2017-12-01

"What More Could I Have Done?" A Graduate Student's Experience Teaching Writing About Writing

Lena May Harper
Brigham Young University

"What More Could I Have Done?" A Graduate Student's Experience

Teaching Writing About Writing

Lena May Harper

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

David Stock, Chair
Kristine Hansen
Brian Jackson

Department of English

Brigham Young University

ABSTRACT

"What More Could I Have Done?" A Graduate Student's Experience
Teaching Writing About Writing

Lena May Harper
Department of English, BYU
Master of Arts

As writing about writing (WAW) research enters its "second wave," characterized not only by an increase in data-driven studies that theorize and assess the effectiveness of WAW curricula (Downs) but also by an increase in its prominence and adaptation, particularly among emerging writing studies scholars and teachers (e.g., Bird et al.), a space has opened for more and varied types of research, especially empirical research, to determine its effectiveness and to produce more solid recommendations for training and curriculum development, especially for those who are new to the field. This case study, which highlights how a novice teacher responds to a new teaching experience, aims to address the dearth of empirical research on WAW curricula and to aid other graduate instructors interested in teaching WAW or program administrators interested in implementing WAW. The study reports results from data collected (e.g., interviews, in-class observations, teachings logs) on the experience of a second-year MA graduate student in composition and rhetoric as he taught a WAW-based curriculum in a first-year composition (FYC) class in the beginning of 2016. His twenty students were also research subjects, but only a small portion of their data is reported here. The instructor's experience, chronicled in narrative form, began optimistically, though with a hint of skepticism, and ended in discouragement and even pessimism. These results were largely unexpected due to the instructor's confidence with and knowledge of WAW history, assumptions, and pedagogy and experience teaching FYC. However, his struggle with the approach reveals and confirms several important points for anyone hoping to teach or implement WAW. Particularly, new WAW instructors need sustained training, support, and mentoring to help them properly temper their expectations for the course, correctly and usefully interpret their experiences teaching WAW, successfully transfer prior teaching knowledge and methods to the WAW classroom, and ultimately find their place in WAW instruction.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Over the past ten years a new method for teaching first-year composition (FYC) has been gaining ground—and rather quickly at that. Called writing about writing, or WAW, the approach makes writing and research on writing the subject matter of the class, rather than teaching a general skills writing course complete with "mutt genre" writing assignments (Wardle, "Mutt Genres"). As Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs explain in the introduction to their coauthored textbook, the purpose of exposing undergraduate students to research from the field of writing studies is to reframe students' thinking about writing from "something we do" to "something we *know about*," based on the assumption that "changing what [we] know *about* writing can change *the way* [we] write" (*Writing about Writing* 1, emphasis in original). This approach to writing instruction is exciting and provocative. It has invited—and still does invite—conflicting perspectives on its appropriateness and effectiveness, especially as the approach becomes more and more popular.

Introduced to the field of composition studies in 2007 by Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs ("Teaching"), WAW is one response of many to more than one hundred years of ongoing debates over the merits and pitfalls of FYC. Scholars have long found fault with FYC for failing to teach students how to write in college and in the workplace, arguing that the general education course is remedial, aims to do too much, is overly focused on teaching skills, and is devoid of context (Bazerman; Connors; Crowley; Petraglia). WAW counters those criticisms by converting the course into an introduction to writing studies (Downs and Wardle, "Teaching"). Recognizing that FYC goals are not being met but also arguing that they really cannot be met as they currently are, WAW supporters see the course as having the potential to meet other meaningful objectives. One of those aims is to help students develop new ways of thinking about writing and about how

writing works so that the students can make more-informed and more-effective choices in each writing situation they encounter (Wardle and Downs, *Writing about Writing*). WAW creates a context for FYC, eliminates remedial expectations, and deemphasizes learning writing skills. As a result, students gain a more holistic understanding of how writing works in their lives and in the world (Wardle, "Continuing") and, arguably, also learn something about how to write. In addition, the course is attractive because it is so flexible. Wardle and Downs assert that "there are myriad pedagogical strategies for teaching this content" ("Reflecting Back"), meaning that there is no one way to teach the course, nor is there a prescribed curriculum.

The success and promise of WAW have been touted from the beginning: several composition instructors have written articles narrating their experiences teaching the approach and advocating for its use (Bird; Carter; Charlton; Dew; Wardle, "Intractable Writing"). Some had been teaching the approach for years before it was crystalized by Wardle and Downs, and their results and claims about the approach were encouraging: students ended the semester engaged and empowered (Charlton; Downs and Wardle, "Teaching") and left with "increased self-awareness about writing, improved reading skills, and a new understanding of research writing as conversation" (Downs and Wardle, "Teaching" 572). The forthcoming *Next Steps* (Bird et al.) contributes more depth and breadth to the research and provides helpful guidance for teaching the approach.

But as claims about WAW's success have begun circulating, so have questions of its effectiveness (e.g., Kutney; Miles et. al; Slomp and Sargent) as well as alternative teaching approaches (e.g., Daugherty; Hilliard; Morris; Yancey et al.). Invitations and opportunities to use empirical research to assess WAW have also arisen. Most WAW research to date has been conducted through teacher inquiry by professors steeped in writing studies knowledge (e.g.,

Downs and Wardle, "Teaching"; Bird; Carter; Dew) rather than by outsiders to the curriculum or field of writing studies. Additionally, some—including Wardle and Downs themselves—have expressed concerns about the ability of non-composition scholars, including graduate students, to teach WAW (Downs and Wardle, "Teaching"; Wardle, "Intractable Writing"). Although this perspective has evolved to an understanding that "teachers without training in composition and rhetoric" who are "smart, enthusiastic, willing, [and] good" can be trained to teach WAW (Wardle, "Intractable Writing"; see also Wardle and Downs, "Reflecting Back"), such claims are, again, supported by anecdotal accounts from faculty or by first-person narratives (for an exception, see Wardle, "Intractable Writing"); in addition, little has been reported on the success of having graduate students teach WAW. Currently, WAW research is still emerging; more and varied types of research, especially empirical research, are needed to determine its effectiveness and to produce more solid recommendations for training and curriculum development, especially for those who are new to the field.

To address this need and to inform future instruction in WAW, I designed a case study that chronicles the experience of Paul (pseudonym), a second-year MA graduate student in composition and rhetoric, who taught a WAW-based curriculum in a first-year composition class. I was especially interested in observing how a certain type of graduate instructor would teach WAW: one who had successfully taught first-year composition; who was familiar with the history, theory, and pedagogy of WAW; and who had expressed interest in teaching it. I chose a case-study method because qualitative research enables scholars to capture in detail the curricular experiences of instructors and students, providing multiple data points from which to better understand and assess the effectiveness of WAW curricula.

Reflecting the naturalistic method of case-study research, I asked the following research questions:

1. *What is a graduate writing instructor's experience teaching writing about writing as outlined in Wardle and Downs's textbook,* Writing about Writing*.*

2. *How do students respond to this curriculum in terms of their engagement with and attitude toward course content?*

However, the primary purpose and focus of the project was to examine and provide an account of the instructor's experience teaching WAW, especially how WAW contributes to his growth as a composition teacher and his perception of the impact of the curriculum on student performance. I approached the study much as McCarthy did in her 1987 study "A Stranger in Strange Lands": without a specific hypothesis. Similarly, I sought to gather data that would allow me to create a rich portrait of Paul's experience teaching WAW, focusing on the affective dimension of his experience—his concerns, emotions, attitudes, and successes (both actual and perceived). I draw on selected data to narrate and assess Paul's experience teaching WAW, which began optimistically and ended in discouragement. This project, which highlights how a novice teacher responds to a new teaching experience, aims to address the dearth of empirical research on WAW curricula and to aid other graduate instructors interested in teaching WAW or program administrators interested in implementing WAW.

Methods

My main reason for choosing a case-study approach centers on its ability to offer a much more detailed account, from the perspective of an outsider to the class, of a graduate instructor's experience teaching WAW. MacNealy defines a case study as "a carefully designed project to

systematically collect information about an event, situation, or small group of persons or objects

for the purpose of exploring, describing, and/or explaining aspects not previously known or

considered" (197). Researchers in writing studies have employed methods associated with case

study research to better understand novice instructors' experiences in the classroom (see, e.g.,

Restaino). This opportunity to explore, describe, and explain unknown information about the

WAW approach was especially appealing.

The case study approach allowed me to gather extensive data representing multiple data

points in an effort to capture the instructor's and students' experiences with the curriculum, data

which helped me draw more informed inferences about their attitudes and engagement. Further,

multiple data points allowed me to corroborate perspectives (e.g., classroom observation notes

corroborated the instructor's attitude as reflected in his teaching log entries and in the weekly

interviews). With no in-depth research from an outsider's perspective (not instructor-reported

data) on a graduate instructors' experience teaching WAW, this case study has allowed for

"more intensive analyses of specific empirical details" and, though the results are not

generalizable, they provide particular accounts that inform understanding of larger phenomena

(Fleming 21).

Participant Recruitment and Course Design

Paul was not a typical graduate student. We met in the fall of 2014 in a graduate seminar in

which we studied the *Writing about Writing* textbook as an introduction to composition studies,

and when I proposed to Paul the idea of teaching the course, he expressed great interest and

enthusiasm. When Paul taught the WAW course, he was finishing up his second and final year in

the English MA program, studying rhetoric and composition. His knowledge of composition

studies was strong. He was an experienced and faculty-lauded instructor, having taught three

FYC classes and one advanced writing class, and was an assistant writing program administrator.

He also had received excellent student reviews and a teaching award from the department. In

December 2015 I received authorization from the University Writing program for Paul to teach

an experimental section of FYC using the WAW approach and approval from the university's

Institutional Review Board to study Paul and his students.

   At this time, the strongest resource for teaching a WAW approach was the second edition

of Wardle and Down's *Writing about Writing* textbook. The textbook provides a repository of

academic readings about writing, offers prereading and postreading questions as well as possible

assignments, and focuses on writing-specific "threshold concepts," or "concepts that learners

must become acquainted with in order to progress in that area of study" (Wardle and Downs,

Writing about Writing vii). It stood out as a useful foundation and a helpful guide for someone

teaching a standalone WAW-based course. Consequently, I had Paul build his curriculum off

that book and the attendant instructor manual. With the help of a faculty advisor, who had

initially introduced Paul and me to WAW in a graduate seminar, Paul used the instructor's

manual in the *Writing about Writing* textbook to create a syllabus. The faculty advisor, who was

also teaching a writing about writing curriculum in an upper-division undergraduate English

class, used the same resources to develop a syllabus and course calendar similar to Paul's.

Together, the faculty advisor and Paul chose three major assignments (units) from the book for

the course—literacy narrative, rhetorical analysis, and discourse-community ethnography—and

added as the final unit a reflective essay. They planned to meet monthly after each unit to

debrief.

As stated in the introduction, Paul became the primary focus of the study, and the students in Paul's class were secondary research subjects. There were twenty students who were all in either their first or second semester (freshmen) at a private, religious university. They were informed of the study on their first day of class and were told that by staying in the class, they were giving their implied consent to be observed.

Data Collection

To create a robust data set that would capture Paul's experience in as much detail as possible, I collected three types of data: in-class observation notes, weekly interviews with Paul, and bi-weekly teaching logs written by Paul. To gauge students' engagement with and attitude toward the curriculum, I collected an additional data type: selected student writings. (See Appendix A for data collection instruments.) I also produced analytic memos during the data collection and analysis process.

Observation Notes

The class met twice a week for fourteen weeks, a total of 26 times, from 8:00 to 9:15 a.m. in a small classroom that accommodated about 30 students. Over the course of the semester (January–April 2016), I conducted 25 classroom observations. The purpose of these observations was to develop an impression of how the instructor and the curriculum influenced students' attitudes and engagement and also to corroborate the instructor's perceptions of student learning that he shared during interviews. My observations of Paul focused on his portrayal of confidence as an instructor and his teaching methods. I particularly noted how and what Paul taught, recording the questions he asked and his responses to and interactions with students. My

observations of the students focused on the type and degree of their participation in class. I looked specifically for signs of student engagement in terms of the number, type, and affective dimension of participation in class lectures and discussions and in small-group discussions and activities, such as peer review of their writing. Regarding general class participation, I noted students' comments and questions and whether these suggested positive, negative, or neutral attitudes toward course content and assignments. Regarding small-group or other participation, I noted whether students were on-task or off-task and commented on their level of engagement in these activities, whether extensive, moderate, or minimal, and the attitudes that were implied by their engagement (e.g., enthusiasm, positivity, skepticism, disengagement, disinterest, confusion, resistance). I also noted any relevant student comments I happened to overhear. All student data was labeled anonymous, and no identifying details of students were recorded.

Interviews with Paul

I conducted 14 interviews with Paul: a presemester interview, weekly interviews during the semester, and a postsemester interview. I interviewed Paul almost every Thursday in a study room a few floors up from his classroom right after he taught his class. The interviews lasted from 15 to 30 minutes and were audio recorded and later transcribed. I used a semi-structured approach (Prior), which allowed room for elaboration in ways that were relevant to but which extended beyond the scope of the initial questions. In the presemester interview I gathered information about Paul's process as he prepared to teach, his concerns and fears about teaching the class, and his experience in the past teaching FYC using the university's established curriculum. In weekly interviews I asked about Paul's perceptions of student learning, his

experience teaching the course, and his thoughts on the WAW approach, as well as any other questions that arose throughout our conversation or from my classroom observations. In the postsemester interview I asked Paul to reflect on his experience and compare it to his prior experiences teaching FYC.

Teaching Log

After each class, Paul wrote a short 200- to 400-word teaching log entry on how he had prepared for the class, his impressions of how the class had gone, and some general notes about what he had taught. At the end of each week, he emailed me his teaching logs.

Student Writings

Near the end of the semester, eighteen of the twenty students gave consent for their writing to be collected as part of this study. I collected writing that seemed most relevant to assessing students' understanding of and attitudes towards WAW: final drafts of writing assignments from each unit (literacy narrative, rhetorical analysis, discourse-community ethnography, reflective essay) and ongoing writing assignments called "freewrite threads," which were short, informal responses to reading assignments that Paul posted to an online discussion board about once a week, for a total of thirteen assignments. The prompts were adapted from questions found in the *WAW* textbook in relation to corresponding assigned readings and typically invited students to demonstrate comprehension and application of main concepts.

Analytic Memos

During the data collection and analysis process, I wrote 31 analytic memos (Saldaña)

throughout the data collection and analysis process, recording ideas, thoughts, and conclusions

about the research.

Data Analysis

Loosely following a grounded theory approach, I worked with my faculty advisor to

generate codes, categories, and themes from the data that would give form to Paul's experience.

We collaboratively employed several first-cycle coding methods to several data sets, beginning

with instructor data and moving to student data: we first employed a "middle-order" approach to

holistic coding, a combination of lumping and splitting data, in order to identify basic themes

and specific representative moments of those themes (Saldaña 142). This approach was crucial to

orienting us to the data and accommodated coding a variety of data sets as we "read and reread

the corpus to see the bigger picture" (143). As an extension of lumping the data, we employed

descriptive coding to help us better understand and capture what we saw happening in the data.

After several months of preliminary collaborative coding, which led to refinement and

elaboration of our codes and categories, we began electronic coding (28) by formatting and

uploading all data into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer software. In NVivo we coded

phrases and paragraphs in the instructor data for emotion and attitude; we coded phrases and

paragraphs in the student data for emotion, engagement, and attitude. To render this visually, we

exported the coded data into an Excel spreadsheet and created two scatter plot graphs (see

Appendix B) that revealed, over the course of the semester, contrasting attitudes toward the

curriculum between instructor and students. This visual rendering of the coded data confirmed

my impressions, based on classroom observations and interviews, of the overall trajectory of Paul's and the students' experience.

In light of the original aim of the case study, and because of limitations of time, my advisor and I agreed that I would set aside most of the student data and focus on revisiting the instructor data in order to describe Paul's experience and highlight his shift in attitude. Employing a more descriptive approach, I annotated, summarized, and described main ideas, events, emotions, and themes to help identify the key markers of Paul's experience. The choice to report Paul's experience in narrative form resembles Roozen's narrative of a graduate student's efforts to repurpose extradisciplinary literate practices for disciplinary purposes.

Findings

Presemester: Confident and Nervous Anticipation

In his presemester interview, Paul expressed confidence in himself as an instructor, both hesitation and excitement about teaching WAW, and some frustration about not having a lot of support from the faculty advisor.

Recognizing that although he didn't have a breadth of teaching experience, Paul expressed a love for teaching and said he felt "fairly confident in the classroom." He also said that expertise, which leads to confidence, makes a class successful, and he felt certain that he had enough of that expertise to be confident in teaching WAW. He knew the articles well and had used them to write several of his graduate seminar papers. In contrast, he said that he had felt far less prepared to first teach the university's traditional FYC course than he was feeling regarding teaching WAW.

While his confidence in himself as a teacher started out moderately high, his confidence in teaching WAW was fairly low. Although he knew the articles, he expressed uncertainty in how he would talk about them with the students. He also recognized the limitations of his knowledge as compared to someone with a PhD. At several points in the interview he mentioned that he didn't know what he was doing: he didn't know how to prepare, and he didn't feel much support, even from other faculty members in the MA rhetoric and composition program. Regardless, he said, "I know that I just have to do it."

Paul suspected that the students would not like the readings and would not fully—or even partially—engage with them. He expressed concern that the assignments in the book weren't very engaging, which for him was a critical component to learning. But he conveyed optimism that although the WAW curriculum would be hard for both him and his students, there would be value in it. He recognized that the general nature of students is to shirk at hard things, but he knew that they would need to be challenged to really learn and grow.

Paul stated that he wanted to teach WAW because he recognized the deficiencies of traditional FYC and was excited about the idea of composition becoming a "real" discipline. At the same time, he expressed skepticism that WAW would really be different than traditional FYC, but he hoped that he might "convince" himself of the value and usefulness of the approach.

Literacy Narrative (Weeks 1–4): Confident Skepticism

During the first unit, Paul continued to feel confident as a teacher and confident in his knowledge about WAW, but he was hesitant about teaching WAW, specifically the readings, and about student engagement. Overall he was excited about the course and felt that the semester was off to a positive start.

Paul set a tone for his teaching early on: confident, knowledgeable, friendly, caring, and responsive. He also set a tone for WAW early on, stressing to the students on the first day how difficult this section of first-year composition, particularly the readings, would be. However, he was perceptive of students' attitudes and concerned with teaching them and helping them understand, and he was sensitive to how they received the material.

Paul emphasized to his students the importance of the five writing threshold concepts, included in the introduction to the textbook, as central to understanding WAW. To more deeply engage the students with the material and measure their comprehension, Paul had them respond to the readings on an online freewrite discussion thread. Though encouraged by some of the students' responses, Paul felt that many of them were superficial. He also noticed that the students needed help digging into the articles more thoroughly, so he began pushing their thinking by responding individually in writing to their freewrite threads, which took a lot of his time. Paul used the freewrite thread responses to guide his lesson preparation, as they helped him know how the students were struggling and where he should focus his attention in class.

However, Paul struggled to integrate the readings and create class discussions around them. He frequently used group work and activities to help students understand and apply the main point from the articles, but he more often relied on lessons and activities he was familiar with—such as assigning group presentations on tropes and schemes, repetition, and appositives or talking about how the students could find rhetoric everywhere, including in the Twin Towers. As a result, the readings often took a peripheral role. He mentioned several times in the interviews that he wasn't spending as much time discussing the articles in class as he would have liked and admitted how important to comprehension and application such conversations were, but he frequently ran out of time just as he was starting a discussion.

At the end of the unit, Paul was content with how most of the students were engaging with the readings, yet he was slightly frustrated by their lack of comprehension. He reported that they had confused *literacy* with *literary* in their final papers, a mix-up that communicated to him both that they hadn't really grasped the main lessons of the unit and that he had not done his job as a teacher. He also noted that although he had talked often about the first threshold concept in class—"writing performance is informed by prior literacy experiences" (Wardle and Downs, *Writing about Writing* 7)—the students couldn't seem to remember it, even though it was particularly relevant to the literacy narrative assignment. Paul expressed concern that he didn't know how to get students to grasp the threshold concepts.

Rhetorical Analysis (Weeks 5–7): Confidence and Passion

During the second unit, Paul's confidence as a teacher grew as he taught familiar material related to analyzing a text using rhetorical concepts and principles. Despite this confidence, student engagement remained uneven, as did their final papers for the unit.

Paul noticed in the freewrite threads that the students were starting to have a particularly hard time with the readings. To help, he put more time into his responses to their freewrite threads. However, he felt like he had already been doing that, and he began to doubt if his efforts were really helping. He did begin integrating the students' freewrite thread responses into class activities and discussion. For example, he administered a quiz of rhetorical terms that incorporated definitions from the students' freewrite thread responses. And although he felt more comfortable integrating the WAW articles than in the previous unit, they often still fell to the periphery.

Furthermore, Paul supplemented the WAW readings on rhetoric with his prior experience teaching rhetoric. Because he was comfortable with and passionate about rhetoric and about teaching rhetoric, the unit became a positive experience for Paul, and it built his confidence. He knew how to help students learn and apply the rhetorical situation; he asked good, confident questions; and he made relatable conclusions to help his students think more deeply about rhetoric and understand how to write a rhetorical analysis. Even though Paul mentioned several times that he felt constrained by the way the textbook covered rhetoric—because it didn't discuss rhetoric in the way the traditional FYC curriculum did, which focused on ethos, pathos, and logos, for example, while those terms were not necessarily discussed in the *WAW* textbook—his instruction again resembled the traditional FYC classes he had taught more than the WAW curriculum as constituted in the textbook, and he relied heavily on his previous teaching experience with traditional FYC.

Paul noted that about half of the students were engaged and seemed to understand the material, but he didn't seem worried about it, saying that it was normal to see such a response from students. However, when the first drafts of the rhetorical analysis came in, Paul learned that the students weren't using the terms they had discussed in class and that their introductions were unfocused, which was contrary to the expectations he had made clear in the assignment description and in the classroom. He addressed these issues in class, and while the students did better on their final drafts, the results remained uneven. Paul was impressed by how well some of the students did, yet he was unsettled by the overall results. Still, he was excited to move to the discourse-community ethnography, as he felt the course had been leading up to that unit. He was encouraged by the students' engagement up to that point and was confident that the students had

a good foundation for moving into the ethnography, as they had read fourteen articles from the textbook up to that point.

Discourse Ethnography (Weeks 8–13): Frustration and Self-Doubt

From the very beginning of this unit, Paul displayed an uncharacteristic shift in attitude in the interviews. He became frustrated with himself, the students and their lack of engagement, and the curriculum, and those feelings only grew stronger as the unit progressed. By the time the students turned in their final papers, Paul had become almost callous toward the course.

In the first week of the unit, Paul began identifying some of his shortcomings as a teacher and questioning his capabilities in a way he hadn't before. He was especially worried that he didn't know how to help his students better prepare for their writing assignments. In fact, the phrase "I don't know" became a common vocalization in each interview as he tried to speak about his teaching and the students' engagement and attitudes, reflecting insecurities in his teaching and suggesting that he wasn't sure how to interpret his experience nor his students' experiences.

Although Paul's internal frustrations were beginning to grow, he did acknowledge that his students were learning in small ways. He thought that they were not yet ready for the ethnography but that they were strong enough to deal with the challenge. Paul did say that he felt one of the benefits of WAW to be that by the time the students got to the research unit, they were more prepared than the traditional FYC student to apply what they had learned, having become familiar with academic research, relevance, authority, and so forth.

In the second week of the unit, Paul received midsemester student evaluations. Although the student comments were mixed, he perceived them as primarily negative. Some of the

students said they were enjoying the class, the assignments, and the accompanying challenges. But Paul was flustered by the complaints about the boring nature of the assignments up to that point and the expressions of discouragement regarding the readings. Mentioning that the evaluations were "less than complimentary" and noting that the students were developing strong negative emotions for the class, Paul appeared to take the evaluations more personally than they were intended—as a critique on his teaching abilities. Further, he was unsure how to respond or how to fix the problems students were struggling with, which caused him to not only doubt himself more deeply as a teacher but also doubt the value of WAW and its readings.

As the unit progress, about half of the class continued to respond well to the coursework, and Paul was often encouraged by their solid responses to freewrite thread questions. However, the other half of the class continued to lag behind. While before Paul hadn't previously been concerned about this disparity, this division now began to raise a red flag. By the fourth week Paul said he was feeling "manic depressive" about how the course was going and how his students were engaging, and he spoke of how less than half of the students had accepted his invitation to conference with him about their papers. The students who did come to Paul for help were the ones who were already doing well. Deciding to not require students to conference with him about their papers was a change in practice for Paul, one he justified because of the time pressures he was feeling from other areas of his life. But it led Paul to dwell even more on his limits as a teacher, and he conceded that giving the students the support and guidance that they needed to be successful in the course would require more time and effort than he was able to give.

To counter his feelings of incompetence and to help students more deeply engage with the material, Paul set a goal to reinforce in this unit what they had learned in the previous two

units, hopefully helping them connect the terms and ideas to the discourse-community

ethnography. Paul's teaching of this unit, more than the previous two, most clearly resembled

WAW in terms of the in-class assignments, activities, and discussions to apply the readings to

their papers. Paul "hammered" into the students the concept of using the readings as a foundation

for their research. He hoped he could give the students enough direction in class so that they

could help each other during the peer reviews. At the same time, knowing how aloof the students

had been in the past, Paul was pessimistic that the students would actually engage and apply the

concepts as he wanted them to.

Though Paul set a mostly negative tone in his interviews, he was encouraged by the

students' rough drafts and the research work they were putting into their ethnography—doing

observations, collecting documents, conducting interviews, and creating surveys. He was

genuinely excited about their topics, and he saw the readings and the research they were doing to

be a helpful model for the rest of their academic lives. He remained hopeful that the students

would make more connections to the readings and understand how their argument could be

bolstered by them as the class and their projects progressed.

However, the more Paul saw his students struggle and develop fairly strong negative

emotions toward the class, the greater Paul's frustrations became and the less he saw the

moments of success and progress. The students seemed to invest in the course according to their

view of WAW and the value they saw in it, and Paul had the sense that the students hated the

course. He was concerned because the students were slow to submit their rough draft by the

deadline, and he was vexed when they began to regularly come late to class, sometimes not even

coming at all—seeing their absences and tardiness as an indicator of disengagement and apathy.

One week only eight of the twenty students were present when class started, and only sixteen had

come by the end of the class. This trend was even more disconcerting to Paul because of the university writing program's policy, which required him to lower their grades after three absences. He also expressed frustration because he was invested in the success of his students and wanted this final project to be beneficial for them.

"I don't feel like they care," he admitted in one interview. "And to be honest, if they don't care, then I don't care. I'm kind of at that point where I just want to help those who are like making progress, and I don't want to help those who are asking stupid questions."

Paul increasingly questioned his abilities as a teacher, and he struggled to understand why he felt so frustrated. At one point he lamented that, despite eliminating some readings to give students more time to work on their papers and instead using a freewrite thread to give them a good foundation for their papers, the students continued to miss key WAW concepts and failed to make important connections with threshold concepts. In their drafts they failed to name the authors they had read, they struggled to organize their papers according to the research moves they had learned and frequently reviewed, and they were making methodological errors. This caused Paul to question his instruction in the previous two units and wonder if he had taught the students well enough. And though Paul remained confident with the WAW readings, affirming that he knew the authors and their arguments, he struggled with knowing how to help the freshmen understand in one semester what he had learned in his two years of graduate school.

As a result of his dip in confidence, Paul began to feel that even his foundational teaching skills, such as asking good questions, were less than adequate, though he seemed as confident in the classroom as he had before. He did often express his concern to the students about their waning performance and decreased attendance. But in the interviews his vocalizations were more intense, and he would express great annoyance and even anger with his students. He wanted

them to do well, but he felt that no matter what he did, they were falling short. In his teaching log

he wrote, "I'm discouraged about how much this is not working. I'm not sure what else I can do

to help them." Eventually, in the last two weeks of the unit, where once he had felt concern and

interest in his students' success, he began to say in the interviews, "I'll just let you fail; I don't

even care."

Paul gave very few high grades on the final papers in this unit, which he said was rare for

him, as in the past he had given As much more freely. But he felt that most of the final papers

had not improved much from their drafts and the higher grades weren't justifiable. Those few

students who performed well led him to believe that it was possible for freshmen to do well in

this class, but the three students who received As to were also the only ones who had

conferenced with him about their paper and had gone to him several other times for help and

guidance.

Despite occasional signs of success in student comments or performance, Paul focused on

his shortcomings as a teacher and on student shortcomings in class. He was very hard on himself

in this unit, which was reflected in his attitude toward WAW. "I'm excited for this to be over,"

he said in his last interview of the discourse-community ethnography unit. "It's time to move

on."

Final Reflection Essays (Week 14): Resigned Pessimism

In final essays students used threshold concepts to identify and reflect on what they had

learned in the course over the semester. Paul and the faculty advisor coordinated to conduct a

joint-class peer review of the reflective essay, in which upper-division students peer reviewed the

final reflection essays written by Paul's students, and vice versa. Paul's students then revised and

presented their essays to the class (each student took 3–5 minutes) for the final exam of the course. The students spoke of the challenges they had encountered in the class, each acknowledging that it had been a difficult semester, but their presentations were surprisingly positive. They talked about how they had learned to see writing in a new light and said they were determined to carry over many of the principles they had learned, especially the threshold concepts.

For example, one student said, "Writing can be painful and learning about writing can be painful, but the threshold concepts are like a wonderful band-aid that you can stick on past writing scars and they'll assure you that everything's going to be okay." Another said, "My conception of writing changed a lot and I improved as a writer because of what I learned writing was."

Their overwhelmingly optimistic assessments of their learning only heightened Paul's skepticism of their learning and, by extension, the merit of WAW. In our interview after the final, Paul confessed that he didn't really believe students' assessments based on their attitudes throughout the semester; they had given the class way more credit than they actually might have believed it deserved. He felt they were concerned about their grades and weren't being completely honest. He noted that all students in their reflections mentioned how hard WAW was and concluded that "it was clear that they hated it all along." In fact, their actual essays revealed that they had experienced some resistance with the threshold concepts, the readings, and the course in general. Although Paul understood the theory behind assigning scholarly articles from writing studies to undergraduate students, he doubted the utility of the approach.

However, one student's essay both encouraged Paul to believe that there was merit in WAW while also demonstrating the difficulty of the course. The essay was brutally honest. The student wrote:

My experience with this curriculum challenged me more than I would've preferred. Had I known how challenging it would've been, I probably wouldn't have started off this semester with such a positive outlook for this class. Writing About Writing just does so much that no other writing class has ever done to me. For good and for bad. I expected to have a writing class with a lot of essays about random junk, and to be able to float through it by making up something that the teacher wanted to hear. But Writing About Writing asked for my soul, and I'm not even exaggerating to make this a fun essay to read. I'm serious, every writing assignment was personal. I couldn't just disconnect my personality and pass. This class forced me out of my comfort zone again and again, and I'm still frustrated with it. I'm so happy it's ending. But although it asked more of me than I would have liked, my experience in this class has given me a lot.

In the end, the negativity of the student's comment overpowered the positive for Paul. He hesitated to make the same connection for the rest of his students, and he struggled to find meaning in the challenges his students had faced with the WAW curriculum.

Postsemester: Moving Toward Optimism

At the end of the course, when asked which he thought was better—traditional FYC or WAW—Paul was ambivalent. "[I'm] just glad I got the chance to do it," he said in the final interview. "But yeah, I think we definitely need to have longitudinal studies on the effect of this class, and we need to have the back-end support. . . . I want to teach it one more time just to see

for sure." Even though Paul wanted to teach the course again, he couldn't recommend that other graduate-student instructors, especially those outside of rhetoric and composition, teach WAW. He felt it was hard enough for someone who had significant writing studies knowledge and who was eager to teach the course.

Ultimately, Paul said he had made his best case for WAW while teaching the course but that maybe only three or four students went along with it. He still admitted to liking WAW, and he had ideas for how he would teach it differently in the future, including using more activities from the book, assigning fewer articles to read, framing the readings more often, and spending more time unpacking the articles with the students.

Discussion

This case study documents a shift in Paul's emotions and attitudes over the course of his semester teaching WAW, moving from cautious confidence to skeptical frustration and even cynicism. Based on existing teacher-reported scholarship on WAW, Paul's experience was atypical. However, in light of forthcoming scholarship on WAW, Paul's experience, though disheartening, was unsurprising.

The primary factor affecting Paul's experience was most likely insufficient support for teaching WAW, and the other factors Paul encountered could be resolved by adequate training and continual support. Paul's talents as a teacher and his extensive familiarity with WAW could not compensate for a lack of sustained training, mentoring, and support needed to teach a new and particularly challenging curriculum. The absence of support certainly contributed to Paul's anxiety about teaching the readings effectively and likely led to two problematic pedagogical choices regarding the WAW curriculum: first, relegating the readings to the online discussion

board and then struggling to integrate them into class discussions and to help students understand

and apply them to their writing assignments; and second, misapplying the textbook's use of

threshold concepts, which are used as theoretical framing devices for each unit, by presenting

them as learning outcomes for the course and assigning students to use them at the end of each

unit and in their final reflective essays to assess their learning. Lack of support can also explain

why Paul relied heavily on his previous teaching experience and lesson plans, which resulted in a

problematic fusion of traditional FYC and WAW curricula. More generally, the lack of support

and mentoring, coupled with growing student resistance and complaints, triggered in Paul

excessive self-doubt, which underscored how his liminal status as a graduate student—in the

process of developing a disciplinary identity—inhibited his ability to fully and convincingly

enact that identity in a classroom setting where the success of the curriculum required it. I briefly

discuss each of these factors below.

A Lack of Support and Training

In the forthcoming edited collection *Next Steps: New Directions for/in Writing About*

Writing, a group of contributors identify reasons for WAW failures: (1) there is a lack of

institutional support (Bird et al. 480); (2) WAW requires more time to develop expertise to teach

the course and also time with the course to learn how to teach it most effectively (481–82); and

(3) teachers of WAW often perceive a lack of student engagement and are concerned that the

readings and the content are boring (482). The roundtable of authors attributes this lack of

engagement to the instructor's interest and understanding of WAW and consequent ability to

develop meaningful and interesting assignments. Paul had the interest and even the expertise, but

he lacked experience with the WAW approach in general, and he was unable on his own to make

connections for the students and teach the material as well as he wanted to—and in a way that might have more fully engaged the students.

These last two issues stemmed—at least for Paul—from the first problem: a lack of institutional support. WAW advocates have made it clear that "professional development is crucial to a WAW approach[,] and it's a long process" (Bird et al. 378). Because Paul did not receive the support, counsel, guidance, and full training that would have helped ensure his success, he could not fully implement his expertise; he had no mentors or peers to help him become familiar with teaching WAW, to ask questions of and receive feedback from, or to develop appropriate curriculum plans and activities. At the end of the course he mentioned that "back-end support" was something that WAW instructors need. Paul finished his teaching experience skeptical of the WAW approach, unsure that the students had learned what he and the course intended, and convinced that the students "hated" WAW.

Paul also felt that he needed to teach a specific class or curriculum—one he had to be "convinced" of. He failed to understand the flexibility of the approach or to see it as anything but a curriculum. At the same time, he was afraid to commit fully to the course and really try the activities and models provided in the *WAW* textbook. Support would likely have helped remedy these misunderstandings.

Paul's experience shows that a strong familiarity with the academic readings in WAW doesn't translate into effective instruction. Paul needed WAW-specific training at the outset and continued support throughout the semester. In Wardle's discussion of her pilot program at the University of Central Florida, she mentioned that her instructors received this support via opportunities to collaborate and discuss their experiences—in a peer group setting ("Intractable

Writing"). Such a peer group, especially a mentored peer group, would have been important and

helpful for Paul.

A Preoccupation with the Readings

As noted in the previous section, WAW advocates have reported that the scholarly

readings are one of the greatest challenges in teaching WAW: they often go over the students'

heads and weigh the students down with a heavy reading load (Bird et al. 384–85). Wardle added

that a particular challenge of WAW is knowing "how to help people teach difficult material"

(Bird et al. 384).

Paul began and ended the semester confident in his understanding of the readings; he

knew them well, as he had engaged with them before in many settings as a rhetoric and

composition graduate student, and he was excited about teaching the material. However, in the

presemester interview and throughout the first two units, he occasionally expressed an

uncertainty about knowing *how* to teach the articles. Likely as a result of that uncertainty, he

spent a large amount of time teaching the readings outside of class in private written replies to

students' freewrite thread responses. The readings did not have a central place in day-to-day

class time.

However, Paul's preoccupation with the readings surged at the beginning of the

ethnography unit. In fact, as soon as the rhetorical analysis unit ended, Paul entered into an

almost excessive, intense period of self-questioning, self-doubt, and regret, in which he

mistrusted his previous teaching of the readings and wondered if he had done enough to prepare

the students for the ethnography. Paul began to review and discuss the readings more in class,

but it seemed to be too late. In each interview he expressed severe frustration with the students

and their lack of engagement; he also expressed low confidence when speaking about helping the students understand and apply the readings.

Paul often ended up conflating WAW with the readings, seeing them as the curriculum rather than as a means to an end. As a result, and perhaps as a way to try to understand why things weren't working and students weren't applying the material as he would have liked, Paul began to blame himself for not having taught concepts well, even marginal ones, such as MLA style. In one interview he said, "I understand I don't explain things as well, and I assume they know things sometimes that they don't." He also focused repeatedly on the lack of time afforded to the class, using Downs and Wardle's initial assertion that the course may be better taught over two semesters as a point of comfort (574).

A recent contribution to WAW scholarship tackles the issue of the course's difficulty, especially regarding teaching it:

> WAW courses deliberately use unfamiliar texts to have conversations with students about reading, how we do it, and why it affects our writing. . . . And when students are lost and overwhelmed by the material they encounter, there is value in discussing, as a class, why there may be only one sentence that resonates for students and how we move forward from there. . . . Struggles aren't meant to be hidden, but explored and interrogated within the context of the course. And most often, as students in WAW courses enhance (or begin) their self-identity as an intellectual contributor, these struggles become for them one of the most valuable aspects of their WAW experience. (Bird et al. 6)

Although he at first acknowledged the benefits of students' struggles and the potential for growth inherent in them, over time Paul began to perceive their struggles as antithetical to learning and as evidence of his failure as a teacher and of WAW's shortcomings. This was

understandable based on his previous teaching experiences, in which he had come to equate learning with engagement and positive attitudes, and it was reflected in how often in the interviews he expressed concern over whether he was making the class interesting enough. The negativity he saw in the students was alarming to him, and he wasn't sure how to confront it or explain it. So he blamed himself—and WAW. But the fact that at the end of the course Paul was thinking about how he could teach a WAW course better the next time, if there were one, suggests that he didn't completely dismiss the theoretical basis for WAW nor the possibility of a successful WAW pedagogy.

Problematic Use of Threshold Concepts

In *Next Steps,* Elizabeth Wardle and Linda Adler-Kassner discuss the role of writing studies threshold concepts in WAW, noting that it is common for instructors to see them as outcomes rather than as foundational markers that students will cross in time, often after leaving the class (Bird et al. 70).

Paul used the threshold concepts as a way to frame the class. In the students' final reflective essays, they spoke to how their struggles with the curriculum had led to important learning and growth, specifically mentioning the role threshold concepts had played in their changed perspectives and even suggesting that they had crossed them. (Discussing threshold concepts was part of the essay prompt.) Paul remained skeptical, however, and was bothered by their assertions. It was clear to him, as evidenced by the results of their ethnography papers, that they had not crossed any thresholds, and he was doubtful that they would in the future. It seems he had unrealistic expectations for how much his students would learn and grow, expecting them

to completely cross the thresholds he taught them and dramatically improve in their writing skills.

A Reliance on Prior Knowledge

Robertson et al. define transfer as "a dynamic activity through which students, like all composers, actively make use of prior knowledge as they respond to new . . . tasks." This definition of transfer as a use of prior knowledge becomes important in understanding Paul's experience teaching WAW. Toward the beginning of the course, WAW played a relatively small role in the classroom; Paul often spent a significant portion of class presenting more familiar activities and ideas from the traditional FYC courses he had taught. This reliance perhaps allowed him to teach with a greater sense of safety and familiarity. Rather than spending the majority of class time discussing the assigned readings—often because he ran out of time, having spent the class time on these familiar activities—he took time outside of class to respond to the students' freewrite threads, seeking to help them to think more deeply about the material. This might have led to some of Paul's burnout, which also could have played a role in Paul's decision to make conferencing optional in the discourse-community ethnography unit.

During the ethnography unit, however, Paul turned his attention more to WAW-related material, discussing the articles and their application more in class. Because this unit was a completely new concept for him and could not be taught without WAW ideas and principles, Paul had no relevant prior teaching knowledge to draw from, and he struggled daily with the task of planning effective instruction. Wardle argues that the approach allows for flexibility in teaching styles ("Intractable Writing"), even accommodating previous knowledge. But in many ways, WAW is a new method that doesn't accommodate prior knowledge or pedagogical

practices, which can be challenging for new instructors and leave them uncertain about how to proceed in difficult situations.

A Crisis of Identity

Speaking to the teaching of a WAW approach, Wardle writes, "To teach a writing class informed by writing studies research, teachers must be or become familiar with relevant research in Composition Studies and then enact this knowledge in their classrooms" (Wardle, "Intractable Writing"). Paul had this qualification, but he struggled to enact this knowledge. Wardle continues: "In gaining and enacting this expertise, those teachers enact a professional identity with disciplinary standing." As Paul struggled to enact this knowledge, he also wrestled with enacting a professional identity.

It became clear through the interviews that Paul was always aware of his standing as a graduate student—albeit a bright and talented one steeped in writing studies knowledge. But this identity within the liminal space of graduate studies, where he was neither a full-fledged professional nor a novice outsider, was troubled by student apathy and resistance, resulting in his inability to fully enact a professional identity within the discipline for his students. He could never accept that he knew enough to properly teach the course, and as he wrestled with the curriculum in the ethnography unit, his standing as simply a graduate student became more and more apparent to him, until it became an explanation for why the students weren't performing as well as he thought they should. Paul's inability to fully adopt a professional identity inhibited his potential as a teacher. Although Paul was more "familiar with relevant research" than many other beginning WAW instructors, he still felt like an impostor.

Paul's experience is not solitary. Scott Launier, an instructor in Wardle's WAW program at the University of Southern Florida, expressed many of the same sentiments. Even after the initial training, Launier had unanswered questions, he wondered at the purpose of what he was teaching, and he assumed he was the least knowledgeable regarding rhetoric and composition out of the new adjuncts. Consequently, he struggled to find his place in the discipline.

Another factor that might have led to Paul's identity crisis was his expectation and desire for his WAW students to like him as much as his FYC students did. He was accustomed to being well liked as a teacher, and even though his students praised him as a teacher—one student even thanking him poignantly after class one day—he seemed especially sensitive to perceptions that students weren't engaged or didn't care, to the point where he took it personally.

Conclusion: Hope for Paul

Ultimately, much can be learned from Paul's experience about what other qualified, first-time WAW instructors—especially graduate students—might experience. Familiarity with the readings and a strong teaching foundation are not enough. Training and constant support are essential to help instructors to develop correct expectations regarding WAW and to transfer their prior teaching knowledge in a way that builds their confidence and helps them transition effectively to the new method. These findings are important for new instructors as well as for the growing body of research on WAW.

When I conducted this study, lack of institutional support was a limitation that I was fully aware of. In a way, one could argue I was setting Paul up to fail. Yet I believed that Paul was so well equipped to teach the course that minimal assistance (the presemester planning meeting, monthly debriefing meetings) would be sufficient, and I was surprised that he struggled as much

as he did. Although Paul perceived his and his students' struggles and resistance as signs of failure, forthcoming research suggests that these are actually positive indicators that the course is functioning as it should. And although Paul was skeptical of his students' claims to have crossed thresholds, the students' experiences were congruent with those mentioned by the editors of *Next Steps,* who note that students' struggles often become "one of the most valuable aspects of their WAW experience" and that they "find a passion for writing in WAW classrooms" and "are often convincing themselves of the various ways in which writing will matter to them after the course ends" (Bird et al. 6, 8). Both points—ultimately valuing struggle and finding meaning in writing and their writing instruction—formed the foundation of Paul's students' reflective essays, in which all eighteen of the students who allowed their essays to be collected admitted to initially struggling with the course but ultimately finding value from it and coming to appreciate writing at least a little through it.

It is in this student data—the other side of the story—that we find hope for Paul. Although there was not enough room here to present the results from the full collected dataset, there are many more stories beyond Paul's that can be—and need to be—told. It is difficult to know what is really implied by this case study and how unsuccessful or successful the course actually was without looking at the students' experience in addition to the instructor's. The next step, then, is to analyze the student data and add it to Paul's narrative. Furthermore, additional empirical research of this kind is needed from others in the field and would benefit the discipline as WAW continues to gain ground in composition studies.

Works Cited

Bazerman, Charles. "Response: Curricular Responsibilities and Professional Definition."

> *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction.* Edited by Joseph Petraglia,

> Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995, pp. 249–59.

Bird, Barbara. "Meaning-Making Concepts: Basic Writers' Access to Verbal Culture." *Basic

> Writing e-Journal,* vol. 8/9, no. 1, 2009/2010,

> bwe.ccny.cuny.edu/Issue%208_9%20home.html.

Bird, Barbara, et al., editors. *Next Steps: New Directions for/in Writing about Writing.*

> Forthcoming.

Carter, Shannon. "Writing About Writing in Basic Writing: A Teacher/Researcher/Activist

> Narrative." *Basic Writing e-Journal,* vol. 8/9, no. 1, 2009/2010,

> bwe.ccny.cuny.edu/Issue%208_9%20home.html.

Charlton, Jonnika. "Seeing Is Believing: Writing Studies with "Basic Writing" Students." *Basic

> Writing e-Journal,* vol. 8/9, no. 1, 2009/2010,

> bwe.ccny.cuny.edu/Issue%208_9%20home.html.

Connors, Robert J. "The Abolition Debate in Composition: A Short History." *Selected Essays of

> Robert J. Connors.* Edited by Lisa Ede and Andrea A. Lunsford, Bedford/St. Martin's,

> 2003, pp. 279–94.

Crowley, Sharon. *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays.* University of

> Pittsburgh Press, 1998.

Daugherty, Erin. "Writing Past Conflict, Writing for Your World." Conference on College

> Composition and Communication, 16 March 2017, Oregon Convention Center, Portland.

Dew, Debra Frank. "Language Matters: Rhetoric and Writing I as Content Course." *WPA: Writing Program Administration,* vol. 26, no. 3, 2003, pp. 87–104.

Downs, Doug. "Writing-About-Writing Curricula: Origins, Theories, and Initial Field-Tests." *WPA-CompPile Research Bibliographies,* no. 12, Sept. 2010, http://comppile.org/wpa/bibliographies/Bib12/Downs.pdf.

Downs, Douglas, and Elizabeth Wardle. "Teaching About Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning 'First Year Composition' as 'Introduction to Writing Studies.'" *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 58, no. 4, 2007, pp. 552–84.

Fleming, David. *From Form to Meaning: Freshman Composition and the Long Sixties, 1957– 1974.* University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

Hilliard, Logan. "Creatively Composing: Engaged Liberation in First-Year Composition." Conference on College Composition and Communication, 16 Mar. 2017, Oregon Convention Center, Portland.

Kutney, Joshua P. "Will Writing Awareness Transfer to Writing Performance? Response to Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle, 'Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions.'" *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 59, no. 2, Dec. 2007, pp. 276–79.

Launier, Scott. "Reply to 'Intractable Writing Problems': One Instructor's Experience Transitioning to the Writing about Writing Curriculum." *Composition Forum,* vol. 27, Spring 2013, http://compositionforum.com/issue/27/ucf-appendix4.php.

MacNealy, Mary Sue. *Strategies for Empirical Research in Writing.* Allyn and Bacon, 1999.

McCarthy, Lucille Parkinson. "A Stranger in Strange Lands: A College Student Writing across the Curriculum." *Research in the Teaching of English,* vol. 21, no. 3, Oct. 1987, pp. 233–65.

Miles, Libby, et al. "Commenting on Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle's 'Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions.'" *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 59, no. 3, Feb. 2008, pp. 503–11.

Morris, Sam. "Gladdening the Process: Voice, Social Identity, and Young Adult Literature." Conference on College Composition and Communication, 16 Mar. 2017, Oregon Convention Center, Portland.

Petraglia, Joseph. "Writing as an Unnatural Act." *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction.* Edited by Joseph Petraglia, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1995, pp. 79–100.

Prior, Paul. "Tracing Process: How Texts Come into Being." *What Writing Does and How It Does It: An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices.* Edited by Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004, pp. 167–200.

Restaino, Jessica. *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground.* Southern Illinois UP, 2012.

Robertson, Liane, et al. "Notes Toward a Theory of Prior Knowledge and Its Role in College Composers' Transfer of Knowledge and Practice." *Composition Forum,* vol. 26, Fall 2012, http://compositionforum.com/issue/26/prior-knowledge-transfer.php.

Slomp, David H., and M. Elizabeth Sargent. "Responses to Responses: Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle's 'Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions.'" *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 60, no. 3, Feb. 2009, pp. 595–96.

Roozen, Kevin. "Tracing Trajectories of Practice: Repurposing in One Student's Developing

>Disciplinary Writing Processes." *Written Communication,* vol. 27, no. 3, 2010, pp. 318–

>54.

Saldaña, Johnny. *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers.* SAGE, 2013.

Wardle, Elizabeth. "Continuing the Dialogue: Follow-up Comments on 'Teaching about Writing.

>Righting Misconceptions.'" *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 60, no. 1,

>Sept. 2008, pp. 175–81.

---. "Intractable Writing Program Problems, Kairos, and Writing about Writing: A Profile of the

>University of Central Florida's First-Year Composition Program." *Composition Forum,*

>vol. 27, Spring 2013, http://compositionforum.com/issue/27/ucf.php.

---. "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the

>University?" *College Composition and Communication,* vol. 60, no. 4, June 2009, pp.

>765–89.

Wardle, Elizabeth, and Doug Downs. "Reflecting Back and Looking Forward: Revisiting

>Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions Five Years On." *Composition Forum,*

>vol. 27, Spring 2013, http://compositionforum.com/issue/27/reflecting-back.php.

---. *Writing About Writing: A College Reader.* Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011/2014.

Yancey, Kathleen Blake, et al. *Writing across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of

>Writing.* UP of Colorado, 2014.

Appendix A:

Data Collection Documents

WAW Classroom Observation Form

Date:

Time:

Observation no.:

Instructor

Overview of Lesson Plan and Content (readings, assignments, etc.)

Teaching Strategies (activities, examples, practices, materials, etc.)

Content Knowledge (command of lesson's content—explain concepts clearly)

Confidence and Aptitudes (communication with students, voice and body language, response to questions, etc.)

Students

Student Engagement (class participation, group discussions, other activities)

Student Attitudes (response to assignments, participation, respect for instructor)

Researcher's Notes

WAW Interview Questions

Date:

Interview no.:

Questions about the instructor's experience/perceptions

How are you feeling about teaching the curriculum?

What was difficult this week? Why do you think that was hard?

What went well? Why do you think that is?

Did you enjoy teaching this week? Why or why not?

How might you change your teaching next week?

What influenced and shaped your preparation for class this week?

Questions about the instructor's perception of student attitude/engagement

What are your perceptions of student attitudes and engagement?

How did they react to this week's lessons?

Do you think they read? How much do you think they understood? After your discussions, do

      you think they understood better?

When were the students most engaged? When were they least engaged?

Additional questions may be asked to seek clarification on participant responses such as,

"Would you please elaborate on that?" or "Could you tell me more about [response]? or

"Anything else to add?" The researcher will also ask the instructor to share insights or content

from entries in his teaching log.

Appendix B:

Scatter Plot Graphs

After coding instructor and student data for positive and negative emotions, I used NVivo

software to tally the total numbers and then exported the data to an Excel spreadsheet and

generated the following graphs that chart the change in attitude over the course of the semester.

Frequency reflects the number of times a word or phrase was coded as positive or negative. The

solid lines reflect the weekly data points, and the dotted lines, which are perhaps the most telling,

show the overall trajectory of attitude over the course of the semester.
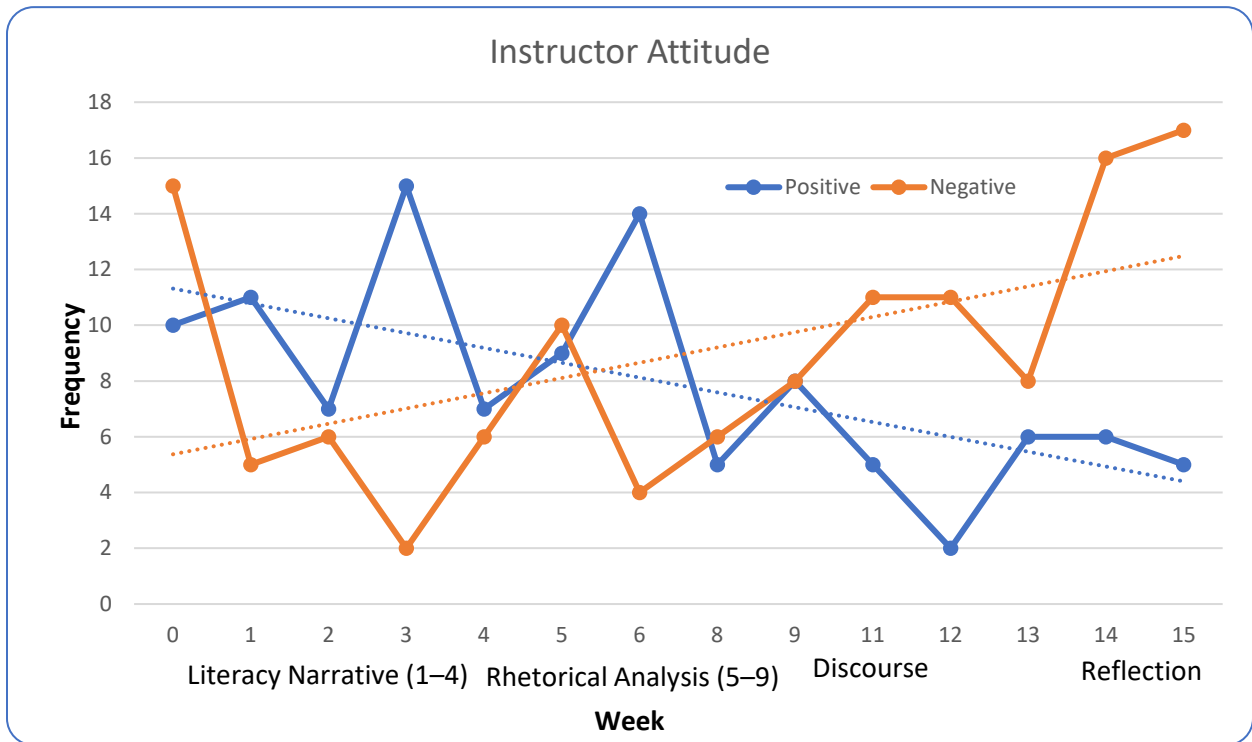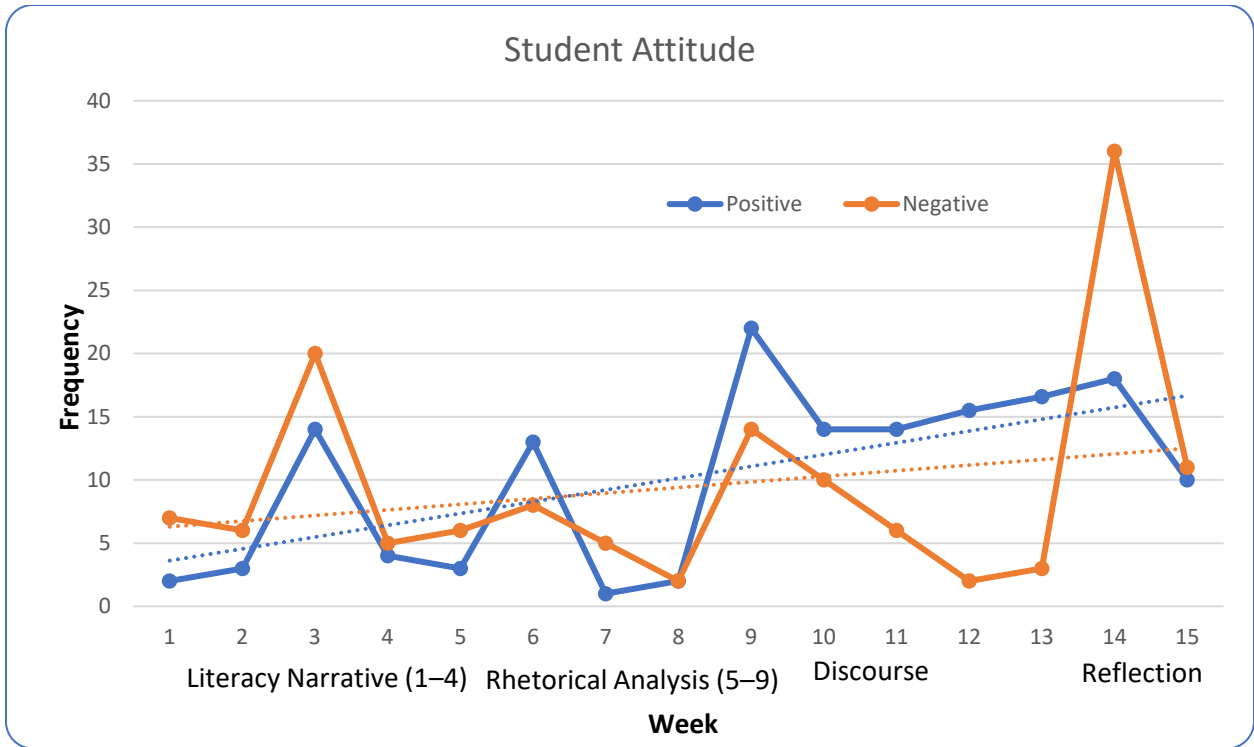

Figure 1. Change in instructor attitude over time

Figure 2. Change in student attitude over time