

I begin each course with two central assumptions. First, I recognize that any teacher's potential impact on the lives and learning experiences of her students can be deeply profound. Consequently, I work to establish my classroom as a place of mutual respect and learning. My courses are not decentered in the strictest sense of the term, but they create a space where everyone is free to share ideas and opinions and where we are each capable of educating each other. Second, I work to help students see the practical implications of intellectual work. I believe that pragmatic applications are central to a successful, engaging learning experience, particularly for first-generation, returning, and EFL students, as well as those returning to family farms. Above all else, I want my students to understand that learning can extend outside of the classroom and continue throughout their lives.

I believe that careful consideration and engagement with multimodal writing can provide a portal to this sort of lifelong curiosity. Toward that end, I require that all students write, regardless of whether they are taking one of my courses in technical writing, public speaking, or digital discourse. Consequently, our working definition of "writing" often expands to include composing in images, sound, and video. Only through the writing process - free writing, drafting, revision, and review - can we come to understand the nature of creating knowledge and discourse. I also write with them to demonstrate that writing is a means of discovery and that writing need not be perfect before it is shared. By writing in public and reading extensively, they learn that both writing and technologies are situated, complicated tools for making meaning.

My students arrive in class with a wide variety of writing experiences and technological skill levels, but we all work toward the goal of becoming critical, reflective users of communication technologies. I ask them to work from their current skill levels and push themselves to advance at least one full comfort level during the semester. An example of this practice occurs in my course in Scientific & Technical Presentations, which requires heavy use of PowerPoint and integrated media. By emphasizing Lessig-style slide composition instead of the more typical templates of headers and bullet points, we learn visual composition as well as how to effectively incorporate multimedia files. I model these techniques through a series of PowerPoint-intensive lectures, so they see me working with the technology during nearly every class. Students in my Internet Tools and Issues course learn to rhetorically participate in multimodal discourse by creating animations, video, images, and podcasts. Throughout the process, I emphasize awareness of political, legal, and ethical dimensions of digital discourse, particularly fair use doctrine and intellectual property law.

Regardless of the technologies I include, my goal for each course is preparing students for their futures, whether in coursework, the workplace, or in their daily experiences as conscientious users of the Internet. When we come to the end of the semester, students should be able to apply our work to their daily lives.