## CONTENTS

President's Forum: Imagining Shakespeare  
Maurice Hunt .............................................. 1

"Richest Juice in Poison-Flowers": The Basil Pot's Corruption of Isabella  
Josh Tindell ............................................... 14

Gender Roles after the Collapse: Women in American Post-Apocalyptic Fiction  
Dave Kuhne ............................................... 22

Transcendence and Mythic Vision in Leo Tolstoy's *Resurrection* and Denis Chávez's *Face of an Angel*  
Mary Jane Hurst ......................................... 29

"This Is the Very Coinage of Your Brain": Shared Themes in *Hamlet* and *Proof*  
Lorrie Wolfard ........................................... 38

Visual Literacy in the Composition Classroom: Sharing in the Connective Spaces of Social Networking Sites  
Mina L. Sommerville-Thompson .......................... 44

What's TEXT Got To Do with It?: Assessing Visual and Textual Elements in First-Year Writing Projects  
Carol Johnson-Gerendas ................................. 53

Embedding Ethics in Assignment Design and Assessment: Using the E-folio to Close the Loop for Students in First-Year Comp Classes  
Stacia Dunn Campbell ................................ 61

Assessing Multimodal Composing in a Senior Seminar in English  
Carrie Leverenz ......................................... 67

I Hope This Reaches You  
Cheryl Clements .......................................... 76

Poems from *The Great Big Middle*  
Sally McGreevey Hannay ................................. 81

Why Illegitimate Children Are No Longer "Bastards"  
Wendy Hanks ............................................. 96

Carving Memory on Consecrated Ground: Tolbert's Texas and Satanta as Historical Figure  
Travis Franks ............................................ 10

Women's Suicide in Fairy Tales  
Kezia Ruiz ................................................. 11

CCTE Information and Reports  
President's Message ..................................... 11
Papers Given at the Seventy-Ninth Annual Meeting ........................................... 11
Minutes of the Executive Council Meeting .......................... 12
Minutes of the General Business Meeting .......................... 13
Frances Hernández Teacher-Scholar Award Recipients ........................................... 13
Life Members/Honorary Members ................. 13
Past Presidents ........................................... 13

Institutional Members ................................ Inside Back Cove
learning, involving students in what we ourselves want to know more about—using new theories I need to learn as a teacher to drive students' research and reflection on what they are doing as designers of multimodal messages.

Works Cited


Assessing Multimodal Composing in a Senior Seminar in English

Carrie Leverenz

*Texas Christian University*

As multimodal composing has worked its way into writing courses, many teachers who do not themselves feel expert in new media writing have taken the plunge and assigned it. For teachers new to assigning videos and websites, one approach to assessing them is to focus only on the writing—to assure students that they will not be graded on their technical skill. It is easy enough when assessing a student web page, for example, to ignore non-textual elements and apply criteria similar to those we normally use when evaluating more traditional writing assignments: is the point clear? Is there adequate evidence? Are the sentences well edited? However, if multimodal composing is to become a valuable part of what writers in the 21st century know how to do—and I believe it is—assessing only the alphabetic aspect of such compositions does students a disservice. Students need to know how to martial the affordances of multimedia to produce rhetorically effective texts, and our assignments and assessment strategies need to work toward that end (Borton and Huot 99).

Though I am committed to increasing opportunities for writing teachers to gain new media composing skills themselves and thus build confidence in teaching and assessing such skills, I want to focus today on what students can learn from using free and accessible tools like the drag-and-drop website creation tool Weebly to produce relatively uncomplicated multimedia assignments that do not require teachers to impart any special knowledge of software. Although in using such template-driven programs, students do not learn the kinds of skills they would if they were required to design a website using Dreamweaver and Photoshop, they do learn valuable rhetorical strategies that are arguably transferable across composing situations and media. And, as Henry Jenkins et al have pointed out, a low barrier to participation is one of the key characteristics of what this MIT research group terms...

Co-Winner of the Rhetoric, Composition, Technical Writing, Language Studies Pedagogy Award
our “participatory culture,” making familiarity and facility with free and easy tools such as Facebook, Twitter, Blogger, and Weebly just as important a learning outcome as rhetorically effective expression. By using such low-barrier tools, teachers also gain valuable experience with teaching and assessing multimodal composing without the need for advanced training.

In the fall of 2011, I had the opportunity to study a small group of students enrolled in TCU’s required senior seminar in English. Originally conceptualized as a capstone course aimed at easing students’ transition into graduate school or the workplace, this one-credit course, which meets once a week for 8 weeks, has come to focus primarily on the construction of a professional digital portfolio. A central challenge for instructors has been how to teach English and Writing majors (who may have little or no experience with new media composing) to create websites in so little time. Approaches have ranged from teaching students to use Dreamweaver to modify templates to recommending free website services such as Weebly and Wix, which allows users to choose a pre-designed template and drag and drop content into it, making it possible to create a website in literally a few hours. While, given the time constraints of the course, even instructors with web design experience offer and accept students’ choice of the easy way out, they also fear that such tools limit what students can produce. But such a view focuses overmuch on the product of composing. As the process movement in composition has taught us—the final text, the product, represents only a fraction of what students have learned about writing. That’s why it’s so important to invite students into the process of assessing their multimodal work, because as writing teachers we still need to understand how multimodal composers produce what they produce. And given that digital tools change so rapidly, this need to understand the process of multimodal composing will likely be with us forever.

When asked what they learned from composing their websites, students in the senior seminar saw benefits even as they acknowledged that using Weebly was “easy,” indeed, perhaps because it was easy; when students are asked to compose a new kind of text but are able to do so easily, they can focus on their rhetorical choices, which is arguably the most important outcome to assess in any writing course and the most transferable. Across the board, students saw the benefit of having to do a kind of writing—composing a website—that has use value outside of school. (See Yancey 2004, 2009.) They also valued what they learned about writing for a real audience (a potential employer, a grad admissions committee, a reader interested in their writing), something stu-

dents told me they had not been required to do as English or even writing majors. Just having to shorten paragraphs or link or highlight words forced students to think about how a reader would engage with their writing when read online. Before turning to some examples of student web pages, I want to note one other transferable rhetorical skill that students gained from creating their websites: an increased capacity for critical self-reflection as they selected which writing samples to include. Aside from the requirement that they include three different genres of writing and write a brief reflection on why they included each example, students were free to choose any work for any reason. This act of selection led students to reflect on what makes writing good, for whom, and in what context.

In the remainder of my time today, I want to show you a few examples of the rhetorical choices senior seminar students made, offering not my assessment of them but the students’ own. Although website templates constrain choice, they do not eliminate choice. Any choice is an opportunity for rhetorical insight. The students whose websites I’ll be discussing today all used Weebly, which offers over 100 options just for the basic design—layout, color, etc. (found at http://www.weebly.com/). As I’ll illustrate in a moment, students made conscious choices of template based on their intended audience and the message they wanted to send. Once a template was chosen, students continued to make choices about such elements as 1) the banner image 2) the image of themselves 3) their writing samples and 4) what they would say about the writing sample.

Cliff is a good example of how even a technologically experienced student can benefit from a simple multimodal assignment that invites students to make rhetorical choices with consequences for a reader they care about. Cliff, who had come to TCU to be a writing major, had taken a multimodal authoring class where he and group members had to design a website using html. For Cliff, the chance to use a free and simple drag-and-drop website-building program was a welcome relief from the difficulty of having to code. Though Weebly was less customizable than he would have liked, he still found ways to make meaningful choices. (http://cliffbell.weebly.com/). See Figure 1.
Cliff said he chose a muted grey, beige, and white Weebly template because it looked “professional,” contrasting it with other templates that “had colors everywhere.” He admitted that a friend not in this class was creating a website with a black background that he liked. But, he said, “I didn’t want to steal her idea.” He also noted that his Senior Seminar instructor had told them that “the more white background you have, the more likely people will be to read it.” Thus, though this Weebly template (as with any free template) is inevitably being used by an uncountable number of people, for Cliff, his choice was an act of originality and of good rhetorical practice.

On Cliff’s home page are several other interesting rhetorical choices that may not be apparent at first glance. The feather icon next to his name, which Cliff said he intended to look like a quill and thus represent his interest in writing, was actually the result of a time-consuming search for an appropriate image that wasn’t copyrighted. His awareness of the ethics of using images online is more evidence of his learning. He noted that he had the option of using an image and giving credit, but he couldn’t figure out how to do so in a way that didn’t detract from the look of his page.

The photo Cliff chose was, he said, “the only good picture of myself,” but also an intentional rhetorical choice. As Cliff put it, “I’m always frustrated when they take my i.d. photo because I have to take my hat off. This is how I try to look pretty much every day.” Cliff’s professional aspirations—to be a video game designer—did not require him to be different from his daily self. I found it interesting that Cliff saw the professional portfolio as a space where he could enact his aspiration by stating on his opening page that he had already been accepted into SMU’s Guildhall Video Design Program, though such was not yet the case when he submitted his senior seminar portfolio for a grade. Cliff, then, was clearly producing a rhetorical construct that included both who he is and who he hoped to be. The senior seminar portfolios, then, are rhetorically more complex than class portfolios in that they are intentionally forward-looking rather than backward-looking. They call students to compose a self to be read by a future audience.

Even in their selection of writing—their past work—students were making rhetorical choices, choices for an imagined audience. For Cliff, this choice included examples of video game design he had submitted for his application to SMU (the Level Design appears above his writing samples). The digital professional portfolio thus allowed Cliff to assemble these diverse parts of his experience and present them as a coherent whole, even though the video game design work had not been a part of any class he took at TCU. Similarly, the first writing sample on Cliff’s page, the short story “Mercenaries,” is one he tells us has been revised many times beyond the original requirements. It too allowed Cliff to claim that he was more than the sum of the classes he had taken. Equally important, his introductory comments demonstrate his unsolicited valuing of revision, an important learning outcome for writers, even if it comes after a class is over. The website becomes an occasion for students to reflect on the learning they did in classes, the writing they produced there, and integrate such learning into a larger understanding of writing more generally.

In his interview, Cliff admitted seeing a connection between creating this website and writing an essay: “you’re writing for a general audience, and you have a goal. You’re trying to convince them of something,” but he commented that “web design is a lot more fun” in part because of the choices he could make: Says Cliff, “I had a lot of control over the look, the outcomes, color scheme, feather, all things I got to choose, whereas with an essay, it has to be this many pages long, this kind of font.” Claiming an identity as a writer requires that students see writing as a matter of choices that they—not teachers—will have to make. The website assignment helped reinforce that message.

Elora, an English major whose first choice of career is university professor but who is also considering law school or teaching English in Japan, describes her expertise as literary analysis, literary research, and creative writing. Although Elora had previously taken a class that required a good deal of blogging and another class where students pro-
duced a video, she described herself as “not very computer savvy” but “excited to learn.” What she wanted to learn was expressly rhetorical: “I’m really happy I’m taking this class because I need to learn more about how to get my name out there online. . . . I’m realizing how much more everything is going online, even for writers. I want to learn more about how to make things look professional, an academic website where I can sell myself” (http://eloradavis.weebly.com/). See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Elora Davis Home Page

Both Cliff and Elora saw their websites as spaces for composing a self rhetorically tied to their professional aspirations. Elora, after initially thinking she would try to cover all her interests on her website, decided to focus on her immediate goal to teach English in Japan. For example, Elora chose her image because, as one of her favorite photos from Japan, “it showed I’d been there . . . The Teach English program is going to want to see that I’ve been there and know the culture.”

In selecting which writing to include, Elora focused on pieces that illustrated her knowledge of Japan, explaining that it’s a “good way for people to see that I . . . love the culture enough to write creatively about it.” Her honors thesis, a fictionalized account of an American woman living in Japan, was thus an obvious choice to include. Interestingly, in her first draft of her website, the only image she included was the one on the homepage; her later addition of images on the pages that introduced her writing—for example, the cover of a novel by a contemporary Japanese fiction writer who is very popular in Japan and had influenced her own writing—further “show[s] how much she knows about the culture.”

Similarly, on her film comparison page, she uses an image of a poster advertising a French film about Hiroshima. The poster depicts one of the only Japanese actors working after World War II who was also very westernized, something she discusses in her paper. Again, according to Elora, the use of this image reinforces to visitors to her site that she knows Japanese culture. The strategic use of images was one of the things Elora noted when asked what she had learned from the assignment. Comparing this project to other writing she’d done for classes, Elora highlighted the differences: “You have to think about [the website] like a business, selling points about yourself, what would be effective from someone trying to choose a candidate . . . Those aspects are so different from just being in an English class. [There is] so much fluff involved. This really boils it down to your strong points. You don’t have a whole paper to explain yourself. You have to focus on visual appeal, which isn’t something English majors really do because we’re focused on rhetorical appeal in terms of text.”

Ashley is an English major who describes her expertise as “persuasive writing, analysis, British Literature, and effective communication skills” and who, like Elora, used the website assignment to develop the message she wanted to convey about herself to an outside audience. In fact, the rhetoricity of the website assignment was central to the learning that occurred, which Ashley described as “having the courage, for lack of a better word, to actually put my stuff online. That was an interesting experience as a whole. It was the first time I was required to write something for a public audience” (http://ashleychart.weebly.com/index.html). See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Ashley Harat Home Page
In contrast to Elora, who remarked that English majors don’t typically focus on visuals, Ashley admitted that her biggest challenge in composing her website was “sometimes focusing too much on the design elements rather than the content. Two weeks before the assignment was due, I went through about 15 different page designs before I went back to my original one. I couldn’t figure out how to change the color of the font. I was trying to find something else to make the font stand out.” She also played around with the font so it wouldn’t look so “ghostbusters” and added the periods after each page name to match her use of Ashley C [period] Hart. This “focusing on the design,” however, was rhetorical rather than technical. She wasn’t struggling to make things work so much as she was working to achieve a desired effect.

Like Cliff, Ashley felt the Weebly templates offered “a lot of good designs, a lot of creative freedom,” as evidenced by the fact that she was able to try out 15 different templates with a click of a button. That she ultimately came back to her original choice highlights the degree to which it was a meaningful choice. The ease with which Ashley could make rhetorical choices extended to her banner image. Ashley replaced the original image of Tuscany with an image of a library and a gothic stone arch, whose rhetorical purpose goes beyond just the association between English majors and reading. As she explains, “I like much older-looking gothic schools. I’m looking at graduate programs up north, so I started looking for something that reminded me of that. I put the image at the top so there would be more focus on my work, my writing,” and the remainder of her website does, indeed, tell a focused, coherent story about Ashley as a writer, from the Courier font (which Ashley chose because it looked like an old book), to the image of an old typewriter, which reminded Ashley of the 1926 Royal typewriter she bought herself for her 20th birthday, to the image she chose for the “About Me” page of herself in a cave in Scotlland, which echoes the stone arch in the banner and illustrates her adventurous spirit.

In explaining her choice of writing samples, Ashley noted the pleasure she had experienced in writing specific pieces (pleasure being something important to writers who but not something we assess or even take note of very often): About her fiction piece, “Art at Sea”—“It was a really fun story, I enjoyed writing it”; about her “New Woman and Aestheticism” essay—“A lot of work went into that paper, but I really enjoyed it. I was really proud of it.” If the process of selecting and revisiting writing helps reinforce for students the pleasure of writing that, too, seems like a valuable learning outcome.

Although for Ashley, using Weebly to create a website wasn’t a challenge in itself, the ultimate goal of the digital portfolio assignment—that she assess her work and present that assessment to an outside audience—was a challenge. In Ashley’s words, “I learned how to go through my old pieces and determine which ones were the strongest which is sometimes difficult for me,” and though the new writing students had to do to present themselves and their work online was minimal, Ashley was proud that she had been able to “adapt her writing style” for an online context, another valuable rhetorical skill.

My point today is that the ability to make effective rhetorical choices should be a key skill we’re teaching and assessing. That’s non-controversial. But toward that end, the digital portfolios senior seminar students created—and that any student can create with tools like Weebly—afforded them new and engaging ways to practice making rhetorical choices when composing in a new form for a potentially real audience. If we focus our assessment on these choices, including students’ own ability to assess them, we can see multimodal composing as an opportunity to reinforce learning goals rather than as in competition with them. (What am I giving up when I include a multimodal composition?) And we can feel a little less anxious about entering territory where we aren’t an expert. Yet.

Works Cited