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The Need for Critical Composition Pedagogy in Present Times

Lashon Malone

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ABSTRACT

Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education developed to challenge forms of social oppression through the acquisition of agency, what advocates argue traditional teaching methods fail to accomplish. It is because of this and because writing is considered by many to be a gateway to learning that critical pedagogy as a teaching methodology in composition studies is a logical alternative to traditional theories guiding composition pedagogy today. Critical pedagogy is meant to help students gain the tools needed to become active participants, influencers, and decision-makers in society. This paper argues for the need for critical composition pedagogy in present times as well as attempts to mold critical pedagogical theory into reliable praxis for first-year composition (FYC) instructors, while also meeting the goals of FYC as established by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (the WPA). The ultimate goal in providing a model for critical composition pedagogy is not to provide a different vision than that of other critical composition pedagogues, but an alternative.

INDEX WORDS: Composition, Critical Pedagogy, Critical Composition Pedagogy, First-year Composition, Neoliberalism, Political, Participatory, Emancipatory, Market-driven Economy
THE NEED FOR CRITICAL COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY IN PRESENT TIMES

by

LA SHON J. MALONE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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THE NEED FOR CRITICAL COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY IN PRESENT TIMES

by

LA SHON J. MALONE

Committee Chair: Ashley J. Holmes

Committee: Mary Hocks

George Pullman

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
Georgia State University
August 2017
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my mother and grandmother, the two fiercely protective, encouraging, nurturing, “can-do” women who raised me UP; to my Papoose, my husband, whose old-school love and support give me confidence and the promise of a soft cushion in which to fall; to my three children, whose mere presence in this world has blessed me with a desire to LIVE; and to my mother-in-law for always speaking truth and wisdom. You ALL are my grace and the best part of life. Rest easy, Grandma.
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I would also like to thank my BBDO family for offering their support and encouragement, for sharing their professional opinions of this work, and for taking up the slack when my school work kept me away mentally and physically.

And, of course, I would like to thank my family for listening, reading, supporting, and encouraging. Thank you!
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1 INTRODUCTION

Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education developed to challenge forms of social oppression through the acquisition of agency—what advocates argue traditional teaching methods fail to accomplish. It emerged from the work of Paulo Freire—inspired by such figures as Karl Marx, John Dewey, and Jean-Paul Sartre and shaped by his experience as an adult literacy educator of poor Brazilian laborers—and extends to the contemporary scholarship of such luminary critical theorists as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, and bell hooks. It is a philosophy that recognizes teaching and education as inherently political, primarily because they are executed under federal and state legislation and institutional bylaws that are shaped by interest groups and lobbyists. Critical pedagogy is, therefore, “a way of understanding education as well as a way of highlighting the performative nature of agency as an act of participating in shaping the world in which we live” (Giroux qtd. in Tristan). It is because of this and because, according to David E. Kirkland, writing is a gateway to learning that critical pedagogy as a teaching methodology in composition studies is a logical alternative to traditional theories guiding composition pedagogy today (87). It is designed to help students gain the tools needed to become active participants, influencers, and decision-makers in society. This paper argues for the need for critical composition pedagogy in present times, given the political climate that exists, as well as attempts to mold critical pedagogical theory into reliable praxis for first-year composition (FYC) instructors, while also meeting the goals of FYC as established by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (the WPA). The ultimate goal in providing a model for critical composition pedagogy is not to provide a different vision than that of other critical composition pedagogues, but an alternative.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In an Associated Press poll conducted on voters in May 2016, 9 out of 10 said they lacked confidence in the country's political system. Given such results, it’s no surprise that only 139 million of the estimated 231 million eligible voters participated in the 2016 presidential election, according to the United States Election Project, indicating that our representative government is in crisis—that people feel disenfranchised and are democratically disillusioned with no hope of effecting change in their communities or their lives. What is also troubling is that such feelings are thriving in a nation which holds as its most prized tradition the concept of freedom.

Many attribute these attitudes to the effects of neoliberalism, or free-market capitalism, which has been pushing social democratic policies of income redistribution and welfare state provisions out of the door since the “social Darwinist conservatism” of Reaganomics, which holds profit as the cornerstone of democracy (Welch 7). In short, neoliberalism is free trade, privatization, and deregulation, or, as suggested by David Harvey, “the financialization of everything” (33). And its policies are negatively permeating every aspect of American life for all but the wealthiest Americans, leaving multitudes apathetic, hopeless, and economically insecure (Davis). In Living Room, Nancy Welch declares today’s neoliberalism a reassertion of the pre-Keynesian economic policies where major political and social decisions are made by the market, which benefits only a small sector of the population, so that in “2000, one [sic] percent of the world’s population...owned 40 percent of the global wealth” (7–8).

Educators consider the effects of neoliberalist policies especially troubling, warning that the privatization of public schools and the capitalist hijacking of universities are threats to democracy and that a market-driven economy can only lead to an educational climate of
competition in productivity and efficiency (Giroux, “Challenging Neoliberalism 21). In fact, as Giroux points out, the focus on privatization devalues public education to the point where it is recognized solely for its ability to provide the skilled workforce necessary to maintain the nation’s global economic status.

Both public and higher education are largely defined through the corporate demand that they provide the skills, knowledge and credentials that will provide the workforce necessary for the United States to compete and maintain its role as the major global economic and military power. Consequently, there is little interest in both public and higher education...for understanding pedagogy as a deeply civic, political and moral practice—that is, pedagogy as a practice for freedom. (“Rethinking Education” 2)

To Giroux’s point, there is a growing trend to privatize public schools under the guise of “charter schools.” Such schools operate under relaxed state regulation and benefit from vouchers, tax credits, and economic partnerships with corporations. For example, the Walton Family Foundation, run by the heirs of the famously anti-union Walmart Stores, has invested more than $1 billion in charter schools over the past 20 years and pledged in 2016 to invest another $1 billion over the next five years. The goal, according to the foundation’s director of education philanthropy, Marc Sternberg, is to develop “pipelines of talent [italics added]” (Kissel).

Educators are advancing critical pedagogy as the “alternative logic” to challenge the threat of a complete neoliberalist takeover of our educational institutions. As McLaren writes in *Life in Schools*, we as teachers...
“must begin candidly and critically to face our society’s complicity in the roots and structures of inequality and injustice. We must face our own culpability in the reproduction of inequality in our teaching, and...we must strive to develop a pedagogy equipped to provide both intellectual and moral resistance to oppression.” (21)

“Banking” is a term Freire coined to represent the model of teaching he had resisted during his time teaching in Brazil—the model that remains dominant throughout the world. He described the banking model as one where an instructor narrates information to a student, as in making a bank deposit. The student, in turn, receives, memorizes, and repeats the information deposited, so that “the scope of action allowed to the student extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the information. Education thus becomes an act of depositing, and knowledge becomes external” (Freire 72–75). And since no knowledge is being constructed between instructor and student, there is no development of critical consciousness. According to Freire, it is this lack of dialogic exchange between student and teacher that makes the banking model an ineffective tool for developing critical consciousness and, therefore, an effective tool for maintaining dominant power structures in a society (Freire 84).

But the relationship between action and knowledge acquisition was not new. Long before Freire made that connection, the ancient Greeks had—as had Jean-Paul Sartre, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget, who famously wrote “If the aim of intellectual training is to form the intelligence rather than to stock the memory, and to produce intellectual explorers rather than mere erudition, then traditional education is manifestly guilty of a grave deficiency” (qtd. Egan 87).

At the core of critical pedagogy are concepts of critical thought, self-awareness, and transformation, all manifestations of conscientização, or consciousness raising, another termed
coined by Freire meaning, more specifically, the developmental process in which an individual moves through three stages to reach critical consciousness and a place of action—from magical to naive to critical-social. He believed education is an inherently political and moral practice with the purpose of providing knowledge and skills in a way that enables students and instructors to develop a critical consciousness that leads them to become consciously aware of the conditions of the world and their context in it and imbues them with a desire to transform the world into a more humanized one. And he believed such transformation could happen only through critical dialog between instructors and students, through “the posing of problems of humans in their relations with the world” (Monchinski 111). Only then is knowledge constructed and education present and dynamic, Freire said (84).

Speaking specifically to the teaching of writing, Kirkland emphasizes that “learning to write is tantamount to learning to think,” so that those who control the teaching of writing also help train the minds and, therefore, the actions of students. Thus writing pedagogies are not simply utilitarian, as they are often considered, but “extremely influential upon how one acts, thinks, believes, and behaves and, as such, should be given the foremost consideration when preparing active, critically thinking participants of the world (87). John Clifford sums this up in “The Subject Is Discourse” stating, “compositionists should do the intellectual work they know best: helping students read, think, and write in ways “that both resist domination and exploitation and encourage self-consciousness about who students are and can be in the world” (51).

3 COURSE DESIGN: FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS

While theoretical concepts of social consciousness, self-awareness, and societal transformation abound in critical literature, less attention has been given to the actual practice of critical pedagogy, particularly critical composition pedagogy, possibly because dialog drives the
process, so that there is no established blueprint. Still, a few critical pedagogues have endeavored to document past experiences. In *Composing Critical Pedagogies*, Amy Lee suggests critical pedagogues first accept that “no practices or methods of teaching writing are inherently transformative or empowering, and no discourse is entirely dominant or marginalized” (103). Hence, we are never entirely free from the parameters that constrain what we do. By the time we step into a classroom, we have already made some political decisions: what will or will not be included on our syllabus and what texts we will or will not use. And while there is room for resistance, we still are operating within the parameters set by the institutions for which we work, acting out ideologies that have already won the battle. So, as Lee points out, the foremost goal of critical composition pedagogy is not to focus on how critical it is, but on more ways to give students authority (qtd. in George 84). What we can and should assuredly do as critical composition instructors is position ourselves as allies of our students and commit to exploring our own lives, voices, and identities along with them; rely on action and reflection to make sure our actions match our vision; and summarily dismiss the persistent criticisms telling us that leading and directing our classes is in violation of critical pedagogical principles (Lee 101–103). Once we are free of these constraints, we can approach the more difficult challenges of a critical classroom.
COURSE DESIGN: THE ICEBREAKER

Critical pedagogy is a student-centered approach to learning where authority is redistributed from instructor to instructor and student, and the learning process is then negotiated. The instructor leads and directs the class but does not control it, “balancing the need for structure with the need for openness” (Shor 16). The instructor provides lesson plans and subject-matter knowledge but negotiates the curriculum and learning process with the students. This dynamic positions student participation as the crux of the critical classroom. But getting students to participate is often a difficult task. They are almost always products of the banking model of teaching and, out of conditioning, initially resist open participation. In fact, most instructors themselves are products of the same model of teaching and are also struggling to redefine their roles. Against this backdrop, any instructor attempting to implement critical pedagogy must commit fully to a participatory classroom and the idea that it will be a transformative experience not only for the student, but also for themselves. If an instructor is not open to growing with their students, then that instructor has already assumed the role of authority—they have already taken the position that no knowledge can be constructed. In order for a participatory course to work, the commitment must be collaborative, with instructors and students working together to examine and uncover the hidden narratives in the curriculum that shapes their lives and perspectives. In Teaching to Transgress, hooks details an experience where at the onset of a course, her students resisted becoming co-creators of the syllabus. They felt there needed to be more structure. hooks says her commitment to dialog allowed her “to hear their suggestions for providing more structure” and see the value in changing her practice to meet them where they were (qtd. in Clayton et al.).
To help students and instructors begin to develop participatory habits, Ira Shor suggests beginning the first day with a thought-provoking question derived from students’ lives, social issues, or academic subjects. For example, he says begin by having students spend 10 to 20 minutes writing a response to a question such as “What is the purpose of school?” Or “What is good writing?” Follow-up questions might be “How do you become a good writer?” “What questions do you have about good writing?” Or “What would you like to get from this class?” (37). At this stage, the best questions are those that potentially will lead to discussions, provide ideas for future assignment topics, or prompt the syllabus co-creation. This stage also presents a great trust-building opportunity for the instructor, as ally, to share their answers to the same questions. One of the top reasons students resist participation, aside from being products of the banking model education, is they have not built trust with their instructors or classmates. After 10 or 20 minutes of writing an answer to the question, the students can assemble in groups or discuss their responses as a class; this is a great opportunity to encourage students to use their authority to decide.

Written responses from this first exercise become the first opportunity for instructors to assess student writing ability and determine appropriate exercises for improvement. Further, Shor says, “A school year that begins by questioning school could be a remarkably democratic and critical learning experience for students” (11).

In Composing Critical Pedagogies: Teaching Writing as Revision, Amy Lee shares an alternate version of Shor’s icebreaker example, which I borrow for my course design (see Appendices A–C). Students will be asked to make a list of some of the “rules of good writing” they have learned in school. Once their lists are completed, the class will discuss them and a new set of problems will be posed: “Do these rules make writing easier or more difficult?” “Do the
rules apply to all writing or are they determined by the context in which one writes?” “Who benefits from the rules?” Following this class reflection, students will be asked to write a personal reflection on their experience with a particular rule. Students will then assemble in groups and create a new set of rules based on criteria they value. The class as a whole will then create from those lists a master list that will be applied throughout the course, so that the assignment unfolds through the following course of events: pose the problem, discuss the problem, provide personal reflection on the problem, and resolve the problem in the form of a new set of “rules of good writing” (210–214).

This exercise begins our ongoing exploration into writing and the writing process. It provides a way to give writing instruction while allowing students to reflect critically on the social and political implications—the hidden narratives—of language. As the course progresses, this exercise will be adjusted to accommodate inquiry into other writing topics as they emerge, such as rhetorical knowledge, as the class switches between reading and analyzing narratives, expository essays, and news stories.

5 COURSE DESIGN: SYLLABUS CO-CREATION

The syllabus is co-created by the instructor and students and should be formed in the process of study. Although the instructor should have a sense of the topics that relate to the course, a fixed syllabus can’t be responsive enough to the dynamic nature of a critical course. So while the syllabus co-creating process will begin the first day of class, it likely will not be complete until well into the course. A course Website or online bulletin board, which I make available via the site www.lashon-malone-1101.squarespace.com, allows for easy adjustments to the course schedule.
Co-creating a course syllabus is an empowering exercise for students. Once they are able to trust the process, their creativity, motivation, performance, and ownership in course structure and content increases, according to Nikki Logan in *Teaching Partners*. And allowing them to determine “what content the course will cover and how they will demonstrate their knowledge ensures that course content is relevant to their goals and interests” (Logan). An instructor can begin the syllabus co-creating process by assembling a skeleton syllabus (see Appendix A), which typically includes all nonnegotiable, fixed information, such as the institution’s policies, office hours, and course description. Students are inclined to vote for an optional-attendance policy, but most critical pedagogues agree that attendance and a grade for attendance should be nonnegotiable. As Shor points out, a critical course includes a participatory classroom that is a “mutual learning community” and requires the participation of all its members. His suggestion for giving some authority back to students when the issue of attendance is raised is to encourage them to express their thoughts and feelings about the course’s direction whenever they are bored, unexcited, or unhappy with the process so that strategies can be created that elicit more interest and participation (27).
6  COURSE DESIGN: GRADING

Because most institutions require quantitative assessment, traditional letter grading is nonnegotiable. This type of assessment is meant to encourage students to strive for higher levels of achievement, whether or not it truly does. But when students are able to participate in the creation of assessment tools, they are more motivated and gain a better understanding of grading standards and expectations (TeachersFirst). It is also an opportunity to give students authority.

Once students are made familiar with the elements of a rubric, they should assemble in small groups to generate assessment criteria for the rubric. Through class negotiation, the appropriate criteria is selected and added to the syllabus.

In addition to the required quantitative assessment, qualitative assessment in the form of narrative evaluation is popular among critical composition pedagogues, who admire its dialogic nature and find it useful for student development over the length of the course (Kim). While I favor one quantitative grading contract, as described by Jane Danielewicz and Peter Elbow in “A Unilateral Grading Contract to Improve Learning and Teaching,” and qualitative grading throughout the course, I understand that students accustomed to the banking model of teaching may require more structure. For that reason, I provide a number of optional rubrics on the Website from which to build the appropriate assessment tools (see Appendix C). The “rules of good writing” list that the class creates at the beginning of the course serves as the first established criteria for quantitative grading.

7  COURSE DESIGN: ASSIGNMENTS AND THE WPA

For the critical composition course, focus is geared more in the direction of how a subject matter is relevant to student life, which can be highly motivational and provide a purposeful learning experience. The first step is to identify topics of interest or concern to the students. For
example, the suggested questions for the first-day icebreaker are of mutual interest or concern to the students since all are enrolled in a college writing course. The instructor then encourages discussion of the question. From the discussion, a problem is identified, and through a writing response exercise, the student relates the problem to their own experience. Further discussion leads to the cause of the problem and actionable solutions. Through this dialogical process, according to Brenda Bowman et al., students engage in literacy activities such as generating vocabulary and using language structures that the teacher later draws on to develop exercises, practice opportunities, or application activities that can supplement the instructional unit. This allows instructors to fulfill the institutional and WPA objectives for the writing course while also providing critical-thinking opportunities (298).

A basic instructional unit includes problem posing, which occurs through dialog; writing response; group discussion; class discussion; peer critique/editing; and revision. The students receive specific instruction on the objectives of each of these stages to ensure that literacy outcomes are achieved. Reading or other materials are introduced throughout the unit to promote dialog. And students are able to provide a combination of textual, visual, and audio responses as is negotiated among course participants. As a commitment to the collaborative, participatory nature of the course, the instructor should make every effort to take part in the writing responses. As bell hooks states, “Sharing my experiences with my students encourages them to reflect on their own experiences in a way that listening to a lecture simply cannot” (139).

Following this path, the course I’ve designed, titled “The American Dream,” begins with an introduction and proceeds through an examination of three social problems, which are set up in modules—Class, Racism, and Ethnic/Religious/Immigrant Discrimination—and culminates in a fourth module titled “Actionable Solutions.” (See Appendix B for complete assignments.) Our
inquiry into the problems of the first three modules will be enabled through creative exploratory writing and class and group dialog and through selected readings and videos and other visual and audio aids. Students will be asked to further stimulate weekly class dialog by conducting outside interviews, collecting related news stories, or bringing in artifacts to share, such as pictures and music. Weekly assignment choices will be driven by in-class dialog. The final module will focus on action. It will require students to choose a particular problem that we’ve discussed or that is of interest to them and either write an argumentative essay in support of a solution or complete three action steps to address the problem they’ve chosen and write a reflective essay about that problem and their experience.

The problems I’ve chosen to unpack in this critical composition course are broad and may seem cliché but are also perfectly relevant to conversations being had all over the country today and are, therefore, sensible for the purpose of a critical course. And each module begins with a question that situates the problem within the students’ lives, making it a topic of interest to them. Since the course is built on developing critical thinking—moving students from magical to naïve to critical-social consciousness, or conscientização—assignments are created with that objective: introduction of an issue, learning about the issue in different contexts, dialoguing on the issue, and reflecting on the issue. Our dialogs will also address different types of solutions, so that by the last module, students are prepped and ready to fulfill the final Actionable Solutions assignment.

Writing instruction is woven into the course from the first-day icebreaker exercise. The master list of rules created by the class will be used throughout the course as a guide to good writing. Each element of the list will be unpacked at appropriate points during the course. So if, for example, students have decided that the five-paragraph essay rates high on their list of rules
of good writing, it will be woven into the dialog as an exploration of the rule. In addition, each module includes a variety of learning materials that gives students the opportunity to adapt to different purposes, audiences, and contexts through analysis and response. For example, in the icebreaker exercise, students have the opportunity to read and respond to an assigned text written to a very specific audience, compositionists. Similarly, another assignment asks students to read a financial magazine and determine audience. In addition to the varied materials that students will interact with, weekly assignments and essays are varied as well to create opportunities for different types of writing: from narrative to interview to descriptive to argument. And, as stated in the syllabus, the schedule creates space for one revision per major assignment, but students are encouraged to hand in as many revisions as they’d like.

Conventions of writing will be explored as needed. For example, if a grammatical “error” presents itself as a persistent nuisance in student writing and hinders readability, that “error” will be explored in the course of our dialog.

8 MORE ON THE WPA

As illustrated, critical composition pedagogy embodies all of the oral, written, electronic, and visual literacies set forth by the WPA in its “Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition.” As illustrated in this paper, the critical composition course structure is embedded with processes of writing through its focus on problem-posing dialog, reading, writing, editing, collaboration, and revision. Furthermore, critical composition pedagogy is equipped to explore rhetorical style, conventions, and multimodal composing through instructional units that foreground those outcomes. In fact, as Barb Duffelmeyer observes, critical composition pedagogy is no longer considered a “radical and rarefied” pedagogy focused squarely on revolution, but rather one that takes a different approach to teaching composition—aiming to
help “students develop ways of thinking about the world and their place in it, and their understanding of the role of language as an integral part of this process” (Durst qtd. 33). And the WPA outcomes statement clearly supports this position, establishing that…

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)

In view of the WPA’s concurrence and the ongoing emphasis on teaching to “an increasingly complex communication environment,” Duffelmeyer further argues that “critical composition pedagogy emerges even more prominently as a valuable means to engage this transforming communication environment” (32). As Russell Durst wittily posits, “What composition teacher today could argue against a pedagogy of understanding, reflection, dialog, and transformation?” (Durst qtd. 33).

9  REFLECTIONS ON CRITICAL COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY

According to Nancy Welch, a social turn in composition studies began as far back as the 1980s, just as the nation began to move toward increased privatization (7). Yet critical composition pedagogy is still plagued by criticism for its stance on social critique and political action. As noted by Maxine Hairston,
“When classes focus on complex issues such as racial discrimination, economic injustices, and inequities of class and gender, they should be taught by qualified faculty who have the depth of information and historical competence that such critical social issues warrant. Our society's deep and tangled cultural conflicts can neither be explained nor resolved by simplistic ideological formulas” (187).

Similarly, in *Save the World on Your Own Time*, Stanley Fish argues that teachers cannot “fashion moral character, or inculcate respect for others, or produce citizens of a certain temper. Or, rather, they cannot do these things unless they abandon the responsibilities that belong to them by contract in order to take up responsibilities that belong properly to others (14). Shor addresses this critique in “Critical Pedagogy Is Too Big to Fail” saying Fish’s argument is impaired because it is based on the very banking model of teaching that critical pedagogues criticize. By arguing that teachers should teach what they know in order to fulfill their contracts, Fish reaffirms the idea that knowledge transfer from teacher to student serves only to benefit the institution or market—as in, fulfill the contract—and not the student (15). Both Hairston and Fish appear to operate under the assumption that civic engagement in a democracy happens in a closet that only a certain few under certain circumstances have access to. Critical pedagogues consider the decision not to adopt critical pedagogy a political decision, as well as every other decision made within our institutions and classrooms. So why wouldn’t we prepare our students to fight for a voice in the decisions being made? It is, in fact, because of this illusory relationship to social and political reality—to the fact that the banking model of education reinforces race and class distinctions—that critical pedagogy exists. Writing is more than the technique Hairston and
Fish elude to. Writing is a way to discover and uncover our identities. And writing instruction should propel this discovery, but it cannot do so by way of “rigid rules, constant evaluation, and obsession with the conventions of writing” (Clifford 47).

For Freire, Giroux, McLaren, and hooks, critical pedagogy is an approach to teaching that aims to develop consciousness, or conscientização, in students. It aims to help students think critically about the world and their roles in it. It aims to transform students from naive to critical-social consciousness so that they are able to recognize the inequities in society and take action to level the playing field.

For Shor, Lee, George, and Durst, critical composition pedagogy is an approach to teaching composition that aims to help students understand the role of language in the world and to demystify the writing process, “allowing them [sic] to enter into the process of constructing meaning, rather than to believe it is done for/to them” (Lee 153).

As Kirkland reminds us, writing is political because it is the gateway to knowledge…because it is through writing that we learn to “act, think, believe, and behave” in the world (87). Thus a pedagogy that teaches writing should also be political. And that’s why adopting critical composition pedagogy in FYC courses is needed in present times. As neoliberalist ideologies threaten to redefine education in terms of its economic contribution, students need to be equipped with the skill, knowledge, and belief to understand that they have the power to effect change in their lives and their communities, and critical composition pedagogy is the pathway to that power.
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The United States Elections Project. http://www.electproject.org/2016g


APPENDICES

These Appendices represent core materials from two Websites created in partial fulfillment of this project: A professional Website designed for potential employers that hosts a short biography, curriculum vitae, teaching philosophy, and a portion of this research and a first-year critical composition course site designed for students that hosts a syllabus and course schedule, assignments, rubrics, a blog, and a bulletin board. The professional site: https://www.lashonmalone.com/. The course site: https://lashon-malone-1101.squarespace.com/.
APPENDIX A: First-year Critical Composition Course Syllabus

FIRST-YEAR ENGLISH COMPOSITION SYLLABUS

(ENGL 1101: CRN #11111) : FALL 2017 : MW 11:00 AM to 12:15 PM

Instructor: LaShon Malone

Office: TBA : Office Hours: TBA

Phone: 678.231.6486

Email: lashonmalone@gmail.com

Class Website: https://lashon-malone-1101.squarespace.com/

Course Description

The main purpose of the first-year English composition course is to examine the conventions of effective writing in a variety of contexts using the theory and practice of writing as a process in order to increase students’ academic writing ability. Its focus is organization, analysis, research methods, argumentation, and expository writing. In addition to examining these conventions and working to further develop and improve our critical thinking and writing skills, we will examine the world and our place in it. To situate our study for the remainder of the course, we look first to the concept of the “American Dream. We will follow up this inquiry with examinations on class, racism, ethnicity, immigration, and religion and how they play out in society. Because this is a dialog-based course, it is imperative that you come to class on time and actively participate in all classroom activities. It is expected that you will have a variety of perspectives and opinions, and I absolutely encourage independent thinking and lively class discussion. However, our disagreements must not get personal and must always be
articulated in a respectful and intellectual manner. You will be responsible for leading class discussion at various points during the semester.

Course Design

Our course is a critical composition course guided by the principles of problem-posing education. Problem-posing is a tool for developing and strengthening critical thinking skills. It is an inductive questioning process that structures dialog in the classroom. The process entails an instructor presenting situations to students through readings, discussion, film, etc. Students then uncover the problem in the situation, personalize the problem through self-reflection, discuss the social/economic implications of the problem, and discuss alternatives to the problem. This process will play out through class and group discussions, readings, writings, and peer consulting.

- Readings and assignments: Readings, assignments, and other course activities answer to our class discussions and writings and, therefore, depend on the collection of our experiences. There are, nonetheless, some predictable elements, which I will outline briefly here.
- In class: You are co-facilitators in the course and are expected to come to class prepared to discuss, develop, engage in, and reflect on assigned readings.
- Cooperative learning: You will work cooperatively on assignment topics in discussion groups and through peer review sessions throughout the course.
- Individual work: You will do independent and individual work in class and outside of class throughout the course.
- Direct instruction: I will introduce ideas, pose questions, and prompt activities.
• Syllabus: This syllabus will be formed in the process of our study together. Though I have an educated sense of the topics that relate to this work, I believe that a fixed syllabus can’t be responsive enough to what the work demands; therefore, this syllabus is subject to negotiation and revision as needed and will be posted and kept up to date on our class Website: https://lashon-malone-1101.squarespace.com/.

• Dialog: Class discussions are perhaps the most important aspect of the course but sometimes cannot be completed in class. In such cases, dialog will continue on a class blog. You will also post responses to readings and instructor questions in a paragraph or two. The blog: https://lashon-malone-1101.squarespace.com/class-blog

The course design requires a true commitment from you and me. Whatever resistance you may develop toward the design as the course progresses will be considered a serious topic for discussion and exploration.

Course Objectives:

• Read, reflect, discuss, and write about problems posed.

• Conduct and participate in informed class discussions, with concern for the involvement of all participants.

• Engage in writing as a process.

• Use language to explore and analyze contemporary multicultural, global, and international issues.

• Engage in the collaborative, social aspects of writing, and use writing as a tool for learning.
• Critique your own and others’ work in written and oral formats and reflect on what contributed to your writing process.

• Gather, summarize, synthesize, and explain information from various sources.

• Use grammatical, stylistic, and mechanical formats and conventions appropriate for a variety of audiences.

• Produce coherent, organized, readable prose for a variety of rhetorical situations.

Required Texts

• Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing. Edition 9 by Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, Bonnie Lisle


• Selected readings in PDF or online format are available on the Website. I will provide any readings listed in the schedule that are not on the Website. Please bring all reading assignments to class.

COURSE POLICIES

Grades

If I have my way, those who fulfill ALL of the expectations of the course will receive a quantitative grade of A. If the class elects this policy, we will move forward with negotiating a grading contract/rubric at a later class meeting to accommodate grading based on this design. Ready-made rubrics are uploaded to the Website and ready for used or adjustment to meet our course objectives. Qualitative, narrative-style assessments also will be issued through the course after the completion of each major writing assignment. These assessments are not grades in the traditional sense, but are meant to help guide you to becoming better writers and critical thinkers.
Attendance

A dialog-based course such as ours is a mutual learning community that requires the participation of all its members; therefore, attendance and punctuality are basic requirements and are considered mandatory. Beyond that, each person's frequency and quality of contribution to the class discussion will be assessed and reflected in the class-participation grading. If you cannot attend a class, it is a courtesy to inform your instructor in advance if possible. A reasonable penalty for excessive absences or tardiness will be negotiated.

Late Work

I know that emergencies do occur. If you know a paper will be late, please contact me before the due date so that we can discuss arrangements.

Cell Phones

Cell phone use is strictly prohibited during class. Turn off all cell phones at the beginning of the class period.

Office Hours

Official office hours are TBD. You may email me to discuss specific questions you have about your writing.

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to follow Georgia State’s code of academic conduct. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. If you have any questions about plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, feel free to ask. The University’s policies on Academic Honesty can be read in the student handbook or on the following website:

http://deanofstudents.gsu.edu/faculty-staff-resources/academic-honesty/
Accommodations for Students with Special Needs

Students who need accommodations are asked to arrange a meeting during office hours or at another mutually convenient time during the first week of classes, or as soon as possible if accommodations are needed immediately. Bring a copy of your Student Accommodation Form to the meeting. If you do not have an Accommodation Form but need accommodations, make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services (Suite 230, New Student Center, ext. 3-9044) to arrange for accommodations.

The Center for Writing and Research

The Writing Center, located in room 976 in the General Classroom Building, provides personal, one-on-one service for students in order to help them at all levels of the writing process. You can schedule an appointment or just drop by and wait. The service is free. This is a valuable resource for writers, and I highly suggest that you use it.

Course Schedule: This course schedule is a skeleton of my best estimate of how the course will proceed. However, a dialog-based course cannot be restricted by such a strict schedule, so this will remain an estimate throughout the course. I will attempt to keep the Website up to date.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Dialog Plan</th>
<th>Homework Plan for Next Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, Aug. 21</td>
<td>- Intro to our course design</td>
<td>- Assigned reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Syllabus review</td>
<td>- Assigned writing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Icebreaker exercise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Aug.23</td>
<td>- Address syllabus &amp; grading concerns</td>
<td>- Assigned reading</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Icebreaker exercise</td>
<td>- Assigned writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Introduction and Module 1: Class begin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Week 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Monday, Sept. 4</th>
<th>Labor Day</th>
<th>No Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Sept. 6</td>
<td>-Module 1</td>
<td>-Assigned reading</td>
<td>-Assigned writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Week 4**

| Monday, Sept. 11 | -Module 1 peer review | No homework |
| Wednesday, Sept. 13 | -Module 1 narrative essay due | -Assigned reading |
| -Module 2: Class begins | -Assigned writing |

**Week 5**

| Monday, Sept. 18 | -Module 2 | -Assigned reading |
| -Assigned writing |
| Wednesday, Sept. 20 | -Module 2 | -Assigned reading |
| -Assigned writing |

**Week 6**

| Monday, Sept. 25 | -Module 2 | -Assigned reading |
| -Conferences: No Class | -Assigned writing |
| Wednesday, Sept. 27 | -Module 2 | -Assigned reading |
| -Conferences: No Class | -Assigned writing |

**Week 7**

| Monday, Oct. 2 | -Module 2 | -Assigned reading |
| -Assigned writing |
| Wednesday, Oct. 4 | -Module 2 | -Assigned reading |
| -Assigned writing |

**Week 8**

| Monday, Oct. 9 | -Module 2 peer review | No homework |
| Wednesday, Oct. 11 | -Module 2 descriptive essay due | -Assigned reading |
| -Module 3: Ethnicity/Immigration/Religion begins | -Assigned writing |

**Week 9**

| Monday, Oct. 16 | -Module 3 | -Assigned reading |
| -Assigned writing |
| Wednesday, Oct. 18 | -Module 3 | -Assigned reading |
| -Assigned writing |

**Week 10**

<p>| Monday, Oct. 23 | -Module 3 | -Assigned reading |
| -Assigned writing |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Oct. 25</td>
<td>Module 3</td>
<td>Assigned reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned writing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 11</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, Oct. 30</td>
<td>Module 3 peer review</td>
<td>No homework</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Nov. 1</td>
<td>Module 3 expository</td>
<td>Assigned reading</td>
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<td>essay due</td>
<td>Assigned writing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 12</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, Nov. 6</td>
<td>Module 4: Actionable</td>
<td>Assigned reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Solutions begins</td>
<td>Assigned writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Nov. 8</td>
<td>Module 4</td>
<td>Assigned reading</td>
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<td>Assigned writing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 13</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, Nov. 13</td>
<td>Module 4</td>
<td>Assigned reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Nov. 15</td>
<td>Module 4</td>
<td>No homework</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 14: Nov. 20/24</strong></td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 15</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, Nov. 27</td>
<td>Module 4</td>
<td>Assigned reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Nov. 28</td>
<td>Module 4</td>
<td>Assigned reading</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Assigned writing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 16</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, Dec. 4</td>
<td>Module 4</td>
<td>Assigned reading</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assigned writing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Dec. 6</td>
<td>Module 4 peer review</td>
<td>No homework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final Exam</strong></td>
<td>Final essay/project</td>
<td>Final essay/project due via</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, Dec. 12</td>
<td>Final essay/project</td>
<td>email no later than 5 p.m.</td>
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APPENDIX B: Critical Composition Course Assignments

The Icebreaker: First in-class exercise

Format*

- Make a list of some of the “rules of good writing” they have learned in school.
- Answer the questions “Do these rules make writing easier or more difficult?” “Do the rules apply to all writing or are they determined by the context in which one writes?” “Who benefits from the rules?”
- Write a response reflecting on your particular experiences with a rule that you’ve listed.
- Assemble in groups to create a new set of rules based on criteria you value.
- The class as a whole will then create from those lists a master list that will be discussed and applied throughout the course.
- As each writing assignment is completed, we will spend time reflecting on the list of rules and discussing other aspects of writing.

Reading Assignments

- Myths of College Writing – handout
- Excerpt from "The Subject in Discourse" by John Clifford
- "Composing Guidelines" by Sondra Perl
- Instructional writing materials as needed
- Additional reading materials as needed

*This format allows course participants to uncover the “hidden narratives” in teaching.

The remainder of writing instruction for the course unfolds in much the same way.
The “American Dream”

Introduction

Because this is a dialog-based course, it is imperative that you come to class on time and actively participate in all classroom activities. It is expected that you will have a variety of perspectives and opinions, and I absolutely encourage independent thinking and lively class discussion. However, our disagreements must not get personal and must always be articulated in a respectful and intellectual manner. You will be responsible for leading class discussion at various points during the semester.

During the course of the semester, as we work to further develop and improve our critical thinking and writing skills, we will examine the world and our place in it. To situate our study for the remainder of the course, we look first to the concept of the “American Dream.” James Truslow Adams, the man who coined the term in 1931, wrote in The Epic of America that the American Dream is

that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it. It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position (214-215).
This pre-flight inquiry will be driven by class dialog that will include asking ourselves such questions as: “Do we believe the American Dream exists today or ever? “Do all Americans have equal opportunities to achieve the American Dream?

The first order of business, however, will be an in-class exploratory writing exercise where we will answer the question “What does the American Dream mean to me?” We will share our answers in class or in group discussion.

What Comes Next

This course is divided into four modules. Our inquiry into the problems of the first three modules will be enabled by exploratory writing and class/group dialog and through selected readings and videos. You will be asked to further stimulate class dialog by conducting outside interviews, collecting related news stories, or bringing in artifacts to share, such as pictures and music. These assignment choices will be driven by in-class dialog. The final module will be a culmination of points that have been raised during the first three modules. That is to say, it is my hope that we offer some solutions to the problems we are discussing in the first three modules so that by module four, you are able to offer a thoughtful, actionable solution to one of the problems we’ve discussed.

The “American Dream”

Module 1: Class

The first module will begin with a look at class in the U.S., its relationship to the concept of the American Dream, and what can be done to remedy it.

Reading/Viewing

Our reading and viewing may include but is not limited to:
In-class Dialog, Group Discussion, and Exploratory Writing

We will begin this module writing a response to the question “What class do I consider myself a member: upper, middle, or lower?” As we progress through the module, we will choose specific aspects of our topic to focus on through group and class discussions and exploratory writing exercises. To help facilitate our class discussions, you may be asked to:

- Create a budget for a family of three with an annual income of $21,160 (the poverty guideline for 2017)
- Skim through a few financial magazines. Who is the audience for these magazines? What type of advice is offered? What types of products or services are advertised? What levels of income and investment are discussed?
- Write a response on where you see yourself in five years.
- As a group, select a city or county and research the types and amounts of aid being distributed and the demographics of those receiving aid. Create a report to share in class.
**Reading Response Blog Posting**

All readings will be assigned as homework. These homework assignments will not be considered complete until you have added a reading response post to the course blog if one is assigned for that reading. This is an informal posting but should be a thoughtful response, and posts will be taken up at length in class.

**Response Essay**

As we read and discuss the problem of class, you should make notes and mark places in reading material where you wish to speak back related to your own experiences surrounding the subject matter. At the end of the module, you will choose one of the places you have marked or noted and write about an experience that prompted your response. This should be in the form of a narrative. The assignment is 2–3 double-spaced, typed pages. It should be ready for peer review the class session before its official due date.

**The “American Dream”**

**Module 2: Racism**

The second module will begin with a look at racism in the U.S., its effects on society, the power of myths, and what can be done.

**Reading/Viewing**

Our reading and viewing list may include but is not limited to:

- From Rereading America: “Causes of Prejudice” by Vincent N. Parillo
- From Rereading America: “Chyna and Me” by Joyin C. Shih
- From The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander
• From Rereading America: “The New Jim Crow” by Michelle Alexander

• From The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America by Richard Rothstein

• “Living Apart: How the Government Betrayed a Landmark Civil Rights Law” by Nikole Hannah-Jones

In-class Dialog, Group Discussion, and Exploratory Writing

We will begin this module in much the same way we began Module 1. You will write a response to the question “Have you experienced, witnessed, or been the perpetrator of an act of racism?” As we progress through the module, we will choose specific aspects of our topic to focus on through group and class discussions and exploratory writing exercises. To help facilitate our class discussions, you may be asked to:

• Document the opinions of one or two persons outside of class on their ideas of the effects of racism in our society

• Bring in a media story depicting racism in action or erroneously purporting to be a case of racism.

• Provide a written description of your own racial identity and list some terms that are applied to each of those identities (those you approve and disprove of)

• As a group, select a city or county and research the incarceration rates for different racial groups. What difference do you notice in types of offenses, crime rates and sentence lengths for members of different races
**Reading Response Blog Postings**

All readings will be assigned as homework. These homework assignments will not be considered complete until you have added a reading response post to the course blog if one is assigned for that reading. This is an informal posting but should be a thoughtful response, and posts will be taken up at length in class.

**Response Essay**

Choose a song, picture, movie, or a story from TV, a magazine, a newspaper, or online new source that depicts an incidence of racism or expresses some feeling toward racism, as you define it. After spending some time with your source, you will provide a descriptive summary of what you’ve seen, read, or heard. Finally, you will provide a thoughtful explanation of your reaction to the source. Support your explanation by referring back to the source. This assignment is 3–4 double-spaced, typed pages. It should be ready for peer review the class session before its official due date. It should be ready for peer review the class session before its official due date.

**The “American Dream”**

**Module 3: Ethnicity/Immigration/Religion**

The third module will begin with a look at ethnicity/immigration/religion in the U.S., the effects on society, the power of myths, and what can be done.

**Reading/Viewing**

Our reading and viewing list may include but is not limited to:

- Causes of Prejudice by Vincent N. Parillo
- From Rereading America: “Quandaries of Representation” by Mona El-Ghobashy
In-class Dialog, Group Discussion, and Exploratory Writing

We will begin this module writing a response to the question “What effects, good or bad, has your ethnicity or immigrant status had on your life or the life of your family?”

As we progress through the module, we will choose specific aspects of our topic to focus on through group and class discussions and exploratory writing exercises. To help facilitate our class discussions, you may be asked to:

- Document the opinions of one or two persons outside of class on their ideas of immigration
- Bring in one media story depicting discrimination based on immigrant status, ethnicity, or religion or one erroneously purporting to be such
- As a group, locate news stories for and against immigration. Is there a difference in the language used when discussing issues of immigration? What metaphors are used? Describe any differences you notice
- Based on what you’ve read, write down how you distinguish between race and ethnicity?
Reading Response Blog Postings

All readings will be assigned as homework. These homework assignments will not be considered complete until you have added a reading response post to the course blog if one is assigned for that reading. This is an informal posting but should be a thoughtful response, and posts will be taken up at length in class.

Response Essay

Research a recent conflict between ethnic or cultural groups on your campus or in your community. For example, there was a conflict last year regarding deporting members of Clarkston, Georgia’s Somali immigrant community. What are the views on both sides of the conflict? What triggered the conflict? Is there a history of conflict? Do you see a solution? This assignment is an expository essay of 3–4 double-spaced, typed pages detailing the conflict and resolution, if there has been one, or a resolution you think might work. Or you can choose a national issue, such as President Trump’s recent executive order.

The “American Dream”

Module 4: Actionable Solutions

The final module will look at the different ways that social change can be brought about, including grassroots activism, conventional politics, and nonviolent protest. We will also discuss well-known movements that have occurred. The idea is to examine the landscape of America and determine what small steps we can take that will bring us closer to realizing James Truslow Adams’ American Dream.
**Reading/Viewing**

Our reading and viewing list may include but is not limited to:

- Watch *Requiem for the American Dream* by Peter D. Hutchison
- Multiple readings from *Political Activism* edited by Tom Landsford
- “Inequality and Economic Growth” by Joseph Stiglitz
- “The Real Problem with Immigration...and the Real Solution” by Kirk Johnson and Tim Kane
- “Paths to Social Change: Conventional Politics, Violence and Nonviolence” by Brian Martin

**In-class Dialog, Group Discussion, and Exploratory Writing**

We will begin this module writing a response to the question “Which social problem have you been most effected by? As we progress through the module, we will examine the many ways in which Americans and others have brought about social change. This module will require more writing, as we will be walking ourselves through the final project. To help facilitate our class discussions and project development, we will find and share current examples of social change from local, national, or international sources. From these examples, we might ask ourselves:

- What makes this social change?
- How did people make change or how do they intend to make change?
- Who is affected by the change being made? Is it the ones creating the change or others?
- Do you think the change that is being made is positive or negative?
- What are some of the potential pitfalls that might be created from this change?
Reading Response Blog Postings

All readings will be assigned as homework. These homework assignments will not be considered complete until you have added a reading response post to the course blog if one is assigned for that reading. This is an informal posting but should be a thoughtful response, and posts will be taken up at length in class.

Final Essay

For the final essay, you will choose a social problem that is important to you or that you are most affected by—a problem that is restrictive and prevents a particular group, including you, from realizing something of significance in your life. The problem does not have to be as big as those discussed during the course. As long as there is a marginalized group component, it is likely an acceptable problem. This final assignment is an argument essay of 5–8 double-spaced, typed pages that will include:

1. An introduction: a brief explanation of the problem and a statement of your claim to solve the problem
2. Background information: the foundation for proving your argument; for example, summary of works being discussed, definition of key terms, explanation of key theories
3. Supporting evidence collected from research that suggests your solution is a viable one (include alternate views as well)
4. A conclusion that restates and readdresses your claim

OR you may elect to complete the final assignment titled “Engaging in Activism: Three Small-scale Action Steps.” If you think this is something you’d like to do, early notification is required, as it will take some time to complete the steps. For this
assignment, you will take three action steps to address a social problem you choose. The problem could be poverty, homelessness, violence, access to health care, school lunch, or child welfare. The action steps could include writing a letter to the editor, donating or volunteering with a local nonprofit, joining a local group or student organization, attending a protest or rally, or lobbying your legislator about a current bill. Once these steps are completed, you will write a reflective paper explaining what they did and the significance of your actions for the group as well as for the community. The significance of your actions should be based on outside information we’ve discussed or you’ve researched. The reflection essay is 3–5 double-spaced, typed pages that will be turned in with other documents such as letters to the editor or literature collected from organizations. More discussion in class.
APPENDIX C: Rubrics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Grammar and Punctuation Rubric</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does Not Meet Expectations - 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Errors frequently interfere with reader's ability to understand meaning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Needs Improvement - 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many errors or occasional errors that interfere with reader's ability to understand meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meets Expectations - 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contains a few errors, but they do not interfere with reader's ability to understand meaning.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exceeds Expectations - 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtually free of errors.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Criteria</th>
<th>No/ Limited Proficiency - 1</th>
<th>Some Proficiency - 2</th>
<th>Proficiency - 3</th>
<th>High Proficiency - 4</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis Focus:</td>
<td>Thesis is missing.</td>
<td>Thesis may be obvious or unimaginative.</td>
<td>Thesis is somewhat Original.</td>
<td>Develops fresh insight that challenges the reader’s thinking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Originality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis Focus:</td>
<td>Reader cannot determine thesis &amp; purpose OR thesis has no relation to the writing task.</td>
<td>Thesis and purpose are somewhat vague OR only loosely related to the writing task.</td>
<td>Thesis and purpose are fairly clear and match the writing task.</td>
<td>Thesis and purpose are clear to the reader; closely match the writing task.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Unclear organization OR organizational plan is inappropriate to thesis. No transitions.</td>
<td>Some signs of logical organization. May have abrupt or illogical shifts &amp; ineffective flow of ideas.</td>
<td>Organization supports thesis and purpose. Transitions are mostly appropriate. Sequence of ideas could be improved.</td>
<td>Fully &amp; imaginatively supports thesis &amp; purpose. Sequence of ideas is effective. Transitions are effective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support/Reasoning:</td>
<td>Offers simplistic, undeveloped, or cryptic support for the ideas. Inappropriate or off-topic generalizations, faulty assumptions, errors of fact.</td>
<td>Offers somewhat obvious support that may be too broad. Details are too general, not interpreted, irrelevant to thesis, or inappropriately repetitive.</td>
<td>Offers solid but less original reasoning. Assumptions are not always recognized or made explicit. Contains some appropriate details or examples.</td>
<td>Substantial, logical, &amp; concrete development of ideas. Assumptions are made explicit. Details are germane, original, and convincingly interpreted.</td>
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<td>Ideas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of Sources and Documentation</td>
<td>Neglects important sources. Overuse of quotations or paraphrase to substitute writer’s own ideas. (Possibly uses source material without acknowledgement.)</td>
<td>Uses relevant sources but lacks in variety of sources and/or the skillful combination of sources. Quotations &amp; paraphrases may be too long and/or inconsistently referenced.</td>
<td>Uses sources to support, extend, and inform, but not substitute writer’s own development of idea. Doesn’t overuse quotes, but may not always conform to required style manual.</td>
<td>Uses sources to support, extend, and inform, but not substitute writer’s own development of idea. Combines material from a variety of sources, incl. para. observation, scientific data, authoritative testimony. Doesn’t overuse quotes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Writing Rubric 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Essay demonstrates excellent composition skills including a clear and thought-provoking thesis, appropriate and effective organization, lively and convincing supporting materials, effective diction and sentence skills, and perfect or near perfect mechanics including spelling and punctuation. The writing perfectly accomplishes the objectives of the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Essay contains strong composition skills including a clear and thought-provoking thesis, although development, diction, and sentence style may suffer minor flaws. Shows careful and acceptable use of mechanics. The writing effectively accomplishes the goals of the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Essay contains average composition skills, including a clear, insightful thesis, although development may be insufficient in one area and diction and style may not be consistently clear and effective. Shows competence in the use of mechanics. Accomplishes the goals of the assignment with an overall effective approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Essay demonstrates competent composition skills including adequate development and organization, although the development of ideas may be trite, assumptions may be unsupported in more than one area, the thesis may not be original, and the diction and syntax may not be clear and effective. Minimally accomplishes the goals of the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Composition skills may be flawed in either the clarity of the thesis, the development, or organization. Diction, syntax, and mechanics may seriously affect clarity. Minimally accomplishes the majority of the goals of the assignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Composition skills may be flawed in two or more areas. Diction, syntax, and mechanics are excessively flawed. Fails to accomplish the goals of the assignment.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capstone 4</th>
<th>Milestones 2</th>
<th>Benchmark 1</th>
<th>Does Not Meet Benchmark (Unsatisfactory) 0</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global Self-Awareness</strong></td>
<td>Effectively addresses significant issues in the natural or human world based on articulating one's own or others' identity in a global context.</td>
<td>Evaluates the global impact of one's own and others' specific actions on the natural or human world.</td>
<td>Analyzes ways that human actions influence the natural or human world.</td>
<td>Identifies some connections between an individual's personal decision-making and certain global issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding Global Systems</strong></td>
<td>Uses deep knowledge to synthesize the historic or contemporary role and differential effects of human organizations and actions on global systems in the natural and human world.</td>
<td>Analyzes major elements of global systems, including their historic and/or contemporary interconnections and the differential effects of human organizations on the human and natural worlds.</td>
<td>Examines the historic or contemporary role, interconnections, and differential effects of human organizations and actions on global systems within the human and natural worlds.</td>
<td>Identifies the basic role of some global and local institutions, ideas, and processes in the human and natural worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perspective Taking</strong></td>
<td>Evaluates and applies diverse perspectives to complex subjects within natural or human systems in the face of multiple and even conflicting positions (i.e. cultural, disciplinary, and ethical).</td>
<td>Synthesizes other perspectives (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical) when investigating subjects within natural or human systems.</td>
<td>Identifies and explains other perspectives (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical) when exploring subjects within natural or human systems.</td>
<td>Identifies some perspectives while maintaining a value preference for own positioning (such as cultural, disciplinary, and ethical).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural Diversity</strong></td>
<td>Adapts and applies a deep understanding of multiple worldviews, experiences, and power structures to analyze significant global or cross-cultural problems. May include initiating meaningful interactions with other cultures.</td>
<td>Analyzes substantial connections among worldviews, power structures, and experiences of multiple cultures historically or in contemporary contexts. May include sustained and respectful interactions with other cultures.</td>
<td>Explains and connects two or more cultures historically or in contemporary contexts with some acknowledgment of power structures, demonstrating understanding and respect for varied cultures and worldviews.</td>
<td>Describes the experiences of others historically or in contemporary contexts primarily through one cultural perspective, demonstrating some openness to varied cultures and worldviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diversity of Communities and Cultures</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates an awareness of adjustment in own attitudes and beliefs because of working with or learning from diversity of communities and cultures.</td>
<td>Reflects on how own attitudes and beliefs are different from those of other cultures and communities. Exhibits curiosity about what can be learned from diversity of communities and cultures.</td>
<td>Has awareness that own attitudes and beliefs are different from those of other cultures and communities. Exhibits little curiosity about what can be learned from diversity of communities and cultures.</td>
<td>Expresses attitudes and beliefs as an individual, from a one-sided view. Is indifferent or resistant to what can be learned from diversity of communities and cultures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connecting Knowledge to a Global Perspective</strong></td>
<td>Connects and extends knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline to global, transnational, or cross-cultural issues.</td>
<td>Analyses knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline making relevant connections to global, transnational, or cross-cultural issues.</td>
<td>Begins to connect knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline to global, transnational, or cross-cultural issues.</td>
<td>Begins to identify knowledge (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline that is relevant to global, transnational, and/or cross-cultural issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

APPENDIX D: Teaching Philosophy

Teaching Philosophy

“I know how many drafts it has taken to acquire spontaneity”

Donald M. Murray

I have to admit, as a graduate student sitting in a composition theory course at the time, I felt overwhelmed, as it seemed an intimidating task to have to settle on just one area of interest among the pool of pedagogies about which I was learning.

Then I discovered that separate interests can be combined to create one way of teaching, and I didn’t have to settle on just one...and that has made all the difference.

My teaching philosophy emerges from my belief that the writing classroom should be a space where critical thinking and literacy are developed, where students learn to see themselves as empowered agents capable of bringing about change in their communities. The writing classroom also should arm students with the knowledge and skills needed to analyze and compose in real-world rhetorical situations. I come to these realizations by way of a few ideas, theories, and pedagogies.

I am a long-time admirer of John Dewey for his progressive, pragmatic, and student-centered ideas and approaches to education that tie knowledge to experience, individuals to society, and reflection to action, and his emphasis on democracy and community. Dewey asserted that students must be invested in what they are learning, that the curriculum should be relevant to their lives, and that the classroom should be representative of the larger democratic
society. Later, when I came across critical pedagogy and Paulo Freire, and even later bell hooks, Ira Shor, Henry Giroux, and Peter McLaren, to name a few, I saw a more grounded version of Dewey’s progressive pedagogy, one that not only saw the classroom as a democratic space but also one that is more reflective on self-awareness, race, class, and power. Like Dewey and Freire, I recognize the dialectical relationship between words and the world and the concepts of “experience, growth, inquiry, communication, mediation, problem posing/solving, consciousness-raising, ethical social action and transformation” (Deans). And like Freire, I believe in order for education to be truly democratic, it must also critically address race, class and power.

At the time I was becoming familiar with Dewey and Freire, I was also introduced to Donald Murray and process pedagogy through his article, "Teaching Writing as Process Not Product." I found Murray’s pedagogical approach to the writing process to be accessible and democratic, a powerful companion to Dewey and Freire — because, while his approach is process-oriented, it is also rooted in democratic principles. For example, when Murray writes, “What is the process we should teach?…It is the process of using language to learn about the world, to communicate what we learn about the world” (qtd. in Miller), he, like Dewey and Freire, is making the connection between dialectic and society. He goes on to encourage students to learn to write by drawing upon their “extensive contact with life and language” (Jones), which is, again, reminiscent of Dewey and Freire and their concepts of experience and inquiry. Additionally, Murray’s holistic and recursive prewriting, writing, and revising strategy, a departure from the rote method also criticized by Dewey and Freire, encourages critical thinking and creative expression and has been shown to improve student writing (Research & Evaluation).
These ideas influence my pedagogical approach in several ways. First, critical pedagogy as a teaching approach means studying topics through the lenses of power, privilege, and oppression. It means that I must draw from the cultural realities that students bring to the classroom. It means that I must be a problem-poser, guiding students through the problem-solving process. It means that I “must be responsible and reflective about my actions” (Giroux), so that I do not become complicit in the power structure of the wider society and do not exert undo authority over students. It means I must empower students with the tools to think critically, to question, and to communicate. And it means prewrite, write, rewrite!

Works Cited


Giroux, Henry. "What is the Role of Teachers in Critical Pedagogy?" *Rage and Hope Website.* http://www.perfectfit.org/CT/giroux4.html


APPENDIX E: Curriculum Vitae

LA SHON MALONE

230 Marcliff Court, Atlanta, GA 30349

678.231.6486 ● lashonmalone@gmail.com

EDUCATION

University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia
Graduate Certification, TESOL, August 2018

Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia
M.A., English Rhetoric and Composition, August 2017

Georgia State University, Atlanta Georgia B.A., English, Creative Writing, 1995

COURSES OF INTEREST

Writing and Research Methodology Composition Theory
Composition Pedagogy (Fall 2016) Rhetoric of Digital Media
Digital Media Production (Spring 2017)

TEACHING AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Freshman Composition
Critical Composition Pedagogy
Multimodal Composition
Public Writing

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Manager, Editorial Services, 2003–present

BBDO ATL, Atlanta, Georgia
Lead a team of five individuals in all aspects of editorial servicing of the Atlanta office of an international advertising agency, including creating client style guidelines for Fortune 500 companies such as AT&T and Toys“R”Us; establishing in-house style guidelines implemented office-wide; creating “Standards for Written Style,” a resource pamphlet included in new-hire packets; designing and executing seminars for new employees and interns on brand and editorial standards and employee editorial obligations; creating learning materials to accompany seminars; copy writing, editing, and proofreading content for print and digital media in-house and for all clients; peer collaboration to solve content and process challenges, including designing learning sessions to reinvigorate advanced team members on production processes and brand consistency and style and developing software to facilitate production and digital animation editing.

*Freelance Proofreader/Editor, 1995–2003*

UPS; Cox Communications; Corporate Reports, Inc.; Arthur Andersen, LLP; Atlanta, Georgia Proofread and edited materials for various companies including annual reports, magazine articles, rate books, and SEC filings.

*Substitute Teacher, 1995–1996*

Clayton County Board of Education, Clayton County, Georgia

Served as substitute teacher throughout Clayton County, with repeated assignments at Tara Elementary School, Jonesboro, Georgia.

**PUBLICATION**


**REFERENCES**

Available upon request.