

Proposal for the Department/School Initiative in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Grant Program
(2009-2010)

Assessing Faculty & Student Multimodal Teaching and Learning Practices Across Campus
The Department of English, Illinois State University

Primary Investigators:

Cheryl Ball, cball@ilstu.edu
Katherine Ellison, keellis@ilstu.edu
Hilary Justice, hjustic@ilstu.edu
Jim Kalmbach, kalmbach@ilstu.edu
Jan Neuleib, jneuleib@ilstu.edu
Torri Thompson, tlthomps@ilstu.edu

Student Participants:

Jason Dockter, Jason.Dockter@llcc.edu
Beth Zold, emzold@ilstu.edu

Joan Mullin, jmullin@ilstu.edu
Chair — English Department

Assessing Faculty & Student Multimodal Teaching and Learning Practices Across Campus

The Teaching-Learning Problem to be Addressed

Although scholars and teachers across the country are more frequently using multimedia in their classrooms, no university or department has yet conducted a study of the impact that multimodal text production has had on the teaching and learning outcomes of their faculty and students. Multimodal compositions draw from not only the textual and linguistic but also the aural, visual, gestural, and kinetic (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 26). For example, new media specialists are teaching students to compose blog-portfolios, audio essays, and visual arguments, and historians of the book and textual production are teaching students how to make paper, bind books, and distinguish between different types and functions of inks. In the Department of English, the PIs on this grant application represent technical communication, rhetoric, composition, new media, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature and culture, and textual studies, and we all engage in innovative multimodal teaching and learning projects in and outside of our classrooms. Colleagues across campus are also assigning and composing multimedia texts. Although some of these texts have been around for centuries, such as seventeenth-century commonplace books, which were early multimodal compositions, their implementation as teaching methods and assignments in university classrooms has only become more common in the last decade and, more important to us, have not yet been studied as pedagogical strategies at the department and university levels. A growing body of research on individual and (fewer still) programmatic implementations of multimodal composition is appearing in publication in the fields of Rhetoric and Composition and Education, but there have been no studies to our knowledge that take an entire university's multimodal teaching and learning practices into account, that consider collaborative possibilities across university disciplines, and that envision the role that the Department of English can serve as a community trained in the history, culture, and practice of reading, writing, composing, and textual production.

Scope of the Study

Through a series of recent hires that complement the strengths of senior faculty members already engaged in multimodal research and teaching, the Department of English has recently built an impressive team of

Assessing Faculty & Student Multimodal Teaching and Learning Practices Across Campus

scholars and teachers approaching multimodality from varied technical, conceptual, theoretical, and historical perspectives. Our graduate and undergraduate students, too, who are entering the department with more varied experiences with and curiosity about multimodality are teaching us much about new multimodal possibilities, better pedagogical strategies, and the kinds of resources we need to help them learn. The SoTL grant will provide us with the time and resources we need to study our own and others practices in a coherent way. Our goal is to collaborate as English Department cohorts who assign multimodal compositions to expand our understanding of how multimodality is taught and could, with additional resources and education, be taught on campus. During the fall of 2009, we will invite faculty members and students from across campus to roundtables to discuss their current and potential uses of multimodal composition such as creating assignments, analyzing learning outcomes, understanding locations of composing (i.e., labs, homes, offices, etc.), enjoying successes and overcoming hindrances, sharing research on multimodality in different fields, etc. We will also organize a roundtable for teachers in pre-K and secondary disciplines who are fellows in the Illinois State Writing Project. Based on issues raised at the roundtable discussions, the beginning of spring 2010 we will create a set of surveys for faculty and students that will be distributed to the entire campus, in which we can further investigate multimodal usage and need for support, technological access, and training. The outcomes of this study will be: (1) provision of a university-wide snapshot of how and why faculty members assign and students learn from multimodal compositions, and (2) practical guidelines for enhancing individual syllabi and department curricula—potentially including suggestions for courses to be offered as part of the general-education Writing Program—that incorporate more multimodal compositions.

Literature Review

Since the mid-1980s, scholarship in the humanities and education has seen a shift toward the implementation of digital, multimedia technologies (see Bolter, 2002). Of particular import to this proposal is increased attention to multiliteracies in the early 2000s. The New London Group (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) defined multiliteracies as understanding how to communicate in multiple modes such as aurally, visually, gesturally, spatially, and, of course, linguistically. Even historical fields that may not first come to mind as engaged with

Assessing Faculty & Student Multimodal Teaching and Learning Practices Across Campus

multiliteracy, like Renaissance British literature, are engaged with questions of how early composing practices – texts that were at once printed and in manuscript form, that featured emblems, or that even required readers to fold and manipulate the paper to find meaning, for instance – influenced the history of both reading and writing. Theoretically, the history of multiliteracy has already transformed traditional fields of literary study and history; what was once a binary vision of the past with only literate and illiterate audiences is now a recognition of *literacies* and varying levels, functions, and goals for readers and composers (see Chartier, 1994; Johns, 1998). Armando Petrucci (1995) and Jonathan Goldberg (1990) have even found that different handwriting styles required multiliterate readers and authors, since early modern penmanship signified a writer's class, education, vocation, and status. In this respect, the history of multiliteracies supports Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences. In *An Unschooled Mind*, Gardner (1995) said that these differences challenge an educational system that assumes that everyone can learn the same materials in the same way and that a uniform, universal measure suffices to test student learning. Indeed, as currently constituted, our educational system is heavily biased toward linguistic modes of instruction and assessment and, to a somewhat lesser degree, toward logical-quantitative modes as well. (p. 12)

Since Gardner's publication in 1995, followed by the New London Group's 1996 article, "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures," English departments (as well as other university settings out of which much of this research originated, such as Colleges of Education) have been incorporating multiple modes of communication in teaching and learning scenarios. However, much of the research on multiliteracies and multimodal composition has been isolated within the writing programs in English departments, and within that domain, until very recently much of the work of multimodal composition has been performed by individual teachers (Anderson et al, 2006) and not on a systematic basis within departments or across departments. An exception to this pedagogical and scholarly gap is the inclusion of multimodal composition as part of the first-year writing experience, which has happened mostly in the last five years at schools such as Michigan Tech, Kent State, Stanford, Ohio State, and University of Illinois–Urbana-Champaign. Although there is a growing body of research about individual teachers' use of multimodal assignments in university writing classrooms (see, e.g., Ball, 2006; Ball & Moeller, 2008; Shipka,

Assessing Faculty & Student Multimodal Teaching and Learning Practices Across Campus

2005, 2006; Sorapure, 2004, 2006; Walker, 2007; Wysocki, Johnson-Eilola, Selfe, & Sirc, 2004), there is relatively little scholarship that addresses either the teaching practices and learning outcomes in classes *other than* writing, or of programmatic efforts to include multimodal composition.

One of the few large-scale studies about multimodal composition was just published in 2009 in *Academic Commons* by Michael Coventry and Matthias Oppermann. Their article, entitled “From Narrative to Database: Multimedia Inquiry in a Cross-Classroom Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Study,” reported on several years of research they conducted as part of the Visible Knowledge Project, in which 75 faculty from 22 institutions participated in a long-term study of “the impact of technology on learning, primarily in the humanities” (“Going Public,” 2009). Coventry and Oppermann’s 2009 findings show, in summary, how the authors extracted metadata in the form of learning outcomes from student-produced digital stories so that the videos could be categorized and included in a database. The database helps document learning outcomes specific to multimedia texts, including student engagement and emotional/epistemological modes of delivery, and makes for easier searching, pedagogical use, and researching based on the kinds or content of videos. We will build from the findings of the Visible Knowledge Project (VKP) to prepare roundtable discussions and survey questions for our localized, campus-wide survey of multimodal practices.

Methodologies

This project has two information-gathering phases—(1) roundtables and (2) surveys—followed by a synthesis of the information through a report.

1. Roundtables

The first stage of research will entail information gathering in the form of university-wide roundtable discussions about multimodal texts. We are specifically interested in the ways teachers are composing multimodally in their research and teaching multimodal composition to their students, through in-class exercises, examples, demonstrations, and assignments and projects. In the fall, we will host roundtables that include prepared readings in multimodal scholarship. We will invite ISU teachers, in-service teachers, and

Assessing Faculty & Student Multimodal Teaching and Learning Practices Across Campus

students (separately) to discuss key topics related to these readings and solicit participation from instructors who have (a) led CTLT workshops on multimodal composing, (b) attended these workshops, and (c) are likely researchers and teachers in these areas based on their departmental assignments. In addition to soliciting participants, we will encourage all faculty to attend (via RSVP) so that the discussion will be as rich and varied as possible. Students who are known to the above faculty as well as students from the general population will be invited to attend student-focused workshops. We plan to kick off the roundtables by having a national guest speaker on multimodal literacies—such as Bill Cope or Mary Kalantzis (co-editors of much work on multiliteracies, including those authored by The New London Group) from the University of Illinois, or Randy Bass (Director of the Visible Knowledge Project) from Georgetown University—followed by one roundtable on a key topic in multimodality and teaching and learning each month September through November. These roundtables will help us to better understand the myriad ways multimodal composition is taught and learned both on and off campus, which will help us better prepare our surveys for the second stage of research.

2. Surveys

The second stage of research will entail creating survey questions about multimodal composition, distributing those surveys on campus, and analyzing the results. The surveys will be distributed via the Internet (using the ISU Web Services survey engine) and the results will be anonymous. If this project is approved, we will apply to the IRB Board. We plan on proposing surveys to reach three audiences:

- ISU Faculty—to assess their past, current, and potential future multimodal pedagogical practices; the limitations they face in implementing those practices; their technological, critical, and pedagogical support needs; and reflections upon the learning outcomes of those practices;
- Pre-K and Secondary Education teachers involved in the Illinois State Writing Project, for whom we will design a similar survey as above but with questions more pertinent to the unique demands facing secondary classrooms; and

Assessing Faculty & Student Multimodal Teaching and Learning Practices Across Campus

- Students—to assess their engagement with multimedia projects for coursework as well as multimodal work they perform outside of school writing; the limitations and obstacles they faced while trying to complete their projects; and reflections on their learning outcomes as a result of those projects.

With a holistic picture of the kinds of multimedia projects faculty and students at ISU are currently using and the success rates of past projects as determined by faculty and students' access to support services, investigators will then be able to compose a report that outlines these issues for the campus.

Outcomes

- **Data from three surveys on faculty and student multimedia composition practices**

We will publish the anonymous survey results so that other scholars, on- and off-campus, can use the information for further study.

- **Analysis of the survey results**

Because the content of this study specifically asks about multimodal compositions, we will decide whether to present the overview and analysis as a white paper/report or as a digital, multimedia text.

- **Carnegie KEEP Toolkit Report**
- **CTLT Teaching-Learning Symposium presentation** (January 2011)

Finally, even though this is an information-gathering mission, it is possible that one or more scholarly articles or digital media 'webtexts' (the equivalent of scholarly print articles) could arise from this data analysis. For instance, the graduate students participating in this project will be taking the lead, under our supervision, on hosting the student roundtables and creating and analyzing the faculty and student surveys. The graduate students could easily turn this project into dissertation work. Such outcomes would be appropriate to publish as an e-/book or in any number of SoTL-related journals such as *Academic Commons*.

Assessing Faculty & Student Multimodal Teaching and Learning Practices Across Campus

References

- Anderson, Daniel; Atkins, Anthony; Ball, Cheryl E.; Homicz Millar, Krista; Selfe, Cynthia; & Selfe, Richard. (2006). Integrating multimodality in composition curricula: Survey methodology and results from a CCC Research Initiative grant. *Composition Studies*, 34(2).
- Ball, Cheryl E. (2006). Reading the text: Remediating the text. *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 10(2). Retrieved March 30, 2009, from <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/10.2/binder2.html?coverweb/riceball/index.html>
- Ball, Cheryl E., & Moeller, Ryan M. (2007). Reinventing the possibilities: Academic literacy and new media. *Fibreculture Journal*. Retrieved March 30, 2009, from http://journal.fibreculture.org/issue10/ball_moeller/index.html
- Bolter, Jay David. (2000). *Writing Space*, 2nd ed. Boston: Erlbaum.
- Chartier, Roger. (1994). *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe Between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Stanford: Stanford UP.
- Cope, Bill, & Kalantzis, Mary. (Eds.). (2000). *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. New York: Routledge.
- Coventry, Michael, & Oppermann, Matthias. (2009, March 5). From Narrative to Database: Multimedia Inquiry in a Cross-Classroom Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Study. *Academic Commons*. Retrieved March 30, 2009, from <http://www.academiccommons.org/commons/essay/narrative-database>
- Gardner, Howard. (1995). *The unschooled mind: How children think and how schools should teach*. New York: Basic Books.
- Going Public. (2009, January 10). *Visible knowledge project*. Retrieved March 30, 2009, from <https://digitalcommons.georgetown.edu/blogs/vkp/>
- Goldberg, Jonathan. (1990). *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance*. Stanford: Stanford UP.
- Johns, Adrian. (1998). *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making*. Chicago: The University of Chicago P.
- The New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1). Retrieved March 30, 2009, from http://wwwstatic.kern.org/filer/blogWrite44ManilaWebsite/paul/articles/A_Pedagogy_of_Multiliteracies_Designing_Social_Futures.htm
- Petrucci, Armando. (1995). *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Shipka, Jody. (2005). A multimodal task-based framework for composing. *College Composition and Communication*, 57(2), 277–306.
- Shipka, Jody. (2006). Sound engineering: Toward a theory of multimodal soundness. *Computers and Composition*, 23(3), 355–373.
- Sorapure, Madeleine. (2004). Five principles of new media: Or, playing Lev Manovich. *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 8(2). Retrieved March 30, 2009, from <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/8.2/binder2.html?coverweb/sorapure/index.htm>
- Sorapure, Madeleine. (2006). Between modes: Assessing students new media compositions. *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy*, 10(2). Retrieved October 22, 2007, from <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/10.2/binder2.html?coverweb/sorapure/index.html>
- Walker, Joyce. (2007). Constructing a BIG text: Developing a multimodal master plan for composition instruction. *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, 11(3). Retrieved March 30, 2009, from http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/11.3/binder.html?topoi/prior-et-al/about/abstract_walker.html
- Wysocki, Anne Frances; Johnson-Eilola, Johndan; Selfe, Cynthia L.; & Sirc, Geoffrey. (2004). *Writing new media: Theory and applications for expanding the teaching of composition*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.

Assessing Faculty & Student Multimodal Teaching and Learning Practices Across Campus

Budget Justification

This proposal requests \$10,000 to support the following items:

- \$4000 course buy-out for project leader to plan fall roundtables. The lead will be creating advertising, soliciting participants, and helping to lead discussions.
- \$2500 Guest speaker's honoraria, travel, and accommodations
- \$2500 Catered hot breakfast or lunch buffet in Bone Student Center or STV 401 for 8 roundtable events (25 persons per event; 4 events each for faculty and students; prices based on University catering services, does *not* include room charge, if any)
- \$1000 Promotional materials, survey development, photocopying, and website development.