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## Writing For Change And Changing Writing: Service Learning, First-year Composition And Writing About Writing

Vanessa Rae Bormann  
*University of Central Florida*



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WRITING FOR CHANGE AND CHANGING WRITING:  
SERVICE-LEARNING, FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION AND WRITING ABOUT WRITING

by

VANESSA RAE BORMANN  
B.A. Florida State University, 2004

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of English  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, FL

Spring Term  
2012

## **ABSTRACT**

Through a piloted model of curriculum designed for ENC 1101 this teacher-research study investigated how service-learning can shape the experiences of both teachers and students in the first-year composition classroom.

The research aimed to determine the ways in which enhancement occurred for students and teachers through evaluation of student coursework, a post-semester student focus group and a faculty interview. Focusing on the impacts of this curriculum on a part-time teacher, this study also aimed to bring to light some of the challenges inherent in service-learning within FYC, while offering ways to mediate those challenges in both course design and departmental implementation.

As a result of this project, recommendations were made for modification of this curriculum to be used as an option for instructors alongside appropriate professional development, which is essential to the success of service-learning in FYC.

Continued research dealing with various approaches to using service-learning in FYC was also recommended.

## **DEDICATION**

“...creativity cannot exist with ruptura, without a break from the old, without conflict in which  
you have to make a decision.”

Paulo Freire (Carrick et al., 38).

My parents, Art and Joyce Bormann, who taught me to follow my bliss and explore what makes me curious, inspired this thesis. Because of the way they raised me, I believe it is my duty as an educated citizen to give back my community, my students and my field in as many ways as  
I can.

I dedicate this work to my husband, John. He has been there from the early stages of this project, as a cheerleader and support system. With him by my side, I read articles on our road trips while we were dating, started my research when we first moved in together and had my first draft done around the time he proposed. In part due to his unwavering support, I was able to type this through three moves, three pet adoptions and planning our wedding. He was there for me at my defense, two days after we became legally married, and the irony is not lost on me. To my partner then, now and forever more, thank you for believing in me even when I didn't.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Dr. Beth Rapp Young has been there from the beginning and has provided constructive criticism that has not only taught me about this process, but more about academic writing in general.

Dr. Elizabeth Wardle deserves thanks far beyond this thesis; her support of my time spent working on this project has been unwavering. I've had many influential teachers, but no one has helped me grow quite like she has. I have come to be not only a better writer in all areas of the craft, but to also take risks differently. From her I have learned (and unlearned) so much, all of which has made me more confident in using my voice.

As my advisor, Dr. Blake Scott has been inexplicably patient, kind and encouraging. If there were more people like him in this world, we wouldn't need service-learning as much as we do. I will be forever changed because of the opportunity to have worked with him over the course of this thesis; I've learned I need to trust myself more and take bigger risks. I've learned to never step back when I believe something is important (and to not give up when a project feels hopeless). But mostly, I've learned that being a nice person can be an incredible professional strength. I hope to give back to my community and my department as he has shown me is possible.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE – OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE AND STUDY .....	1
Current Conversations .....	2
Definitions of Service Learning .....	3
Potential Benefits and Challenges.....	10
Potential Benefits.....	11
Challenges .....	13
Gaps in Conversation .....	18
Exigency of Project.....	19
Overview of Course Model.....	20
Forecasting.....	22
Summary of Arguments .....	22
CHAPTER TWO – COURSE MODEL AND METHODS OF STUDY .....	24
Introduction .....	24
Overview of FYC Program and Service-Learning Course Model.....	26
FYC Objectives and Learning Outcomes .....	26
Enhancement of Objectives and Outcomes .....	28
Enhanced Main Components and Major Assignments .....	31
Discussion of Rationale and Approach.....	36
Transition to Study .....	45
Methodology .....	47
Study of Student Writing in the Course.....	48
Limitations of Methodology.....	60
Background of Motivations .....	61
CHAPTER THREE – OBSERVATIONS .....	63
Student-Related Observations.....	63
Benefits .....	65
Limitations.....	79
Unexpected Observations .....	85
Instructor-Related Observations.....	92
Critical Consciousness Is Necessary for Instructors.....	92
Part-Time Instructors Can Teach Service-Learning Courses .....	94
Not All Benefits Require Sustainability.....	95
Unanswered Questions .....	96
Forecasting of Implications.....	97
CHAPTER FOUR – IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS .....	98
Summary of Results.....	98
Recommendations for Teachers .....	99
Revision of Overall Model .....	99
ENC 1102: Promoting Literate Lives.....	103
Recommendations for Administrators and Others Supporting FYC Instructors.....	113
Faculty Coordinators or Fellows.....	114

Service-Learning and Professional Development .....	116
Conclusions .....	120
APPENDIX A: IRB LETTER .....	122
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS .....	124
Martinez Interview Questions .....	124
Student Focus Group Questions .....	125
LIST OF REFERENCES .....	126

## **CHAPTER ONE – OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE AND STUDY**

Through teacher action research and a descriptive study, this project is an explanation of my attempt to integrate service-learning into a First-Year Composition (FYC) course. I focused on teaching transferable writing and rhetorical concepts through the use of writing studies research, while also having students write for public audiences. I had students read, write and reflect to enhance their critical consciousness and motivate them to use writing as a form of social action. This project spans one course, ENC 1101, taught in the fall semester of 2010.

With this project, I will contribute to the discussion of service-learning in FYC in a way that is grounded and practical. In much of the scholarship surrounding service-learning and writing courses, I have found a void in FYC-specific studies. More directly, I have found very little scholarship concerned with combining service-learning with a FYC approach emphasizing both declarative and procedural knowledge about writing from research in the field. A lot of the work that has been done to suggest the success of service-learning in FYC has involved courses taking different approaches. In addition, more information is needed to determine how service-learning can be incorporated into FYC by part-time instructors and instructors who do not have access to professional development. More research is also needed to determine how the often pre-set competencies in FYC impact the way instructors use service-learning.

In this project I aim to present not only what worked, but also what didn't work, as well as my observations about why that was the case based on my approach. For service-learning to be taken seriously as a viable approach to teaching FYC, specific attention also needs to be paid to what will be asked of instructors, students and program directors. For quite some time the



arguments surrounding service-learning in FYC have addressed how different approaches reach different results; while this project will do the same, the contribution made here will also address gaps in the scholarship and establish another aspect of that discussion as it pertains to the resources to support service-learning in FYC. I believe this discussion will help departments make the best decision about how to support service-learning in FYC based on their provisions. As service-learning continues to grow as a pedagogical approach, and scholars such as Thomas Deans cite writing courses as a prime place for service-learning to provide benefits to students, continuing this conversation is not only timely but also necessary in our field.

This chapter will present the current conversation of service-learning in FYC as it applies to this study, as well as relevant gaps in the literature that lead to my research. I will also discuss my methodology, a summary of my main arguments and preview the chapters that will follow.

### Current Conversations

Since the mid 1980s, service-learning in FYC has been a way to bring “the academic world and the democratic community into a closer relationship” (Ball and Goodburn 81). Through that, students are able to “negotiate new positions for themselves” (81), making service-learning full of “rich and productive contact zones” (81). First-year students need a place for themselves within the university and the community to be successful (Fischer); service-learning provides them an avenue to form a “social consciousness” (Herzberg 308) and improve their “personal efficacy” (Kendrick and Suarez 37) by giving students experience with “real rhetorical situations” (Heilker via Bickford and Reynolds 235) and preparation for “civic participation” (Crisco 32).

### *Definitions of Service Learning*

In 1999 service-learning had over one hundred possible definitions (Deans, 1999; Mikolchak) and while it doesn't seem to be much easier to define today, a definition is important because the difference in how one defines service-learning is akin to the ways one practices it.

As borrowed from Kendall, "service learning [definitions can] be grouped into two categories: service-learning as a kind of education and service learning as a kind of philosophy" (qtd. in Giles and Eyler 78). As many scholars have urged that service-learning needs a theoretical backbone, finding one's place within this approach has become a popular conversation within the scholarship published since the late 1990s.

The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, a resource program that supports the Corporation for National and Community Service, defines service learning as "a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (par 1). Campus Compact, a collegiate support organization founded by Stanford, Brown and Georgetown universities in 1985 states on their website: "Service-learning incorporates community work into the curriculum, giving students real-world learning experiences that enhance their academic learning while providing a tangible benefit for the community" (par. 1). In this study I define service learning as an approach to teaching and learning that connects objectives for education with civic action and reflection done by students in pursuit of gaining knowledge in a discipline and meeting a community need. Defining service-learning is one of many important parts of finding our way among the options, but is also not something we should

aim to make static; having a flexible definition of service-learning allows us to continuously assess our evolving priorities.

### *John Dewey and Paulo Freire*

James Dubinsky believes “service learning is neither easily defined nor practiced” (5), but one way to make service-learning more comprehensible is to understand the theoretical undercurrent present within service-learning scholarship. Two theorists/philosophers who have been largely influential in service-learning theory are John Dewey (1859-1952) and Paulo Freire (1929-1997). Seminal service-learning scholar Thomas Deans suggests: “service learning reflects, either unconsciously or consciously, a Deweyian influence” (Deans 1999, 78). While Dewey didn’t use service-learning, “his philosophy of experience is central to his early work on pedagogy and his later philosophical works concerning epistemology” (Deans 1999, 78). An American philosopher, psychiatrist and education reformer, Dewey broke experience into two elements: “agreeableness and effect on later experience” (79). His prominence in educational scholarship is central beyond just service-learning approaches for this reason; in the early 1930s he defined scaffolding as a “principle of continuity” and suggested “experiences build on previous ones and...need to be directed to the ends of growth and development” (79). He also proposed what we now call situated learning as a “principle of interaction,” suggesting that “learning results from the transaction between the individual (learner) and the environment” (79). While these ideas are present in service-learning, it was mainly Dewey’s attention to reflection that has allowed scholars to further the aims of service-learning pedagogy. Dewey believed that “for projects to be truly educative” (qtd in Giles and Elyer 80) they must:

- generate interest

- be worthwhile intrinsically
  - present problems that awaken new curiosity and create demand for information
  - cover a considerable time span and be capable of foster[ing] development over time
- (Giles and Eyster 80)

Deans offers that “education for Dewey, is a form of growth through active experience and reflective thought” (16); this idea can be found in the work of Deans and others. Service-learning scholarship is hinged on the idea that both action and reflection are present as part of the student learning experience. Dewey believed that “schools [do] not simply prepare people...for life, rather they model it” (82). Much of the scholarship on writing and service-learning addresses that concern with attention paid toward creating “real world writing” (Dorman and Dorman 126), helping students cultivate a “social imagination” (Davi qtd.by Herzberg 76), teaching “civic responsibility” (Dorman and Dorman 124) and allowing students to explore “unequal power relations” (Riggs 4). In these ways and more, Deans accurately portrays Dewey’s essential relationship to how we view, define and practice service-learning in contemporary pedagogy.

Paulo Freire has been referred to as “the Latin John Dewey” (Deans 15). Although some scholars emphasize differences in Freire and Dewey’s approaches to the relationship between teaching and political action, the main difference I see is that Dewey believed education prepares a student for political action, while Freire felt education *was* political in and of itself (Deans 20). Freire helped scholars see that the classroom is and will always be a political place which furthered the idea that service-learning can provide a way to use the politics in the classroom to prepare a student for the politics they will experience in life (Nester 2).

Despite looking at education through different means, Dewey and Freire share a view of education as being more than just what happens in the classroom. For Freire, “education should be made up of ‘action, critical reflection, curiosity, demanding rigor, uneasiness [and] uncertainty’” (Deans 21). As Freire’s views on critical thinking extend to include “willingness to enter into dialogue with the disposed in society” (22), we can see how both Dewey and Freire’s early ideas have helped to establish a movement to combine classroom learning with that of learning from others outside of the classroom.

Deans suggested in his 1999 article for the *Michigan Journal of Service Learning* that “service learning practitioners...align their philosophical preferences with their grounded teaching practices” (26), but he also warned that “we should resist the impulse to recruit service-learning practitioners into a single philosophical, theoretical or pedagogical framework” (2), focusing instead on the “overlap” (26) of Dewey and Freire that has informed his own approach:

an anti-foundationalist epistemology; an affirmation of the centrality of experience in learning; an articulation of the intimate relationship between action, reflection and learning; an emphasis on dialogue; and an abiding hope for social change through education combined with community action. (Deans 26)

The presentation of these commonalities serves as a way to further define and understand how Dewey’s and Freire’s contributions have influenced the way we practice service-learning in FYC. For Dubinsky, mixing frameworks brought him to define service-learning as incorporating three “axes” present at the same time – learning, serving and reflecting (5). These three elements borrow seamlessly from the ideas set forth by Freire and Dewey, as well as what Deans has suggested about the role of the community in regard to the service accomplished. Dubinsky has

argued that efficient service-learning pedagogy must include reciprocity, reflection and accomplishment. This idea aligns with the updated direction service-learning scholarship has taken in recent years, by placing more emphasis on re-defining the theoretical framework of service-learning. Despite the evolution of how service-learning is practiced, there remains consistent attention paid to students performing service for the community in some fashion, reflecting on their experiences and learning as a result of the process.

### *Types of Service*

Students can do service working face-to-face, building relationships with community members or members of community organizations, and they can also do service online, on campus or off-campus (Mastrangelo; Stenberg and Whealy). Regardless of where the service actually takes place, a common element of service used in the classroom involves students building relationships with others through their actions. While relationship-building service is the messiest, it also comes with the most benefits (Stenberg and Whealy). When relationship building is a goal in students' service, the value of that service can become more personal for them (Dubinsky; Gere and Sinor; Gorelick; Green; Himley; Kincaid and Sotiriou). However, those relationships are also some of the most problematic for the community, the instructor, the university and the student (Mathieu).

A major challenge present for instructors who teach service-learning classes is to balance their course goals and outcomes with the goals they have for the learning students are doing through service. Paula Mathieu complicates that idea further in her seminal book, *Tactics of Hope*, by arguing that as members of a university community, we have a responsibility to make sure the service our students are doing is actually providing a marked benefit to the

community (xvi). Mathieu posits that one way relationship building service can enhance the community-university partnership is through actual *partnerships*. In that way, “specific courses could then be planned around specific needs of specific groups at specific times” (104) to ensure that the service students are doing is not “generic and not responsive to the particular rhetorical moment[s in the community]” (99). Throughout *Tactics of Hope*, Mathieu warns about service-learning being used by universities merely as a “selling point” (95). When this is the primary purpose of service-learning in a department, the relationship building that students and community members can experience is short-sighted and often not sustainable.

Without recognizing the challenges and potential benefits inherent in how service is actually done, instructors may be inclined to only believe service can only take place face-to-face, which could either keep them from using service-learning in their course(s) or cause them to make unrealistic choices about the level of service they ask of their students. This oversight could result in instructors choosing options of service they cannot manage effectively based on their role in the university (full or part-time employment) and the demographics of the students they teach (commuting or mostly resident students). While instructors typically approach service in a specific way that works for them, as Chapter Two will explore, there is also great value in exposing students to a wider variety of definitions for “service” as a verb, as a way of being in the world. Helping students make situated connections between the act of service and the act of writing can not only enhance the way they see themselves academically, but it might just make them better writers, too.

Susan Wells, in her CCC article, “Rogue Cops and Health Care: What Do We Want from Public Writing?” suggests that “the writing classroom does important cultural work for the

million and a half students it serves each year, but it does not carry out that work through the texts it produces” (338). To counter this problem, one of her solutions is to have students “produce...writing that will enter some form of public space” (339). By involving public writing directly in the composition classroom, Wells suggests we can go a long way to avoid “assigning generic public writing...[wherein] students inscribe their positions in a vacuum” (328) by teaching them that public writing requires that they invent and become knowledgeable about the public for which they plan to write. As you will see throughout the chapters that follow, having students create projects that address an audience of their choosing is one way to approach this by using writing as a form of service.

### *For, About, With*

Dewey’s “principal of interaction” (Deans 79) suggests that the learner and their surroundings influence each other as part of the learning process, an idea that is reflected in Deans’ three types of writing within service: for, about and with. In his seminal book published in 2000, *Writing Partnerships: Service-learning in Composition*, Deans discusses the differences between asking students to write for the community, with the community and about the community. When students write *for* the community, they produce documents that will be used for community benefit; this is “one of the most popular forms of service-learning [writing]” (53) and is often called “writing as service” (53). When students write *with* the community, they often write for newspapers or collaborate with community members to make their voices heard via writing partnerships; Carnegie Mellon University’s Community Literacy Center partnership is a good example of this (110). When students write *about* the community, they do a larger variety



of things that are not as focused on collaboration with the community, but rather studying the community through writing. Projects using this form of writing may include personal journal writing about an issue in the community, community member biographies (wherein students might write up an interview with someone from the community), and other expressive arts that involve the community and community members being inspiration for work done by students, that may or may not result in a direct community benefit. Bentley College is a good model for this type of writing (Davi; Deans, 2000; Herzberg, 1994; Lewis and Palmer; Novak and Goodman).

The differences inherent in these approaches are essential to note for an instructor designing writing assignments for their course, as students' audiences will change with the type of writing they are asked to do. Also, these distinctions can help an instructor make choices about how they will manage their service-learning classroom and what kind of relationships they would like their students to build with the community through writing. I find Deans' contribution most useful in terms of how thinking through the choices inherent in having students write for, about and/or with can help to solidify what we want them to do. I also see areas where one can borrow from each approach over the span of a course, as is evident in the model that I will present from my own project in Chapter Two.

### Potential Benefits and Challenges

The variety of potential benefits and challenges an instructor will experience with regard to teaching a service-learning/FYC course will vary greatly depending on the design and approach that the teacher chooses, as well as the instructor's role within the university. For the

sake of this project, I have outlined some of the most pertinent of both categories as they relate to this project.

### *Potential Benefits*

#### *Rhetorical Immediacy*

Service-learning FYC courses allow instructors variety in the rhetorical situations they present to their students through assignments; service-learning in FYC provides a gateway through which students experience situated learning in ways they may not in non-service-learning FYC courses. Paul Heilker suggests that service-learning produces “real rhetorical situations” (Bickford and Reynolds 235); with rhetorical situations spanning to the audiences and for purposes outside of the university, service-learning provides teachers with a lot of freedom to make choices and/or ask students to make choices while writing. As one of the FYC objectives I used in my course asked students to “study writing as situated motivated discourse,” I found that using service-learning seemed to enhance student motivation by helping them see how academic writing provides value and connections to communities outside the university, for which they could write.

#### *Opportunity to Intervene*

Virginia Crisco argues that we need to look at service-learning via activism/activist literacy: “the rhetorical use of literacy for civic participation” (32) for the purpose of “critically understanding and challenging socio-political power struggles” (34). Many of my students chose activist texts, such as YouTube videos about abortion or drug abuse and ad campaigns by non-profits such as Greenpeace to rhetorically analyze, positioning themselves as individuals with

stances on issues relating to their discourse communities as well as presenting their understanding of the ways genres work within those communities. While involving activism in the classroom to teach concepts such as genre is a benefit of service-learning, there is a mediated way activism must be introduced, as students at large research universities are not always members of the communities in which they reside, nor have the time or desire to view themselves as activists in the way Crisco seems to ask. As such, simply having conversations about activism and writing can help to debunk commonly held beliefs about what activism is, making it more accessible to students as another way to use writing in the world. By discussing how writing can be used as a form of activism, students are able to develop a “social imagination” (Herzberg, 1994 19) that may result in increasing their involvement as writers and citizens. To do this with my students I used a working definition of activism as a way of performing service for communities via writing; I had them unpack as many of their beliefs about activists and activism as they could share. By discussing what they thought activism was compared to what they believed they could do for issues they cared about, some of them began to see being active as something they could achieve and also something that would be beneficial in promoting change.

As I will discuss further in Chapter Three, some students in ENC 1101 seemed to become more motivated to write because they were seeing themselves as writers in a context outside of the classroom and making choices in writing that asked them to do more with their final assignments than produce essays for teacher-audiences. For many of them, this approach proved challenging, which motivated them to push themselves as writers.

### *Motivation*

Service-learning in FYC has the potential to increase student's motivation to accomplish assignments in a meaningful way because they make their own decisions about what interests them and how they would like to help others. While it can be argued that a rhetorical approach to FYC can also accomplish this, the difference service-learning makes is in broadening the conversation students and instructors have about public writing and its many functions in the world. In order to maximize the potential for what students have learned in FYC to transfer beyond the course, what they do in the course should be relevant to their lives. Service-learning in FYC, by way of increasing options for assignments and audiences via public writing, provides students a wider variety of contexts in which to read, analyze, write and reflect about how writing gives them a voice, which can aid them in making connections as to why writing is important in their lives, thereby increasing the motivation they have to write inside and outside of the university.

### *Challenges*

Instructors and departments may not embrace the use of service-learning in first-year writing programs because of the challenges often associated with service-learning. The sections that follow will draw attention to some of the more specific challenges service-learning presents in FYC as discussed in the scholarship.

### *Losing Focus on the Subject Matter*

One of the main challenges related to the opposition of service-learning in FYC is the argument that service-learning can subvert the focus on writing in an FYC course (Cooper, 1997; Mastrangelo; Mikolchak).

For a composition course Lisa Mastrangelo taught wherein students held a book drive and wrote about women in prison, she discussed that students said they didn't understand how the course was connected to writing, some saying they felt like they were going to a history class. Mastrangelo admitted the course "strayed far from writing or even critical conversation" (47) because of the subject matter, but she didn't address how she would or could alter that. Similarly, Maria Mikolchak focused her course on violence against women and had students volunteer at a local women's shelter where they cleaned and painted while getting to know some of the residents. While the response from the students was mostly positive, with strong final presentations and "students ...connect[ing] all parts of the course into a meaningful whole" (96), one of her students reported that she didn't feel she was in an English class because they talked so much about everything else. While there are many approaches like those described in the scholarship that I would argue could be improved to make courses like these more writing focused, the major benefit of service-learning in FYC is that it can be used to enhance student learning in a variety of ways depending upon the design of the course. For courses such as these, adjustments could be made in order to make the subject matter of the course more writing-related.

### *Effects May Not Be Sustainable*

Another challenge present in the discussion of service-learning in FYC is the concern as to why service-learning should be used in FYC. Throughout the course of this project I have been asked this by colleagues and encountered it in the scholarship; many do not feel service-learning is a good idea in FYC because it asks too much of an already overloaded course. Ellen Cushman recognizes that:

the institutional standing of service learning initiatives remains difficult to legitimize – service learning is the fringe bordering the fabric of academic work. Some faculty and administrators do not value nor support their colleagues’ efforts to start and sustain service learning programs because they perceive these programs as dispensable to the main work of the university. (2)

While this observation brings up points that could motivate a much larger discussion, Cushman rightfully urges those who utilize service-learning to recognize how their practice is perceived. I feel most of the concern presented comes from a lack of understanding about the goals of a service-learning FYC course as well as a lack of knowledge about how service-learning can enhance student learning in FYC. In many ways, those who support service-learning in FYC do not see this connection as an either-or; rather, they see the ways service-learning can add to FYC, which is something those in opposition may overlook.

For service-learning to be taken seriously, Cushman recommends “social reflexivity” be practiced by the “students, teachers, and community members” involved (4). She suggests that “these reflections reveal the difficulties and accomplishments of individuals who often have to socially reposition themselves in service-learning collaborations, reflections that offer one place

for collaborators to begin writing, teaching, and knowledge making together” (4). Referring to the efforts of Linda Flower and Shirley Brice Heath, as well as Himley et al., Cushman suggests that service-learning be practiced by instructors as a “problem-solving activity” both for themselves and their students; to help build the esteem of service-learning in the academic community, “researchers need to be invited into the community” to share with their field about how service-learning can be beneficial (3). To support sustainability, she argues that service-learning research should take a turn toward “a method of narrative refraction, not treating stories as foundational, but as complex, meaningful, ongoing events that can be told and retold to keep learning and teaching in motion” (4). To Cushman, the “stories” (4) that are told through service-learning research have vast potential to further the research of service-learning, as well as help departments and institutions support a sustainable approach to service-learning in FYC. However, before service-learning in FYC can be made sustainable, those who teach it need to participate in the process of creating research from their experiences, which means they need to be able to teach service-learning based FYC courses.

#### *Students May Not Be Prepared or Positioned to Intervene*

As I was designing my course and assignments, a challenge I found important was to keep the student population I teach in the forefront of my mind. As I had limitations based on not being an Orange County resident and being a part-time instructor with an undetermined future within the department, I was aware that my students shared a similar transience. Many students commonly enrolled in FYC courses are first or second-semester freshmen, around the age of 18, who do not have their own transportation and, depending on the type of university they’re

attending, may not consider the university's surrounding community their own. They also do not have time in one course to sufficiently learn about the conventions of any partnering discourse community. All of these things may make it difficult for students to intervene in the way service-learning scholarship often suggests they do in order to build relationships. Aside from the safety and logistical concerns of having freshman do service in an unfamiliar community, there is also the question of their maturity and ability to manage increased responsibility this requires (Mathieu). As I will discuss in Chapter Two, I attempted to mediate these challenges by having students intervene in conversations based on the communities they'd already connected themselves to, and by using public writing as the form of service they provided to those communities. Any mediation within a course requires a teacher to have their finger on the pulse of the student body they instruct. For a new and/or part-time instructor, this level of student-awareness may be near impossible. Furthermore, if a university assigns a teacher a service-learning FYC course, the extra time and energy put into planning for that course (without extra pay) may negatively affect the teacher's dedication to the level of awareness necessary to overcome this challenge (Bacon, 2000).

### *Increased Instructor Workload*

As a graduate student teaching ENC 1101 for the first time, my schedule and workload made facilitating face-to-face relationship building with a community partner impossible. This challenge is important to discuss not only because of the choices it led me to make, but also because FYC is often taught by part-time faculty (Cushman) and service-learning FYC courses require a lot of work from a teacher, especially when a community partner is involved. We need



to be asking ourselves a lot of questions (Himley) before we design a service-learning FYC course; for a part-time teacher, the workload associated with those questions, not to mention the management of the service portion of the class may overwhelm their teaching. Service-learning is inherently “messy” (Mastrangelo 33) but without preparation on behalf of the instructor, productive “chaos” (Stenberg and Whealy 683) could lead to an instructor or student being soured by the experience. For me, this challenge came to pass because I didn’t really know my strengths as an instructor in my second semester of teaching. I was anxious that service-learning would make FYC more difficult for me to teach. I was also concerned that it would impact my future job possibilities within the department in a negative way or create issues in the classroom I couldn’t handle with my limited experience. Also, because I’m not a resident of Orange County and don’t have relationships with community partners shared by UCF, I didn’t want to attempt to build a community partnership only to have to leave it the following semester. I moved ahead with my course by using public writing as a form of service by which students could intervene. This decision came down to knowing that no matter how I chose to teach service-learning FYC, it would require something more from me, just as I expected it to bring something more out of my students.

### Gaps in Conversation

While the scholarship available gives an understanding of the issues around service-learning in FYC, specific suggestions to ease some of the present challenges are few and far between. Much of the service-learning and FYC scholarship focuses on upper-division writing courses, which presents a need for further research on service-learning practices and approaches

specific to FYC. Likewise, most of what has been documented about service-learning in writing courses has come from full-time instructors, which is problematic in FYC wherein many courses are taught by part-time faculty comprised of graduate students and adjuncts. Further research is also needed to determine how an instructor can utilize service-learning in FYC courses wherein the core competencies are pre-set by the department; much of the scholarship surrounding the use of service-learning in Composition courses, because it is focused on upper-division courses, presents courses wherein the core competencies are built by the instructor who is teaching the course. Integrating service-learning into FYC presents additional challenges in regard to making sure a course does what it needs to do for the department while also still providing the benefits associated with service-learning. For instructors, further research is needed to study how access to professional development, or the lack thereof, affects whether and how they use service-learning in FYC. Finally, as the subject matter of FYC is a heavily debated topic in our field, that conversation needs to extend into the discussion of service-learning in FYC as well; studies need to be done to address if and how using a writing studies approach to FYC in conjunction with service-learning affects student learning.

#### Exigency of Project

I wanted to incorporate service-learning in FYC because, as a new and part-time instructor, I was looking for a way I could blend the expertise I had writing for communities outside of the university with the expertise I was developing writing for the university. Teaching in a FYC program focused on rhetorically based core competencies, I wanted to find a way to forge the academic rigor I knew my students needed with more experience writing for the world outside of college. As students entering college are often in the process of entering new discourse

communities, I wanted to give them an opportunity to explore social issues surrounding their future fields and current club memberships. I wanted them to become more skilled at writing for a variety of audiences in a variety of genres, and to use persuasion as a means to have a civic voice both on-campus and off. Based on what I'd learned about service-learning as a graduate student, I felt incorporating service-learning in FYC could enhance students' learning in the sense that they could potentially see a purpose to writing that doesn't begin and end with a letter grade. I believed they could achieve the competencies required within FYC while also learning more about a variety of dialogues within the university and beyond. I didn't think this was too much to ask; rather, I felt that the situated ways service-learning could enhance FYC would not only make the concepts easier for students to absorb, but would also support the transfer of writing skills into other disciplines, since the rhetorical situations they would face in the university and beyond would require a large variety of genres, with an even larger variety of audiences. By bridging my passions as an academic with my passions as an activist, I found ways to bring my experiences and interests into the classroom that made me feel more confident in my teaching ability, all the while keeping writing and rhetoric as the central focus of the course.

### Overview of Course Model

I integrated service-learning into my course model by adapting objectives and major assignments while still focusing on the major core competencies used by the department: writing process knowledge, understanding of discourse communities, rhetorical awareness and genre knowledge. Three specific objectives I adapted included language relating to how I used service-

learning in this model. The major differences between my model and the approach used by other instructors in the department revolved around how I structured goals for the major assignments. The Discourse Community, Rhetoric and Genre units all asked students to focus on using the learned core competencies to explore and analyze ways to write for and about the community. The final project I assigned consisted of two parts and asked students to deliver an academic rationale for the choices they made in composing their final product (poster, video, blog, t-shirt, etc). Students were asked to comprehensively use the knowledge they'd gained about discourse communities, rhetoric and genres to create a message related to a social issue and deliver it to a discourse community of their choosing. This two-part final project differed from the academic paper usually required at the end of ENC 1101 in that it asked students to support the choices they'd made in the design of their message, but to do that, they had to actually create the message. Their messages served as their contributions to the community, while their academic papers served as my way of assessing that they'd not only made the choices evident in their messages, but could present evidence and reflect as to why those choices were justified with regard to audience, genre, appeals and delivery.

I built this model in an attempt to address some of the gaps I found in the scholarship surrounding service-learning in FYC. As most of the service-learning studies have involved upper-division courses, I wanted to see what students just entering college would get out of using writing as a form of service. Furthermore, as this model involved teaching writing and rhetoric-focused competencies and using service-learning as a way to support those goals, I wanted to know exactly how service-learning could enhance student learning in those areas; research hasn't been done on the connection between public audiences and student learning as related to

rhetorical skills. While much of the literature would support that the purpose of a service-learning course in first-year writing should be in large part to prepare students for the academic writing they will do in college, I wanted to see how academic writing and writing for the community could be taught simultaneously, and how this would help students learn about rhetorical knowledge.

While the scholarship frequently illustrates how time consuming service-learning can be for instructors, students, and community partners, rarely have researchers offered alternative approaches by which service-learning can be made more manageable. In the design and implementation of the model I created, I wanted to see how teaching a service-learning FYC course would work for a part-time graduate student. Through that experience, I aimed to learn what could potentially be applied from my course to make service-learning in FYC more user-friendly for a larger audience of instructors

### Forecasting

In Chapter Two I will present my methodology and a narrative rationale for my course model that details how it met and enhanced the core competencies of ENC 1101. In Chapter Three I will discuss the key findings from this study, outlining potential benefits and challenges of using service-learning in FYC as they pertain to teacher and student experiences. In Chapter Four I will make recommendations for teachers and writing program administrators (WPAs) in regard to ways departments and institutions can support service-learning in FYC, including what kind of professional development would be beneficial.

### Summary of Arguments

Through this project I found that service-learning seemed to enhance my FYC course model for some students by supporting their exploration of themselves as writers and engaged citizens through the subject matter and assignments of the course. By teaching the core competencies and having students use public writing to address their communities, I exposed them to a wider variety of genres and delivery choices; the writing they did by the end of the course asked them to intervene into situated conversations about an issue that was meaningful to them, which seemed to increase their motivation to accomplish difficult tasks. In-depth critical and rhetorical analysis that also connected with social issues they deemed personally relevant were other benefits associated with this course.

As an instructor, this course enhanced my experience of teaching FYC by allowing my personal knowledge of public audiences to show up in the classroom in new ways, providing a bridge between my academic and activist writing practices that I could share with students. In this way, service-learning enhanced how I taught the core competencies due to the access I had to building more situated rhetorical exigency within assignments; this course model allowed me to better teach to my strengths.

By mediating some of the challenges inherent in service-learning in FYC, we should be able to use service-learning to provide enhancement of FYC courses without adding more work for students, instructors or departments. An approach to accomplish this, as well as suggestions for implementing teacher support, can be built from this project to make the service-learning's benefits more accessible to a larger audience of FYC instructors.

## CHAPTER TWO – COURSE MODEL AND METHODS OF STUDY

### Introduction

This chapter will introduce the service-learning course model I taught for ENC 1101 in the fall semester of 2010. The description of the course as I designed and taught it is grounded in how I adapted the programmatic outcomes put forth by the UCF First-Year Writing Program to include service-learning pedagogy, specifically relating to how students read and analyzed, how they were motivated, what they were assigned to write about and how they were asked to utilize reflection.

As this study relied heavily on teacher action research as methodology, the description of the course found here takes a more personal tone than what may typically be expected for a master's thesis project.

While some may believe the personal nature of teacher research draws away from the professionalization of our field, I argue there is plenty of room in composition studies for projects like what I have completed. The acceptance and respect of teacher research as a research methodology is hinged on how and why departments place value on theory and practice for their graduate students (Ray 139-45). Ruth Ray, in her book *The Practice of Theory: Teacher Research in Composition*, argues, “we must realize that there are many knowledge makers” in our field and that we should “recognize the many forms of knowledge they create” (137). For Ray, this includes valuing how “teacher research illustrates how teachers’ personalities, beliefs, feelings, and political views affect the learning environment, as well as how researchers interpret and write about their feelings” (137). Accepting teacher research as a valuable way to contribute

to composition studies complicates the view many have of research as “‘real work,’ and teaching [as] merely a distraction” since teacher research is built on research being conducted alongside the practice of teaching (Ray 140). Ray argues for a “more interpretive, process-oriented” approach to teaching graduate students about research, wherein “from an interpretive perspective, graduate students write in order to construct the field for themselves and to consider the personal possibilities of researching and teaching within it” (148). Ray observed that many of her colleagues over the years have continued to “not consider [personal writing] intellectually rigorous enough” which she believes “merely perpetuates the dichotomies between personal and public knowledge, theory and practice that seriously inhibit enlightened, broad-based, multimodal, multidisciplinary inquiry in English studies” (151). Ray states that teacher researchers “write in order to articulate for themselves and others what changes need to be made to improve teaching and learning” (156).

My choice to frame this project as teacher research came from the exigence of my study, which will be explained in this chapter. My experiences as a teacher, student, scholar and writer informed me to ask the questions which lead to this project, and my desire to study my own teaching in this way was an effort to inform others. By using teacher research, I argue that I have been able to provide a contextualized account of the course from my perspective as an instructor, which allows me to directly contribute practical applications from my results to an audience of teachers and administrators.

In the sections that follow, I describe the service-learning course model I created, along with my motivations, the questions addressed by my study and the methodology I used for analysis.



## Overview of FYC Program and Service-Learning Course Model

### *FYC Objectives and Learning Outcomes*

The outcomes for FYC within our department focus on procedural and rhetorical knowledge about writing that students may transfer within the university and beyond. While there are set outcomes for ENC 1101 and ENC 1102, the overarching goal for both courses is that students will leave FYC with the understanding that writing is both situational and a process; students will have gained tools for navigating a variety of rhetorical situations. By the end of ENC 1101 it is expected that students will have amassed understanding about persuasive writing and rhetorical situations; they will view writing and research as processes made up of specific elements; they will be able to understand, practice and analyze writing for discourse communities; they will be able to navigate a variety of genres; and they will have become aware of their own writing process and will be able to talk and reflect about themselves as writers.

When students enter 1102, some of them have had 1101 at UCF, and others have taken a similar course at another school, or they've been exempted from having to take the course at all. 1102 brings students together from a wide variety of backgrounds, with the common purpose to have them put into practice what they've previously learned as it applies to doing researched writing. In our program, research for students is centered on genuine inquiry; students are taught strategies to inquire about writing, collect data and write research, and make arguments and practice rhetorical competencies. Students choose research focuses based on questions in writing studies research, which they've often established in assignments for the course leading up to a larger final paper or project at the end of the term. Whereas 1101 challenges their understanding

about writing by focusing on process and rhetoric, 1102 challenges students' understanding about research by moving them beyond cursory search-engine exploration. Both courses are focused on transferrable skills that students can apply to their majors and courses, as well as the writing they will do outside of the university.

In order to create objectives that meet our department's learning outcomes for 1101, while also including some of the components of service-learning, I built the following set of objectives for my course model:

- Study writing as situated, motivated discourse.
- Study genres of writing from inside and outside of the university.
- Study the connections between rhetoric, writing and change.
- Study discourse communities inside and outside of the university and their related social issues.
- Practice the canons of rhetoric as ways of knowing, creating and delivering.
- Practice analyzing genres and understanding choices one must make as a writer.
- Become more confident in writing abilities and self-reflection.

Since fall 2010, I have altered these objectives in minor ways; if I taught the course in the future, knowing what I do now, I would rework them a bit more for increased clarity, as I will discuss further in Chapter Four.

As I mentioned in Chapter One, my approach aimed to integrate service-learning into 1101 by adapting objectives and major assignments while still focusing on the major core competencies used by the department. The Discourse Community, Rhetoric and Genre units all

asked students to focus on using the learned core competencies to explore and analyze ways to write for and about the community.

### *Enhancement of Objectives and Outcomes*

#### *Discourse Communities*

I situated discourse communities within a discussion of social issues – students understood that certain groups cared about certain things for certain reasons (PETA, labor unions, Planned Parenthood, etc). As they learned how to characterize a discourse community using Swales, I had them not only profile a community they were or wished to be a member of, but also reflect about social issues that connected to their community’s public goals. Borrowing from David Coogan’s concept of ideographs, or snapshots of the ideologies a community holds, I wanted students to be able to begin to see the “techniques of power” and the “techniques of rhetoric” present for a given community (672). In the major assignment for this unit, a Discourse Community Profile, I asked them to chose to write from a position based on their level of membership – current, potential, newcomer or long-standing. I also allowed them to write their profile to an audience that consisted of new members (potential or actual) or someone (like me) who they just wanted to tell about their membership. By connecting social issues with the characteristics of a discourse community, I was able to establish a discussion about not only communities and ideological membership, but also about activism and how it occurs based on the public goals of specific communities, which was scaffolded across the other units. By having students complete a profile of a community, I aimed to get them into the process of thinking

about a community's values, in order to better analyze how to deliver to them in the upcoming units.

### *Rhetoric*

Students in my course were asked to learn and apply the canons of rhetoric in multiple assignments; while many FYC courses in our department do the same, this course was different in the sense of *how* students were asked to put that knowledge to use. In their final paper to accompany their final project, I asked students to rhetorically and reflectively analyze their entire project – from audience to genre, to exigence and constraints, to delivery and lexis, students had to pull from the knowledge they'd gained incrementally in every unit to defend their choices. I asked them to supply me with an argument about why their message worked based on the rhetorical situation they'd identified, which enhanced the course by providing them with an application of rhetoric and argumentation in a situated way. Their final assignment was a meta-rhetorical situation, which asked them to not only show off what they'd learned but to use argumentation in order to convince me that they'd made the best choices available to them as writers.

### *Genre*

This course enhanced students' understanding and ability to navigate genres by exposing them to a large variety for study and use. I broke the genres we discussed in class into four categories in order to help students compare and choose the best genres for their final projects: Everyday, Workplace, University and Activism. Examples of Everyday genres included things like text messages, grocery lists, Post-It notes and informal emails. Our discussion of Workplace

genres varied greatly based on the fields we discussed, but a few examples were patient charts filled out by nurses, memos, employee handbooks, business emails and resumés. University genres included academic papers, exams, syllabi and assignments. Examples of Activism genres included *YouTube* videos, protest songs, billboards, t-shirts and bumper stickers. While we discussed genre as a malleable concept via Devitt, coming up with concrete examples such as these as a class assisted students in gaining a more situated understanding of the concept of genre, in addition to allowing us to discuss ways in which texts challenge concrete categorization. For their final projects, I asked them to choose a genre to use to create their messages, as well as analyze their choice of that genre. By not giving them a teacher-mandated genre for their final projects, I asked them to not only understand genre as a concept, but also to apply their reasoning for choosing a genre based on the rhetorical situation they'd set up for themselves.

### *Activism*

I believe the discussion of activism within FYC offers the same kind of enhancement that a unit focused on political rhetoric or advertising might offer – it provides context to a complicated subject. When rhetoric is situated in a modern and applicable way, students can more easily understand how it works in their lives, as well as how they can use it. They can recognize it on TV and in the magazines they read, which makes it real to them. Another way activism enhanced this course was that exposure to it in a non-extremist way helped students to see that using writing to voice their stances on issues was something that is a consistent part of our society, and something to which they too could contribute. Being an activist doesn't have to mean picketing and going against the grain in big ways; even a few sentences spoken at the right

moment can make a difference. Activism in the context in which I taught it became about kairos and rhetorical choice in public writing; students were taught about how rhetoric and writing could give them opportunity to be heard.

### *Motivation*

While our department outcomes don't specifically state that students should leave ENC 1101 with more confidence or motivation to write, the other outcomes imply that there should be some shift in student's views of themselves as more competent writers by the end of the course. Understanding writing as situated discourse helps students to see that there isn't a magical formula for "good" writing that will apply across all rhetorical situations; rather, effective composition is focused on how an individual navigates a variety of elements in every writing situation. My course enhanced the motivation students had for writing in that it asked them to make a larger number of choices in the invention and delivery of their assignments, with their final project asking them to create a message via a text that had a purpose beyond our classroom. For students who were used to papers being the only measurement of their ability to write, these options helped to not only increase their confidence to complete assignments, but also helped them become more motivated writers, as I will discuss further in Chapter Three.

### *Enhanced Main Components and Major Assignments*

As with other FYC models, the main components of this course included reading, writing, analyzing and reflecting. Students did all four of these things continuously throughout the semester leading up to their final projects. The main difference in the components of this

course as compared to other FYC models is, once again, how I asked students to practice and apply these elements.

### *Reading and Analyzing*

I kept the readings for this course the same as what students would be reading in other sections of 1101; the textbook I used, *Writing About Writing: A College Reader* by Elizabeth Wardle and Douglas Downs is the same book used by a majority of instructors in our department. I did not have students read texts that directly discussed service-learning, nor did I assign readings that took away from writing being the main focus of the course. What I did do was build the course to ensure they were exposed to a wide variety of texts, and in the last two units of the course I gave them options for the kinds of texts they would analyze and produce. I relied on Coogan's idea of "materialist rhetoric" (673) to situate how and why they would analyze; from ideographs in the DC unit and beyond, I wanted students to see that an important aspect of writing for social action is to understand the community for which they will produce texts. Coogan urges that materialist rhetoric be utilized in service-learning based writing courses so that rhetorical analysis is done before students write for a community. As students need context before we can expect them to elicit change, rhetorical analysis is crucial to students' understanding of not only writing as a process, but also to writing as social action. To prepare for the Rhetorical Analysis assignment, as a class we challenged the definition of the word "text" and I encouraged students to choose items to analyze that they felt personally compelled to ask questions about. They proposed photographs, commercials, journal articles, scientific diagrams, entire websites, billboards and a variety of other texts that I could never have chosen for them with such relevance. Giving them the opportunity to make their own decisions in regard to

elements of major assignments such as this helped them to see choosing what they would write about as one of many rhetorical decisions a writer must make – some students chose images initially thinking they would be easier to analyze, only to switch to a text that included written messages about their social issue, while others who started with lengthy journal articles came to find through working in class that they were stronger at finding what wasn't said in images or commercials. This trial-and-error approach to writing coincided with much of what they'd studied about writing processes in the earlier part of the course; they learned “good” writing was all about making the best decisions based on the given situation. In the second half of the course all the writing they did asked them to practice that in one way or another. For their final paper and project, I asked them to do this once again, but in a more expansive way: they were given the option to create a message via a text, for a discourse community they'd identified, and they were asked to write a paper reflectively and rhetorically analyzing the choices they'd made in the delivery of that message. The level of analysis students completed in this course was one of the major areas I focused on, but I also wanted them to learn about analyzing as a process of asking questions for specific purposes of inquiry—something that they'd been doing for a very long time, but when applied to writing, was being used in a more directed way in ENC 1101. To help them get there I set up a lot of in-class activities in which they practiced this – we read and rhetorically analyzed syllabi, their Rhetorical Analysis assignment, political cartoons, wedding invitations, news reports, and a variety of other texts that were familiar to them inside and outside of the university.



### *Writing Assignments*

Students in this course did as much writing as they would have done in non-service-learning sections of 1101, but what was different about the writing component of my model was how they used that writing. As I mentioned, I wanted them to intervene in a public conversation with their final project by using public writing, but before that happened, I needed them to be able to reflect on the choices they were making in real ways—how would this text be received by their audience, why is it needed, what limitations did they have as the rhetor in delivering this text? Questions such as these were part of what I expected them to be able to answer after creating their final projects, but to get them accustomed to that level of meta-reflection by the end of the course, I needed to give them opportunity to write papers that would lead them to this throughout the course.

In their Discourse Community Profile, they analyzed a discourse community and identified a social issue that connected to that community's public goals; this prepared them to choose a community and issue to focus on in their final project. From there, the Rhetorical Analysis assignment asked them to analyze a text from a community in order to explore audience, exigence, constraints and appeals; this prepared them to utilize these rhetorical tools in their own writing. When it came time for them to intervene via their final projects, they were asked to put to use all the major concepts they'd learned throughout the course to produce a message via a text for a public audience and write an academic paper for me defending their choices. This two-part final project differed from the academic paper usually required at the end of ENC 1101 in that it asked students to support the choices they'd made in the design of their message, but to do that, they had to actually create the text that delivered their message. The

message served as their contribution to the community, while the paper served as my way of assessing whether made the choices evident in their products, but also whether they could present evidence and reflect as to why those choices were the best with regard to audience, genre, appeals and delivery.

### *Reflection*

Reflection in this course served as an assessment tool, as well as a way for students to explore and interact with the concepts we covered. Students responded to the readings we did on the class' Facebook page, where they commented and discussed each other's observations informally. Additionally on Facebook, they were introduced to four guests (one for each unit of the course) who all used writing professionally as it related to the unit they were representing; students were able to ask questions about a variety of writing and rhetorical aspects of the guests' work and receive answers that helped them contextualize what we were learning in class with how it worked outside of academic contexts. I also asked them to use in-class freewriting to explore their ideas, famous quotes and aspects of the readings. For each major assignment they turned in, I had them reflect about elements of their papers they wanted me to notice or those which they had questions about; I asked them to reflect about aspects of the course they were concerned or confused by; I required them to submit proposals for their Rhetorical Analysis and final projects; and like many other sections of FYC, I asked them to end the course with a final course reflection letter that discussed their growth and learning. What was different in this course about the way we used reflection was that students were asked to not only reflect on themselves by the end of the course, but to also consider how they'd made an impact in the community as a result of the course, and how likely they would be to continue using writing in this way.

### Discussion of Rationale and Approach

The way I designed this course was deeply connected to my expectations for it as well as my own strengths as an educator. I aimed to create assignments that would push students' boundaries and encourage them to take risks in their writing; I wanted them to lose some of the fear college writers often have in hope this would help them build confidence and motivation when it came to future assignments. I wanted them to leave ENC 1101 with knowledge of rhetorical tools as well as when and how to use them because knowing these things would help them in the writing they would do for the university and beyond. Because I really enjoy helping students improve their attitudes about writing, I wanted this course to give them a new way to use writing that would strengthen their ability to argue and use their voices in situated contexts. I made clear to them through class lectures and my general interest in their learning that I wanted them to understand the power they had at their disposal to create change, not only in their own lives through writing, but in the lives of others. I wanted this course to empower them as both writers and individuals.

Part of what drew me to service-learning as an educational philosophy was that I learned to teach in a department that supports academic rigor and meta-awareness. Our department encourages instructors to teach to their strengths, try new approaches and share successful strategies. I wanted to contribute to that conversation in large part because I wanted to see if I could prove that service-learning was not only possible but also beneficial for a part-time instructor in FYC. What I learned about service-learning as a graduate student seemed to complement the competencies outlined by our department, and I believed it would help to utilize

something I hadn't in my first semester teaching—my own expertise as a writer outside of academe. As such, my model attempted to address the following benefits of service-learning: rhetorical immediacy, student's opportunity to intervene and increased student motivation.

As discussed in Chapter One with regard to course design, it is easy for service-learning to become secondary to FYC; writing as service can easily become writing about service, and for some instructors, this might even be what they want to accomplish. However, for service-learning to enhance FYC, the service aspect of service-learning cannot supersede the core competencies of the course. Service-learning scholarship presents many connections between a rhetorically based approach to teaching service-learning in FYC as outlined by Bacon, Deans and Hellman. However, more often than not, I found ways that courses discussed in the scholarship could have been altered to move away from general writing skills and move into using writing as a subject for the course. Too often it seemed the inclusion of service-learning in a FYC course overshadowed the fact that the course was supposed to be teaching students about writing.

To ensure I didn't make the same oversights, I built my model from the core competencies as outlined by our department. For a variety of practical reasons, many scholars question the place service-learning should have within FYC courses, and I felt that in order for a model to be usable within our department, it would need to meet the same level of rigor that other 1101 courses did. Furthermore, as 1101 students move into 1102 with what instructors taught them, I didn't want any of the students who would come through my course to be at a disadvantage in 1102—the competencies of 1101 exist so we as instructors can ensure we are teaching to prepare our students.

I focused on having students write about the community in their Discourse Community Profile and Rhetorical Analysis assignments in order to prepare them to write for the community in their Final Projects. I also did not assign readings about writing for service or community audiences. I believe this segregated the course on some level; despite lectures in class about writing for service and activism, because service wasn't something that was addressed in the same way concepts about writing were throughout the course, students may not have felt ready to write for the community, or they might not have recognized the writing they were doing as public and/or as a form of service. Having exposed them to some of the theory behind what I was asking them to do would have contextualized the course in a more seamless way.

When an instructor uses service-learning they should build models that incorporate learning, serving and reflecting (Deans; Dubinsky) to enhance the subject matter of the course. A service-learning course should be reciprocal in what students produce and should aim to establish sustainable results. Students taking a service-learning course should gain a social imagination (Herzberg), and via reflection, they should be able to recognize the course material as relevant to their lives. For a service-learning FYC course, much of this comes in the moment when students intervene into the community via the service they do as part of the course.

This course didn't ask students to put themselves in precarious situations with vulnerable populations; nor did it require students to find transportation off-campus to complete a certain number of service hours. Because of my own standing within the department as a part-time teacher, I didn't aim to establish a community partnership for which I could ask students to create documents because I didn't want to start something I couldn't finish with an organization. Similar to the genre-model used by Deans, I asked students to make decisions about a way they

wanted to use their voice in the world and to reflect on the choices they made in doing so. The service they did was to use writing to help their community by promoting awareness on a social issue they recognized as important.

Throughout this project I have asked myself if this model should really constitute as service-learning since, arguably, much of it is very similar to other courses taught within the department. Students did write as a form of service as we discussed it, but as most writing-as-service approaches to service-learning in FYC include students creating documents for pre-defined public audiences as based on a direct community need, did this course do enough? Is the definition of writing as a form of service open enough to include this course? I believe I designed this course by taking as many safe risks as possible. Because I was new at this and because I was very familiar with the multitude of things that could go wrong, I aimed to create a model that didn't do any harm, but did do good. I accomplished that and I accomplished having FYC students use writing as a form of service, but I wondered if they felt they had done service? As far as the way this model contributes to the inclusion of service-learning in FYC overall, I believe it is relative. For a department that supports service-learning via widespread professional development, I do not think a model like this would make much of an impact. But for a department wherein service-learning in FYC is not practiced, nor is supported via professional development, my model is an example of how elements of service-learning, such as public writing, can be used to enhance FYC while not subverting writing as the subject matter or creating an unmanageable workload for first-year students, as well as the instructors who teach them.

### *Intervening and Community Writing*

As far as how the components of service-learning were used with this course, the first thing that should be noted is that scaffolding was used to prepare students for intervening with their final project. As I will discuss in Chapter Four, there are things I would revise about the model to make this aspect of the course more impactful, but as I taught it, students knew from the beginning of the semester that they wouldn't just be producing a paper for a teacher at the end, which I believe changed how they viewed the work they did in the course. While some may argue that students knew they would still ultimately be working for a grade in a course, I also saw their work become meaningful to them personally, which has value we cannot ignore. Students weren't asked to contribute to one specific community need; rather, they were asked to identify their own idea of what a community needed and use writing to address it. In this way, the intervening that they did was very much their own, which seems to have played a role in how seriously they took their work.

Students wrote papers, for which I was the only audience, and they also wrote their final paper to me, but their major semester project is where they wrote for the community. By raising the stakes and asking them to complete a difficult task many had never been asked to do before, their questions about audience, genre, delivery, lexis and even color choices became more situated to them. As Chapter Three will explore, what the students did with their projects afterward doesn't matter as much as their concern about how their work would be received by their intended audiences. This course gave them the opportunity to practice writing for someone other than a teacher, and that seemed to help many of them to see how powerful and useful public writing can be. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, the best-case scenario for each

student was that they used that final project to actually intervene in the community, but even for students who didn't take that optional step, they still treated the work they did as if it were going there, because it could.

### *Reciprocity and Sustainability*

Because students didn't respond to one specific community need and because they didn't work with a community partner, it is difficult to expressly define how this course established reciprocity in the service students completed. However, I do not believe that all service-learning courses can or should be measured the same way, for the aims of the course will change with how students meet the core competencies of service-learning. The reciprocity my model created came from the social imagination, or critical consciousness (Freire), students developed as part of being in the course. They didn't volunteer their time at soup kitchens or help to build houses; we commonly determine service as reciprocal by what it tangibly gives back, but I argue that helping freshman college students think about the world as a place they can create change within by using their voices via writing has a similar effect. Helping students establish a critical consciousness about their communities could result in future acts of service outside of an service-learning course; in the very least, as I'm sure many service-learning supporters would agree, we can hope that they will remember they are fortunate people who have the opportunity to help others. I don't see finite reciprocity in the specific projects my students created for this course, as will be further discussed in Chapter Three, but I do see connections between what they were asked to do in this course and what they felt confident they could do with writing in the future.



While sustainability is a benefit to the university, instructors and students involved, sustainability for a part-time graduate teaching associate is not something that is guaranteed, nor was it something I had the means to establish in my role within the department. As many adjuncts teaching FYC would corroborate, the role of the part-time teacher requires a flexibility and transience that makes it difficult to imagine one's presence as sustainable beyond one semester to the next. I approached sustainability in my model in the only way I felt it was fitting for my place within the university; I did not aim to make this course nor the work students did in it sustainable beyond the fall semester. What I did aim for, as I mentioned with regard to reciprocity, was that students would create projects that could be put into the community with the hope that some of them might be encouraged by their connection to community issues to continue to pursue service in some way.

Using writing as a form of service addressed some of the challenges of service-learning in FYC, but the way I used service in my model was a limitation of the course. Having students write for a community audience once during the semester was a change for them, but they could have benefited from more consistent exposure to writing for public audiences leading up to their final assignment. If they'd had more practice creating public writing, they might have been more apt to take their work one step further into the community. Likewise, had I worked with a community partner on or off campus for whom students had written, this model would have been sustainable, allowing students' work to meet a direct and identified community need that would persist from one semester to the next.

## *Motivation*

By allowing students to choose their own social issues, their own genres, create their own rhetorical situations and make each of their major assignments matter to them as personally as they chose, this course helped students to understand and practice writing in new ways. Students in my course were offered options and a chance to defend their choices, which helped them to take an active role in the decisions they made as writers, students and citizens. There wasn't a right or wrong answer as far as what they cared about, but they had to be able to defend their choices using the language they'd learned in the course. Expecting this level of personal responsibility from first-year writers may seem risky for a new instructor, but I found as I loosened my grip on them (removing page limits for assignments, being more open to project subjects than I thought I would have to be) many responded with impressively responsible work that seemed personally motivated.

For even the most studious of students, their motivation for a course and their investment in it is largely based on getting a good grade to achieve some other means—keeping a scholarship, staying in their parent's good graces, being able to play their sport. It's hard to get students to do just what is expected of them in FYC, so when service-learning is added to FYC, it can become even more difficult to discern their motivation when they're asked to intervene in a community conversation. In addition, it's difficult to determine if all students will be ready to share work they've created in just one semester.

In order to mediate these challenges, I aimed at getting students motivated by giving them the opportunity to make the work they did for the course as personal as they wanted, based on options they had in a variety of aspects of their assignments. I also didn't force them to

deliver their final projects to their audiences; I let them determine if they were ready to “go public” (Herzberg), and I allowed them to choose when and how they did so. As part of their project, they proposed *how* they would deliver their product to their audience, in very specific steps, but I didn’t connect their grade to them actually taking that step.

### *Reflection*

While reflection and meta-awareness were integral aspects of this course, students would have benefitted from reflection that was dedicated especially to the way they were being asked to use public writing leading up to their final projects. Their final paper asked them to reflectively analyze their choices, and their end of course reflection asked them about the course and the service they did, but had they been reading and reflecting on service throughout the semester as they were with writing, I think they could have made even more meaningful connections. Furthermore, the reflection students did via freewriting in class each day could have been directed to help them explore issues, concerns and questions about service in addition to writing.

### *Instructor Expertise and Workload*

By letting teachers be experts in areas of writing that extend beyond the academic community, a course isn’t necessarily less rigorous, nor does it become less beneficial to students. This model shows that service-learning in FYC courses gives instructors options, which is not only one of the benefits of our field but is necessary for invention and instructor growth to occur. Service-learning, like FYC, can be molded into a variety of shapes and performed in a variety of ways, but the main benefits remain connected to what happens in the student’s writing and how the instructor can use his/her experience to guide them in positive directions.

The amount of extra work associated with service-learning FYC courses is often one of the first things instructors will mention about why they haven't or wouldn't attempt to teach a service-learning course. As part of my aim in creating this course model was to find a way to make service-learning workable in FYC for even a part-time teacher, keeping the workload manageable was one of my primary goals. One of the ways I was able to accomplish this was by deciding to not involve a community partner. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are many things that can go wrong with service-learning, and a majority have to do with what can happen at the service site. By finding a way to imbue this course with some of the potential benefits of service-learning, and not have students involved with community partners, I reduced the workload often associated with service-learning. While it can be argued this may have also reduced the experience students had, in making sure writing was still the focus of 1101 with my model, having students use writing as a form of service was an approach I would take again. By introducing service via public writing as something that can be self-initiated rather than only required by a teacher, we can encourage students to use writing for a larger variety of purposes in FYC while we also help them foster a potentially lasting social imagination.

### Transition to Study

Bacon suggests a list of elements related to situated learning by which we can measure a student's "school-to-community transition" (58) in an service-learning FYC course: knowledge about writing, their theory of writing, rhetorical awareness, motivation and attitude toward task, social relationships, identity as a writer, identity as a learner and their learning strategies. This list corresponds well with most of the core competencies for 1101, and while I believe Bacon

intended them to be used in the context of how a student had appropriated concepts learned in a service-learning FYC course as writing relates to the community, this list is also useful as a reminder of how it is important to know how we're measuring the success of students as writers, and ourselves.

I was able to design assignments that focused on asking students to make developed choices because of my use of writing as a form of service in this model. The assignments throughout my service-learning-based FYC course asked students to situate themselves within their discourse communities, write for other discourse communities and analyze the audience(s) for which they wrote. They were also asked to design a final deliverable based on their work throughout the semester, directed toward a public audience of their choosing as their service project. And they did this, along with all the other outcomes that are expected of a student in an FYC course within the department, while they reflected on their own identities as writers and how writing for change impacted their experience.

While only a long-term study would begin to utilize this list by Bacon in order to measure how these students might transfer what they learned in the course into their other classes and everyday lives, this chapter should make evident that I was able to include service within FYC at a level to which I felt comfortable, while mediating the challenges I have addressed previously. Chapter Three will present the findings of my short-term study as related to student learning and the instructor experience of my model.

### Questions Addressed by Study

This project was guided by the following questions:

- What did the course look like, and how did students respond when I attempted to incorporate service learning into ENC 1101?
- What did I observe about possible benefits and limitations as a result of how students experienced writing in this course?

### Methodology

In attempt to answer these questions, I designed and taught an ENC 1101 course in the fall of 2010 influenced by writing for the community (Deans), activism (Crisco; Inman; Novak and Goodman), genre theory (Deans), materialist rhetoric (Bacon; Coogan; Mikolchak) and the Stanford model of writing as service (Crisco; Cooper and Julier; Deans; Dorman and Dorman; Hellman; Herzberg; Mastrangelo), While I was influenced by the Stanford model, I did not have students write for a specific organization or partner, as is the case with most approaches based on that model. Rather, this course was focused on teaching the core competencies used within the department: writers and the writing process, discourse communities, and the canons of rhetoric, using elements of service-learning, such as public writing.

In order to assess the course model, I built a qualitative methodology combining primary and secondary research in the form of teacher research (Ray). The scholarship I reviewed came from academic journals focused on college composition, such as *CCC* and *Composition Studies*, as well as scholarship from service-learning journals, such as *Reflections* and the *Michigan Journal of Service Learning*.

The primary data I collected came from selected coursework of my sample of four students, the interview I held with a fellow graduate teaching assistant (GTA), and the interview notes I took alongside those of my research assistant during the student focus group.

### *Study of Student Writing in the Course*

I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to observe my students in class, use their coursework and interview them in a focus group post-semester. I also gained permission to conduct an interview with my research assistant, a fellow graduate student, after the course ended. In addition to these data collection procedures, as this study was designed based on teacher research (Ray) and my own observer comments that provide context to how teaching a service-learning course can be analyzed through instructors' pedagogical and personal goals.

#### *Observer Comments*

My observer comments (Rossman and Rallis 137) consisted of field notes written during the freewriting time students and I shared in class, as well after each unit was completed, via focused freewriting (Lessner and Craig 132). These notes are not to be viewed as part of the IRB-approved data collection, and as such they were not coded. My observer comments serve as my teacher research; they are used throughout this project to provide context to the exigence and findings as presented.

#### *Graduate Teaching Assistant Interview*

To apply another teacher's point of view, I chose to interview fellow GTA, Laura Martinez. Martinez audited my course (section 0038) during the entirety of the semester for her own research (also approved by IRB), and my choice to interview her over another faculty member was based on the level of exposure she had to my model. Not only was she in class every day, but her research also required her to be in close proximity to my students. She had a

level of accessibility to them that I didn't have by sitting in student desks, recording comments during group work and interviewing her study participants throughout the semester. Because she also regularly interviewed me, she had insight about the workability of my model from both the student perspective and the instructor perspective, a lens that could not have been equally provided by another faculty member.

As a fellow GTA at the time of the interview, Martinez also had first-hand experience with the specific challenges and the importance of access to professional development for teacher growth. I wanted the interview with Martinez to give me an idea of what else a teacher might need in ways of professional development in order to teach a service-learning FYC course within the department. To achieve this I chose to conduct an email interview over a face-to-face or phone interview because I wanted to give her ample time to reference her own notes from the semester as well as review all the printed course documents (syllabus and lesson plans). I sent her the materials two weeks after the fall semester ended and asked her to review them as she would a prospective course she might adapt to teach. Two weeks later I sent her a list of interview questions (see Appendix B), and the narrative nature of her responses led me to important and unexpected findings as well as helped me to support the recommendations present in Chapter Four.

### *Student Coursework*

The coursework done by students included in this study consisted of final drafts of relevant unit assignments and final portfolio reflection letters. Students completed more work than what has been coded for this project, but I found these items to have the most relevance because they directly corresponded to the course objectives.



For the final portfolio reflection letter assignment, I created a set of questions to be answered in writing as a means to gauge student perceptions of the outcomes met within ENC 1101 (see Appendix C). As that assignment's purpose was to provide students an opportunity to assess their own learning while leaving room for them to also discuss areas wherein the course did or did not meet their anticipated needs, I didn't tell them ahead of time that I would be using their answers so as to not skew their responses. Instead, I provided a handout outlining the assignment a few weeks before finals; we went over the handout in class, they wrote their letters on their own time and turned in their portfolios during the final class meeting during finals week. The questions I chose to include as part of that assignment were written with the goal that students would reflect, deepening the connections they might have otherwise made about their course experience. This kind of reflection was not only key to their overall semester learning but also provided me with an end of semester writing sample from which to further measure their growth and find patterns via coding.

### *Student Focus Group*

To measure the short-term student experience of being in the course I set up a focus group of volunteer students to meet the week after spring break during the Spring 2011 semester. I introduced the focus group during the final exam period for each class during the Fall semester. Students were made aware that signing up was strictly voluntary and that I would not know who had signed up until the week after grades were posted. I also explained that the focus group would be informal, take about an hour of their time and they would be served pizza while they answered a short set of questions about the course (see Appendix C). I stepped out of the room and students signed up with Martinez using a sheet I had created with five spots for primary

participants and five spots for backup participants. On the sheet I collected their names, email addresses and phone numbers. Twenty students signed up (ten from each class), and when Martinez gave me the list of students the week after grades posted, I emailed them all to thank them for their participation and let them know they would hear from me again closer to the middle of the Spring semester. While it would be beneficial to revisit these students even later, due to time constraints of this project, I believe the nearly four months between the end of the Fall semester and the time after Spring Break that the meeting took place was satisfactory to see how the service-learning aspect of this course affected student's ideas about writing, service and their interest in civic engagement.

Three weeks before Spring Break I emailed the ten primary volunteers and asked them to respond by the end of the week if they planned to attend. After shifting the dates several times, the group was held at Wednesday at 1pm at Brooklyn Pizza on campus. About a week before the meeting was scheduled, I emailed the ten backup volunteers, two of whom responded and one whom took part in the focus group. Of the four students who attended the meeting, three were the same students who had taken part in the study Martinez did and two were students enrolled in an 1102 class I was teaching. I believe the shifting of dates caused others to not attend, but it is also possible these four students were committed to this project because of the involvement they had with both Martinez and me. However, it should also be noted that 23 other students enrolled in my 1102 courses who had taken 1101 during the previous semester did not attend, nor did a student taking 1102 with Martinez who had confirmed she would be there.

During the focus group the students, Martinez and I sat around a table as I asked six casual questions that the students answered one-by-one in a circular fashion. Martinez and I took

notes, and while our observations were similar in nature (we didn't discuss them ahead of time), we both focused on different elements of the student responses, which I believe happened because of our different relationship with the course (teaching for me, observing for her). As an observer both for her own study and assisting with mine, Martinez took notes that focused on the student experience and response as a whole. As the designer of the course and the instructor who taught it, my own notes were focused on how the course was created and implemented.

I chose to have Martinez attend the focus group because I felt having another instructor there would help me see student responses from a different perspective and allow me to catch anything that might be missed if I took notes alone. After the focus group, Martinez and I typed our notes and shared them via email. We casually discussed the nature of our responses in a few emails back and forth; I chose not to code either of our notes because it wasn't important to this study that our notes carried patterns; rather, it was meaningful to see how we viewed the results of the group as evidence of our different perspectives of the student experience. For example, I paid closer attention to specific design/approach comments students made, such as a suggestion about extra credit; Martinez's notes came from a different lens, with general comments about these students versus other students who take 1101. These differences provided an understanding of the student responses than I would have had otherwise, which helped me to construct what I could or would not do differently when teaching the course again.

### *Student Sampling*

While there were 48 students who received grades for the work they did in 1101, I chose to focus on the work done by the four students who attended the focus group. I have assigned them the following monikers: Juanita, Daphne, Amanda and Rachel. I chose these students

because of how important their focus group comments were and because I felt choosing a small sampling would allow for a deeper analysis of their experiences. While I believe these four students to be exceptional as far as their involvement with the projects Martinez and I both did, they also represent a good cross section of what occurred throughout both classes and in all relevant assignments. The four students are introduced here for an understanding of their background coming into ENC 1101 in the fall of 2010.

Juanita is an 18 year-old Mexican native who came to the U.S. to attend college at UCF. She learned English in school in Mexico but still struggled a lot with her own confidence as a writer in this second language, as well as the stress with being away from her home country. Her goal is to be a medical doctor, helping people in countries like her own that need doctors who speak the language and have solid training. As an Eservice-learning student, she was very conscientious of her language-based struggles and attended every meeting with an electronic translator on her desk. She also went to the University Writing Center many times throughout the course, as well as asked Martinez, also a Spanish speaker, for an extra reading of her drafts.

Rachel is an 18-year-old American student who came from public high school and was an undeclared major at the start of my course. Active with Campus for Christ and pledging for a criminal justice fraternity, she was juggling many extra-curricular activities and a full load of courses, while being away from home for the first time. Early in the semester she expressed an interest in writing but also acknowledged her lack of self-confidence in her writing ability due to previous negative experiences with teachers.

Amanda is an 18-year-old American student who came to UCF to eventually be accepted as a medical student, but expressed dreams of possibly being a veterinarian instead by the end of

the course. She was a very active high school student and came from a family who highly valued education. She expressed in the freewriting she did in class that she never felt pressured to be a doctor like her father, but that she wanted to save lives like he did. Despite being from a Florida town, she struggled being away from home for the first time and often expressed displeasure in the quality of her work as a student in her classes in general, as opposed to the grades she received in high school for similar effort.

Daphne is an 18-year-old American student from a military family. Having come to UCF from a small town in Idaho she had difficulty adjusting to UCF. Her boyfriend in Oregon, her father who was sent to Germany while she was in my course, and her mother who passed away from breast cancer around Thanksgiving the year before, all played major roles in her feeling unmoored at a huge school. She was an active high school student, the editor of her school paper and during the semester she was in my course she joined the tennis team and started writing for the *Central Florida Future* in attempt to make friends and feel part of the campus culture. As a journalism major, she aspired to be a reporter for a major newspaper but also expressed concern about the future of the newspaper business, unsure of whether she would change her major as she continued with school.

All of these students had solid attendance records, never missed assignments and consistently participated in class. Three of the four also volunteered for a study being done by Martinez the same semester, which may or may not have played a role in their studious approach to first-year writing. Because of their interest in participating in these studies, I also feel it is important to note that all four of these students were involved on campus in some way and took their education seriously. Not every student in the course demonstrated engagement of this

nature, but I believe these four still present a solid cross-section because they all struggled with various aspects of the course despite their dedication to the assignments.

### *Process of Analysis*

My analysis of student work went through three loops that are described in this section in the order in which they occurred.

Initially I was focused on just analyzing all of the students' final course reflection letters because I felt that was where the most growth and the application of concepts would be evident. However, as I began trying to apply codes, I found I was looking for where and how often words such as "revision" and "pathos" were being used. While this provided me with data that I could tabulate, it didn't provide me with a narrative understanding of student growth, which I felt would be more telling of their overall experience of the course. From this initial stage I was able to create a table of coding words based on the major competencies of the course. This became useful later, but upon building that table, I came to find it was more important for this project to look at the final drafts of major assignments in a way that would focus more on how students applied concepts (not just that they'd used the words from the course) and that they'd shown growth in their usage of the concepts and in their reflections. It was important to establish an analysis process that would enumerate these elements of their experience, so my second attempt of analysis was more organic. By this time I'd also chosen to only focus on the four students I have mentioned, which allowed me to determine that I would get a better overall understanding of their learning if I coded not only their final reflections but also all of their final drafts of major assignments. To create this new coding approach, I went back to the rubrics for each assignment;

every rubric focused on three main goals that connected to the overall course objectives, and I focused on the three goals for each assignment to build my codes.

For example, in their first assignment (The Writer Profile) I asked them to tell a story about their identity as a writer, their feelings about writing and their writing process. The codes I used for this assignment were: “identity/self,” “feelings/emotions” and “process description.” I went through each of their drafts for that assignment in the following random order: Juanita, Amanda, Rachel and Daphne. In subsequent drafts I kept this order the same for uniformity. The actual analysis of that first assignment involved reading each student’s paper and marking, paragraph by paragraph, where they expressed feelings about writing, discussed their writing process and talked about their identity as a writer. I used an indigenous typology (Rossman and Rallis 179) to develop a set of movements I was looking for them to make--identity, emotion and process--but I allowed those movements to be expressed by the student’s own words while I made margin notes to help give context to the paragraphs and marks I made. For example, in the opening paragraph of Juanita’s Writer Profile she talked about how writing was not a necessity to her and she was not passionate about it; she also talked about how passion is the most important thing in anything she does and that she believed that is why “I do not like writing.” I underlined that statement and wrote in the margins based on the context of that whole paragraph “feeling about writing = sad; not part of who she is.” I did this because the other feeling-related word she’d used in that paragraph was “sadly,” which I’d also marked. I followed this pattern of analytical reading for each draft of each assignment. I analyzed the assignments in batches because this helped me stay focused on the goals for that particular assignment, which allowed me to find patterns in student work more efficiently. After coding each student paper, I made

overall notes about what I'd found before moving on to the next student draft. Because my goal for analyzing their work was to tell the narrative of their experiences in the course, assignment by assignment as it related to what they'd learned, this process forced me to isolate each student's work and each assignment as much as possible while still keeping a common narrative of their overall experience running in the overall comments I made after each draft. For example, coding in this way helped me to connect back to Juanita's Writer Profile when in her final course reflection letter she mentioned positive statements about her feelings about writing.

For analysis of the final course reflection letters, I chose to use an analyst-constructed typography (Rossman and Rallis 179), as I had originally attempted to do for the other coursework. This worked for the reflections in a way it did not for the other assignments because in this assignment I was looking for certain keywords that indicated how students applied the knowledge they gained during the semester. To do this I referred back to the original chart I had built upon the course objectives, and I color-coded each section. For example, on that chart I labeled "rhetoric" in yellow and marked words such as "ethos," "exigence," and "audience" in yellow in student papers as they corresponded to that category on the chart. Once I went through each reflection using those codes, I then went back through and read each paper a second time, making margin notes that referred to how the student had applied those concepts. For example, in Juanita's reflection, she used words relating to rhetorical awareness in 21 instances, all of which occurred within the intended context. This allowed me to see that she'd focused her reflection on discussing the rhetorical elements of the course far more than anything else and she'd learned the correct context of those concepts. The color-coding allowed me to visualize



how her use of rhetoric-related keywords compared to other students, which helped me with the next connection I needed to make with their final reflections: the adaptation of concepts.

To determine how each student had adapted the concepts learned in the course, I first needed to know what they felt they learned, which the above coding helped me establish. From that coding I also had notes about where and how they'd felt they'd grown the most as writers and as individuals. For example, in her Writing Process Project, Daphne mentioned she wanted to learn how to use humor more in her writing to connect with readers. By the end of the course in her reflection, she had attempted humor in only one assignment (the Discourse Community Profile), but she'd focused her discussion of what she'd learned rhetorically on the concept of "audience" and how her writing process had changed as a result of learning how to use appeals. I believe her not carrying out her initial goal early in the course (past that one assignment) was a result of what she applied from the rhetoric unit; the remaining papers she wrote for the course leading up to her reflection were intensely serious and for audiences of which humor would not have been persuasive. The fact that she did not use humor showed me she'd adapted the concept of audience appropriately, despite her personal goal of wanting to be more like the popular humor novelist Carl Hiaasen.

During the third and final loop I created codes that directly related to the benefits and limitations I'd found in the literature. I focused on applying the same codes to students' major assignments, their focus group responses and the transcript from the interview with Martinez. Doing this allowed me to identify patterns across all of these data sources that made me more confident as a researcher that I was finding deeper patterns than in the previous loops. The codes I used in this loop were based on the benefits of service-learning in FYC; I added codes as they

were supported by the literature and codes that addressed limitations of service-learning. For example, Deans notes that service-learning provides a way to teach genre theory that students can conceptualize and put into practice; I taught them genre theory using service-learning, and in order to assess the benefits of that, I needed to locate whether and to what extent their work showed that they'd conceptualized and applied genre theory. I applied the code "considered genre/media/message" to their Final Projects and their End of Course Reflections (both assignments where they would be talking about genre). I didn't apply this code to other assignments, such as their Writer Profile, as they hadn't yet learned about genre at that point in the course. Because I'd spent time with their coursework from the last two loops of analysis, I was able to identify which data sources would be the best fit for which of the codes I was using. Along with their major assignments, I applied the same list of benefit and limitation-related codes to their focus group responses, and the transcript from the interview I did with Martinez.

Another code related to the benefit of service-learning to increase student motivation to write was "writer identity." I wanted to identify when, where and how students wrote about themselves as writers to see if there was a connection between their self-concept and their motivation in the course. Their self-identification happened mostly in their first two assignments (Writer Profile and Writing Process Project) as well as in their End of Course Reflections. I applied this code when students identified themselves as writers, and I analyzed the surrounding context in relation to their progress in the course. For example, in her End of Course Reflection, Daphne wrote, "I'm a writer at heart, and changes in my writing also present changes in me," which presents a positive self-concept at the end of the course. Likewise, in the first assignment of the semester, The Writer Profile, Juanita wrote, "I do not like writing. In fact, I do not write

because it is not part of who I am.” From this first assignment we can see Juanita does not call herself a writer and goes as far as to say she does not “write” when what she seems to really mean is that she does not write for pleasure. By identifying their self-concepts via this code, I was able to find connections between where they began and where they stood at the end of the course, as both related to the motivation they had for the work they did throughout the course.

The only other analysis that took place was a simple note I made on the top of each student’s final course reflection to mark if they’d mentioned anything about “writing for change” or their writing as it related to service.

The above research practices including participants were confidential, with the exception of the interview and involvement of Martinez who agreed to have her name used. All participants were 18 or over at the time of their involvement and understood that participation in this project was not mandatory or binding.

#### Limitations of Methodology

As is the nature of much of the service-learning scholarship alongside FYC, longitudinal studies are not often achieved due to the movement of FYC students and the often-temporary employment of the instructors who teach FYC. The methodology for this project had the same limitations, although the focus group attempted to mediate that in a short-term way.

While it was clear that learning occurred throughout the semester and that students gained a lot of knowledge in the core competencies while also building some form of social consciousness, it wasn’t clear exactly what caused that learning to occur. My methodology limited the examination of student learning and only allows me to speculate why learning occurred. In future studies, pre-and-post course surveys, as well as larger-scale student samples

and personal interviews, done over a series of sections of the same course, taught by the same instructor would be helpful in providing more evidential information about how and why learning occurred.

### Background of Motivations

My major expectation for this course was that students would gain the knowledge they needed to move into ENC 1102 while also gaining an understanding that writing could be used as a form of service (Deans) to produce texts for public audiences. By the end of the course, I wanted students to be able to use writing as a form of social action and recognize it as such. The means by which I anticipated students would meet these goals were through creating new definitions of activism as it pertained to a way of being in the word and of using writing. In doing this, my goal was to have them leave the course with a view of writing as a way to voice their opinions and to take action on something they believed in. If I could accomplish this, students could potentially transfer this knowledge into making arguments on a variety of subjects for which they would be asked to write within the university and beyond.

While designing the course, I envisioned students learning situated ways writing exists and persists in their lives. I aimed to create a course that was relevant to students and the ways they would use writing, regardless of their major. But above all, I expected this course to provide students with an opportunity to use their writing in FYC to *do* something and in that, I hoped they would have the opportunity to find something they cared about as much or maybe even more than the grade I would give them.

On a personal level, I saw this course as a positive challenge – I had struggled finding myself within my graduate school education, and I used this course as an exercise in

finding myself in my teaching. I wanted to move beyond using a syllabus that felt like it still belonged to someone else and into a teaching style that reflected what I could give back to the department. I found the focus on teaching students to compose papers after the style of academic journal articles to be an approach to FYC that did not speak to my strengths or interests as an instructor. I wanted to teach a class that allowed me to share my expertise, not just in the way I taught, but also in the way I could relate to the subject matter as a writer. As our department encourages instructors to utilize their own knowledge as expertise, I was optimistic that I could create a course that combined my interests as a scholar and an activist, while adhering to the competencies for 1101. I also felt I could use what I'd learned about rhetorical pedagogy to mediate some of the larger issues inherent in using service-learning in FYC; I aimed to create a model that could make service-learning more applicable for a larger number of instructors.

## CHAPTER THREE – OBSERVATIONS

To streamline the presentation of observations in this chapter I have categorized what is presented here into a section based on those that involve the students and those that involve instructors.

### Student-Related Observations

While I did not analyze student work for critical thinking, specifically because I found it hard to separate from rhetorical awareness, I view critical thinking as a major part of the way students grew to understand texts and delivery in this course. Service-learning pedagogy focuses on solving problems through critical thinking and reflection, so it would be difficult to look at how service learning worked in the course and not discuss critical thinking in some fashion. In a study Novak and Goodman did on a service-learning FYC course piloted at Pepperdine, they found that, in general, students left the course able to think more critically about the role writing has in their everyday lives in college and beyond. By approaching the FYC classroom as a more of a “shared inquiry” (66), students like Amanda, produced work that was not “done” but were able to identify various needs to be addressed. While I cannot be sure this was solely because of the inclusion of service-learning in this course, I do believe the liberty students had to make choices about their projects helped them to take their work seriously.

In order to present the key patterns relating to students, I have arranged the observations in this chapter as they connect with the possible benefits and challenges service-learning

provided in FYC, as presented in Chapter One. I have also arranged these observations as they connect with the limitations of my approach.

The major and unexpected patterns I discerned are summarized and then discussed below.

### *Observations about Benefits*

Students seemed motivated by the public exigence of their final projects

Students showed development of critical thinking and rhetorical skills by their choices in their final projects

Students paid attention to rhetorical choices though a variety of genres and contexts in their final projects

- Students were able to defend and reflect about their rhetorical choices made in their final projects.
- Students recognized they could intervene in community conversations via writing in their final projects and end of course reflections.
- Students recognized motivation for continued engagement with their chosen social issues after the course.

### *Observations about Limitations or Challenges*

- Not all students were prepared and positioned to intervene in the conversations they were presenting, due to lack of skills or lack of rhetorical awareness.
- Students lacked the level of technical skills needed to produce the kinds of projects they proposed.

- Not every student connected equally to the social issue(s) they chose to write about.

#### Unexpected Observations

- Some students explored their identities as writers by analyzing and reflecting about their public writing and learning about the writing processes of professional writers.

### *Benefits*

#### *Motivated By Real-World Exigence*

Anne Ruggles Gere and Jennifer Sinor suggest that students often choose service for personal reasons and then expect personal gains to come from it. Based on the concept of social imagination, Gere and Sinor suggest that we make service-learning more personal for students instead of trying to avoid them expecting these personal gains. Through readings and reflection, service-learning has the capacity to give students meaning, but it's up to us as instructors to use it as a site for such. It's important for students to have the opportunity to practice making their school assignments meaningful to them. Not only does this help lead them to projects that involve genuine inquiry, but it also makes room for them to be motivated by the connections they make to their lives within assignments.

In her Rhetorical Analysis assignment, Juanita reflected that her views on health changed when her family went to a holistic life coach, and since then, she'd experienced great benefit from adopting a gluten-free diet. She recognized that her exigence for her final project, an animation geared toward college students on being aware of gluten intolerance, was based on her "goal to convey from my product a clear and interactive message to the student community about the harm of eating grain-based foods." Her desire to share what she'd learned with others



motivated her to identify her area of interest early in the semester, using the assignments leading up the final project to analyze scientific articles about nutrition and ultimately design her project around educating others in the way she'd become more educated.

As being pro-life was important for Rachel, who had just become a member of an on-campus Christian club, she identified the exigence for her project as the need to “educate those who do not [understand the reality of abortion].” She chose to address college students because she felt that “Many young adults see abortion as a clean fix... Yet abortion is one messy process.” As I will discuss in later sections, Rachel struggled with learning and using new technology in order to accomplish her goals for her final project, which is not something I asked her to do, but is something I allowed her to take on.

Shawn Hellman attributed a positive shift in the motivation of his grant-writing students' work to the level of personal relevance his course design allowed them to explore. I argue the same was the case for my students; when a student connects their assignments with their life, the transactions (and potentially the transfer) between school and life learning become stronger, which may aid in the motivation a student experiences when producing coursework.

Of the projects in this course, Daphne's was arguably one of the most personal. There are many reasons this happened for Daphne, but the most germane one as it relates to relevance is that she used this course to do something she felt she needed to do, which might have happened partly because she had an audience for it, or partly because the timing was right for her. Regardless, the students who mined their own experiences and interests consistently produced the most complete and in-depth final projects. For Daphne, this was getting closure with something traumatic in her life; for Juanita, this was working to find connections between how

she could see herself as creative, and this as better writer in her own mind; for Rachel, this was addressing a topic that is often overdone, but she felt was necessary for college students to see in a new way; and for Amanda, this personal connection was an exploration of a volunteer interest. This level of personal connection in assignments might be somewhat unique to this course as opposed to other FYC sections. Martinez recognized that she “saw a sense of ownership from students that is often lacking in FYC, even after students spend an entire semester on one research paper in 1102. Getting that sort of motivation and engagement from students in 1101 seems to be a huge accomplishment...”

#### *Recognized Their Writing Could Intervene Into Community Conversation*

Opportunity for intervention is another element that set this course apart from other FYC courses. While I didn't require students to submit their work to their audience as part of their grade, or coerce them in any way to do so, the option to create something that had an audience outside of an instructor and could be delivered to a public community helped students see their writing as an active way to participate in a conversation. In the focus group, Daphne and Amanda expressed that after sixteen weeks in the course, they understood the purpose of using writing to promote social action differently than they had at the beginning of the course. Likewise, in her final course reflection, Amanda mentioned that this shift in her understanding of how writing could be used in the world was one of the most important things she took from the course. In her Genre Paper, Juanita stated that she didn't want to “limit anyone from the information I may publish in my product.” Her use of the word “publish” implied to me that even at that point, she'd moved beyond thinking of her animation video as something she was simply doing for her grade in the course.

Despite that Juanita was the only student who ended up submitting her work to her audience, each student reflected in their Genre Papers about how they saw their message intervening in the world as part of the exigence for their project. Amanda felt her message could help “spread awareness,” and Juanita wanted “to introduce” the issue to college students. Rachel “[hoped] to educate,” and Daphne wanted to “show families the best way they could help” their relatives with breast cancer to be comfortable. Regardless of whether a student’s project made it to their audience in sixteen weeks, the fact that all four students were able to identify specific ways in which their message could intervene showed they were able to become meta-aware about writing as a transaction in this course. If one of these students wanted to intervene in a conversation with an unfamiliar audience via writing in the future, perhaps they would be able to make choices using what they learned in 1101.

#### *Considered Genre as a Rhetorical Choice*

In non-service-learning FYC courses, students may be asked to theorize about the concept of genre and write in a variety of genres, but in my course, students were asked to create their message for an audience by using genre as a rhetorical choice that they could defend. As Carolyn Miller suggests about genre in the article “Genre as Social Action,” “the exigence provides the rhetor with a socially recognizable way to make his or her intentions known. It provides an occasion and thus a form, for making public our private versions of things” (158). I asked students to focus on what they wanted to say and then to choose an audience they felt needed to be addressed. From there they were asked to make decisions about genre, rhetoric, style and delivery to get their message to that audience. By not asking them to only write for a teacher-audience, and by giving them many choices they needed to be successful in their final

projects and their final paper, the work of all four students presented evidence of a strong consideration of genre and how it impacted what they wanted to say, based on their chosen audiences. As Miller points out, “to comprehend exigence is to have a motive” (158). My students’ exigence seemed to have “some basis in the conventions of rhetorical practice, including the ways actual rhetors and audiences [had] of comprehending the discourse they [used]” (Miller 152) within their specific areas of focus.

Juanita chose to present her message in an animation, and Rachel selected a short “activist-type film.” Both students reflected that their choice for video genres was made due to the accessibility their audience (college students) have to the Internet and how much time they spend sharing and watching online videos. As Rachel reflected in her Genre Paper, “I feel confident that *YouTube* will supply a much more widespread audience than the dinky poster board I originally planned to present.” Juanita also reflected in her Genre Paper that a video wasn’t her first choice: “...my first intention...was to design a colorful and attractive flyer...” Like Rachel, she found that a video would allow her to share her message with a larger number of college students; she didn’t want to “limit anyone from the information” she was presenting. Unlike a flyer, Rachel noted that her use of a video allowed her to “rouse contemplation” by “emotionally stimulating” her audience through the combination of “graphic images...young women stating facts and statistics... [and] video clips from news broadcasts and celebrities speaking out on the topic of abortion.” For Juanita, the video genre afforded her creative liberty with her message, which she felt was important because “For a serious subject such as [gluten intolerance]...I want young people to feel comfortable and relate to it.” The choices Rachel and Juanita made show that they were both largely concerned with how the genre they chose would

limit the exposure of their message to their audience. By choosing videos, they both supported their exigence, while making rhetorical choices in that genre that would direct their messages to college students.

Daphne's choice of genre was largely connected to her desire to create an emotional appeal to her audience. In her Genre Paper she wrote that she "chose a picture over all the other genres because...when it comes to emotion there's not one right sentence or exact word that can describe someone else's emotion[s]." She wanted to "pluck at the heartstrings" of families whose relatives were fighting breast cancer without telling them how to feel because "no one could ever describe their feelings to them." Despite that her message wasn't to tell them how to feel, she included a "Burmese proverb that states, 'In a time of test, family is best' [because] it's short, but it shows the importance of family..." As part of a larger effort she called "Project Hope," Daphne wanted to imprint this quote on a picture of her mother who passed away from breast cancer exactly a year earlier. As she began to search through photos, she found that "each picture gave me a different feeling and was a reminder of the message I was trying to send. ...instead of choosing just one, I chose all of them and made a collage of pictures or a collage of feelings." As Daphne and her family were members of the audience she chose, her selection of a collage seemed to stem from her desire to spend time with the images she selected in order to share them with others in her same situation.

Daphne, Rachel and Juanita all chose genres that were practical for to them to work within as students, but Amanda took a more lofty approach which would have required her to work on this project for months, maybe even years; to be implemented, her project—a proposal to major animal food manufacturing companies—would have needed to go through many stages

of approval from executives of those companies. As she didn't identify the specific companies, nor identify access she had to reaching them as a student, her choices could have been a result of her either misunderstanding the goals of the assignment or not feeling confident enough in her ability to actually send her message to an audience to which she had current access. Or, it could have been a result of her still seeing what she was doing as a project for a course and therefore not real to her beyond turning in the assignment. Of the student sampling, Amanda was the exception in this assignment, but in the course as a whole, she was not the only student who wasn't able to make the best choices and defend the choices they made by using concepts from the writing studies research they'd read. Despite the fact that every student didn't produce genre projects at the level of those by Daphne, Juanita and Rachel, I agree wholly with Martinez's observation about the benefit of using service-learning in FYC to teach these concepts

I think that in many ways, [service-learning in FYC] gives students a "real world" perspective on concepts such as rhetorical situations, genres, audience, etc...students can sort of operationalize what can often be very hypothetical concepts. They really don't understand (in some cases) what an audience is until you talk to them about how people may perceive a poster in a college classroom. They may not know how constraints are handled by rhetors in everyday situations, but if you have a discussion about how a specific "Pro-choice" ad targets religious beliefs, the concepts may begin to click.

### *Reflected About Style Choices and Distribution of Text*

Students reflected on their choices in delivery based on their audience and what they had access to as college students, suggesting that they'd considered the distribution of their text alongside their genre and their message. Juanita and Rachel, due to their opportunistic use of

technology, both reflected that they would post their projects on *YouTube* and share the link to their videos with their friends on Facebook, asking them to spread the message. In this way, they both planned to rely on their access to this free and popular technology, as well as utilize their connections with friends to further their message in gaining exposure. As they both chose college student audiences, perhaps this aspect of the assignment was easier for them to conceptualize. Unlike Amanda, they considered what they had access to and how they could realistically produce their message within a genre that fit within a plan for delivery they could accomplish. Both Juanita and Rachel also discussed other outlets for their work; Juanita planned to post her video on “blogs on health,” and Rachel cited an in-class presentation as how she would first deliver her text, since her classmates were part of her audience. Juanita and Daphne also identified decisions they made regarding language as a means of delivery, which is something that Amanda left out. Amanda didn’t discuss what kind of language she would use in her letter(s) to the animal food manufacturing companies’ executives, nor did she address stylistic choices, such as formatting or rhetorical elements such as style and delivery. Juanita wrote that her choice to use “slang” was in effort to show that gluten-intolerance could be the topic of a conversation among friends. Likewise, Rachel chose to use news clips and celebrity sound bites in her video, as well as images of some of her friends holding signs, to deliver a message that her audience would know did not come from “some old, preachy activists” because of the conversational language used. She also identified her choice to “alternate between the terms ‘fetus’ and ‘baby’ interchangeably” as a pathos appeal to help her audience connect the idea that a fetus is a baby. In her Final Course Reflection, Juanita mentioned that what she’d learned about discourse communities helped her think critically about how language would impact her audience’s

perception of her message; both Juanita and Rachel used the word “lexis” throughout their Genre Paper to discuss these choices in style, which showed me they’d already applied those earlier concepts by the end of the course.

Daphne didn’t have trouble coming up with ways to deliver her text, but she did have reservations about doing so. In her reflection, she mused that she had considered enlarging her collage and “posting it somewhere on campus,” but since her audience was more widespread than the members of a college campus, she saw more potential in using it as “a part of a presentation for breast cancer awareness groups.” She reflected that her lack of decision about delivery was due to the fact that she didn’t feel emotionally prepared to “speak in front of people about something this personal without crying.” Despite her reservations, she was still able to plan her approach, justify her choices and conceptualize her project as part of a larger whole, which demonstrated that she was engaged with this work on a meaningful personal level; it wasn’t just something she was doing for a grade in the class.

Amanda also had a detailed plan for the delivery of her product, but it wasn’t something she could logistically carry out, during the semester or likely beyond it. She wrote that she would begin to spread her message by “submitting a proposal to a major animal food company” to “get permission to post my [sticker] on their products.” She then planned to “begin meeting with the company” to figure out costs and production of the stickers. Despite her lack of attention to what she could realistically accomplish based on her means as a college student, she was able to point out some of the many limitations regarding her plan; they didn’t result in a revision of her plan, but in her end of course reflection she was able to convince me that she’d learned enough about the importance of delivery in regard to audience, genre and rhetors by



being able to see the weaknesses present in her approach as they related to those concepts. In line with the observation from Martinez about service-learning helping students see rhetorical concepts as “real world” issues, asking students to defend and reflect upon their approaches to their products helped them to understand rhetorical thinking in a transactional way, which gave them a more advanced application of the concepts they learned in the course. As other students outside of the sample created projects that they would not have been able to realistically carry out in the time we had in the course, and as this is an issue with single-semester service-learning courses, the benefit I saw service-learning bringing to this course was helping students like Amanda identify the rhetorical weaknesses in projects they at first saw as “final”.

#### *Motivated for Social Engagement*

In the third assignment of the course, students profiled a Discourse Community of which they were members or which they wished to join. Part of this assignment asked them to discuss a social issue that connected to their discourse community’s public goals. Two of the four students discussed groups that connected to the work they did during the rest of the semester.

Juanita profiled International Medical Outreach (IMO), stating that as a group “we care about health issues to serve impoverished areas of the globe.” She wrote that she “believes in our causes so much that I became a Director of Cultural Awareness...” She discussed their “service” as the trips members take with volunteer doctors in which they offer “clinical days, teaching health education and donat[ed] clothes and medical supplies.” She also identified her membership in this group as a choice due to how their “agenda...mission, [and] their moral and ethical values were similar to mine.”

Amanda profiled the Pre-Professional Medical Society (PPMS) of which she was also a new member. She identified a main goal of the group as giving “students the chance to volunteer...within various occupations.” While she discussed that the group welcomes many different service interests of members, she wrote, “The one social issue I am passionate about is abortion.” She discussed the work she did the previous year on her own as part of the March for Life in Washington, DC, describing it as “one of the most incredible experiences.” Interestingly, Amanda didn’t end up doing her project on abortion, but rather she related the course to a budding interest in veterinary medicine. In her final project, she seemed to have the least personal connection to her topic, which was possible because, unlike Daphne and Juanita, Amanda’s interest in animal welfare was something she was exploring as a connection to a new identity. For her to think about this project in the way she did, she found herself considering changing her major; while the other three students experienced shifts in identities as writers throughout the course, none of them considered changing their majors by the end of the sixteen-weeks.

#### *Motivation for Continued Engagement*

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, throughout this project I’ve questioned if this course was “service-learning enough.” If I didn’t require students to submit their work beyond the classroom, was I really asking them to do service? As it pertains to their learning, a more important question is, did this course motivate students toward continued civic engagement?

Joyce Inman believes service-learning should accomplish real academic learning, civic engagement and critical/cultural literacy. She feels too much of the service-learning work that’s done in FYC is “character education” (4) – reflection that’s too personal and/or not directed

enough. She also feels that “cultural activism” (4) is often missing from service-learning courses. To counter this she suggests we provide students with heuristics for cultural criticism and help them situate their service into forming a “critical consciousness” (5). Inman’s suggestion for a critical consciousness speaks to the overall goal I had for students in the course: I wanted them to become more critically minded academically while also becoming more conscious of how they could impact social change where they saw a need for it.

During the focus group, Martinez and I both picked up on the fact that all four students viewed their final project as something truly important in the world. As Martinez mentioned in her interview, this level of dedication was something that set this course apart:

During the final presentations, I could tell that some students really put thought into how they could potentially implement their genres into the world, using the particular issues that they had explored all semester. It was so great to see them take into consideration so many elements when composing their project—they weren’t just trying to fulfill the assignment requirements to get the grade, but I think that some of them genuinely thought about how their work would be accepted in the ‘real world.’ They discussed the potential locations where their work would be most successful, and how they would adapt what they’ve made to fit the needs of their audiences. I was so impressed by that.

Despite the fact that only two students specifically mentioned “writing for change” in their End of Course Reflections, all four students left the course critically conscious of how the work they did in the course connected to their lives, and they appeared to be prepared to critically engage in the future.

By the focus group meeting, Juanita had gone on her first trip with IMO, spending her Spring Break in Columbia shadowing a doctor and helping to provide medical education to small villages. At first during the focus group, Juanita held back in talking about gluten intolerance as a social issue because she felt it was too “scientific” to be considered personal, but after I prompted her to make the connections with her life as she had in her project, she mentioned her family and her experiences with gluten intolerance and as Martinez notes: “[Juanita] began to understand how this could in fact be considered a social issue relevant to many other individuals and families.”

Likewise, Amanda stated during the focus group that she’d already volunteered to help animals since the course ended and was still thinking about changing majors to go into veterinary medicine. While I can’t be sure if Juanita and Amanda’s interest in engagement was sustained only because of this course, as Martinez noted, all students expressed positive opinions about volunteering, finding it “important and impactful.” It seems that 1101 may have served as a catalyst for Juanita and Amanda to take their interests beyond projects for the course.

When it came to discussing the relationship between writing and change during the focus group, students expressed the connection that had been made and sustained between the two as a result of the course. Daphne mentioned that she had already understood writing could be used for change, but this course helped her “see a larger benefit for doing it.” Martinez noted, “One student explained that she had learned, ‘that it’s possible to change things through writing.’ I think that this is a huge realization for a college freshman and it shows that the work she conducted in 1101 had an impact not only on her perception of a social issue, but on her perception of writing as a useful tool that can create change.”

All of the students in the focus group responded that they would be interested in having the option to take another service-learning course in the future. Rachel stated that she felt the service aspect of the course helped her reflect more on her issue and in that aspect she would like to take a service-learning class because it's hard to go outside of school and do service. Daphne said she would consider doing so but didn't think her major offered service-learning classes. Regardless, she shared that volunteering was always a big deal to her family and she's always done service work, which she planned to continue. Juanita shared that since the fieldwork she does is the way to learn and gain experience in her field, she views that as service. Amanda mentioned that she worked with Habitat for Humanity in a high school service-learning course and that she felt "really fulfilled." She stated that she would "enjoy participating in other similar projects." Martinez noted, as did I, that all of the students mentioned how 1101 had helped them be more aware of the issues around them, as well as the need for volunteers and for people to take action, which interested them all. Martinez noted, "Students explained that the course allowed them to 'reflect more on the issues' and to see how they could 'really change things through writing.' One student also expressed that service-learning is not something required by her major, but that after taking 1101, 'I would definitely do it.'"

While the level of engagement these students showed with regard to the critical consciousness they built is what I would have hoped for as a result of this course, it is important to note that all four students who participated in the study already valued being active in the world before they took 1101. As Martinez noted, "For some, finding passion and engagement in an issue is something they've internalized a long time ago, while for others the idea of service-learning is brand new." We both agreed that it would be beneficial in a future study to look at

how the levels of critical consciousness raising were different for students who didn't have such an ingrained awareness for service as these four students did. Perhaps as a result of these students all having volunteered prior to taking ENC 1101, or perhaps in part as a result of what they learned in the course, Amanda, Rachael, Daphne and Juanita's statements four months after the course ended suggest that this course helped them to be motivated to engage civically in the future.

### *Limitations*

The patterns of limitations I found came primarily from student's Genre Papers, End of Course Reflections, and their focus group responses. I present them in this section as they relate to some of the challenges with service-learning discussed in Chapters One and Two. This section also points to some of the areas of my approach I have revised, which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

### *Lacked Technical Skills to Produce Texts*

Nora Bacon argued in her 2000 CCC article, "Building a Swan's Nest for Instruction in Rhetoric" that instructors of FYC need to "define [themselves] as analysts of language, ready to examine respectfully a wide range of texts" (605). She suggests that "It is not enough to tell students that writing varies with its audience and purpose: If students are to develop a real (not merely abstract) understanding of rhetorical principles, they need to write in more than one setting, for more than one audience and more than one purpose" (606). One limitation of this course was the lack of time I had to teach students how to compose digital texts from design to delivery. During the focus group, all four students shared that they felt they lacked skills to put

their final work into the public. Even Juanita, who posted her video on *Facebook*, as she'd planned, explained that she wanted to go further by putting it on *YouTube*, but that she couldn't figure out how to upload the video. Rachel and Daphne also cited technology as a problem – Daphne felt she lacked the photo-editing skills to make her collage better, and Rachel wasn't pleased with the quality of her video but didn't have the right software or know how to improve it.

This limitation stems mostly from the fact that ENC 1101 is a 16-week required writing course in which there is not enough time to teach students digital composing skills in addition to everything else. In many successful service-learning models, courses are upper-division and span more than one semester. Likewise, the competencies are often created by the instructor rather than established by the department. As such, instructors can spend half a semester teaching students how to write grants or publish newsletters, whereas in FYC, there are very specific expectations of what a student should be able to do when they move from 1101 into 1102. Likewise, I believe the nature of the way we define composition is partly involved. Students arguably use of all kinds of technology on a daily basis, but they have a hard time seeing what they do on social networking sites or blogs as a form of composing. As these four students were composing in ways that were conceptually new to them, and as this course asked them to challenge their idea of a text while not providing them specific skills in which to compose in these new genres, it is also possible they lacked confidence in what they'd produced.

#### *Didn't Connect With Social Issue*

Throughout the first two rounds of analysis, I had concluded that Amanda's progress in the course differed from the other three students because of her lack of personal connection to

the issue she chose to address in her final project. As Martinez mentioned during her interview, it is difficult to judge how a student connects: “I think that asking some students to develop passion for a social issue was unrealistic for where they were as individuals, especially since it’s something that we can’t really measure or grade.” While I agree that it is difficult, maybe even impossible to “measure” or “grade” passion, I also did not intend to weigh a student’s success in this course as a result of their passion on the issue they chose to explore. This was never an outlined goal for the course, nor was it something that ever appeared on a rubric for an assignment. When talking about passion and any required course, the same issues of personal connection are present in any approach to FYC: students have to take the course, but they might not be ready to connect to the course personally, and we shouldn’t grade them as such. As we don’t outline “passion” as a competency for 1101 or 1102, I don’t think it’s fair to view the lack of personal connection a student may or may not have as a negative aspect of a service-learning FYC course. My observations about Amanda’s seeming lack of personal connection to her social issue come not from a concern about her having not met the course objectives; it was an observation based on differences of engagement I saw in the work she did as compared to the work Juanita or Daphne did.

During the focus group, Amanda mentioned that she was thinking of going into veterinary medicine, which started to help me see that perhaps the seemingly cursory connection she made in her Genre Paper was actually a result of her trying on a new interest. If that were true, perhaps that would explain why her connections were less detailed as others, for she was exploring possible career paths as an undeclared freshman. While Juanita and Daphne had been personally interested and involved in the issues they chose to work on for quite some time,



Amanda chose something she cared about, but not something that directly related to her current major or community memberships. Despite this, I believe Amanda got something from the course that she wouldn't have without the inclusion of service-learning, namely the opportunity to explore a possible new career option.

When it came down to discussing a plan of delivery in her Genre Paper, Amanda went very broad, which I believe occurred for her and others because most students don't have experience in thinking of small-scale, doable projects that ask them to use writing for a purpose outside the classroom. Martinez offered another reason this might have happened for Amanda and others: "I think that some students struggled to 'fake it' in order to get the grade that they desired, and for this reason, they were not as successful as others. I think that this is something that all instructors struggle with, really, but I think that the service-learning focus was particularly challenging because it's harder to justify to students why they 'should care.'" I agree with Martinez in regard to justifying to every student why they should care about a social issue; as teachers, we know that you can't make a student care about something in the way you think they should, be it an assignment or a social issue of their choosing. However, again, I don't see this as an issue that is related to a service-learning FYC course, but rather, to writing courses, or really, courses students must take in general. Doesn't every teacher struggle to some degree or another with motivating students to "care" about the work they do for a course? I think some teachers may use this as a challenge they associate with service-learning courses because they can't see how they could motivate students to care about a social issue when some students don't even care enough about a course to finish the semester. If we're going to discuss students not "caring" or not being "passionate" as limitations to service-learning, we must also recognize that

these are not problems inherent to service-learning, but rather, to FYC and to required courses in general. I argue that as service-learning courses give students more options for relevant coursework than some other approaches to FYC might, service-learning in FYC for instructors such as myself could improve rather than hinder the level of motivation a student obtains in 1101 or 1102.

In her genre product, Amanda did well to find realistic constraints she would face in reaching her audience, but she didn't have a plan to circumnavigate those issues, nor did she have a genuine intention to deliver her work to her audience (based on the fact that she didn't actually write the proposal to the pet food companies). When we discussed this after it had been turned in, she was quick to find her errors and agreed with my suggestion that perhaps this would be something she could implement if she interned at a vet's office, placing the stickers on the food they sold. Interestingly, while she missed much of what she needed to do in the paper portion of her assignment, her actual product was one of the most realistically designed in the class – she brought in tiny canisters filled with candy to represent cans of pet food, and had a sticker printed and placed on each. The saying she'd created to spread her message was catchy and original, a variation of many over-used phrases for the same purpose, but delivered in a way that was applicable to her audience (“Save a Litter, Spay Your Critter”). Amanda showed in her creation of her product that she understood the rhetorical awareness necessary for the assignment, but in her Genre Paper she did not show she'd successfully applied the concepts when reflecting on her choice; she had procedural knowledge but not declarative knowledge, while others displayed both in their final assignment.

I think one of the biggest limitations of this model is that it assumes that everyone cares about a broad social issue that they are invested in personally enough to take action upon via writing. However, I also believe this is an issue we experience equally in non-service-learning FYC courses. It is difficult to get every student involved in writing, even with relevant connections to coursework. As far more people *write* daily than *write for change* daily, making those connections to writing and change relevant becomes even more of a challenge in a service-learning FYC course using my approach.

#### *Not Positioned to Intervene*

I mentioned earlier that in their Genre Papers, all four students identified how their message could intervene. However, why did only one student submit her work to her audience? The feedback received from Amanda, Daphne, Juanita and Rachel during the focus group indicated that they, as Martinez observed from her notes, “did not have the time or available resources” to put their work into the world. While their perceived skills are no doubt a large part of why their work didn’t go beyond the classroom, I believe that there could have been other things at play. For example, if I’d had them read research about students writing for public audiences like I’d had them read writing studies research, would they have felt more prepared? Are there changes I can make to the design of this course that would encourage students to work within their skill set to produce texts they could realistically deliver at the end of a sixteen-week course if they wanted to do so? Or, is it enough that they recognize intervention? Students’ feelings of unpreparedness to intervene into community conversations may have had a lot to do with their own measurement of available ethos. Because they view themselves as freshman, beginning writers, students, and because as their teacher I am assessing them throughout the

course, their lack of confidence in their own access to public audiences could have been part of what held them back. Perhaps even though they chose their own audiences, their access to their audiences weren't recognizable from their position in the classroom or even the university as new students.

Despite that all four students recognized connections between writing and change throughout the course, only Juanita ended up doing anything with her final project outside of 1101. This seemed to have more to do with the lack of resources students felt they had than a lack of interest in doing something with their work. Amanda mentioned that she didn't do anything with her project beyond the class because she didn't have access to people who would help her produce her product, but if she became a vet or worked in a vet's office she would still like to implement it. Daphne offered that she really intended to do something with her project but because the photos of her mom belonged to her aunt, she wanted to work with her and do something with it when she had more time and could "find the avenue" for her work. As Martinez noted: "In general, it was clear to me that these students saw the value behind their ideas for their projects, but that they had some hesitations as to their ability to put it all together in a manner that would be taken seriously by the public."

While I do not aim to address every challenge inherent in service-learning in FYC, Chapter Four will discuss the changes I have made to my approach in order to mediate some of these limitations.

### *Unexpected Observations*

As I set out to have realistic expectations for the course based on my rationale, I would have never believed that "Writing for Change" would help a future medical student make peace

with writing, or that a first-year writing course could be a place where a student could find closure with a family member's death. None of these things should be the focus of FYC, but I do believe that when students are allowed to seek audiences of their choosing and make their own personal connections to assignments, outcomes like these can occur as a result. The unexpected benefits of this course helped me to see how this approach worked in ways I didn't anticipate, which helped me shape some of my choices for a revision of my approach (Chapter Four).

### *Students Explored Their Identities as Writers*

From the first assignment to the last, the work each student did reflected an increase in self-awareness in regard to her identity as a writer. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, when students enter FYC courses, they bring with them long-held beliefs about writing and its place in their lives. In Juanita's Writer Profile, the first paper for the course wherein students were asked to discuss their attitudes and relationships with writing, she described writing as "not part of who she is" and wrote that she "never felt that writing is a necessity." In the same paper Amanda wrote that "she doesn't consider herself a writer" and that "good writing is an opinion." Rachel responded that she was "scarred and scared" to write for school based on "past experiences" with teachers in high-school who told her "not to overdo it" with being creative in papers. In her Writer Profile, Daphne wrote that while she had viewed herself as a writer for quite some time, when "structure" and "formulas" were introduced to writing for high school she learned to feel less like one. All four students recognized either disassociation with writing as part of their identity and/or negative attitudes as to the role writing played in their lives.

In the second paper of the course, the Writing Process Project, wherein students were asked to pick a professional writer from the *NY Times* "Writers on Process" blog, read about that

writer, and compare their processes to that writer, students began to show a slight change in their previously held associations with writing. Specifically, all four students chose to connect this assignment to the previous paper in the sense that they recognized changes they wanted to make in their own processes that affected their identities as writers. Two examples of this come from Juanita and Rachael's papers.

Juanita continued to discuss how bad writing made her feel, but in that, she showed a shift in her attitude about learning more about writing: "I do not consider myself creative enough to like writing, but this is something I must learn to overcome in order to be successful in life. This is also an exciting challenge for me because this idea of learning to love something that doesn't feel enjoyable is intriguing to me in so many ways." By the end of her Writing Process paper, she reflected that she could "say with certainty that it does not affect whether you are passionate about writing or not, because we all have different interests but the similar process can be followed for both of us." Her recognition that she and the professional writer she chose to write about, Rosecrans Baldwin, could feel differently about what they liked about writing and yet still write showed that she was re-thinking some of the claims she made in her first paper about how someone cannot be a writer unless they're passionate about writing. Likewise, Rachel focused her paper on how she and poet Jack Ridil had different attitudes about themselves as writers: "he loves to revise" and she sets "impossible standards" for herself. She recognized that "simply reading about [his] writing process and habits has been extremely influential to my own writing process," and she admitted that her current process "does not serve me well." She observed, "until [Ridil's] work has been rejected and revised, it is not satisfactory in his eyes." While he "loves to revise" to improve, Rachel's process for revision was based on feeling that

her writing was “inadequate.” She set a goal for herself to “experiment with my writing more and not be afraid to take risks.” In Daphne’s Writing Process Project, she summarized that she realized that “the writer creates the process and not the other way around,” which can be applied to how all four of these students approached and delivered their second papers in the course.

By the end of the semester in their final course reflections, these students discussed how their attitudes as writers had changed. Through their discussion, all four students showed that they connected writing to themselves as individuals, which supports what we know about how meta-awareness about writing processes can help to foster motivation and identity building. Juanita discussed experiencing a “confidence boost” in her writing due to receiving “good grades” and reported that she felt very confident in her abilities to “analyze.” She also mentioned that she felt writing was no longer a “disturbing activity” – she learned she was “not a bad writer” and could have a strong voice regardless of what genre or purpose for which she was composing. She also connected writing to her future: “My medical career will require me to do tons of analytical writing, and feeling confident that I know how...will increase the expectations that I have on myself.”

Amanda discussed how the course helped her writing “[move] along the page” with more ease than it did before and that she learned she didn’t have to “be right the first time [in a draft].” She wrote, “The reading I did in this course helped me a lot with my identity as a writer... Reading about other writers has helped me to develop my own process.”

Rachel used the personal pronoun “my” throughout her reflection to refer to the changes she’d experienced, which showed she was beginning to take ownership of her own writing; “my writing” and “my process” were peppered through her reflection. She stated that she learned to

“let go and write.” She reflected that she gained confidence because she learned to “write for herself” and still meet an assignment. She stated that she now begins her writing assignments with “less stress and more peace” and knows she has a process that is specific to her, as well as revision practices that make her writing stronger. She, like Amanda, credited reading about writing processes of other writers as part of what helped her realize “[my] writing process should give me room to grow in order to become a better writer.”

Daphne reflected that as she slowed down, she found herself becoming “unblocked” as a writer and as a person, which allowed her to face something she was struggling with personally. She wrote, “I’m a writer at heart and changes in my writing also present changes in me.” The revision strategies she learned in the course gave her “freedom” and helped her learn to just write first and foremost, building her confidence about writing academically. While Daphne was the only student who directly called herself “a writer” throughout the course, the End of Course Reflections showed that all four students took stock in their own writing in new ways by the end of the semester.

### *Implications of Explored Student Identity*

The exploration students did of their own writing processes and identities as writers was beneficial to them not only in gaining understanding of themselves through meta-awareness, but it also helped them to build confidence in their abilities.

Juanita didn’t consider herself a writer at the onset of the course, specifically because she didn’t see connections to it and her career, but by the end of the course she had undergone a major shift, seeing writing as something that is a large part of the work done by doctors. As early as her Discourse Community Profile assignment, Juanita worked on finding a connection



between writing and her career field. She explored how in her membership with IMO they used writing as a primary form of intercommunication and how important it was that they were able to make “creative” materials when traveling to instruct the children they would speak to in other countries and to achieve fundraising. Creativity, she found, was a big part of being a member of this group, and as she took a leadership role as the Director of Cultural Awareness, the need for her to push herself became clear. Creativity mattered here and to her accomplishments in the group, which helped her see herself as a creative thinker and make the connection to how that had a place in her career, despite that at the beginning of the course she wrote that she didn’t consider herself “creative enough to like writing.” Her final project showed that she could balance the use of creativity alongside analytical choices.

Daphne considered writing part of her personal identity at the start of the course and spent the semester working on different themes involving emotion. As she had been struggling to use emotion in her writing prior to the course, by the end of the semester she reflected that she and her writing had changed. She expressed that she distanced herself from people because she didn’t want them to feel sorry for her, but in doing the final project for this course, she discovered a way to be okay with her loss as a loss; “people were going to say they were sorry and that [was] okay.” She expressed that because she allowed herself to be open to change as a writer, she was able to use the final project in the course to also become okay with change herself, finally getting “closure” with regard to her mother’s death.

Rachel spent the last three assignments working on elements of the idea of being a “victim” – from domestic abuse to abortion, she took a stand as someone who could speak for those without a voice. Perhaps this had to do with her new membership with Campus for Christ,

her recent decision to become a criminal justice major or perhaps her realization that she could use creativity to prompt people to take her seriously. Regardless, in each assignment, she made it very clear as to why she wanted to write about what she chose from a personal standpoint; her motives were never hidden. What I found most interesting about the work that Rachel produced throughout the semester was that it seemed once she recognized that she wasn't being asked to stop being creative, she was able to use her creative thinking to work on unique papers and projects while delivering writing that was very professional and polished. Of the overall assignments created in the course Martinez noted, "I think that by far, the most successful aspects of this model were reflected in the connection that some students seemed to form with their assignments."

I don't think we should force students to get personal, but I think for teachers who value what happens when students do, the results of these four students show how designing assignments that allow student to make choices helps them make connections to writing and their lives. As Dewey believed education is a way for students to grow, and as one of his pedagogical recommendations for this was to make assignments "worthwhile intrinsically" (Giles and Elyer 80), teachers of FYC must be able to foster learning that is academic, but also, like with Daphne, deeply transformative. Likewise, for students such as Rachel and Amanda, our assignments should also "present problems that awaken new curiosity and create demand for information" (80); we should be open to students choosing focuses for inquiry that allow them to question their approaches as well as their messages. For students like Juanita, assignments, according to Dewey, should allow students to be explore interests that "cover a considerable time span and...foster development over time" (80). Regardless of where a student begins a service-

learning course, assignments that “generate interest” (Giles and Elyer 80) can enable them to discover themselves and their disciplines, as well as the subject matter of the course they’re taking.

Teaching this course showed me that for those kinds of connections to take place, students must be able to find their own way. We can encourage them to see the ways writing is meaningful in their lives, and we can influence those connections in the way we design assignments. But when it comes down to if they make the connection on a personal level, it’s going to depend on their goals for the course, not just ours.

#### Instructor-Related Observations

My observer comments and my interview with Martinez helped to contextualize some of the implications present in the literature. The instructor-related observations from this project will be further discussed in Chapter Four, but what follows will address the main areas that this project impacted or was impacted by the role and nature of instruction.

#### *Critical Consciousness Is Necessary for Instructors*

Does service-learning in FYC as a teaching method work in part because those who teach it care about service too? Prior to the interview I held with Martinez, I hadn’t considered this; I figured if someone taught a service-learning FYC course, they would do so because they care about social issues, are activists and/or volunteer. However, as is reflected in the scholarship, sometimes teachers are assigned service-learning FYC courses by their departments. So what happens then? Could the level of personal commitment a teacher has to doing service impact the perception of a service-learning FYC course by students? For Martinez, the answer would be

yes. Regarding incorporating service-learning into her own teaching, she said, “I think that utilizing this curriculum as it stands would pose a huge challenge for me, and would require similar efforts to those that I put forth when first navigating through the writing about writing curriculum. Because I don’t have the experience or expertise in the field of service-learning, I would find it difficult to implement service-learning into all aspects of my course.” She also mentioned she felt she doesn’t “have the background in Service Learning needed to effectively convey the passion and motivation that you instilled in your students.” Prior to this project, I didn’t consider how much my interest in teaching this course in this way would translate to student learning. As a student I was able to quickly tell whether I would enjoy a course more or less due to an instructor’s personality or teaching style, but “passion” seemed fleeting and unimportant when thinking about whether a course was successful overall. As a teacher I believe I do bring a lot of “passion” for what I do, but I also believe it’s impossible to measure passion. Instead, as I mentioned in Chapter One, a benefit of an approach like service-learning is that it can instill a different kind of personal presence for an instructor in the classroom. I believe what Martinez is referring to here is not my passion for teaching, but rather, in this course, my enthusiasm for teaching a course that I felt was truly relevant to students’ lives in a way it was also relevant to mine.

Martinez said she wouldn’t use this model for her own teaching, “not because I don’t find it useful and effective, but because it does not reflect my strengths as an instructor.” I found it interesting that her reason for not using the course model was one of my reasons for designing it. She mentioned that she felt she “would also have to research and address social issues that are important to me, before attempting to present these ideas to my students.” Prior to this interview,

I took for granted how much of a role my own interest in social issues was an asset to this model. Martinez's statement that she would find this aspect of the course difficult made me appreciate how that informed what I did in this model. Although I did research to prepare, I didn't even consider researching social issues, for that is something I am familiar with as part of my daily life. This suggests to me that those who teach (or want to teach) service-learning in FYC do it because public service and writing is already part of their literate lives. As Martinez recognized that this model wouldn't fit her strengths as an instructor, service-learning in FYC might be just the approach to bring out the strengths in others. As I mentioned in Chapter One, service-learning in FYC is not an either/or debate, but simply another approach to teaching FYC aimed at helping students become stronger writers while also becoming more critically conscious individuals.

#### *Part-Time Instructors Can Teach Service-Learning Courses*

As a part-time teacher and graduate student, as discussed in Chapter Two, I faced challenges with regard to sustainability and workload which led me to make some of the decisions I did. This course was not unmanageable, nor did I experience issues as an instructor that would lead me to say this course is anything less than successful. Based on my findings, service-learning in FYC can be taught by a part-time teacher. However, unless they are familiar with service-learning scholarship as it applies to FYC, they will face many challenges that are not addressed in this project. As such, to ensure a part-time teacher has an experience closer to what I've had, they would need to have access to professional development, as well as be willing to commit to keeping up with scholarship. Chapter Four will introduce my recommendations for

these and other ways service-learning in FYC can be made more accessible without straining a department.

*Not All Benefits Require Sustainability*

In order to negotiate the transience of my students' place within the university and my own temporary status, I did not build this course to be sustainable. Because this course was not designed to be sustainable and it still provided benefits to the existing competencies, I argue that sustainability is not necessary for students to benefit from a service-learning approach to FYC. Although my course lasted only sixteen-weeks, did not involve a community partner, and was not part of a larger service-learning focus within the department, benefits were plentiful. Students were motivated by the exigence of their projects; they saw ways their work could intervene in the community; and, they were able to make strong rhetorical and genre-based decisions in effort to reach public audiences. These things may happen without service-learning, but I argue they would be difficult to recreate without the enhancement service-learning provides for FYC. Even Martinez, who said she would "find it difficult to implement service-learning into all aspects of my course," stated she "would consider adjusting my curriculum to implement some of the activities that you conducted to encourage a connection between students and their projects." Knowing that service-learning wouldn't work for her teaching style, her consideration of how elements of the course could benefit her own non service-learning FYC courses shows that even if an instructor doesn't adopt a full service-learning FYC model, there is still benefit to be had. Likewise, in a department such as UCF's where teachers are encouraged to share their best practices, the inclusion of dedicated service-learning FYC courses would provide areas of professional development for all instructors by way of learning from each other. In addition, as

service-learning continues to be a popular research area in our field, it would behoove instructors in our department to continue to professionalize themselves by having access to service-learning in FYC practices and scholarship in order for the department to continue to be competitive with other universities who are contributing to this conversation.

### Unanswered Questions

Despite the results that have come from this project, there remain almost as many unanswered questions.

Juanita used this course to connect writing to her life as a future doctor. Part of Amanda's shift occurred in her letting go of perfection with regard to her drafts and her process; Amanda consistently had the lowest draft grades out of all four participants. Rachel found her creativity could have a place in her academic work, but only if she paid attention to the rhetorical situation. Perhaps because of her making that connection, she spent the majority of her effort in the course working on her Rhetorical Analysis assignment, receiving the only "perfect" draft grade I gave that semester. Daphne came into the course already self-identified as a writer and left the course having undergone an extremely personal transformation.

Much as these four students found this course shifted their understanding of writing, their work has helped me see how course objectives are just one part of what we ask students to accomplish during a course. The rest of what happens is very much about them, our audience, and how we allow them to establish themselves within our lessons. In this way, the inclusion of service-learning in FYC asked them to write for their own change, not just the change in the world they would like to see. Transformation of themselves as writers is a big part of what we seek as instructors –from process knowledge and increased confidence by way of drafting, to the

understanding of rhetoric and genre, we aim to change the way students understand writing and themselves as writers. For the teacher, like myself, who is also interested in students applying these concepts in preparation for public audiences, the use of writing as a form of service creates an added value to the already transformative nature of a rhetorical, writing studies approach to first-year composition. I believe great changes can occur in taking such an approach, but I witnessed even greater *personal* change in students in my course. My observations and analysis suggest that this result is connected mostly to my allowing them to utilize genuine inquiry as a means to explore social action via writing. By not limiting them to one specific social issue, or one specific genre in which to compose their final projects, they were able to work incrementally during the course to remain as focused on one area as they wished, or to explore as much as they could. All of their work, as Dewey would argue, is essential to critical education, aimed to “generate [their] interest” (Giles and Elyer 80) in something they identified.

#### Forecasting of Implications

Despite the success of my model in fall 2010, if I were teaching this course again, I would make adjustments based on what my findings have presented. Chapter Four will address the alterations I have made to the course since the version I have discussed in this thesis. I will also present recommendations for instructors and others in support of my argument that service-learning in FYC can be present within a first-year writing program without draining much-needed resources from a department.



## **CHAPTER FOUR – IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS**

### Summary of Results

As the preceding chapters suggest, service-learning in FYC is an approach to teaching that can enhance students' learning outcomes by the options it provides instructors. By using relevant assignments and giving students an opportunity to explore their interests as they relate to the course, service-learning in FYC is another way to get students interested in writing. For the instructor, service-learning can provide a way to teach students to be better writers and more critically conscious individuals. As Martinez noted during her interview, "...One of the benefits of the writing about writing curriculum is that you can teach to the outcomes using whatever methodology or approach suits your strengths as an instructor. For this reason, if service-learning reflects your strengths, you can certainly adapt your materials to fit the goals of writing about writing."

As presented in Chapter One, there are many benefits and challenges inherent in using service-learning in FYC, especially when community partners are involved. However, as I presented in Chapter Two, there are ways a course can be designed without a community partner. Using public writing as a form of service in FYC can result in students meeting the expected course competencies, while also raising their critical consciousness and achieving personal transformation through relevant course assignments. Some students left my course better writers and more critically minded individuals interested in continued engagement. Despite how well I feel the model worked based on my expectations for it, I would do several things differently if I

taught the course again. This chapter will discuss the implications of those revisions as they relate to the student, the teacher and the department. In addition, I will discuss the need for professional development to support service-learning in FYC, as well as further research that should be done to continue to study and revise the approaches that best fit the department at UCF.

### Recommendations for Teachers

The need for most of the changes I will present here occurred slowly throughout the process of teaching, grading student papers and researching my approach. These changes generated a model that I hope can be adapted by other instructors more easily, as well as replicated across classes with few challenges than the model I presented in Chapter Two. To further situate the value of teacher research as a means to create pedagogical awareness, I will present these revisions as recommendations in this chapter because I would urge any instructor considering service-learning in FYC to address these areas for themselves.

### *Revision of Overall Model*

In attempting to address suggestions students made in the focus group about wanting to do service that allow them to interact with people in-person, I have tried to find a way to make relationship-building service work in FYC, without adding additional limitations. After meeting with Sheri Dressler, the Director of Experiential Learning (EL) on campus, I began to revise my approach for 1101 to include FYC students doing interviews with students involved with Volunteer UCF. Dressler thought such interviews could advertise the volunteer opportunities available to UCF students and help both volunteers in the program and students in FYC to

become more aware of the importance and variety of service options available to them as college students. During our meeting, we discussed ways assignments could be created in the course to scaffold toward 1101 students doing their interviews as end-of-course projects that would be published on the EL blog. We also discussed assignments that would help to meet course objectives and teach students about service through the act of writing. For example, students in 1101 would be assigned a specific Volunteer UCF participant doing service in an area that interested them. For their Discourse Community unit, students could profile the agency their interview subject was volunteering with. For a Rhetorical Analysis assignment, students could analyze a text from that agency. For their final assignment, the interview, students would spend a few weeks learning about interviewing in the field, drafting questions, practicing interview strategies and completing their interviews. By writing their final projects, students would learn about genre through the EL blog, and would need to go through a process of revision to get their interview ready to be published on the blog, which would provide ample opportunity for them to foster critical thinking about choices made rhetorically and in their writing processes. Among the many ideas I have explored in the last year since teaching 1101, Dressler's suggestions create the most doable alternative approach because a class such as this would support the goals of our first-year writing program while also supporting campus service goals. Throughout my attempted revisions of this model, my choices have been driven by implications from my research and my knowledge of what would work within our department as an approach for other instructors. I have taken into consideration the challenges I avoided in my model, and compiled the following set of suggestions I've created for successful service-learning in FYC within a department using a rhetorical approach:

- Service project should have benefits for students and their communities.
- Service should be meaningful and/or useful to the individual student.
- Service project could work large-scale for more than one interested teacher.
- Service project should not involve a direct community partner unless the teacher designing the course has a solid understanding of service-learning and has a personal relationship with an organization.
- Service project should not ask freshman students to go off-campus due to transportation issues; service should be accessible on-campus to help build their connections to the UCF community.
- Service projects will require some additional work on the part of the teacher, but should not overwhelm teaching or deflect from the required departmental competencies.

In the review and revision of my course model, it was clear that I did not achieve all of these. The fact that my course seemed to be more flawed as I learned about it from analyzing my student's work is an aspect of how I found teacher research to be of value to framing this study. Through the revision of my course model, I could see more clearly what would make a course like mine more successful.

Dressler's suggestion met most of these requirements, except for the feasibility of this approach being scalable. I would need to do further research to determine the strain multiple teachers in a department using this approach would cause to the students involved with Volunteer UCF. Overall, for an option for 1101, this approach would benefit the students in being able to focus on one audience (the students and faculty reading the EL blog). They would

also be able to choose to work with a volunteer who was doing work with an organization they were interested in; although motivation and personal connection is not something that can be forced, giving students options to make their own choices is a positive way to ensure it can happen for many. In addition, enabling students to help build the volunteer community at UCF could strengthen their investment in the university community, and could potentially motivate them for continued engagement as future volunteers themselves. For the readers of the blog, the interviews from students in 1101 would provide useful information on the experience of volunteering as a college student, and would be beneficial to the EL office in promoting service options as part of being a UCF student. Additionally, as the blog is run by a university office and is focused on students, FYC students may feel more positioned to intervene into the conversation contained within it, as they would be members of the public for which they were writing.

In the two semesters since I taught 1101, I've been teaching 1102 using a curriculum I designed based on what I learned from 1101, which I will present in this chapter to show how my revisions from 1101 have benefitted my approach to 1102. For the last year I've been trying to find a way to revise 1101 to meet the expected outcomes, while also mediating the challenges of service-learning in FYC, and also addressing the limitations I observed in my model as they relate specifically to 1101; Dressler's idea achieves that and would make a good fit for ENC 1101. However, my approach to ENC 1102 also shows an alternative to what can be done to incorporate public writing in FYC.

Because students come into 1102 from such richly diverse backgrounds, they bring with them access and interest in a large variety of communities. From organizations with which they volunteer, to new clubs they're joining on campus, to part-time jobs they've acquired, and sports

teams they call home, as well as their high schools, churches, immediate peers, and even the strangers-cum-friends with whom they share living quarters, they navigate many publics for which they could write. By incorporating public writing into ENC 1102, we can encourage them to learn about writing, rhetoric and research in ways that are not only relevant to their lives, but also enable them to give back to their various communities. Because first-year students are so diverse, it cannot be assumed they all have transportation off campus, extra time in a three-credit general education course or an interest in one community partner's goals. First-year students aren't all positioned to perform service in the way much of the upper-division scholarship suggests. As such, to involve service-learning in FYC, using public writing seems to be a way to introduce transactional writing assignments which they are personally motivated to participate in. By opening up the community-base for which they can write by not constraining them to one community partner's goals, I suggest that by proxy, we actually open them up as writers, thinkers, and citizens.

*ENC 1102: Promoting Literate Lives*

The 1102 course I teach is focused on literacy and asks students to create researched arguments for audiences they choose, inside and outside of the university, about some aspect of literacy. Throughout the course students read, research and write about literacy as a very broad term encompassing reading, writing and comprehension as it relates to knowledge building. On the syllabus, I describe the course as such:

*Promoting Literate Lives* is a research-based course about literacy, language and writing. We will focus on exploring conversations that discuss the act of writing, reading, learning and comprehending in the world. In *Promoting Literate Lives*

you will conduct research and produce a research-based argument to promote some aspect of literacy to a community with whom you are connected. The content of this course focuses on argumentation and research, as well as doing service by sharing your own final researched argument to promote literate lives to an audience of your choosing.

This course, like other versions of ENC 1102, is researched-focused and hinges on students working incrementally through the semester to present a body of researched work by the end of the course. Their semester is made up of small assignments to orientate them with current conversations about literacy from both academic and popular sources, as well as to explore their own literacy history. From there they choose to focus on an aspect of literacy, propose an argument, present their research, and finally, they end of the course by presenting their researched arguments to their audiences via public writing.

### *Readings*

One element of my 1101 course that needed to be revised was assigning readings only about writing. As students were asked to connect with service-learning and writing, having readings that helped them gain knowledge in both aspects would have enhanced the connections students made to the way “service” could be achieved through the act of writing. As with any selection process, I would urge instructors to choose specific readings based on the theme of their course, however, sections from *Tactics of Hope* by Paula Mathieu would be very valuable in helping students see how their actions in writing and service affect others. I also think a section from *Writing Partnerships: Service-Learning in Composition* by Thomas Deans would be beneficial in engaging them to discuss and understand writing for change as it connects to

communities. Articles could also be taken from the service-learning journal *Reflections* and/or the recently published *Writing and Community Engagement: A Critical Sourcebook* (Deans, Roswell, and Wurr). A mixture of texts that support the goals for a rhetorical approach to FYC as well as service-learning would help to blend the two approaches together more seamlessly, which would translate to the student experience of the course. In ENC 1102, I have assigned a collection of readings that it seems strike this balance; this list of which is as follows:

- Malcolm X. “Learning to Read.” *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. Ed. Alex Haley. New York: Ballantine, 1965.
- Alexie, Sherman. “Superman and Me.” *The Most Wonderful Books: Writers on Discovering the Pleasures of Reading*. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1997. 3-6.
- Brandt, Deborah. “Sponsors of Literacy.” *CCC* 49.2 (1998): 165-185.
- Holmes, Linda. “Neil deGrasse Tyson on Literacy, Curiosity, Education and Being ‘In Your Face’.” *Monkey See*. NPR. Web. 16 Dec. 2010.
- Lessner, Steven and Collin Craig. “Finding Your Way In”: Invention as Inquiry Based Learning in FYW.” *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*. Vol. 1. Anderson: Parlor Press, 2010.
- Carr, Nicholas. “Is Google Making Us Stupid?” *The Atlantic*. July 2008. Web. 16 Dec. 2010.
- Battelle, John. “Google: Making Nick Carr Stupid, But It’s Made This Guy Smarter.” *Searchblog*. 10 June 2008. Web. 16 Dec. 2010.
- Toppo, Greg. “US Illiteracy: Why Johnny Still Can’t Read.” *USAToday.com*. 14 Oct. 2009. Web. 3 Jan. 2012. PDF.



- Simon, Scott. “Years of Schooling Leaves Some Students Illiterate.” *NPR.org*. 12 Dec. 2009. Web. 3 Jan. 2012. PDF.
- Wells, Susan. “Rogue Cops and Health Care: What Do We Want From Public Writing?” *CCC* 47.3 (1996): 325-41.
- Miller, Carolyn. “Genre As Social Action.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 151-67. PDF.

These readings are a mix of academic scholarship and popular conversation; they also represent a mix of literacy and service-related theories and concepts. These readings span the first eight weeks of the course, and students turn in one to two Reading Responses a week (short informal papers wherein they answer and pose questions about the readings). Often these responses help them to begin to make connections between the course and their interests, lives and majors. My responses to them in these papers are research-directed; whenever I notice a budding possible focus, I make comments to the students to direct them into thinking about what they might be curious enough about to sustain as a research interest throughout the course.

### *Assignments*

As a result of 1101 also being part of the study Martinez did for her own research, I learned that the way we present our assignments, in both order and design, has a big impact on how students perceive what we’re asking them to do. Because this study took place during my first semester teaching ENC 1101, I made some mistakes in my delivery of assignments and concepts that may have made a difference in the perception of this model by students. For example, the unit scaffolding I did in my 1101 model was the best choice for the theme and movement of the course, but I recognize now that there’s no way I wouldn’t mention genre until

Unit Four; thus, I would recommend that when concepts are first mentioned that time is built in to introduce them so students can increase their understanding as the course moves along. With regard to assignments, mid-way through the semester, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, I removed the page limits and the MLA formatting from the assignment sheets I used in 1101. As I didn't feel it was important to assess students solely on either of these items in this course, I would recommend that what appears on assignment sheets and/or rubrics directly coincides with the goals for student learning in the course, practices which are present in how I currently teach ENC 1102.

I would also recommend that the assignment sheets provided to students are written clearly and relate to the rubric. The assignment sheets I used for 1101 were confusing at times, with too many options provided and not enough clear direction given about what exactly I wanted students to do. I have since addressed this in all of my courses and now break each assignment down to three actions that correspond with three major rubric areas on which they're graded. Regardless of what an instructor chooses to do, I would recommend making each assignment sheet consistent across the course. While these changes are slight, a lack of attention to these matters could result in students being confused and missing what's being delivered; that's harmful in any course but for service-learning in FYC, something like assignment design could hamper student learning and the connections they make in regard to the course as a whole.

In ENC 1102, I have applied clarity and simplicity to the way I introduce and present assignments, not only via the assignment sheets, but also in class. The scaffolding in a research-based course is essential for students to be able to see their projects growth incrementally, and

thus, what I learned from my model of ENC 1101 has proven invaluable for the success of my new approach.

In *Leading Literate Lives*, once students have begun to research their chosen literacy-based focus, they write a research project proposal, wherein they present a revised research question, and discuss their delivery plan for their final project (which includes their proposed audience, and genre). This research project proposal is where they specifically address the community focus and exigency of their project. The final project in the course is a researched argument; this project is informed by their research and is the finalized version of what they proposed in their project proposal. Their researched argument is the text that they will deliver to their community audience. Alongside this text (which may come in a large variety of genres and be directed toward audiences within and outside of the university), I assign a rationale in which students reflect about and defend the rhetorical choices they made in the creation of their final projects, much like what I had students do in ENC 1101.

### *Sustainability*

Another area of oversight in my approach to 1101 was that I did not aim to make the course replicable. My course was not sustainable in the community either, since the projects were all student-directed and didn't aim to answer an existing community need in any organized fashion. However, from that experience, I posit that sustainability is not needed in order to encourage students to be more critically conscious. Likewise, sustainability and the drive for it, is often founded in the university through institutionalized service-learning, not in the classroom, or even in the department through administration. If we open up the definition of sustainability to include teaching students how to analyze and present their message to an audience inside and

outside of the classroom, we encourage what could be a sustainable practice through transfer. In ENC 1102, I still do not involve a community partner, but rather, I lecture about public writing and encourage students to see what they create in this course as something that is sustainable for someone else through knowledge-building. Their projects take a researched area of study and apply it to an audience that they feel needs to be more knowledgeable about it. We don't need to have a community partnership, or one specific way every student does service in order for what they do to have the potential to be sustainable and impactful in the community at large.

### *Audience Selection*

Dorman and Dorman believe that students are not explorers in learning, they're observers, consumers, "sightseers" (119) and it's partly our fault. They remind us that when students don't see "relevant connection[s] between learning and life" (119), they don't really learn what's being taught. I noticed that the students in ENC 1101 who chose an on-campus issue in their final assignment for the course seemed to have the least trouble with rhetorically adapting to audience. They were able to use their experiences as students and their budding memberships on campus to inform the things they cared about that affect college students. When revising my approach, I returned many times to a possible suggestion that students should choose to use writing to do service on-campus only, but when I started teaching ENC 1102 in the spring of 2010, I saw that students often had access to audiences they felt more confident to approach that had little to do with the university. While a large number of students from both semesters still navigated toward campus-related, or at the least, college-student directed arguments, I felt narrowing their focus to only allow them to appeal to other college students might easily turn into a bunch of in-class presentations on final exam day constituting to how they understood

“service.” For some students, this does end up being the case, but many draw from their own access points beyond the university to create projects that help or motivate others.

While doing on-campus service via writing would mediate some of the challenges I have faced when helping students in ENC 1102 navigate appropriate audiences for their work, it might also limit them too much. Many students spend a lot of time trying to figure out what audience to address, and often their final choice isn’t clear until about halfway through the semester, at which point their arguments have gone through many iterations. While narrowing their focus to on-campus issues and audiences would help them address the task at hand about presenting their work, the audience selection process is an important part, perhaps the *most* important part, of them locating and analyzing the rhetorical situations to which they will respond. One downside of letting them choose their own audiences is the sheer amount of options they face. As Martinez noted in our interview, “With so many different issues at hand, I think that some of them seemed overwhelmed and a bit apathetic.”

As students in ENC 1101 and 1102 showed by how many chose on-campus issues to address to college-student audiences, they are very interested in what is going on on-campus; for many freshman, campus is where they live and it is a community to them, as “real” as it gets. Gere and Sinor agree with Herzberg that relationships formed during the service-learning process must be based on social justice, not an opportunity for students to interact with those “less fortunate” (54) than themselves. In this way, on-campus service via writing teaches them a very democratic approach to what doing service actually means. I learned from my students’ projects that a number of issues on-campus are important to them and should be important to instructors as well; the college campus is a microcosm for the problems students see in the world. For these

reasons I see great value in them choosing to address on-campus audiences; however, I also do not think we should limit them to only having that option.

What I have done in the last two semesters of ENC 1102 is to ask students a lot of questions during their ongoing audience selection. From their first proposal, to the in-class exercises we do about audience awareness, to their final research proposal and even up until their larger research paper, I direct them toward making the decision about their audience based on 1) who they feel most needs to be made aware of what it is they have to say, and 2) who they have access to. For some students, their peers are truly who they want to reach and for others, they explore connections via parents, jobs, other classes, churches, previous teachers and social networking, to name a few. In my first semester teaching 1102 with this approach and even moreso in my current classes, I'm seeing projects that are arguably more useful, as well as rhetorically sound, than what I received in 1101, which I speculate could be a result of my increased involvement with their selection process through conferences, conversations and comments on their work leading up to this aspect of the course.

#### *Extra Credit Service*

Another change I have made in my approach as I have applied it in ENC 1102 is to make the service students do extra credit. If they present or submit their argument to their audience, I don't grade them on their submission, but they can gain extra points by carrying out the project they prepared. This was a suggestion that came from Daphne during the focus group and something that fit well with my goal of keeping students' work doable for them. I wanted students to be able to have the chance to work one-on-one with me and groom their researched arguments for submission to their audiences, but I knew from 1101 that not every student was

ready for or would be interested in doing that, especially during the last few weeks of a semester. This project taught me that regardless of what we do or don't do in a given semester, there will be students who are just not ready to put their work out into the public by the end of the course. As such, I feel this extra credit inclusion is a way to offer that experience to those who want it and yet not pressure those who will simply not be ready in a 16-week course to take that step. In 1102, it is the personal responsibility of the student to let me know by a deadline that they wish to take the opportunity. I ask them to email me a detailed plan for getting their writing to their audience, and from there we schedule a one-on-one meeting for revision and editing. After that is completed, I require at least two additional drafts be discussed via email and a final approval from me before they submit their work to their audience. After they've submitted, and in order for me to assess their contribution, as well as for them to reflect on the experience, I require them to turn in a reflection that discusses what they did, how their audience responded and what they learned. This not only allows me to keep a very close watch on what they are doing, but I have also found that it provides additional lessons in revision and rhetoric that I simply couldn't teach without them really facing their work being viewed by their audiences.

While it is the goal of most FYC instructors who use service-learning is to see their students putting their work out into the world, expecting that from every student within a 16-week turnaround is unrealistic and possibly damaging to the students, community and the reputation of the university. The results I presented in Chapter Three suggest that despite not making their work public, students left that course with several benefits. In this way, it is a much more realistic goal to use service-learning to plant the seed of raised critical consciousness instead of forcing them to grow an entire tree.

### *Additional Opportunities to Share Work*

Something that I didn't consider while teaching ENC 1101 in the fall of 2010 was the variety of ways students can further share their work on-campus and beyond as supported by the university. From publication in the first-year writing journal *Stylus*, to acceptance at the university Knights Write Showcase, the work students do in FYC is beginning to have a directed place among the many celebrated student accomplishments on campus. Likewise, with a course like *Leading Literate Lives*, students would also be qualified to participate in the Student Service-Learning Showcase, and based on their research projects, might even be able to submit work to the recently formed Undergraduate Research panel at CCCC. Situating student research as a way to produce writing as service gives students who may not choose to submit their work to their audience, as well as those who do, additional options for doing something with their projects by the end of the course.

### Recommendations for Administrators and Others Supporting FYC Instructors

While budgetary concerns and available resources are valid concerns when overseeing any change that affects others, in the case of supporting service-learning FYC courses within a department, a little bit goes a long way. If a department doesn't have a service-learning program and wishes to offer service-learning courses as an option to instructors, the first step would be to gauge how many faculty members might be interested in using such an approach. Prior to starting this project, in July 2010, I sent an informal email out to the department Listserv inquiring if anyone had used service-learning in FYC and/or if they would be interested in doing so. Ten instructors replied in total; one said she had used service-learning, one offered that an assignment he gives asks students to write about "real communities" (but not produce texts for



them), three indicated interest in learning more about service-learning in FYC, one didn't provide an answer, and the other four didn't indicate they had any interest in service-learning but did let me know they hadn't used it. While this was informal and should not be viewed as a true measurement of interest, a thirty-percent response raised from an informal email from a graduate student suggests that others in the department are interested in knowing more. That's a small and manageable number; based on the responses I received, the recommendations presented here are intended to address concerns about supporting service-learning in FYC from an administrative level and mediate challenges present that could potentially put a strain on the department budget or resources. A range of approaches to support interested faculty in acquiring professional development seems to be the most efficient way to share the widest variety of resources. Utilizing what already works in other aspects of professional development in a department is a solid place to start.

#### *Faculty Coordinators or Fellows*

For the WPA or other administrator who is hesitant to support service-learning within their department, a major concern may be that hiring additional people to manage the chaos often associated with service-learning is not in their budget. As John Duley states in his article "Service as Learning, Life-Style and Faculty Function," "The thorniest problem in developing service-learning programs is the faculty time commitment required to successfully operate them" (31). Duley makes a distinction between how this issue is handled by how large the service-learning program is; for "large programs a faculty member may be hired" while for "some departments...coordination is viewed as equivalent to teaching one course" (32). Supporting service-learning in FYC in a department wherein only a small number of people would

potentially utilize that approach would merit creating “coordination” (Duely 32) within the writing program; however, that coordination wouldn’t need to be anywhere near as complicated or programmatic as the level of coordination needed for departments wishing to make service-learning in FYC mandatory or widespread.

Having a coordinator to guide service-learning faculty is beneficial because it would allow for one contact person to help instructors with a variety of issues. As “understanding the characteristics of faculty who implement service-learning and the barriers they face further helps understand how to support them” (Harwood, et al. 42), having a point-person, other than the WPA, who is responsible for working closely with service-learning faculty would ensure their needs are being met with as little negative impact to the rest of the department as possible. Based on our lack of department resources for this, a Faculty Fellow sponsored by the Office of Experiential Learning or Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning could be responsible for working with interested faculty members to make sure service-learning FYC courses meet the university service-learning requirements and are registered with the office so students receive the appropriate marks on their transcripts. The Fellow could review syllabi and offer recommendations to faculty members. As the Fellow works closely with the Office of Experiential Learning and the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, procedurally they would also be able to help FYC faculty navigate the many resources already available through those offices.

Utilizing a Faculty Fellow could ease some of the logistical work a teacher would need to do by way of providing someone they would be able to go to for questions as well as problems; the fellow’s purpose is to be a resource and offer guidance in regard to making service-learning

work in whatever department they are connected with. As the Fellow would get to know the needs and concerns of service-learning/FYC faculty, they would also be influential in helping to make programmatic changes in regard to new policies and/or recommendations. To get to know what the faculty they were looking for in service-learning courses, the fellows at Western Michigan University asked faculty members using service-learning in FYC to “fill out questionnaires [wherein] faculty articulated the design for their service-learning “dream course” and identified their needs and perceived barriers to making it happen” (43). In addition to being there for the faculty and reporting any major issues to the WPA, the Fellow would also be able to provide support for professional development as it relates to the specific needs of the service-learning/FYC instructors.

#### *Service-Learning and Professional Development*

In the study done at WMU, researchers found that “engaging faculty in the scholarship of teaching and learning necessitates attention to faculty development issues such as professional growth...” (41). With a small group of interested faculty, the professional development offered would only need to be minimal. Teaching circles and workshops are the two ways our department currently offers on-going faculty development, and I believe this structure could be replicated positively to assist faculty members who wish to use service-learning in FYC. Interested faculty could also be encouraged to attend the annual Service Learning Day as well as the Community Partners’ Breakfast, both free to participants. Both of these resources would help to further deepen the service-learning teaching experience for interested faculty by helping see how many resources are available.

### *Teaching Circles and Workshops*

In the two-year study done by Harwood, et al., at WMU 66% of faculty using service-learning had “pedagogical” concerns that arose while they were teaching (44). Because of the structure WMU had in place to support these teachers, they were able to address these concerns with the faculty fellows, who provided the WPA with resources to solve problems. However, when the faculty in the study reflected on what they found most helpful from the professional development program they were offered, they found “a time and space for like-minded faculty to engage in discussions about teaching” was what was most often mentioned (45). To promote this kind of support for instructors, teaching circles should be held at least once a month or as needed to discuss approaches and best practices. Much like what is already in place for Graduate Teaching Assistants, one of the instructors using service-learning could schedule the meetings and plan an agenda structured around sharing resources and discussing problems or concerns. As service-learning asks specific things of an instructor that those not using the approach would not need to consider (such as service project options), it is essential instructors using service-learning in FYC have the opportunity to share insights and best practices to aid in their continued development, as well as the development of the department for those not using the approach. Like Martinez mentioned in her interview, even if an instructor isn’t interested in teaching FYC with a service-learning approach, they can still benefit from learning about what those using service-learning are doing in their classrooms. As most teachers would not teach every FYC section with a service-learning approach, the departmental workshops would also be great way for those instructors to discuss research projects they’re doing and share findings. In the study at WMU, the researchers found that “the opportunity to share and exchange ideas with others [is] a

direct benefit of participating in course development workshops” (42). This benefit is definite for the teachers using service-learning, but it also serves as a positive contribution to a department for those not using service-learning.

Martinez stated that she was interested in the projects my students did and was “impressed” by the outcomes; despite that she didn’t see herself teaching this model, she did feel she would be able to adapt her teaching to include elements she felt fit her teaching style: “In particular, I think that your idea of having students study a genre within a social issue and then actually introducing this genre into the “real world” was “entirely brilliant.” Like Martinez, I believe service-learning in FYC provides a benefit not just for the students in the classroom or the teacher who teaches it, but also for other teachers to see something in a new way and borrow from service-learning. Sharing service-learning practices in workshops during the semester would benefit all faculty members.

### *Reading Groups*

Throughout the scholarship present on service-learning in FYC, one common conversation revolves around the lack of knowledge about how to navigate the many issues that could arise in planning a course and executing it, as that connects with a lack of knowledge about service-learning scholarship. While this chapter discusses some of the most essential elements of my 1101 course that needed revision, my course benefitted from my efforts to familiarize myself with the scholarship before planning the course. As I discussed in chapters One and Two, many instructors do not have the time or resources to do this. While instructors doing research on service-learning in FYC, such as myself, would survey the literature for grounding, other instructors who might be curious or even committed to the approach simply do not have the time

to read as much as they should. At the very least a handful of seminal articles and texts by the likes of Ball and Goodburn, Cushman, Deans, Herzberg, Hellman and Mathieu would go a long way in opening up discussions among faculty and in helping those using or interested in using the approach to situate themselves within the scholarship. Of teaching her first service-learning FYC course without “adequate theoretical grounding,” Cheryl Hofstetter Duffy states that in the revision of her approach (made after she’d taken a sabbatical to research service-learning), she found that she was “more aware of the rich possibilities inherent in service-learning when [she] consciously [applied] the theoretical principles that composition researchers and practitioners have advanced in recent years” (411). Duffy summarizes in her 2003 article from *Reflections* that “Ideally, composition faculty would avail themselves of this wealth of thinking and theorizing before ever attempting to teach a service-learning class,” but she also recognizes that most are “eager to begin and too overwhelmed...to do much beforehand” (404).

The reading group should be modeled after the group that currently meets a few times a semester in our department; an involved faculty member would be responsible for scheduling the meeting and guiding the discussion. To ensure that everyone had opportunity to be in the practice of exploring the scholarship, each faculty member should submit readings at the end of each meeting that they would like to share at the next meeting, and the faculty organizer could pick reading suggestions based on a theme for discussion for the next meeting. In addition to encouraging shared conversation, these reading groups would also help to amass a reading list of sorts, which could develop into a departmental resource for those looking to do research on service-learning in FYC.

While having access to a faculty fellow and participating in teaching circles, workshops and reading groups do not replace investing a handful of months into the scholarship, a little bit can go a long way. The main point of these recommendations for professional development is not to separate service-learning from FYC in any way, nor to segregate the teachers who use service-learning in FYC from those who don't, as often they will be one in the same. However, as this project presents, there are specific concerns that must be addressed when using a service-learning approach in FYC. and thus it is important to have a structured plan in place to help those teachers who wish to incorporate service-learning in the classroom. Much like anything we do in our field, the success of service-learning in FYC comes from doing a little bit at a time. As these recommendations do not include any additional budget requirements and can be reasonably carried out by interested faculty members, providing professional development for service-learning wouldn't negatively impact the department; rather, it would offer a simple way to provide support for a viable approach to teaching FYC.

### Conclusions

This project provides a model for ENC 1101 that seemed to enhance student-learning outcomes while minimizing some of the challenges commonly associated with service-learning in FYC; it also presents an approach for using public writing in ENC 1102. My observations suggest that a model wherein students use writing as a form of service for the final project of a course still provides some of main benefits associated with service-learning, without as much of the negatively associated teacher workload or departmental strain. As such, this model is an approach to using elements of service-learning alongside a rhetorical, writing studies approach to FYC. Furthermore, it also suggests that doing so can enhance the student and teacher experience

of the course, which leads to a recommendation that it should be accepted as a viable approach to FYC within a rhetorically driven department, with the provision that professional development be available for interested faculty.

Further research should be done to explore the differences of the student experience in a service-learning FYC course and a non-service-learning FYC course taught by the same instructor; it would be beneficial, like in the study done by Kendrick and Suarez, to see how the student-learning outcomes of those courses would vary. Along those lines, it would also be beneficial to conduct a larger study to survey the variations of service-learning/FYC models used within the same department and how the student-learning outcomes change from instructor to instructor based on the differences of approaches.

Because research on professional development in service-learning in FYC is “scant” (Harwood, et al. 42), it would also be important to establish exactly how and what types of professional development contribute to the success of the FYC instructor, as well as to ascertain how to define and measure what we deem as successful in an service-learning FYC course. This project is a step in presenting how service-learning can inform and enhance a rhetorical, writing studies approach to teaching FYC and shows that part-time faculty can successfully incorporate service-learning in FYC.



## **APPENDIX A: IRB LETTER**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: Vanessa R. Bormann

Date: December 02, 2010

Dear Researcher:

On 12/2/2010, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: Writing for Change and Changing Writing: Service-Learning,  
Writing About Writing and First-Year Composition  
Investigator: Vanessa R. Bormann  
IRB Number: SBE-10-07257  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Joseph Bielitzki, DVM, UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 12/02/2010 02:21:24 PM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

IRB Coordinator

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS**

### Martinez Interview Questions

To complete this “interview,” please review the syllabus and lesson plans I’ve sent. In order to best answer the questions below, view the materials as you would a potential model for teaching your own class. Your answers should come from your personal evaluations of the content/approach/outcomes as well as what experience with the model you’ve gained from auditing Section 0038.

Response to Course Model:

- How likely would you be to use this model to base your own ENC 1101 teaching materials? Please explain your answer providing detail as to how you feel this model would or wouldn’t work for you.
- What major changes, if any, do you feel you would need to make to implement this model to fit your teaching style/philosophy?
- In your study of 0038, do you feel this model enhances WAW and if so, how? If you feel it doesn’t enhance WAW, please explain how WAW could be better represented.
- What were the most successful and least successful aspects of this model based on what you gathered in your research within 0038?

### Student Focus Group Questions

- What social issue(s) did you choose to focus on and why?
- If you were to volunteer in the future, do you feel you would choose to do service with regard to the issue(s) you wrote about in ENC 1101? Why or why not?
- As a result of taking this course, how do you feel your opinion on writing as a form of social action has changed?
- Did any of you end up doing anything with your final project for the course and if so, what did you do? If you didn't use your product beyond our course, why do you feel this was the case?
- Do you feel being in ENC 1101 has made you more or less likely to take a service-learning course in the future? Are you currently enrolled or are you planning on enrolling in a service-learning course in the future?
- What do you feel the biggest benefit of this course being centered around "writing for change" was for you as a student writer.

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