CHAPTER 1 Thinking about Multimodality

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WHY MULTIMODAL COMPOSITION?

It is fast becoming a common place that digital composing environments are challenging writing, writing instruction, and basic understandings of the different components of the rhetorical situation (writers, readers, texts) to change. Such changes are both significant and far reaching—and they promise to be disruptive for many teachers of English composition. For many such teachers at both the secondary and collegiate levels, the texts that students have produced in response to composition assignments have remained essentially the same for the past 150 years. They consist primarily of words on a page, arranged into paragraphs. This flow of words is only occasionally interrupted by titles, headings, diagrams, or footnotes.

These texts resemble—in many ways—other texts that students have been producing elsewhere in the academy (or in other formal educational settings) in response to more conventional assignments like essay tests, lab reports, and research papers. The information within these is conveyed primarily by two modalities—words and visual elements (e.g., layout, font, font size, white space)—and is often distributed in the medium of print. Importantly, however, these texts do not resemble many of the documents we now see in digital environments that use multiple modalities to convey meaning—moving and still images, sounds, music, color, words, and animations—and that are distributed primarily, albeit not exclusively, via digital media (e.g., computers, computer networks, CDs, DVDs). Although composition theories have evolved to acknowledge and study these new ***multimodal*** texts (texts that exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music and sound), the formal assignments that many English composition teachers give to students remain alphabetic and primarily produced via some form of print media. And the papers that students submit in response to these conventional assignments have remained essentially the same: 8.5 by 11 inch pages, double-spaced, 1-inch-margins, 12 or 10 inch fonts. Thus, while time march-

es on *outside* of U.S. secondary and college classrooms, while people on the Internet are exchanging texts composed of still and moving images, animations, sounds, graphics, words, and colors, *inside* many of these classrooms, students are producing essays that look much the same as those produced by their parents and grandparents.

Why the astonishing lack of change in both classroom assignments and student-authored writing? It's been many years since Patricia Sullivan (2001) pointed out that, with computer technologies, writers have more control over the page than they've ever enjoyed. Her claims today suggest that authors could expand that notion of control *beyond* the page, that they could think in increasingly broad ways about texts—not only about pages, words, layout, and design, but also about still and moving visual imagery (photos, photo-editing programs, movie-authoring programs, animation programs) and aural components of communication (music, audio recordings, sounds). Why should composition teachers, researchers, and scholars be interested in taking more advantage of these opportunities?

Agreeing that literacy pedagogy must account for the multiplicity of texts allowed and encouraged by digital technologies, many teacher/scholars and others in fields outside writing studies have articulated compelling arguments for why people concerned with writing and literacy should turn their attention to the cultural shifts in meanings of writing, composing, and texts:

Cindy Selfe (2004) has elsewhere written: " . . . if our profession continues to focus solely on teaching only alphabetic composition—either online or in print—we run the risk of making composition studies increasingly irrelevant to students engaging in contemporary practices of communicating" (p. 72).

Arguing that "new communications media are reshaping the way we use language," the New London Group (1996) contends that "effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries" (p. 64).

"To be responsible teachers," Anne Wysocki (2003) maintains, "we need to help our students (as well as ourselves) learn how different choices in visual arrangement in all texts (on screen and off) encourage different kinds of meaning making and encourage us to take up (overtly or not) various values" (p. 186).

James Gee (2003), writing about video games and literacy, asserts the importance this way: "People need to be literate in new semiotic domains [by which he means any set of practices which relies on multiple modalities to communicate meanings] throughout their lives. If our modern, global, high-tech and science-driven world does anything, it certainly gives rise to new semiotic domains and transforms old ones at an ever faster rate" (p. 19).

In a world where communication between individuals and groups is both increasingly cross-cultural and digital, teachers of composition are beginning to sense the inadequacy of texts—and composition instruction—that employs only one primary semiotic channel (the alphabetic) to convey meaning. In internationally networked digital environments, texts must be able to carry meaning across geo-political, linguistic, and cultural borders, and so texts must take advantage of multiple semiotic channels. At the same time, however, many composition teachers—raised and educated in the age and the landscapes of print—feel hesitant about the task of designing, implementing, and evaluat-

ing assignments that call for multimodal texts—texts that incorporate words, images, video, and sound. These teachers understand both the possibilities and the challenges posed by a curriculum that accommodates multimodal literacy practices and students who compose texts from video, sound, still images, and animations, as well as from words. It is a difficult situation, and composition instruction is poised on the precipice of the change.

This collection is designed to provide a beginning point for composition teachers who want to make this theoretical shift in their understanding of literacy and develop effective and sound pedagogical approaches in response. This book provides a basic set of resources for teachers who want to experiment with multimodal composition assignments—particularly those that incorporate video and audio production—in their classrooms.

As we've indicated above, the authors represented in this volume argue for the importance of paying attention to multimodal composing. Our reasoning can be summarized in the following list of claims:

1 **In an increasingly technological world, students need to be experienced and skilled not only in reading (consuming) texts employing multiple modalities, but also in *composing* in multiple modalities, if they hope to communicate successfully within the digital communication networks that characterize workplaces, schools, civic life, and span traditional cultural, national, and geopolitical borders.**

Whatever profession students hope to enter in the 21st century—game design (Gee, 2003), archeology (Boxer, 2005), science and engineering (Tufte, 1990, 1993, 2001, 2003), the military (D.C. Comics, 2005), the entertainment industry (Daly, 2003), and medicine (Hull, Mikulecky, St. Clair, and Kerka, 2003)—they can expect to read and be asked to help compose multimodal texts of various kinds, texts designed to communicate on multiple semiotic channels, using all available means of creating and conveying meaning. Instructors of composition need to teach students not only how to read and interpret such texts from active and critical perspectives, they also need to teach students how to go *beyond the consumption* of such texts—learning how to *compose* them for a variety of purposes and audiences.

In peer-review workshops or studio sessions (where compositions are viewed or heard and responded to), students are simultaneously put in the familiar position of audience member and the perhaps unfamiliar position of critical responder. Many people have argued for a pedagogical commitment to critical and active response, especially to technologies. Grounded in the knowledge that comes from authoring multimodal compositions themselves, students can constructively respond to audio and visual compositions, developing critical perspectives that will serve them well as citizens who respond to any texts.

2 **If composition instruction is to remain relevant, the definition of "composition" and "texts" needs to grow and change to reflect peoples' literacy practices in new digital communication environments.**

Although it may sound like technological determinism to some (i.e., that our professional work and values should take into account changes and developments in communication technologies), the authors of this book believe that it is important to remain in step with the ways in which students, workers, and citizens are communicating, the changing nature of the texts these people produce, and the ways in which such texts are now being used around the world.

The more channels students (and writers generally) have to select from when composing and exchanging meaning, the more resources they have at their disposal for being successful communicators. Aural and video compositions sometimes reveal and articulate meanings students struggle

to articulate with words; audio and visual compositions carry different kinds of meanings that words are not good at capturing. It is the thinking, decision making, and creative problem solving involved in creating meaning through any modality that provide the long-lasting and useful lessons students can carry into multiple communicative situations. In this way, the new composing processes, and problem-solving approaches that students learn when composing with modalities other than words can later serve to illuminate the more familiar composing processes associated with words and vice versa.

Effective technologies often function invisibly in our lives. Think of how visible technologies become when they break down; it's when they are not running invisibly in the background of our work that we become most conscious of them and their roles in our lives. When computers were first introduced to writing instruction, many teachers marveled at how the new writing technologies revealed the processes of writing that over time had become largely invisible to students and teachers of composition. With the new technologies now mediating composition—the web, digital video, digital photography, digital sound—different aspects of composing meaning, of communicating, have been foregrounded in ways that have encouraged many teachers to take note.

3 **The authoring of compositions that include still images, animations, video, and audio—although intellectually demanding and time consuming—is also *engaging*.** It is certainly true that one of the challenges of teaching multimodal composition is the learning curve involved for both teachers and students new to thinking about different modalities. This learning curve varies, however, depending on whether or not multimodal composing involves computers (many such projects do not, and we provide sample assignments in Chapters 3 and 9 that are nondigital), the size of the project (a 5-minute original video project or an 8-minute montage of still images set to an audio track), the complexity of the compositional elements (still images, audio, or video downloaded from a web source; still images, video or audio recorded by students, downloaded onto a computer, and edited by students; or a combination of these elements), and the time frame (several smaller projects in one semester or one culminating project worked on throughout the semester). In addition, increasing numbers of students coming into composition classes have experience in multimodal composing that teachers can tap.

The collective experiences of the authors represented in this book also indicate that audio and visual compositions are *engaging for students*. Like the majority of Americans, many students are already active consumers of multimodal compositions by virtue of their involvement in playing and even creating digital music, watching television, shooting home videos, and communicating within web spaces. As a result, students often bring to the classroom a great deal of implicit, perhaps previously unarticulated, knowledge about what is involved in composing multimodal texts, and they commonly respond to multimodal assignments with excitement.

For students, such instruction is often refreshing (because it's different from the many other composing instruction experiences they've had), meaningful (because the production of multimodal texts in class resemble many of the real-life texts students encounter in digital spaces), and relevant (students often sense that multimodal approaches to composing will *matter* in their lives outside the classroom). Indeed, the teachers writing for this collection have watched students become so engaged in their compositions that they push themselves beyond the boundaries of the assignments and demonstrate learning that goes well beyond teachers' expectations as they begin to understand how multimodal texts look, act, and function. As James Gee (2003) has speculated about the intense engagement some computer gamers experience, "Wouldn't it be great if kids were willing to put in this much time on task on such challenging material in school and enjoy it so much?" Yes, it would be, and this kind of engagement is marvelous to witness.

Additionally, students engage—sometimes very personally and emotionally—with multimodal compositions as readers/listeners/viewers for their peers' compositions. When was the last time you or anyone in your class was moved to tears by a student composition? Multimodal composition may bring the often neglected third appeal–pathos–back into composition classes (which often empha-

size logos and ethos while devaluing pathos as an ethical or intellectual strategy for appealing to an audience). Students authoring multimodal compositions often demonstrate a strong awareness and understanding of how music and images are used as appeals in arguments and, further, how effective these modalities can be in creating and establishing meaning. Maybe classes that draw on such understandings can produce the *driveway effect*, a state of engagement so strong that radio listeners remain in their cars after they've arrived at their destinations to listen to the end of a program. Wouldn't it be great to re-articulate Gee's question, if students experienced that kind of engagement and connectedness in the peer-response workshops that characterize composition classrooms?

> "There was what they call the '*driveway effect*,' Mozetich says. People stayed in their cars in their driveways long after they'd arrived home in order not to miss the ending."
>
> —Hugh Fraser (2001)

4 **Audio and visual composing requires attention to rhetorical principles of communication.** Conventional rhetorical principles such as audience awareness, exigence, organization, correctness, arrangement, and rhetorical appeals are necessary considerations for authors of successful audio and visual compositions. In some ways, many classical rhetorical principles of communication–in which the study of composition is grounded—may be more difficult to ignore in audio and visual compositions. These rhetorical principles of communication–which composition teachers have applied primarily to *literate* communication–also apply, just as appropriately, to multimodal compositions. Teachers less than willing to make such a leap might be encouraged to remember that the rhetorical principles currently used to teach written composition are, themselves, principles translated from the study of oral communication. To include additional oral and visual elements in composition might be seen as a return to rhetoric's historical concerns.

Further, the authors of this book agree with many contemporary scholars and teachers (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2003; Hocks, 2003; Kalantzis, Varnava-Skoura, & Cope, 2002; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Wysocki, Johnson-Eilola, Selfe, Sirc, 2004) that the study of literacy and composing using a full range of visual and aural modalities can teach students new strategies and approaches which can be productively applied to their efforts at composing more traditional written compositions. Thus, the time spent on multimodal composition, far from being a distraction, will enrich the teaching of composition in general. The following chapters provide suggestions for teachers who want to experiment with multimodal compositions and test this hypothesis for themselves—in both small or more extensive ways.

5 **Teaching multimodality is one pathway to accomplishing long-valued pedagogical goals.** In *Experience and Education*, first published in 1938, John Dewey outlined a vision for "progressive education," as opposed to education in which "the kind of external imposition which is so common in the traditional school limited rather than promoted the intellectual and moral development of the young" (p. 22). In contrast, Dewey envisioned education as an enterprise involving teachers and students in mutually intellectually satisfying relationships:

> There is, I think, no point in the philosophy of progressive education which is sounder than its emphasis upon the importance of participation of the learner in the formation of the purposes which direct his activities in the learning process, just as there is no defect in traditional education greater than its failure to secure the active cooperation of the pupil in construction of the purposes involved in his studying. (p. 67)

A student's experiences outside the formal educational setting, in other words, should play a significant role in defining the purpose of the educational enterprise. "A student-centered pedagogy asks students to work within their own cultures and discourses by using experimental forms to

learn actively from one another and to engage with the world around them," reflects Mary Hocks (2003). Like Dewey, she, too, believes that starting with students' experiences is a pathway into literacy instruction:

> Visual rhetoric–when understood as the dialogical processes of critique and design in contexts that deconstruct the visual world and the technologies surrounding us–goes much further in helping us teach students the rhetorical and compositional abilities that they can use for years to come. (pp. 214 – 215)

In this collection, the authors do not argue that digital technologies (such as audio and visual composing) and an emphasis on multimodal composition are going to be a catalyst in revolutionizing writing instruction. Instead, we argue that *opportunities to think and compose multimodally can help us develop an increasingly complex and accurate understanding of writing, composition instruction, and text.* It is only teachers' learning about new approaches to composing and creating meaning through texts that will catalyze changes in composition classrooms.

Before teachers can begin to explore the possibilities of multimodal composition classes, they must reflect on their pedagogical assumptions about writing instruction generally. What is the goal for composition instruction? With what knowledge/experience/skills/strategies do they want students to leave class? Which meaning-making arenas—academic, civic, private—should they consider for classes? If teachers believe that composition instruction should help students develop and fine-tune the meaning-making strategies and skills they bring with them to classrooms; if they believe it important to teach students to be stronger communicators and meaning makers; if they focus instruction on the many communicative genres, approaches, and forms that people communicate with and through, within and outside the university, then they already share many of the theoretical positions informing multimodal composition instruction. Thinking about multimodality often involves teachers in deep, careful thinking about composition instruction and what matters to communicators in the 21st century.

FIVE KEY QUESTIONS

Thoughtful teachers who are seriously considering whether or not they should expand the range of modalities that characterize their composition assignments do face some realistic concerns—as well as many new possibilities. These concerns are frequently focused on some variation—or combination—of the following five questions. We provide some responses here not to suggest definitive answers, but to offer perspectives that teachers can use as they formulate their own increasingly rich understanding of multimodal composing.

✓ When I teach multimodal composing, am I really teaching composition?

This question rests at the heart of many teachers' concerns about multimodal composing, so it's best to address it directly.

The classical basis of composition instruction involves teaching students how to use *all available rhetorical means* of communicating effectively. For oral cultures, this important phrase—all available means—focused on persuasive *oral* presentation; for Aristotle and later rhetoricians, *writing* provided an additional means of persuasive communication; for authors after Gutenberg; print text and images were among the resources that could be put to rhetorical use.

Some English composition teachers might argue:

- Composing with multiple modes takes attention away from writing concerns.
- Multimodal composing is just the newest trendy thing; it won't end up being a sustained concern for writing instruction.
- One semester is barely enough time to teach

At each of these particular points of history, people have expressed sincere concerns about the new technologies of communication and their effects on more conventional forms of literacy. In the *Phaedrus*, for example, Plato has Socrates express the concern that writing weakens the memory and can neither defend itself nor represent truth to others. Indeed, Socrates notes, people are naive if they "believe that words put in writing are something more than what they are" (p. 275). Similarly, in the 16th century, the Church considered the printing press to be a dangerous new communication technology—and one not to be trusted because it supported an increased flow of information to the masses and increasingly vernacular expression (Lea, 1902).

Today, many teachers of English composition worry about the effects of computers and the increasingly vernacular expressions of multimodality that digital environments have encouraged. Multimodality, however, is not limited solely to digital environments; rather, it has been encouraged over a much longer historical period by the advent of various nondigital technologies: engraving, film, photography, recording devices, animation, and television. Indeed, as Sullivan (2001) and Wysocki (2001) have pointed out, print text itself is *already*—at some level—multimodal, as any scholar familiar with Laurence Sterne's 18th century novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy,* can attest. Print, in short, carries visual information as well as alphabetic information. This argument can just as easily be extended to other examples of multimodal communication from William Hogarth's 18th century engravings of British life to Ira Glass' 21st century essays on National Public Radio.

students to write; how can I possibly also teach them audio and video composition?

- I don't know how to use the technologies to create audio and video compositions; how can I be expected to teach it?
- Audio and visual composing won't teach students important skills like how to construct correct sentences, consistent rhetorical theses; development or organization.
- Literate composition is superior–intellectually, artistically, historically–to audio and video.

So, why *is* multimodal composition such a hot issue *right now*—especially if authors have had a long history of using multiple modalities (words, sounds, visual images) to make meaning, and if media technologies have supported such expressions long before the invention of computers and digital environments? One explanation lies in the convergence of *digital production technologies*. As composition scholars have noted (George, 2002; Wysocki, Johnson-Eilola, Selfe, & Sirc, 2004), the converging inventions of personal computers and the web; photo manipulation, audio-editing, and video editing applications; and digital recorders (still and video cameras and audio recorders) now make it possible for students in many schools to produce a variety of multimodal texts as well as to consume them.

These converging innovations—and the possibilities they help enable—have not gone unnoticed by professional organizations. The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), for example, has encouraged teachers to think in new ways about both the *production* and *reception* of multimodal texts. As early as 1996, for instance, the NCTE passed a resolution entitled "On Viewing and Visually Representing As Forms of Literacy," which acknowledged the importance of teaching students how to *produce* and *interpret* multimodal texts in print and nonprint contexts:

> To participate in a global society, we continue to extend our ways of communicating. Viewing and visually representing (defined in the NCTE/IRA *Standards for the English Language Arts*) are a part of our growing consciousness of how people gather and share information. Teachers and students need to expand their appreciation of the power of print and nonprint texts. Teachers should guide students in constructing meaning through creating and viewing nonprint texts.

And, by 2004, Randy Bomer, then President of the National Council of Teachers of English, had identified multimodal literacy as a key focus of the Council's attention:

> What can NCTE do to advance young people's learning about the multi-modal literacies that are becoming commonplace in a digital environment? How can we create resources that bring the widest possible range of teachers into this conversation? What public policy and public education will prepare the way for the rapid pace of change in these forms of literacy? (personal e-mail communication, Oct. 19, 2004)

By 2005, and the writing of this book, faculty at institutions as diverse as Ohio State, Stanford, the University of Illinois. Michigan State, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Florida Central University, the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, Georgia Tech, Bowling Green State University, Michigan Tech University, Georgia State University, Kent State University, and the University of Colorado were experimenting with multimodal composition assignments in a variety of courses and curricula.

In each of these cases, organizations, institutions, and individual teachers acknowledge the realities of changing communication practices in which people—in business, science and research contexts, personal correspondence, community work—are increasingly exchanging information in online environments and using a variety of semiotic resources and systems to make meaning as they compose: not only words, but also still and moving images, sound, and color among other modalities. The exigence for changing educational approaches, in other words, has been the recognition that composition instruction must change if it is to remain relevant and fulfill the goal of preparing effective and literate citizens for the 21st century.

Why should English composition faculty teach multimodal composing? Shouldn't we stick to teaching writing and let video production faculty teach video? Art and design faculty teach about visual images? Audio production faculty teach about sound?

As we have pointed out, a central goal of contemporary education within U.S. colleges or universities is the preparation of literate graduates—intelligent citizens who can both *create meaning in texts* and *interpret meaning from texts* within a dynamic and increasingly technological world. No collegiate unit bears the responsibility for achieving this goal more directly than do composition programs.

Historically, composition teachers have met this responsibility by grounding their instruction firmly in rhetorical theory: making sure that all students are taught how to use *all available means* to communicate in productive way and that they are provided a range of strategies and techniques for reaching different audiences, achieving a variety of purposes, and using accepted genres effectively. The belief is that students can take these basic strategies into any disciplinary arena, build on them in more specialized ways, and put them to good use during the remainder of their collegiate programs.

Today, in a world that communicates increasingly via multimodal texts—web sites that include video clips, scientific texts built around visual data displays, radio commentaries, online reference collections—basic composing strategies have changed. Professionals in every discipline—math, physical education, health and medicine, education, science, engineering, the military—are communicating information via multimodal texts: PowerPoint presentations, video tutorials, data displays and animations, educational web sites, and they are expecting students to understand basic strategies for reading and composing such texts. In this context, basic composition instruction, too, must change in order to provide students an introductory, rhetorically focused introduction to a wider range of semiotic resources.

This situation does not mean that English composition teachers, especially in first-year courses, must now assume the responsibility for providing specialized or advanced instruction in animated data displays, video production, art and design, or audio production. Such advanced work, typically, remains solidly grounded in disciplinary contexts in which knowledge of design, production, and exchange is shaped by specialized expectations. The changing nature of communication does suggest, however, that the teaching of rhetorically-based strategies for composition—the responsibility

of introducing students to *all available means* of communicating effectively and productively, including words, images, sound—remains the purview of composition teachers.

When you add a focus on multimodality to a composition class, what do you give up?

One of the main concerns of composition teachers considering the addition of multimodal composition assignments in their courses is that the instruction involved in such projects may take valuable time away from more fundamental instruction on the written word, instruction that many teachers feel is sorely needed among contemporary students.

We, too, would argue that writing is of vital importance to educated citizens. Indeed, it is clear that alphabetic writing—and the ability to express oneself in writing—retains a special and privileged position in the education of contemporary citizens. The fact that alphbetic literacy remains a key responsibility of composition educators is difficult to refute. So, it is not our purpose to suggest that composition teachers should abandon this belief or the practices it suggests. Throughout this book, readers will find that the authors include numerous opportunities for written composition, even within the context of projects that focus on multimodal composition.

The authors of this collection do, however, recognize that other communication modalities—among them, images (moving and still), animations, sound, and color—are *in the process of becoming increasingly important*, especially in a world increasingly global in its reach and increasingly dependent on digital communication networks. We hold that responsible educators will not want to ignore these changes. And we know that in many disciplines, including composition, educators are adapting their instruction to the exigencies of a world characterized by multimodal communication.

We also believe that teaching students to make sound rhetorically-based use of video, still images, animations, and sound can actually help them better understand the particular affordances of written language—that such instruction can, moreover, provide students additional and instructive strategies for communicating in writing. For example, teaching students how to compose and focus a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) for radio—and select the right details for inclusion in this audio composition—*also helps teach* them specific strategies for focusing a written essay more tightly and effectively, choosing those details most likely to convey meaning in effective ways to a particular audience, for a particular purpose. In addition, as students engage in composing a script for the audio PSA, they are motivated to engage in meaningful, rhetorically based writing practice. Further, as students work within the rhetorical constraints of such an audio assignment, they learn more about the particular affordances of sound (the ability to convey accent, emotion, music, ambient sounds that characterize a particular location or event) and the constraints of sound (the difficulty audiences have in going back to review complex or difficult passages, to convey change not marked by sound, to communicate some organizational markers like paragraphs). Importantly, students also gain the chance to compare the affordances and constraints of audio with those of alphabetic writing—and, thus, improve their ability to make *informed and conscious choices* about the most effective modality for communicating in particular rhetorical contexts.

In short, whether instructors teach written composition solely or multimodal composition, their job remains essentially the same: to teach students effective, rhetorically based strategies for taking advantage of *all available means* of communicating effectively and productively, to multiple audiences, for different purposes, and using a range of genres.

If I teach multimodal composition will the focus on technology detract in significant ways from a focus on rhetorically based composition instruction? Will I have to become a technology expert?

First, we note that multimodal compositions are *not dependent* on digital media (although digital tools can often help authors who want to engage in multimodal work). In Chapters 3 and 9, we suggest multimodal assignments that students can undertake in nondigital environments.

Second, in cases in which multimodal composition *does* entail the use of digital communication tools and teachers are concerned about the effects of technology on a course, we suggest that teachers start *slowly and small*—designing courses that make multimodal composition an option for *one assignment* during a term or creating assignments that make multimodal responses an option *only* for those students who have access to digital equipment (either their own or borrowed from friends) and some experience in using this equipment. These small experiments can help instructors gauge what kinds of assignments are best adapted to multimodal responses; which tasks are most effective in both providing rhetorical instruction and engaging students' interests; how much (and what kind of) assistance students are likely to need as they compose in multiple modalities; and how the teachers' process-based deadlines, conferences, and feedback need to be modified to meet students' needs in such cases.

Third, all teachers have to seek their own level of comfort in digital communication environments. We hope, however, that composition teachers are willing to respect the full range of literacies that students bring to classrooms and build effectively on these literacies, expanding them whenever possible. We also hope that composition teachers serve students as role models in life-long learning—especially with regard to literacy. Teachers who hope to accomplish these goals, we believe, will also accept some level of responsibility for preparing students to communicate in an increasingly global world and one increasingly dependent on networked digital environments.

Does my school have the digital equipment that a composition class might need for multimodal assignments? Can I get access to this equipment?

Each teacher has to answer these questions individually and within the complex and overlapping contexts of their instruction, program, department, institution, and community.

By now, readers should know that multimodal composing tasks are *not dependent* on digital media (even though digital tools can, often, help authors who want to engage in multimodal work). Later in this collection, we suggest multimodal assignments that students can undertake in nondigital environments (see Chapters 3 and 9). So every teacher, we believe, even those who teach in schools that have very little access to computer technology and digital equipment like video cameras and audio recorders, can still modify some assignments to allow a multimodal option.

Those teachers who *do* want to work in digital communication environments need to make an early survey of the local instructional resources to which they have access: computer labs within which classes can be scheduled, campus programs or offices that have digital video or audio equipment for loan, informed personnel who might be persuaded to help with instruction; online tutorials and materials available on the web, students who have access to digital equipment or expertise in using such equipment, or community members willing to help. Teachers might also want to read Chapter 13 in this collection: Sustaining Multimodal Composition. In this chapter, Richard Selfe writes about how to form tactical alliances with colleagues, staff, students, other units, and programs in the service of designing not only instructionally effective but also *sustainable* efforts in multimodal composition.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

This book is composed of three major sections. Part One leads instructors through the preliminary stages of theorizing how and why multimodal composition will enter their classrooms, then through

the planning stages of extending composition assignments beyond the limits of conventional print essays—offering two sample assignments (one for an audio essay and the other for a video essay) that will be referenced throughout the book. Part Two offers material that helps turn teachers' attention toward composition processes and pragmatic pedagogical concerns as they begin to construct assignments—focusing on scheduling collaboration, rhetorical thinking, experimentation, response, and assessment. Part Three explores productive approaches to problem solving and trouble shooting, ways to connect with writing centers, and strategies for sustaining multimodal composing efforts.

Within the three primary sections, each chapter is written by a teacher, or a team of teachers, who have personal experience with both conventional and multimodal composing. As a group, this team of authors represents a talented and knowledgeable ensemble. Throughout this book, the pronoun "we" is used to refer to these authors collectively. Our use of this pronoun, we hope, will also imply our solidarity with, and inclusion in, the broader community of multimodal composition teachers and scholars around the world—a group to which we are proud to belong and committed to supporting.

At the end of this book, we have included a series of Appendices, to which we refer throughout; a Glossary, containing technical terms that teachers may run across in the teaching of multimodal composition; a complete list of the resources (print and digital) that we have identified in the various chapters; and a DVD with a number of student essays—both audio and video—that were composed in response to variations in the sample assignments. Also on this DVD are digital copies of all the Appendices for the book. Teachers can use these files when they want to modify the various sample documents to better suit their own classes and situations. *Indeed, we encourage readers to make these changes—experimenting with revisions designed to tailor materials more specifically to their particular needs and those of students within their classes.* We know that none of the assignments, directions, instructions, checklists, and handouts that we have designed for use with the students in our courses, programs, and institutions will be exactly right for use with students in other places; no teachers' digital equipment will be exactly like our own; no hardware and software will work exactly like that we now have in our classrooms. Each teacher and class will have its own set of resources that will need to be accommodated in some way—so *we encourage teachers to revise these materials according to their needs.*

What we hope to accomplish throughout this book is to explain to colleagues *how* and *why* we go about engaging with students, with their efforts to compose meaning, with the technologies they use for this purpose—and why we enjoy it so much—in our own classes and institutions. We hope that colleagues find the processes of reading, experimenting, and composing on the following pages just as engaging and enjoyable and satisfying as we have.

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