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# Curricular Analysis of the University of Arkansas Composition I Pilot Course: ENGL 1013, Community Ethnography

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Curricular Analysis of the University of Arkansas Composition I Pilot Course: ENGL 1013,  
Community Ethnography

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in English

by

Morgan Scholz  
John Brown University  
Bachelor of Arts in English, 2013

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis analyzes a new first-year writing course that is under consideration for implementation as the standard Composition I course at the University of Arkansas. The course utilizes an ethnographic approach to teaching critical writing skills to students. This thesis presents evaluation through a metacognitive lens and explores the course through a case study approach. This thesis also examines the expectations and concluding reflections of three stakeholder groups: students, instructors, and administrators.

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## **Dedication**

This edition of *Curricular Analysis of the University of Arkansas Composition I Pilot Course: ENGL 1013, Community Ethnography* is dedicated to all students who seek to be changed before creating change and who seek to learn rather than know.

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## Chapter 1—Introduction

In “Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century,” Richard Fulkerson acknowledges that practitioners in the field of rhetoric and composition are always grappling with the best answers to the big questions of “who we are, what we wish to achieve with students, and how we ought to go about it” (654). But that set of shared concerns seems to be where the consensus ends, at least according to Fulkerson. Within the discipline, there exist vast discrepancies about the most appropriate pedagogy for teaching composition, and there are looming questions about the purpose or function of a first-year writing course. The Program in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Arkansas is engaged in answering those questions of purpose and process by rethinking and redesigning its first-year writing curriculum. Four years ago, Composition II transitioned from a longstanding Writing About Literature approach to a Writing About Writing approach. This past year, the University has been piloting a Community Ethnography Composition I course that is designed to complement the new Composition II course and more effectively achieve the learning objectives of a first-year writing course in general.

A first-year writing course, or Composition I or II at the University of Arkansas, is different from many other core classes in that the emphasis seems to be on teaching students a set of fundamental skills rather than specific content. Generally, the focus of this course, unlike courses in math, science, or literature, is not the represented subject (in this case, writing). Rather, the presumed purpose of a first-year writing course is to prepare students to write well in their other courses. In “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning ‘First-Year Composition’ as ‘Introduction to Writing Studies,’” Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle, borrowing a term from David Russell’s article “Activity Theory and Its Implications for

Writing Instruction,” acknowledge that “First-year composition (FYC) is usually asked to prepare students to write across the university; this request assumes the existence of a ‘universal educated discourse’ that can be transferred from one writing situation to another” (552).

Essentially, the common perception about first-year writing courses is that they exist to equip students to succeed in their future academic and professional careers. Wardle explores this concept still further in “Understanding ‘Transfer’ from FYC: Preliminary Results of a Longitudinal Study,” stating, “the fact that nearly every student is required to take FYC suggests that administrators, the policy makers, parents, and students expect the course to prepare students for the writing they will do later—in the university and even beyond it” (65). Though Wardle argues that this is an unrealistic expectation, it is safe to say that the assumption largely persists: students, instructors, and administrators expect FYC to prepare students for other academic and professional writing and basic research tasks. In short, a first-year writing course is perceived to be useful generally because of the skills it presumably equips students with so that they can successfully access and produce other information.

For better or worse, most first-year writing programs do not use their courses to emphasize the validity of writing as a subject of its own (a situation which Downs and Wardle and the Writing About Writing movement in first-year composition studies aims, in part, to remedy). Fulkerson asserts that in the eighties and through today, composition instructors “were to help students improve their writing and... ‘good writing’ meant writing that was rhetorically effective for audience and situation” (655). Although he goes on to lament the discrepancies within the field about the best way to achieve this understood goal, the general consensus is that the main goals of any first-year writing course are developing transferable skills in writing and critical thinking. In “Teaching for Transfer,” D. N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon describe

transfer as the "deliberate mindful abstraction of skill or knowledge from one context for application in another" (25). Transfer requires students to be aware of themselves as situated in many socio-rhetorical contexts, and educators often understand this type of discernment as metacognition. However, writing assignments in traditional college composition courses often lack any relevance to students' everyday experiences and concerns and are rarely designed for audiences beyond the classroom, which, to students at least, undercuts the authenticity and value of what they are producing.

In an attempt to provide authentic writing contexts and to foster authentic student engagement in, and awareness of, their own writing and learning processes, the University of Arkansas has designed a new approach to composition instruction and has piloted this new class in seven sections. My thesis will use case study research from two of these pilot sections to evaluate the effectiveness of the new course. The approach of the new course presents Composition I in the framework of a community ethnography wherein each student selects a community to closely observe, interact with, analyze, and write about throughout a single semester. Students take on the complicated and tenuous role of participant/observer as they perform observations, collect data, maintain fieldnotes, and conduct interviews and surveys. Along with conducting primary research as ethnographers, students learn to summarize, analyze, critique, and argue through a sequence of four major writing assignments that emphasize these academic skills. Those major writing assignments are a Community Observation Report, a Folklore Analysis, an Ethnographic Account, and a Research Portfolio that includes a Research Reflection Essay. Because students are observing and correspondingly representing real people in a real community and sharing those original findings with their peers and, in some cases, groups or individuals outside of the classroom, students are exposed to authentic considerations

of audience and genre. Furthermore, in a community ethnography writing class, the content of student writing shifts from other writers' ideas to the primary research students have collected from a community they have selected based on some level of individual interest or curiosity. When students collect and present their own research, they become active—rather than passive—scholars and engage in genuine inquiry.

Because metacognition is both a key consideration in transference and an intended outcome of ethnography, I will evaluate the extent to which the pilot community ethnography course at the University of Arkansas facilitates metacognitive practices in student participants. In utilizing this theoretical lens, I will analyze two forms of metacognition—what I refer to as “rhetorical metacognition” and “social metacognition.” As I explain in more detail later, I will use a case study approach to focus on how two students in the pilot course expand their awareness of being situated in a rhetorical context and in a social context, making decisions as readers and writers and as members of a community. Positioning these students as participant/observers and primary researchers in another community besides the classroom seemed to facilitate new and deeper processes of reflective and critical thinking, and I will verify, at least to some extent, the role that student engagement played in these processes.

On a related note, I will also consider how each stakeholder group defines success in terms of first-year composition in general and in terms of the pilot course in particular. Stakeholder's perceptions about the course are important because if any group does not think the course is successful, they will have little to no motivation to actually invest in their work, which is, in turn, essential for the course's success. Those stakeholder groups are administrators (the individuals who designed and implemented the new composition course), instructors (the individuals teaching the course), and students (the individuals taking the course). In Section 4, I

will consider how each group defines the purpose and goals of first-year composition generally as well as the purpose and goals of the pilot course specifically. In Chapter 5, I will present each group's assessment of the successfulness of the course based on the groups' respective definitions of success and whether or not the course achieved the goals they described of FYC. I conducted interviews at the beginning and end of the semester with members of each group and have analyzed these interviews, along with collected written materials, from each stakeholder group. Through these interviews, I discovered that metacognition was a stated or implied goal of every study participant, a discovery that reinforces the appropriateness of metacognition as a theoretical evaluative lens.

The primary goal of this thesis is to provide helpful and in-depth analysis of the Community Ethnography Pilot course for the consideration of the University of Arkansas' Program in Rhetoric and Composition. Through evaluating the objectives and expectations of the three stakeholder groups and performing case studies on two student participants, I hope to, in the broadest of terms, present different parties' perspectives of what worked, what didn't, and why or why not. I hope, too, to provide some helpful suggestions for alteration or enhancement of the pilot course, again, based on the careful evaluation of interview feedback and written materials from different stakeholder groups. Through this curricular analysis, I hope to position the administrators to make a more informed decision about whether to adopt this course at the University of Arkansas, and I also hope to provide suggestions for improvement if the course is adopted.

## Chapter 2—Framing the Study

### 2.1—Metacognition as an Evaluative Lens

The course philosophy states that “The pilot of ENGL 1013 is designed to cultivate student agency and community engagement by casting students in the metacognitive dual role of participant-observers within communities of their choosing” (Pilot Course Philosophy). When students have to objectively observe and analyze communities that they are members of, they are also compelled to think about their own perceptions and assumptions. Because the pilot course as a whole emphasizes metacognitive development and social awareness, I utilize case study findings from student writing samples and interviews to evaluate if and to what extent the course helps students develop metacognition. In addition, the term “metacognition” is an assumed positive outcome of an ethnographic approach, and since it is also a stated goal in the course philosophy, metacognition is an imperative consideration in this pedagogical approach and essential in framing objectives for any writing assignment in this pilot course.

Students need to develop both rhetorical and social metacognition because their social experiences often shape biases, which then influence how they interpret information and write about it. These biases may be shaped by family histories, academic disciplines, or social circles; regardless, it is essential for students to cultivate an awareness of these biases and the subsequent limitations that these biases may impose on their effectiveness as readers and writers. In “Reading Student Writing with Anthropologists,” Mary Soliday assesses a group of anthropology graduate students who were acting as readers for undergraduate essays. She evaluates the readers’ sensitivities to student biases and how those sensitivities were actually reflective of the graduate students’ own disciplinary values (or biases).

To contextualize her study, Soliday asserts that in assigning writing, especially writing

that calls for analysis, we are asking students to make judgments and to assume stances (ultimately, to decide what position is better or best and why). She then demonstrates through her study that this judgment-making process is not purely objective or academic but is highly influenced by individual students' biases. Soliday explains, "How students relate to readers and evidence is not always an intellectual or rhetorical matter—it may also be personal or sociocultural" (86). For example, she found that students often constructed arguments and made analyses by culturally privileging personal experiences as evidence, which the anthropology readers often interpreted as ethnocentrism. Interestingly, the graduate student readers were performing similar acts of judgment in interpreting the texts—in grading essays they were influenced by assumptions and values held in the discipline of anthropology, giving higher marks to students whose writing "reflect[ed] their ethical commitments to the core values of their discipline" (87). Soliday concludes that in asking individuals to analyze and respond to a text, we are essentially asking them to judge and prioritize, and this process is inevitably influenced by biases, which were formed by disciplinary preferences in the case of graduate readers and by socio-cultural influences in the case of student writers.

Soliday connects her study to the instruction of writing in asserting the importance of equipping students to identify what influences their interpretation and composition of texts. After demonstrating that there was no purely objective essay or assessment, she concludes, "Part of our jobs as writing teachers and WAC specialists is to call attention to the often tacitly expressed relationship between the evidence, reader, and writer's stance" (88). Thus, according to Soliday, it is imperative that students develop an awareness of what social, cultural, or disciplinary influences may shape the content of their writing, an awareness made possible by the development of social metacognition. Soliday further asserts, "We need to help readers

appreciate that analysis is not value-free; we need to help writers discover the governing power of a particular angle of vision,” (88) suggesting that students should not only be aware of biases that they may have as writers, they should also the rhetorical metacognition to employ an awareness of, and an ability to respond to, different audiences’ values. Placing students in a context where they are repeatedly examining another community and evaluating what influences their own understanding of, and relationship to, said community, as the community ethnography pilot course does, responds directly to Soliday’s imperative to “call attention” to biases and assumptions that influence how students understand and communicate information (88).

Finally, though metacognition is generally understood as the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking, Crystal VanKooten, in “‘The Video Was What Did It For Me’: Developing Meta-Awareness about Composition across Media,” explains that the terms “meta-awareness,” “metacognitive awareness,” “rhetorical awareness,” and “metacognition” have all been used in rhetoric and composition studies—often interchangeably—to explore different aspects of the metacognitive process (58). She explains that a limitation of these terms is that they often “do not define or specify what aspects of thought are most relevant for writing in particular” (VanKooten 58). Aware of the need for specificity, then, I will use the terms “social metacognition” and “rhetorical metacognition” to distinguish between students’ processes of learning about how they think in relation to people and communities around them and students’ processes of learning about how they think in relation to composing texts, respectively. Though I define them separately to more accurately discuss course goals, both forms of metacognition are interdependent and interrelated in ethnography.

### 2.1.1 Social Metacognition

Ethnography, or the scientific study of place, people, and culture, is traditionally practiced in anthropology or human geography rather than in composition studies. However, ethnographic research places heavy emphasis on writing and social metacognition, and as a result, it coalesces naturally with a first-year writing course. The types of writing practiced in ethnography are both suitable for, and adaptable within, a first-year writing course. In *Writing the New Ethnography*, H.L. Goodall, Jr. asserts that an ethnographer has four tasks: 1) Learning to do fieldwork, 2) Learning to write, 3) Learning one's identity as a fieldworker, writer, and self, and 4) Learning how and where those activities are meaningfully connected (7). Thus, beyond the obvious correlation of learning to write, which Goodall asserts is inherent in ethnography, this approach also heavily emphasizes the development of individual and social awareness, which is the development of social metacognition. Goodall also presents the constraints inherent in those four tasks, however, asserting that these learning goals are "difficult because what you learn evolves out of lifelong habits of self-reflection" and that ethnographic writing ultimately "shows the self, and the self's construction of knowledge, as a jointly produced work in progress" (8). Though much of Goodall's book explores what he terms the "new ethnography," or creative writing in conjunction with ethnographic research, his assertions about the work of ethnographers—especially student ethnographers—are upheld in most other ethnographic depictions. Furthermore, he suggests that metacognition is inherent in the ethnographic process in that ethnographic writing is "a method of inquiry, scholarly inquiry, that privileges the exploration of a self...through the textual construction of, and thoughtful reflection about, the *lived experiences of that self*" (191).

Another way that the ethnographic approach facilitates social metacognition is through

the focus on place. When conducting a community ethnography, students are researching and interacting with a community to which they somehow have direct access, and these communities are usually physical (for example, out of the seven sections and approximately 130 students enrolled in the pilot courses, only one researched an online community). In *Literacy, Place, and Pedagogies of Possibility*, Barbara Comber explores findings from three decades of ethnographic and collaborative studies to explore the question of how “systematic study of and engagement within specific elements of place can enable students’ academic learning and literacy” (3).

Comber asserts that classrooms are now, more than ever, a place of “throwntogetherness and negotiation,” as it is a veritable guarantee that any given group of students will represent a wide range of histories, experiences, and resources (157). Comber presents this diversity as an asset, indeed, a necessity in students’ ability to become what she calls “literate graduates who are inclusive citizens” (157). Comber proposes spatial theory, or the utilization of local places and experiences to foreground pedagogical practices, which occurs when students research, interact with, write about, and reflect upon communities in an ethnographic composition course. Comber suggests that in this context, students develop agency through meaning-making, text production, and related social action about things that matter to them and their communities, and she terms this process *critical literacy* (62-65). Comber concludes that “Place-conscious pedagogy and critical literacies fuse together enabling pedagogies for diverse student communities” (26). Though student ethnography does not always need to result in social activism, it should cultivate social consciousness and inclusion in students.

The student role of the participant-observer is unique to the ethnographic approach—it enables students to consciously navigate between being a subjective self and an objective observer, and according to J. Arias in “Reaching Ethnography: Reading the World and

Developing Student Agency,” “both points of view foster critical thinking and discrete writing skills” (97). Conducting primary research through observations, interviews, surveys, and other forms of data collection equips students to write about what they have learned for themselves and to cultivate an investment in their research focus. In “Introductions to Primary Research: Observations, Surveys, and Interviews,” Dana Lynn Driscoll suggests that the intended outcome of primary research is “to learn about something new that can be confirmed by others and to eliminate our own biases in the process” (154). Arias astutely points out a tension in many writing classes, which is that “notions of writing—developing a personal point of view and fostering an objective, detached sensibility—conflict” (92). The process of conducting primary research helps mediate that tension in that “activities that encourag[e] inquiry reforc[e] a sense of agency in students” (93). Arias asserts that ethnography, described simply as “writing about culture,” “demands that the writer become metacognitively aware of the subjective self and the detached observer” because students are not just observing and collecting data: they are also critically examining the data that they collect through producing reflective and analytical writing (92).

When discussing evaluative lenses for the pilot course, it is important to distinguish the difference between social metacognition and social activism. One concern that often arises in the context of ethnography pertains to the dynamics between the ethnographer and their respective community. Specifically, some scholars maintain that an ethnographer has a social duty to enact some form of positive change, improvement, or empowerment in the community that they are researching. The premise of this idea is essentially reciprocity: the researcher is benefiting from the observed community by gaining valuable primary research, and the research should, in turn, contribute to that community in some manner. Ellen Cushman explores this idea in “The

Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change,” suggesting that “one way to increase our participation in public discourse is to bridge the university and community through activism” and pointing out the need for researchers to “empower people” and “establish networks of reciprocity” as a part of their research endeavors (7). In her study, she describes the theoretical and physical separation of the university she works in from the community she is researching. Her article outlines her own endeavors to give back to the community that she observed through sharing access to computers and making herself available as an editor, reference, and life coach to individuals with restricted technological access and limited education. Cushman concludes that rhetoricians have the power, and indeed the responsibility, to give back to and improve the community that they research. Cushman clarifies that she is not asking students to become social workers but asking for “a deeper consideration of the civic purpose of our *positions* in the academy, of what we do with our knowledge, for whom, and by what means” (12). This stance suggests that students participating in ethnographic research should engage in some form of community outreach, and some degree of activism could be required.

Though the community ethnography writing course could, according to authors such as Cushman, be an ideal opportunity to encourage or even require social activism from students on behalf of their communities, it is important to note that this is neither a goal of the pilot course nor a requirement for social metacognition. While students will be informing others, namely, their fellow classmates and instructors, about their community through their writing, they will not be required to “give back” to the community by empowering members, attempting to change misconceptions, or offering personal resources in exchange for information. Through researching their community and sharing their findings, students may find their own perceptions or biases being challenged or changed, and their shared findings may indeed change others’ perceptions,

but this type of change is not realistically measurable as a standard of assessment for students. Social metacognition is the process of students becoming aware of their own and others' perceptions and biases, and though that awareness may lead to some social change or activism, students' ability to change others is not a required or measured component of the course. What I will attempt to assess through the rhetorical lens of social metacognition is how students themselves are being changed.

### **2.1.2 Rhetorical Metacognition**

Writing skills are only useful inasmuch as students are aware of how and when to use them. VanKooten refers to Wardle's "Understanding 'Transfer' from FYC" for a helpful explanation of the ways that rhetorical metacognition occurs when students "analyze assignments, see similarities and differences across assignments, discern what was being required of them, and determine what they needed to do in response" (Wardle 76-7). This ability to apply writing skills appropriately in myriad contexts enables students to transfer what they have learned beyond the writing class, which is a fundamental expectation of the first-year writing course. Rhetorical metacognition is critical in this process because students must be conscious of the choices they make in order to write effectively for any given situation, and this awareness involves an acute sense of audience and purpose.

Linda Flower and John R. Hayes discuss the significance of rhetorical metacognition in the context of reading and writing processes. In "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing," they identify key stages and sub-stages in the writing process that are flexible in order of application and frequency of use. They then pose a critical question: "if the process of writing is not a sequence of stages but a set of optional actions, how are these thinking processes in our repertory

actually orchestrated or organized as we write?” (375). Their findings are that “sophisticated writers” possess an awareness of the different goals within the composing process and, based on that awareness, continually make valuation choices about what they want to prioritize and to what end in both writing and revising (Flower and Hayes 380-1). In short, students become better writers when they are aware of the choices that they make during the composition process and when they make reflective, goal-oriented choices. Facilitating student awareness not only of writing forms but also of the decisions they make as writers in the composing and revising process helps students develop into more sophisticated and effective writers; therefore, rhetorical metacognition should be an essential goal in designing effective assignments and in assessing the success of the course.

Other studies have shown the importance of students’ awareness of their own learning processes. In her case study of students composing videos in a writing class, VanKooten expresses how significant rhetorical metacognition was for her students to produce quality work—an experience which, it is important to note, was achieved due to her students being challenged to compose in a genre that was unfamiliar to them (the video essay). As already noted, a goal of the pilot course is to generate exigence by moving away from the traditional and familiar “summary” or “research paper” to a community ethnography that calls for participation as well as observation. VanKooten acknowledges that in composing video essays, students encountered many obstacles and had to engage in “rhetorically layered actions and metacognitive articulations in a recursive process” to overcome the obstacles (58). VanKooten describes these “rhetorically layered actions” as being “1) orienting and reorienting to a different compositional context, 2) addressing multiple audiences and purposes, and 3) revising various parts while considering the whole of a composition” (58). In studying these rhetorical practices, VanKooten

discovered that the unfamiliar form of a video essay compelled students to recursively consider purpose, audience, and objectives within their composing process in order to complete the assignment.

Deborah Brandt further explores the significance of rhetorical metacognition in “Social Foundations of Reading and Writing.” Brandt conducts a case study with two individuals, evaluating the significance of writers reading their drafts during their composing processes. She discovers that “reading during composing involves a constant monitoring of the here-and-now” wherein the writer repeatedly stops to assess what a reader would make of the text at multiple stages during writing (116). Brandt suggests that “[t]o constitute meaning we also must constitute the conditions by which that meaning can be realized. And we constitute or activate these settings largely through our language” (118). She posits that language serves the dual function of being a means of and factor in the crafting of social reality: “Language in use is simultaneously a manifestation and facilitator of the setting in which it occurs; to use language is at the same time to reflect and establish, constitute and perpetuate, a shareable social reality through which understanding can be accomplished” (Brandt 118). Much like Soliday, Brandt asserts that “readers bring to a text stores of prior knowledge about the world and about the nature of discourse that allow them to fill in the inferences and make the predictions necessary for comprehension” (119). Ultimately, Brandt discovered the intersection of rhetorical and social metacognition. She found that writers who are in constant dialogue with themselves and recursively revisit their work while writing are simultaneously exercising an awareness of how people may read their emerging text.

The “understanding” that Brandt references through shared social realities presupposes a universal agreement on the definition of this term, but as a goal of rhetorical metacognition, the

term begs some explication. Krista Ratcliffe provides a very helpful interpretation of understanding that enriches the concept of rhetorical metacognition in her article “Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a ‘Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct.’” As the title suggests, Ratcliffe proposes that a missing component in contemporary rhetorical studies is rhetorical listening, which foregrounds understanding, asserting that “understanding means more than simply listening for a speaker/writer's intent. It also means more than simply listening for our own self-interested intent,” which, Ratcliffe explains, could be appropriation, identification or same-ness, or agreement (205). She proposes, “Instead, understanding means listening to discourse not for intent but with the intent to understand not just the claims, not just the cultural logics within which the claims function, but the rhetorical negotiations of understanding as well” (205). These “rhetorical negotiations” are acts of awareness, reconciliation, and meaning-making that are essentially what I am referring to as rhetorical metacognition. Ratcliffe proposes a conceptual reorientation that she expresses in the idea of “standing under” discourses, which “means identifying the various discourses embodied in each of us and then listening to hear and imagine how they might affect not only ourselves but others” (206). When students begin to rhetorically listen, they are simultaneously “listening for the (un)conscious presences, absences, unknowns” of a text and also “consciously integrating this information into our world-views and decision-making” (206). Again, rhetorical and social metacognition are both interconnected and distinct.

## *2.2 Thesis Questions*

In looking at a community ethnography course through the evaluative lens of metacognition, I aim to address several questions. The first question involves course goals: to

what extent are the aims of ethnographic research compatible with the aims of a first-year writing course, and at what point, if any, does one set of objectives take precedence over the other? In short, will, by default, the course emphasize the work of ethnography over that of first-year composition, or will the critical skills usually stressed in first-year composition, skills such as summarizing, analyzing, researching, synthesizing, and critiquing texts be effectively emphasized in this course? This question will be posited again in Chapter 4, which discusses stakeholder expectations, and the question will, to some degree, be answered in Chapter 6—Findings when stakeholders consider the effectiveness of the course. Because the literature on ethnography emphasizes social metacognition more than rhetorical metacognition, this study also addresses how and to what extent rhetorical metacognition fit into this course, along with the role that student engagement or “buy-in” play in this course achieving the goals of a first-year writing course. Finally, this study seeks to understand to what extent the different stakeholder groups perceive the course to be successful, as well as what the implications of any potential discrepancies in these perceptions may be. Those concerns are addressed in Chapter 4—Findings.

### **Chapter 3—Case Study Approach**

#### *Section 3.1—Methodology*

The case study approach is a viable research method to evaluate learning processes in a variety of contexts from a variety of subjects. In *Composition Research: Empirical Designs*, Janice Lauer and William Asher explain that case studies can be used to examine complex and individualized learning processes in various contexts (45). According to Lauer and Asher, “The case study is a type of qualitative descriptive research that closely examines a small number of

subjects, and is guided by some theory of writing” (33). The case study is therefore a highly appropriate methodology for studying a course in which each student chooses his or her own research focus. Closely assessing stakeholder group members’ responses to, and work within, this course through conducting case studies allows me to more accurately and closely ascertain cognitive processes, which would not be as discernable through more generalized quantitative research (Flower and Hayes 211). Also, through collecting data in multiple formats (interviews, course materials, writing samples, observations/fieldnotes) and from three different sets of sources (students, administrators, and instructors), I will be able to perform what Lauer and Asher refer to as *triangulation*, or the comparison and combination of multiple sources of data. This process will result in a more rich and helpful analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the course from multiple perspectives. Stephen North in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* and Lauer and Asher classify case studies themselves as ethnographic in nature in that they compel the reader to observe a facet of an existing community (in my case, the composition classroom and a specific set of students within that classroom); therefore, a secondary benefit of a case study approach in this project is that the study is somewhat reflective of the curriculum itself.

### **3.1.1 Early Case Studies**

Perhaps the most seminal example of a case study approach in investigating students’ writing processes is Janet Emig’s 1971 report *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*. The research of Emig and others established the need for writing instruction to transition from a product-based approach to a process-based approach. Through this study in particular, researchers and educators became and remain interested in the instructional implications and

opportunities afforded by studying and understanding students' composing processes in reading and writing, and the thick descriptions and individualization accomplished through this case study encouraged other researchers in composition studies to continue utilizing this research method.

The Writing Process movement gained real momentum in the 1980s, and though that particular method of composition instruction is not a major consideration in this new Community Ethnography course (largely because it is already widely accepted and generally applied in the composition curriculum at the University of Arkansas), it is worth noting that utilizing a case study research approach was foundational in propelling one of the most significant shifts in the pedagogical focus of composition studies within contemporary Western education. Therefore, this research method can be highly effective in understanding and evaluating individualized composing processes, which can, in turn, have wider implications for pedagogical approaches.

In *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, Emig's research explored the composing processes of five female and three male twelfth grade students in what she terms both their reflexive (self-sponsored) and extensive (school-sponsored) writing practices. Data gathered were four interviews with each student, writing samples that were analyzed and coded, direct observations of writing, and recorded think-aloud protocols of students during composing. Emig hypothesized that the two different writing practices (reflexive and extensive) would reveal different composing practices and that each process would be governed by a distinct set of stylistic principles. Her findings supported these hypotheses in that reflexive, or self-directed, writing consistently entailed a longer and more complex composition process for students. Emig's findings were distinctly different from pre-existing conceptions and professional opinion about students' writing processes; thus, her research foregrounded the reevaluation of teaching

writing and the reorientation towards emphasizing students' writing processes over what they produced.

Like Emig's case study, my research includes a small group of participants and data in the forms of interviews, observations, and writing samples. Unlike Emig, I do not utilize think-aloud protocols or direct observations of students' composing processes, and my study will focus on the work of only two students. Emig restricted the conclusions of her findings to the subjects she reported on while extending the implications for applicability to other students and educational contexts. Similarly, my study only provides concrete conclusions for the case study participants, but it is my hope to offer findings that are useful when considered specifically when evaluating a first-year community ethnography writing course.

### **3.1.2 Recent Case Studies**

Though Emig's case study pioneered this research on the writing process, the case study approach is also a widely practiced and generally helpful research tool in other areas as well. Case studies have been utilized in multiple disciplines and contexts as an effective means by which to understand how individuals are learning and reacting in a given context and what factors, such as language, culture, and motivation, may contribute to these processes. Two areas, for example, that have benefited from the usefulness of case studies are workplace literacy and language acquisition literacy.

In *The Politics of Workplace Literacy: A Case Study*, Sheryl Greenwood Gowen observed, recorded, and interacted with hospital employees who were required to participate in a work-sponsored skills and literacy training course, which had a goal of "improving job performance by improving basic skills" in reading/writing, math, and oral communication (32).

In this case study, Gowen researched different stakeholder groups: the hospital administrators who commissioned the program, the educators who facilitated the program, and the hospital employee participants. This research on multiple stakeholders resulted in valuable insight on the varying expectations for, and reactions to, the program. Using an ethnographic approach, Gowen observed and recorded training meetings and collected stories through scheduled interviews and written narratives of members of stakeholder groups, and her account is largely narrative in nature. The implications of her findings were socio-political—she learned that though the administrators, educators, and participants all had divergent interests in completing the workplace literacy program, the program itself was ultimately understood by all stakeholder groups to be functioning more as a gatekeeping mechanism than as a tool for empowerment in that it ultimately served to “initiate minority and working class employees into mainstream ways of communication and behavior” (132). The predictable response of participants was a great level of resistance and resentment, which severely undermined any intended empowering or educational effect. In this report, the case study approach was essential in understanding and expressing the nuanced and complex experiences of different stakeholder groups in assessing the effectiveness of a new program. Like Gowen, I will triangulate the expectations and perspectives of the three stakeholder groups in order to present an assessment of the success of the course based on different perspectives, though my study will not emphasize the relationship between the stakeholder groups in this context.

In “Learning Transfer in English for General Academic Purposes Writing,” Gholam Reza Zarei and Ali Rahimi describe a sixteen-week case study to explore how learning is transferred during language acquisition. They chose the qualitative design model of the case study “as it is considered appropriate for portraying a detailed picture of phenomenon occurring in natural

contexts” (3). Zarei and Rahimi collected data from thirteen university students from varying fields who were all native Persian speakers and second language (English) learners. The researchers facilitated regular interviews with their case study participants and transcribed and coded these interviews to develop their findings. They also collected writing samples from a sixteen-week English language and writing course. Their findings supported the common understanding that for second-language learners, “the transfer of learning occurs as a function of different variables such as type of knowledge to be transferred, conditions under which to transfer, individuals’ preferences for transfer, tasks, and so on, occurring at different rates and in different ways” (Zarei and Rahimi 10). Much like Zarei and Rahimi discovered, my study will explore students’ highly individualized learning processes and the myriad conditions and factors that influence that process. Though the subject of my study is very different, I will, like Zarei and Rahimi, explore the idea of transfer in students’ learning processes as well.

### **3.1.3 Contemporary Case Studies**

Currently in education, there is a growing awareness of the impact of digital technology on students’ learning processes, and case studies have been used to assess the impact of technology on learning practices and processes in and outside of educational contexts. Specifically, educators and researchers are now interested in understanding how learning takes place through student engagement with online communities and what has been termed by the New London Group (among others) as New Literacies. The application of a case study research approach in this relatively new online and digitized arena both validates the usefulness of this research method in contemporary studies and demonstrates the flexibility of a case study approach in its applicability to a variety of learning contexts. More contemporary case studies

exemplify the effectiveness of qualitative research in evaluating less overtly measurable accomplishments such as metacognition. As Graves noted nearly thirty years ago, the case study approach is still “a means to investigation of the variables involved in new areas of research” (228).

In “‘Tech-savviness’ Meets Multiliteracies: Exploring Adolescent Girls’ Technology-Mediated Literacy Practices,” Kelly Chandler-Olcott and Donna Mahar trace the composing practices of two teenage girls through their participation in online fandom. Chandler-Olcott and Mahar aimed to explore in what ways and for what purposes their subjects (and, by extension, other adolescent girls) used digital technology to engage in literacy practices beyond formal education and also how their membership in these online communities influenced these literacy practices. Through observations, e-mail correspondences, and interviews, the researchers found that their subjects were writing prolifically in digital arenas and were engaged in multiple forms of literacy that were helping them develop as learners through mentors, audience feedback, and self-guided tutorials. Chandler-Olcott and Mahar urge teachers to explore students’ non-academic literacy practices as a means for making classrooms “communities of practice” (382). Though multimodality is not an overt focus of my study, I will consider the potential benefits of students composing non-traditional (i.e., not print-based) texts such as Chandler-Olcott and Mahar focused on in their study. I also explore the value of student interest as a motivation for them being more active in their own learning processes, because just as Chandler-Olcott and Mahar discovered that students taught themselves challenging concepts in order to engage in their non-academic online communities of interest, this community ethnography approach asks students to engage with, as participant/observers, communities of interest to them.

In “Weaving Multimodal Meaning in a Graphic Novel Reading Group,” Sean Connors

evaluates how and to what extent students negotiate and incorporate visual and linguistic design elements through a case study of six high-school students reading graphic novels (2012). The goal of his case study of six student readers was to assess the level to which multi-modal integration occurred when young adults read graphic novels in particular. Connors found that “As the participants wove multimodal meaning, they were active as readers,” contradicting earlier conclusions that multimodal texts essentially compelled young readers to “check out” or to stop using their imaginations. This study explored the possibility of graphic novels to achieve “multimodal meaning making as a process of design” (Connors 28), the term “design” here meaning the process of creating meaning (33). Students engaged in this process not only by transferring meaning between written text and imagery but also by filling in the gaps between the two to construct a fuller meaning. In addition to being competent readers, students were aware of color/lighting/shading, facial expressions/posture, angles/dimensions/size, and distance/spacing/text effects, and the students integrated their familiarity with linguistic and literary conventions with their awareness of the potential meanings embedded in these myriad visual elements. This reconciliation of, and mobility between, visual and linguistic design indicated a recursive rather than linear “reading” of the text (Connors 47). Just as Connors used case studies to expand the definition of literacy as being both visual and linguistic, my case studies will consider the different, but interconnected, aspects of social and rhetorical metacognition.

Both of these case studies explore new literacy practices outside of a traditional educational context, and both studies affirm the notion that students are very proactive and motivated learners when they are personally interested in a subject. This notion is part of the rationale for allowing students to pick any community that is interesting and accessible to them

for the community ethnography course, and just as a case study approach was effective in assessing this hard-to-measure factor for Chandler-Olcott and Mahar and Connors, so it will be useful in this study of a community ethnography course. Each of the six case study examples provided demonstrates the usefulness, flexibility, and applicability of a case study approach in different contexts with the goals of assessing different qualitative outcomes.

### *3.2 Data Collection Procedure*

Data for this project were collected from members of the three key stakeholder groups: administrators, instructors, and students. I received IRB approval to conduct the study in the summer of 2016 and began conducting interviews and collecting data in August.

#### **3.2.1 Participants**

I selected student participants from two of the seven pilot sections of ENGL 1013. I was the instructor of record for these two sections, and my classes met over a sixteen-week fall semester for seventy-five minutes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The other study participants were the two other instructors teaching sections of the pilot course and the two administrators who were responsible for the design of the course curriculum. One administrator is the Director of the Program in Rhetoric and Composition, and the other is the program's Curriculum Specialist. Though the Curriculum Specialist also taught one section of the pilot course, he was interviewed in the capacity of a course designer and administrator. Of the two other instructors chosen to instruct the pilot course, one was a second-year doctoral student specializing in Rhetoric and Composition, and the other was a very experienced full-time instructor who had taught in the English Department at this university for over seven years. I, a second-year M.A.

student specializing in Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy, also taught two sections of the pilot course, and all of the pilot instructors had taught the current version of Composition I at the University of Arkansas before teaching these pilot sections, though none, myself included, had any previous experience with ethnography. Instructors and administrators were asked to participate in the study during the summer, and I conducted the initial interview with all four faculty participants within the first few weeks of the fall semester.

I did not make the final selection for my two student case study participants until I had collected all the data at the end of the semester from ten potential subjects. I collected writing from and attempted to conduct and record two interviews with all ten of these prospective case study participants. I collected arguably too much data (ten sets) in order to, at the end of the semester, evaluate which two students would provide the best information for my study, and my final selection was based on the two students who were articulate, participated in both interviews and completed all or most of the major and minor writing assignments, and who represented different educational backgrounds and writing levels, came from different family support systems, and made different community selections. I first narrowed down the ten potential participants to those in the two sections of the pilot course that I taught. After explaining the study to the classes and collecting signed Informed Consent Forms from all willing students, I collected writing samples from thirty-seven students in order to ascertain students' levels of writing. Out of the thirty-seven students from whom I collected and analyzed writing, I chose ten students as possible case study participants based on their varying levels of writing ability, diverse educational, cultural, academic majors, and overall responsiveness/communicativeness. These ten potential student case study participants were all 17-19 years old and were first-semester freshmen at the University of Arkansas. From the initial data collected from these ten

case study participants in the fall of 2016, I selected two students who completed all the course work, participated in both interviews, were articulate/expressive, and came from different educational backgrounds and family systems and who chose very different communities to observe.

### **3.2.2 Data Collection**

#### **I. Interviews**

I interviewed the student, administrator, and instructor case-study participants two times in the fall semester (August 19th - September 16th and December 5th - 12th, 2016). These interviews were audio-recorded, and if I needed any additional clarifications after the interviews, I followed up with participants via e-mail. These interview responses were transcribed and analyzed initially to discern similarities and contrasts in goals and expectations within and between stakeholder groups. All of the participants were asked the same sets of questions (Appendix B) in order to discern key similarities or differences between individuals and stakeholder groups. The questions for the first interview addressed individuals' goals and expectations for the course and the final interview asked participants to evaluate the overall success of the course. I also audio-recorded all the meetings of the administrators and pilot instructors, and I collected some e-mail conversations within these groups that addressed questions or concerns pertaining to the pilot course. I have assigned the student participants pseudonyms when referencing them in my thesis.

#### **II. Texts**

Materials such as rubrics, lesson plans, assignment prompts, and peer review forms were collected from instructors, and the syllabus, assignments, templates, meeting notes, and

textbooks used or considered were collected from the administrators. Some e-mail correspondence pertaining to the pilot course was also collected. I collected student writing from two pilot sections, which provided thirty-seven complete sets of student coursework. Coursework collected consisted of all four major writing assignments (Observation Report, Folklore Analysis, Ethnographic Account, and Reflection Portfolio), drafts of assignments, student feedback on drafts of major essays from mandatory in-class and electronic peer review workshops, in-class writing assignments, homework assignments, and students' field notes. This extensive collection of texts used in course design, course instruction/implementation, and course completion, along with interviews conducted at two strategic points in the semester, allowed me to analyze the complementary and divergent expectations for the course between the three stakeholder groups, as well as the extent to which, and in what manner, students were developing social and rhetorical metacognitive practices. Finally, these data allowed me to observe what course goals were being prioritized and accomplished as well as which goals were being less fully pursued.

#### **Chapter 4—Findings**

This chapter articulates the expectations and conclusions of the three stakeholder groups—administrators, instructors, and students—as they pertain to this pilot course specifically. I will use these findings primarily from the two interviews, in conjunction with the student case studies, to assess how successful the course was in achieving the goals of each stakeholder group. In order to perform triangulation, I have utilized course materials, interviews, and student writing samples in my case studies of the two students.

## 4.1—Stakeholder Expectations

### 4.1.1 Administrators

The term “administrators” refers to the individuals responsible for designing the pilot course. Those individuals are the Director of the Program in Rhetoric and Composition (henceforth referred to as the Director) and the Curriculum Design Specialist in the Program in Rhetoric and Composition (henceforth referred to as the Curriculum Specialist). The administrators created course materials—such as the syllabus, course philosophy, and grading rubrics—that clearly establish the goals of the course for both the instructors and the students. Administrators provided further insight on their goals and expectations for the course through individual interviews.

According to the syllabus that the administrators created specifically for the pilot course, the pilot course and the current Composition I course, which takes a more broad, academic, source-oriented, and writing skills-focused approach, share the same goals. According to the syllabus, those goals are to equip students to:

- analyze rhetorical situations;
- identify authoritative sources;
- identify persuasive appeals in written and visual texts;
- paraphrase and summarize accurately the ideas of others;
- develop a thesis and construct a convincing written argument for a specific audience;
- use electronic resources to support library research;
- synthesize several sources using an established style for internal documentation and works cited;
- analyze and revise their own writing and the writing of others; and
- practice academic integrity and ethical communicative aims.

(ENGL 1013 Syllabus)

However, the pilot community ethnography course adds the goal for students to learn to “devise primary research materials and engage in primary research” (Pilot ENGL 1013 Syllabus). As mentioned earlier, the pilot course as a whole also emphasizes metacognitive development and

social awareness. As mentioned, the course philosophy stated, “The pilot of ENGL 1013 is designed to cultivate student agency and community engagement by casting students in the metacognitive dual role of participant-observers within communities of their choosing” (Pilot Course Philosophy). When students have to objectively observe and analyze communities in which they are members, they are also compelled to think about their own perceptions of the communities and themselves.

In terms of broader assumptions about the purpose of a first-year writing composition course, the administrators felt that FYC should prepare students for writing that they will do throughout their academic careers. According to the Director, the role of FYC is to “introduce students to the demands of college-level writing” (Director Interview 1). The Curriculum Specialist agreed, noting in his first interview that “Ideally, Comp I is meant to introduce students to the fundamental skills they will need to succeed in any writing task in the university, and hopefully also to prepare them for the more varied writing tasks they will have to take on professionally” (Curriculum Specialist Interview 1). However, inherent in these statements are several assumptions, one being that there is “a shared discourse across the disciplines that make up a college or the university,” (Director Interview 1) and, as Wardle points out, this assumption is problematic because it simply isn’t true—one academic discourse will not adequately equip students with all of the skills and lexis they might need for writing assignments in journalism, history, anthropology, biology, or business classes. A further assumption is that “every student coming into college will need to know how to engage in basic research processes, know how to engage in critical thinking or practice critical thinking, practice critical reading, and write effective arguments” (Director Interview 1). Regardless of how realistic these conclusions about

how FYC should equip students a successful college career are, they are still echoed by all three stakeholder groups and foreground the content design and compilation of the pilot course.

There are endless approaches to achieving the goal of equipping students to succeed in college, but at the University of Arkansas, administrators place emphasis on teaching students critical skills rather than editing or mastering standard writing forms, which is reflected in the course goals (Director Interview 1). Administrators have identified those needed skills based on common writing demands from upper division courses. According to the Director, “Students are going to be required to evaluate sophisticated texts, which is why they need critical reading and critical writing skills, they’re going to be required to find out more than what they’re reading, which requires research skills, and they’re going to be required to present information in standard forms, whether in writing or in speech” (Director Interview 1). Thus the academic skills that the Director aimed to incorporate into the community ethnography writing course were those related to critical reading and writing, researching, and proposing or presenting information, and the cultivation of those skills was inherently linked to the transferability of those skills to upper division courses (Director Interview 1).

Though the current academic and secondary text-based Composition curriculum also aimed to equip students with these critical skills, the administrators identified ways in which these skills could be emphasized more effectively, namely, through altering the types of research and writing that students were asked to do. According to the Curriculum Specialist, the current Comp I was “based on an older model that still relies on the traditional academic essay, which is a very valuable genre but not one that the students will necessarily encounter that often” (Curriculum Specialist Interview 1). Through less-traditional assignments such as a portfolio, fieldnotes, and a folklore analysis, and traditional forms such as a report and summary, the pilot

course demanded that student writing included but also went beyond the traditional academic essay. Furthermore, several assignments required students to select what mode best reached their target audience, and students had the flexibility to compose blogs, articles, or even video essays. Non-traditional assignments and flexibility in formatting helped students see the association between content and presentation. As the Curriculum Specialist explained, “Sometimes learning these skills in the confines of that genre [the traditional academic essay] makes it difficult for them to see how those skills transfer. We thought this would let them focus much more on skills and rhetorical aspects rather than on genres” (Curriculum Specialist Interview 1). Additionally, the administrators hoped that the community ethnography approach would more effectively achieve and expand these skills by allowing students to engage in primary research on communities of their choosing. In targeting research skills that go beyond archival or library research, the administrators hoped to tap into “a new sensibility,” which was for “students to see a connection between their writing and to become aware of the community as an extension of the university” (Director Interview 1).

Though social metacognition was not necessarily a stated goal of the pilot course, it did appear to be an implicit one supported by the administrators’ comments. However, the distinction between social metacognition (wherein the student experiences some kind of change) and social activism (wherein the student creates some kind of change) is again important to note. Unlike Cushman’s assertion that rhetoricians can and should be agents of social change, the administrators stop at hoping that the course serves as an agent for individual change rather than requiring that students demonstrate a particular form of social intervention. For example, when I asked the Director if it was a course goal for students to enact some kind of change in the community that they observed, he responded in the negative, explaining, “We don’t have, for

instance, an assignment that says ‘now go back and make sure that you are changing the community that you researched.’ On the other hand, the very notion of finding out—which is what research is—information on any given topic is fundamentally an act of change” (Director Interview 1). In short, the Director expected students to grow in awareness of their communities and themselves in relation to their communities through this process, and though the information that students acquired and presented through the course may affect their peers, their community, or a broader audience, that type of change was not necessarily an outcome that could be assessed as part of the course. Rather, students themselves would hopefully be impacted by what they learned from their primary research, and it was therefore the administrators’ intention to “introduc[e]students to research processes that could lead to that change” (Director Interview 1).

According to the administrators, rhetorical metacognition was a very overt emphasis of the comprehensive curriculum redesign. As explained in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the pilot course was created as a part of the redesign of the entire first-year writing curriculum, which, at the University of Arkansas, consists of two sequential courses: ENGL 1013: Composition I (which is generally referred to as “introduction to academic discourse”) and ENGL 1023: Composition II, which was redesigned as an “introduction to writing-in-the-disciplines” course using the writing-about-writing approach pioneered by Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle four years ago. The notion of a universal academic discourse was alluded to by all the stakeholder groups in this study but remains controversial in Composition Studies in general. Wardle would maintain that there is no such universal discourse and an attempt to teach one is counter-productive to FYC. However, this study suggests that there is a discourse privileged at the university. Though students often approach academic discourse as a set of genres or rules to master, the instructors and administrators in this study see it as a series of socially situated expressive choices involving

language. The tandem consideration of social and rhetorical metacognition helps explore the nuanced nature of this discourse.

The pilot Composition I course that is the subject of this thesis was designed to complement the second course in the sequence and to move students sooner to think of writing not just as mechanical skills involving the use of print, but as socially-situated expressive choices involving language (or, more succinctly, as particular discursive practices enacted via the written medium). As a result, the pilot Composition I course shares many of the goals of the current Composition II course, as the administrators developed the courses as a complementary sequence. As the Director explains, “One of the major goals or aims of Comp II is to get students to think about their own literacy practices, their own attitudes towards writing, their own expectations of the kind of writing they’re going to be doing in their discipline, and ultimately to critique and evaluate that literacy and expectation of what’s going on in their discipline” (Director Interview 1). Each of these metacognitive practices is preliminarily explored in the pilot Composition I course as well—the Director noted that “because we’re getting them to do so much reflective thinking [in Composition II], I wanted them to begin to do that as well in Comp I, and not to see the tasks of summarizing, synthesizing, analyzing as discrete tasks that they just apply but rather that any one of those tasks takes on a unique approach insofar as each one of them takes on the task uniquely” (Director Interview 1). Essentially, the administrators aimed for students to become aware of their own writing processes and diverge from the tendency to rely on basic steps and formulas (Director Interview 1). According to the Curriculum Specialist, a goal of the pilot course was to help students “understand the key concepts that underlie any writing situation and prepare them to do well in those situations as they come up” (Curriculum Specialist Interview 1). The hope was that this will give students “a much better sense of how the

process works and adapts and changes. And their process is something that they have control over” (Curriculum Specialist Interview 1). Students’ awareness of, and control over, their own writing process reflects the skill of prioritizing writing goals at different stages in the composing process that Flower and Hayes describe in “A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing.” This development of authority and awareness in writing, though not an overt goal of ethnographic work, is a clear representation of rhetorical metacognition.

#### **4.1.2—Instructors**

The two instructors’ expectations for this course, and for any first-year writing course, generally reflected the expectations and goals of the administrators, with a few key differences. Before those expectations are explored, however, I will provide some background information about each instructor for context. Instructor A earned her Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing from the University of Arkansas and has, for the past seven years, taught essentially every offered writing class at the University, as well as serving in various administrative capacities in the English department such as academic advisor, interim program director, and assistant program director for the Program of Rhetoric and Composition. Instructor A was asked to teach the pilot course because she is an experienced writing instructor and is very familiar with the University’s goals.

Instructor B was, at the time of the study, a second-year Ph.D. student in English specializing in Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy at the University of Arkansas. In addition to a year of teaching as a graduate assistant at this university, she had also taught for two years previously while earning her Master’s degree in English from a university in Texas. Instructor B was asked to teach the pilot course because she is recognized by both her students and the

administrators as a very good teacher who provides thoughtful and insightful feedback. Both instructors had taught the current source-based and form-oriented version of Composition I and the Writing About Writing Composition II courses at the University of Arkansas at least once, but neither had any previous overt experience with ethnography, especially in the context of a writing course.

Similar to the administrators, both instructors thought that the main purpose of a first-year writing course was essentially to equip students with the reading and writing tools they will need to succeed in the university and beyond. However, Instructor A viewed FYC specifically as a sort of access portal to the academic discourse that students would engage in at the University and saw certain writing assignments as the source of any potential transferability. According to Instructor A, “The goal of Comp I is to get everyone who comes to the university up to the same level of proficiency as a writer. And it’s to get everyone the tools they need to succeed at writing in college” (Instructor A Interview 1). In consideration of the new pilot course, Instructor A maintained that “the goals of the new Comp I need to be the same” (Instructor A Interview 1). Instructor B affirmed the notion of preparedness in FYC, though, like the Curriculum Specialist, she did not restrict this to writing in the university only. She concluded that “Comp I should introduce students to and help them cultivate the ability to analyze texts both written, spoken, visual, and teach them how to embark on a self-determined process of inquiry and teach them how to write about that process” (Instructor B Interview 1). Both instructors thought that a FYC course should prepare students for later critical reading and writing tasks by providing them with the tools or skills that they need to succeed in other disciplines, which echoes the notion of transfer provided by D. N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon in “Teaching for Transfer.” They suggest that transfer is the “deliberate mindful abstraction of skill or knowledge from one context

for application in another” (25), and this cross-context application of skills is exactly what both instructors hoped to see in a FYC course, while the “deliberate mindful abstraction” is essentially metacognition.

Though the provision and instruction of transferable critical skills was a goal for both instructors in FYC, they each espoused different ideas of what that process might look like, particularly in the context of a community ethnography writing course. Instructor B provided examples of transferable skills that should be emphasized in the pilot course, such as “learning how to deeply analyze something, to articulate that analysis in a way that other people can understand, and process and develop an understanding of how to kickstart your own problem-solving process, or ask a question and find a way to find answers” (Instructor B Interview 1). She describes these skills as particularly useful in a vocational context too, “especially if [students] have to collaborate with other people,” but she also sees the cultivation of these skills as essential in “engaged citizenry, and just [...] personal development of critical thinking [and] common decency” (Instructor B Interview 1). Instructor B’s ideas of transfer, then, extended beyond application to other disciplines and even potential professional contexts to include individual development. This idea reflects the process of individual change that the Director hoped students would experience through conducting their own primary research, and it is further extrapolated in what Instructor B repeatedly referred to as a “self-determined process of inquiry” (Instructor B Interview 1).

Instructor B described this “self-determined process of inquiry” as the process wherein “students are, from the beginning of the semester, as much as they can, picking a subject, defining their purpose in picking that subject, and defining the questions that they want to ask of that subject, and figuring out in their own way how they’re going to go about seeking answers to

those questions” (Instructor B Interview 1). This idea is uniquely suitable to and possible within a course where students are required to select their own research focus and given the freedom to utilize different forms of writing for different purposes. The concept of initiative and interest is a feature of the community ethnography approach that both instructors see as a very positive dynamic, and Instructor B hoped that, since this process is such an overt objective in the structure of the course, students can actually transfer that process to other courses and even their major.

Instructor A also hoped that students could take and transfer ownership of their own learning processes, but she was also skeptical of this happening on a broad scale. She acknowledged that, in her experience, “it’s only going to be like 10% who are going to be able to do that, and I’m thinking in terms of the few A-level students who go above and beyond” (Instructor A Interview 1). Though Instructor A was dubious as to whether or not the majority of students will take much initiative in the class, she acknowledged that the ethnography aspect of the course was precisely what could motivate students to take ownership of their own learning, as “the course is designed to do that” (Instructor A Interview 1). Both instructors acknowledged the benefits of students having control over what their research focus was in the community ethnography course. According to Instructor B, “The content being used in the Pilot Comp I course to achieve those outcomes is and will feel more authentic to students not as contrived and more applicable to the life they see themselves having outside of our classroom” (Instructor B Interview 1).

Instructor A took a very practical approach to considering transfer in the context of the community ethnography writing course. She suggested that this course will prepare students to write and research in specific formats that they can, and likely will, utilize in other disciplines.

For example, she posited that “a lot of skills that they acquire from doing primary research can contribute to lab reports [...] and they all have to do science” (Instructor A Interview 1). She also suggested that primary research could be useful for future writing endeavors in that “conducting their own research [could help them] figure out how to take the data that they’ve gathered and parse out some meaning from it and then coherently organize that into a paper,” which, she went on to explain, was something that students would have to do with secondary and scholarly research in history, science, and other subjects (Instructor A Interview 1). Instructor A also acknowledged how much more cohesive the pilot course seemed to be with the Writing About Writing Composition II course, which could create a more comprehensive first-year writing curriculum as a whole. Regarding the compatibility of the two courses that, at the time of this study, made up the first-year curriculum, Instructor A felt that “we work on perfecting these skills of summarizing and writing standard papers [in Comp I], and then when we get into Comp II we’re like, ‘Ok, we want you to...throw all of that away’” (Instructor A Interview 1). Instructor A suggested that the current source-based and form-oriented Composition I course asked students to write specific texts for specific genres, and the Composition II Writing About Writing course asked students to reject those formulas. The two courses seemed incompatible to her and did not, in her opinion, function as a cohesive curriculum. She noted that the pilot course could have more transfer potential to Comp II because creating surveys and conducting interviews are all skills that are utilized in both the pilot course and in Comp II.

Like the Administrators, the Instructors both acknowledged that there were many approaches for imparting critical skills and facilitating transfer; however, because the instructors were less familiar with the concept of ethnography, the design of the course, and the course texts, they were less confident about how naturally the structure of the course would achieve these

goals. Both instructors voiced concerns about the potential tension between the goals of a FYC course and the demands of conducting primary research. Instructor B acknowledged, “Part of my concern is for myself as an instructor, knowing that the textbooks that we’re using emphasize the research inquiry portion of the course’s objectives and then other things like...teaching students how to summarize, or synthesize, analyze, are not emphasized as heavily in that textbook” (Instructor B Interview 1). Similarly, Instructor A acknowledged that because students will all have different subjects for each assignment, “The assignments could go various different directions, and...their goals are going to be really different” (Instructor A Interview 1). She felt that the diversity of subjects would make standardizing instruction very difficult, explaining that “I can still teach grammar to them and I can still teach paragraphing, and I will, but it’s going to be challenging for me to work on argumentation and give them practical examples from the actual thing that they’re working on, that they can use” (Instructor A Interview 1). In terms of incorporating the skills of summarizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and critiquing, Instructor B responded thusly: “I’m very conscious of my need to make sure that those are somehow connected, and I’m not sure how capable I feel of doing that at this point” (Instructor B Interview 1). She also offered the following consideration: “If I was a brand-new TA and I didn’t know anything about the old version of Comp I and I was teaching this course, I might not realize that my department wants me to be emphasizing those four key skills, and that might fall through the cracks” (Instructor B Interview 1). Though both instructors saw the potential benefits of an ethnographic approach and students conducting primary research, they were aware of the potential tensions between the goals of a traditional FYC and the work involved in ethnography.

Though they sensed a potential disconnect between ethnographic research and teaching writing skills, both instructors were hopeful that the pilot course would facilitate rhetorical

metacognition. Instructor A noted that “academically, it's important for them to know what their problem areas are, and their strengths, so they can work on those, and build on their strengths and improve their weaknesses in the course” (Instructor A Interview 1). She concluded that if students failed to identify and improve on their own strengths and weaknesses as learners, “they can't succeed in this course” (Instructor A Interview 1). Instructor A noted the difference between students simply following rules and learning to think critically about their own writing. For example, she explained that “if they're just thinking, 'Well I don't know what she [the instructor] wants,' then they're not going to be able to improve” (Instructor A Interview 1). Instructor B agreed: “I want to see them be able to summarize correctly and synthesize...but [not without] that enthusiasm and willingness to engage with the research process” (Instructor B Interview 1). Instructor B hoped that if students are interested in their work, their writing would, by extension, improve. She concluded that “if students seem motivated to try, if they seemed engaged by not only the material, but their own process of inquiry throughout the semester, if they seem to be invigorated by that or interested at the very least, and...if that effort is visible in their writing, I think I would call that successful” (Instructor B Interview 1).

Both instructors had high expectations for students to develop social metacognition in the pilot course. Instructor A suggested that the pilot course will be successful if it facilitates social metacognition, inasmuch as students “choose a community that helps foster greater understanding and helps them step outside of themselves and relate to members of that group,” because “a social goal of this course is to open people’s minds and help them to perceive the world from other people’s perspectives in a way that they haven’t before” (Instructor A Interview 1). Instructor B hoped that when students research and engage with their communities, their work would be “more applicable to the life they see themselves having outside of our

classroom and their future in trying to find a place for themselves in communities” (Instructor B Interview 1). She acknowledged that students would be uniquely challenged in the pilot course, because they would be compelled to examine other communities and themselves in relation to those communities through the dual role of participant/observer. In objectively observing and reporting on their community, students would be acting as observers. However, through interviewing and interacting with members of their community—a requirement of the course—students would be acting as participants. Though each student will have a different degree of participation, they would each have to negotiate when to observe and when to participate, and this tension could facilitate both social and rhetorical metacognition. As Instructor B concluded, “I think that they will find it challenging to make sense of how to do that [become participant/observers], but I think that it’s a really important part of the metacognitive process for them to at least try to make sense of it (Instructor B Interview 1).

#### **4.1.3—Students**

The two students that I chose as participants in this study were both female freshmen at the University of Arkansas. One student, whom I will refer to as Amy, was a first-generation college student from a small town in southern Arkansas where she attended a small public high school (her graduating class was approximately 30 students) after moving to six different states by the time she was a junior in high school. At the beginning of this study, her major was Criminal Justice/Sociology, and she had taken no previous college courses or college preparatory classes. When I asked her to assess her abilities as a student, she rated herself as an eight out of ten and asserted that her greatest strength as a scholar was her ability to “really pay attention and

understand things” and not need to ask a lot of questions (Amy Interview 1). Amy was excited to be the first person in her family to complete a Bachelor’s degree.

The second student, whom I will refer to as Kate, grew up in Northwest Arkansas and is the youngest of four children. Her father was a physician specializing in internal medicine, her mother was a high school English teacher, and all of her older siblings were either currently completing or had completed a Bachelor’s degree. She took five AP classes at her large public high school (her graduating class was nearly 500 students) and, at the beginning of the study, she was a theatre major and English minor. She described herself as “a very good study-student and a very bad test-taking student” in that she does “great with assignments and homework,” but a test makes her “completely choke” (Kate Interview 1). Kate believed that this was due to second-guessing herself, and where Amy felt confident to receive direction and complete tasks, Kate seems to want more guidance. Kate’s goal for her freshman year was to earn a 4.0 and make her family proud.

Students were initially interviewed within the first two weeks of the course, so their understanding of the pilot course was largely contingent on their instructor’s presentation of the course. Both students shared the same general assumptions about the purpose of a first-year writing course with the administrators and instructors: they hoped that Composition I would essentially make them better writers and equip them to succeed in the university and beyond. They also shared an awareness of the potential to develop social awareness and become more conscientious individuals in this course. In the first interview, Kate repeatedly stated that she hoped this course would “make me a better person” (Kate Interview 1) and Amy hoped to “become a better observer of people, because I’m pretty oblivious to most things” (Kate Interview 1). Furthermore, she saw the potential for a change in perspective due to primary

research, which she expressed as “beliefs that we acquire during our research” (Kate Homework 1). Both students expected to experience some degree of the individual change that the Director hoped would occur in the context of the course.

Amy and Kate expressed an expectation for transfer that correlated with the administrators’ and instructors’ goals for the course as well. Kate noted that a first-year course “is meant to accomplish teaching the students how to get a better perspective of what people expect when we go out into the working world” (Kate Interview 1). She added, “We won’t have to write essays or do tests or anything, but in the working world we’ll have to be able to format [documents] and write better, and...we’ll need to be able to jump forward and prepare ourselves” (Kate Interview 1). Along the same lines, Amy noted that a first year writing course should be “setting us up for success in later classes, but also [teaching us] learning” and should ultimately “prepare students for other higher level requirements” (Amy In-Class Writing I). She added that the course would be successful if it “prepares us for later life” (Amy In-Class Writing I). Thus, both students believed that the course should have a preparatory function and equip them with skills that will be useful in contexts beyond the classroom.

Where the instructors and especially the administrators understood how aspects of ethnography could complement a first-year writing course, the students seemed to perceive the course in a more dualistic light. They tended to characterize aspects of it as “English” when referring to any act pertaining to writing or “ethnography” when discussing primary research and their community. However, they did not necessarily perceive the two approaches to be interconnected. For example, Amy explained that “when I’ve had any other English course there’s always been...certain things you study like nouns and stuff like that, and that’s just what you learn in English class and you apply to the papers that you write every four weeks or

whatever” (Amy Interview 1). Amy saw the tasks associated with ethnography as very separate from those of a traditional “English” class, and interestingly, she saw the English portion as nonessential and extracurricular and the ethnography aspects as more practical and immediately useful, explaining, “I want to use what the community ethnography will help me learn: that’s something I’ll use everyday, and the English is just something I want to know” (Amy Interview 1). She saw the “English” aspect as interest-based information and the primary research component especially as useful, practical experience. Like Instructor A, she saw the immediate applicability of field research on her other classes—for example, she noted that a lot of the work in the pilot class is “stuff we’re doing in anthropology”—but she still viewed the course as a container for two different (and not necessarily complementary) subjects. Because of what students perceived to be the dualistic nature of the course, they were aware, like the instructors, of the potential tension between the competing objectives of ethnography work and writing skills. Amy hoped that she wouldn’t be so distracted by the work of researching a new community that she would neglect to improve her actual writing, and to that end, she felt that content and presentation could be in conflict. “My biggest concern is that I don’t want to focus too much on the community ethnography part: I also want to know more about English in general” (Amy Interview 1). She saw herself as an advanced and invested learner, because she wanted to pursue more of the English aspect though she doesn’t consider it to be particularly practical, and she viewed the course as two distinct “parts” that are in competition, rather than cohesion, with one another.

Both students already possessed an awareness of rhetorical metacognition and expected to develop that further this semester, though of course they utilized different terminology. Kate, for example, described different approaches she takes in different writing forms and why she

makes those decisions. She explained, “If I am writing a story, ninety-five percent of the time [it] is to make a person cry. Not when I’m writing an essay, though—I try to be inspirational in my essays” (Kate Homework I). She demonstrated an awareness of how different genres impact different audiences and have different purposes and effects. She was also already aware of her deficiencies as a writer and how she could improve, explaining, “To be a stronger writer, I need to find a better writing style because focusing on just people’s emotions will not help me to become successful” (Kate Homework I). She described her need to be more intentional about planning, noting that “planning is the hardest part for me when it comes to writing because I hate feeling constrained, but if I don’t plan, then my writing is a wishy-washy mess, so I need to become a better planner to become a better writer” (Kate Homework I). Amy also demonstrated an awareness of rhetorical metacognition, but on a more general level. She wanted to “grow as a writer and a student in English,” and she saw personal interest as essential in that process. She distinguished between producing required traditional academic texts and being motivated to learn something independently. In this regard Amy added, “I’ve written a lot of research papers, and I know what it is to bear down and write something because you just have to get that grade. And I know too what it is to write about something that you’re actually interested in, and it’s two totally different spectrums” (Amy Interview 1). In writing research papers, she often wondered, “Why am I even doing this?” because not only is the content uninteresting or new, she didn’t see the traditional research paper as particularly useful or transferable to other courses or her future career (Amy Interview 1). That perception of usefulness or interestingness was, to Amy, essential in being motivated to develop as a writer, and her awareness of what motivated her was an indication of rhetorical metacognition.

Kate shared the conviction that motivation was essential for improved writing, and both students understood that motivation was essential in developing as writers. Kate explained the experience of having the authority to write about a subject of interest to her: “I can write about what I want freely and, although I will have many errors, I will be able to become a stronger writer because of Comp I” (Kate Homework 1). Kate thought that this would be true of everyone, and in fact, she acknowledged that “most people hate writing. That's all there is to it. It can be tedious, frustrating even; writing is just a way for people to achieve their grades, but with the Comp I community, I do believe everyone will become stronger writers” (Kate Homework 1). She discussed how significant student initiative and input might be in improving writing skills. She concluded that “they [students] can form their own opinions, make a decision about what they think about their writing assignments,” which she saw as a unique strength of the pilot course (Kate Homework 1). In her experience, Kate had learned that “to become a better writer, a person must continue to repetitively write, but for a person to continuously write, they must find something that lights a fire in them: creates a passion. Passion, hard work, and the beliefs that we acquire during our research and writing will allow us to become stronger writers” (Kate Homework 1). Here, Kate expressed the same potential benefits of student interest that were uniquely available in a community ethnography writing course, much like the instructors hoped would be present. She understood that growing as a writer required practice, but she acknowledged that she and other students will be disinclined to practice their writing if they're not interested in the subject.

#### *4.2—Student Case Studies*

The fifth chapter will analyze work from two students in the pilot course. I hope to

identify if, when, where, and how rhetorical and social metacognition occurred in the context of this class through looking at various texts that the students produced. I will introduce the texts that I analyze, and I will evaluate first the rhetorical and then the social metacognitive processes that students engaged in.

In order to triangulate my findings and produce more complex research, I analyzed recorded student interviews, written student reflections, and student writing assignments. In using these sources, I was able to analyze what students hoped to accomplish in the class, how they perceived their own progress and work, and how their perception of their work matched with the academic texts that they were producing. In this section, I will outline the key texts that I have analyzed.

#### **4.2.1 Field Notebooks**

Over the course of the semester, students recorded their observations of their communities in notebooks. They were instructed to utilize a dual-column entry method. They divided each page into two columns entitled “Record” and “Reflect.” They wrote down sensory observations (sights, smells, and sounds) in the “Record” column and then revisited those rote observations in the “Reflect” column. The “Reflect” column had questions, wonderings, and inferences in it. Students were also required to produce three to five freewrites based on their observations: after each recorded observation, students had to revisit their notes and compose a paragraph that reflected on those observations on three to five separate occasions.

#### **4.2.2—Major Writing Assignments**

Students completed four major writing assignments over the course of the semester. Though the Administrators provided the same prompts to all of the pilot course instructors,

instructors were also given the flexibility to alter aspects of major and minor writing assignments as they each deemed helpful. Thus, though all four major writing assignments were uniform in objective across all seven sections of the pilot course, I, the instructor of the two students in this case study, altered some of the parameters of the third and fourth major writing assignments. I include the original and altered prompts for Writing Assignments #3 (Appendix F) and Writing Assignment #4 (Appendix G), respectively. The prompts for Major Writing Assignments #1 (Appendix D) and Writing Assignment #2 (Appendix E) were unaltered.

The first assignment, an Observation Report, asked students to observe their chosen community, record detailed observations in their field notebook, and then, based on that primary research, achieve the following in an essay:

[I]ntroduce your reader to this community. Explain your purpose in writing about this community...and what you want your reader to see from your first report. Explain your methodology... and then choose the one or two most intriguing aspects of the observation from your field notes and explain to your reader why you find them important. Discuss what you have learned so far and what you want to learn as you continue. Conclude by proposing any thoughts or observations you think might be relevant for your future observations and research and whether your initial purpose has changed based on your first few observations. Finally, tell your reader what can be expected from your future reports. (Appendix D)

The minimum length for this essay was six hundred words, and it was due approximately five weeks into the semester. WA #1 was worth ten percent of students' overall course grade.

The second major writing assignment was a Folklore Analysis (Appendix E). Students were required to identify a piece of folklore within their community based on observations and interactions and then analyze how that folklore was important to the community as a whole and how it helped the author achieve their purpose in studying that particular community. The Administrators provided a supplemental handout that defined and helped students understand the concept of folklore (Appendix E), but it was broadly defined as “a narrative or set of narratives valued by the members of that community” (Appendix E). The assignment required students to

continue making observations of their community to provide documentation of the folklore in the analysis. The prompt asked students to consider audience, engage in revision, and utilize secondary research, and it built on concepts of integrating primary research and summarizing information that the first writing assignment introduced. WA #2 had a minimum wordcount requirement of twelve hundred words, and it was due in the eighth week of the semester. It was worth fifteen percent of students' overall course grade.

The third major writing assignment was an Ethnographic Account. The original prompt asked students to “reflect on [their] observations so far while continuing to observe and interact with [their] community, represent general perceptions about [their] community, conduct secondary research to supplement [their] observations, and craft a project explaining the most important elements of [their] chosen community and the methodology by which [they] discovered those elements” (Appendix F). One major alteration to this assignment that I made was emphasizing the option for students to compose their findings multimodally through a video essay, podcast, blog, presentation, or article, though they could also choose to write a traditional academic essay. In order for students to select the most appropriate format for presenting their work, I required students to identify the audience that they planned to share their findings with and address their purpose in sharing their findings with this particular audience. This assignment asked them to consider not only content and organization but also a real audience and purpose. WA #3 was due in the twelfth week of the semester and was worth twenty percent of students' overall course grade. Length and formatting requirements varied depending on the format students chose for their work in, which was specified in the prompt (Appendix F).

The final writing assignment was a portfolio where students collected and presented their work from the entire semester. I altered the prompt for the portfolio by adding detailed

specifications about the format of the portfolio. Students were asked to present examples of their research and to provide writing samples, which consisted of the other three major writing assignments, accompanied by introductions to each item that guided the reader through the portfolio (Appendix G). In addition, students had to compose a reflection paper (approximately 800 words) in which they reflected on their role as participant/observers and discussed what they learned about their community and about themselves through conducting primary research. As the assignment description indicates, the portfolio had to include the following elements, and emphasis was placed on organization and appearance:

- Cover page
- Table of Contents (include page numbers)
- Portfolio Introduction
- Research Methods (pick 3 of the following) + Introduction
  - Field Notebook (sample) + Introduction
  - Interview(s) (questions + partial transcript) + Introduction
  - Survey(s) (questions + results) + Introduction
  - Observations (narrative description) + Introduction
  - Other + Introduction
- Writing Assignments + Introduction
  - Observation Report (final draft) + Introduction
  - Folklore Analysis (final draft) + Introduction
  - Ethnographic Account (final draft/representation) + Introduction
- Reflection Paper
- Works Cited (Appendix G)

The main audiences that students considered for the portfolio were the instructor and potential future employers/evaluators: the prompt asked students to compose their portfolio as a professional representation of their development and capabilities as researchers and writers.

#### **4.2.3—Supporting Documents**

For the first three major writing assignments, students in my sections of the pilot course were required to submit several supporting documents with their final draft of each essay for WAs #1-3. Those supporting documents were an Intention Statement (Appendix H), two essay drafts (one that the student and I reviewed during individual conferences and one with peer

review feedback from Peer Review Workshops), and two Revision Reflections based on those drafts (Appendix I), which I will describe later.

The Intention Statements, though they varied somewhat in wording for each writing assignment, generally asked students for the following:

After re-reading the prompt for Writing Assignment #\_\_\_, write 1-2 well-developed paragraphs that define your intentions with this writing project. Think about intentions on several levels: what do you hope to get out of this as a student, writer, learner, individual? Do you see this assignment affecting anyone or anything else? Do you want it to? ... Again, and as always, do not just answer those questions--use them to prompt your own reflective thinking and make clear your purpose in completing the assignment. This should be organized, mechanically sound, thoughtful, and interesting! (Appendix H)

The Intention Statements aimed to initiate and formalize the ideation and planning stage of the writing process for students. Once they completed this assignment, students were asked to begin drafting their essays. The first draft that students submitted for a grade was a partial draft (usually half the length of the required final wordcount) that students took to a mandatory conference with their instructor. Students were required to type two specific discussion questions on their draft that would guide the conference and address conflicts that students may have encountered in the drafting process. The second draft was a complete and correctly formatted draft that students shared with two of their peers for Peer Review. Students submitted both drafts, along with completed peer reviews, with their final draft.

In the pilot sections that I taught, students were also required to complete two Revision Reflection assignments for each of the first three essays after making critical revisions to their essay drafts. The first Revision Reflection was completed after students met with the instructor and made edits to their initial draft, and the second Revision Reflection was completed after students received peer feedback on complete, revised drafts during Peer Review workshops. Revision Reflection assignments asked students to describe in detail the revisions that they made

to their drafts. For example, the prompt for the Revision Reflection assignment after the Peer Review Workshops suggested to students that “once you've revised your draft a second time based on feedback from your peers, describe that revision process. What feedback was especially helpful? What suggestions did you implement, and what suggestions did you ignore? Why did you make these choices?” (Appendix I). These assignments were approximately two hundred words, or one paragraph, and students were required to submit their Revision Reflections, along with the draft that they based each assignment on, with their final essay. Thus, for each of the first three major writing assignments, students submitted an Intention Statement, Partial Draft, Revision Reflection #1, Complete Draft, Peer Review Comments, Revision Reflection #2, and their Final Draft. The purpose in having students present their final essays with so many supporting documents was to encourage students to reflect on writing as a process rather than just a final product, much as Emig emphasized as a value in her 1980's study. Finally, in both sections that I taught of the pilot class, students responded to prompts for various other homework assignments that are utilized in this study (Appendix J).

#### *4.3—Analysis of Rhetorical Metacognition*

There seems to be evidence that the two case study students entered the course with some level of rhetorical metacognition that noticeably increased through the community ethnography writing course. I have most clearly observed this development in the Intention Statements and Revision Reflections; therefore, these assignments, along with the initial interviews and final writing assignments, will be the principal texts that I evaluate in this section.

The first depiction of rhetorical metacognition that students demonstrated was in their initial interview. I asked each student to describe how she thought she performed academically and as a writer. Kate felt that she was a strong writer and credited her capabilities to the fact that

her mom was a high school English teacher. She acknowledged, however, that she often lacked confidence in her own work, explaining, “I second-guess myself a lot” (Kate Interview 1). Perhaps because of this lack of confidence, she set an overt personal goal of rhetorical metacognition (though she did not use that term). At the beginning of the semester, I asked Kate what would make this course successful for her, and, among other things, she said that she hoped “to become more aware of myself as a writer” (Kate Interview 1). Note that she didn’t simply hope to become a better writer. She hoped to *become more aware* of herself as a writer. She also hoped to become better at observing people and situations around her, and she thought this would help her improve as a writer as well. In reference to becoming a better observer, Kate said, “I think that will help my writing become stronger because whenever I go further and do more research projects I’ll have a better formatting of what I can do and a better understanding of my skills as a writer” (Kate Interview 1). Here again Kate emphasized the importance of rhetorical metacognition. She understood that becoming a better writer required her to *understand* the writerly tools she possessed and the rhetorical choices she made.

Amy, like Kate, hoped that the course would help her improve as a writer, but she too understood that rhetorical metacognition was inherent in that process. Regarding her own academic abilities, Amy gave herself an eight out of ten, explaining, “I’m really good at paying attention and I understand things, and generally I don’t have to ask a lot of questions because generally I understand and know what I’m going to do, so I can just clue into everything” (Amy Interview 1). Regarding writing in particular, however, she acknowledged that “writing has and hasn’t been one of my strong suits over my academic career,” yet she hoped “to become a more precise and critical writer” (Amy WA#1 Intention Statement). She acknowledged that the individualization was inherent in the learning process, explaining that “everyone has their own

way of doing things such as reading, studying, test taking, et cetera.” Over the course of the semester, she hoped to “evolve intellectually as a student and critically as a writer” (Amy WA#1 Intention Statement). She explained that “to evolve as a student, I hope to learn more than just the things I learn from research or everyday conversation,” suggesting that she already sees her academic development as something that extends beyond the classroom. These statements suggest an awareness not only of her own ability but also of the areas she should focus on in order to improve.

Each student’s initial assessment of her respective strengths and weaknesses as a writer proved to be surprisingly correct, demonstrating that each was already practicing rhetorical metacognition upon beginning the course. Amy’s confidence in her own ability to understand and accomplish tasks was confirmed throughout the semester, both in her own reflections and in her successfulness at completing tasks, and she did, in fact, earn an “A” on every single major writing assignment and in the class. For example, reflecting on her revision process for Writing Assignment #1, Amy stated, “After our conference this week, I was fully aware of what I really needed to communicate in my paper to my readers” (Amy WA#1 Revision Reflection 1). She then laid out a clear outline of what, specifically, she changed in order to make her topic more clear and communicated in an appropriate manner to her identified audience. This trend continued in her reflections throughout the semester: Amy regularly made statements such as “To be a good writer, I am going to focus on clarity, structure, understandable conclusions, and eliminating useless or not needed information that could be confusing” (Amy WA#3 Intention Statement). These statements demonstrate that she had a goal (“to be a good writer”), a plan (“I am going to”), an awareness of audience (“could be confusing” to her readers), and a rhetorical skill set to utilize (“clarity, structure, understandable conclusion”). The language Amy used

mirrors the confidence she had the ability to understand expectations and apply knowledge: her reflections were marked with statements such as “I will have a specific order and structure,” “I will be careful of useless information,” and “scholarly sources will make my work more serious and factual, which in turn will make me, as an author, more credible” (Amy WA#3 Intention Statement). All of these statements demonstrate that Amy had a multi-tiered understanding of the effects that different rhetorical choices had on her audience and purpose (Amy WA#3 Intention Statement).

Kate was also correct in her early self-analysis: she realized at the beginning of the semester that whenever she underperformed, it was because she second-guessed herself, and this insecurity was repeatedly reflected in her writings throughout the semester (Amy Interview 1). She struggled with understanding the assignments: for example, each essay required a fairly straightforward “Methodology” section in which students systematically outlined their methods of collecting and analyzing research, but by the second round of revisions on WA#2, after pointed feedback from the instructor and her peers, she noted, “I still feel as if I do not have a full grasp of it” (Kate WA#2 Revision Reflection 2). Whereas Amy made declarative statements about what she would do, Kate wrestled with her ability to do what she knew was needed to produce her desired outcome. Instead of using statements such as “I will” and “I know” to describe how she will revise her writing, she used language such as “I hope,” “I think,” “I tried,” and “I feel,” which seemed to demonstrate the second-guessing tendency that she noted at the beginning of the semester. She seemed unable to do what she knew was necessary to make her writing more effective. For example, she acknowledged that a draft was “exponentially longer than I wanted it to be,” despite the fact that “there were still things that needed to be added” (Kate WA#1 Revision Reflection). After she trimmed down and added the needed content, she

still “got more than what I had started with” (Kate WA#1 Revision Reflection). Still, these acknowledgements reflect rhetorical metacognition: she understood that she did not yet have the ability to write with perspicuity and clarity, and though she perhaps did not yet have the critical skills to write clearly, she was at least somewhat aware of that deficit and aware what she needed to do in order to be a more effective writer. This awareness, or rhetorical metacognition, gave Kate a tangible goal to work on.

Despite having different levels of confidence at the beginning of the semester, both students clearly developed more authority in their own writing and revising processes throughout the semester. For example, after reflecting on peer review feedback, both students made conscious choices to accept or reject revision suggestions and provided a rationale for those choices. In the first Writing Assignment, Amy noted that she ignored one suggestion because she didn’t understand it and accepted all the other suggestions. Her reflection was vague: she said that “the feedback was helpful,” “enlightening,” and “overall, a great aid in cleaning up my final draft” (Amy WA#1 Revision Reflection 2). As the semester progressed, she became more judicious and detailed in rationalizing her revision choices and eventually relied on revision strategies she had learned over the course of the semester more than on feedback from others. In the second essay, she “began revising [her] paper...by rereading it aloud” (Amy WA#2 Revision Reflection 2), which was a strategy that she found useful in the first writing assignment. She provided a rationale for accepting certain suggestions and rejecting others: for example, she noted that one of her peers “had recommended that I not explain the definition of folklore, but it is crucial to my paper for my folklores to be represented” (Amy WA#2 Revision Reflection 2). Amy not only made independent choices, she was also able to explain and defend those choices. She had confidence in herself as a reviewer and also determined and applied

revision strategies that she'd found helpful before.

It is important to note that for Amy, much of her authority as a writer seemed to develop from a clear sense of audience and purpose made possible by her subject choice. She picked a community that was unfamiliar to her (the International Students and Scholars organization) and, fueled early on by sincere interest and discovery, quickly posited herself as an informed and credible source on the subject. Her chosen audience was always people who, like her, had little to no exposure to different cultures, and everything that she learned about her community was something she hoped to share with others. At the beginning of the semester, she stated, "I'm hoping I can read this to my dad and other people too and they can be like 'oh my god' and really learn something" (Amy Interview 1). Amy entered the course with a very tangible sense of audience (her dad and people like her who had limited intercultural exposure) and purpose (to learn and have her perceptions challenged). This sense guided and clarified her revision processes.

Eventually, Kate seemed to develop authorial confidence even more markedly than Amy did. By the third writing assignment, her Revision Reflection stated, "I decided that I was going to completely change my thesis...I understood that I was going too broad and needed to narrow down" (Kate WA#3 Revision Reflection 1). She "decided," taking responsibility for her rhetorical decisions, and she "understood" what she needed to do. This statement demonstrates not only her confidence in her ability to accomplish the task but also her awareness of her development as a writer.

Even her inability to grasp the Methodology section demonstrated a facet of rhetorical metacognition: Kate was aware of an expectation and aware of her own lack of skills to fulfil that expectation. Her writing seemed to improve in large part because of this awareness and

intentionality. By her third writing assignment, Kate noted her own progress on understanding and effectively writing her Methodology section. She said, “I fixed my methodology and I am finally confident in my understanding with methodology. I have been struggling with that since we’ve started writing, but I feel pretty confident in it now” (Kate WA#3 Revision Reflection 1). Comparing Kate’s first and third methodology sections confirmed her shift in understanding and ability. Her first methodology section read as follows:

When I was observing this community, I sat in my Intro to Theatre classroom to get best results. My intro class is filled with thirty students who make up my freshmen department and I will work with these students for the next four years. I will sit in the center of the room, and I will just watch the students and see what they do. I’ve mostly been writing in my notebook because I have not figured out how to record on my computer yet. That being said, the easiest way for me to observe the collaboration is to observe the people I’ll be working with for the rest of my college career. (Kate WA#1)

In this sample, Kate’s writing indicated her confusion: she switched between tenses and seemed unable to distinguish between what she had done and what she would do, and her writing was very casual (“I’ve mostly been writing in my notebook...”). However, the methodology section of Kate’s third paper showed some marked improvements. She wrote,

When conducting my methodology, I took thorough notes in my field notebook. I gave out a survey to ninth graders and freshmen as well as found academic sources for examples. Since we’ve started observing our communities, I have been observing my Theatre class in the Graduate Building in room 113. I have also conducted interviews with Joe Millet, the head of Stage Management at the University of Arkansas Theatre, and Morgan Hicks, head of Directing at the University of Arkansas and founding member of Theatresquared. (Kate WA#3)

Here, Kate wrote with much more precision and clarity. She described to her reader how, when, and where she collected data (notes in her field notebook, survey, observations, academic sources, and interviews). She also provided brief biographical information of her interviewees so that her reader understood why she chose to interview those individuals. Kate was also describing what she had done, not what she might do or is considering doing. The second sample

demonstrates much more writerly control and clarity.

As the semester progressed, both students continued to articulate an awareness of their own rhetorical strengths and choices. They also developed confidence in their authority as writers to make rhetorical choices based on their growing understanding of audience and purpose. This development of rhetorical metacognition was ultimately evident in the final drafts of their writing assignments. Amy noted, “In the beginning of this course...I felt as though I wasn’t a good writer and that I wasn’t capable of formatting the different kind of writing assignments correctly. Over the course of the semester though, I came to realize that I am a good writer. I make ideas clear, write with a purpose, and format a paper well” (Amy WA#4). She also proudly reflected on all the new things she had done, such as conduct a professional interview, create a blog, put together a portfolio, write an analysis, use a field notebook, and conduct a survey (Amy WA#4). Utilizing these new tools reinforced Amy’s confidence in her ability to rise to the task at hand, and her interest in her community gave her a sense of authority over the content of her compositions.

Amy’s final draft of her second essay demonstrated her authorial development. In Amy’s Folklore Analysis, she understood what the assignment was asking of her, but she didn’t feel that the definition of folklore that was provided in the supplemental handout worked for her particular community. The International Students and Scholars (ISS) organization represented myriad other cultures and communities, each with its own history and folklores. Aware of the constraints that her particular community presented, Amy chose to broaden the definition of folklore. I will note here that as her instructor, I agreed with Amy that finding a folklore in a community that made a point of celebrating and sharing the different traditions of its members was indeed challenging. Her proposal to broaden the definition of folklore for this assignment

was approved by me after discussion and research. Her final draft states, “The term ‘folklore’ isn’t used often because its definition isn’t flexible enough” and so to mitigate these limitations, she concluded that the folklore of the International Scholars club “was the expectation of openness and concept of humility” (Amy WA#2). She went on to depict how these expectations of openness and humility, though not traditional “folklores” such as a story, chant, or traditional gesture, are represented in various capacities throughout the organization. It could be argued that Amy missed the point of the assignment or failed to find a folklore for her community and instead wrote about the defining values of said community; regardless, she demonstrated confidence and ownership in this writing assignment, and if she did not respond to the prompt as expected, she nevertheless did so intentionally and carefully.

Kate became a more adaptable and aware writer as the semester progressed. For the first two major writing assignments, she initially sought to prove or confirm a theory that she had about her community rather than reflect and report on objective findings. For example, at the beginning of the semester, before she had performed any observations or collected any research, she had a “pretty good idea as to what I’m going to write about” for her Observation Report (Kate Intention Statement WA#1). This statement showed that Kate was not able to understand the purpose of the assignment, which was to make and reflect on observations and then report on key findings. If her report was based on her research, it should have been impossible for her to have a good idea what she was writing about before she had made any observations. This predetermined stance suggested that Kate struggled to be an objective observer and instead was relying on a similar experience as a former member of a related community. Though assumptions about research findings were problematic for Kate in her first two major writing assignments, she became increasingly aware of the posture of discovery rather verification that

primary research aimed to facilitate. After meeting with the instructor for a conference, she realized that the Observation Report “wasn’t really an argument paper...but a paper that has observations and conclusions drawn from those observations”; therefore, “my main point completely changed” (Kate Intention Statement WA#1).

Kate continued to struggle with arguing rather than researching; however, she became increasingly aware of her own propensities to do so in situations where an argumentative posture was not required, and this awareness made her better able to address those situations. Regarding Writing Assignment #3, the Ethnographic Account, Kate noted, “To become a good writer, I would like to focus on not drawing to a main point...I am hoping that a broader topic will allow me to just focus on the research instead of having an idea that I have an opinion over,” and she was aware that “I am such an argumentative writer. The writing draws to a point from thin air” (Kate Intention Statement WA#3). The difference between Kate’s first and third essay was not necessarily that her proclivity to argue based on opinion rather than supporting facts had waned, but rather that she could easily identify and address that tendency. That awareness persisted in the intention statement for her fourth writing assignment. She again noted, “I need to stop referencing back to my own experience...I need to start thinking more as a researcher...The more research I have the better writer I will be” (Kate Intention Statement WA#4). Kate developed a plan for addressing this issue, which was to focus on her audience, which was two classes of high school students. She concluded that “because I have a focus group [audience], my observation should help me infer more than pinpoint a target” (Kate Intention Statement WA#4). Kate shifted her focus from herself, or observing and writing to prove some theories about her community that would help her understand and “fit in” with that community, to others, or observing and writing to expertly inform an interested audience of findings that would be

pertinent to them. This shift demonstrates the interrelatedness of rhetorical and social metacognition: Kate's increased awareness of and engagement with other social groups gave her writing more clarity and purpose, which she was clearly aware of.

In her third writing assignment, Kate did indeed appear to draw conclusions from her research rather than her own experiences. For example, she incorporated survey findings into her presentation and shaped the presentation based on those findings. She explained, "From the survey, I noticed that seventy-three percent of you thought that arts based classes will help in your education while only sixty-three percent of you would do something to save them," and she utilized charts and graphs to explore the usefulness of arts-based classes. While she still relied on her own experience to some extent (there was a slide in her presentation titled "My Time in Theatre"), Kate's final presentation was fairly structured and interactive, and her thesis was supported by various forms of research rather than her own preconceived opinion.

Through the pilot class, both students developed different levels of rhetorical metacognition. They became more acutely aware of tendencies that were barriers to effective communication. That awareness prompted action: each student made a plan, which was reflected in their intention statements, to address those propensities, and they both improved in writing more clearly and precisely. As I will explore in Chapter 6, by the end of the semester, both students were able to describe both surface-level tendencies and content-level tendencies that they had as writers. Not only that, they were also able to articulate where they had struggled over the course of the semester and how, through that struggle in writing, they gained confidence in their abilities as writers and researchers.

#### *4.4—Analysis of Social Metacognition*

In order to understand how and where social metacognition occurred in the pilot course, I will first explain the community choice each student made and her rationale for choosing that respective community.

Kate chose to observe the University of Arkansas theatre community. Though, as a freshman, she was new to the University theatre community in particular, she had actively participated in theatre since childhood and was a theatre major. She chose the theatre community as her ethnographic focus because she had ready access to it, a great passion for it, and a professional interest in theatre as her future vocation. She repeatedly referred to the theatre community in general as her “family” but also frequently expressed the normal freshman concern of her place in the university. She acknowledged that “the biggest thing I’m worried about is finding where I fit in. Being a freshman and being a commuter, I wonder where I’ll belong” (Kate Interview 1). This concern suggests that part of her motivation in choosing the theatre community could well have been to become more connected to the University and to find a new “family” at school.

Inversely, Amy chose to observe a community that was completely foreign to her: International Students and Scholars. She noted that since she was from a small town in central Arkansas, she had little to no exposure to people from other cultures/countries; therefore she chose this group because of “all the possible things to learn from a variety of people, which can be so enlightening” (Amy Interview 1). She repeatedly used the term “openmindedness” in expressing her intentions for observing this community, but she also noted that it is a group that she is very much an outsider of. Kate felt that she knew how to be a member of her community very well, whereas Amy had never interacted with her community before. Though Amy, like

Kate, was a commuter student and a freshman, Amy seemed less concerned with finding her place in the University and more concerned with having her worldview expanded. In this sense, the two students had almost opposite motivations in their community selections: one wanted to replicate a sense of belonging that she had found in her local high school theatre community, and the other wanted to expand her ideas and experiences beyond those of her community of origin.

Despite having differing objectives for selecting their respective communities, both students were very aware that, as freshmen, they would be experiencing significant changes, and they both wanted to take the opportunity to reexamine what they knew or understood from their previous environments. Kate noted that “because I am starting my college life there will be changes” and “because I am becoming an adult with choices, I must step away from my upbringing. This is a time for me to realize who I am as a person” (Kate Homework 1, Appendix J). In considering the potential benefits or challenges of this course in particular, Amy noted, “Over the course of this writing project I hope to...broaden my thought spectrum by being openminded as a learner and an individual. Individually, I want to learn as much as possible” (Amy Homework 2, Appendix J). Both Amy and Kate saw college and this course as an opportunity to consider and question perceptions that had become familiar to them in relation to their new environment.

However, Amy’s intentions in this course extended beyond personal development: she also wanted to impact other people. She said, “I want to influence people to try out being open-minded, to understand their own ignorance” (Amy Interview 1). She also wanted “to be able to influence people to think beyond themselves and their own culture to learn about others” (Amy WA#1 Intention Statement). Kate noted that influencing other people could be an outcome of the course, but her primary goal was individual change. In reference to her folklore analysis, she

stated, “I may not change the views of others, but I may be able to change my own views and learn more about the community that I love” (Kate WA#2 Intention Statement). Inversely, writing about the same assignment, Amy said, “I think that the folklore that I have learned and will write about will affect more people than just me” (Amy WA#2 Intention Statement). The confidence with which each student approached the course is again evident in and informs what they hope to get out of their writing assignments.

Each student’s development of social metacognition could be seen in her major writing assignments. For the first assignment, which was the Observation Report, Amy described her first observation and key impressions that stood out to her. In her final draft, she described being surprised that the other students looked somewhat normal, and then she found herself asking, “What makes my sense of normality so superior? What actually is the definition of ‘normal?’” (Amy WA#1). She explained the process of being aware of others around her and then being aware of her own perceptions of others. That awareness led Amy to question her own perceptions of, and accepted definition for, the concept of “normal.” She wondered, “What makes me normal and these people not?” which made her uncomfortable (Amy WA#1). As the only American student at that first meeting, she admitted, “I honestly felt like a fish out of water, and not them. Could an American really be the odd man out?” (Amy WA#1). Amy’s process of noticing, identifying, and questioning her accepted perceptions could be an indicator of her developing social metacognition.

Kate’s Observation Report did not contain any epiphanies like Amy’s. Kate relied heavily on her own experience with the theatre community and even started out her essay with some of the lexis. “Blocking, set, places, emotion. When building a play, a director needs a few branches of theatre to work with: actors and technicians” (Kate WA #1). It was unclear from her

essay what information came from her observations and what she derived from her own past experience and familiarity with theatre, and this vagueness indicated that she had difficulty objectively observing the community. Her main findings involved the communication within the community. She noted that her theatre class was unable to recite the alphabet together, that some people spoke out more than others, and that there was a lot of misunderstanding between actors and technicians. This focus on communication and conflict within the community reflected Kate's process of place-finding. She concluded, "I want to know why it's so hard to communicate to each other" (Kate WA #1), and she hoped that knowledge would help her better connect with the theatre community at the University. She was aware of her own desire to "fit in" but did not have the access that she wanted. Still, Kate's perception of herself in relation to her community and her ability to question communication within her community could be indicators of social metacognition.

Both students' third writing assignment proved to be a strong indicator of their progression in developing social metacognition. The Ethnographic Account asked them to make multi-tiered socially cognitive considerations: they had to consider what they wanted to represent about their chosen community from their research; they had to consider who this information would be useful and pertinent to; and they had to consider the most effective means to share that particular information with that particular audience. Kate chose to share about the significance of exposure to other cultures, and she specifically wanted to reach other students from her former high school in a small Arkansas town. She stated, "The best and most efficient way to have my ethnography shared is by making it a blog post," and she planned to share it by posting to her high school's Facebook page (with the principal's permission) and sharing the link with the Arkansas Newswire (Amy WA#3 Intention Statement). Her awareness of audience was evident

in the tone that her blog content took. Her home page message read:

Welcome! My name is [Amy], the author of this blog. Of course I wasn't solely inspired to create this blog – each of the posts to this page will be reviewed by my peers and graded by my instructor. This blog is dedicated to the people, and especially the students, of my hometown of \_\_\_\_\_, Arkansas. As an alumni of \_\_\_\_\_ High School, I understand many of the ups and downs of education that the area gives for future college students. Whether we admit it or not, the International Students and Scholars organization and international students are quite unfamiliar to the students of \_\_\_\_\_. (Amy WA#3)

Amy's writing took on a friendly and casual tone in her blog because her main audience was high school students (though she acknowledged that her peers and instructor would review the material too). Her posts continued to keep her audience in mind, and though the blog had some requisite academic features, such as a Works Cited page and a Methodology section, she wrote to high school students. Interestingly, her own writing mirrored the openness she hoped to facilitate. For example, in the post titled "Don't Give In To the Limitations," Amy wrote,

\_\_\_\_\_ has its own culture that many don't realize because they are accustomed to it. Which isn't a negative thing, it can just be a limiting one. Facing differences is just one of the many ways to gain more knowledge and varying perspectives. There are so many options outside of what you think is "normal" or comfortable for you. Take everything for what it is. Discover the world through someone else's eyes, and then strive for your own informed experience. Develop a sense of openness and define your own normality – it can take you places you've never dreamed of. (Amy WA #3)

Amy was able to encourage other students to expose themselves to new experiences without polarizing the options: she informed her readers that their shared hometown has its own distinct culture and then she assured them that this experience of a unique culture was not "necessarily a bad thing" before encouraging open mindedness (Amy WA#3). She demonstrated sensitivity towards her subject by representing the community respectfully, and she also demonstrated sensitivity to her audience by simultaneously validating and challenging accepted perceptions. Most significantly, Amy was aware of her role in each of the two communities. Her blog presented information about, and empathy for, each community but also depicted her own place

in each community—roles which changed with proximity and experience.

Like Kate's, Amy's portfolio and Reflection Essay expressed perceptions of how the pilot course influenced her metacognitively. Kate, in reflecting on her semester, acknowledged that "it never did cease to fail that observing this community, I felt cut off from my family [the University theatre community] more than once this semester" (Kate WA#4). In fact, she confessed that her feeling of outsider-ness was "not only because I was mostly an observer, but because I was scared to dive with in with my family. I couldn't really talk to my classmates and I assumed everyone disliked me" (Kate WA#4). She further reflected, however, that "now at the end of the semester, I have made friends in my theatre community that understand me and I understand them" (Kate WA#4). Interestingly, however, finally feeling a connection to her community did not result in reinforced membership: Kate's reflection Essay went on to read, "It makes me a little sad that this will be one of the last projects I do with the community. After my final exam on Wednesday, December 14, I will officially be a Political Science major" (Kate WA#4). She went on to explain:

This semester, I have gained perspective of myself and what I want to do with my life. I love theatre with every part of my being, but it's not my true calling in life. I want to help people more than anything, so it is time for me to change from being so involved in theatre and start working towards being a lawyer. Now, I did not lose my love for theatre because of this project, it was actually fueled....this assignment has done much more for me than just teach me about the world I have been living in. This assignment has opened up many doors for me: breaking me out of my shell a bit, allowing me to find a new dream, and even helping quietly observe people now. It's been fun watching not only my theatre family grow, but myself grow with them. (Kate WA#4)

Kate gained perspective of not only herself and her community, but of what her relationship to that community was and of what her role was with that community. Her awareness motivated her to action: she changed majors (very dramatically, I might add) because though she still loved theatre "with every part of [her] being," she realized that her passion from theatre was separate

from what she wanted to do vocationally. She, like Amy, was able to appreciate and respect the community that she came from while posturing herself to become a member of a new community.

Both Kate and Amy developed a strong sense of social metacognition through the pilot course. They were compelled to consider their respective communities of origin in order to understand their preconceptions about the communities that they chose to observe. They considered their placement within their observed communities and reflected on experiences and perspectives that affected their roles as participants. In writing about their communities, they considered how others perceived their communities and how to represent those communities to an uninformed audience.

#### *4.5—Stakeholder Conclusions*

Broadly speaking, all of the stakeholders that I interviewed recommended adopting the pilot course as the standard Composition I course at the University of Arkansas. That being said, each stakeholder presented different features that they thought were particularly successful and effective as well as recommendations for improving the course in the future. Any reservations expressed in individual interviews reflected concerns about the broader stakeholder group which that individual represented; instructors had concerns about the teachability of this course for other instructors; administrators had concerns about accreditation and the approval of this course university-wide; students had concerns about what would be useful to other students in the future. This concluding section will utilize the final interviews to examine the respective successes, concerns, and recommendations of each stakeholder group, as well as present recommendations based on my own research and experience with the pilot course.

#### 4.5.1—Students

At the beginning of the semester, Amy expressed concern about the ethnographic approach overshadowing what she termed “the English part” of the pilot course (Amy Interview 1). In her final interview, she addressed that concern and noted, “In the beginning...I was afraid we’d be focusing more on the ethnography part of it, but now I feel really comfortable that I actually learned more English than I thought I did” (Amy Interview 2). When I asked her how she thought that occurred, she credited the new and different types of assignments and the tasks associated with primary research that were unfamiliar to her. Amy noted that “I’ve never conducted an interview, I’ve never created a portfolio, I’ve never done a folklore analysis--I’ve never done any of this but the research paper, so I feel like I’m a lot more prepared for future things that they throw at me because I’ve done four different things in one semester” (Amy Interview 2). The non-traditional nature of the assignments and the research made her realize that her scholarly abilities were not contingent on her ability to write just the research paper. Rather, because she performed so many new scholarly activities in the pilot course, she felt confident in her ability to handle whatever else may be “thrown” at her in the future. At the beginning of the semester, she noted that her confidence in her writing ability waxed and waned--she was good at some things but not at others; however, by the end of the semester, she felt confident in her ability to adapt to any type of writing that was asked of her because she had, in the course of the semester, succeeded in writing and researching in so many new forms. In fact, at the end of the semester Amy was considering changing her major from Business to Criminal Justice and Pre-Law, and she noted that this consideration “has a lot to do with me being more confident in my writing and being able to do the research. I feel like I’m kinda prepared for a little bit of everything, because I know that I can handle it, because I did that this semester. I feel like it’s

really changed the way I view myself as a writer and in terms of setting goals for myself for the future” (Amy Interview 2). Again, she clearly noted that the combination of utilizing new writing forms and conducting original research was what reinforced her confidence as a writer and compelled her to reexamine her vocational direction. She became more aware of herself and of herself in relation to the world around her, and that awareness prompted personal reevaluation.

When reflecting on what impacted them most over the course of the semester, both students indicated that the Folklore Analysis was a turning point for them. In referencing this assignment, however, they each specifically noted how important the interview aspect was in making them feel more connected to, and informed about, their respective communities. Amy noted, “When I was doing the folklore analysis for this class, he [my interviewee] talked a lot about openness... he showed me his side, because he traveled a lot teaching, and then came back here, so now I’ve seen both sides; how he wanted to be there and have them affect him and how he wanted to be here and affect them” (Amy Interview 2). The “sides” Amy referred to were the interviewee’s two experiences of being an outsider in another country and then working to make international students feel welcome in the United States. For Amy, then, seeing a member of the International Student and Scholar community share about his own experience in becoming a member of that community provided a bridge of understanding and access to her that was a turning point for her in engaging with that community.

Kate was similarly influenced by the interview aspect of her folklore analysis. She even referenced it in her final writing assignment, noting that “Interviews were particularly hard because I didn’t know [my two interviewees], but they were more than willing to help me to the best of their abilities. My ethnographic research encouraged my idea that theatre isn’t just for people who want to be creatively outspoken, but for people who are introverted minds as well”

(Kate WA#4). Though, as Kate noted, conducting interviews challenged her as an introvert, the process also helped her feel more welcomed to and understand her place in her community. She actually referenced the two interviewees in her third assignment as well, and they clearly shaped her level of comfort and depth of experience with her community.

Both students provided feedback about the course texts. Neither student found any of the textbooks to be particularly helpful. They noted that rather than using the *Saint Martin's Handbook*, they looked things up online. They both admitted that they only used the handbook when the instructor required them to bring it to class and use it in class. In terms of texts that could prove helpful, the students wished they could have seen sample student essays of the assignments that they were asked to complete, because they did not have a clear concept of what was being asked of them. Kate noted that even the peer review workshops were not particularly helpful in providing examples of other student writing, because “everyone was doing something different” (Kate Interview 2). She described a continual insecurity in composing the assignments, explaining that “most of the time I was like, ‘I hope this is right! It looks right but I could just fail this’” (Kate Interview 2). For Kate, even the essay prompts didn’t provide enough structure because she had never written anything similar to most of the assignments in this class.

Kate and Amy noted that the extra conferences mitigated the potential frustration of unclear assignment prompts, because they had the opportunity to discuss their work up to that point (students were required to bring partial drafts to each of their conferences) and receive clarification and redirection if their work was not fulfilling the assignment requirements. For example, Amy’s Revision Reflection after a conference for WA#2 described in detail what she added/alterd based on instructor feedback:

I fixed grammatical errors and sentences that seemed overdone or unfinished...I added more content to expand and explain more on my folklores. I added

information of the history, origin, how it is practiced, potential conflicts, and the various levels that these folklores are valued. I also added information about how these folklores can vary between different people and by the people in the community. My methodology was completely absent in my previous draft, so I added in one underneath my introduction. In my introduction I included more of my purpose of exploring the concepts of folklore. I also completely changed my conclusion so that it would reflect on the values of the community and how the folklores apply. (Amy WA#2 Revision Reflection 1)

The conference provided Amy with major content redirection (completely changing her conclusion and including a methodology section), surface-level revisions (altering sentence length and structure), and clarifying material (information about the history, variations, and conflicts of the folklore). Though all of these concerns were addressed in the prompt, having a face-to-face meeting with the instructor highlighted components of the assignment that had been absent and equipped Amy with a better understanding of what was being asked of her. Because conferences required some degree of preparation and reflection and articulation on the student's part, they truly facilitated rhetorical metacognition, which Amy described in referring to her awareness of content, structure, and editing tools.

The concluding portfolio assignment was a highlight to both students and was essential in their awareness of what they had accomplished. In looking back over her work, Kate said, "I wanted to cry. I looked at my first, second, and third assignments and was like, 'Oh wow'" (Kate Interview 2). Kate went on to explain that her sense of awe was because "there has been a constant change in my writing this semester...it [the final assignment] sounded like a college student's writing and not a high school student's writing" (Kate Interview 2). Similarly, Amy noted that through composing the portfolio,

I feel like I noticed a lot of the things that I was doing wrong...I had a lot of information that at one point I thought was important, but now when I write something and go back over it I can pick out the information that I don't really need. I have to make sure that I don't over-write on a topic...I explained it a lot but I didn't explore it enough. So now I'm thinking, 'How can I explore this topic?' So now I have more of an idea of going with a topic and getting in depth

with it more than just giving a definition of it. (Amy Interview 2)

Amy, like Kate, became aware of her tendencies and was confident in her ability to identify and address less-effective writing habits such as “over-writing” and prioritizing information. She was not concerned with meeting the minimum word count and was instead concerned with including only pertinent information. She also transitioned from explaining and defining to exploring and “getting in depth” in her writing, which demonstrated her shift from surface-level concerns to more substantial content-related concerns such as purpose and clarity.

The portfolio was significant to both students. Viewing their cumulative work over the course of the semester gave them a sense of accomplishment at the quantity of work they had done. The portfolio also gave them confidence in the quality of work they had done. Most significantly, Kate and Amy were able to see their development and progress as writers. Kate felt that she was writing like a college student, and she could trace how her writing had changed. It was also a point of rhetorical metacognition for them, because they noted specific ways that their writing developed. Their awareness of their development as writers gave them confidence as they positioned themselves for their future academic endeavors.

In addition to wanting more detailed prompts and/or other writing examples to refer to, Kate and Amy felt that the course could do a better job in helping students select their community. Kate suggested that the instructor “talk about what a community is more” because students needed to “take it more seriously” (Kate Interview 2). She admitted that she did not realize how much time she would be spending with her community and how involved the interactions would be. Though neither student regretted her selection, they noted that other students in their classes seemed to have a hard time with some of their respective communities. Amy suggested that the course provide “more preparation--we just made a list, discussed the list, and then picked one,” which she felt was insufficient preparation in light of the amount of

interaction with that community that the course required (Amy Interview 2).

#### 4.5.2—Instructors

Though the instructors generally had very different reactions to the pilot course, they both agreed that the course was successful but that some of that success may have been due to their experience and ability as instructors to identify and compensate for deficits in the course. Specifically, the instructors felt that the course did not lend itself to emphasizing the critical skills identified as goals of FYC, and over the course of the semester, they relied on their previous teaching experience to attend to these goals beyond the purview of the course. Both instructors thought that the course could be implemented once some key revisions were made to address these concerns.

Instructor A reflected that “the biggest goal I have is to teach them to abandon external organization forms; to abandon thinking about a paper as needing to have five paragraphs or have three subtopics. They need to start thinking critically and allow the research to start generating forms” (Instructor A Interview 2). In terms of this goal for FYC, the course was successful, because it did compel students to explore composition beyond external organization forms. She acknowledged, “It made them think critically, which they don’t tend to do, and it made them generate new data and analyze it, which is huge; regular comp I doesn’t ask them to do that” (Instructor A Interview 1). She also reiterated her sentiments from the beginning of the semester that “the goals of FYC are to get everyone onto a level playing field. Comp I is meant to get everyone up to the same level of writing, and that level of writing needs to be minimally proficient college writing” (Interview 2). Instructor A felt that this preparation did occur in the pilot course, and “it happened through the assignments; they learned about reporting, gathering

data, and analyzing it. They learned how...the report genre is formatted; that's huge. They learned about grammar from our comments, and they learned about organization" (Interview 2). Broadly speaking, Instructor A thought that the pilot course worked; however, she also felt that, to a large extent, the success that her two pilot sections had in meeting the goals of FYC was due to extra work on her part to ensure that the features of academic writing were addressed. She concluded, "It was successful--the way I ended up teaching it was successful--but I feel like it asked the teachers to do a ton of work to make it successful" (Instructor A Interview 2).

The extra work that Instructor A felt was required of her was in part due to the diversity of topics that each class represented. She noted of the individualized nature of the pilot course in particular, "The fact that everyone's projects were so idiosyncratic [made it] hard to have a Comp I class where I'm supposed to be teaching them the basics of college writing--it was just really hard to do that when they were all writing about different things in different ways" (Instructor A Interview 2). Instructor A referenced specific exercises that she had utilized in the traditional academic text-based Comp I course to teach skills and features of academic writing that could not work in the context of the pilot course due to the diversity of subjects. She provided examples of the difference between the two Composition I courses for her as an instructor, explaining that

Working with them on reading and analysis of texts and then building a paper out of their own analysis is key. That's really built into the current Comp I because the first paper has you identifying subtopics, all in the same source, and then identifying topic sentences and you're reading it together and you can show them and model the behavior. The second paper you're showing them how to synthesize sources where you're giving them the sources, and you can help them figure out what subtopics they might choose. All of that stuff is lost, gone, in the pilot. Because the reading together doesn't happen so you have to find other ways to teach them that, but it's more in conferencing, having them talk to their peers at their table and I come and talk to them. It's much more individualized, it's a lot harder, and the class is a lot worse off for it. Honestly, I'm the only one working in class. They'll be working for five minutes, and they've got to wait for me to

come around, and they just sit there and wait for me for the majority of the classes it feels like. (Instructor A Interview 2)

Instructor A further noted that it was difficult to teach students how to do secondary research as well, because “you’re not all researching the same topic. You had to teach each person individually, and some of them had topics where they couldn’t do library research, so they got out of Comp I without having to use the library! Others of them did use the library successfully” (Instructor A Interview 2). She noted that none of these issues were necessarily insurmountable, but she questioned the ability of a first-year T.A. to address the issues she encountered teaching the community ethnography writing course.

Instructor A had several suggestions for the revision of the course. Her main proposal was that the course be divided into two main units: the first unit would focus on more traditional and formal features of academic writing, and the second unit would utilize those skills in ethnography. She, like the students, felt that there was not enough structure at the beginning of the semester to help students make a good community selection, so she also suggested that instructors utilize the first half of the semester to prepare students for making a sustainable community choice. Specifically, she noticed that several of her students chose to observe communities from “back home” such as their senior high school class or cheer squad or their old church youth group. The effect was that this choice “kind of pulled them away from the campus and pulled them away from this new world back to a community they were no longer a part of,” which “kind of reinforced the existing community” (Instructor A Interview 2). Instructor A felt that allowing students to research a community that they were former members of undermined what she called the “social element” of the course, or the idea that the course “was meant to promote inclusivity and diversity and understanding by having students find a discourse community that they’re not a part of and learn to understand it” (Instructor A Interview 2). In this

statement, Instructor A affirmed that social metacognition was a goal of the course but that that goal was significantly undermined when students chose to research communities that they had recently been active insiders of.

In all of her reflections, Instructor A acknowledged that the newness of the course was a key factor in any discomfort that she and her students experienced. She noted that “part of the problem with the course was that none of the instructors had ever taught anything like this before,” which is, of course, inevitable in a pilot class (Instructor A Interview 2). She concluded that “the big thing I would like to see to make this course better would be more examples of community ethnographies - there weren’t any, so these kids were trying to emulate something that they don’t really understand and I don’t understand” (Instructor A Interview 2). Once students and instructors have a point of reference for the major writing assignments and concrete examples of features of successful and unsuccessful community choices, many of the inhibitions that Instructor A expressed may be addressed.

Instructor B was generally encouraged by the pilot course, and she immediately noted that “the students connected with the material more readily and more consistently throughout the semester. They seemed more interested in discussing their writing and discussing what they were working on. They seemed more interested in reading and engaging with the written feedback they received in order to improve on the next try” (Instructor B Interview 2). She felt that the course met several heretofore elusive goals that she had as an instructor, explaining that “getting to the end of this semester and hearing some of them casually talk about things like ‘audience’ or ‘rhetor’ as if they have a very clear understanding of how to apply those terms and what they mean—that’s a goal that I have going into every course but is something that I don’t often feel is achieved by the end” (Instructor B Interview 2).

Instructor B agreed with Instructor A's sentiment that the community ethnography course could be hard for first year T.A.'s to teach. But she also acknowledged that "more than likely, first-year teachers are going to have a hard time anyway, no matter what material they're teaching or curriculum they're using" (Instructor B Interview 2). However, Instructor B further suggested that "some of the trade-off that you get with the community ethnography pilot course might even make some things even easier, though of course it will present some new and different challenges. It might be easier to work with that curriculum as a first-time teacher or a first-year T.A." (Instructor B Interview 2). The "trade-off" that Instructor B referred to was the trend she observed in student engagement with the revision process. She explained that she always has a goal "to see students engaging with the written feedback they get—because that's one thing I put a lot of effort into giving them--individualized, descriptive, reader-response type feedback" (Instructor B Interview 2). The pilot course, she further explained, "was the first time I've had students come in and sit down, pull up their paper with feedback, and ask questions and talk about it" (Instructor B Interview 2). The interest and involvement that students showed in their own work was, she concluded, "largely because of the nature of the course" (Instructor B Interview 2). Specifically, Instructor B felt that allowing students to select their own subject really contributed to her goals as an instructor. She explained, "I want students to think of their writing as something malleable, that can be revised, and just as an ongoing process where you can double back and scaffold your understanding of yourself as a writer. That was another general goal that I usually have that I saw met in some different ways in this course. And I am inclined to say that subject has a lot to do with that" (Instructor B Interview 2).

Instructor B also had several recommendations for improving the course. She felt that students were not given enough context for the broadened expression of "text" and "community"

that the course facilitates, so she recommended that the course explore those ideas more deliberately. She explained,

From the beginning of the course when we are trying to help our students understand what a community is and what that means, we should emphasize more heavily the different modalities through which community is articulated and produced, so emphasizing that a community is spatial, a community relies on signs and symbols to create its meaning, a community relies on printed text, a community relies on sounds or smells. Which I think would maybe set them up to gather richer data. I would say that my students, by and large, were pretty focused on written stories that their community had or printed that their community used or just the people in that community as the primary sources of meaning and identity in that community, and I think that there's a lot more potential for locating that meaning in communities. So I think that if we emphasize some of those things or maybe provided multi-faceted definition of "community" for students at the beginning of the semester, they might have an easier time throughout the rest of the semester to scaffold their understanding of what a community is and what they're looking for. (Instructor B Interview 2)

Like Instructor A, Instructor B felt that students were not properly equipped to make sound decisions about what community to observe early in the semester, and she suggested foregrounding the concept of community much more in order to aid students in making a more informed and thoughtful decision. Along those lines, Instructor B said, "I would recommend there being more opportunities for and more emphasis on one-to-one engagement between student and instructor in the first couple weeks of this semester when communities are being chosen," and she also added, "I recommend that the instructors who are teaching that course should be told very clearly beforehand that they should be comfortable telling students, 'Because I care about your success in this course, I really recommend that you not research this community' and feel OK about saying that" (Instructor B Interview 1). In short, many of the challenges Instructor B saw students face was making poor community choices.

Instructor B had several suggestions that were specific to certain assignments or the sequencing of assignments. She felt that the time allotted for WA#1 (approximately 6 weeks) was too long and that students should be doing more writing during that time than the brief

Observation Report required. She suggested that “either the spacing of the assignments needs to be changed or we really need to emphasize that they need to be making observations and doing research consistently more than one time in the first few weeks of the semester” (Instructor B Interview 2). She, like the students, had a difficult time with WA#2, the Folklore Analysis. Instructor B recommended that “either the philosophy or wording of the Folklore Analysis should be revised, because that was really confusing for students, and a lot of them did not feel that they could find community folklore to write about, which put them at a disadvantage” (Instructor B Interview 2). She admitted, “I had to get kind of funky with how I defined that word for many of them, and that for me is not really honest to the assignment itself” (Instructor B Interview 2). Her final assignment revision suggestion had to do with the portfolio. She felt that it was a very beneficial assignment but that the prompt as it was given did not ask enough of students. She suggested that “it should be explicit in that assignment that if the portfolio is going to be retained, revision needs to be highly, highly emphasized, and maybe even things like the visual design of the portfolio need to be considered. I think that extra pieces of writing need to be added into that portfolio to go with what’s being compiled” (Instructor B Interview 2).

Of final note, Instructor B provided valuable insight on the concept of “text” in the context of the community ethnography writing course--both in how texts should be presented to students and how students should be expected to utilize and produce them. She suggested that the course provide more emphasis on “discussing what a text is and what that means, because I would also say that by and large (I say this because I did an activity with my students in the pilot course asking them what is a text, what does it look like, what does that mean) they all said that text was something print-based, unimodal, a book or whatever” (Instructor B Interview 2). Instructor B posits that the problem with this definition of “text” is that “we’re asking them to do

things that you usually don't do with printed texts, and I think that they're having a hard time understanding this multimodal approach within their communities." She proposed a solution that I will expand on in Section 6.4: multimodal composition. Instructor B stated,

Students should be able to have the chance to practice with designing and creating multimodal texts, and I think that particularly makes sense in the context of the pilot course, because so many of the texts they are working with in order to produce this finished product are multimodal. They're artifacts, people, spaces. I can imagine that probably for a first-year student it can be really challenging to take what you learn from those semiotic domains and put them onto a piece of printer paper in size 12 Times New Roman font. It's something that we don't, thus far, provide the opportunity in, because I think that even through touch, sight, sense, taste, acquiring more knowledge can't just be communicated through a traditional print essay, and how are we going to access that if we're not willing to expand how we define an essay or composition? (Instructor B Interview 2).

As mentioned, the question of multimodal composition will, among other questions, be explored in more detail at the end of this chapter.

### **4.5.3—Administrators**

The final stakeholder group that I will consider in this study is the Administrators; however, both administrators acknowledged that they couldn't properly ascertain the successfulness of the course without seeing research results and how the course equipped students later on in their academic careers. Still, the Administrators expressed general optimism about, and satisfaction with, what they had seen of the course at the end of the pilot classes. The Director echoed a main concern of Instructor A, noting that "it seems that the issue has been in sheer lack of experience with the curriculum...The instructors are still feeling their way through the assignments. They don't have a point of reference, they haven't seen student work in regards to those prompts before, so in terms of content, what students are turning in, they're still verifying if that's what the prompt called for" (Director Interview 2). However, this issue will be mitigated by the availability of student writing samples from the pilot courses and isn't perceived

as a grave concern.

The Director acknowledged multi-tiered concerns that are present in any curriculum change and may not be specific to the community ethnography course:

My final concern, as I'm always thinking about 1st year composition curriculum, is attending to the constituents, attending to the parties, the stakeholders if you will, that are impacted by the decisions that my program makes. I have to remain mindful of the Arkansas department of higher education's expectations, the certification/accreditation bodies that come and review our programs, and they want to make clear that we have clear learning objectives in our courses, that we are assessing our courses and meeting those objectives, and as a result, these decisions aren't made readily, easily, casually—they require considerable thought. They require considerable evaluation, and as I think about these things, I have to keep in mind the stakeholders, the students, and what happens to them whenever we switch or change curriculum. What happens to our instructors every time we change the vision for the program. What does this mean for accreditation if we are switching from one vision or approach to another. (Director Interview 2)

The Director, as well as the Curriculum Specialist, felt confident that not only will the new course meet the demands of accreditation, it will better serve the students and engage instructors. The Director explained, “This course has a better chance of teaching students how to carry their knowledge into different situations, and that's been one of the problems. We can teach our students how to write a very good summary paper, a very good synthesis paper, but then they're required to draw on those same skills in a different situation and it doesn't always occur to them that they are the same skills” (Director Interview 2). He concluded that the pilot course had the potential to do that.

The Curriculum Specialist shared the concerns of both instructors about the teachability of the course for more inexperienced T.A.s especially. His concern did not primarily lie in the ability of T.A.'s to effectively instruct but rather in the non-traditional nature of the course that would require adjustment on the part of both instructors and students. He explained,

The main thing I'm worried about now is how are we going to take this course in whatever its final version is and present it to teachers in a way that they can execute it. In some ways, it requires a more hands-off approach. In some ways,

the teacher is acting more as a very enlightened reader. In traditional Composition courses, the teacher is very much the expert. Even if the given paper assignment is over a text that is out of the teacher's field, the teacher is still more than likely get a mastery in that specific text more quickly than the student will. Here, the teacher has to be willing to accept his or her relative ignorance on the topic—we are so practiced at teaching our current course that it will be a little difficult. We'll have to start from the drawing board. (Curriculum Specialist Interview 2)

Still, even with those challenges in mind, both the Director and the Curriculum Specialist retained optimism about the ability to equip instructors to effectively teach the course and the value of the community ethnography approach in better equipping students with critical writing, reading, and analyzing skills needed in college.

The Curriculum Specialist, like Instructor B, felt that some features of academic writing were compromised in the pilot course. He explained that “given our excitement about letting students pursue their own interests and play with forms and audience and things like that, I think we sacrificed some of the more formal features of specifically academic writing” (Curriculum Specialist Interview 2). He noted that the situation was not insurmountable, but that in terms of course design, attending to concepts such as citation and documenting and referencing sources would be a focus in revising some of the content. Still, the Curriculum Specialist noted that he felt that the course emphasized “rhetorical concepts and some of the issues surrounding writing and rhetoric in general quite well, and I think that students got very good exposure to working with those concepts” (Curriculum Specialist Interview 2), and Instructor B's discovery about the fluidity with which her students discussed concepts such as audience and rhetors affirmed that notion.

The Curriculum Specialist noted that reemphasizing traditional academic features could challenge certain features of the course that worked very well. He was, like Instructor B, particularly encouraged by student engagement, but he noted that some of that engagement was due to the flexibility of subject and formatting, which, in turn, compromised some of the

emphasis on traditional academic writing. He explained,

I'd never seen this level of engagement across a class with the writing--I think students found a lot more confidence in themselves and there's a stronger voice to this writing, which we'll have to figure out a way to preserve, because I think that a lot of that was because they weren't writing the traditional academic essays, so we need to figure out a way to expose them to that genre, or to the genres more standard in academic writing without shutting down that voice. (Curriculum Specialist Interview 2)

Again, though important, the Administrators did not see those concerns as insurmountable. The Curriculum Specialist concluded that "I think the course in general works really well. I want to see some additional scaffolding, I want to see emphasis on things like citation, more academic prose while still allowing students the ability to choose their own forms and to really get their voice out there" (Curriculum Specialist Interview 2).

## **Chapter 5—Conclusions**

### *5.1—Limitations and Recommendations*

There are myriad limitations of this study. Though the case study approach is an effective tool for assessing individualized experiences, it is not an indicator of the overall effectiveness of the course, as it yields no quantifiable improvement on a majority of students' writing or learning. Also, the students I selected as case study participants were, as I have indicated, very open to being changed and challenged by the course. They were also both hard workers and high performers academically. As a result, they each had a generally positive experience in the course that a less motivated student may not have had. Perhaps most significantly, the students that I used in this study were students that I taught in pilot sections of my course. Because I, as the researcher, had overt goals of assessing and evaluating rhetorical and social metacognition, it is likely that those goals were more integral in my version of the course; therefore, my findings of the capacity for this course to develop social and rhetorical metacognition in students could be somewhat or largely due to specific assignments that I integrated into the course, such as the

Revision Reflections and the portfolio-style structure of each of the first three major writing assignments.

That being said, if it is the case that those components of my two sections of the pilot course helped students develop rhetorical metacognition in particular, I would recommend that similar activities be incorporated into the course structure as a whole. In the cases of the two case study students, their ability to identify and discuss elements of their own writing ultimately gave them confidence in themselves as writers and in their future academic endeavors. They were asked to identify changes they made to their major writing assignments and detail how they planned to be more effective writers. In doing so, they were able to discuss what helped them revise their drafts, and these tools will be useful to students in the future.

One additional recommendation that I wish to make before this course is adopted and implemented is that one of major print-based writing assignments become a mandatory multimodal composition instead. This recommendation is based on the compatibility of the inherent learning features of multimodal composition with the stated goals of a community ethnography writing course. I would also emphasize the importance of publication as a means to more effectively facilitate students' understanding of audience and purpose.

As the course currently stands, WA#3, the Ethnographic Account, is an ideal assignment to be composed multimodally and published to a real audience based on a clear purpose identified by the student. I have redesigned this assignment as such and actually implemented some aspects of the revised assignment into the pilot course as I taught it this fall. In implementing this assignment revision within the framework of the specific course objectives and the broadly understood aims of transfer of a FYC, I rely on findings from Wardle's longitudinal study on transfer to help frame tenants an engaging, successful, *transferable*

assignment that engages students in both social and rhetorical metacognitive practices. Those findings are:

- The assignment does not have one “right” answer but is a truly engaging rhetorical problem; the assignment “seems authentic” to the student.
- The prompt for the writing assignment is thought-provoking so students think about the assignment outside of class and when not writing.
- The assignment is open to student ownership; students have some autonomy/freedom while being given the necessary structure to help them succeed.
- The assignment is not simple regurgitation or summary of facts, which feels like “busy work.”
- The assignment relates in some way to students’ interests/future; writing is easier and more meaningful when students have read deeply about the topic and are engaged in the conversation about it. This is easier when the course is in students’ majors; when the assignment is in a general education course, the teacher who engages students helps involve them in a conversation so they know something about what is being said about the topic.
- The assignment is challenging, not easily within students’ reach, and teachers maintain high expectations for the results.
- The assignment clearly relates to the rest of the course content.
- The assignment is intended to achieve a clear purpose, is “goal-oriented.”
- The assignment is clear; students understand what is being asked of them and why. (Wardle 77-8)

There are many considerations in suggesting multimodal composition as an appropriate requirement in building such an assignment. At the most basic level, it is no longer sufficient to view writing as strictly linear and print-based—indeed, some would argue that restricting students’ understanding of writing to that is a major disservice to them. Gunther Kress, author of *Literacy in the New Media Age*, is one such proponent of reconsidering literacy. He suggests that literacy now must be considered within “a vast array of social, technological, and economic factors” (Kress 1) is no longer static (i.e., reading and writing = literacy), and is a constant consideration, prioritization, and application of semiotics negotiating the aforementioned factors within concurrently adaptable and fluid modes. Thus in our broadening consideration of literacy,

we are encouraged to consider the implications of the contemporary shifts from writing to imagery - and not just through Instagram, memes, and Snapchat!, but in the prevalence of blogs, articles, videos, and other multimodal means of communication - and from the dominance of the medium of the book to the medium of the screen. Along with that, then, Kress insists that “It is absolutely essential now to consider the *sites and media of the appearance* of text, above all the *page* and the *screen*” (Kress 36), suggesting that how a text is presented is just as significant and telling as the message of the text itself. Text in this sense is used broadly to denote “the ‘stuff’ of our communication” rather than linguistic signs (Kress 47). Thus compelling students to compose multimodally is not just beneficial to them in terms of engaging them in metacognitive thought and thereby improving their skills as writers and thinkers. It is also preparing them to engage more thoughtfully with the changing world. As Kress points out, “In a world of instability, reproduction is no longer an issue: what is required now is the ability to assess what is needed in this situation now, for these conditions, these purposes, this audience” (49). The implementation of multimodal composition in a writing class is a part of responding to, and moving with, this change.

Because the format of multimodal compositions can be flexible and often more engaging (often audio, visual, etc), they have a much wider potential for publication, making the requirement of publication possible (it is realistic to ask students to publish a video essay on YouTube and share a link with their friends, but less likely that their friends would be interested in reading a traditional essay) and therefore the concept of audience concrete and tangible. In traditional composition courses, audience is essentially imagined. We ask students to frame their writing for a certain purpose, but then the only people who read it are their peers (if peer review is required) and their teacher. As Douglas B. Park acknowledges in “The Meanings of

‘Audience,’” “‘audience’ points to the final cause for which form exists, to the purposefulness—or its lack—that makes a piece of prose shapely and full of possibility or aimless and empty” (233). Audience is, as Park asserts, easy to talk about (“Just imagine whoever might be reading this piece,” we might say) but vaguely conceived at best and falsely contrived at worst. The problem with students submitting writing to any real audience outside of their classroom is essentially one of oversaturation: who wants to read a bunch of (often poorly constructed) summaries of the same article? Brian Gogan extrapolates on this tension in “Expanding the Aims of Public Rhetoric and Writing Pedagogy: Writing Letters to Editors.” Gogan suggests that writing to an audience outside of the classroom (a Letter to the Editor of the local school newspaper, in his instance) inherently and authentically presents “the rewards and risks of public rhetoric and writing” (538).

A real audience also presents concrete questions of ethics to students—a concept that (we hope) is tacitly emphasized in prohibiting plagiarism, requiring thorough citation, and so forth. As Seth Kahn acknowledges in “Putting Ethnographic Writing in Context,” “Because ethnographies are about actual people, the assignment [conducting an ethnographic study] makes you think about *ethics*...how you’re presenting information, how that information might affect people if made public, being as accurate as you can” (175). It is realistic to assume that some member of some level of the community that students are writing could view the report, which makes it imperative for students to consider how they’re representing that community and how the real members of it would perceive their findings. Such considerations would not be as likely if a student were submitting a printed report to their teacher alone.

### 5.2—Assignment Example

Taking into consideration these concerns of crafting an engaging and effective

assignment that acknowledges the significance of multimodal composition and the reality of an actual audience that the assignment will be published for, I have revised the WA#3 prompt as a suggestion of how this change could be implemented. I will provide the updated prompt as well as an outline of some considerations and assignments that could be useful in preparing students to complete this assignment.

Making WA#3 a multimodal and published text will require quite a bit of scaffolding on the part of the instructor. Planning for this project should commence informally early in the semester when students first start conducting research on their chosen communities. As students compile their research and write about their communities, they should be regularly reminded to be thinking about what interesting themes are standing out to them in their findings and who that information might be relevant or useful to. Because students will need a critical amount of research and time to complete this assignment, it should occur in the second half of the semester when they have accumulated quite a bit of research. They should also be given at least four weeks to execute this assignment, as they'll likely be learning new modes of production (video essay, etc) and will also be integrating scholarly research and surveys. In the pilot sections that I taught, I did require students to publish their WA#3, though I defined "publish" broadly. Essentially, students were required to compose their assignment for an audience that might benefit from and/or be interested in their subject and then share it with that audience. They were not required to verify that the audience read/watched/utilized their project, but they did have to share it.

In order to help students identify an appropriate audience and format for publication, I reminded students that they had collected original primary research on a specific community in a way that had likely not been done before. The copious amounts of detail and information that

they'd amassed would, I proposed, surely be interesting and relevant to someone. That in mind, I asked them to consider what specifically they wanted to highlight and share about their chosen community (not simply a general introduction/overview) that they realized or discovered *through their research*. They were then asked to consider and identify several groups that this information might be important and interesting to. Once they identified that audience, they had to consider the most effective and appropriate means to present that information to their chosen audience and then propose how exactly they would share (publish) their project. Each of these considerations was submitted as either an in-class writing activity based on in-class discussion or a homework assignment. Additionally, I met with students in "mini-conferences" (ten minutes) at the beginning of the new unit to discuss their considerations with them. For that meeting, they had to come prepared with the following items:

***Audience Assessment:***

- *Identify two potential publication audiences--Who will you share your ethnographic report with, and why would this information be helpful/useful to them?*
- *How will you get this information to them? What will be the most effective format, and why?*

***Survey Draft:***

- *Bring a link to a survey that you will distribute to gain a wider understanding of common perceptions of your community, or, at the least, a list of questions that you will include on the survey, as well as how you will rate answers (scale of 1-5? short answer? yes/no?).*
- *Who will you distribute this survey to? Why this group? How will you disseminate this survey?*

***Self Assessment:***

- *Write your definition of "good writing" from our in-class writing.*
- *Write out the areas you need to improve on to see yourself as a good writer (based on your own definition).*
- *Create a list of goals for yourself for this assignment - what, specifically, do you need to focus on?*

Students were then required to create an "Intention Statement" (Appendix H) that formalized their plans for the project.

Because students were most often unfamiliar with the format that they were composing

in, as that decision was governed by appropriateness, not comfort level, I also made them review and analyze multiple examples of similar projects in a homework assignment called “Example Analysis.” Not only did this assignment give students exposure to the genre that they would be composing in, it also positioned them as the critical audience for that same style of work, allowing them to think about and analyze what Gogan calls “the processes through which attention is constructed” (539). In his assignment, he also compels students to “immerse themselves in the genre” by constructing, evaluating, and commenting upon myriad different editorial letters. A key constraint inherent in this level of immersion for WA#3 is the wide range of genres represented, making extensive in-class analysis of any one in particular impossible due to time limitations. Furthermore, I wanted students to choose their composition format based on what would be most effective for their chosen audience. Relegating each person’s project to one consistent form would, I feared, invalidate the understanding of exigence and audience by making the assignment too formalized and rote. The Example Analysis prompt asked students to complete the following tasks:

***Example Analysis:***

*Find some examples of your project's format (article, blog, video essay, etc). Narrow it down to **two**, one that seems like an ideal example of your chosen medium and one that is sub-par. For each example, you will:*

- *Provide a link to the example that you've found, along with its title and your determination (i.e., 1. Ideal Example: "Thoughts about Barbies" by Susan Bob).*
- *Briefly summarize the content of the item.*
- *Analyze it: if it's good, what makes it good? What stands out to you, and what will you use from this example in your own work? If it's not so good, what has compromised the quality of this piece? What will you avoid in your own work?*

*Each analysis (you will have two total) should be at least 350 words, and each component (link/title, summary, analysis) should be numbered.*

Finally, during the composing process, I encouraged reflection at multiple points by assigning “Revision Reflection” homeworks at two critical points: after they had met with me yet

again to discuss a partial draft of the assignment (or their “Shitty First Draft,” borrowing the term from Anne Lamott’s chapter entitled such which I read with my students at the beginning of the semester) and after they had their work reviewed by at least two peers in a guided in-class peer review workshop. These minor writing assignments asked students to discuss what changes they made after receiving feedback and emphasized “process along with product” (Gogan 539).

### *Further Considerations*

One key problem or concern in this assignment as I have proposed it is what Gogan would call *efficacy*, or “the degree to which a composition is capable of changing the status quo, impacting decisions, or spurring actions” (537). As I presented WA#3, publication in some form was required, but impact, change, or reception were not. Does the lack of activism encouraged in this assignment undermine the very real goals of authenticity? Comber would, I think, pose a similar question in that Comber advocates critical literacy is the process in which students have agency through meaning-making, text production, and *related social action* about things that matter to them and their communities. As I had the assignment formatted, all I could do is hope that social activism and real impact occurs as a by-product of the process—at this stage in the development of the course, I see no way to make this a collective requirement, both with the diversity of subjects represented in any given classroom and the challenges and potential injustice of assessing student work based on its impact or reception. Still, it is my hope that students do, by nature of writing to and for a specific audience, enact change, either in themselves or in their audience.

Finally, practice in reading multimodal texts within this framework is imperative to discerning the real effects of that work. In addition to the obvious limited tenure that this form of composing has in writing classrooms (compared to long history of the traditional print essay),

there are further concerns as well. Assessment is challenging when there is no formula to follow. Additionally, instructors will have to be very cautious and diligent in monitoring student projects to ensure that no photos, videos, or audio clips are being used without proper written consent. Finally, there are times where it just may not work - students may underestimate the work involved in creating, say, a video essay, or be reticent to publish their work, or for any host of reasons may simply fail. But that challenge is not specific to this course or genre, and I hope that an authentic and sustained interest in their chosen community and sense of accountability in what they are publishing combined with an awareness of how they are thinking will intrinsically be more of a barrier to failure than ordinary essay writing would be.

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## Appendix A—Course Philosophy and Syllabus

### ENGL 1013: Composition I—Primary Research and Writing Course Philosophy

The pilot of ENGL 1013 is designed to cultivate student agency and community engagement by casting students in the metacognitive dual role of participant-observers within communities of their choosing. Students will gain authority over their chosen topics and learn to see writing as an active process that can accomplish change. Students will closely study the four major constituents of rhetorical situations. They will begin by devising their own purposes for observing and writing about a specific community, and in doing so will engage with writing as a purpose-driven activity by which they can set and accomplish goals. The self-directed nature of their inquiry will give students much more ownership of their writing and help them to understand that writing is an action that can affect the world around them. By choosing which communities to study and which aspects of those communities to write about, students will engage more fully with the work of the course and the intellectual skills and habits necessary for successful college careers and sustained civic engagement.

Within the new course design, students will continue to practice fundamental skills by writing a series of papers that will develop from their field observations, culminating in complete ethnographies of their respective chosen communities. The first assignment requires each student to state a purpose for writing, explain the methods of observation, and describe one interesting aspect of the chosen community (summary); the second assignment requires each student to interview community members and gather information through questionnaires and surveys concerning an element of community folklore, and then to draft a paper explaining the importance of that folklore to the community as a whole (analysis); the third assignment requires each student to conduct secondary research about the chosen community and to synthesize that research with the student's observations to produce a complete ethnography of the community (synthesis and critique); the final assignment then requires each student to gather his or her notes and previous drafts into a portfolio, and then to draft a paper that reflects on two things (1) the dual role of participant-observer, leading to an explanation of how each role revealed different aspects of the community the student chose to explore (argumentation) and (2) how those roles influenced them in presenting information in written form—either to elicit information from or to convey it—to imagined audiences (writing awareness).

This course will also introduce students to means of generating primary data such as interviews, surveys, and questionnaires which will serve them well as they transition into Composition II and complete assignments which require primary research. The very nature of the course therefore fundamentally engages students with the processes and methods of inquiry. Finally, in training instructors—primarily graduate teaching assistants—to deliver this course, we are preparing new generations of teachers to engage in experiential, community-based learning initiatives.

## Syllabus

ENGL 1013: Composition I - Section 077

Tuesday and Thursday | 9:30 – 10:45 | CHPN 413 | Fall 2016

Instructor: Morgan L. Scholz

Office: KIMP 233 | Office Hours: Monday 10 – 12 and Thursday 3:30 – 4:30

E-mail: mls041@email.uark.edu

**Purpose:** To teach students how to conduct primary research and engage with specific communities, and to teach them to draft, revise, and edit their researched essays to demonstrate sound argumentation, development of ideas, clear organization, accurate analysis, awareness of writing conventions, and mastery of standard linguistic forms.

**Specific Goals:** In accordance with the stated purpose of the course, students will learn, among other things, how to

- devise primary research materials and engage in primary research;
- analyze rhetorical situations;
- identify authoritative sources;
- identify persuasive appeals in written and visual texts;
- paraphrase and summarize accurately the ideas of others;
- develop a thesis and construct a convincing written argument for a specific audience;
- use electronic resources to support field and library research;
- synthesize several sources using an established style for internal documentation and works cited;
- analyze and revise their own writing and the writing of others; and
- practice academic integrity and ethical communicative aims.

**Procedure:** Discussion; workshop; lecture; and the writing of papers, essay examinations, and exercises. The quality of writing will largely determine the final grade.

**Required texts and materials:** (unless otherwise noted, bring your books to class each day)

FieldWorking: Reading and Writing Research, 4th ed., by B. S. Sunstein & E. Chiseri-Strater. (Bedford/St. Martin's)

The St. Martin's Handbook, 8th ed., by A. Lunsford. (Bedford/St. Martin's)

A Man Without Words, by S. Schaller (U of California P)

Field Notebook

### Additional Resources:

Class+: class.uark.edu is an amazing free writing center – highly recommended!

Copies of each text listed above are on reserve in the library, and A Man Without Words can be accessed online through the library for free here: <http://library.uark.edu/record=b3320920~S1>

### Assignment Grade Distribution:

#### Major Writing Assignments:

First Observation Paper 10%

Folklore Analysis Paper 15%

Ethnographic Account 20%

#### Other Assignments:

In Class Activities 12%

Homework 4%

Conferences 4%

Reflection Portfolio	15%	Peer Review Workshops	3%
Field Notebook/Portfolio	15%	Quizzes and Exams	2%
			TOTAL: 100%

Course Grade Scale: A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 0-59

#### UNIVERSITY POLICIES

**Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. Moreover, the University of Arkansas Academic Policy Series 1520.10 requires that students with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact me privately at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through the Center for Educational Access (contact 479-575-3104 or visit <http://cea.uark.edu> for more information on registration procedures).

**Discrimination and Sexual Harassment:** Anyone experiencing discrimination and/or sexual harassment while at the university may report it to a complaint officer appointed by the Chancellor. The complaint officer will discuss any situation or event that the complainant considers discriminatory or constitutive of sexual harassment. Reports may be made by the person experiencing the harassment or by a third party, such as a witness to the harassment or someone who is told of the harassment. For more information and to report allegations of discrimination and/or sexual harassment, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Compliance, 346 N. West Avenue (West Avenue Annex), 479-575-4019 (voice) or 479-575-3646 (tdd).

**Academic Integrity:** “As a core part of its mission, the University of Arkansas provides students with the opportunity to further their educational goals through programs of study and research in an environment that promotes freedom of inquiry and academic responsibility. Accomplishing this mission is possible only when intellectual honesty and individual integrity prevail. Each University of Arkansas student is required to be familiar with, and abide by, the University’s ‘Academic Integrity Policy,’ which may be found at <http://honesty.uark.edu/index.php> Students with questions about how these policies apply to a particular course or assignment should immediately contact their instructor.” — Office of the Provost and Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs

**NOTE:** The University defines plagiarism as “offering as one’s own work, the words, ideas, or arguments of another person or using the work of another without appropriate attribution by quotation, reference, or footnote.” In addition, in this course, submitting work you have turned in to fulfill requirements for another course will still constitute plagiarism. You must obtain your instructor’s permission before turning in previously submitted work. Refer to the sanction rubric <http://honesty.uark.edu/sanction-rubric/> for a list of specific violations covered by the University’s Academic Integrity Policy.

**Attendance:** “Student absences resulting from illness, family crisis, University-sponsored

activities involving scholarship or leadership/participation responsibilities, jury duty or subpoena for court appearance, military duty, and religious observances are excusable according to university rules. The instructor has the right to require that the student provide appropriate documentation for any absence for which the student wishes to be excused. Moreover, during the first week of the semester, students must give to the instructor a list of the religious observances that will affect their attendance.”

— Academic Regulations University of Arkansas Catalog of Studies

**Inclement Weather:** When the university is closed, all classes are also cancelled. If a weather delay affects university operations, then class will be cancelled if it is scheduled before the university resumes operations. If class is ever canceled due to weather, there will still be time-sensitive assignments due – check Blackboard before you get waylaid in a four-hour snowball fight!

#### Emergency Procedures

Many types of emergencies can occur on campus, so it is crucial that we be prepared to respond appropriately in the event of severe weather, armed assailants, or fire alarms. In keeping with the detailed instructions found at [emergency.uark.edu](http://emergency.uark.edu), if a weather emergency occurs during our class:

Always follow the directions of the instructor or emergency personnel.

If told to evacuate, do so immediately.

If told to shelter-in-place, find a room, in the center of the building with no windows, on the lower level of the building.

If you cannot get to the lowest floor, pick a hallway in the center of the building.

In the event of an armed assailant or physical attack (CADD):

**CALL**—9-1-1

**AVOID**—If possible, self-evacuate to a safe area outside of the building.

**DENY**—Barricade doors with desks, chairs, bookcases or similar objects. Move to a place inside the room where you are not visible. Turn off the lights and remain quiet until police arrive.

**DEFEND**- Use chairs, desks, cell phones or whatever is immediately available to distract and/or defend yourself and others from attack.

## Appendix B—Initial Interview Questions

### Interview Questions and Procedures

#### Initial Interview – Beginning of semester

Instructors and administrators will be interviewed between August 1st and August 20th, 2016.

Students will be interviewed between August 24th and September 22nd, 2016.

For the first interview, students will be asked to provide the following background information:

Age and year in college

Place of origin

Academic interests/major

An estimation of their average ability as a student

High school attended (school name and city)

Any previous college coursework (school name and city)

Family educational background

Highest level of education completed by parents

Highest level of education completed by siblings

For the first interview, all three groups of stakeholders (students, instructors, and administrators) will be asked the following questions:

What are your expectations for this course?

Ideally, what goals should Composition I in general achieve for students?

What would you say are the goals of this particular composition course?

Do you foresee this particular Composition class achieving the goals of Composition I in general?

If so, how do you anticipate that this specific class will achieve the goals of Composition I in general?

If not, why do you think this particular composition class will not accomplish what you think of as the main goals of Composition I?

What issues or barriers do you anticipate in achieving those goals?

What do you project as the biggest advantages in those goals being accomplished?

How do you define “success” in the context of this course? That is, if the course is “successful,” what does that mean?

What do you observe as the greatest strength of this course?

What else would you like to discuss in terms of college composition in general or the University of Arkansas Composition I Community Ethnography course?

\*The researcher may follow up and/or clarify some of your responses via e-mail after the interview.

### Appendix C—Concluding Interview Questions

All stakeholders will be interviewed between December 5th and December 16th, 2016  
 In this final interview, the researcher will revisit the participants' responses from the previous two interviews before proceeding to address the following questions:

- In general, what are your thoughts (positive and/or negative) about this course as a whole?
- Did your goals change over the course of the semester? How so or not?
- Do you recommend that the University of Arkansas continue to utilize a Community Ethnography approach in teaching Composition I?
- If so, why, and what further recommendations would you make to improve the effectiveness of this course for future students?
- If not, why, and what do you identify as the biggest weaknesses of this approach?
- What were key factors that worked well in this approach, and why do you think they worked?
- What didn't work well in this course, and why do you think these things were unsuccessful?
- Discuss the portfolio component of this course:
- What was good about a final portfolio?
- What were drawbacks associated with it?
- What were benefits of a portfolio that may not have been present in, for example, a research paper?
- How do you see this particular assignment pertaining to Comp II?
- How do you see this particular assignment equipping students for the remainder of their college career?
- How do you define "success" in the context of this course?
- What other suggestions, recommendations, cautions, etc would you make about this course?
- What else would you like to discuss in terms of Composition in general and/or Composition approached through Community Ethnography?

\*The researcher may follow up and/or clarify some of your responses via e-mail after the interview.

## Appendix D—Prompt for Writing Assignment #1: Observation Report

### COMPOSITION I

ENGL 1013

Fall 2016

Morgan L. Scholz

Essay Assignment 1: First Observation Paper

Your first major assignment requires you to report on your initial observations of your chosen community. You will need to clearly explain your purpose in choosing this specific community to observe, and then detail the process by which you chose the community, the methods you used to observe and/or interact with this community, and the results of these initial observations.

#### Choosing a Community

Select a community you find interesting enough to study for the next sixteen weeks. Make sure this is a community you will be able to observe and interact with on a regular basis. Choose a community you are interested in, perhaps even one you know very little about, so that you can enter this project in a truly exploratory spirit. As you begin to observe your community, consider your purpose in doing so. Do you wish to help this community achieve its goals, or do you think this community has something to offer to non-members, something you can explore and convince outsiders to value?

#### Forming a Methodology

Decide how you will interact with this community on your first few observations. Will you observe a large gathering that will let you see many different members of the community, or will you observe a small meeting that will introduce you to a more select group within that community? Will you simply observe, or will you ask questions and talk to members of the community?

Write a step-by-step plan for how your first observation will proceed. This plan will form a substantial part of your paper. Be sure to return to this step after completing your initial observation and note any ways in which you diverted from your original plan.

#### Making the Observation

Put your plan into action. Use your double-entry field notebook to take very thorough notes about and to reflect on every aspect of your observation. Make notes about everything that might be significant: the things people do and say, the ways the members dress, the location and physical surroundings, music that is part of the occasion, and anything else you find interesting.

#### Writing About Your Observation: Purpose

Now that you have completed your observation, introduce your reader to this community. Explain your purpose in writing about this community (review FW pg. 64-65, Grant-Davie pg. 353-355, and SMH pg. 28-30) and what you want your reader to see from your first report. Explain your methodology (which you should have drafted from the step above) and then choose the one or two most intriguing aspects of the observation from your field notes and explain to your reader why you find them important. Discuss what you have learned so far and what you

want to learn as you continue. Conclude by proposing any thoughts or observations you think might be relevant for your future observations and research and whether your initial purpose has changed based on your first few observations. Finally, tell your reader what can be expected from your future reports.

Minimum page length: 600 words

Due date: Thursday, September 22nd – final draft due on BB and printed copy (including drafts, intention and revision statements, and peer review sheets!) due at beginning of class.

Grade value: 10%

## Appendix E—Prompt and Handout for Writing Assignment #2: Folklore Analysis

ENGL 1013

Fall 2016

Morgan L. Scholz

Essay Assignment 2: Folklore Analysis

Your second major assignment requires you to conduct further observations of your chosen community and to analyze an element of folklore, a narrative or set of narratives valued by the members of that community. You will then draft a paper that explains why that one individual element is important to the functioning of the community as a whole and how understanding the folklore contributes to your purpose in writing about your chosen community.

### Further Observations

Observe your community several more times and Interview Its members to find out what stories they value as a group. Do they tell stories about a particular member or group of members, or is there a specific event or figure in the community's past that serves as a point of identity in the present? Does the community stage any performances or feature any visual reminders of these storied people or events? Devise questionnaires and conduct interviews (review FW ch. 5 and SMH pg. 208-211), drawing much of your information from longtime members. Pay attention to variations in the stories they tell, and reflect on what these variations might mean. Try to collect any artifacts that might accompany the folklore, like photographs, newspaper clippings, or physical representations shared by the group. As before, use your field notebook to record any thoughts, questions, or ideas that might occur while you conduct your research, particularly as they pertain to the folklore under analysis.

### Writing About Your Observation: Audience

While continuing to consider and revise your purpose in observing your chosen community, focus on drafting this paper to suit a specific audience. Consider how you will determine an appropriate audience for your writing and what strategies you will use to appeal to that audience. Review FW pg. 64-65, Grant-Davie pg. 355-356, and SMH pg. 30-33 for important considerations regarding your audience.

Now, analyze the folklore you have discovered and discuss its importance to the community. Summarize the narrative and then explain how this story or group of stories helps you achieve your purpose, drawing lots of evidence from your interviews, questionnaires, and field notes to support the discussion. As mentioned above, pay attention to any variations or discrepancies in different community members' telling of the story and analyze what those discrepancies might tell your reader. Remember to clearly communicate your methodology so that your chosen audience can understand it. You should leave your reader with no questions as to how you obtained your information.

### Revision

Carefully revise the draft of your essay by reconsidering whether your ideas, and tone were appropriate for your purpose and audience. Consider whether the essay needs further logical and phrasal transitions to improve its coherence. Finally, proofread your essay for errors in word usage, syntax (word-form and word-group order), and punctuation.

Minimum page length: 1,200 words

Due date: Thursday, October 13th – final draft due on BB and printed copy (including drafts, intention and revision statements, and peer review sheets!) due at beginning of class.

Grade value: 15%

## Essay Assignment 2: Folklore Handout

Your second major assignment requires you to conduct further observations of your chosen community and to analyze an element of your chosen community's folklore. Folklore broadly means the beliefs, knowledge, and customs of the common people, or "folk," and can encompass stories, songs, jokes, dances, methods and styles of dress, proverbs or customary sayings, and even the use of certain material objects.

To help you better understand exactly what folklore is, consider the following definition adapted from J. Harold Brunvand's *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*, and the examples that accompany it. Drawing from numerous folklorists' writing and theories, Brunvand gives us the following five criteria for identifying folklore:

1. It may be oral and/or performative. In other words, folklore is passed down—from person to person or from generation to generation—by word of mouth or by demonstration, rather than by any sort of written text.

Example: think of calling the Hogs at a Razorback game. There are no written instructions for this call, you simply learn it by imitating those around you at a game.

2. It is traditional. In other words, folklore is passed down in relatively standard forms among the members of a group.

Example: think about old family recipes, or nursery rhymes like "The Itsy Bitsy Spider."

3. It exists in different versions. In other words, folklore may deviate in certain ways from case to case, but still retains its core features.

Example: consider the "devil horns" hand gesture used by fans of metal music. The standard expression is to raise the forefinger and pinky while keeping the other fingers down (thus producing the "horns"), but some fans raise the thumb and pinky instead. The gesture is usually pointed toward the performers, but is sometimes turned inward toward the person making the gesture. Regardless, all members of the metal community will recognize this gesture.

4. It is usually anonymous. In other words, we usually don't know who began a particular piece of folklore.

Example: urban legends—alligators in the sewers, vanishing hitchhikers, Bloody Mary, etc—are widely spread and most have been around for decades or longer, yet no one knows who first told these tales.

5. It tends to become formularized. In other words, it has specific features or clichés that remain basically the same from version to version.

Example: consider the formulas for many basic jokes. Some follow the "knock-knock/who's

there?” pattern, while several others being with the “three people walk into a bar” motif.

Use the above guidelines to help you determine which aspect of your community’s folklore you want to analyze for your paper. Once you have chosen your folklore, consult with your instructor to ensure you have chosen something workable and to plan the rest of your project. Then, follow the directions on the Assignment 2 prompt to help you develop your research into a coherent paper.

## Appendix F—Prompts for Writing Assignment #3: Ethnographic Account

### *Original Prompt*

Your third major assignment requires you to produce an ethnographic account of your community. You will reflect on your observations so far while continuing to observe and interact with your community, conduct secondary research to supplement your observations, and craft a paper explaining the most important elements of your chosen community and the methodology by which you discovered those elements.

### Methodology

Describe any new materials you may have generated, new interviews you may have conducted, and any other new observations you have made. Start by adding to the methodology sections from your previous essays, and then consider how you might best present your complete methodology to your reader. See *Considering Form* below for further discussion.

### Secondary Research

Conduct secondary research about your community. See what has been written about them in books, journals, magazines, newspapers, blogs, or any other media you can find. Take careful notes about that research and compare the perspectives you find there to your own observations about your community and review SMH ch. 10-12 and ch. 8 for further guidance.

### Writing About Your Observation: Constraints

While continuing to consider your purpose and audience as you craft your paper, consider the constraints you faced while researching and writing about your community. What cultural, social, or other circumstances helped you conduct your research? What circumstances provided obstacles? Review FW pg. 64-65 and Grant-Davie pg. 356-358 for important considerations regarding the constraints under which you are writing.

### Considering Form

Draw all of your research and writing together to refine your purpose and select your audience, and draft and carefully revise a paper that suits those rhetorical decisions. Would a formal report work best, or would an exploratory essay, blog, or other form better suit your ideas? Should you include a section in which you describe your entire methodology, or should you discuss the various methods you used during different pertinent moments in the essay? You will not be able to write about everything you observed, so you will have to decide which details and what information best suit your chosen purpose and audience. You are now the authority on your chosen community, and it is your task to communicate that authority to your readers.

### Citation Style

Use MLA style to attribute information and expression of ideas to your sources. Every time you quote or paraphrase from any sources provide the corresponding parenthetical citation. The last page of your essay should be a “Works Cited” page, which, as the name indicates, lists the sources to which you made reference in your essay.

Minimum page length: [6] pages / [1800] words

Due date: [ ]

Grade value: 20%

*Revised Prompt*

## COMPOSITION I

ENGL 1013

Fall 2016

Morgan L. Scholz

## Assignment 3: Ethnographic Account

Your third major assignment requires you to produce an ethnographic account of your community. You will reflect on your observations so far while continuing to observe and interact with your community, represent general perceptions about your community, conduct secondary research to supplement your observations, and craft a project explaining the most important elements of your chosen community and the methodology by which you discovered those elements.

## Methodology

Briefly but thoroughly describe how you have collected data for this project. Your audience should have no questions about where your research is from, and any information that you later represent in this project should have already been referenced here. This includes your own research, surveys or interviews, and secondary research.

## Secondary Research

Conduct secondary and/or archival research about your community. See what has been written about them in books, journals, magazines, newspapers, blogs or the community's own archives. Look at what professionals in your community have to say, and look at what popular news sources/media has to say. Take careful notes about that research and compare the perspectives you find there to your own observations about your community and review SMH ch. 10-12 and ch. 8 for further guidance.

Audience: Who are you presenting this account to?

Purpose: What do you want them to learn, understand, or know from this account?

Format: Considering your audience, what is the most effective means by which to share this information?

## Citation Style

Use MLA style to attribute information and expression of ideas to your sources. Every time you quote or paraphrase from any sources provide the corresponding parenthetical citation. The last page of your essay should be a "Works Cited" page, which, as the name indicates, lists the sources to which you made reference in your essay.

## Length and submission:

Video Essay: 6-8 minutes in length, submitted with full script and Works Cited, published on YouTube

Podcast: 8-10 minutes in length, submitted with full script and Works Cited, published

Article: 1,500 words, single-spaced, submitted via e-mail to editors with attached images and Works Cited

Essay: 1,800 words, MLA formatting

Blog: Six to eight 200-500 posts, including “About” page, Works Cited

Presentation: 10-15 minutes + video recording of you giving presentation, submitted with PowerPoint or Prezi and Works Cited

Other: confirm in writing (via e-mail) with me

Due date: Thursday, November 17th – final draft due on BB and printed copy (including drafts, intention and revision statements, and peer review sheets!) due at beginning of class.

Grade value: 20%

#### Audio Resources

Audio Editing Software

Audacity

Garage Band (for Macs)

#### Creative Commons Licensed Music

CC Mixer

Free Music Archive

Jamendo

#### Creative Commons Licensed Sound Effects

Audio Micro

Freesound

Free Sound Effects

#### Visual Resources

iMovie (for Macs)

Windows Movie Maker

Student Technology Center (in Union)

YouTube

\*Be sure to work with larger file formats (500x500) so that your images aren't too pixelated

#### Blog Resources

Wordpress.com

Blogspot.com

## Appendix G—Prompts for Writing Assignment #4: Portfolio

### *Original Prompt*

#### Essay Assignment 4: Reflection Portfolio

Your final assignment requires you to compile a portfolio that displays the research and writing processes you engaged in all semester, and to write a brief paper reflecting on your dual role as both participant in and observer of your chosen community.

#### Portfolio

Gather all your research materials from this semester: your field notes; your interview questions and all transcripts, questionnaires, and surveys you generated; photographs, sound recordings, and/or videos you took; any artifacts you gathered from your community; secondary and archival sources you read about the community; and the successive drafts, revisions, and final texts of your first three major assignments. Select and organize these materials to supplement the narrative you will provide in your reflection paper. Keep an open mind about organization as you arrange your portfolio and draft your reflection; you may decide to alter the organization of one or both as you work on each of them.

#### Writing About Your Observation: Rhetor and Ethos

Draft a paper that reflects on your research processes and the experiences you gained through that process. Focus on the two perspectives you have achieved with regards to your community: one as a participant in that community, and one as a detached observer of it. Explain how each perspective helped you learn different things about the community, and how integrating both perspectives helps you better understand the community and your own writing process. Refer to your portfolio to demonstrate your claims. Conclude the paper by discussing what further research you would like to do, if given time, and how you think you will use what you learned this semester in the future.

As you draft this paper, concentrate on your writerly persona: the ethos you are projecting in your writing. How are you gaining your reader's trust, so that they learn to value the insights you have gained through your research? Which aspects of your personality, your self, do you want to reveal in this paper? Which aspects of your personality might have been changed or even formed by your research process? Review FW pg. 64-65, Grant-Davie pg. 354-355, and SMH pg. 28-29 for important considerations regarding the connected concepts of rhetors and ethos.

#### Considering Form

What might be the best way to organize your ideas in this final paper? Do you want to tell a story of your experiences, or explore them through a more formal essay? How can you best integrate important evidence for you claims, such as images, videos, or recordings?

#### Revision and Citation

Revise your final paper carefully in light of your purpose, audience, constraints, and ethos. Proofread your essay for errors in word usage, syntax, and punctuation. Use MLA style to attribute information and expression of ideas to your sources, and include a "Works Cited" page, which, as the name indicates, lists the sources to which you made reference in your essay.

Minimum page length for reflection paper: [3 pages] / [900 words]

Due date: [ ]

Grade value: 15%

*Revised Prompt*

COMPOSITION I

ENGL 1013

Fall 2016

Morgan L. Scholz

Essay Assignment 4: Reflection Portfolio

Your final assignment requires you to compile a portfolio that displays the research and writing processes you have engaged in all semester. Your portfolio will be a comprehensive portrayal of your ethnographic work. As such, it should guide your reader through each aspect that you highlight.

Portfolio

Gather all your research materials from this semester: your field notes; your interview questions and all transcripts, questionnaires, and surveys you generated; photographs, sound recordings, and/or videos you took; any artifacts you gathered from your community; secondary and archival sources you read about the community; and the successive drafts, revisions, and final texts of your first three major assignments. Select and organize these materials to supplement the narrative you will provide in your reflection paper. Keep an open mind about organization as you arrange your portfolio and draft your reflection; you may decide to alter the organization of one or both as you work on each of them.

Your portfolio should have the following components:

Cover page

Table of Contents (include page numbers)

Portfolio Introduction

Research Methods (3) + Introduction

Field Notebook (sample) + Introduction

Interview(s) (questions + partial transcript) + Introduction

Survey(s) (questions + results) + Introduction

Observations (narrative description) + Introduction

Other + Introduction

Writing Assignments + Introduction

Research Report (final draft) + Introduction

Folklore Analysis (final draft) + Introduction

Ethnographic Account (final draft/representation) + Introduction

Reflection Paper

Works Cited

Portfolio Introduction:

Your introduction should introduce your reader to the work you've done over the course of the

semester, including the community you chose to research, your objective in researching this community, and what they can expect from this portfolio. It will briefly introduce each section of this portfolio, as well as explain why you made choices about what to include, organization, and what you hope your reader takes away from this portfolio as a whole. 500 – 700 words, single spaced.

#### Research Methods:

Choose three (3) research methods that you've used this semester to present and analyze. Write an introduction to this section as a whole that rationalizes why you made these selection choices and what they are (200 – 400 words). Additionally, create a new header and introduction/rationale for each research method that you present, describing why this was an effective research tool, why you chose this particular tool, some findings that you discovered, etc. Feel free to refer to the method itself in each introduction (ex: "As you will see from my field notebook sample, I utilized the Dual Entry method, which is a process in which I record my obser.... I used this method because..."). Do not simply describe your methods: justify your research choices.

#### Writing Assignments:

You will include all three major writing assignments in this portfolio. Write an introduction to this section as a whole that presents these assignments to your reader. Include the final draft of each assignment in your portfolio (For WA#3, if you did not compose your project in traditional text, you'll need to consider the best way to represent your work) and write a brief introduction to each individual Writing Assignment. These brief intros should be a combination of your Intention Statement and Revision Reflections in that they should describe to your reader your purpose as both a researcher and a rhetor in each assignment and how you got the assignment to its point of completion. Do not simply copy and paste portions from previous work – make sure that each introduction is effective in actually introducing your reader to that particular section within the context of your portfolio as a whole. Include any contextual information or constraints that your reader might need to know about so that they're as informed as possible. Each section intro should be 200-400 words, single spaced.

#### Research Reflection: Writing About Your Observations

Draft a paper that reflects on your research processes and the experiences you gained through that process. Focus on the two perspectives you have achieved with regards to your community: one as a participant in that community, and one as a detached observer of it. Explain how each perspective helped you learn different things about the community, and how integrating both perspectives helps you better understand the community and your own writing process. Discuss challenges or constraints that you encountered in either role, and refer to your portfolio to demonstrate your claims. Conclude the paper by discussing what further research you would like to do, if given time, and how you think you will use what you learned this semester in the future.

As you draft this paper, concentrate on your writerly persona: the ethos you are projecting in your writing. How are you gaining your reader's trust, so that they learn to value the insights you have gained through your research? Which aspects of your personality, your self, do you want to reveal in this paper? Which aspects of your personality might have been changed or even formed by your research process? Review FW pg. 64-65, Grant-Davie pg. 354-355, and SMH pg. 28-29

for important considerations regarding the connected concepts of rhetors and ethos.

#### Format

Each component of this portfolio should have a clear header. The portfolio should be one cohesive document (not several attachments) that has contiguous page numbers, consistent design (fonts, etc), and is evenly spaced. It should be clear to read and aesthetically appealing. Save and submit in Word.

#### Audience

As your evaluator, I am your main audience. In this portfolio, I should clearly see the work you've done this semester and what you have learned as a researcher and writer. I am expecting impeccable organization and strong rationale for all the content that you're presenting.

#### Revision and Citation

Revise your final paper carefully in light of your purpose, audience, constraints, and ethos. Proofread your essay for errors in word usage, syntax, and punctuation. Create one Works Cited page that will conclude the document and cites any works you used, either your own or secondary, in the portfolio.

Minimum length for reflection paper: 800 words

Due date: Final portfolio due on Thursday, December 8th at the beginning of class.

Grade value: 15%

## Appendix H—Intention Statement Prompt

### Prompt: WA#1 Intention Statement

After re-reading the prompt for Writing Assignment #1, write 1-2 well-developed paragraphs that define your intentions with this writing project. Think about intentions on several levels: what do you hope to get out of this as a student, writer, learner, individual? Do you see this assignment affecting anyone or anything else? Do you want it to? What do you think this assignment is unto? What could it be unto, besides being a mandatory part of a mandatory class in college. College isn't mandatory (and even if you feel forced to be here, you still had a choice), so to some degree, this assignment is your choice too - what do you want to get out of it?

Again, and as always, do not just answer those questions - use them to prompt your own reflective thinking and make clear your purpose in completing this first assignment. This should be organized, mechanically sound, thoughtful, and interesting.

## Appendix I—Revision Reflection 1 and 2 Prompts

### Revision Reflection 1 Prompt

You've really started to develop your paper now. What did you do to take it from a partial draft to a full draft? What kind of content did you add (specifically) and what did you take out and/or how did you refocus the direction you were taking? \*As you revised your draft and are preparing your complete draft for Peer Review workshops next week, what do you want feedback on? What are you still unsure about at this point, and what are you concerned about?

Minimum of 200 words.

As always, include your name, date, assignment, and class when submitting any work.

### Revision Reflection 2 Prompt

Once you've revised your draft a second time based on feedback from your peers, describe that revision process. What feedback was especially helpful? What suggestions did you implement, and what suggestions did you ignore? Why did you make these choices? Again, be specific. Simply saying "I changed some things in my introduction to make it sound better" is not enough. Quote your own essay if necessary to show, rather than just tell, what changes you made and why you made those choices.

150 - 250 words.

## Appendix J—Homework Prompts

### Homework 1- Reading Reflection (August 2016)

Complete the FW reading assignment (Chapter 1, pg. 1-38). Immediately after you've completed this reading, write a thoughtful 300 - 500 word reflection on your own reading process. How did you go about reading this hefty amount of text? Recount as much detail as you possibly can - what did you read first (i.e., headers, boxes, text, etc.)? What parts were difficult for you to focus on - why? What parts did you enjoy reading? How long did the assignment take you? Did you complete it in one sitting? How did this text compare to other forms of reading that you do?

\*Note: these questions are not comprehensive and should not be directly answered in your response. Your response should be a cohesive reflection, not a list of answers to questions. The questions here are meant to stimulate ideation, so please think beyond these questions and do not simply answer them. Produce a complete and informative piece.

### Homework 2- Prompt: Access and Ethics (August 2016)

Using that monster list of groups/communities/sub-cultures that you brainstormed about last week, narrow that list down to five groups that you are interested in focusing on. Remember that you'll be observing and interacting with one group the entire semester, so as you narrow down your options, keep in mind that it should be a group that you have a sustained interest in (to some degree). Once you've narrowed down that list to five, write 3-5 sentences about each potential group through which you reflect on:

1. Your access to this group - do you have a connection or way to consistently observe and interact with this group? What are the pros and cons of that connection?
2. The ethics - what concerns do you have about observing this group?
3. Your role - where are you in relation to this group? Are you a member, an outsider, etc? What will be some of the challenges or discomforts for you in interacting with this group?

And so forth...essentially, I'm wanting to see you really narrow down your options and thoroughly think through some choices in order to anticipate any challenges, conflicts, and concerns that you might face in making any selection. There is no perfect choice, but some choices are better than others ;).

### Homework 3--Prompt: Initial Observation (September 2016)

After you have scheduled your first observation of your community, write a step-by-step plan for how your first observation will proceed. In detail, outline how you made initial contact to schedule this first observation, including information such as who you contacted, how, etc. Did you find out about a meeting time online? Etc - obviously, this will differ depending on what your first observation is - Will you observe a large gathering that will let you see many different members of the community, or will you observe a small meeting that will introduce you to a more select group within that community? Will you simply observe, or will you ask questions and talk to members of the community?

This Plan can be either a detailed paragraph or bulleted list. It should include as much detail as possible - do you need to dress a certain way for your observation? What will you take with you? How long will you be there? What are you expecting? And so forth...

#### Homework 4 Prompt: Positioning Yourself (September 2016)

Based on some guidance from FW page 117 (Box 11), take some time to reflect on your own position. Complete the "Action" section, responding to all of the bulleted points in 1-2 well-formed paragraphs, and then write 1-2 paragraphs on the following prompts:

Take some time to consider yourself - what makes you who you are?

- Write about the external details that comprise you - age, appearance, etc
- Write about cultural influences
- Write about your educational history
- Write about social factors
- Write about what elements your identity is comprised of

Now consider yourself in relation to your community

- What do you share?
- What makes you different?

What is your relationship to that community?

#### Homework 5 Prompt: Conference Preparation (October 2016)

Before our meeting, prepare the following things (address all four bolded areas below in one Word document that you upload to this prompt and bring two printed copies of to our mini conference).

##### Audience Assessment:

Identify two potential publication audiences - who will you share your ethnographic report with, and why would this information be helpful/useful to them?

How will you get this information to them? What will be the most effective format, and why?

##### Survey Draft:

Bring a link to a survey that you will distribute to gain a wider understanding of common perceptions of your community, or, at the least, a list of questions that you will include on the survey, as well as how you will rate answers (scale of 1-5? short answer? yes/no? etc)

Who will you distribute this survey to? Why this group? How will you disseminate this survey?

**Self Assessment:**

Write your definition of "good writing" from our in-class writing

Write out the areas you need to improve on to see yourself as a good writer (based on your own definition)

Create a list of goals for yourself for this assignment - what, specifically, do you need to focus on?

## Appendix J—IRB Documents



Department of English ♦ Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences  
 Kimpel Hall 333 ♦ Fayetteville, Arkansas 72701 ♦ (479) 575-4301  
 Principal Researcher: Morgan L. Scholz  
 Faculty Advisor: Dr. Patrick Slattery

***INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE***

You are invited to participate in a research study designed to examine the effectiveness of the Community Ethnography Composition I Pilot course at the University of Arkansas. This study will assess the pilot course from the perspectives of key stakeholders: students taking the course, instructors teaching the course, and administrators designing the course. By collecting and assessing course materials and feedback from students, instructors, and administrators, the researcher hopes to gain a better understanding of how successful a composition course designed as a community ethnography project is.

***WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY******Who is the Principal Researcher?***

Morgan L. Scholz, Master's Student  
 Department of English  
 University of Arkansas  
 233 Kimpel Hall  
 Fayetteville, AR 72701  
 479-249-4518  
 mls041@email.uark.edu

***Who is the Faculty Advisor?***

Dr. Patrick Slattery  
 Associate Professor of English  
 Department of English  
 University of Arkansas  
 717 Kimpel Hall  
 Fayetteville, AR 72701  
 479-575-2288  
 pslatter@uark.edu

***What is the purpose of this research study?***

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the University of Arkansas Composition I Community Ethnography Pilot course according to students, instructors, and administrators. The researcher will evaluate how each stakeholder group defines "success" for students in the context of Composition studies and whether or not this course is effective according to each groups' definition. This study will also seek to evaluate students' awareness of their own learning process and progress.

***Who is participating in this research study?***

This study is being conducted among three stakeholder groups in the Composition program at the University of Arkansas: students, instructors, and administrators. If you've been asked to participate, you are in one of these three groups.

IRB #16-07-020  
 Approved: 08/08/2016  
 Expires: 07/28/2017

***What am I being asked to do?***

*If you are a student*, signing this form means you are willing for any of the written work you complete in this course to be collected and used for the aforementioned research purposes. The researcher will only collect work that is already assigned in the course; don't worry - you won't be asked to complete any extra assignments for this research project, and allowing your work to be collected and evaluated will have no impact on your grade!

\*Eight students will also be asked to participate in three individual interviews with the primary researcher that will give the researcher valuable data on your perspective on the course as a student. Interviews are voluntary - if you are invited to participate in interviews, you are entirely free to decline. These interviews will not be graded and will have no impact on your grade in the course. Interviews will be scheduled for the beginning, middle, and end of the semester, and they will audio-recorded on campus and last between 20 and 30 minutes in length. The researcher may e-mail you with follow-up questions, and your responses would be part of the data.

*If you are an instructor*, signing this form denotes your willingness to participate in three audio-recorded interviews with the primary researcher. These interviews would be voluntary and would serve to provide data regarding your perspective on this course at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester and would last between 20 to 30 minutes in length. You are also consenting to the audio-recording of Pilot meetings throughout the semester. If you chose to share any instruction materials with the researcher (lesson plans, power-points, assignment sheets, etc), you are granting permission for these materials to be used as data.

*If you are an administrator*, signing this form denotes your willingness to participate in three audio-recorded interviews with the primary researcher. These interviews would be voluntary and would serve to provide data regarding your perspective on the course at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester and would last between 20 to 30 minutes in length. You are also consenting to the audio-recording of Pilot meetings throughout the semester. If you chose to share any course design materials with the researcher (syllabi, assignment sheets, etc) you are granting permission for these materials to be used as data.

***What are the possible risks or discomforts?*** There are no anticipated risks or discomforts involved in participating in this research project.

***How will my confidentiality be protected?***

All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. Collected data will be kept in a secure area (password-protected computers and locked offices). If any of data from you is utilized in a written report, you will be given a pseudonym, and the researcher will likewise use pseudonyms for people you happen to refer to in the course of the interviews. No identifying information will be used in any report or publication resulting from this research.

***What are the possible benefits of this study?***

This study has different benefits for the three stakeholder groups:

1. **Administrators** will benefit by having the Pilot course evaluated by an informed but objective party in that findings from this study will provide them with more means by which to assess whether or not the course is successful and, based on those determinations, whether or not to implement the pilot course as the standard Comp I course at the University of Arkansas.

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Expires: 07/28/2017

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2. Instructors will benefit from this study in that the information that they contribute will help the program administrators assess the continuation of, and/or any alterations to, the pilot course, making it more teachable and successful for them in the future.
3. Students who are interviewed will benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their own learning goals throughout the semester.

***How long will the study last?***

The study will last for the duration of the Fall 2016 semester. Some follow-up questions and/or clarifications may take place via e-mail after the fall semester has concluded, but you may respond at your convenience.

***Will I receive compensation if I choose to participate in this study?*** No, you will not be compensated for your participation in the study.

***Will I have to pay for anything?*** No, there are no costs associated with your participation in the study.

***What are the options if I do not want to be in the study?***

Participation in this study is completely optional - if you do not want to be in this study, you may refuse to participate. If you change your mind about being in this study, you may refuse to participate at any time after the study begins. Your relationship with your institution will not be affected in any way if you refuse to participate.

***Will I know the results of the study?***

Throughout the study, the researcher may share interpretations of the data collected with you so that you can help ensure that the researcher is representing your responses accurately.

***What do I do if I have questions about the research study?***

You are welcome to address any questions or concerns with the researcher at any point throughout the study. You can also contact the Faculty Advisor with any concerns that you may have with or without notifying the researcher. Finally, you may also contact the University of Arkansas Research Compliance office listed below if you have questions about your rights as a participant or if you'd like to discuss any concerns about, or problems with, the research.

Ro Windwalker, CIP  
 Institutional Review Board Coordinator  
 Research Compliance  
 University of Arkansas  
 109 MLKG Building  
 Fayetteville, AR 72701  
 479-575-2208  
 irb@uark.edu

I have read the above statements and have been able to ask questions and express concerns, which have been satisfactorily responded to by the principal researcher. I understand the purpose

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 Expires: 07/28/2017

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of the study as well as the potential benefits and risks that are involved. I understand that participation is voluntary. I understand that no rights have been waived by signing the consent form.

---

Printed Name of Participant

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Principal  
Researcher

---

Signature of Principal  
Researcher

---

Date

IRB #16-07-020  
Approved: 06/08/2016  
Expires: 07/28/2017



Office of Research Compliance  
Institutional Review Board

August 8, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: Morgan Scholz  
Patrick Slattery

FROM: Ro Windwalker  
IRB Coordinator

RE: New Protocol Approval

IRB Protocol #: 16-07-020

Protocol Title: *Curricular Analysis of the University of Arkansas Composition I Pilot Course: ENGL 1013 - Community Ethnography*

Review Type:  EXEMPT  EXPEDITED  FULL IRB

Approved Project Period: Start Date: 08/08/2016 Expiration Date: 07/28/2017

Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form *Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects*, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (<https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rscp/index.php>). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.

This protocol has been approved for 124 participants. If you wish to make *any* modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval *prior to* implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.

If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or [irb@uark.edu](mailto:irb@uark.edu).