate multimodality, particularly in regards to the study of online communities and use visual rhetoric in ePortfolios, while still maintaining a rhetorical focus on the threshold concepts of the WaW curriculum. The next section details one possible WaW curriculum that integrates multimodality. Although there are certainly any number of ways to do this, the one described below is the approach taken in the FYC classroom at this large public university in the Southeast.

One Potential Approach to a Multimodal WaW Curriculum

The course taught was a second-semester FYC course focused on conducting primary and secondary research using the WaW approach as a lens for students to consider their own research. The class is based upon the concept of discourse communities, communities that John Swales (2014) described as "Specific Interest Group[s]" (p. 220). Students select a community to study over the course of the semester and spend time trying to define and understand that community through Swales' concept of discourse communities. Additionally, students are asked to develop their own research questions and to conduct their own research regarding the ways writing and rhetoric work within their chosen community. To help them conduct their own research and create new knowledge, they are also tasked with analyzing the genres and texts within the community.

What has been described thus far about the course doesn't particularly get at multimodality because any number of communities could be studied and, although particular texts or genres might make use of multimodality, there isn't a focus on it in the course. In an effort to further bring multimodality to light, we as FYC teachers ask students to study what we call "online discourse communities." Online communities will incorporate multimodality in some way, thus giving students the opportunity to study the way that multimodality plays a role in the threshold concepts that address how writing is context-dependent, how it mediates activity, and also how writing is a technology. Because online writing is often composed and organized differently than print texts, students are able to see how these threshold concepts are working in a

wider variety of texts than previously. Students are also still able to engage with Writing Studies scholarship by considering how concepts like intertextuality and the rhetorical situation exist within online environments.

      This is important because of the 31 students who responded to the survey, only three stated they had created multimodal essays previously, which demonstrated a need for illustrating how these online communities are practicing multimodal composing. Indeed, research has shown that students are often experienced users of technologies on a surface level, but are not frequently critical consumers or even producers of technologically mediated compositions (Vie, 2008), leading to calls for a greater emphasis on multimodal production in the classroom (Arola, Ball, & Sheppard, 2014). Of those who responded, five students said they had created other types of projects using PowerPoint, for example, but didn't classify that as a multimodal essay. Many more students hadn't even heard of the term "multimodality" previously. Based upon this survey data, there is a greater call for talking to students about multimodality so that they can see how their literate practices, both in school and out of school, are multimodal. While much of the scholarship in Writing Studies has championed students' self-sponsored and technologically mediated writing as worthy of study, many students fail to see their multimodal composing practices as writing per se.

      Furthermore, throughout the course, students are exposed to Writing Studies scholarship that discusses computer-mediated communication, such as the ways in which audience is understood through social media websites like Twitter, which helps to bridge students' various literate practices with writing studies. In this light, a student may choose to study a local animal shelter's web presence, which is shown in Figure 1. Although the shelter might not fit neatly into Swales' (2014) definition of a discourse community, the student could consider how the shelter used social media, images, videos, blog posts, and other genres of text for interacting with those who visit the website. This focus on the scholarship in Writing Studies that highlights technologically mediated composing practices helps students see that the field not only studies writing that occurs in typically print-based settings but also composing practices writ large—in communities like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and through practices like hashtagging and commenting.

      Aside from studying online discourse communities as a means for bringing multimodality into the course, students are also required to compose webtexts as they work towards completing their ePortfolio (see Figure 2) that is due at the end of the semester. These webtexts still rely primarily on writing as it is understood in print texts, which is something Ball (2004) may take issue with since she clearly defined new media composing as approaching writing differently than print texts. However, these webtexts do still make an effort to incorporate understandings of multimodality. Using Google Sites as a platform, a free website creator offered by Google, students are asked to seriously consider their choices in the design and color scheme of the site. Additionally, for their essays over the course of the semester, students are also asked to incorporate other modes besides written text, such as videos, images, and hyperlinks. The choices students make here again further support the threshold concepts advocated by the WaW curriculum, especially students' prior literacy experiences, as students are asked to consider what they've noticed about web writing and think about how some of those things may be relevant to their own webtexts.
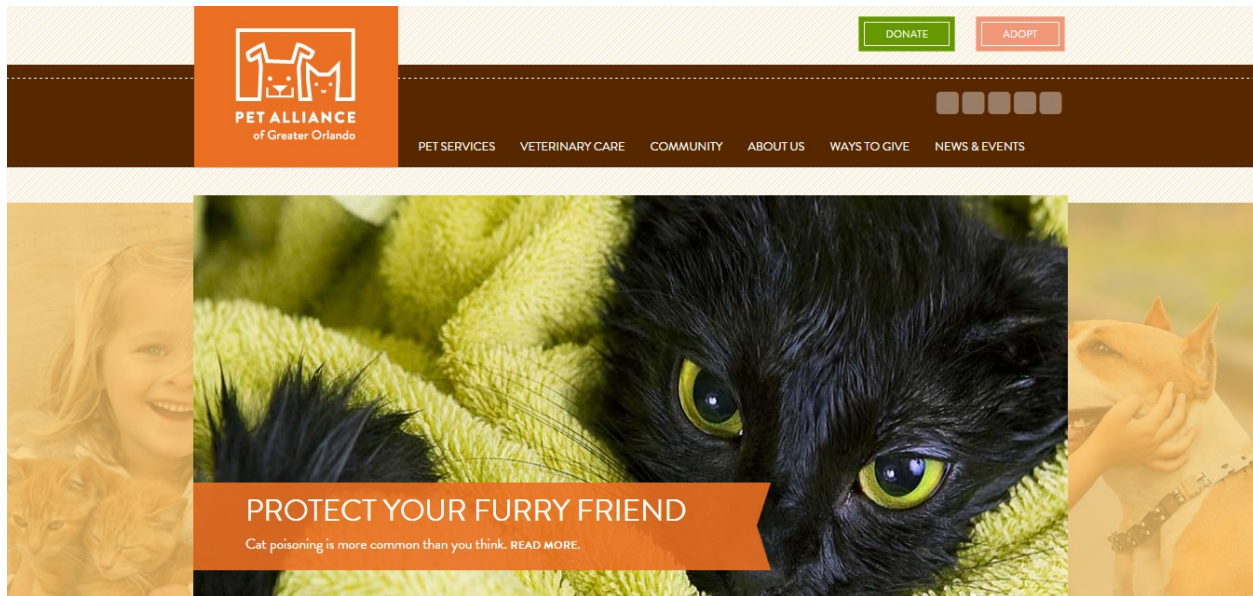
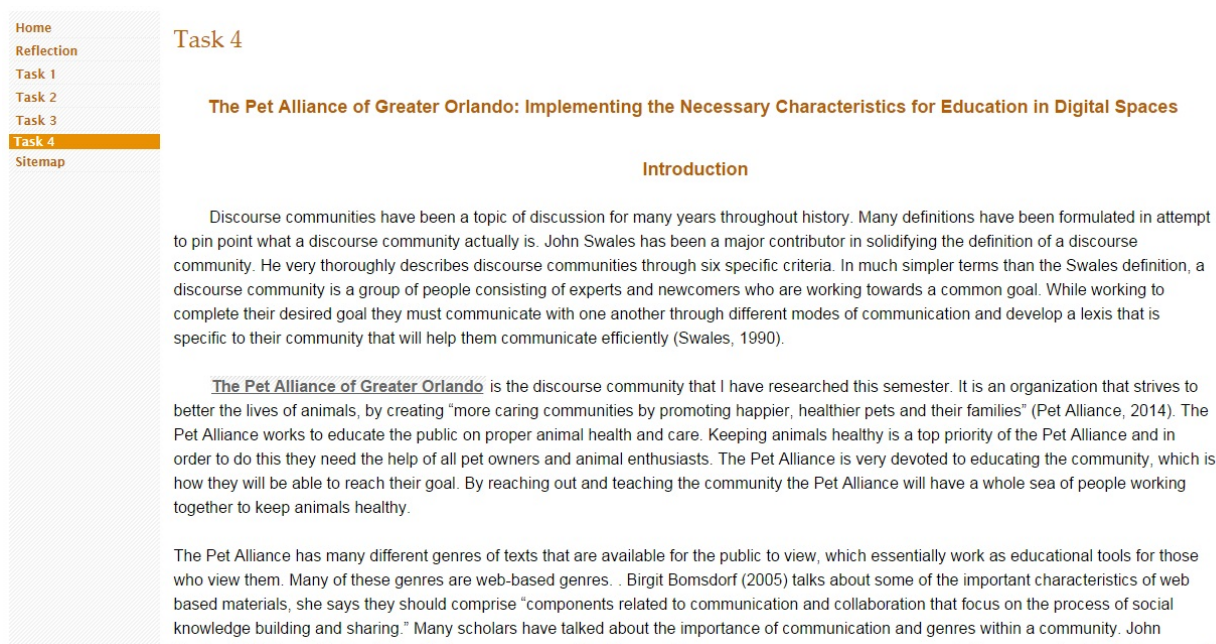Figure 1 – Homepage of the Pet Alliance of Greater Orlando (2015)

Figure 2 - Screenshot of student ePortfolio imitating some of the color and design choices of Pet Alliance

Of the six students interviewed, only one (who did not have prior experience with multimodal composition) had used Google Sites previously, and he had specifically used it for the purposes of an ePortfolio. Though the other five students hadn't used this particular online tool before, they all expressed that they were able to play around and figure out how to accomplish what they wanted in regards to the visual aspect of the site. For instance, one student wanted to embed a video into her Google Site, and although she said she had difficulty figuring

out how, she described it as easy once she finally figured it out. She also commented that she especially liked being able to incorporate the video into her essay because it would've been challenging to try to explain it to readers in her own words. Despite some of the challenges students faced, all six students interviewed stated that they liked using Google Sites because of how easy it was to access their work-in-progress, and also that they were able to communicate through visual means by changing the color scheme of the site and adding images and videos. This illustrates that although not all students will have used a particular tool, like Google Sites, prior to encountering it in a course, prior experiences with technology and the comfort of playing around with technology facilitates their learning how to navigate Google Sites.

The final aspect of the course involves students revising their essays over the course of the semester and also creating a reflection essay where they discuss the work they've done. Having students work with their same online discourse community over the course of the semester, and then asking them to revisit and revise their work, helps students to deepen their understanding of their chosen community and the way writing is working within it. This in-depth study allows them to develop a nuanced understanding of their community that they would be unable to reach if they spent just a few weeks studying their community. The revision and reflection essay especially reinforces the threshold concept regarding writing as knowledge-making. As students revisit their writing and then reflect on it later, they often come to new ideas and understandings about their subject of study that they weren't initially aware of because so often ideas for research at the start of a semester, much like the beginning stages of academics' research projects, are not yet fully developed.

What we've outlined above is one way of including multimodality in the WaW curriculum, and it certainly isn't the only way. Other ways might include more fully embracing concepts of new media and multimodal composing so that students are not composing webtexts that largely follow the methods of writing in print essays. One way of accomplishing this is by asking students to choose their own genres for composing in, which is something Shipka (2011) in particular advocated in her own multimodal pedagogy. Students could, for instance, be asked to compose their essay in the form of one of the genres they studied that is the most appropriate for the message they are trying to convey. Since students would be studying online discourse communities, this would likely take shape more like Ball's (2004) understanding of new media composing by incorporating videos, social media, blogs, and other genres that have emerged online. Students could focus on alternative formats that emphasize non-textual modes like audio podcasts or photo-based collages. The next section considers some of the challenges and pedagogical implications of integrating multimodality into the WaW curriculum.

Challenges and Pedagogical Implications

Incorporating multimodality into any classroom can be challenging, but incorporating it into the WaW curriculum may be even more challenging because students are being asked to compose in what is likely an entirely new mode on top of learning writing studies scholarship for the first time. Although some students may have familiarity with new media composing through social media, for instance, many believe that academic writing for school includes print texts and print texts only. Teachers, then, are tasked with helping students understand the threshold concepts of writing and multimodal composing. Takayoshi and C. L. Selfe (2007) explained that teaching multimodal composition, though, does not equate to losing rhetorically based writing instruction because of a focus on technology and multimodal instruction. Instead, teachers can

still remain focused on teaching writing through a multimodal lens, which is what we've attempted to do in the course described above.

Another challenge of incorporating multimodality into writing classrooms is that both the teachers and students may have various experiences (or lack of experience) using particular tools to create new media and multimodal composition. Clark (2010) emphasized that teachers need to embrace the technology, but also explained that technology frequently changes and teachers need to be aware of what technologies and tools are currently popular and could be useful for including in classes. However, including new tools and technologies is risky because neither the students nor the teachers may be experts. Because of this, it is important to again emphasize teaching core concepts of writing and suggesting the use of tools that have technical support for students. For instance, Google Sites has a "help" section that explains how to use the tool, and students can easily go to a search engine and search how to do something specific if they don't already know how. Despite the challenges, having students practice composing with new tools and technologies will be useful in developing their technological literacy (C. L. Selfe, 1999) and their multiliteracies (Selber, 2004) as they gain experience with the types of composing Takayoshi and C. L. Selfe (2007) suggested they will encounter outside of school settings. Teachers, though, must decide for themselves which tools and technologies will be conducive for their students and the work they want their students to accomplish.

Additionally, as the interviews for this study have illustrated, students often are able to find their way by continuing to experiment and play with the tools. Of these students interviewed, some embraced multimodality more than others by including images and changing the color scheme beyond what was expected or articulated in the assignment instructions. These students described how they were able to navigate the technology based upon their prior knowledge. One student mentioned she had used Google Drive previously, so that previous knowledge and playing around with Google Sites helped her accomplish what she wanted. Another student explained he felt he was already tech savvy, and so it was easy for him to grasp using the technology in the course. What is important here is that students, when motivated, are able to navigate the technologies at hand, and we think integrating multimodality helps to tap into that motivation because students aren't just composing print essays.

From a pedagogical perspective, integrating multimodality into the WaW curriculum also impacts the role of the teacher in the classroom. In studying the teaching and learning of writing in a traditional classroom and in a computer-supported classroom, Mike Palmquist, Kate Kiefer, James Hartvigsen, and Barbara Goodlew (2008) discovered that the ways in which the teacher and students interacted had shifted. Palmquist et al. (2008) discovered that whereas in traditional classrooms teachers tend to adopt the role of a leader and lead more "front-of-the-classroom activities (large-group discussions, lectures)" (p. 252), in computer-supported classrooms teachers adopted the role of a facilitator instead of a leader and the students frequently worked in small groups or wrote during class. With this in mind, teachers may need to reconsider their own teaching personas and roles within the classroom. Multimodality asks students to think of composing in new ways, and so teachers may need to consider teaching in new ways.

Conclusion

Multimodality and the WaW curriculum are often discussed separately within writing studies scholarship, as was demonstrated at the opening of this article, yet if FYC teachers are to teach Writing Studies scholarship that touches on crucial concepts in the field, then something is

missing if multimodality isn't incorporated. Aside for the call from many scholars in the field to pay attention to multimodality and digital literacy that were identified above, there are also journals that publish multimodal work such as *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy; Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*; *Harlot: A Revealing Look at the Arts of Persuasion;* and *Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture,* to name a few. Writing Studies not only acknowledges but embraces multimodal scholarship, and so teachers should also be introducing multimodal scholarship to our students.

Furthermore, teaching multimodal composition to students still aligns with the threshold concepts the WaW curriculum advocates, and also works at preparing students for the types of composing they will likely encounter outside of school as they develop the technological literacy C. L. Selfe (1999) called for as well as Selber's (2004) multiliteracies. While there are any number of ways multimodality could be integrated into the WaW curriculum, here we've proposed one method for doing so while also discussing potential challenges, such as working with tools and technologies teachers may not be experts in using. Even so, multimodal and new media composing is important to the field of Writing Studies, and so as scholars and researchers continue to refine and develop ways to focus on WaW pedagogy, we should similarly consider ways to integrate twenty-first century literacies into the WaW classroom through a greater inclusion of multimodality in this pedagogy.

References

Arola, K. L., Ball, C., & Sheppard, J. (2014, January 10). Multimodality as a frame for individual and institutional change. *Hybrid Pedagogy*. Retrieved from http://www.hybridpedagogy.com/journal/multimodality-frame-individual-institutional-change/

Ball, C. E. (2004). Show, not tell: The value of new media scholarship. *Computers and Composition*, *21*(4), 403–425.

Baron, D. (2009). *A better pencil*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bazerman, C. (2002). The case for writing studies as a major discipline. In G. A. Olson (Ed.), *Rhetoric and composition as intellectual work* (pp. 32-38). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Berkenkotter, C. (1983). Decisions and revisions: The planning strategies of a publishing writer. *College Composition and Communication*, *34*(2), 156-169.

Clark, J. E. (2010). The digital imperative: Making the case for 21st-century pedagogy. *Computers and Composition, 27*(1), 27-35.

Conference on College Composition and Communication. (2004). CCCC position statement on teaching, learning, and assessing writing in digital environments. Retrieved from http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/digitalenvironments

Council of Writing Program Administrators. (2014). WPA outcomes statement for first-year composition. Retrieved from http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html

Dew, D. F. (2003). Language matters: Rhetoric and Writing I as content course. *Writing Program Administration*, *26*(3), 87–104.

Downs, D., & Wardle, E. (2007). Teaching about writing, righting misconceptions: (Re)envisioning "First-Year Composition" as "Introduction to Writing Studies." *College Composition and Communication, 58*(4), 552–584.

Enculturation: A Journal of Rhetoric, Writing, and Culture. (n.d.). Retrieved from
http://enculturation.net/

Google Sites. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://sites.google.com/

Harlot: A Revealing Look at the Arts of Persuasion. (n.d.). Retrieved from
http://harlotofthearts.org/index.php/harlot

Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy. (2015). Retrieved from
http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/

National Council of Teachers of English. (2014). NCTE position statement on multimodal literacies.
Retrieved from http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/multimodalliteracies

Ong, W. J. (2002). *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word*. London: Routledge.

Palmquist, M., Kiefer, K., Hartvigsen, J., & Goodlew, B. (2008). Contrasts: Teaching and learning
about writing in traditional and computer classrooms. In M. Sidler, R. Morris, & E. O. Smith
(Eds.), *Computers in the composition classroom: A critical sourcebook* (pp. 251-270).
Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Pet Alliance of Greater Orlando. (2015). Retrieved from http://petallianceorlando.org/

Pigg, S., Grabill, J. T., Brunk-Chavez, B., Moore, J. L., Rosinski, P., & Curran, P. G. (2013).
Ubiquitous writing, technologies, and the social practice of literacies of coordination. *Written
Communication*, *31*(1), 91–117.

Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society. (n.d.). Retrieved from
http://www.presenttensejournal.org/

Read, S., & Michaud, M. J. (2015). Writing about writing and the multimajor professional writing
course. *College Composition and Communication*, *66*(3), 427-457.

Selber, S. (2004). *Multiliteracies for a digital age*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University
Press.

Selfe, C. L. (1999). *Technology and literacy in the twenty-first century: The importance of paying
attention*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Selfe, R. J., & Selfe, C. L. (2008). "Convince me!" Valuing multimodal literacies and composing
public service announcements. *Theory into Practice, 47*(2), 83-92.

Shipka, J. (2011). *Toward a composition made whole*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Swales, J. (2014). The concept of discourse community. In E. Wardle & D. Downs (Eds.), *Writing
about writing: A college reader* (2nd ed.) (pp. 215-228). Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Takayoshi, P., & Selfe, C. L. (2007). Thinking about multimodality. In C. L. Selfe (Ed.), *Multimodal
composition: Resources for teachers* (pp. 1-12). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Vie, S. (2008). Digital divide 2.0: "Generation M" and online social networking sites in the
composition classroom. *Computers and Composition, 25*(1), 9–23.

Wardle, E. (2009). "Mutt genres" and the goal of FYC: Can we help students write the genres of the
university? *College Composition and Communication*, *60*(4), 765–789.

Wardle, E., & Downs, D. (2013). Reflecting back and looking forward: Revisiting "Teaching about
writing, righting misconceptions" five years on. *Composition Forum*, *27*. Retrieved from
http://compositionforum.com/

Wardle, E., & Downs, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Writing about writing: A college reader* (2nd ed.). Boston:
Bedford/St. Martin's.

Yancey, K. B. (2004). Made not only in words: Composition in a new key. *College Composition and
Communication*, *56*(2), 297–328.