

To: Jeffrey Galle, Denise Domizi, & the University System of Georgia

From: Ashley Holmes, Associate Professor of English and Chancellor's Learning Scholar at Georgia State University

Date: May 19, 2020

Re: USG Chancellor's Learning Scholars Final Report

Please find enclosed the critical reflections for 7 of the 8 participating instructors in our faculty teaching and learning community. This is the same group from 2019 that continued on during AY 19-20; this year we focused on the topic of high-impact practices. The participants and their critical reflections included are as follows:

- Ashley Holmes
- Mary Hocks
- Gina Caison
- Matt Dischinger
- LeeAnne Richardson
- Michael Harker
- Melissa McLeod
- Mark Noble (no reflection submitted)

Our group met in Fall 2019 3 times face-to-face and in Spring 2020 1 time face-to-face and 2 times virtually after the closure of campuses due to COVID-19. Thank you again for the opportunity to lead this group and to be a part of this initiative. Several participants are co-authoring a book chapter with me, and I'm excited to further reflect on our experiences through that scholarly contribution.

Ashley Holmes, Chancellors' Learning Scholar & Faculty Learning Community Leader

Critical Reflection

- A brief description of the original assignment, activity, or course material.

The course I chose to work with for this year's CLS group was English 3080: Persuasion. The course teaches foundational rhetorical concepts and strategies and asks students to analyze the use of persuasive tactics in the communicative acts of others. The original assignments involved students analyzing the public speeches of others for their use of persuasive strategies and then students choosing public issues to write their own persuasive letters about.

- The purpose of the assignment, activity, or course material.

The purpose of the course and activities is for students to understand, apply, and practice strategies of rhetorical persuasion to writing and speeches.

- A description of the change or innovation you have made to the assignment, activity, or course material.

For the CLS group, I decided to target this English 3080 course to incorporate high-impact practices, specifically by doing the following:

- incorporating more **writing-intensive assignments** where students compose their own arguments rather than only analyzing the arguments of others,
 - creating a community partnership with a local non-profit organization to enhance **community-based learning**,
 - assigning students to write one analysis report **collaboratively with their peers** for our partnering non-profit organization,
 - and to further engage with **community-based learning** by participating in site visits to the state capitol building to observe the state legislature and then having students write persuasive letters on current issues or bills being debated at the state government level.
- What you hoped to accomplish with this change or innovation (i.e. your goal)

I hoped to make the course more innovative and engaging for student learners and to help them see the real world impact and the positive impact using persuasive rhetorical strategies can have within their communities.

- Did this change or innovation meet your expectations?

Yes, mostly it did, though I would have liked to finish out the course in-person to better reinforce the concepts.

- What was the outcome for your students?

For students, many had never stepped foot inside their state capitol building, only 2 blocks from where our GSU class met. Many of them told me how powerful the experience was to track local bills and many were very committed to the issues and legislation they chose to track and write about.

- What will you do differently next time?

One innovation I experimented in the delivery mode for the course was to schedule the class to meet once weekly for 2.5 hours, rather than the typical twice weekly for 1.25 hrs each time. I hoped that this extended schedule would allow us time to make site visits during class, come back to debrief, and still allow students to get to their next class on time. I'm used to teaching once/weekly seminars with graduate students, but what I learned is that undergrads really struggle with this extended time format on days we weren't doing site visits. Plus, if someone misses 1 day of class, it's like seeing 2, and it was hard to get them back on track if they missed and I wouldn't see them for 2 weeks. All this is to say, next time I will offer the class as a hybrid, meeting once weekly for 1.25 hours as a traditional class and leaving a second meeting slot open for community-based learning. This deviates from the typical hybrid conception which sees online content balanced with more traditional class time, but I'll be asking students to participate in site activities in the community for the "hybrid" days.

- What effect did your participation in this FLC have on your teaching?

The FLC was a great opportunity for me to brainstorm ideas and share in my triumphs and challenges with my colleagues. I discussed my ideas in fall and then was able to debrief about how things were going when I taught the course in spring. As we moved to online instruction during COVID-19, I was flailing a bit, trying to find my focus and center, and when my FLC group met online, I was able to vent and feel supported in this emergency shift to online instruction. We really helped each other through the tough times of teaching during a pandemic, and I was grateful to the group for that. In this, our second year, I felt like our relationships strengthened even more and we were able to connect with each other on other relevant initiatives in our department and on our campus.

USG Chancellor's Learning Scholars Teaching Group, Spring 2020

Reflection by Mary Hocks

Introduction

Nothing in my career has been more rewarding than reflecting on my own teaching in conversations with other colleagues. This reflective teaching often takes place at a research university within extended faculty development programs such as the interdisciplinary curricular techniques of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), with its focus on critical thinking, writing to learn and writing to communicate. The goals of those WAC program efforts are often tied to a university writing requirement (writing intensive courses) or an assessment requirement (university writing portfolios). Such efforts embed a series of practical outcomes: creating reflective feedback loops within required course assessments, comparing terminology about written and digital communication across disciplines, and moving students through a progression of assignments from informal low-stakes reflective writing to more formal communication tasks that are directed toward their fields' academic and public audiences. That kind of discipline-based communication is, arguably, the goal of all communication and academic literacy instruction at a university, and efforts like WAC have demonstrated how transformative a reflexive turn through reflection on teaching can be.

The USG Chancellor's Learning Scholars groups have offered a new alternative to more formal faculty development and curricular efforts, and our own ability within English to create an “intradisciplinary” group from our different concentrations has been powerful. Our large English department shares institutional and departmental goals, but our curricula for each concentration operate autonomously—specifically, the rhetoric and composition concentration with various approaches to rhetorical, digital and literacy studies, and the literary / cultural studies concentration with different fields and areas of American, British and world literatures. More importantly, our goals as teachers come most directly from the specific academic conversations in which we each participate as active teacher-scholars so our “disciplines” are related, but distinctly different. Our group met off campus in restaurants, and eventually continued to do so over video (WebEx) as the university moved completely online in March of 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our meetings were always social, flexible, and collegial, but also serious and supportive while we were trying high impact activities in our courses. We have met for over two years, and while sharing a department kept connections between us active, our newfound focus on reflective teaching through the Learning Scholars Group meant that we knew one another better as teachers with a shared purpose. Everyone in our group tried something new, and by sharing our successes AND our failures in this safe space, we supported and learned from one another in a more sustained way than a one-time faculty development workshop or seminar.

Course:

My reflection this year focuses on my first completely hybrid course design (50% in person and 50% online) of Visual Rhetoric while fully co-teaching with an advanced graduate student through a departmental co-teaching initiative. **Visual Rhetoric, ENGL 3135**, is a required writing course within the English Department's Concentration in Rhetoric and Composition. This course also fulfills a writing course requirement for other English concentrations and for students across the humanities (e.g., communication, moving image studies, history, education, etc.). I originally designed this course to focus on visual communication and digital media production as an expanded type of multimodal writing. One other faculty member and a few selective advanced graduate students have taught this course over the years. Visual Rhetoric is always taught in a designated computer classroom and is a central part of our digital production-focused coursework.

Visual rhetoric and digital media are popular research areas, so I've always had PhD students guest present in this class. Graduate students bring their own research and visual productions as exemplary models to the class and develop their own course discussions, pedagogical approaches, and class activities. Developing relevant assignments and current approaches to "non-discursive" visual rhetoric requires using current visual technologies and terminologies for new and emerging, screen-based media. Such assignments included visual rhetorical analysis and composition processes for designing flyers and brochures using Adobe PhotoShop software. Most students then built websites that curated and organized information for a specified audience and topic. For example, students designed websites about teaching abroad programs and offered that knowledge and those resources to other students.

Purpose and description of high impact activities:

This year, I co-taught the Visual Rhetoric course with PhD student Meagan Malone and together, we developed a completely hybrid delivery (50% in person and 50% online). This year's course focused on Malone's interests in online activism and featured new assignments based on recent digital writing and rhetoric research using a recent framework for "Rhetorical Looking." Students applied specific visual analysis strategies to software interfaces and to activist websites on voting rights and other urban problems like traffic as specific to Atlanta.

The hybrid course delivery required that I drop my usual practice of having extensive guided and hands-on production time in the classroom. Instead, we had to introduce and prepare students for more self-paced learning and composition production outside of class. In a class that used to be part theoretical readings and in-class discussions of visual rhetoric, and part independent production time in the classroom, we instead offered progressive assignments and interactions to take place online via iCollege/WebCT courseware. The first half of the semester, we designed reading responses each week, which we placed on discussion boards as informal writings, but with specific word-length requirements. We evaluated these discussions together each week and used them to prompt in-class in-person discussions during our one weekly meeting. The second half of the semester, the weekly online assignments became group discussions of media activism and analysis of the examples we provided each week. We broke the two large course assignments -- both the interface analysis and the final activist website project -- into specific steps. Student drafted a portion of the assignment each week and received feedback from one of

us before moving onto the next section of the assignment, allowing us to offer formative assessment in an organized way while students engaged in an extended composition process.

Expectations Met and Outcomes for Students:

Students definitely benefitted by the hybrid design and online structuring of this course. These students experienced an integrated progression of assignments that built toward the two major projects, extensive iterative feedback from both of their instructors, and more independence and responsibility for their own learning of visual rhetorical practices occurring within online activism. Student themselves reported anecdotally in person and in their written course evaluations that they were much more engaged in a sustained way than similar courses. More students produced better work, and the few that inevitably fall behind in such a course knew by the midterm that sustained diligent work and interactive discussions would be necessary for successful course completion.

Visual Rhetoric was a pre-pandemic Fall course, but it actually prepared me more thoroughly for the abrupt move during the spring of 2020 to completely online teaching in a similar class (ENGL 3090, Exposition), a course at the same level that even included some of the same students. I used an identical course structure for progression of assignments that were easy to transform into online-only assignments. We changed the coursework from in-class discussions and compositional production time to online discussions and a longer paper written in stages with feedback. The vast majority of students did excellent work and appreciated the on-going feedback when we moved to complete online delivery. A couple of students did “disappear” and three others, for personal reasons, required late interventions where I spoke with them by phone to develop their work and offered them flexible deadlines. Without the hybrid course structure of assignments, discussions and formative feedback that I co-developed for Visual Rhetoric with PhD student Meagan Malone, my transition to online teaching eight weeks ago would have been much more chaotic and less successful for my students.

Conclusion:

My own anecdotes this year about hybrid course design, online teaching, and co-teaching with an emerging teacher - scholar in the subject of Visual Rhetoric have all revealed the impacts of my direct practice. Discussing the innovations in teaching I have made over the past few semesters with supportive colleagues in the Learning Scholars Community, as I described in the Introduction, has helped me reflect more deeply on how I can improve these courses, especially during disruptions such as we experienced this spring. I can think of no better way to demonstrate the importance of reflecting on our teaching, because this faculty group and my co-teaching were essential to my own success as a teacher this year.

Gina Caison, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of English
Georgia State University

The CLS this year most obviously helped me to transition a Study Abroad course set to travel to Newcastle Upon Tyne in the UK to a Stay-At-Home course. The topic of the class was on American Literature and Human Rights in Newcastle and it focused on the numerous African American writers who had lived, worked, and visited the city over the last 200 years. It also had a significant focus on public history and memory. Initially, it was because of my participation in last year's CLS that I was inspired to design a Study Abroad course, and the course (as planned) had several activities that were intended to use High Impact Learning Practices.

I had taken the material from our CLS to design activities for the students' time abroad that would maximize their experience of the city. For example, on the day of arrival, the students were to complete an "Amazing Race" style scavenger hunt that would both give them a crash course in basic skills for navigating the city and allow them to use material learned in our pre-departure meetings and readings to understand clues that lead them to complete the race. The entire activity was planned around strategies discussed in our fall meetings about high impact learning.

Once the class could not be completed as designed due to the global pandemic, I had to think about how to transition high impact learning to distance education. Because my colleagues were also going through this transition, I was able to learn with them as we all navigated this unexpected disruption. I decided to have students complete their asynchronous assignments with the same spirit of that initial scavenger activity except they could use their home base as a space to learn. For one of their assignments, I asked them to go find a place near them that 1) they could safely take a photograph of and maintain social distance and 2) that had some aspect to public history and memory in Atlanta. They then had to write a reflective piece on our course blog about what we had read and learned about public memory and how it applied to this part of Atlanta. This allowed students to think about our readings in their own lives and environments.

Being a part of this group allowed me to forgo a lot of panic about my teaching during this time, and it filled a truly unexpected need as we all worked to re-imagine how to maintain high pedagogical standards during the transition to distance learning.

Matthew Dischinger / Chancellor's Learning Scholars
Critical Reflection / 5.6.2020

- A brief description of the original assignment, activity, or course material.
 - **Our approach to small teaching focused on high impact teaching practices, or teaching and learning foundations that can guide pedagogy. Since these practices include broad categories like learning communities, writing-intensive courses, diversity/global learning, and ePortfolios, they were foundations that I was already putting into practice in a few ways. Talking with colleagues about these practices nonetheless allowed me to think more about these practices and sharpen them in my courses—particularly in ENGL 3040 (“Introduction to Literary Studies”), which was my focus course for our discussions.**
- The purpose of the assignment, activity, or course material.
 - **I originally thought about the above foundations as ideas that guided the course, but talking with colleagues about these high impact practices brought them into better focus. In one assignment this spring, I had students summarize an academic article about a text and classify it under a specific methodology that we discussed in our course—which was essentially a critical methods course covering many different literary interpretive strategies. The purpose of the assignment was to get students to use the ideas we worked on in class to better understand the academic conversations they might move through in many of their courses.**
- A description of the change or innovation you have made to the assignment, activity, or course material.
 - **One big change I made to the assignment was to ask students to complete a reflection at the end that they would add to their GSU Portfolium page, or a living digital portfolio of their work. The reflection asked them to think and write about the career skills that they used in the Article Summary assignment. I gave students a list of ideas to pull from and respond to, and they used those ideas as a starting point for their inquiry.**
- What you hoped to accomplish with this change or innovation (i.e. your goal)
 - **I hoped that students would see the value of creating a written archive of not just the assignment itself (the Article Summary, I mean), but also their real-time thoughts about how that assignment could be valuable to them long term. While their ePortfolio would likely not be ready to share yet, they would also develop skills related to sharing their work publicly slowly over the course of their education rather than at the end of their time at GSU, as they think harder about internships and career options.**
- Did this change or innovation meet your expectations?
 - **It absolutely did. I was happy with the work I saw in these reflections. Just before we ended our time together in a physical classroom, we were able to discuss the value of this sort of reflection in a broader conversation about what is valuable about critical methods—a seemingly esoteric topic focused on academic discourse. The result of that conversation was clearer thinking about what is valuable to us individually and what may be valuable to**

employers and society at large about the work we carried out both in the specific assignment and the class as a whole.

- What was the outcome for your students?
 - **I had students complete another reflection at the end of the semester. That assignment demonstrated how the initial reflection had taken hold, as many students circled back to the same questions I asked them to write about before the middle of the term with fresh ideas resulting from the second half of the course.**
- What will you do differently next time?
 - **In short, I plan to fold this work into all my courses more fundamentally. While my focus this spring was an upper-division course, I plan to use more reflective writing in ENGL 2130, 1102, and others.**
- What effect did your participation in this FLC have on your teaching?
 - **Beyond the work I have already described, I found once again that connecting with my colleagues helped immeasurably. I learned a lot from listening to my colleagues discuss their pedagogy successes and failures, which we all shared candidly. Once again, this FLC was extremely beneficial in helping me connect meaningfully with my colleagues in the department.**

LeeAnne M. Richardson
Chancellor's Learning Scholars/Faculty Learning Community reflection

During the spring semester, our Faculty Learning Community focused on High Impact Practices and I developed/implemented a new graduate course project. The Central Online Victorian Educator (COVE) website electronically publishes peer-reviewed critical editions of out-of-copyright texts for pedagogical use, and our course project was to submit something to be published on COVE.

Because it was a new project, using a new platform, and entirely in collaboration with the students (starting with having them choose the text that the project would focus on—from a list that I developed), the help of my fellow faculty was invaluable. They offered support, hints and tips, cautions, and commiserations when needed. It was also from these conversations that I developed the second strand of readings/discussions that I had not initially planned for the course: a meta-conversation on editing practices and interpretation.

Working in teams of two, the students began by annotating the text (Oscar Wilde's 1891 short story collection *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories*) using the software platform created by COVE. Students could make traditional explanatory annotations as well as embed links and/or images that further contextualized the stories. The purpose of this assignment was two-fold: to allow students to research the social, cultural, linguistic and geographical world of the texts and to think about the audience for this text and what its needs would be.

The next step was to create appendices with cultural contexts to help users more deeply understand the stories. As a class we brainstormed possible categories and then worked in teams to create the appendices. Several students reported that this was both one of the most difficult but also most satisfying projects they had done as graduate students. It required multiple levels of research—into late-Victorian periodicals and newspapers; nineteenth-century essays and reviews; diaries, biographies, and letters; as well as scholarly critical works—and they stemmed from and integrated into the work done on the annotations.

The final step was for each student to write a short essay and annotated bibliography of “further reading.” This was the most traditional element of the assignment, except that—like the other assignments—it was extensively peer-reviewed at several stages of development. Students got feedback from me and from their peers at the proposal, first draft, and second draft stages. All elements of the project required and encouraged collaboration so that students would learn the value of sharing their knowledge and providing another viewpoint informed by different information and experience. This was a lesson that I myself experienced via my membership in the FLC.

My goal was to find a project that students would be fully invested in, so that they would be motivated by a larger purpose than being dutiful or getting a good grade. In addition to research skills and content knowledge, I also wanted my students to learn the power of collaboration, to trust their peers' ideas and viewpoints, and to discover the value of their own knowledge-base.

This assignment has more than achieved my goals. In the past, I have assigned graduate students an annotated bibliography that they present to the class plus a research paper at the end of the course, with the goal of having students learn research and writing skills. This project achieved that plus so much more. My students were actively engaged throughout the semester—even after the move to all on-line work—and really owned their contributions. Because we were working with an electronic platform and had already been using shared google documents for collaboration, the switch was less disruptive than it might have been.

The support of my colleagues in the FLC was essential. But because every step of the class project was arranged with student input, I could not plan the details in advance. I had the general idea of annotations, appendices, and short essay—but all of the details were collaboratively conceived. The first step was giving my students the choice of how to publish our results: we could have published a non-peer-reviewed text on a Wordpress site but the students chose to use COVE in order to try for a peer-reviewed publication, committing to revise their work even after the end of the course should the peer reviews require it. Once I knew that COVE was the goal, I needed to learn its annotation program, its coding requirements, and then scaffold the assignments, creating the timeline, groups, and peer reviews.

My FLC colleagues gave me tips from their own experiences with innovative assignments and electronic platforms, as well as with student researchers. And during a WebEx meeting after we went remote, I solicited advice about how to make sure my grad students remained engaged with the class when so many of them were struggling to do their own remote teaching. After hearing that several of my peers had given out their personal phone number to graduate students, I did the same. The subsequent phone conferences I had with my students were hugely important to the success of the overall project. I spoke with each student individually about how the semester was going. We spent more time talking about the challenges of remote teaching than the project itself, but it was an important moment of connection during the semester that re-committed them to the project and made them unafraid to reach out for help. One of the repeated lessons of the FLC is the importance of that moment of connection—both with colleagues and with students.

Perhaps the most valuable element of the FLC was that I had a real-world personal experience of the power of collaboration to share with my graduate students. Because collaboration requires more time, I used my experiences with the FLC to help get the graduate students on-board with working with their peers. I think that they, too, realized how valuable good collaborators are to the success of a project. The benefits were immediately apparent and significant: the annotations they produced (after feedback from the larger class and within the group) were professionally done. The appendices are superb: they are well-informed, insightful and creative. I have confidence that the project will successfully pass its peer review and be published on COVE.

[Because I focused on the impact of the FLC to my graduate course, I have not even mentioned the collaborative essay that members of the FLC have had accepted for publication. This, too, is a significant outcome of my participation in the FLC this semester.]

Michael Harker
Associate Professor of English
Georgia State University

For me this round of CLS was definitely an extension of the first iteration, especially with respect to benefiting from community, pedagogical reflection, and learning more about how my peers in different concentrations deal with pedagogical challenges. Evidence of this CLS's effectiveness can be found, I believe, in the fact that we're co-authoring a book chapter across specialties! I'm really excited by this opportunity and hope other CLS participant benefited in a similar way.

Melissa McLeod
Faculty Learning Community (High Impact Practices)
May 12, 2020

Original Assignment/Purpose

I developed my face-to-face Practical Grammar class as a hybrid for spring 2020. I had taught a hybrid version of this class a few years ago, but the results were lackluster. I created and curated online material mostly for students to use supplements to the textbook and to use if and when they chose. The purpose of the original hybrid course was to make students better prepared for in-class meetings when students performed activities. I wanted to spend more time having students do grammar exercises on their own or in groups and less time lecturing.

Innovation/Goal

I developed new more specific discussion questions that encouraged students to interact with one another. I also created more online quizzes, including some embedded in Kaltura videos that I'd made. Once we switched to online, I was in pretty good shape. However, I need new online material. I included video lectures that I made as well as videos I curated from the internet, especially from Khan Academy. My goal for these changes were the same as the original hybrid class—for students to learn more on their own and to spend class time practicing skills.

Outcomes

Because of the shift to all online learning in March, I cannot determine whether the changes I made to the course met my expectations or what student outcomes were.

Effects of FLC

The FLC gave me a place to talk out the broad strategies of hybrid and online teaching and gave me ideas of how to implement these strategies in my class.