**Findings**

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways in which first-year composition programs implement multimodal composition assignments in first-year composition curriculum. Specifically, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How, if it all, do digital rhetoric, procedural rhetoric, and the concept of electracy influence first-year composition curriculum and approaches to digital literacies in the field of rhetoric and composition?

2. What types of assignments and platforms allow for an attempt to combine theory and application in the composition classroom?

At the start of this research study it was believed that there existed a general agreement regarding first-year composition curriculum including multimodal assignments in an effort to build 21st century literacies as a result of new and/or newer technology used in the process of composing and communicating. The NCTE Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies published in 2005 defines multimodal literacies, and provides an overview of the benefits of multimodal assignments as an integral part of developing literacies when it states “the use of different modes of expression in student work should be integrated into the overall literacy goals of the curriculum and appropriate for time and resources invested” (NCTE, 2005). Identifying the mixing of modes as an important part of developing literacies, and clearly stating it should part of a student’s literacy goals helped to put an end to the discussion regarding the inclusion of composing by mixing modes in composition curriculum. The WPA Outcomes State for First-Year Composition (v3.0) released in 2014 presents the practices, research, and theory of composition teachers in postsecondary education. The statement identifies rhetorical knowledge as “the basis of composing” (WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0 Authors go here). It specifically addresses the use of technology and multiple modes under Rhetorical Knowledge, and Process, whereby students should be able to “understand and use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences,” and “adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities” (WPA Outcomes Statement 3.0 Authors go here). The specificity of the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (V3.0) give credence to the notion that it is accepted among composition instructors and WPAs that multimodal composition and therefore multimodal assignments should not only be part of first-year composition curriculum, but that they should also be a regular practice in first-year composition classrooms. The WPA does not provide specific information about types of assignments; rather they give an overview of desired outcomes for the students after completion of a composition course.

To research and evaluate multimodal composition assignments in first-year composition an online survey was distributed to Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) and first-year composition instructors.

**Table 1 Summary of Survey Participants**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of Survey**  **Participants** | **Number Agreeing to Participate in Survey** | **Number of Surveys**  **Started** | **Number of Surveys Completed** | **Survey Completion %** |
| 83 | 82 | 76 | 58 | 76.31% |

The online survey drew 83 unique users; meaning 83 participants successfully began the survey by reading about the dissertation study. 82 participants agreed to continue the survey, while only 76 of the 82 participants that agreed to participate successfully started the survey. In total 58 surveys were completed, for a completion percentage of 76.31. The demographic of the 76 participants is made up of WPAs, professors, lecturers and graduate student instructors.

**Table 2 Summary of Survey Participant Demographic**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Answer** | **%** | **Count** |
| 1 | Writing Program Administrator | 34.21 | 26 |
| 2 | Graduate Instructor | 27.63% | 21 |
| 3 | Professor | 21.05 | 16 |
| 4 | Lecturer | 17.11% | 13 |
|  | Total | 100% | 76 |

Question 11 of the online survey asks participants “How many, if any, assignments require students to create multimodal compositions are part of the FYC curriculum you teach?”

**Table 3 Summary of Responses to Survey Question 11**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of Multimodal Assignments in FYC Curriculum** | **Participant Response to Question 11** | **Percentage of Participant Response to Question 11** | **Percentage of FYC Curriculum with 1 or More Multimodal Assignments in FYC Curriculum** |
| 0 | 12 | 20% | 0% |
| 1 | 21 | 35.00% | 35% |
| 2 | 13 | 21.67% | 21.67% |
| 3 | 6 | 10.00% | 10% |
| 4 or more | 8 | 13.33% | 13.33% |
| Total | 60 | 100% | 80% |

Responses indicate that 80% of participants teach a first-year composition curriculum that includes at least one multimodal assignment. Of the 48 survey participants with a first-year curriculum that includes at least one multimodal assignment, 27 (45%) teach a first-year composition curriculum that includes two or more multimodal assignments. The survey participants are small in sample size, but the high percentage of first-year composition curriculums with at least one multimodal assignment indicates multimodal composition is common in first-year composition curriculums.  
**Table 4 Types of Multimodal Composition Assignments**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Types of Multimodal Composition Assignments Taught in FYC Curriculum of Survey Participants** | **Count** | **Percentage** |
| Website based assignments | 45 | 27.78% |
| Graphic based assignments | 40 | 24.69% |
| Video based assignments | 36 | 22.22% |
| Audio based assignments | 35 | 21.60% |
| None | 6 | 3.70% |
| Total | 162 | 100 |

Survey responses from the 48 participants that stated the first-year composition curriculum at their institution included at least one multimodal assignment identified a variety of types of assignments that are taught as multimodal. Participants could select more than type of multimodal assignment, which accounts for the number of total responses (162), which is higher than the actual number of survey participants. Website based assignments made up 27.8% of responses, with graphic based assignments as second most common multimodal practice with 24.69%, video based assignments made up 22.22%, and audio based multimodal assignments made up 21.60% of responses. The multimodal composition assignments as part of their first-year composition curriculum are both major and minor assignments. 21 of 56 total (37.5%) participants answered that the multimodal assignments in their curriculum are major assignments. 6, (10.71%) answered that the multimodal assignments in their curriculum are minor assignments. 20 (51.79%) participants answered that the multimodal composition assignments in their curriculum are a mix of major and minor assignments.

**Table 4 Summary of How Instructors Provide Feedback**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of Feedback** | **Count** | **Percentage** |
| Written comments | 44 | 20.09% |
| Conference outside of class | 39 | 17.81% |
| In class discussion | 36 | 16.44% |
| Rubric | 34 | 15.53% |
| Comments delivered via course management system | 33 | 15.07% |
| Audio comments | 14 | 6.39% |
| Video Comments | 12 | 5.48% |
| Other | 7 | 3.2% |
| Total | 219 | 100% |

Instructor feedback on the multimodal composition assignments provided to students varied. The most common way feedback was given to students was in the form of written comments. Conferences outside of class and in class discussion followed. 15.07% of responses recorded delivering comments through a course management. Audio comments, and video comments were the lowest used method of providing feedback to students. Participants were allowed to check the different methods they use to deliver feedback to students on multimodal composition assignments.

To better understand how multimodal composition is implemented and taught in first-year composition classes survey participants were interviewed. Of the 58 participants that completed the online survey 27 indicated they would continue participating in the study if contacted for a follow-up interview. Of these 27 participants, 10 were selected to participate in a follow-up interview. A total of 9 survey participants accepted interview requests. Interviews took place in September and October of 2017. Interviews were conducted over the phone, and lasted approximately twenty minutes. Interview participants answered seven to eight questions depending on their survey responses. Each participant answered questions about when they last taught first-year composition, scholars and practices that influence their pedagogy, how they assess multimodal assignments, and follow-up questions to their individual survey responses. Due to survey responses demonstrating a high number of first-year composition curriculums including at least one multimodal assignment 8 of the 9 survey participants interviewed taught at least one multimodal composition assignment. A total of 8 out of 9 interview participants taught a first-year composition course within the last year. 7 of the WPAs and instructors interviewed were teaching a first-year composition during the Fall 2017 semester/quarter. The only survey participant interviewed that did not recently teach a first-year composition course is participant #2, a WPA at a Midwestern university who has not taught a first-year composition course in five years. Interviewing WPAs and first-year composition instructors that recently taught a first-year composition course benefits this study because any multimodal assignments or practices they assign to their students reflect their most recent or current approach to multimodality.

**Table 5 Interview Table**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Position** | **Last Taught FYC** | **University** | **Location** |
| Natalie (Give Fake Name) #1 | WPA | Fall 2017 | Baccalaureate College | Pacific Coast University |
| Singleton (Give Fake Name) #2 | WPA | 5 years ago | R1/Doctoral Granting | Midwestern University |
| Parfitt (Give Fake Name) #3 | Associate Professor | Spring 2017 | Doctoral Granting | Northeast University |
| Tonya (Give Fake Name) #4 | Teaching Professor | Fall Quarter 2017 | Doctoral Granting | Pacific/West Coast University |
| Monty (Give Fake Name) #5 | Assistant Professor | Spring 2017 | Doctoral Granting | South Texas? Southern University? |
| Hunt (Give Fake Name) #6 | Associate Professor | Spring 2016 | Doctoral Granting | Pacific/West Coast University |
| Burke (Give Fake Name) #7 | ??? | Fall 2017 | Associate College | Southern Community College |
| Stewart (Give Fake Name) #8 | Assistant Professor | Fall 2017 | Doctoral Granting | Midwest University |
| Freeman (Give Fake Name) #9 | Lecturer | Fall 2017 | Doctoral Granting | Pacific/West Coast University |

**Standard Curriculum in** **First-Year Composition**

In order to understand the extent to which the participants could integrate their own assignments the survey includes a question that prompts survey participants to identify if they teach in a standard curriculum, and what elements of their curriculum are standard. I wanted to find out how much control they had over the curriculum, and how they worked within the parameters of a standard curriculum, or standard elements in their curriculum. The survey responses of 6 of the interview participants indicated in their survey r they teach in a curriculum they described as standard, but the elements of the curriculum that are standard vary. Interview participant #1 is a WPA whose program uses a standard syllabus and learning outcomes that are specific to the needs of their student population. Similarly, interview participant #6 also teaches in a first-year composition program that uses standard learning outcomes. This suggests instructors have freedom to teach assignments they feel will meet the learning outcomes as set by the program. The instructors at the university interview participant #8 teaches at use the same handbook, but no other element of their curriculum is identified as standard.

Interview participant #2 is a WPA of a program with a curriculum where assignment prompts for textbooks and the syllabus are standard, but these are primarily intended for graduate instructors. Veteran faculty have more freedom and are not expected to follow the assignment prompts.#3 teaches in a first-year composition program where the only standard component is the e-portfolio, which is also part of a university-wide initiative. Students at this university use the same software to publish their work online. The standard element of the curriculum of the program #9 teaches in is also an end of semester portfolio, which is under the process of becoming an e-portfolio. The standard elements of first-year composition curriculum these six interview participants teach vary, but within their programs exist an opportunity for instructors to implement their own approaches and ideas as to how to achieve their learning outcomes, the e-portfolio, or prompts. This freedom suggests that the standard elements in their program or curriculum do not hinder their approach to multimodality in their classroom.

**Table 6**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Interview Participant** | **Standard FYC** |
| Natalie (Give Fake Name) #1 | Syllabus and Learning Outcomes |
| Singleton (Give Fake Name) #2 | Handbook and Assignment Prompts |
| Parfitt (Give Fake Name) #3 | E-Portfolio |
| Hunt (Give Fake Name) #6 | Learning Outcomes |
| Stewart (Give Fake Name) #8 | Handbook |
| Freeman (Give Fake Name) #9 | Portfolio/E-Portfolio |

**Multimodal Composition Assignments in First-Year Composition Curriculum**

Every interview participant teaches a multimodal composition assignment. The type of assignment varies by instructor, but 8 of the 9 interview participants teach a first-year composition curriculum that features the multimodal composition as a major assignment. The first-year composition curriculum of participant #7 includes a multimodal assignment that is not a major assignment, but a minor assignment in terms of points that is part of a larger assignment. This indicates that students spend a significant amount of time composing by mixing modes.

The first-year composition curriculum of 7 of the interview participants includes a multimodal assignment that is first a text heavy written work, which requires students to take that work and make it multimodal.

**Table 6**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Interview Participant** | **Number of Multimodal Assignments Taught** | **Original or Text Heavy/Only First** | **Major/Minor Assignment** |
| Natalie (Give Fake Name) #1 | 2 | Original | 1 major  1 minor (throughout semester) |
| Singleton (Give Fake Name) #2 | 1 | Text Heavy/Only First | Major |
| Parfitt (Give Fake Name) #3 | 1 | Compilation of assignments (e-portfolio) | Minor |
| Tonya (Give Fake Name) #4 | 2 | Text Heavy (Major)  Original (Minor) | Minor (WM)  Major (G3A) |
| Monty (Give Fake Name) #5 | 1 | Text Heavy/Only First | Major |
| Hunt (Give Fake Name) #6 | 1 | Students Choose | Major |
| Burke (Give Fake Name) #7 | 1 | Text Heavy/Only First | Minor (10%), but part of major assignment |
| Stewart (Give Fake Name) #8 | 1 | Text Heavy/Only First | Major |
| Freeman (Give Fake Name) #9 | 1 | Text Heavy (FYC 2) Original (FYC 1) | Major |

Students in the first-year composition program at the midwestern university where #2 serves as WPA write an analytical research paper throughout the semester. At the end of the semester students must participate in a symposium where they present their research. Students present their research by giving a scripted talk about their research while images move behind them on a screen, similar to a TED Talk. This is the multimodal assignment in their curriculum.

Interview participant #2 describes the analytical research assignment as a“ major assignment that is a scaffolded analytical research essay that works through several stages over the course of the semester,” which includes a “secondary related assignment that's multimodal” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 22, 2017). The presentation of their research at the symposium accounts for 30% of the student’s grade, making it a major assignment, but it is not an assignment every student in their program completes.

Interview participant #2 explains this by stating *“We do have a standard curriculum, but I have to asterisk after that because we also allow instructors with significant teaching experiences, or instructors who are faculty members or instructors who are lecturers to make informed changes to the way they teach the class. And so there, almost every section follows through with an assignment, either exactly or much like the symposium. A few don't do it at all, and that's ok with me,”* (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 22, 2017).

Students presenting their research is important to this program, as evidenced by the total percentage points that assignment is worth, but the multimodal element of this assignment is not mandatory in every composition class. By pointing out that full-time faculty members or lecturers, essentially any instructor with a lot of experience is not forced to participate and/or include a multimodal assignment in their curriculum suggests that multimodal composition assignments are likely taught by graduate instructors that are also new instructors, because they would not have the freedom to change the curriculum in this first-year composition program. The description of the assignment as alphabetic text first, and then repackaged as a script to be recited with moving images playing in the background makes this a multimodal assignment that is limited to two modes of communication, images and text, assuming text appears on the images on screen behind the student. This format does not support video images, and so this multimodal assignment is similar to a slideshow. More important, since veteran instructors have freedom to not teach a multimodal assignment it is highly likely a number of students in their composition program may take a composition course where they are not required to compose by mixing modes. The WPA at this university understands that this is a possibility, but does not view it as problematic because “it's a very small number of sections where this might happen” and while “they're probably doing something that I would not identify as multimodal” their experience affords them “the kind of discretion to design the course the way they like” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 22, 2017).

The community college instructor interviewed (#7) approaches multimodality in a similar way. This instructor’s students must present their research, but they do not present in a symposium. Rather, they create a slideshow using PowerPoint or other similar software and present their work to the class. However, they must create a poster using their slides to be placed on campus where their fellow students and other instructors are encouraged to leave feedback.

Rather than spending class time learning about how to make a PowerPoint presentation students “work on layout,” and think about“how do you organize a poster board” in terms of “from left to right, top to bottom, how do you read them, how do you emphasize one infographic over another, where does the works cited page go”(J. Falcon, personal communication, September 27, 2017).This instructor goes on to explain that the end result is students preparing boards to be put up for a week on campus and “the idea is that they're getting feedback from me” and “then they get feedback from the audience -- people who walk by and who put up sticky notes on their boards”(J. Falcon, personal communication, September 27, 2017)

This approach to multimodality is based on audience with a focus on showing “the students how wide and varied their audiences is, and how different people have different reactions to what they say” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 27, 2017). This instructor understands that this approach to multimodality is dependent on audience participation, but he explicitly uses it to “make the point that if you get no feedback on your board, that's going to tell you something. That you picked a topic that your audience isn't really interested in or your topic is presented in a way that doesn't engage the audience. In the absence of feedback is feedback” *(*J. Falcon, personal communication, September 27, 2017). This multimodal assignment may not allow for the use of sound or video, but it does require students to think about arrangement, and audience.

The first-year composition curriculum of interview participant #9 also requires students to turn their research paper into something multimodal. In this first-year composition course students write a research paper with an intended audience of people in their discipline, and then they do what this instructor refers to as a “popularization of that project, in which they put together some sort of either poster, or usually an actual presentation some elements there, adapted tones that they present them to a more popular audience” *(*J. Falcon, personal communication, September 21, 2017). Students share their work as part of a first-year composition research festival. This instructor does not dictate which modes students must use, but instead allows students to choose which they feel most comfortable with based on previous knowledge or experience. In this major assignment more attention is given to the process of students rethinking their project by presenting it using different modes. The instructor explains that students often “have a project and then they move on from that project and never think about it again, and they think of the work as kind of fixed and it kind of having to take a project and transmit it to another mode I think makes them rethink it and use different parts of their brain” *(*J. Falcon, personal communication, September 21, 2017).

Interview participant #8 teaches in a program that uses the same handbook, but does not have any other standard requirements. This instructor follows a similar pattern of requiring students to remediate a text heavy paper. Students in part one of a first-year composition courses write a persuasive essay and upon completion of the text heavy assignment they create a video or infographic based on their work. In the second composition class students “write a research paper and then in the last week” and turn that into “either a poster or a video or any other kind of visual representation of their topic” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 28, 2017). Students choose the type visual they’d like to create and to create this visual based on their audience. The research paper is for an academic audience, but the visual is to be presented to the class and so the audience is now their peers. Framing the multimodal assignment around audience requires this instructor’s to think about “the best way to present your information that would be appealing to your audience,” and after students make the decision about the best way to present their information they must explain to their instructor why they chose the mode they did in an effort to justify their rhetorical choices.

Interview participant #4 teaches in a first-year composition program with no standard elements. This instructor teaches two major multimodal assignments and developed assignments as part of a WPA grant with other scholars at different institutions.

“Students create their own theory of writing which means that they think about which key terms and concepts have been most influential to their writing practice and writing caveats and they talk about why these particular terms and how they are going to take them up in their future writing classes. So, we have some informal writing that takes the place of what I call discovery. They also do some word mapping. They also do some digital illustrations of their key words. So, they have total choice there. And then they sort of brainstorm and write a draft that is sort of text heavy and then they transform it into whatever genre that they want. And the multimodality in that assignment is optional” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 22, 2017).

The other multimodal assignment in this first-year composition class is one part of a three part assignment. Students write a 8 to 10 page inquiry based research paper, and then they “create this composition in three genres. And one of them has to be print based, or text based as opposed to print based. Their second one has to be multimodal and their 3rd one, has to be audio or visual or audio/visual” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 22, 2017). This assignment was born out of the instructor’s desire to see students compose in different genres in addition to learning about them, and using multiple modes to achieve this.

The first-year composition program of interview participant #5 has a set of learning outcomes that need to be met, but no other element of the curriculum is standard. This instructor follows the trend of basing the multimodal composition assignment on research paper students write. In this instructor’s class students create a public document based on their research paper and choose modes to use based on the best way to reach the audience. This instructor approaches this multimodal assignment“in terms of a very broadly defined rhetorical situation that they're entering to and then make their decisions based on the context, audience, constraints, whatever they have available to them, and sometimes that involves writing something that isn't strictly like an academic text” (J. Falcon, personal communication, October 16, 2017). The public document element to this multimodal assignment makes it similar to the symposium of interview participant #2, but with the added goal of their work serving the public.

Interview participant #6 last taught first-year composition in the Spring of 2016. The first-year composition program at this university is currently undergoing changes in curriculum and learning outcomes. This department also teaches public speaking and combines writing and public speaking in those classes. The first-year composition courses do not follow a standard curriculum, and the current learning outcomes do not include multimodal composition. The new learning outcomes include digital composition, which is understood to include multimodal composition, but does not specifically multimodal composition. This instructor provides multimodal options for students in the public speaking class. Specifically, this instructor allows students to compose by mixing modes to help them present arguments if they are not yet succeeding in their writing classes at the level they should be, and/or they have prior knowledge or skill in mixing modes. This instructor has always suggested to students that they have “multimodal options and I try to support them and designing something that would match their interests and skills rather than having it be an assignment they have to produce” (J. Falcon, personal communication, October 12, 2017). In the Spring 2016 first-year composition course this instructor taught a shareable assignment, where students had to “translate their sort of research essay work into something that would be more easily shared,” with a goal to have students compose something “that somebody would share as if they could on social media” (J. Falcon, personal communication, October 12, 2017). Again there is the approach that students write a more traditional research paper, and then repurpose it to meet the specific assignment guidelines and goals.

Interview participant #3 last taught first-year composition in the Spring of 2017. The first-year composition program at this university has one standard element. Each student must create an e-portfolio, and this is the multimodal aspect of their first-year composition curriculum. This is part of a university wide program that encourages students to upload their work. Students use Digication, a platform designed by an instructor at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). This platform is described as a “bit more friendly to visuals and video than it is to text,” and “in order for it to look like a website” students must “post pictures, and videos” so that “their E-portfolio does begin to look like more than just a kind of archive” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 19, 2017). As students post more one their e-portfolio “it begins to look more like multimedia website over time,” which should also include a section for each course they are enrolled. However, not every section of a course is included. The e-portfolio “tends to fill up with their essays, and those essays are often entirely text,” which the program would like to change in the future, so that if students post in their e-portfolio the posts would “be multimodal compositions and so we're moving more and more in that direction” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 19, 2017). There are no specific requirements for students to make their E-porftolio multimodal by adding multimedia to it, or remediating their text heavy assignments to something more multimodal. The e-portfolio itself does not have specific learning outcomes or guidelines, rather it acts as a “showcase for work that has its own learning outcomes” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 19, 2017). It’s unclear how much, if at all, students compose by mixing modes.

**Assessment**

**Table 7**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Interview Participant** | **Assessment Focus (Product or Process)** | **Uses Rubric** |
| Natalie (Give Fake Name) #1 | Process (drafts)  Product through reflection | Yes |
| Singleton (Give Fake Name) #2 | Product | Yes |
| Parfitt (Give Fake Name) #3 | Product (For Completion Only) | No |
| Tonya (Give Fake Name) #4 | Product | Yes |
| Monty (Give Fake Name) #5 | Process through reflection | Yes |
| Hunt (Give Fake Name) #6 | Process | Yes |
| Burke (Give Fake Name) #7 | Product | Yes |
| Stewart (Give Fake Name) #8 | Product through reflection | No |
| Freeman (Give Fake Name) #9 | Product (text more than design) | Yes |

In order to gain a well rounded view of each instructor’s approach to multimodality a question was asked about how they assess multimodal projects in first-year composition. The focus on either process or product provides insight on what the instructors value when teaching multimodal assignments. A total of 7 out of 9 interview participants use a rubric to assess multimodal composition assignments. Four instructors that use a rubric for assessment teach a multimodal composition assignment that requires students to write a reflection. The reflection assignment serves as a guide for instructors when grading. Interview participant #5 uses the student reflection as a way for students to “explain or explain to me how to assess it. So in a lot of ways they're reflection on that project tells me a lot more about the project than the product itself” (J. Falcon, personal communication, October 16, 2017). Interview participant #6 used a similar approach by assessing the metacognitive piece of writing and and if students “made a good faith effort” on the multimodal piece they received full credit. The general approach to grading the multimodal projects appears to center around the understanding that a student may not have the skills or knowledge to compose by mixing modes, therefore emphasis is placed on what they tried compose and why that was the best rhetorical choice as opposed to only assessing the final product. Interview participant #1 assigns points for the process and product with 70% of the final grade on the final product, and 30% of their grade is their process. This instructor’s main focus is for students to produce a multimodal composition that honors the “practices inside that genre convention” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 19, 2017). Other interview participants grade for completion, as is the case with the e-portfolio that students at the university interview participant #3 teaches at, where students receive 5% of the course grade for posting their assignments to their e-portfolio. Other instructors focus on only the final product as a means to assess the elements of the multimodal composition students created they feel are most important. Interview participant #7 assesses “organization,” “content,” and “if it's visually appealing, that's nice, but it's not the primary function,” because as this instructor explains students “have to think about ways to draw your audience in” (*(*J. Falcon, personal communication, September 27, 2017).

**Introducing Multimodal Practices** I wanted to understand more than what was assigned as a multimodal project, and how it was assessed, but also how multimodal projects were introduced to students. How the multimodal assignments are introduced to students tells us how instructors prioritize elements of the assignment. It also provides additional information about which theories or practices are used when students first encounter multimodal assignments in first-year composition classes. When introducing multimodal assignments the instructors interviewed often use prompts, multimodal guides or handbooks, assignment sheets (guidelines), examples of multimodal compositions, software instruction, genre theory, or a discussion of the rhetorical situation.   
 Interview participant #1 introduces multimodal composition through the study of genre, audience, and “rhetorical agility.” Interview participant #5 introduces multimodal composition when discussing the rhetorical situation in his first-year composition class. Interview participant #7 focuses on arrangement and audience, by asking his students to address the best way to present their content in a way that is engaging for their audience. The examples and assignment sheets are used by other instructors interviewed as a means to both introduce the specific guidelines of the assignment and provide students with multimodal texts to analyze so a discussion can occur on what works and doesn’t work for specific purposes and audiences. A majority of instructors intend for the multimodal projects their students compose to be shared or made public either through presenting their work or posting a hard or digital copy publically. One instructor was not clear about whether the multimodal project was shared, or composed with the idea that it would function as a shareable piece. This component of the multimodal assignments included in their curriculum speaks to their desire to have students view the project as attempting to achieve a goal, whatever goal the student sets, and not something that is only submitted for a grade.  
 The most commonly used texts are *Understand and Composing Multimodal Projects* (2013**)** by Dánielle Nicole DeVoss and *Writer/Designer A Guide to Making Multimodal Projects* (2014)by Kristin L. Arola, Jennifer Sheppard, Cheryl E. Ball. DeVoss’ *Understanding and Composing Multimodal Projects* briefly defines multimodal composition in the introduction. More attention is given to how to “read” a text, before moving on to sections based on each mode of communication. Each section begins with a brief discussion of genre related to specific modes. For example, the sections on text, sound, static images, moving images and multimodal texts all begin with a quick run through of guiding questions for discussion, before diving deeper into the features, purpose, audience and meaning of each mode in specific genres. The design of the multimodal composition project is presented as deciding the information that need be the emphasis of the and arranging modes in a way that best does achieves this. *Writer/Designer* takes a different approach by beginning with an introduction to multimodal projects by defining modes and using the NLG’s modes of communication to create their own diagram. This guide provides more information for the student about multimodal projects, and makes use of technical communication practices, such as creating a team contract, writing a project proposal, and evaluating the multimodal project as a stakeholder. This is not a surprise considering the title links the practices of a writer and a document designer. Both the guide and handbook provide important information for the instructor and student about multimodal composition. Using one over the other would likely be a decision based on preference and/or how the instructor wishes to introduce multimodal composition.

Interview participant #4 uses the DeVoss handbook, and #9 uses *Writer/Designer*, which demonstrates that their approach to teaching multimodality plays a factor in which text they use in their first-year composition class. Students in interview participant #4’s class read DeVoss book, and then look at examples of multimodal compositions, such as an infographic “because I think they're really easy in class genre analysis text that students can understand, absorb, think about and it's complex about for us to have a deep rhetorical discussion about it,” which when comparing that model of instruction to the arrangement of the DeVoss book it is logical that this instructor would introduce a multimodal assignment in this way. Interview participant #9 uses *Writer/Designer* in her class. Students in this class first look at examples of multimodal texts, and collectively analyze these examples before they “come up with criteria for what we think the different modes works for them.” Reviewing the affordances of specific modes could easily follow reading *Writer/Designer* as this guide includes a section on the “Analyzing Multimodal Projects,” which addresses audience, purpose, design choices, writing and designing rhetorically. There is obvious overlap between the two texts, which is understandable given they address the same topic.

**Table 8**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Instructor** | **How Multimodal Comp Introduced** | **Multimodal Assignment Shared/ Made Public** |
| Natalie (Give Fake Name) #1 | Genre, Audience, “rhetorical agility” | No |
| Singleton (Give Fake Name) #2 | Prompts for the various parts of assignment. | Yes |
| Parfitt (Give Fake Name) #3 | Instruction on using platform | Yes |
| Tonya (Give Fake Name) #4 | Students read understanding and Composing Multimodal  Texts,  Handouts, examples. | **??** |
| Monty (Give Fake Name) #5 | Introduced during discussion of rhetorical situations. | Yes |
| Hunt (Give Fake Name) #6 | Look at different examples | Yes |
| Burke (Give Fake Name) #7 | assignment sheets, layout sheets to help them figure out what slides go on the board | Yes |
| Stewart (Give Fake Name) #8 | Examples of videos, infographics, examples of the genre and mode. | Yes |
| Freeman (Give Fake Name) #9 | Cheryl Ball text Analysis of examples  analysis of a work that uses images or how does, a film use of sound affect what we're seeing here and those kinds of things. | **??** |

**Pedagogy and Practices**

The WPAs and instructors interviewed provided information about pedagogical practices that influence what they teach, but also how they teach. Each interview participant discussed several different practices and pedagogies and while there are similarities in their approach and learning goals for their students they each approach multimodality differently. The learning outcomes for their multimodal assignments, how they assess these assignments, and their reasoning for teaching the multimodal assignments the way they do are all related to their approach to rhetoric and writing. For this reason the answers provided by interview participants what practices and scholars or specific scholarship that influence their pedagogy for first-year composition gave insight on how they view, and ultimately implement multimodal practices within the first-year composition curriculum they teach.

For example, interview participant #1 stated that she uses basic rhetorical theory to try and “make sure that students understand of the different kinds of speech, of audience adaptation, purpose going back to the Sophists” in addition to “Bitzer and the rhetorical situation,” because the focus is always on having students develop rhetorical skills for transfer” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 19, 2017). When this WPA teaches a first-year composition course her approach to multimodality is a direct result of the attempt she makes to try and help students “understand the best and most effective kinds of writing depending on situation, the audience and the purpose that you're currently in,” and this is evident in the multimodal assignments she teaches. The multimodal assignment in her first-year composition course require students to use genre theory to think about different modes and what each mode does for their audience and purpose.

Interview participant #5 wants students to reflect on the writing they do outside of the classroom so that they will “identify what are their rhetorical moves they're doing well, and then use that to sculpt a framework for their own academic writing” with the ultimate goal of students seeing “the potential areas of strength and transfer” (J. Falcon, personal communication, October 16, 2017). This instructor also uses social justice pedagogy, which is evident in how this instructor wants to students to learn to “think about how they can impact a positive change on that real world event through their emerging disciplinary expertise” through their writing, and understanding of rhetorical situations (J. Falcon, personal communication, October 16, 2017), This instructor wants students to “approach this in terms of a very broadly defined rhetorical situation that they want to that they're entering to and then make their decisions based on the context, audience, constraints, whatever they have available to them, and sometimes that involves writing something that isn't strictly like an academic text,” and this is evident in the public document students create in this first-year composition course, which is the multimodal assignment in the curriculum.

Interview participant #4 also teaches with a focus on transfer in addition to network theory, genre, creating an “orientation of equity in student learning outcomes” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 22, 2017) by teaching students how to use rubric. To promote metacognition this instructor wants students to “spend time thinking about how they made their choices and why they made their choices” (J. Falcon, personal communication, September 22, 2017). By thinking about genre this instructor states that students have an advantage when they begin discussing multimodality because “it's not something necessarily foreign to them. They've started thinking about it and learned some key terms to analyze text and understand them,” so much so that when students begin to view “categories of genre, features, purpose and audience, and meaning” where students can then“directly apply them to multimodal text”(J. Falcon, personal communication, September 22, 2017). Students will then use what they learned through analyzing multimodal compositions to guide their choices when they begin to compose by mixing modes. This instructor places importance on metacognition and using a rubric as a teaching tool, which is evident in how multimodal composition is introduced in this first-year composition class.

The interviews with the WPAs and instructors revealed that their approach to teaching first-year composition as influenced by practices and scholarship in the field influences how they teach multimodal composition. Each had a favorable view of multimodal composition, and while how they introduce, teach, and grade it differ no WPA or first-year composition instructor viewed multimodal assignments as a means to introduce concepts and practices in digital rhetoric, procedural rhetoric, or electracy. Students in their classes don’t have to create a digital only multimodal composition, because some instructors want students to use what will best help them be effective in reaching their audience. However, most of the multimodal assignments included in their first-year composition curriculum are digital. The elements of their curriculum that are standard may influence the types of multimodal assignments they teach, but they possess the freedom to introduce multimodality in any way they choose. Ultimately, how they introduce these assignments and what they assess provides insight into the current state of multimodality in first-year composition. While a small sample size the survey responses and interviews reveal that multimodal assignments are common in first-year composition courses, but that they may not have evolved at the same rate as related scholarship.

It is understood that scholarship in digital rhetoric and procedural rhetoric may not address multimodality. However, practices in these subfields of rhetoric can be applied to multimodal composition. The WPAs and instructors did not directly link multimodality to a specific technology, but each multimodal assignment uses digital platforms or software to mix modes. For this reason electracy also can fit within their curriculums because it “creates a need for new theories about writing, reading, and thinking about subjectivity, community and representation” (p. 5).

In the next chapter I will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

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| **Interview Participant** | **Pedagogy and Practices** |
| Natalie (Give Fake Name) #1 | Rhetorical theory  genre theory  rhetorical agility |
| Singleton (Give Fake Name) #2 | Instructor decides |
| Parfitt (Give Fake Name) #3 | Academic writing |
| Tonya (Give Fake Name) #4 | Teaching for Transfer  Metacognition  Network theory  Rethinking Assessment |
| Monty (Give Fake Name) #5 | Social justice pedagogy  Evaluating sources  Identify and understand rhetorical moves made in writing |
| Hunt (Give Fake Name) #6 | Written Feedback  Digital writing  Audience  Rethinking Assessment |
| Burke (Give Fake Name) #7 | Theme class  Give students something to write about  Helping students rethink what they learned and/or have done in the past |
| Stewart (Give Fake Name) #8 | Online learning  Community of inquiry framework  Collaborative learning |
| Freeman (Give Fake Name) #9 | WAC  Transfer  Writing that is more engaging for students  Writing that helps students make connections outside of the classroom |

Couple paragraphs about rhetorical theory and digital literacy--what was and wasn’t mentioned.

The previous sections discuss the pedagogical elements of how multimodal projects are aligned with curriculum, assessed…. The interview also asked about the participants’ theoretical influences (etc). This was a broadly framed question that allowed them to answer in whatever way they wanted to.

They said xyz.

Concluding paragraphs:

Overview of the chapter and note of what was missing…..with lead in to next chapter.