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Jody Shipka

A Multimodal Task-Based Framework for Composing

This essay presents a task-based multimodal framework for composing grounded in theories of multiple media and goal formation. By examining the way two students negotiated the complex communicative tasks presented them in class, the essay underscores the benefits associated with asking students to attend to the various motives, activities, tools, and environments that occasion, support, and complicate the production of academic as well as everyday texts.

Never before has the proliferation of writings outside the academy so counterpointed the compositions inside.
—Kathleen Yancey, in her 2004 CCCC Chair's Address

By privileging composing as the main site of instruction, the teaching of writing has taken up what Karl Marx calls a "one-sided" view of production, and thereby has largely erased the cycle that links the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of writing.
—John Trimbur

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In her 2002 article, "From Analysis to Design: Visual Communication in the Teaching of Writing," Diana George argues that "the terms of debate typical in our discussions of visual literacy and the teaching of writing have limited the kinds of assignments we might imagine for composition" (14–15). Maintaining that "current discussions of visual communication and writing instruction have only tapped the surface of possibilities for the role of visual communication in the composition class" (12), George invites readers to consider how a new configuration of verbal/visual relationships that involves "more than image analysis, image-as-prompt, or image-as-dumbed-down-language" (32) might affect the work students engage in in the composition classroom. While George insists that students do not necessarily have a more sophisticated understanding and command of visual literacy than their instructors do, the highly sophisticated sampling of visual arguments featured at the start of her piece effectively underscores a point she goes on to make, namely, that "our students have a much richer imagination for what we might accomplish with the visual than our journals have yet to address" (12).

While discussions of visual communication provide one point of entry for rethinking the course's semiotic and productive potentials, they also raise the question of whether discussing visual/verbal literacies and the production of visual arguments is *all* we might do. At a time when many within composition studies have begun questioning the field's "single, exclusive and intensive focus on written language" (Kress 85), and its exclusion of the wide variety of sign systems and technologies students routinely engage, we might also begin asking how the purposeful uptake, transformation, incorporation, combination, juxtaposition, and *even three-dimensional layering* of words and visuals—as well as textures, sounds, scents, and even tastes—provide us with still other ways of imagining the work students might produce for the composition course. Given the field's strong tendency to "equate the activity of composing with writing itself," thereby missing "the complex delivery systems through which writing circulates" (Trimbur 190, see also Welch and Yancey), we need to do *more* than simply expand the media and communicative contexts in which students work. Increasing the range of semiotic resources with which students are allowed to work will not, *in and of itself*, lead to a greater awareness of the ways systems of delivery, reception, and circulation shape (and take shape from) the means and modes of production. Instead, I

Composition courses present students with the opportunity to begin structuring the occasions for, as well as the reception and delivery of, the work they produce.

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argue, composition courses present students with the opportunity to begin structuring the occasions for, as well as the reception and delivery of, the work they produce.[1]

The past seven years have afforded me opportunities to begin exploring this wider field of possibilities in the courses I teach. The following examples of student work are offered with the intent of initiating new conversations about the ways students' uptakes of a much wider, richer repertoire of semiotic resources, coupled with their efforts to purposefully structure the delivery and reception of that work, afford new ways of thinking, acting, and working within and beyond the space of the first-year composition classroom.

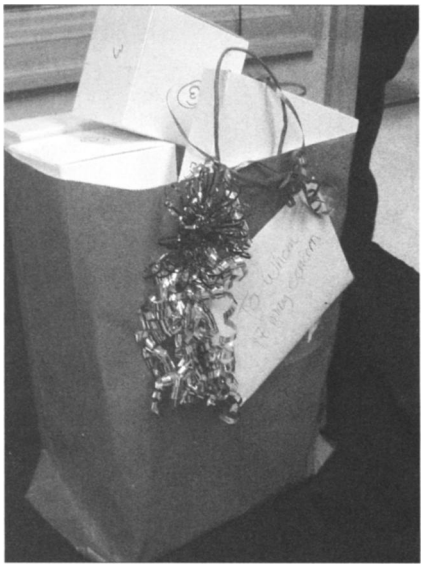

Fig. 1. Lindsay's portfolio

So how's this for a complex multimodal rhetorical event? The day portfolios were due, Lindsay Freeberg[2] arranged to have a large blue bag containing eleven numbered gift boxes delivered to my office along with a card addressed "To whom it may concern" (Fig. 1).

The left side of the card functioned as the table of contents, listing which pieces of Lindsay's work would be found inside which boxes, while the right side contained a set of explicit instructions for receiving and recirculating that work. In keeping with the context of gift-giving that Lindsay had established, her semester's worth of work had been repurposed as a collection of valuable "tokens." Lindsay wrote:

> Dear Receiver of Tokens,
>
> Hi, my name is Lindsay Freeberg. You're probably wondering what the heck is going on and why you have a bag filled with numbered boxes. I'm sorry to say that this isn't a present just for you, it's for everyone, but I'll get back to that later [. . .]. All right, back to how these tokens are for everyone. You're probably wondering how everyone is going to see this. Well, here's what you have to do. Read everything, but don't just read it quickly, let is [*sic*] soak in for awhile and read it again. Sign the card somewhere, comment if you want to. If there isn't any more room, add pages to the card. Now, think of someone. Got them? Good. Secretly give the bag to them as I gave it to you. All I ask you to do is keep this going.

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Or this? After completing a task that requires students to research the history of a word using the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary,* Prakas Itarut turned in a manila envelope containing an unmarked floppy disk and a typed, text-only treatment of the word "scare." At the top of this text the following message appeared:

> ****To get a true experience of what I am about to tell you, please read this paper at night and follow the directions exactly as it is told.****
> There is a disk included with this paper.
> Please insert it into a PC that is equipped with sound.
> Now open this paper in Microsoft Word.
> By now, you should be reading this message on a computer screen. If you haven't done what I mentioned above, please do so now.

Had I been brave enough to set aside the typed text and experience the remaining portions of the piece in the way Prakas recommended, the first thing I would have encountered in the on-screen version was a sampling of the various meanings and uses of the word "scare" that Prakas had excerpted from the *OED*. I would also have encountered the option to "click here," which, in turn, would have taken me to a file on the disk containing the *OED*'s full entry for "scare." Following this, I would have found another set of instructions prompting me to execute the "MC Program" file contained on the floppy. I would have then been prompted to return to the *OED* file, where I would have found five scary tales that I had been asked to read "slowly" and "if possible" out loud. Had I paced my out-loud reading of the tales as Prakas hoped I would, I would have been in the middle of the following passage when the MC Program triggered for the first time, replacing Prakas's text with the ghostly image of a woman's face while the computer issued a scream:

> Scare: To frighten, terrify.
> **C. 1256** Ancient Thai people—there is a belief that there is such a thing as a ghost/spiritual power in the world we live in today. Ghost in this sense is usually misrepresented. It is not an ugly monster in a Halloween party or a cute Casper. It can be so simple as just another person. Imagine yourselves alone in a bathroom at night looking in the mirror and [you] see another person behind you [. . .]

Provided that I had been brave enough to set aside the hard-copy version of the tales and experience Prakas's reenvisioning of the *OED* in the way he intended (I was not), I would have found instructions for deactivating the MC Program in this final "frightening" tale:

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> **C. 2001** MC Program—An English teacher executed the MC Program which was created to stimulate [*sic*] the true experience of the definition of this word. Luckily, she was smart enough to either restart the computer or hit ctrl-alt-delete to end the MC Program.

Suspecting that his instructor would *not* be brave enough to experience the piece in the way he intended, he knew that many of his classmates would be. To this end, Prakas asked permission to post a link for a Web-based version of the piece on the course Web site, where he dared classmates to experience his terrifying treatment of the *OED*.

And finally: After receiving a task entitled "A History of 'This' Space," [3] Maggie Christiano considered conducting a small-scale, survey-based study of people living in public versus private university housing as a way of determining if there were connections between where students lived and how well they might be adjusting to their first semester in college. Engineered, in part, as a way of providing students with the opportunity of telling future readers something about who they were and what they did, valued, feared, enjoyed, etc., at a specific point in their college careers, the task presented Maggie with an opportunity to explore a question that concerned her at the time the task was assigned: How, or more specifically *how well,* might a group of first-semester college students be adjusting to living away from home? Admitting that she was so homesick for the first month of her college career that she had entertained the idea of dropping out, Maggie wanted to know if her classmates were adjusting more quickly to their post-high-school lives. Stressing that part of the appeal of the survey-based study had to do with allowing her to satisfy the task requirements without spending much time with other students with whom she suspected she had little in common, Maggie's plans for the history changed after a class session during which her classmates began talking about where they were from, where they had gone to high school, and so on. While the conversation had little to do with being homesick, the session significantly altered Maggie's feelings about her classmates as well as her involvement in the class. Deciding to jettison the dorm life study, she began a new, time-intensive history, one that still allowed her to focus on the idea of home while serving as a "tribute" to the class.

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Maggie began collecting data for her history by asking her classmates to identify the place that they called home and to briefly describe the place itself and/or their feelings about that place. She then began the process of researching her classmates' hometowns online, both in hopes of learning something about those hometowns and of finding a Web site that she could later repurpose based on the information her classmates had provided her with. If, for instance, a classmate described his hometown as "famous for its big mall and many health clubs," Maggie would look for a Web site for a store in that mall or for a health club in town. After successfully pairing each member of the class with a hometown Web site, Maggie gave her classmates a word related to the Web site that she planned to use (e.g., the word might be "shoe" or "sock" if the Web site was for a shoe store, as it was in my case) and asked them to write a paragraph or two about that word, jotting down anything that came to mind. At this time, Maggie also requested that each of her classmates bring in an object representing the word so that she could take a picture of each person with his or her object. Maggie's contribution to the history consisted of a twenty-five-page collection of cleverly repurposed Web pages in which Maggie had strategically inserted her classmates' "with-object" photos and portions of their writings into the saved "original" version of the Web sites (see Fig. 2).

Accompanying the collection was a taped news special that Maggie scripted and then filmed over fall break. The video features Maggie in a series of "live, late-breaking Rhetoric 105 news reports," the majority of which had been filmed while Maggie stood in front of the specific hometown locations featured in the repurposed collection of Web pages.

Cognizant that the student work featured above may seem strange, especially when the norm for student work is equated with linear, argumentative, thesis-driven print texts that are passed forward in class and geared primarily, if not exclusively, to an audience of one (the instructor), I would suggest that the rhetorical, material, methodological, and technological choices students made while engineering these complex rhetorical events merit serious and sustained attention. Based on the kind, quality, and scope of work I have witnessed students producing for the past seven years, I am moved to argue, with George's claim in mind, that students have a much richer imagination for what might be accomplished in the course than our journals *have yet even begun to imagine,* let alone to address[4].

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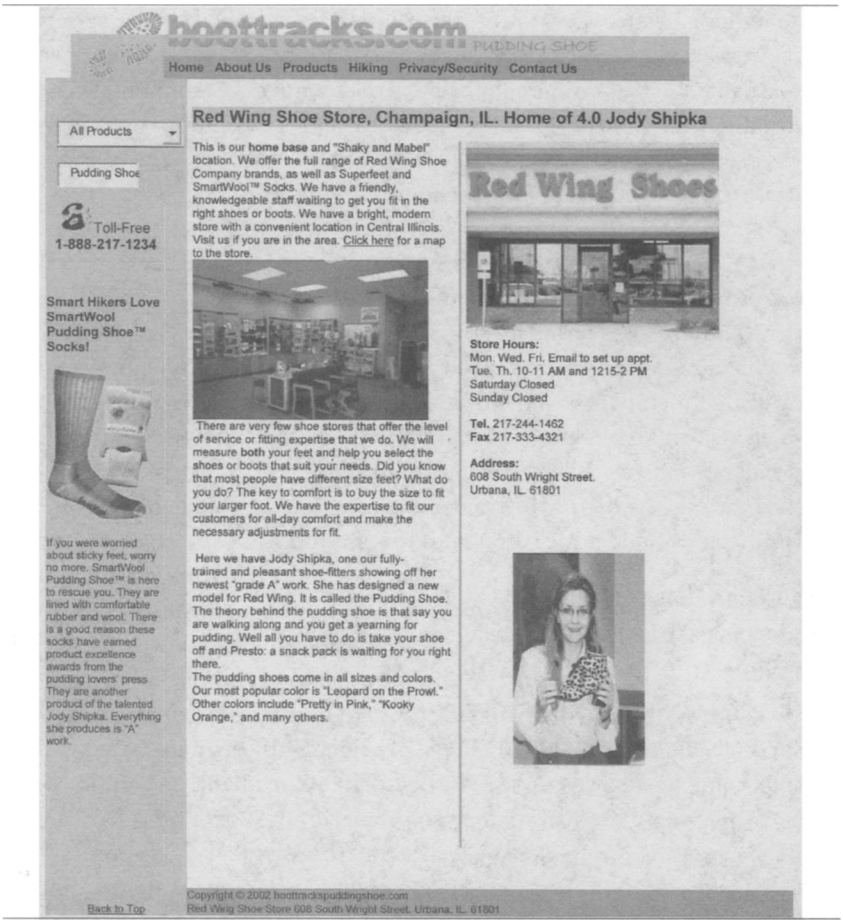

Fig. 2. One of Maggie's repurposed hometown Web pages

In this essay, I look to theories of goal-oriented activity as a way of reconceptualizing production, delivery, and reception in the composition classroom. To illustrate some of the implications of the multimodal, task-based approach to composing I will be describing here, I also present two examples of students working to negotiate the complex communicative tasks that they undertook in my class. Taken together, these accounts suggest that, when called upon to set their own goals and to structure the production, delivery, and reception of the work they accomplish in the course, students can: (1) demon-

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strate an enhanced awareness of the affordances provided by the variety of media they employ in service of those goals; (2) successfully engineer ways of contextualizing, structuring, and realizing the production, representation, distribution, delivery, and reception of their work; and (3) become better equipped to negotiate the range of communicative contexts they find themselves encountering both in and outside of school.

From Writing Assignments to Communicative Tasks: Engineering Complex Rhetorical Events

Robert Connors called it the "inescapable question" and one that composition instructors must address prior to committing to the kinds of assignments they will provide for students: "Should [one] emphasize honest, personal writing? stress academic, argumentative, or practical subjects? or try somehow to create a balance between these discourse aims?" (296). That this question is a crucial one is evidenced by the tremendous amount of scholarship devoted to providing practitioners with strategies for offering students opportunities to engage with course materials that are, at once, personally and socially relevant and intellectually rigorous. As inquiry-based approaches to composing were increasingly offered as a way of bridging the distance between personal and academic discourse aims, practitioners were also cautioned about the ways that overly prescriptive assignments might actually militate against intellectual "mystery" (Davis and Shadle 441) and perpetuate instead a mechanical fill-in-the-blanks or "cookbook" (Bridwell-Bowles 56) approach to composing. In other words, by providing students with what the cognitive anthropologist Edwin Hutchins would call solution procedure "strips"—relatively stable and seemingly linear sequences of steps that are offered as a means of leading people through the successful accomplishment of a given task (294), overly prescriptive assignments afforded students the possibility of bypassing the inquiry phase as they searched for the "implicit clues that reveal what really counts and what can be ignored in completing a particular assignment" (Nelson 413). Consider, for instance, the way the following hypothetical assignment prompt, one derived from many I have seen, forecloses inquiry by signaling the specific ways students are to successfully accomplish the task:

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> Choose three of the five essays listed below and compose a four- to five-page argumentative typewritten essay in response to those essays. Double space your text, use a 12-point standard font and 1-inch margins all around, and make sure your thesis statement is clear, arguable, and underlined; make sure the piece is structured logically and that your work is carefully proofread.

Here, the *scope* and *purpose* of the work are already established for the student: a four- to five-page argumentative essay in which the student demonstrates his or her ability to use outside sources as the basis of an argument. The *methods, materials,* and *technologies* he or she is expected to employ are also predetermined: reading and critically engaging the assigned texts, using at least three of these as the basis for a logically structured linear argumentative essay, the use of paper plus some device that produces print text, etc. Equally problematic is the way the prompt suggests a logic of composing that proceeds in an orderly, top-down manner: the student first chooses the essays he or she would like to work with; then composes an argumentative, thesis-driven essay; then proofreads the essay; and last, marking the end of the composing process, underlines the thesis statement. More troubling still, the prompt says nothing about the ways in which, or the specific conditions under which, students' work will be collected and assessed. In fact, to imagine the last line of the assignment reading "Once the paper is finished, you will pass this forward in class, and the instructor will read it, respond to it, and then provide you with a grade," could seem silly, a way of stating the obvious. After all, what else might one possibly imagine doing?

In pointing out the limitations of this kind of assignment, I am not suggesting that the work students produce for a course should be free from adhering to the standards associated with a specific communicative practice or genre. I am also not suggesting that the classroom become an intellectual free-for-all where assignments, due dates, and any expectation of student accountability is jettisoned as they become free to write when, how, or even *if* they want to. I am suggesting that assignments that predetermine goals and narrowly limit the materials, methodologies, and technologies that students employ in service of those goals while ignoring the "complex delivery systems through which writing circulates" (Trimbur 190), perpetuate arhetorical, mechanical, one-sided views of production.

As an alternative, I propose a goal-directed multimodal task-based framework for composing that I have been developing in classes since 1997. Based in part on Walter Doyle's definition of academic tasks, the framework is geared toward increasing students' rhetorical, material, and methodological flexibil-

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ity by requiring them to determine the purposes and contexts of the work they produce. Importantly, students working within this framework also assume responsibility for generating the solution procedure strips, or what I prefer to think of as the more dynamic and flexible "action sequences" (Hutchins 293), that will guide them through the successful accomplishment of each assigned task. In Maggie's case, for instance, the hometown history involved the creation of the following steps or *complex action sequences:* (1) collecting various kinds of data from classmates; (2) researching and later repurposing hometown Web sites; (3) scripting the "live" news reports; (4) devising a way of representing those hometown locations she could not actually travel to; (5) recruiting the help of a camera person; (6) traveling to the hometown locations; (7) filming the reports; (8) transferring that footage to VHS tape for ease of viewing; (9) composing the introduction to the piece and instructions for using the piece; and (10) ordering and binding the collection of repurposed Web pages. By refusing to hand students a list of nonnegotiable steps that must be accomplished in order to satisfy a specific course objective, the framework asks students to consider how fairly simple, straightforward, and relatively familiar communicative objectives might be accomplished in any number of ways, depending upon how they decide to *contextualize, frame,* or *situate* their response to those objectives.

Take, for instance, an objective often associated with first-year composition programs, asking students to use course readings or outside sources as the basis for an argument. Rather than requiring students to produce a thesis-driven, linear print essay that is, more often than not, intended for the instructor alone, students approach this objective by contextualizing it in ways that are of interest or importance to them. They decide *how*, *why*, *where,* and even *when* that argument based on specific readings will be experienced by its recipient(s). Following these decisions, they begin generating the complex action sequences leading to the realization of their final product(s). For Prakas, a desire to underscore the point that the *OED* database provided "poor connection[s] between the word and the actual meaning" served as the catalyst for the steps leading to the creation of the piece's on-screen component. More specifically, Prakas's inclusion of the tales and his appropriation of the MC program was his attempt to "rewrite" the database, providing those who experienced the onscreen version with what he believed was a truer sense of the word. At the end of his piece, Prakas explicitly states that his reenvisioning of *OED* data was crafted, in part, as a teaching tool and, in part, as a prototype for a "truer," or more interactive, version of the *OED*:

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> Hopefully if you followed the direction [*sic*] exactly as I told you, by now you should know the true meaning of the word "scare." For the benefit of those people who are starting to learn English (I used to be one myself), it will be very interesting to see a dictionary in the future that uses a similar method as I did above to describe definitions of words.

Instructors working within this framework are still responsible for designing tasks in accordance with course goals and objectives. Yet, again, rather than predetermining the specific materials and methodologies that students employ in service of those goals, tasks are structured in ways that ask *students* to assume responsibility for attending to the following:

- the *product(s)* they will formulate in response to a given task—this might take the form of a printed text, a performance, a handmade or repurposed object, *or, should students choose to engineer a multipart rhetorical event, any combination thereof*
- the *operations, processes,* or *methodologies* that will be (or could be) employed in generating that product—depending on what students aim to achieve, this might involve collecting data from texts, conducting surveys, interviews or experiments, sewing, searching online, woodworking, filming, recording, shopping, staging rehearsals, etc.
- the *resources, materials,* and *technologies* that will be (or could be) employed in the generation of that product—again, depending on what they aim to achieve this could involve, paper, wood, libraries, computers, needle and thread, stores, food, music, glue, tape, etc.
- the specific *conditions* in, under, or with which the final product will be experienced—this involves determining or otherwise structuring the delivery, reception, and/or circulation of their final product. (Adapted from Doyle 161)

Importantly, upon completing each task provided to them over the course of a semester, students are required to compose a highly detailed written account of their work, something that my students typically refer to as the "heads-up" statement. While the specific issues they are asked to attend to in these statements change depending on the task assigned, students must always account for the specific goals they aimed to achieve with their work and then specifically address how the rhetorical, material, methodological, and technological choices they made contributed to the realization of their goals.

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To better understand the role these detailed accounts of goals and choices play in a multimodal, task-based framework, it may be helpful to compare them to the practice of asking students to underline their thesis statement prior to handing in a completed essay. Just as asking students to underline a thesis statement before turning in a linear, thesis-driven essay has served the purpose of reminding students of the importance of having a thesis statement (and preferably one that was arguable, clearly stated, and compelling enough to be used as a device for structuring the content of their essay), asking students to produce an account of their goals and choices reminds them of the importance of *assessing rhetorical contexts, setting goals,* and *making purposeful choices*. More important, requiring students to produce these statements underscores the importance of being able to speak to goals and choices in a way that highlights *how*, *when, why,* and *for whom* those goals and choices afford and constrain different potentials for knowing, acting, and interacting.

As a way of concretely illustrating what these statements look and sound like, I offer the following heads-up statement, which accompanied a student's response to an intensive research-based task that was assigned midsemester and that required students to examine the way a person, place, thing, idea, etc., was represented in a wide variety of sources.[5] The student whose heads-up statement appears below chose to focus on the way her sources represented a 1950s version of womanhood. The final product was housed inside a DVD case for the film *Mona Lisa Smile,* within which the bulk of the author's research was contained in a thick "chapter" booklet. The student was asked to articulate her goals for the piece and to identify the main point(s) she was attempting to make with this piece. She was then asked to account for how the various choices she had made allowed her to accomplish her goals. The student wrote:

1. My goals for this piece were to reflect the data through my representation of the data [in keeping with the ways] the sources themselves were presented to society. Many of my sources came from different forms of media and therefore I wanted to present my analysis of the sources in the form of a media source. I wanted the reader/viewer to experience the intake of information like women in the fifties did when presented with media from that era. The argument that I make in this piece is that media from the 1950s impact the dreams of women in that day. I argue that the media has messages behind it that influence women to choose

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the life of being a housewife. I believe that the media was a strong force in that day and women were highly impressionable by the media. The sources that I have chosen for this project are either artifacts of media in the fifties or they are articles from today and they discuss the impact of media on women in that day.

2. [My] Choices and Reasons:
Why presented inside the cover of the movie *Mona Lisa Smile?* I chose to present my data inside the movie because not only was this movie the main inspiration for my topic but also I wanted the viewer/reader to be able to experience what I learned from the movie.
Why presented in a booklet? I formatted my data and reflection into this booklet because I wanted it to look like a little booklet that comes with some movies that tells about the summary and reviews of the movie. I also wanted this booklet to aid the viewer as they watch the film. I wanted them to have background knowledge about the issues discussed in the movie so they can have a better understanding.
Why is the first section labeled with the title "summary"? I titled the first section "summary" because movie reviews always start out with a brief summary of the film. In this case it is a brief summary of my topic and the sources as well as an overview of the film. I wanted this booklet to look like a guide to the movie.
Why is the following section labeled with "scene selection" and subtitled with "chapters"? The section is titled "scene selection" because often with movies on DVD they give a list of the different scenes you can select to watch. I found this to be appropriate because the reader can choose which information they want to read, which analyses they want to look at. The subtitles of "chapter" are appropriate because movies will often title the different scenes by chapters. I chose to title the sections with "chapter" because each section talks about a different type of media and my analysis of its impact on the dream of women in the fifties.
Why is the next section of the booklet titled "reviews"? This section is titled "reviews" because I wanted to stay with the movie review aspect. The phrases in the review are my analysis of the movie as a source. They are also my concluding thoughts on the topic. This seemed to suit since a movie review discusses the movie much like how my comments analyze the movie as a source.

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> **Why is the last section titled "credits"?** [B]ecause the credits of a movie give appreciation to all the people behind the scenes of the movie. This section is my works cited page. This seemed appropriate because it gives recognition to all the sources that were a part of my analysis about my topic.
>
> **Why did I choose the sources that I did?** I chose my sources to come from actual forms of media in the fifties because I wanted to look at and analyze the real source. Some of my sources are pieces that reflect on a certain media. I chose to use them as a few of my sources because I wanted to look at how they inform today's public of the issues. These sources also helped to aid my analysis of the primary sources and my discussion of the topic.

Knowing that they will be expected to produce these highly detailed accounts discourages students from generating rushed and thoughtless responses to tasks. Almost without exception, statements that contain unclear or generalized statements of goals and vague explanations of the choices made in support of those goals introduce work that has not been afforded the time or effort the task required. Consider, for example, the difference between the heads-up statement offered above and the following:[6]

> My goal was to *kind of try* to convince *a lot of people* that *a lot of things* about *society today* are *unjust*. I did this by interviewing *a lot of random people* and finding *a bunch* of sources that agreed with me and disagreed with me. I basically decided to type all my information and then I decided to put it inside an old social studies textbook that I still had from high school. (My italics)

In addition to dissuading students from starting a task at the last minute, the statements provide instructors with ways of navigating and assessing student work. Instead of spending time trying to determine exactly how or why students might have engaged in a particular task the way they did, the statements allow instructors to frame their response to students' work in increasingly efficient, purposeful, and constructive ways by focusing on the specific goals and choices students have selected and shared with the instructor.[7]

A multimodal task-based framework not only requires that students work hard, but, related to this, *differently,* and it does so by foregrounding the complex processes associated with goal formation and attainment.

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plex processes associated with goal formation and attainment. Activity theorist A. N. Leont'ev[8] argues that these crucial processes are too often overlooked "under laboratory conditions or in pedagogical experiments" where the subject is offered a "prepared" goal (62). Following Hegel in insisting that an individual "cannot define the goal of his action until he has acted," Leont'ev maintains that the "selection and conscious perceptions of goals are by no means automatic or instantaneous acts. Rather, they are a relatively long process of *testing goals through action* and, so to speak, fleshing them out" (62).

Precisely because this multimodal task-based framework refuses to provide students with prepared goals, students learn by doing. For students who have grown accustomed to instructors telling them exactly what they need to do, this way of working can be time-consuming and frustrating, especially when the students discover potentials for enriching their work that may require them to set aside the work they have already begun and return to an earlier stage in the production process. However time-consuming this process of "testing goals through action" may be for some, those who have experienced this form of deep revision have reported that they no longer equate revision with proofreading. Rather, revision has become *re-vision*: A demanding process that involves both the potential and the willingness to reimagine the goals, contexts, and consequences associated with their work.

Precisely because this multimodal task-based framework refuses to provide students with prepared goals, students learn by doing.

This is not to say that only those students who opt to jettison their original work in favor of creating something more complex have benefited from this enriched sense of revision. Even those who make the smallest adjustments to their work begin demonstrating a more nuanced understanding of *as well as a greater appreciation for* the productive tension that often exists between knowledge and action, an understanding that often leads to greater communicative flexibility insofar as they begin recognizing that

> [k]nowledge as organized for a particular task can never be sufficiently detailed, sufficiently precise, to anticipate exactly the conditions or results of actions. Action is never totally controlled by the actor but influenced by the vagaries of the physical and social world. Thus, in any given instance, knowledge is continually being refined, enriched, or completely revised by experience. (Keller and Keller 127)

This is also not to say that students offered prompts like the one mentioned earlier ("Choose three of the five essays listed below . . . "), would not

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come to both recognize and appreciate the complex ways that knowledge and action "are each open to alteration by the other as behavior proceeds" (Keller and Keller 125). I would argue, however, that a multimodal task-based framework—precisely because it demands that students both think and act more flexibly as they assume responsibility for determining *what* needs to be done along with *how* it might possibly be achieved—positions them in the thick of things, and in so doing, foregrounds these complex issues in ways that more prescriptive prompts may not.

A multimodal task-based orientation requires a great deal from students, to be sure. Making the shift from highly prescriptive assignments to multimodal tasks is challenging for students unaccustomed to thinking about and accounting for the work they are trying to achieve in academic spaces. Even those eager to assume more responsibility for their work and/or to explore various materials, methodologies, and technologies often find the tasks more challenging than they had first anticipated. Still, I would argue, making the shift to these more open-ended, complexly mediated tasks is both worthwhile and necessary, especially at a time when many (see, especially, Chiseri-Strater; Geisler; George; Hocks; Sirc; and Welch) have underscored the importance of establishing an atmosphere in which students are able to prove that, beyond being critically minded consumers of existing knowledge, they are also extremely capable, critically minded producers of new knowledge.

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Enacting a Multimodal Task-Based Framework

To provide readers with a better sense of how this framework has been enacted in the classroom, I examine the way two students enrolled in my spring 2004 section of Rhetoric 105, a university first-year composition course, negotiated a task called "the OED." Assigned during the fourth week of the semester, it requires students to use the online version of the *Oxford English Dictionary,* a source many students find boring and frustrating, to research the etymology of any word they choose. Designed, in part, to prepare students for the extensive research project assigned later in the semester, this task requires that the data students find in the *OED* make up at least three-fourths of their response. Geared also toward increasing students' rhetorical and material flexibility, the task requires that students generate at least three tentative (paragraph-long) plans for representing the data they have collected, before

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attending the in-class workshop held a week and a half after the task is assigned. For example, a student who researched the word "find" came to the workshop with one plan for a scavenger hunt, another for an online game, and yet another for an article in a magazine aimed at people devoted to the *OED*. During the workshop sessions, students address what they consider the specific affordances associated with each of their plans while soliciting feedback from their peers.

Before examining the ways Karen Rust and Mike Ragano negotiated this task, it is important to say that the student work featured here both is, and is not, representative of the work students typically produce for the class. In focusing specifically on Rust's and Ragano's work, I do not mean to imply that students routinely gravitate toward choices that involve engineering complex tests or producing videos. As the sampling of work featured at the start of this piece suggests, when students are called upon to set their own goals and to explore the variety of ways those goals might be accomplished, the work they produce tends to defy any easy attempt to categorize by quality or kind. What *is* representative about these pieces has to do with the critical engagement and rhetorical flexibility their producers demonstrated throughout the process of accomplishing them, the sophisticated ways they were able to attend to the twinned questions of *what* they sought to do and *why,* and how, in the process of negotiating a task-based multimodal approach to composing, they began forging important connections between the classroom and other lived spaces.[9]

Accounts of Production, Delivery, and Reception

Before the semester began, Karen Rust assumed, as did many of her peers, that the course was going to be the "typical English class," where students would be expected to read assigned texts and produce responses to those texts "presented in the typical five-paragraph essay format." While her experience in this class was in keeping with her idea of typical to the extent that students were expected to read and respond to a series of assigned texts, Karen had not been expecting that the course would "force [her] to build upon [her] past skills and former approaches to writing." Admitting that she was extremely frustrated for the first part of the semester, Karen, an architecture major, saw her *OED* project, the "Mirror IQ Test," as her opportunity to articulate that frustration through a piece that was intentionally designed to make the "participant feel the same way [Karen] did in finding an idea to fulfill the assignments [she] was given." Her heads-up statement provides a strikingly rich set

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of goals for how her complex treatment of the word "mirror" should affect its recipient:

> The point behind the creation of the mirror IQ test is that I wanted to inform the participant of the definitions and uses of the word mirror along with demonstrating my frustration during the research for the test itself. It took me almost two and a half weeks before I could even figure out what to do for the assignment and I was becoming extremely frustrated in the process [. . .]. I wanted the participant to feel the pressure of completing the test in a given amount of time much like how I felt pressure trying to complete the assignment in the amount of time I had.

The "Mirror IQ Test" came inside a 9-by-12-inch manila envelope that was addressed to the instructor. Karen's university address appeared in the top left corner. A plastic bag containing nine mirrors was stapled to the front of the envelope. Inside the envelope was a typed sheet of paper entitled "Setting Description and Instructions," a stapled four-page, single-spaced copy of the test printed entirely in reverse (a technique often referred to as "mirror-writing"), a duplicate copy of the test that was printed "normally," an answer key for the test, and a two-page single-spaced heads-up statement for the piece.

Although the instructions and setting description did little in terms of showcasing her *OED* data, Karen said that both were crucial in terms of helping her situate the piece by simulating a high-stakes timed testing atmosphere similar to what she had experienced while taking tests like the SAT and the ACT. Karen hoped the setting description, in particular, would work to exacerbate whatever anxiety the recipient[10] might have been experiencing at the prospect of having to complete the test in the thirty minutes allotted:

> Imagine you are sitting in an empty classroom with just one desk in the center and a ticking clock in the background. The room is drafty and cold with very dim light. It is eight o'clock [and] the score from this test will determine your future by deciding which school you will be accepted to. You tried to study for the test but your friends, your parents, and your annoying siblings continually distracted you [. . .]. You ended up only studying for an hour before you fell asleep, and now you are only half awake to take the exam.
>
> [. . .] When you dig out your pencil the tip is broken. You search for a pencil sharpener but there isn't one in the room so you have to ask the proctor for another one. They hand you a stubby pencil with no eraser and tell you to sit down because the exam is starting.

The setting description also provided Karen with the opportunity to write herself into the piece by cataloging some of the "distractions and annoyances"

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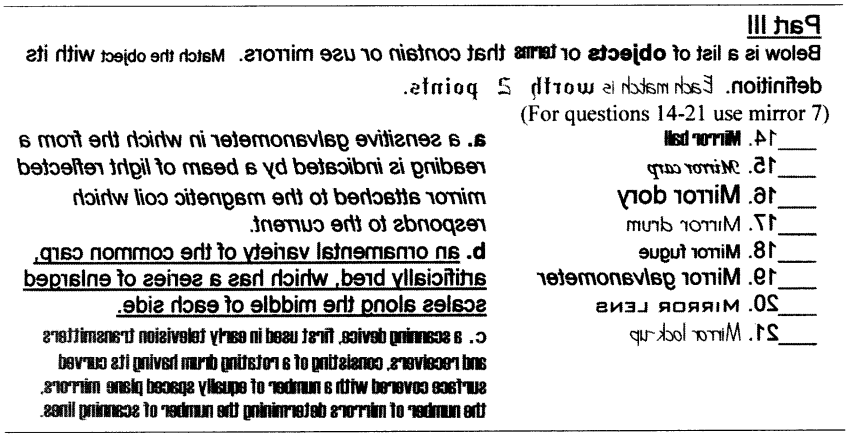
she encountered while working on this task. Here Karen alludes to the distractions of dorm life, fatigue, and feelings of being ill-prepared and alone, feelings that may have stemmed from the in-class workshop that left Karen concerned that many of her classmates had devised more solid plans for the OED than she had been able to. Yet instead of explicitly stating that the problems were ones *she* experienced while composing this test, her use of the second person allowed her to distance herself from those experiences. Frustration, stress, anxiety, and ill-preparedness were no longer associated with the position Karen was able to assume here as the creator and administrator of this test. Rather, they belonged to whoever was unfortunate enough to have to take the test.

The test itself comprised *OED* data that Karen had arranged in four sections: multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, and identifying correct spellings of "mirror." Cognizant that any other attempts to explicitly foreground the anxiety, frustration, or intellectual impotence that she experienced while composing the piece might compromise the authority of the test as well as her authority as student-turned-expert-test-creator, every choice Karen made while engineering the test needed to leave the recipient with little doubt that he or she had not only been able to successfully *take on* the specific challenges associated with the task, but that she had been able *to take them over* as well.

After creating a master copy of the test in her word-processing program, Karen began adjusting that copy, alternating the types and sizes of the fonts. Following this, she began the process of reversing the entire document in image-editing software (Fig. 4). In addition to "increasing the difficulty and con-


Part III

Below is a list of **objects** or **terms** that contain or use mirrors. Match the object with its definition. Each match is worth 2 points.

(For questions 14-21 use mirror 7)

___14. **Mirror ball**
___15. Mirror carp
___16. **Mirror dory**
___17. Mirror drum
___18. Mirror fugue
___19. **Mirror galvanometer**
___20. MIRROR LENS
___21. Mirror lock-up

a. a sensitive galvanometer in which the from a reading is indicated by a beam of light reflected mirror attached to the magnetic coil which responds to the current.

b. an ornamental variety of the common carp, artificially bred, which has a series of enlarged scales along the middle of each side.

c. a scanning device, first used in early television transmitters and receivers, consisting of a rotating drum having its curved surface covered with a number of equally spaced plane mirrors, the number of mirrors determining the number of scanning lines.

Fig. 4. An excerpt from "Mirror IQ Test"

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fusion" one would experience while taking the test, Karen said the manipulation of the word-processed document provided her with a very specific way of "reflecting" the difficulty she had trying to decipher some of the older (less-familiar) portions of the *OED* entry she had been working with.

For someone invested in doing everything possible to ensure that the test taker would fail to complete the test in the time allotted, Karen's decision to provide the test taker with a packet of mirrors was not indicative of either a slip-up on her part or of her willingness to level the playing field by providing resources for navigating the complex text. In fact, Karen said that most of the mirrors included in the kit had been specifically chosen for having features that would make it almost impossible for anyone to see or read much of anything with them. Some were concave, some convex, and almost all of them were made of a substance that precluded them from reflecting anything at all. One mirror in particular, while it had been large enough and of a decent-enough quality to have provided an adequate reflection of the test, was covered in black tape so that only a small portion of the middle of the mirror was left to reflect anything. In her heads-up statement Karen wrote that she chose to tape the mirror to "briefly hit a point" that she wanted to make with the piece, namely, "that when we look into mirrors we only look at a small part of the whole. We tend to focus on our nose or our lips instead of stepping back and looking at all of it together."

By creating an environment that required the test taker to employ media (i.e., the mirrors) not typically associated with test taking, Karen seems to be suggesting that *just because* one is given permission to take up a variety of media does not necessarily make a task any easier.

By creating an environment that required the test taker to employ media (i.e., the mirrors) not typically associated with test taking, Karen seems to be suggesting that *just because* one is given permission to take up a variety of media does not necessarily make a task any easier. In fact, in addition to altering one's perspective on what composing practices might potentially require and afford (much as Karen's collection of mirrors works to suggest), the increase in media often makes the business of composing (or in Karen's case, of test making and taking) that much more challenging, as there is often, quite literally, infinitely more stuff for students to handle.

Mike Ragano, a business major, also admitted that the tasks had been a source of frustration for him, stressing that it often took a good deal of time, effort, and thought to come up with ideas for responding to each new task. Upon receiving the OED task description, however, Mike felt he had lucked out, as he knew exactly what he hoped to do:

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> I choose the word "power" because it has a great deal of meaning to me. I love war movies that talk about military and political power and I love to weight lift which is about muscular power [. . . ;] it is also an older word and I was confident that I could find a lot of research on it in the *OED*. [. . .] I wanted to do a fun movie. I felt that a lot of the work that I had done in the class was time consuming and I felt that a movie would be an easy and fun change of pace. I thought that I could make power seem fun and interesting.

While deciding on a word, purpose, and method of representation before looking through several sets of *OED* data is fairly unusual—more often than not, students will have to switch words a few times before settling on one they can use—accomplishing the task would not prove especially easy for Mike. His heads-up statement continues: "After thinking more about how I might actually accomplish my goal and after spending countless hours staring at the *OED,* I realized that there was nothing amusing or fun about it. I couldn't think of a single way to portray the information as funny."

Mike's treatment of the word "power" took the form of a "public access type" show that attempted to "mimic" a program Mike recalled seeing years before. In his heads-up statement Mike explained: "The [gardening] show was very boring and it upset me that the host could be so passionate about such a boring subject. I decided to use this genre to bore my watcher." In choosing to burn "Interpretations of the *OED*" on CD, Mike was also able to structure viewers' reception of his work in ways that aligned with the specific forms of physical and intellectual "punishment" he felt he had to endure while sitting in front of the computer looking for usable *OED* data online.

"Interpretations" was shot in black and white, Mike's way of ensuring that the episode would "bore the socks off" the viewer. At the start of the episode, we meet "Russ" (the host of the show and someone not enrolled in the course), a man with shoulder-length hair, who is dressed in a tweed sports coat and seated in a chair positioned against a very plain background. On Russ's lap was a copy of Mike's rhetoric course packet, which Mike had repurposed in hopes of making it appear that Russ was actually reading from a volume of the *OED*. Inside the spiral-bound packet was a script containing various spellings and uses of the word *power*.

After welcoming viewers to the show and promising them an "intimate evening" spent "delving into the word 'power' and all it has to offer," Russ makes a reference to Mr. Rogers, removes his shoes, and settles into his chair. Following this, Russ begins holding up what Mike's script calls "signs" (i.e., pieces of paper) containing different spellings of the word "power." Russ displays and

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spells aloud twelve "signs" in all, including: poer, poeir, pouwer, pouwere, pouoir, pouer, pouere, poweer, pouar, powar, pover, and finally, the one Russ refers to as "our good old trusty stand-by companion, p-o-w-e-r." For Mike, the decision to have Russ read each spelling aloud *and with ever-increasing enthusiasm* was intended as a way of "really getting his message across" by making the episode "drag on and on with unnecessary long [and boring] parts." Interestingly enough, this (two minutes plus) portion of the piece seems to have had a reverse effect on audiences insofar as the 130-plus viewers who have viewed the episode have suggested that the spelling segment is quite funny.

If Russ's portions of the video allowed Mike to both *purposefully* and *playfully* represent the data he collected from the *OED* and to illustrate the powerfully numbing experience of sitting alone in his dorm room searching the *OED* database, the three commercials interspersed throughout the video are suggestive of another form of power Mike had to negotiate while composing his piece—the power of friendship, video games, good movies, and food. Put otherwise, the power of extracurricular diversions.

In his heads-up statement Mike explained that the colorful, loud, and cluttered space that served as backdrop for the commercials was offered as a contrast to the "horribly furnished room with little visual stimulation" in which Russ and the *OED* were positioned. As a way of providing a tighter link between Russ's portion of the piece and the commercials, Mike made the problem of trying to find the time and desire to complete his OED task the central focus of the commercials. Two of the "visually stimulating" commercials began with roughly the same shot, one that featured Mike sitting alone in his dorm room in front of the computer with his copy of the rhetoric course packet in his lap. Within minutes, friends began entering the room offering him "fun and interesting distractions" from doing his work. As Russ's appearances as the obedient and passionate student-scholar of the *OED* in the black-and-white segments of the video were meant to suggest, the student Mike portrays in the commercials ultimately gives in to the power of these other distractions and places his rhetoric to the side. Despite making promises to the contrary at the end of each commercial, Mike continues to procrastinate, and so fails to complete the task himself.

Or does he? It may be important to note here that "Interpretations" gave Mike the opportunity to revisit an issue he had begun addressing in his earlier work, namely that of trying to reconcile the distractions posed by extracurricular interests and practices with those posed by curricular ones. While the piece as a whole worked to suggest that Mike (the commercial persona) found

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a way of reconciling this problem by having Russ tend to his curricular distractions, thereby freeing commercial-Mike to tend to the extracurricular ones, the processes that Mike (as a Rhetoric 105 student) employed while producing the video suggest that he did, after all, find ways to both productively and *simultaneously* manage both forms of distraction. Explaining that he had "some really great people at his dorm" who had previously volunteered to assist him with work he had been producing for the course, Mike said he approached the *OED* task with the thought of taking people up on their offers. By "subcontracting" various parts of the project to other people (i.e., while Mike would conduct the research, compose the script, and take on most of the directing, he put his friends in charge of filming and editing the video, designing the two sets, and deciding who would play the various supporting roles in the piece), Mike said he was able to approach the task feeling less like its sole author or creator and more like a project manager whose primary concern had to do with organizing and overseeing the various resources and talents each member of the team brought to the project. In this way, Mike felt that his way of approaching the task resonated with his long-term career goals (to work in business/management) in ways that working alone on the piece would not have afforded.

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Terms, Conditions, Conclusions

In "Quartet Three" of her 2004 CCCC Chair's Address, Kathleen Blake Yancey calls for the development of an activity-based multimodal curriculum for the twenty-first century, one that allows us to carry forward the "best of what we have created to date" (16) as we continue forging purposeful connections among the literate activities that students encounter both within and beyond the space of the classroom proper. The task-based multimodal framework offered here represents, I suggest, one way of responding to Yancey's call. It highlights what students might accomplish when they are provided with opportunities: (1) to set their own goals for the work they engage in in the course; (2) to draw upon a wider range of communicative resources than courses have typically allowed; (3) to speak to the ways the various choices they have made serve, alter, or complicate those goals; and (4) to attend to the various ways in which communicative texts and events shape, and take shape from, the contexts and media in which they are produced and received.

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In keeping with Anne Wysocki's definition of new-media texts, the complex work students produce within this framework need not be digital but might be made, or as I prefer to put it, *purposefully engineered,* out of anything (15) or, should students be interested in producing multipart rhetorical events, out of *any number or combinations of things:* print texts, digital media, live or videotaped performances, old photographs, "intact" objects, repurposed (i.e., transformed or remediated) objects, etc. "Rather than taking talk and writing as [its] starting point," as composition courses have tended to do, the framework I have proposed here privileges innovative choosing by treating all modes, materials, and methodologies "as equally significant for meaning and communication, potentially so at least" (Jewitt and Kress 4). While the framework still requires that students produce a substantial amount of writing for the course, the fact that they are drawing upon multiple semiotic resources as they compose work suggests that students are doing something that is at once *more and other than* writing (i.e., placing and arranging words on a page or screen). I would argue that students who are called upon to choose among and later to order, align, and/or transform the various resources they find at hand tend to work in ways that more closely resemble the ways choreographers or engineers do. To return to an example offered at the start of this piece, Lindsay's portfolio involved a trip to the store (importantly, not having a car, Lindsay said her shopping options were limited to those stores along the bus line) where she selected and purchased the gift boxes, a gift bag, ribbon, and the greeting card that she later repurposed. To successfully pull off the event, Lindsay also needed to arrange for a method of delivering the piece, to compose the specific instructions for experiencing, and later recirculating her semester's worth of work, and, of course, to arrange the various word-processed texts and repurposed objects (a CD, a gameboard, etc.) contained within the gift boxes. For Mike Ragano, "Interpretations of the *OED*" involved not only the production of a script based on his *OED* data, but also, with this, the complex orchestration of those bodies (i.e., their energy, time, talent, access to, and experience with technology) who had earlier volunteered to assist Mike in the production of work for the course. Following Wysocki, I would stress that what is most

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important about this complexly engineered work "is that whoever produces the text and whoever consumes it understands—because the text asks them to, in one way or another—that the various materialities of the text contribute to how it, like its producers and consumers, is read and understood" (15).

When students are called upon to work within a multimodal task-based framework, questions associated with materiality and the delivery, reception, and circulation of texts, objects, and events are no longer viewed as separate from or incidental to the means and methods of production, but as integral parts of invention and production processes. Again, for Lindsay, the goal of regiving her semester's work determined the specific choices she made to realize this action: from where she shopped and how she got there to what she bought and how she transformed the gift card, as well as the specific ways she chose to represent, and later dictate the circulation of her semester's work. Similarly, most of the choices that Prakas, Maggie, Karen, and Mike made while engineering their events were predicated upon the understanding, if not the *hope,* that their work would be experienced by specific, not to mention *multiple,* audiences—the instructor, peers, future readers, etc.—in very specific ways.

Convinced as I am of the richness, intelligence, and sophistication of the work I have witnessed students producing over the years, I admit that as I began exploring the various ways I might present this framework along with the students' accounts of the work they produced I kept returning to a point Yancey makes in her address, namely that the development of a new curriculum for composition will likely involve "a new vocabulary, a new set of practices, and a new set of outcomes" (16). As the framework proposed here involves new terms (vocabularies), conditions (practices), and conclusions (outcomes/products), I wondered if the terms I was using, the practices students were engaging in, and the work they had produced for the class might strike some as strange and too little in keeping with "the best of what we have created to date." While cognizant that the complexly engineered work featured here might not resemble the student work many have grown accustomed to assigning and responding to, I wanted to conclude by underscoring the ways I see this framework working to achieve more familiar goals.

First, students working within this framework are still writing, conducting research, and responding to complex social texts, including ones they have engineered, ones engineered by their peers, and others that they encounter in curricular and extracurricular domains. Second, in keeping with the "WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition" adopted in April 2000, students working with this framework are extensively and deeply involved in

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- Focusing on a purpose
- Responding to the needs of different audiences
- Responding appropriately to different kinds of rhetorical situations
- Using conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation
- Adopting appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality
- Understanding how genres shape reading and writing
- Writing in several genres
- Integrating their own ideas with those of others
- Understanding the relationships among language, knowledge, and power
- Understanding the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes
- Using a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences
- Learning common formats for different kinds of texts
- Controlling such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling (Council 520–22)

Finally, students are still "doing" process and learning about revision. However, I would maintain that what students come to understand about potentials for processes, *processing,* and revision is far richer and more complex when practiced within this kind of goal-directed multimodal task-based framework. When students come to understand process and revision as concepts that both shape, and take shape from, the specific goals, objectives, and tools *with which,* as well as the specific environments *in which,* they interact while composing, they stand a far better chance of appreciating how processes and revision also play an integral role in the continual (re)development of genres, practices, belief systems, institutions, subjectivities, and histories. And, of course, in the ongoing (re)development of lives.

Acknowledgments

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the helpful comments and suggestions they offered on earlier versions of this manuscript.

Notes

1.This essay was inspired by a presentation Sarah MacDonald and I gave at the 2004 Allerton Articulation Conference in Monticello, Illinois. After arranging the work produced by eight of our students in "audio-equipped stations" throughout the room, we provided participants with headsets that they could plug into the tape players located near the students' work. Participants could then listen to the students' voices as they addressed: (1) the goals they had been trying to achieve with their work and (2) the specific rhetorical and material choices they made in service of those goals.

2. With the written permission of each of the students included in this piece, I am using real names. Students were also offered the option of pseudonyms.

3. Inspired by the dearth of information on students' lived experience with or in composition classrooms, this task allows students the opportunity to tell others something about who they were or what they did at a specific point in their college careers. Students are encouraged to begin the task by *defining* the specific "space(s)" their history will represent. Following this, students are asked to *decide* what it is about that space they would like to represent for others. Students are asked to determine the *methodology* (or methodologies) they will employ while collecting data and the *means* by which they will represent their findings. At the end of the year, those contributions that allow it are copied, bound, and distributed to class members. Students are also asked whether I may donate a copy of their contribution to the Student Life Archive on campus.

4. This point is echoed by Kathleen Blake Yancey in her 2004 CCCC Chair's Address, "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key," in which she calls for the development of an activity-based, multimodal curriculum for the new century. As part of the "ambitious agenda" Yancey begins outlining here, students would be afforded opportunities to consider what the "best medium and best delivery" for their work might be and to "create and share those different communication pieces in those different media, to different audiences."

5. Depending upon what students have chosen to research, sources have included academic texts, Web sites, popular fiction, advice manuals, textbooks, children's books, film, art, bumper stickers, print newspapers and magazines, toys, candles, jewelry, and other objects. From a pedagogical point of view, the broader objective associated with this task is inviting students to think beyond the two-sided or pro-con research papers that many have reported composing in high school classes and to think about how an issue, object, or argument is represented, complicated,

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or perpetuated in a wide variety of sources. Thus emphasis is placed not on what *the student* thinks about an issue so much as on what the student thinks about *the ways that issue* (person, place, thing) is represented in a wide variety of sources. Students are asked to pay special attention to the kind and quality of work their sources do and to base their responses to the task on their attempt to account for how those sources accomplish the work students see them doing. Students are encouraged to consider how access to and use of a source might contribute to its persuasiveness, value, and power, or lack thereof.

6. The statement of goals and choices offered here is not one that a student actually composed for the course but loosely modeled upon some of the less comprehensive statements I have received over the years. With this said, I tend to see statements of this kind only at the start of the semester as students are adjusting to what the framework specifically requires of them.

7. Should students choose to engineer final products whose complexity may preclude the instructor from experiencing that work precisely as the student intended, the statements serve an additional purpose in allowing students the opportunity of describing or even enacting what the instructor might have actually experienced had he or she been able to experience the work as it was intended to be experienced.

8. In her 2004 Chair's Address, Yancey also pointed to the value of activity theory for reconceptualizing the work of first-year composition. To see various uses of activity theory in studies of writing, see Charles Bazerman and David Russell's online collection, *Writing Selves, Writing Societies: Research from Activity Perspectives.*

9. For discussions on the importance of connecting work done in the classroom with other lived spaces, see, for example, Bridwell-Bowles; Chiseri-Strater; Davis and Shadle; Durst; Harris; Latterell; Prior and Shipka; and Sirc.

10. The choice to use "recipient" to indicate audience issues here is deliberate. Within the context of the Rhetoric 105 classroom proper I am, of course, a primary recipient of the students' work. However, depending upon how a student chooses to frame response to a task, the potential audience for that work may, *and almost without exception does,* include other recipients, both real (classmates, friends, family members, etc.) and imagined/potential. In Karen's case, the envelope was addressed to me but the language of the test itself (i.e., test-taking "participants") points toward a wider potential audience. For many students, the challenge often becomes one of dealing with these double, triple, or even quadruple contextualizing moves. More baldly stated, students will always be cognizant of my role as (or in) an audience. At the same time, they must make their work resonate in whatever other contexts, genres, or activity systems their work maps onto the activity of "doing tasks for Rhetoric 105." This mapping or complex layering of contexts is

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nicely illustrated by Prakas's work, where the instructor, his classmates, and those just beginning to learn English are included as potential audiences for this work. The same could be said for Maggie's or Lindsay's work, where the issue of audience extends well beyond the space of one particular college composition classroom.

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