

STATEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

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TECHNOLOGICAL AGILITY AND RHETORICAL DECORUM

Technological agility is essential to my pedagogy. I do not teach students to use technology for its own sake, but because I believe it helps, literally, to change their minds. I believe it is this mental dexterity that makes them cogent. Richard Lanham writes that oscillation is encoded in “rhetoric’s central decorum.” My students learn how to be persuasive by exercising technological flexibility, which allows them to select their tools carefully and adapt their language to their tools. In fact, in some cases, I do not teach students technologies at all. Rather, I provide the resources—time, space, software, hardware, feedback and evaluation mechanisms, and structured assignments—to support student learning.

My teaching philosophy grows out of personal experiences (and experiments) with technology in classrooms in the Digital Writing and Research Lab. But I haven’t always taught in technologically endowed classrooms. When I taught American Literature discussion sections, I lugged a laptop, a projector, and portable speakers across campus to a drab room in which the desks were bolted to the ground in rows. I showed students animated versions of poems we were reading. My teaching philosophy began simply by exposing students to new media alongside words on a page to illustrate the idea that the rhetorical interpretation of a text can change as it moves into different media.

As my access to writing technologies became more sophisticated and ubiquitous, my incorporation of them into the writing classroom became more ambitious. I designed a syllabus for a class called *Remixing Rhetoric*, which I taught in the Digital Writing & Research Lab. Drawing inspiration from boxes of discarded rhetoric books, we reimagined how rhetorical training might be better distributed in the digital age. Students chose a topic to track and made videos, images, multimedia presentations, blog posts, mash-ups, and remixes to present their arguments. I used a portfolio evaluation method called “The Learning Record,” which required students track their progress across five dimensions of learning using work samples and observations. I adapted my teaching philosophy to account for multimedia assessment.

As my incorporation of technology into the classroom became more ambitious, the problems I faced became more complicated. *Remixing Rhetoric* had some momentum behind it, so I wrote a syllabus that focused on audio technologies for a class called *Literature and Popular Music*. Students would embed podcasts in their writing, which would be posted on the course wiki for everyone to revise.

That was the plan. On the first day of class, I discovered I had a deaf student. Fortunately, *Remixing Rhetoric* taught me to conceptualize remixing in broad strokes and John Slatin had attuned me to issues of accessibility. I had video remixing software installed on the lab's computers and broadened podcast assignments to include images and video. We learned about assistive technologies and discussed music and literature in synesthetic terms. I benefitted greatly from the DWRL's legacy of exploring issues of accessibility, which I follow with great interest.

After doing remixing workshops and sharing remixing lesson plans with other instructors, I submitted a lesson plan for the The John Slatin Prize for "Mastery of Electronic Media in Education" (MEME), which I won in 2012. Since then, I've turned my attention to teaching instructors in the DWRL. With a team of assistant directors, I have developed a digital writing and research certificate program that helps instructors acquire, document, and articulate digital skills for pedagogy and research. In the program we have skills modules that introduce instructors to digital audio and video, code, publishing software, games and immersive environments, presentations, productivity and digital workflow, social networking, visualization and web presences. We also have "Digital Dialog" modules that help instructors contextualize their work amid conversations about things like "posthuman and transhuman subjects," "accessibility issues," "digital annotation," and "fair use, creative commons, copyright and copyleft." I add my experiences in the DWRL to experiences in two more traditional writing centers, the William L. Adams Center for Writing at TCU and the University Writing Center at The University of Texas at Austin. Together, these experiences round out my classroom pedagogy with pedagogies involving digital workshops and one-on-one consultations on both traditional and multimedia writing.

We all enter the classroom at different stages and we exit in many directions. But more than any technology, I try to bring into the classroom the idea of responsiveness to exigencies, to others, and to the ecologies in which we find ourselves.