



GAMIFYING RHETORIC: FIRST-YEAR WRITING IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

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Bachelor of Arts, 2012

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Arlington, Texas

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

AddRan College of Liberal Arts

Texas Christian University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

May, 2014



## PREFACE

Perversity and irony have transformed my approach to writing, as feminist concepts, like Donna Haraway's famous cyborg figure, have provided rich avenues for the development of my personal pedagogical practices in the college writing classroom—practices that dismantle the normative academic boundaries that value theory *over* practice. “Dismantling the norm” is a recurring theme in both my teaching and my research, and my approach to scholarship consists largely of “breaking the rules” (in fact, I’ve often joked that my memoir will be titled *You’re Not the Boss of Me*). Culturally, a phrase like “breaking the rules” summons a number of different (negative) ideas about progress (failure, immaturity, cheating, stealing, or any other number of “criminal activities” [read: activities that impede traditional notions of progress]). However, the process of writing this thesis has taught me that new media writing offers approaches to writing that not only permit writers to “break the rules” but also encourage them to do so toward productive ends.

Interestingly (and perhaps unsurprisingly), my methodology has also allowed me to “break the rules” of the traditional prose-thesis-writing process. That is, part of this thesis exists as a video game. The reason for this choice is inextricably entangled with the argument I put forth in the thesis. Specifically, rather than seeing new media writing as the analysis of specific media (or of the broader tropes of formal convention that often guide epistemologies of writing), I maintain that new media writing's materiality is situated within its compositional *practices*. The significance here is that in this thesis, I implicate academic traditions that privilege print, prose, single-author texts as “legitimate” scholarship as hindrances to pedagogies of rhetoric and composition, and as such, in its form, this thesis embodies my refusal to position textual analysis *over* textual production.

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Writing Games: The Theory .....	3
Writing Games: The Practice.....	5
Writing Writing Games: The Praxis .....	6
<b>Writing Games: The Theory.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Systematic Worlds .....	9
<i>The New Rhetoric</i> and Rhetoricity.....	15
Universal Audience Reveals the Arhetoricity of First-Year Writing .....	22
Particular Audience Reveals Gaps Between Theory and Practice .....	25
Filling the Gaps.....	34
<b>Writing Games: The Practice .....</b>	<b>37</b>
A Quest for Expression.....	37
The Expressive Affordances of Video Games.....	42
<b>Reference .....</b>	<b>47</b>
Appendix: Writing Writing Games: The Praxis .....	47
Why Read the Code? .....	47
How to Read the Code.....	47
The Code.....	48
Works Cited.....	57

## Introduction

Over the past decade, writing instructors and writing program directors have debated and contested the implications of digital modes and methodologies for rhetoric and composition. Interestingly, however, new media scholars have often articulated the importance of differentiating digital writing from the traditional writing in matters of mode and methodology. Scholars such as Stephen Ramsay and Geoffrey Rockwell, for example, have discussed the ways in which digital writing allows for “the manipulation of features, objects, and states of interest using the language of coding or programming (however abstracted by graphical systems)” (Ramsay and Rockwell 82). Ramsay and Rockwell go on to say that the manipulative activities made accessible through new media composition processes are not only beneficial unto themselves as they pertain to the ends of composition, but also that such processes constitute the very essence (and evolution) of theories of writing and composition (Ramsay and Rockwell 82). In short, with new media composition, practice is theory is practice. In other words, writing new media is inherently praxical. Thus, through an engagement with the manipulative practices that comprise and constitute digital writing, new media composition has the potential to expose first-year writing students to the intersections of writing’s theories and practices—to the places where theories and practices of writing converge. With this in mind, writing instructors and writing program directors would be remiss not to attend to potential implications of new media for first-year writing programs.

Additionally, many scholarly discussions of digital writing as it pertains to the disciplinary humanities center on digital writing’s epistemological relationship(s) to hegemony and power, specifically the ways in which digital writing might alter traditional

ideas about the production of knowledge both inside and outside the academy. According to Luke Waltzer, within the context of college students' increasingly digital and networked lives, general education requirements, as common practices in universities, tend to fall short of adequately relaying the importance of the humanities to students in the context of their connected lives (Waltzer 335). Waltzer attests to the significance of the hegemonic power of these generalized methodologies of instruction when he says:

These conditions are encouraging too many college students to see knowledge as something they purchase in the form of a degree, as opposed to something flexible and broadly applicable that they gain through deep, engaging experience. (Waltzer 335).

In other words, generalized methodologies of instruction that are common to the academy, are, in part, the very situations that prompt students to perceive knowledge as a commodity. That is, the academy's tendency to privilege "discipline-based" research, positions the scholarship of teaching and curriculum development as the "ugly stepchildren" of the university which, in the best cases, undervalues any attempts writing instructors may make to refine scholarly and pedagogical inquiries of praxis—inquiries that might allow students to think about knowledge differently (Waltzer 336). At worst, by privileging what is traditionally known as "discipline-based" research, generalized methodologies of instruction run the risk of foreclosing the possibility that such praxis exists and can be achieved within institutions of higher learning. Significantly, then, by accounting for the discrete and broadly applicable elements and processes of knowledge creation, the praxis that digital writing affords has the potential to help students understand *how* to create self-sustainable pedagogies of their own.

Working from Gregory Ulmer's analogy of the historical trajectory from orality to literacy (Ulmer ix), in *Inter/vention: Free Play in the Age of Electracy*, Jan Rune Holmevik

claims that Ulmer’s “electracy” replaces what is commonly referred to as “digital literacy” as a third wave of writing revolution (Holmevik 5). Holmevik goes on to explain that play facilitates (and has historically facilitated) the contemporary terrain of composition that now includes electracy. For these reasons, Holmevik maintains that scholars need not choose between theorizing and playing, but rather that scholars can—and should—*both play and theorize* (Holmevik 91). Significantly, then, this project exists as an exploration of the ways in which first-year writing instructors and program directors might *both play and theorize* writing in an attempt to understand electracy’s responsibilities to democratized knowledge and *kairos*, as invention/innovation.

#### Writing Games: The Theory

Here, the word “writing” is an adjective that modifies the word “game”—it’s the type of game. That is, in this section, the word “writing” refers broadly to the theoretical, abstract principles that underpin generalizable practices of writing instruction—principles best exemplified, perhaps, in a document like the Writing Program Administration’s Outcomes Statement, which lauds values such as “rhetorical principles” and “critical thinking, reading, and writing” (WPA). Namely, this theoretical foundation attempts to establish a working theory of composition pedagogy that utilizes tenets of video game theory as structural models for writing programs. In short, this section works toward identifying the ways in which (and why) instructors of composition and program administrators might introduce writing theory through play (or practice) into the structure(s) of first-year writing programs.

Because the systematic rules that favor generalizable results are established by universities without regard for the ways in which such rules govern first-year writing programs, writing teachers and writing program directors must turn their attention to the praxical implications of digital writing. Such implications will (or should) affect how

instructors and program administrators teach writing toward the goal of preparing students to be producers of knowledge both inside and outside the academy. In “Where’s the Pedagogy? The Role of Teaching and Learning in the Digital Humanities,” Stephen Brier claims that the disciplinary humanities’ adoption of digitized practices has tended to “focus too narrowly...on the academic research and publication aspects of the digital humanities” (Brier 390). This narrow focus, Brier contends, reinforces what he calls “disciplinary silos,” which, according to Brier, reduce, or generalize, the digital humanities to a mere understanding of the ways in which the digital humanities might be of service to quantifiable research (Brier 391). Significantly, through its service to academic publication, peer review, tenure, and promotion, such a limited view of digitized writing practices makes certain assumptions that privilege product *over* process, or theory *over* practice (Brier 398). As they pertain to generalized writing instruction, the assumptions that privilege theory over practice likewise position theories of writing over practices of writing. Importantly, then, by diminishing the agency of practitioners, the theory/practice hierarchy positions scholars and teachers of writing (the “owners” of theory) as causal agents of “good writing.”

However, distinct demarcations between rhetoric’s subjects, objects, causes, and effects may not be so easily discerned. In *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being*, Thomas Rickert addresses the importance of rhetoric’s material agency, pointing out that “rhetoric is not exclusively a symbolic art, nor does it issue solely from human being” (Rickert 176). Rather, according to Rickert, “rhetoric is fundamentally wedded to the world and emerges within that world” (Rickert 176). Importantly, Rickert not only describes rhetoric as “wedded to the world,” which suggests coexistence and symbiosis between rhetoric and the material world, but he also describes rhetoric as “emerg[ing] within that

world,” which suggests that rhetoric does not preexist, or cause, but rather “becomes with”<sup>1</sup> the material world. The significance here is that generalizable theories of writing instruction imagine a (direct) causal relationship between *kairos* (or a relationship to context, as part of a material world) and rhetoric. Yet, in light of Rickert’s claims, such a traditional notion of causality is insufficient to account for the ways in which rhetoric “becomes with” *kairos*. Thus, because rhetoric “becomes with” *kairos*, disrupting traditional notions of causality, scholars and teachers of writing should strive to invent methodologies that disrupt traditional notions of causality in a similar way— by “becoming with” their respective contexts. In other words, methodologies of writing instruction must account for the material agency of both rhetoric and *kairos*, which, in turn, might shape pedagogies of writing in ways that encourage students to put theories of writing into practice. More specifically, by disrupting traditional notions of causality, game-ified methodologies of writing pedagogy possess the potential to address and account for the intra-actions<sup>2</sup> among the multiple (read: simultaneously intersecting *and* diverging) subjectivities and epistemologies that come together in college writing classrooms.

#### Writing Games: The Practice

In this section, the word “writing” refers to the acts of making rhetorical choices toward composition. Here, in the phrase “writing games,” the word “writing” is an action, a verb, and games are the direct objects of those actions. To extend the game metaphor a bit further, this practical foundation serves to highlight the ways in which instructors of

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<sup>1</sup> According to Karen Barad, “becoming with” is “meeting each moment, being alive to the possibilities of becoming, an ethical call, an invitation that is written into the very matter of all being and becoming” (Barad 396).

<sup>2</sup> Barad claims that intra-action differs from the “classically comforting concept of interaction” as intra-action “entails the very disruption of the metaphysics of individualism that holds that there are discrete objects with inherent characteristics” (Barad 422).

composition and program administrators make the game of first-year writing programs “work.” That is, this section represents the practice of creating programmatic “coding,” or structures, of first-year writing programs.

Without question, first-year writing programs must not neglect the theoretical principles of rhetoric that underpin their (respective) commitments to writing instruction. Significantly, however, the programmatic coding of first year writing programs must embody a hybridity that allows for both the coexistence and symbiosis of rhetoric and *kairos*, while embodying the reflexivity and recursivity—the “becoming with”—of rhetoric’s intra-actions with *kairos*. One solution may be to “code” the requisite flexibility into the structure of the programs in ways that permit the “rules,” or theories of rhetoric and composition, to facilitate the abilities of instructors, administrators, and students to be flexible in practice.

#### Writing Writing Games: The Praxis

This section exists in the form of a game—a game that allows the readers of this project to *both play and* theorize writing. As such, the game embodies the “becoming with” of the project, or the place where theory meets practice, where they work together. That is, by turning a critical eye toward the praxical possibilities of writing, this section works to understand the ways in which the things (signifiers, words, theories, philosophies, phenomena, etc.) that compose the stuff (“good” writing, “good” writers, “good” teachers, etc.) of first-year writing programs *do* instead of *mean*<sup>3</sup>.

Namely, the praxis of writing writing games necessitates continual change and

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<sup>3</sup> In *Difference and Repetition*, Gilles Deleuze poses a central claim that difference precedes representation and that representation (or the logic of identity) does not precede difference. Thus, the individual qua individual possesses something for which traditional representation does not adequately account. According to Deleuze, representation does not, in fact, represent that which is unique to an entity nor can representation adequately encapsulate the things an entity contributes to its individuation (*Difference* 222).

constant renegotiation. For video game scholar James Paul Gee, video game play offers a sort of mediated intra-action between real and virtual identities, which, he argues, embodies the constant (re)negotiation between the real and the virtual—between the interface and the player (Gee 56). In the game that comprises this project, the constant (re)negotiation is enacted through the systematic rules of code that work in tandem with input from the player. For example, one of the game’s rules instructs the game to store the player’s input in the “Table of Rainbows,” and during game play, the rules are such that the game will randomly select an entry from the “Table of Rainbows” (a stored piece of the player’s input) in order to confront the player with the ways in which he/she has participated in “writing” the game. Thus, by enacting recursive writing practices, this rule not only functions subjectively for the player-qua-reader, but also for the player-qua-writer, causing the player to (re)negotiate a number of subjectivities through their play. Additionally, the game’s timed response function works to persuade the player to enact/embody a continual (re)negotiation of rhetoric and *kairos* through experimentation with voice. More importantly, however, writing writing games also disrupts a traditional notion of causality. For example, the “color” labels on indexed text in the game work merely to hold structural places in the game. That is, the names of the colors mean nothing except inasmuch as they structure the player’s interaction with a systematic world. Significantly, then, writing writing games reveals the ways in which (and what) theory can *do*, rather than *mean*.

For first-year writing programs, this means that the theoretical “rules” of rhetoric and theories of writing also *do* instead of *mean*. In other words, rhetorical theories should be regarded as significant only to the extent that such theories work to structure (or taxonomize) the *kairotic* becomings and agencies of the intra-actions among rhetoric, *kairos*, and the

multiple and simultaneous subjectivities of the individuals that comprise first-year writing programs (broadly defined). Like the systematic rules of the game, when determining the structures of first-year writing programs, scholars and teachers of writing must likewise account for the agencies and intra-actions of its players. Otherwise, we risk severing *kairos*, as a condition of creative production, from rhetoric, which, in turn, disallows the “becoming with” of *both* rhetoric *and kairos*. Moreover, positioning rhetoric and *kairos* within the confines of a directly causal relationship is a dangerous practice that gives credence to arguments that value the products of writing solely in terms of service to quantifiable research. Conversely, then, in order to respect the fullness of the work that English departments and first-year writing programs do and to esteem rhetoric and writing themselves as objects of study worthy of our scholarly attention, writing’s experts must turn their attention to the “coding”—to the structure—of such departments and programs. Thus, rather than retreading familiar ground by facilitating discussions of *what* writing means, we, as scholars and teachers of writing, must shift our focus to facilitating discussions of *how* writing means.

## **Writing Games: The Theory**

### Systematic Worlds

Both video games and first-year writing programs create systematic worlds for their respective audiences. For video games, these systematic worlds might take on the characteristics of a racetrack, a football field, or an abandoned hotel filled with zombies. The systematic worlds that first-year writing programs most commonly create, however, are compulsory first-year writing classes. To extend the parallel further, video games and first-year writing programs construct systematic worlds in which agents, or actors, are modeled after (and follow) programmed rules that govern their interaction. As such, a video game's rules, which are programmed by the game's designer, govern a player's interaction with the game. Take, for example, the classic video game Pac-Man, which challenges players to navigate through a maze. Within the game, Pac-Man's programmatic rules allow players to perform certain actions (i.e., navigating the maze), while prohibiting others (passing through the walls of the maze, for instance). The programmatic "rules" of first-year writing programs, like mission statements, statements of outcomes, predetermined assignments, and monitored assessment, govern students' interactions with writing in a similar manner. That is, the "rules" of first-year writing programs allow students to perform certain actions, while foreclosing the possibility of others. Specifically, the official statement of outcomes issued by the Council of Writing Program Administrators regards "critical thinking, reading, and writing" and "rhetorical knowledge" as allowable actions (WPA). At the same time, however, the rhetoric of many first-year writing programs forecloses the possibility for students to arrive at their own conclusions regarding the value(s) of rhetoric and composition. As a result, both video games and first-year writing programs present agonistic arguments

that feature “winning” and “losing” scenarios<sup>4</sup>, which, in turn, present their respective audiences with something to be explicitly solved. In Pac-Man, players must navigate Pac-Man through the maze, while “eating” all of the power pellets within the maze and avoiding the ghosts (or Pac-Man’s “enemies”) on screen. For first-year writing students, the challenge is to “solve” (or acquire) the ability to write persuasively. Most importantly, video games, like Pac-Man, rely on user input, such as controller manipulation, typed text, etc., to make events happen within the narrative of the game, while first-year writing programs depend on their students’ tuition, attendance, and, significantly, the “deliverable” products of their writing, to subsist. Thus, it is the interactions between users and the systematic worlds of which they are a part that give both video games and first-year writing programs their respective essences.

Despite the fact that video games and first-year writing programs depend on the interactivity of their respective users for their existence, video games and first-year writing programs regard the notion of progress very differently. With video games, a user’s progress is contingent upon his or her ability to explore, understand, and traverse the systematic world in which he or she is immersed. Namely, video games allow players to manipulate surroundings, allowing them to systematically observe the results of their manipulations in attempts to discover the workings of the world. Put another way, video game players utilize their interactive manipulations to determine *how* to produce desired effects—effects that lead to progress. Pac-Man players, for example, might determine the effects of their interactions by engaging a ghost “enemy” or by choosing not to navigate the maze. The significance here

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<sup>4</sup> According to Jesper Juul, losing scenarios in video games manifests itself as a player’s failure against the challenge of the game (as in single-player games) and/or failure against other players (as in multi-player games. (Juul 5).

is that in order for players of video games to be able to traverse the systematic worlds created by designers and governed by programmatic rules, users have to be able to transition from possessing the knowledge of *what* constitutes a solution to the knowledge of *how* to produce the solution. In Pac-Man, the mere knowledge that one must navigate the maze, “eat” the power pellets, and avoid the ghosts is insufficient to earn progress for the player. Rather, a player must know *how* to do so. In short, in video games, users must be able to explicate, or enact, the solutions to the problems they encounter.

Unlike video games, first-year writing programs put boundaries on students’ interpretations of rhetorical problems because first-year writing programs tend to measure progress according to a student’s ability to reproduce a predetermined standard of *what* constitutes “good writing.” Accordingly, first-year writing programs, as traditionally administered, can effect (and affect) rhetorical outcomes only inasmuch as a student’s interpretation of “good writing” is aligned with that of the program. Importantly, in first-year writing classrooms, students, as interactors with the systematic worlds of first-year writing programs, are always-already engaged in interpretive and responsive construction of those worlds. That is, students co-create the “texts” of their writing classrooms much like gamers create the narratives of their game play. However, systematic rules that favor generalizable, quantifiable research, position theory alone as the causal agent of rhetoric, leaving little or no room to account for the agencies and interactions—the “becoming with”—of *kairos* and rhetoric itself. That is, generalizable methodologies of writing instruction fail to adequately address writing’s praxical implications.

In the traditional sense, when first-year writing programs successfully “persuade” their students of the value(s) of writing, individuals often attribute the persuasive effects to

the structural intent of the program, to generalizable and quantifiable “outcomes” as “goals” of the program. When first-year writing programs “fail” to persuade students, however, individuals rarely cite the intent of first-year writing programs for the inadequacies of a program’s structure, but rather turn their attention to the *effects* of such structures—to “measurables,” like style and rhetorical technique, which are, according to the generalizable structures of first-year writing programs reflected in the WPA’s Outcomes Statement, things that can *be* assessed. Significantly, then, generalizable structures of first-year writing programs take, as starting points, the notion that a student’s writing *causes* his or her progress in the course. However, it is important to note that a traditional notion of causality positions theory as the causal agent of practice. As a result, the contemporary rhetorical theory that facilitates the existence of first-year writing programs, which suggests that rhetorical adeptness is a matter of values, is disjoined from the everyday praxis<sup>5</sup> of writing (and writing instruction), which suggests that rhetorical adeptness is teachable and, as such, can *be* taught.

Video games offer their interactors a sort of pliability that first-year writing programs, as traditionally administered, cannot. Once one learns how to navigate the systematic world of a video game, the knowledge gained does not govern, but rather informs, the experience of one’s next interaction with that world. A player’s first attempt at playing Pac-Man, for example, may result in “failure” if the player encounters a ghost within the maze; however, each “failure” in the game serves to help the player recognize and solve problems within the

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<sup>5</sup> In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau alludes to the agency of the practice of social operation, or “everyday practice.” Specifically, de Certeau suggests that these “everyday practices” must be explicated in processes of representation and consumption. As processes of *both* representation *and* consumption, writing’s “everyday practices” must not be obscured from its users.

simulation. Gee contends that video games are worlds that “talk back” to a player’s actions, giving feedback about the success or failure of the player’s actions in terms of the systematic rules of the game (Gee 91). He goes on to say that this feedback forms the basis for player-created hypotheses regarding patterns of relationships to the context—or the *kairos*—of the game (Gee 91-2). Put simply, by helping the player understand and amass a number of things *not* to do, “failure” constitutes progress in video games. Moreover, since nothing is “corrected” or “rewritten,” “failure” adds content to video games. As such, the programmatic rules that structure video games are flexible enough to be *both* solvable and finite on one level *and* limitlessly generative on others.

Relatedly, and perhaps most importantly, winning without failing eliminates surprise. Juul argues that failure’s most significant contribution to video games is most readily discernible when it is absent (Juul 59). Specifically, according to Juul, when failure is absent from video games “players often play it safe and do not seek the high arousal, challenge, or personal growth that we would expect” (Juul 62). In other words, winning without failing forecloses possibility, dictating what is possible in advance. Thus, instead of situating winning and failing at opposing poles of a binary, Juul suggests that in video games, winning “becomes with” failing. Therefore, by working in favor of the unexpected—or surprise—video games allow individuals to *both* play with *and* theorize different patterns of memories and expressions in an endlessly renewable model that actualizes in infinite ways. In video games, the failure that generates content comes through play; progress does not (and indeed cannot) exist without play. It stands to reason, then, that play might introduce failure to writing in a similar manner. The significance here is that, as with video games, the failure introduced to writing through play has the potential to add content, as a condition of

progress, to writing. Conversely, then, writing without “failure” through play eliminates surprise, limiting inventive possibilities.

The theoretical structures that underpin the existence of many first-year writing programs discount the generative essence of failure. Recall that the WPA Outcomes Statement positions theory as a causal agent of a student’s ability to “solve” (or acquire) “rhetorical techniques” and “critical thinking, reading, and writing” (WPA). For example, expressionist theories of writing posit that a stable, human subject speaks, encouraging writers to find the most “appropriate” voice as a means of achieving an “authentic” voice. However, just as *both* design *and* play “become with” the systematic worlds of video games, *both* rhetoric *and* *kairos* “become with” the systematic worlds of first-year writing programs (through which students of first-year writing move). Importantly, when taken together, the continual (re)negotiation that characterizes processes of “becoming with” coupled with the generative essence of failure undermines the theoretical structures of expression as an “authentic,” autonomous endeavor. Significantly, then, the disjunctions between expressionist rhetorical theory and the practice of rhetorical expression present students with forced choices that preclude students’ intra-activity with *both* rhetoric *and* *kairos*.

Through the same failure and surprise inherent in video games, game-ified methodologies of writing instruction might allow students to observe the results of their intra-actions with *both* rhetoric *and* *kairos* toward the goal of reverse engineering the workings of rhetorical theory. More specifically, first-year writing programs that are able to harness the failure and surprise inherent in video games might help writing students better understand that the human subject is expressed just as often as it expresses. Additionally, first-year writing programs that allow students to manipulate (or play with) methods of

rhetorical structure and delivery may better facilitate the students' enactment of their own learning methods. In other words, by modeling themselves after video games, first-year writing programs could encourage students to parse consciousness and voice, rather than "solve" or "acquire" them in the traditional expressionist manner, shifting the focus from *what* rhetoric and composition mean to *how* rhetoric and composition mean.

### *The New Rhetoric* and Rhetoricity

In *The New Rhetoric*, Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca present a theory of argument that regards a rational assessment of values as a fundamental part of rhetoric. Specifically, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca take issue with a Classical treatment of rhetoric—one that demarcates deliberative and forensic rhetoric from epideictic rhetoric in that, according to Aristotle, deliberative and forensic rhetoric deal with matters of fact, while epideictic rhetoric deals with matters of value. *The New Rhetoric* not only offers an explanation for Aristotle's "confusion," suggesting that "epideictic oratory forms a central part of the art of persuasion" but the authors also maintain that "the lack of understanding shown toward [epideictic rhetoric] results from a false conception of the effects of argumentation" (Perelman 49). Namely, such a treatment of rhetoric indicates that audiences are capable of rationally discerning matters of facts and policy on the basis of their merits, but are incapable of rationally discerning values in the same way. As such, *The New Rhetoric* attempts to forward a theory of argument in which rhetors and audiences are able to rationally assess values in the same way as facts and policy.

Contending that rhetoric favors matters of style rather than matters of rationality, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca trace the association(s) between rhetoric and style to Aristotle's analysis of rhetoric, specifically his three oratory forms: deliberative rhetoric, forensic rhetoric, and epideictic rhetoric. According to Aristotle, deliberative rhetoric

“always advises about things to come” and attempts to persuade an audience to take (or not take) some specific action (Aristotle 13). Forensic rhetoric attempts to persuade the audience of the justice (or injustice) of a person or group in regard to a particular action in the past (Aristotle 13). Significantly, the rhetorical audiences of both deliberative and forensic rhetoric must, as starting points of argumentation, adhere to the rhetor’s position that the topic of persuasion is debatable. In other words, both deliberative and forensic rhetoric take for granted the debatability and debatedness of their own topics of persuasion. Thus, it stands to reason that the effectiveness of both deliberative and forensic rhetoric can be measured by degrees of adherence to arguments already accepted (inasmuch as they *are* arguments) by the audience (Perelman 49). As such, both deliberative and forensic rhetoric seek to persuade audiences to take sides on preexisting matters of fact.

By its very nature, compulsory first-year writing sets up an educational paradigm that deals with matters of fact, like practical, quantifiable results and the fact that such courses *are* compulsory. Such prescriptive conditions do not seek to satisfy the desires of the students as participants in the rhetorical situation of the composition classroom, and therefore function as agonistic persuasive techniques. In *The Democratic Paradox*, Chantal Mouffe argues that deliberative rhetoric involves a commitment to agonistic techniques, which do not seek consensus through compromise. Rather, according to Mouffe, deliberative rhetoric seeks the most informed and democratically ethical solutions that emerge through agonistic rhetorical exchange (Mouffe 101). The significance here is that the agonistic persuasive techniques of first-year writing must follow the practice of the deliberative rhetoric they portend—a practice of agential exchange that (in)forms the ethical structures of first-year writing

programs<sup>6</sup>. In other words, the ends of agonistic persuasive techniques and deliberative rhetoric are not intended to satisfy some aspect of each participant's original desires but to achieve the most ethical course of action.

By contrast to deliberative and forensic rhetoric, epideictic—or ceremonial—rhetoric secures audience adherence through methods of proof that reflect matters of value. Aristotle says: “The ceremonial orator is, properly speaking, concerned with the present, since all men praise or blame in view of the state of things existing at the time, though they often find it useful also to recall the past and to make guesses at the future” (Aristotle 13). According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, however, epideictic rhetoric is a “central part” of persuasion in that it “strengthens the disposition toward action by increasing adherence to the values it lauds” (Perelman 50). Here, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca note that Aristotle's definition of ceremonial rhetoric exists solely in terms of its contextually-specific objects, or “things existing at the time,” which, the authors contend, seems to collapse any distinction between epideictic rhetoric and its persuasive effects or aesthetic value (Perelman 48). In other words, because epideictic rhetoric is most concerned with matters that are not under dispute, praise and blame provide its most suitable arguments in that praise and blame both demarcate values and motivate individuals to take future action. Wedding toasts, for example, employ epideictic rhetoric in that their speakers endeavor to persuade guests of the praiseworthiness of the newlyweds, or marriage more generally. Importantly, then, unlike deliberative and forensic rhetoric, the effectiveness of epideictic rhetoric cannot be measured by degrees of

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<sup>6</sup> As Sharon Crowley suggests, by situating the first-year composition course inside a universal requirement, writing programs and the institutions in which they reside, rely on agonistic persuasive techniques that threaten to render intellectual sophistication a luxury (Crowley). Moreover, participants in this form of deliberation, Crowley argues, face risk because the positions with which they enter into discussion may be adversarial to others, and some positions may prove to be better and more ethical than others (*Toward* 196).

adherence to already accepted arguments, but rather relies upon the skillfulness with which such rhetoric is constructed and delivered.

The practice of epideictic rhetoric is perhaps most clearly conveyed through the persuasive techniques that (in)form the rhetoric's construction and delivery. However, composition, as it has been historically practiced in the first-year English course, constructs students according to Aristotle's collapsed distinction between persuasive effects and style by expecting outcomes that deal in matters of value. For example, the WPA Outcomes Statement says that students should be able to demonstrate some level of mastery of the rhetorical outcomes contained in the statement "at the end of first-year composition" (WPA). This parameter places a measure of fact on the time frame wherein the rhetorical outcomes outlined by the statement should be achieved. Moreover, programs that issue traditional grades likewise attribute quantity, or mathematical "fact," to the rhetorical techniques in students' writing. The significance here is that for first-year writing programs, epideictic rhetoric is constructed in terms of fact (related to the programs' institutional and departmental situations) yet the WPA's outcomes, like "rhetorical knowledge" and "critical thinking, reading, and writing," deal in matters of value. This disjunction reveals that the rhetorical theory that underpins the ultimate rationality for first-year writing programs does not line up with the institutional practices that sustain the teaching of writing in American universities.

In theory, in order to be effective, epideictic rhetoric depends upon the skillfulness with which it is delivered, and first-year writing's delivery depends on methodologies of writing instruction. The WPA Outcomes Statement, for instance, bears the influence of eighteenth and nineteenth century rhetoric, which privileges stylistic elements of correctness

and perspicuity (*Methodical* 148). Specifically the WPA's statement privileges students who are able to:

- Learn common formats for different kinds of texts
- Develop knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics
- Practice appropriate means of documenting their work
- Control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling (WPA)

In other words, because the statement of outcomes underscores predetermined notions of genre, form, documentation, and style, the WPA leaves little room to allow students to play with form and genre, which works to limit their inventive possibilities. When taken to its logical conclusion, the WPA's outcome statement dictates what is possible in advance, leaving first-year writing students to aesthetically express their autonomous selves independent of the public discourses under which their first-year writing courses are formed and maintained. In "The Language of Exclusion," Mike Rose points to the difficulties in enacting research and pedagogy that conflate style and persuasive technique:

The trouble, of course is that such work is built on a set of highly questionable assumptions: that a writer has a relatively fixed repository of linguistic blunders that can be pinpointed and then corrected through drill, that repetitive drill on specific linguistic (or stylistic or rhetorical) principles, that bits of discourse bereft of rhetorical or conceptual context can form the basis of curriculum and assessment, that good writing is correct writing, and that correctness has to do with pronoun choice, verb forms, and the like. (Rose 590).

Importantly, although such research and pedagogy are "enacted to good purpose," writing instruction that is deals in matters of fact demonstrates disregard for the ways in which rhetoric "becomes with" *kairos* (Rose 590). This disjunction, in turn, allows the traditions of modern English departments to ideologically dominate writing programs' concepts of what constitutes "good writing." A Pac-Man player with only one "life" possesses no opportunity to explore and manipulate the systematic world of the game, and, as such, their interactivity

with the game is no longer generative. Similarly, traditional ideologies of outcomes and assessment sever the study of rhetorical invention as *kairotic* activity from traditional first-year writing instruction (*Composition* 264).

Epideictic rhetoric gains audience adherence through shared values, and, as a result, the effectiveness of epideictic rhetoric can be measured only by “the obstacles overcome by the action and the sacrifices and choices it leads to and which can be justified by adherence” (Perelman 49). Accordingly, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca understand the “effects of argumentation” in terms of audience, emphasizing the adherence of the audience as both the object and starting point of argumentation (Perelman 31). Thus, in discussions of the persuasive function(s) of epideictic rhetoric, the attitudes of the audience are of primary importance and require special consideration. That is, to achieve persuasion through epideictic rhetoric, the rhetor must utilize persuasive techniques that reflect the values and beliefs shared with the audience (Perelman 66).

*The New Rhetoric* positions the audience as the counterpart of the rhetor, which, in turn, prompts the rhetor to shape his or her internal representation of the subject into a form most acceptable and appropriate for the audience. This is not to say that the audience preexists the rhetor, nor is it to suggest a causal relationship between audience, rhetor, and rhetoric<sup>7</sup>. Simply, just as failure in video games serve to generate content, the rhetorical audiences of epideictic rhetoric similarly serve as generative, inventional tools that aid in the creation of discourse within their given rhetorical situations. Significantly, then, the interactivity between rhetor and audience comprise rhetoric, and persuasive techniques, as

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<sup>7</sup> Literary theorist and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin describes the carnivalesque as a similar phenomenon in which hierarchies of ideological authority are temporarily inverted during the anarchic and liberating period of the carnival (Bakhtin 10).

generated through interactions between rhetor and audience, call forth, or hail, the audiences to which the rhetoric's persuasion is aimed. In this case, the persuasive techniques of first-year writing programs' epideictic rhetoric, and the structures and delivery of that rhetoric, preexist (or interpellate<sup>8</sup>, to use Althusser's term) their audiences. As such, the ideology of writing programs work to position the WPA's generalized outcomes as an obvious (and static) reality for first-year writing students whose subjectivities are in constant flux. Thus, the generalized first-year writing course undermines the agency of first-year writing students, situating the methods of instructions themselves as the causal agents of the students' acquisition of rhetorical skills.

Still, it is important to note that according to Rickert, rhetoric does not preexist, but rather "becomes with," its audiences. Just as video games rely on the interactivity of players in order to *be* games, rhetoric similarly relies on *kairos* in order to get the attention of the audience toward the goal of persuasion—in order to *be* rhetoric. For first-year writing, this means that students, as the audiences of first-year writing courses, co-create the discourse that sustains their writing instruction. Thus, the agency bestowed on students through generalizable theories of writing are disjoined from the agency bestowed on students in the everyday practices writing. Significantly, then, generalizable methodologies of writing instruction undermine the agency of students and cannot adequately account for the simultaneously intersecting and diverging subjectivities of its players. Importantly, these disjunctions work to illuminate distinctions between the rhetorical and arhetorical elements of compulsory college composition.

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<sup>8</sup> According to Althusser, the main purpose of ideology is to interpellate—or constitute concrete individuals as subjects. He claims that ideology is so pervasive in its constitution of subjects that it forms our very reality and thus appears to us as "true" or "obvious."

### Universal Audience Reveals the Arhetoricity of First-Year Writing

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca understand the interaction (or intra-action) of rhetor and audience through the demarcation of two idealized audiences: the universal audience and the particular audience (Perelman 30-1). The authors conceptualize the “universal audience” as “all of humanity, or at least those who are competent and reasonable” (“Practical” 1393). That is to say, the universal audience is the largest possible audience possessing the need to hear (or potential to agree with) the rhetor’s message. For Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, the universal audience is an ideal mental construct created by the arguer. Prior to preparing an argument, the arguer conceptualizes the universal audience and decides what kinds of arguments are best. If the argumentative goal is to invent and select arguments of the highest quality, an audience who will be more rigorous in their critique of evidence and logic is needed. The universal audience does not have to be composed of many people; it can be one person or one’s own self. Depending on the goals of the arguer and the role the arguer wants the audience to play, this audience is conceptualized in different ways.

As a tool of invention, the universal audience authorizes its knowledge as truth, working with the rhetor to modify public knowledge by informing the arguments that would be most persuasive to the whole of humankind. That is, philosophers conceptualize a group of people they envision to constitute “reasonable and competent people” and use that audience to determine how best to construct and frame their argumentative claims. In *Rhetoric and Public Knowledge*,” Lloyd Bitzer describes a public, or Perelman’s universal audience, as “a community of persons who share conceptions, principles, interests, and values, and who are significantly interdependent” (Bitzer 68). The author concludes that a public, as a whole, decides what will be true for that group of people, authorizing its own (public) knowledge as truth. For example, in an attempt to appeal to a universal audience of

“reasonable and competent people” regarding the merits of first-year writing courses, just over a decade ago, the WPA adopted an official statement of outcomes for first-year composition courses. In the statement, the Council specifically addresses a universal audience, stating that the WPA “aimed at writing a document that the general public can understand” (WPA). For Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, the adherence of the universal audience is the ultimate rationality. Thus, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest, the WPA’s universal audience, the general public, necessarily informs—and, importantly, *comprises*—the rhetoric of the statement. Put another way, the general public and the WPA are both present and represented within the statement’s rhetoric.

According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca the universal audience can be used as tool to differentiate good arguments from bad ones. Consequently, arguments are more effective at generating assent and resolving disagreements and appeal to wider groups of people when the techniques of argument rely less on a specific audience’s particular commitments. Keeping in mind the ability of the universal audience to differentiate good arguments from bad ones, the WPA constructs and presents its argument in ways that bolster the Council’s credibility, specifically articulating “what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory” (WPA). More importantly, however, the construction and presentation of the rhetoric of the statement reveals the Council’s “rhetorical conscience,”<sup>9</sup> because, according to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, the quality of an argument is in direct proportion to the quality of the audience that gives its assent. Therefore, the strength of the WPA’s argument regarding the efficacy and necessity of compulsory first-year writing courses relies on the credibility of the general public’s

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<sup>9</sup> Allen Scult uses this term to describe the universal audience in his article “Perelman’s Universal Audience: One Perspective.”

knowledge regarding the values of rhetoric and composition and not on the credibility of the practice, research, and theory of composition experts as it claims.

The rhetorical representations of the WPA's universal audience are most clearly conveyed through the persuasive techniques that appeal directly to the general public's sense(s) of the benefits of first-year writing courses. The perceived benefits of first-year writing courses, as articulated in the WPA's statement, necessarily reflect the values of the general public, a universal audience of rational human beings, yet the statement's rhetoric suggests no room for disagreement regarding the debatability and debatedness of whether or not students should (and do) acquire rhetorical knowledge in first-year writing courses. For example, the statement deems the values of "rhetorical knowledge" and "critical thinking, reading, and writing skills" to be the starting points of agreement with the universal audience. As such, the Council's discourse focuses on specific universal ideals as matters of fact regarding the efficacy of first-year writing courses—ideals the WPA asserts as binding on all human beings in all circumstances. An examination of the argumentative techniques employed by the WPA reveals that the appeal to the general public attempts to persuade regarding matters of "facts" and "truths"—or what Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca term "the real" (Perelman 67). They say:

The conceptions people form of the real can vary widely depending on the philosophical views they profess. However, everything in argumentation that is deemed to relate to the real is characterized by a claim to validity vis-à-vis the universal audience. (Perelman 66)

Here, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest that the universal audience (the general public, in the WPA's case) is characterized as such only inasmuch as it is persuaded in terms of "facts" and "truths." As shown, however, epideictic rhetoric deals with matters of value, and, as such, works to persuade particular audiences and argumentation achieves meaning (and

results in action) because of the intra-action between rhetor and audience, and not as a result of audience alone. Thus, confined by generalizable methodologies of writing instruction, the WPA's appeal to a universal audience discounts students as agents of argumentation.

#### Particular Audience Reveals Gaps Between Theory and Practice

The persuasive techniques of the rhetoric of first-year writing programs rely on things that can be quantified in order to persuade particular audiences. That is, such programs subsist on facts and truths that characterize mathematical reasoning. However, as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca suggest, argumentation that relies on facts and truth is aimed at a universal, not particular, audience and therefore has no purpose (Perelman 46). Specifically, according to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, arguments based on facts or truths “triumph of themselves,” for in such argumentation “the speaker plays no essential role, since his demonstrations are timeless, and there is no cause to distinguish among audiences, since all men are supposed to yield to what is objectively valid” (Perelman 46). In other words, the *kairotic* agency of the rhetor is diminished when deliberative rhetoric, which deals in matters of fact, is aimed at particular audiences, which deal in matters of value. On the one hand, then, the WPA's statement of outcomes, as deliberative rhetoric, accounts for limited student agency; that is, a generalizable agency measured against the outcomes highlighted in the statement. On the other hand, however, the WPA's Outcomes Statement, as epideictic rhetoric, confines the agency of writing instructors through an invalid substitution of the universal audience (the general public) for the particular audiences of the students who enter college writing classrooms.

Because of this substitution, when viewed as epideictic rhetoric, which deals in matters of value, the WPA's statement of outcomes attempts to convince, rather than persuade, the general public of the efficacy of the first-year writing class. Perelman and

Olbrechts-Tyteca note that the nuance between convincing and persuading is “a delicate one,” but they go on to conclude that the rhetor “will have done all he [or she] can to convince, if he [or she] thinks he [or she] is validly addressing [a universal] audience” (Perelman 28). Put another way, when rhetors address universal audiences, they work convince—rather than persuade. This distinction between convincing (which is aimed at universal audiences) and persuading (which is aimed at particular audience) is not without significance. Recall that Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric *implies* persuasion; therefore, if persuasion is rhetorical, and if convincing is distinct from persuasion, then convincing is distinct from rhetoric. As such, the WPA’s appeal to a universal audience regarding the value of compulsory first-year writing courses is arhetorical and its persuasive effects must be examined accordingly.

The WPA and many college writing programs take rhetorical theory, or matters of value, as the starting points of argumentation as it pertains to the justification of the existence of first-year writing programs; however, the rhetorical theory presented in the statement is aimed at a universal audience. As previously established, the rhetoric of first-year writing courses must appeal to the particular audiences in order to persuade, rather than convince. The particular audience, according to Perelman, is the audience the rhetor is most specifically addressing, generally the immediate, present audience (Perelman 28). As exemplified in the WPA’s Outcomes Statement, the particular audiences for the rhetoric of first-year writing programs are varied. Explicitly, the WPA regards “well-prepared college writing teachers and college writing program administrators,” as particular audiences of their rhetoric (WPA). Implicitly, however, the rhetoric of first-year writing programs addresses the particular

audiences of institutions and departments in which first-year writing programs reside and, of course, students who take first-year writing classes.

Considering particular audiences, two elements of argumentation emerge as most relevant: 1) According to Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, particular audiences represent matters of value and 2) According to Rickert, rhetoric diffracts the subjectivities of its particular audiences, as co-creators of discourse. In theory, then, the epideictic rhetoric of first year writing programs, which highlights the value of rhetoric and composition, diffracts the subjectivities of students as a particular audience first-year composition. As such, the everyday practices (read: construction and delivery) of first-year writing programs, which “become with” rhetorical theory, should diffract the subjectivities of students in a similar manner. Thus, an examination of the persuasive techniques aimed at the particular audiences of first-year writing programs may reveal which (or whether) particular audiences stand to benefit from compulsory first-year writing courses. In turn, these particular audiences, as beneficiaries of first-year writing courses (and as co-creators of rhetoric), reveal the conjunctions of rhetorical theory and practice. However, because epideictic rhetoric “becomes with” its particular audience, any discrepancy found between particular audiences of first-year writing programs and the persuasive techniques—or rhetorical practices—of first-year writing programs indicates a specific disjunction between the rhetorical theory and practice of first-year writing programs.

The implementation of first-year composition began because “competent and reasonable” people suggested that high school English courses underserve students, and such programs persist, perhaps, because college writing demands a higher skill level than high school writing, so college English departments must teach students how to write prior to

taking other college courses. Yet, universities compel students to take first-year writing courses, subverting the students' agency to discern for themselves the critical value of such courses. In *Persuasion*, Daniel O'Keefe suggests that persuasion implies "the presence of some criterion or goal and the existence of some intent to reach that goal" as well as "some measure of freedom (free will, free choice, voluntary action) on the persuadee's part (O'Keefe 3). Given the fact that first-year writing courses are compulsory for degree-seeking students, such courses deny students the "measure of freedom" inherent in persuasion. It stands to reason, then, that the persuasive techniques of first-year writing programs do not seek to persuade the particular audience of first-year writing students regarding the values of the critical content of such courses. As such, in order to persuade its particular audience of students, the construction and delivery of the rhetoric of first-year writing programs must permit students to give their consent to be persuaded regarding the value of first-year composition.

The WPA regards the "rhetorical" outcomes of first-year writing courses as the keys to teaching students to link ideas to ideas and ideas to readers, yet the "rhetoric" of the official statement cannot be justified as long as first-year writing instructors (broadly defined) function as the sole arbiters of writing assessment. Specifically, the WPA contends that "By the end of first year composition, students should:

- Focus on a purpose
- Respond to the needs of different audiences
- Respond appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations
- Use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- Adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- Understand how genres shape reading and writing
- Write in several genres" (WPA)

Thus, the WPA's persuasive techniques indicate that both rhetors and (particular) audiences of first-year writing programs must attend to the students' ability to identify writings'

purposes, audiences, rhetorical situations, genres, and conventions. Significantly, however, although the statement places importance on the students' mastery of convention, genre, purpose, and the rhetorical situation, it is vital to note that each of the WPA's stated rhetorical outcomes depends on a predetermined recognition of the function(s) of rhetorical audiences. Thus, the WPA's Outcomes Statement preexists the writing, the process of rhetoric "becoming with" *kairos*, that students, as particular audiences, do in first-year writing courses. In short, epideictic rhetoric, which addresses particular audiences, "becomes with"—and does not preexist—particular audiences.

As it pertains to first-year writing courses, the WPA's statement of outcomes lauds critical thinking, reading, and writing as the building blocks for teaching students to build arguments from shared beliefs. Still, the statement's language, coupled with the compulsory nature of first-year writing courses, complicates the very notion of the possibility of shared beliefs between writing programs and the students enrolled in their courses. More specifically, by implementing a compulsory first-year writing requirement, writing programs and institutions privilege rhetors as the sole determiners of persuasive effects, which is insufficient to account for the agency and subjectivity of the audience. For example, the WPA's statement reads: "By the end of first year composition, students should:

- Use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating
- Understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources
- Integrate their own ideas with those of others
- Understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power" (WPA).

It is important to note that despite the compulsory nature of first-year writing, students of composition courses may learn to evaluate, analyze, and synthesize as the WPA recommends; however, the compulsory nature of first-year writing necessarily undercuts

opportunities for students to “understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power” (WPA). In other words, the first three outcomes can occur with limited sufficiency in individual classrooms with individual sections of students and individual teachers. However, students of first-year writing courses cannot fully understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power when they are not even privy to the rhetorical situations that facilitate the existence of the writing program that governs their own classroom.

More specifically, the purposes and rhetorical situations of writing relate to rhetorical audiences as the objects of rhetoric. In “The Rhetorical Situation,” Bitzer defines the rhetorical situation as:

a complex of persons, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence. (“Situation” 6)

That is, Bitzer understands exigence and audience to be central components of rhetorical situations. Rhetoric’s purpose, Bitzer says, “is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (“Situation” 6). The rhetorical audience, Bitzer notes, “consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change” (“Situation” 8). Interestingly, Bitzer describes the relationship between exigence and audience as one of causality. He asserts that exigence “functions as the organizing principle” in that it “specifies the audience to be addressed and the change to be effected” (“Situation” 7). In other words, exigence calls forth the rhetorical audience and stipulates the action for which the rhetoric calls.

To the universal audience of the WPA’s rhetoric, first-year writing courses function as the “organizing principle[s]” of students’ writing. As such, the universal exigence of first-

year writing programs is one that maintains that students, unaided by mandatory college composition courses, lack the ability to produce “good writing.” For this reason, writing program administrators and teachers of writing must turn their attention to the rhetoricity of the exigence that comprises first-year writing programs. Bitzer offers two qualifications for testing the rhetoricity of exigence, noting that exigence is rhetorical “when it is capable of positive modification” and “when positive modification requires discourse or can be assisted by discourse” (“Situation” 7). For the WPA, then, “positive modification” equates to the efficacy of first-year writing courses inasmuch as such courses effectively teach students to produce “good writing.” Yet, as a discipline, composition is unable to define “good writing,” and rarely, if ever, do first-year writing instructors promise such amorphous ends.

Furthermore, the WPA’s universal audience of the general public is not rhetorical in that they do not possess the means necessary to mediate the change for which the WPA’s exigence calls. Moreover, the exigence for the WPA’s rhetoric is arhetorical for a universal audience in that the “positive modification” of teaching students to produce “good writing” cannot be made by discourse alone. As previously established, any rhetoric that appeals to a universal audience deals with matters of fact, and the “positive modification” called for by the WPA deals with matters of value, and thus must appeal to a particular audience.

Within the rhetorical situation(s) of first-year writing classrooms, the persuasive techniques of instructors, as the “owners” of rhetorical theory, necessarily, if inadvertently, call themselves forth to students as the particular audience. This is significant because when positioned as the “owners” of rhetorical theory, writing instructors foreclose the possibility for students to invent the audiences they address with their writing. The theory/practice hierarchy works to distort the rhetorical audiences of students’ writing. Customarily, college

writing instructors create assignments, which exist as the exigence, or purpose for students' writing, and according to Bitzer, exigence calls forth the rhetorical audience it addresses. Significantly, then, when instructors require predetermined assignments as regimented exigence for the writing that first-year composition students produce, the students, as particular audience, are likely to perceive the assignment itself as the exigence for their rhetoric. In other words, for students, the unfinished assignment functions as the "thing which is other than it should be" ("Situation" 6). Thus, since students are capable of being mediators, in that they have the ability to change the unfinished assignment, it stands to reason that within the context of the first-year writing classroom, the students are the rhetorical audience. Taken together with the notions of intra-action between rhetor and audience laid out in *The New Rhetoric*, the complex situational rhetorics of both student and teacher, as organized by compulsory first-year composition courses, disrupt the agential (or causal) relationship between exigence and audience. According to Bitzer, the rhetorical audience is an object of rhetoric, yet the particular audience subjectively comprises rhetoric without regard to any predetermined object position relative to that rhetoric. In short, rhetoric is audience is rhetoric. Thus, the predetermined rhetoric of the first-year writing class, which, in reality, is constituted of the subjectivities of *both* instructors *and* students, precludes the students' ability to disentangle the identities of rhetor and audience so as to sufficiently satisfy the WPA's rhetorical outcomes, like audience identification and adherence to conventions of form and genre.

Whereas the purposes and rhetorical situations of writing relate to rhetorical audiences as the objects of rhetoric, notions of genre and convention relate to rhetorical audiences as rhetoric's subjects. Both genre and convention make use of persuasive

techniques related to the construction and delivery of rhetoric that deals with matters of value. Thus, the techniques of genre and convention must work to persuade particular audiences. Importantly, however, students of writing obtain values of genre and convention through their subject positions as the particular audiences, rather than rhetors, of first-year writing courses. Consequently, students learn to value tenants of genre and convention as determined by the rhetoric of the situation of their classrooms. While positioned as the particular audience—as the object of first-year writing’s rhetoric—students are asked to assume subject positions as epideictic rhetors who praise or blame their own subjectively-constructed values of genre and convention. Significantly, then, in order for first-year composition students to demonstrate mastery of writings’ genres and conventions, they must necessarily be able to flow into and out of the subject positions of rhetors, toward the goal of inventing audiences for which they can praise or blame the stylistic values of writing they subjectively prefer.

As subjects of rhetoric, students submit their rhetoric, toward the goal of persuasion, to a particular audience. However, writing students, as both audience and rhetors, assess and produce the values of genre and convention subjectively. Conversely, writing teachers, as both audiences and rhetors, assess mastery of genre and convention through their own rhetorical subject positions. In both cases, the construction and delivery of first-year writing programs undermine the ways in which rhetoric “becomes with” *kairos*. In other words, because teachers create the exigence for their students’ rhetoric, and since exigence calls forth the rhetorical audience, when students are positioned as subjects of rhetoric and teachers are the sole arbiters of the students’ mastery of genre and convention, students are likely to perceive their instructors as the particular audience of their rhetoric. As a result, the

particular audience, as co-creators of discourse, works to shape the rhetoric in terms of its own subjective values regarding genre and convention. Thus, students are compelled to adhere to notions of genre and convention that are deemed by the instructor to constitute “good writing.” Such limited practices do not and cannot account for the ways in which rhetoric “becomes with” *kairos*.

### Filling the Gaps

Fundamentally, the gaps between the rhetorical theory and practice of traditional first-year writing programs reveal the precise points of disparity between writing programs and their ultimate rationality, that is, the disparity between training students to produce *what* constitutes “good writing” and teaching students *how* to produce good writing. Specifically, in theory, compulsory first-year composition courses serve to teach students to build arguments from shared beliefs. Yet, in practice, first-year composition courses neglect to expose students to the rhetorical situations of the university policies of generalized education that govern their mandatory enrollment. As a result, the structural disparity between the theory and practice of first-year writing programs inhibits an understanding of the relationships among language, knowledge, and power for students of first-year writing courses.

Similarly, as exemplified by the WPA’s Outcomes Statement, first-year composition courses subsist under general theoretical agreement regarding their “rhetorical” outcomes. However, by their very structure of instructor-arbitrated assessment and outcomes that preexist audience, generalizable methodologies of writing pedagogy construct a limited exigence for student writing, and this constructed exigence is insufficient to account for the intra-active, rather than causal, relationship(s) between rhetors and audiences. Moreover, in theory, within the constructed exigence of an assignment, a student is tasked with navigating

the multiple ontological subjects and objects of the rhetoric of his or her first-year writing program. However, in practice, students of first-year writing confront overdetermined subjectivities in cases where outcomes preexist their rhetoric and underdefined objectives in cases that necessitate audience invention. This requisite, ontological navigation renders the goal of teaching students to link ideas to ideas and ideas to readers extremely difficult because first-year writing courses, as traditionally delivered, ask students to distinguish causal relationships between rhetoric and *kairos* where none exist.

Pedagogically, the keys to teaching students *how* to produce good writing lie in bridging the gaps between the rhetorical theory and practice of first-year writing programs—in gamifying writing programs. Writing programs must allow students to manipulate the systematic worlds of their classrooms so that they may observe the results of their rhetorical techniques in order to determine the workings of rhetoric. Moreover, rather than attending to “measurables,” like style and rhetorical techniques, writing assessment must account for a student’s ability to produce, or enact, solutions to the rhetorical problems that he or she encounters in the systematic world of the writing class. Put another way, in order for first-year writing programs to align their rhetorical theory and practice, they must teach students *how* to build arguments from shared beliefs and *how* to link ideas to ideas and ideas to readers. The most significant gap between the rhetorical theory and practice of first-year writing programs, as traditionally administrated, is one of ontology. Specifically, writing instructors must seek to adopt gamified pedagogies of first-year writing—pedagogies that enact methodologies that account for the ways in which design (in)forms play (in)forms design and in which winning and failure “become with” one another. Game-ified methodologies of writing instruction have the potential to introduce the ontological fluidity

of writing into college writing classrooms—fluidity that neither distinguishes between, nor attempt to demarcate, the objects and subjects of the students’ rhetoric. By rethinking traditional writing pedagogies in this way, students may learn to intra-act with rhetoric as “becoming with” their own dynamic ontological positions.

## **Writing Games: The Practice**

### A Quest for Expression

According to the NPD Group, there are 64 million video gamers between the ages of 2 and 17 in the United States (“Video”). That number is roughly equivalent to the populations of California (38 million) and Texas (26 million) combined (“Census”). Over the next 15 years, nearly 25 million of these young gamers will enter college writing classrooms. As a result of this growing trend, educators increasingly recognize the impact of video games on their students and utilize games as teaching devices in a number of classrooms.

Interestingly, scholars do find that video games offer more than just play; games help students acquire knowledge, develop life skills, and reinforce positive habits. Specifically, in *What Video Games Can Teach us About Learning and Literacy*, literacy scholar James Paul Gee contends that through game play, children learn to participate in what he calls “semiotic domains” (Gee 18-9). He argues that these domains are not static objects defined only by their content; on the contrary, according to Gee, semiotic domains are predicated on lived, historically changing sets of distinctive social practices in which content is continually renegotiated and transformed (Gee 20).

Significantly, Gee’s recognition of a continual renegotiation stands in contrast to theories of writing and composition, like the WPA’s Outcomes Statement, which emphasize the individual and focus on the human subject as a static, autonomous being that precedes expression. In “Rhetoric and Ideology in the Writing Class,” James Berlin traces key critiques of expressionism, noting that expressionism emphasizes the autonomous individual subject as the creator of meaning (Berlin 484). As a result, expressionism urges students to

find an “authentic” voice through the practice of writing, encouraging writers to discard any material that is not “true” or “authentic.” In other words, generalizable theories of writing omit the dynamic and historically changing sets of social practices, or the *kairos*, that comprise writing. Thus, by severing *kairos* from rhetoric, many academic cultures of writing limit inventive possibility for student writers.

For Gilles Deleuze, however, being does not precede expression. Rather, he sees expression as entangled with being and not limited to a location within a singular individual (Deleuze 1). I express. I am expressed. Something expresses itself through me. In other words, individuals are “selves” in constant flux. According to Deleuze, writing helps us palpate this flux (Hilst 8). Deleuze says that writing and becoming are “always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed” (Deleuze 1). However, if writing itself is always incomplete and in constant flux, educators must move beyond a concept of composition that is based solely on the expressions of the experiences of a self, to a concept of composition that engages with a syntactic analysis of writing’s flux. In other words, methodologies of writing instruction must allow students’ rhetoric to “become with” their *kairos*, which “becomes with” their rhetoric. For first-year composition students, teachers might create video games designed with a specific focus on writing and composition, and such games may effectively facilitate students’ recognition of and solutions to some common problems that arise from the expressionist myth that “good” writing stems from an “authentic” self.

Through enactments of the ways in which a player “becomes with” simulated worlds, video games have the potential to illuminate ontologically (and epistemologically) fluid approaches to writing and composition. First, video games account for the subjectivity of the teacher as rhetor in that teacher-created video games grant access to the teacher’s writing

authority. Additionally, video games account for the varying and fluid subjectivities of students in that they have the potential to position students as researchers and writers who discover and form a variety of academic and/or literary “voices” from within simulations. That is, through their hybrid “becoming with” of design and play, video games possess the flexibility to permit students to take ideas from so-called “good” writing in an attempt to discover how the discrete elements of writing are represented in games.

Video games seem to be particularly suited for providing a virtual consciousness in which students are free to engage in experimentation. According to Gee, video games offer players the practice of perpetual renegotiation, which is a crucial part of critical learning. For example, Gee says that when playing video games, “[t]he learner needs to learn not only how to understand and produce meanings in a particular semiotic domain that are recognizable to those affiliated with the domain, but, in addition, how to think about the domain at a ‘meta’ level...[and] how to produce meanings that, while recognizable, are seen as somehow novel or unpredictable” (Gee 23). Furthermore, in “Deleuze: Neo-Expressivism in Composition,” Joshua Hilst argues that experimentation with voices is key to thinking about the domain of writing at a meta level (Hilst 3). Specifically, Hilst challenges the expressionist concept of voice, contending that the idea of the self as an autonomous unit must be abandoned before students can be free to experiment with voice as a means of discovering other possibilities. By invoking what Hilst terms “voice-non-voice,” or the possibility for a number of voices, expressive experimentation has the potential to shift the focus from what things mean to how they mean, to engage with writing’s constant flux (Hilst 7). In other words, by structuring fields of reality in ways that involve active processes of externalization toward the end of achieving the goal of a multiplicity of expression, video games have the potential to offer

students writing techniques that resist locating expression within a singular consciousness, thus opening up invention to a world outside the conscious self.

According to Gee, the process of play foregrounds the ways in which texts make meaning, providing a framework for studying basic concepts of meaning making. Gee asserts that video games invite players to resist locating expression within a singular consciousness by encouraging users to develop their comprehension of both the ways in which a game's content is presented ("internal design grammar") and the ongoing social practices that determine the principles and patterns through which members of the domain recognize the activities and practices that comprise the game ("external design grammar") (Gee 28-30). For first-year writing students, this dual comprehension might translate to skills like audience identification and manipulation of genre, as included in the WPA Outcomes Statement. This systemic thinking, Gee argues, urges players to think about (and critique) semiotic domains (of writing, of games, etc.) as designed spaces rather than moment-by-moment environments. In other words, in contrast to theories of "good writing" that preexist the practices of the rhetor, such as those outlined in the WPA's Outcomes Statement, according to Gee, the process of play has the potential to foreground, rather than obscure, the intra-action of writing's theories and practices. Thus, play might reveal the ways in which texts make meaning, providing a fluid framework for studying basic concepts of meaning making—a framework that accounts for the ways in which rhetoric "becomes with" *kairos*.

By underscoring the importance of an agent's complex relationship(s) with the systematic worlds of which he or she is a part, video games highlight the importance of systemic thinking. That is, video games allow players to act and interact within and on simulations by discovering and/or forming goals while recognizing and solving problems

from within simulations. Within the context of first-year writing programs, this focus emphasizes rhetoric's complex relationship(s) to *kairos*, which may allow writers to reverse engineer the discrete elements of rhetorical theory independently of the sign systems (like the WPA Outcomes Statement) that bestow these elements with their meaning(s) and create the systematic worlds of first-year writing for students. Therefore, by positioning students as researchers and writers who discover and form goals from within simulations, game-ified methodologies of writing instruction may foreground the ontological fluidity of *both* rhetoric *and kairos*, giving players the confidence to play with existing structures of so-called "good writing" with the intent to better experience writing's flux. Put another way, allowing students to play writing games may facilitate the "voice-non-voice" that Hilst advances. Thus, video games designed with a focus on writing and composition could encourage student writers to take possession of their writing, filtering it, in a sense, through an ever-shifting *kairos* made up of their individual sensibilities, interests, and talents.

It is important to note, however, that while no mode of writing is inherently good at doing one thing and not another, each distinct mode of writing has at its disposal different means of expression. Since video games are (or can be) a mode of writing, student writers can engage with the means of expression afforded by video game play. For example, when considering different modes of writing, the participatory nature of the video game medium necessitates a continual negotiation in that players must explore different alternatives—different possibilities. To draw a parallel between academic writing and narrative writing, in video games, players may become the protagonists that engage in the story of writing, perhaps changing the events or the order of events, thus experiencing different versions of writing's story. Additionally, players may choose to isolate and explore discrete elements of

writing, setting the “events” of texts aside in favor of rehearsing the themes and mechanics of texts through game play. Most importantly, games have the potential to turn writing into worlds to be explored. That is, through video game play, *both* students *and* teachers might be free to play with, explore, and transform their rhetoric (and *kairos*) in different ways. By accounting for the intra-actions between rhetoric and *kairos* through a paradigm of ontological fluidity, game-ified methodologies of writing instruction can offer insight into a (limitlessly generative) range of approaches for creating meaning and culture.

### The Expressive Affordances of Video Games

Games are a type of representational medium in that, like all art, they have the ability to represent cultural, social, and human experiences; however, games are distinctive in that they also have the ability to unveil their own procedural production by representing human experience in rules and code. That is, video games invite players to interact with real and imagined systems, without locating expression within a singular consciousness. The title of Jesper Juul’s book *Half Real* points to the hybridity of video games, and the author argues that “to play a video game is...to interact with real rules while imagining a fictional world” (*Half-Real 2*). That is, according to Juul, video games are “a combination of rules and fiction” (*Half-Real 197*). Juul contends that in games, “[f]iction cues the player into understanding the rules, and rules can cue the player into imagining a fictional world,” but he goes on to say that his theory of video games “has no first principle or starting point [read: no “fixed center”], but many simultaneous parts that interact” (*Half-Real 197*). Thus, like processes of writing, video games resist a “fixed center” in that a game’s “consciousness” is located within a hybridity of “real” consciousness and “fictional” consciousness.

Due to their hybrid consciousness, video games can be viewed from two distinct frames of reference: game design and game play. The “real” is the game’s design, and the

“fictional” is the game’s play. Significantly, according to Juul, a game’s interest does not derive solely from design, nor solely from play, but rather from the interaction of the two (*Half-Real* 90-1). For example, video games do not merely require the player’s and/or designer’s presence; in order to result in a unique experience for each user, games also require the player to make choices (“fiction”), which necessitates the designer’s anticipation of those choices (“rules”). In the best cases, video games create worlds and mechanics that allow players to decide what meanings to give the text, while empowering users to determine how those meanings manifest in their own play. By accounting for the intra-actions between design and play, video games not only account for *both* subjects (designers) *and* objects (players) of video games, but video games also disrupt a traditional notion of causality in a redistribution of agency among authors and readers and texts. Thus, while playing video games, students might become aware of the infinitude of intra-acting, agential frameworks that constitute expression among authors, readers, and texts.

More specifically, by playing video games focused on writing and composition, students are exposed to frameworks of expression that permit them to experiment with “the falsehood in ‘choosing’ an academic voice” (Hilst 11). For example, at their discretion, students may choose to omit and/or add constructs of so-called “good” writing to their game play, in individual contributions to an ever-growing and limitlessly-expanding version of their written texts. Such varied iterations exhibit the paradox of simultaneously contradicting and complementing previous “drafts,” which works to create a broader understanding of the concept of academic voice because in such games, the variations to voice remain open and are constantly increasing (Hilst 11). That is, by highlighting the paradox of simultaneous complement/contradiction, video games focused on writing and composition allow students

to uncover the ways in which (“good”) writers filter their understandings of texts through a variety of (seemingly disparate) “voices.”

Additionally, video games focused on writing and composition allow students to play with “the artifice of creating another voice,” while learning to fail productively (Hilst 11). For example, video games present a consistent tension between winning and failure, and this tension enacts “voice-non-voice” experimentation. Just as Juul suggests that game design interacts with game play to constitute interest, he asserts a similar symbiotic relationship between failure and winning. Rather than positioning failure in opposition to winning, Juul contends that failure in video games is central to enjoyment and experiences of depth (Juul 5). In other words, by allowing players to amass pieces of knowledge regarding what *not* to do (and since nothing is “corrected” or “rewritten”), failure adds content to the “writing” of video game play. In fact, the unexpected material produced by “failure” in video games can form the basis for further composition in a free-association that creates text. In this sense, we might say that “failure” in video games is tantamount to unexpected material that forms the basis for further composition. Voice-non-voice experimentation demands this unexpected material; it requires failure. Significantly, then, writing games might permit students to experience “failure” in writing as a generative process.

Juul says that winning without failing leads to dissatisfaction. In fact, Juul argues that “failure is an integral element of the overall experience of playing a game” and that failure in games serves as “a motivator, something that helps us reconsider our strategies and see the strategic depth in a game,” offering “clear proof that we have improved when we finally overcome it” (Juul 9). This is significant because failure in video games challenges players’ preconceived notions of success by pointing out instances of failure. However, Juul also

notes that games are often “ritualistic, repeatable, and laden with symbolic meaning,” offering a “parody of emotional vulnerability” in which players might experience precarious voices “in transformed, masked, or hidden form” (Juul 26-7). With this in mind, failure in video games no longer reflects “natural” abilities, but rather this “fictional” failure is impersonal, since games are “artificial constructs with no bearing on the regular world” (Juul 21). For first-year writing programs that utilize play to disrupt a traditional notion of causality among authors, readers, and texts, this means that students could liberate “failure” (and its cultural connotations) from a seemingly-static, essential self. That is, game-ified approaches to writing demonstrate the relativity of “failure”—and its “becoming with” winning—rendering the negative connotations of “failure” far less powerful and personal.

Just as winning in video games is less satisfying when its intra-actor, failing, is absent, writing without the “non-voice” of “voice-non-voice” makes for less satisfying (and less inventive) writing. Recall that winning without failing eliminates surprise and forecloses inventive possibility, dictating what is possible in advance. Writing without “non-voice” likewise eliminates surprise, limiting inventive possibilities. Thus, by incorporating a desirable notion of “failure” (as a generative aid to invention) into first-year writing programs, game-ified methodologies of writing instruction might help students recover foreclosed possibility, allowing them to discover *what* and, more importantly, *how* winning means. Therefore, by working in favor of the unexpected—or surprise—game-ified writing instruction allows students to *both* play with *and* theorize an infinite number of patterns of intra-actions among themselves, rhetoric, and *kairos*.

Whereas expressionist theories posit that a stable, human subject speaks, encouraging writers to find the most “appropriate” voice as a means of achieving an “authentic” voice, the

surprise inherent in video games might help students better understand that the human subject is expressed just as often as it expresses, and that rhetoric shapes *kairos* just as often as *kairos* shapes rhetoric. Significantly, this ontologically fluid approach to writing has the potential to transform writing from a codified task into a bold experiment for inventing *both* voices *and* non-voices, *both kairos and* rhetoric, *both* theory *and* practice, *both* authors *and* readers. Therefore, video games designed with a specific focus on writing and composition may help students transgress pedagogies that present them with forced choices, enabling them to enact their own learning methods by playing with “the falsehood in ‘choosing’ an academic voice” and “the artifice of creating another voice” (Hilst 11). Through the voice-non-voice experimentation that video games allow, writing could become what Hilst calls an attempt “not at expressing the self, but expressing something else” (Hilst 11). Game-ified writing instruction permits the expression of that “something else.” By allowing for the “becoming with” of *both* rhetoric *and* *kairos*, writing games facilitate expression of the intra-activity and dispersed agency among an infinity of meaning-making entities. This expression opens, rather than forecloses, inventive possibility because expressions of distributed agency theorize their own meaning-making practices in a demonstration of knowledge that extends beyond the human subject. As such, writing’s most significant value lies neither in its theory, nor its practice, but in the *both/and*, the intra-action, the “becoming with” of the two.

## Reference

### Appendix: Writing Writing Games: The Praxis

#### Why Read the Code?

The code reflects the metacognitive processes that helped to shape the argument(s) contained in this thesis. In a demonstration of what I know (and what I don't know), the code outlines the steps I took to know when and where to use particular strategies for learning and problem solving. Additionally, in support of the pedagogical methodologies I advocate, my commentary throughout the code articulates my acknowledgements of how and why to use the specific strategies I discovered in my writing process. In short, the game's code represents an ability to use prior knowledge to plan a strategy for approaching a learning task, and how I have taken necessary steps to solve problems, to reflect on and evaluate results, and to modify my approach as needed.

#### How to Read the Code

Inform 7, which is the application I used to create the video game, is a self-defined "tool for writers intrigued by computing, and computer programmers intrigued by writing." The process of designing interactive fiction can be divided into two related activities: the creation of the world as it appears at the start of play (where and what everything is) and the specification of the rules of play, which shape how the player interacts with that initially created world. The language used in the source reads as if it were English aimed at a human reader, but, in reality, Inform 7 understands a very modest range of sentences and will complain if its limits are passed. Still, with the two related design activities in mind, the English language coding should make sense to less experienced readers (especially when coupled with the game play).

The Code

**"Experimentation With Voice" by Amy**

**Release along with an interpreter.**

**Use American dialect and the serial comma.**

**Include questions by Michael Callaghan.**

**Include Glulx Entry Points by Emily Short.**

[I've tried the following two extensions to get the prompt to interrupt the writer after a predetermined elapsed time. However, Real-Time Delays prohibits all action for a predetermined number of seconds and Basic Real Time needs an action to trigger the "clock." I haven't quite figured out how to code the trigger effectively.]

**Include Real-Time Delays by Erik Temple.**

**Include Basic Real Time by Sarah Morayati.]**

**[setup]**

**When play begins:**

**say "Many students feel uncertain about using language in an academic context. There are lots of different reasons for this. They include:[paragraph break]1. Learning to 'speak' the language of a discipline[line break]2. Structuring thinking to suit the needs of academic assignments[line break]3. Choosing the right words to suit the needs of academic assignments[line break]4. Feeling comfortable about expressing understanding in writing[line break]5. Putting things in their own words[paragraph break]These are the kinds of things we'll explore together in this game."**

**[I wanted to open the game by giving the player a brief description of "voice" and its relationship(s) to writing and some of the common hangups that students experience when learning to discover/develop their academic voices.]**

**The player is Writer. Writer is a person. The description of Writer is "You're doing great, and you've already begun to figure out what makes for 'good writing.'"**

**[The description of Writer doesn't add much to the game itself. It's more of a nod to those who are familiar with the genre of interactive fiction and common IF commands. More specifically, the description of the player will appear in the game as printed text any time the player types the command "examine self".]**

**The player is in a room called VoiceNonVoice. The description of VoiceNonVoice is "VOICE is a distinct personality, style, or point of view"**

contained in a piece of writing or any other creative work.[paragraph break]Type **EXAMPLE** to see an example of voice in writing[line break]Type **WHY** to learn more about why voice is important to writing[line break]Type **FIND** to learn strategies for finding your writing voice[paragraph break]After you've explored these options, type **BEGIN** to begin experimenting with voice."

[Inform operates on basic building blocks called "rooms". VoiceNonVoice is simply the space in which play begins. Later in the game, the rooms will become more important, as they will serve to add structure to the player's gameplay.]

I also chose to include prompts for the four possible commands coded into the room VoiceNonVoice.]

Laboratory is a room. The description of Laboratory is "**Are you ready to experiment?**"

[The player is moved to Laboratory when he/she types "begin" in VoiceNonVoice.]

The description of Laboratory is merely a workaround for a structural issue I had in coding the game. I needed to create some (arbitrary) content in Laboratory in order to attach the rest of the rules to the action(s) in this room. In other words, without this seemingly innocuous rhetorical question, the player would get stuck in video game limbo, and this was the only fix I could make work.]

After reading a command when the player is in VoiceNonVoice:

If the player's command includes "**example**":

say "**The New York Times and the New York Post may cover the same story, but their headlines are likely to be quite different. For example, when Ike Turner died, the New York Times had a straightforward headline: 'Ike Turner, Musician and Songwriter in Duo With Tina Turner, Dies at 76', whereas the New York Post went for a bad pun: 'Ike 'Beats' Tina to Death.'"**;

stop the action;

If the player's command includes "**why**":

say "**A writer's voice is what people sometimes mean by style, although technically style refers to the words a writer chooses. Style is the objective data on the printed page that a literary critic studies. . . . Voice, however, is different. Like stage presence in actors, voice emerges from a writer's being. The writer is often unconscious of it and does not always try to create it. Often too, the untrained reader responds to it without knowing just**

what it is. Voice inspires a subjective feeling in readers about a writer, and usually it is the writer's voice that keeps a reader reading.";

stop the action;

If the player's command includes "find":

say "So how do you discover and develop your voice? Start by thinking about these three things:[paragraph break]1. What you want to communicate about yourself (or another if you're writing on behalf of someone/something else)...[line break]If you asked your readers to describe your writing with a few adjectives, which words would you want them to choose?[paragraph break]2. The purpose of what you're writing...[line break]Should your voice be different for an obituary than for a movie review?[line break]Do you want to inform, entertain, or motivate readers to take action?[paragraph break]3. Your target audience...[line break]Are you writing for kids, professional investors, soccer fans from around the world?";

stop the action;

If the player's command includes "begin":

move the player to Laboratory;

stop the action;

Otherwise:

say "Stay on topic!"

[The rules (and sub-rules) above tell the game what to do in any instance in which the player types a command in the room VoiceNonVoice. The "otherwise" sub-rule is the catch-all, and the "if" sub-rules tell the game about the exceptions to the catch-all rule. In plain terms, unless the player types one of the four words highlighted in the prompt in the room VoiceNonVoice, "Stay on topic!" should appear as the game's printed-text response.]

Data is a kind of value. The data are red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, circle, square, triangle, rectangle and complete.

The player's red is indexed text that varies.

The player's orange is indexed text that varies.

The player's yellow is indexed text that varies.

The player's green is indexed text that varies.

The player's blue is indexed text that varies.

The player's purple is indexed text that varies.

The player's circle is indexed text that varies.

Identity is data that varies.

[Here's where I've created some of the discrete pieces that form the larger structure of the game. I think of them like Legos; these are my building materials. They are (sort of) insignificant signifiers in that their meaning matters solely inasmuch as they work to build structure in the game.]

V1 is a scene. V1 begins when the location is Laboratory. V1 ends when Identity is complete.

[V1 and Scenes: Scenes allow the game designer to rearrange the priority of the rules. I have differentiated V1 from the starting room, VoiceNonVoice, because the additional condition "if V1 is happening" provides an additional "branch" onto which dependent rules may hang.]

[I want to embed the hyperlink, if possible.]

When V1 begins:

say "In your browser, follow this link to the New York Times:[line break]<http://www.nytimes.com>[paragraph break]Choose a story that interests you.";

now Identity is red.

Every turn during V1:

If Identity is red:

now current question is "Next, try to identify all the 'voices' (or points of view) represented in the story you chose.";

now current prompt is "List them here...[line break](Enter six voices. You may repeat entries, if necessary.)[paragraph break]1.";

ask a closed question, in text mode;

If identity is orange:

now current question is "Another?";

now current prompt is "2.";

ask a closed question, in text mode;

If identity is yellow:

now current question is "Another?";

now current prompt is "3.";

ask a closed question, in text mode;

If identity is green:

now current question is "Another?";

now current prompt is "4.";

ask a closed question, in text mode;

If identity is blue:

now current question is "Another?";

now current prompt is "5.";

ask a closed question, in text mode;

If identity is purple:

now current question is "Another?";

now current prompt is "6.";

ask a closed question, in text mode;

If identity is circle:

start a 15000 millisecond timer;

choose a random row from the table of rainbow;

say "Now, begin to (f)re(e)write the article in this voice: [color entry][line break]";

Table of Rainbow

Color

"[player's red]"

"[player's orange]"

"[player's yellow]"

"[player's green]"

"[player's blue]"

"[player's purple]"

**A text question rule (this is the V1 rule):**

**If V1 is happening and Identity is red:**

**If the player's command matches "done":**

**now identity is circle;**

**exit;**

**Otherwise:**

**now the player's red is the current answer;**

**now Identity is orange;**

**exit;**

**If V1 is happening and Identity is orange:**

**If the player's command matches "done":**

**now identity is circle;**

**exit;**

**Otherwise:**

**now the player's orange is the current answer;**

**now Identity is yellow;**

**exit;**

**If V1 is happening and Identity is yellow:**

**if the player's command matches "done":**

**now identity is circle;**

**exit;**

**Otherwise:**

**now the player's yellow is the current answer;**

**now Identity is green;**

**exit;**

**If V1 is happening and Identity is green:**

**if the player's command matches "done":**

now identity is circle;

exit;

Otherwise:

now the player's green is the current answer;

now Identity is blue;

exit;

If V1 is happening and Identity is blue:

If the player's command matches "done":

now identity is circle;

exit;

Otherwise:

now the player's blue is the current answer;

now Identity is purple;

exit;

If V1 is happening and Identity is purple:

If the player's command matches "done":

now identity is circle;

exit;

Otherwise:

now the player's purple is the current answer;

now identity is circle;

exit;

[This part of the code works to "collect" the player's responses. The responses are labeled "red," "orange," etc., and Inform can recognize the player's input as "player's red," "player's orange," etc.]

A glulx timed activity rule:

If identity is circle and the reading a command activity is going on:

cancel line input in the main-window;

re-request line event in main window;

now identity is square;

start a 15000 millisecond timer;

If identity is square and the reading a command activity is going on:

cancel line input in the main-window;

stop the timer;

choose a random row from the table of rainbow;

say "Continue to (f)re(e)write the article in this voice: [color entry][line break]";

re-request line event in main window;

start a 15000 millisecond timer;

[If identity is triangle and the reading a command activity is going on:

cancel line input in the main-window;

stop the timer;

re-request line event in main window;

start a 15000 millisecond timer;

now identity is rectangle;]

[If Identity is rectangle and the reading a command activity is going on:

stop the timer;

now identity is complete.]

To re-request line event in main window:

```
(- glk_request_line_event(gg_mainwin, buffer + WORDSIZE,
INPUT_BUFFER_LEN - WORDSIZE, buffer-->0); -)
```

To cancel line input in the/-- main-window:

```
(- glk_cancel_line_event(gg_mainwin, gg_event); buffer-->0 = gg_event-->2;
-)
```

To start a/-- (T - a number) millisecond/ms timer:

```
(- if (glk_gestalt(gestalt_Timer, 0)) glk_request_timer_events({T}); -)
```

To stop the/-- timer:

```
(- if (glk_gestalt(gestalt_Timer, 0)) glk_request_timer_events(0); -)
```

[These rules work to modify the parser in order to trigger events in real time.  
Borrowed from Erik Temple in the "Glulx Inform 7" thread on [intfiction.org](http://intfiction.org).]

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## ABSTRACT

### GAMIFYING RHETORIC: FIRST-YEAR WRITING IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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With new media composition, practice is theory is practice. That is, the processes and products of new media writing are inherently praxical. New media scholars have discussed the ways in which digital writing allows students to manipulate features, objects, and simulated worlds by using the languages of coding programming. Moreover, scholars contend that the manipulative activities made accessible through new media composition processes are not only beneficial unto themselves as they pertain to the ends of composition, but such processes also constitute the very essence (and evolution) of theories of writing and composition. Thus, through an engagement with the manipulative practices that comprise and constitute digital writing, new media composition has the potential to expose first-year writing students to the intersections of writing's theories and practices—to the places where theories and practices of writing converge.