Feminist Cyborgs:
Teaching like a Feminist in the Computer Classroom

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Abstract: This whitepaper documents a workshop conducted by CWRL instructors as part of UT's 2005 Women's and Gender Studies Conference. Presenters considered the meaning of feminist pedagogy and the ways technolog enables or constrains those principles.

In 2002, Sara P. Pace, a graduate student at Texas Women's University, began her article "Feminist Pedagogy and Daedalus Online" by observing, "scholarship dealing with feminism in the technology based first year composition classroom is sparse," and urging, "it is crucial to examine how well we as feminist instructors can fit our pedagogical objectives in both modes of instruction: face to face and online." Two years later, scholarship dealing with feminism in the computer classroom is still sparse, most publications appearing prior to Pace's article or appearing later in short discussion-based papers online.

At UT Austin we are uniquely positioned to discuss the role of feminist pedagogy in the computer classroom. We are home to the

Computer Writing and Research Lab (CWRL), an award-winning lab which, according to its mission statement, "promotes advances in technologically mediated writing through pedagogy and research that are innovative, sustainable, and effective." A number of graduate students and faculty independently undertake feminist pedagogical practices in CWRL classrooms, teaching a range of courses including first- and second-year composition courses and sophomore literature courses.

A group of these instructors produced a workshop this March at the annual conference held by UT's Center for Women's and Gender Studies. The goal of this workshop was to bring together graduate student instructors in a collaborative, interdisciplinary environment that would allow us to have a public discussion about the possibilities for feminist work in computer classrooms. Though the panel members all have experience teaching literature and composition courses in the computer classroom, we imagine the findings of this workshop, articulated through this white paper, to be useful to graduate students and faculty from various fields.

The possibilities for feminism in the computer classroom are exciting, and we hope to use the workshop findings and this public report to develop a working group that can, in conversation with the Center for Women's and Gender Studies and the CWRL, contribute to the existing public discussion about feminist pedagogy. Such a contribution will help graduate students working on teaching statements for employment and will help prospective faculty members exploring jobs that may require or offer the opportunity for computer classroom teaching.

We wish to take up what Carol L. Winklemann, in *Frontiers* (1997), suggests is the revolutionary possibility of feminist pedagogy in a computer classroom: "I am interested in the liberatory potential of feminist networking and border-crossing pedagogical experiences made available through electronic technology. Electronic literacy has the potential to foster imaginative possible unities and political kinships between people who—off-line—would not ordinarily connect. By tapping this potential, critical teachers may find ways to sponsor infidel heteroglossia: multi-accentuated languages inside and outside of educational institutions that critique androcentric narratives or hegemonic interpretations of everyday experience that deny the oppression of women and stifle hope for social change."

Transcript from the 1 April 2005 Feminist Cyborg Workshop

Kristen Hogan
Welcome to the workshop "Feminist Cyborgs." Those of us who are presenting are all graduate student teachers in the English department and we work in the Computer Writing and Research Lab. The Lab is a place where we develop teaching tools using computers. We have classrooms in which every student has a computer—either a laptop

or desktop—so there's a combination of learning with the computers and through discussion. We came together because we're all interested in teaching like feminists in computer classrooms. A lot of us had questions about what it means to teach like a feminist, and, from the student's perspective, how do I know if I am experiencing feminist pedagogy and is that a kind of learning that works for me. And we wanted to bring the question of technology to these issues in order to think about how technology enables the ideals of feminist pedagogy and to find out how it challenges or undermines some of those ideals.

A discussion of feminist pedagogy through the lens of the computer classroom is particularly appropriate because the writing on computers in the classroom suggests that computers are supposed to be generating less hierarchical classrooms and increasing student involvement—issues that are central to feminist pedagogy. Each of us is going to talk about a particular part of feminist pedagogy that we're interested in and that we think some of the computer skills that we use in the classroom speak to. These different teaching approaches speak to three different aspects of feminist pedagogy: class content, class structure, and evaluation process.

Audra Rouse [distributes index cards]
This is set up as a workshop, so we'd like to make it interactive. On your card, write down any questions you might have about the relationship between feminist pedagogy and technology. We're going to collect them and talk about them at the end.

I. Class Content
Recreating lost women's lives
Focusing class discussion on gender issues

Melanie Ulrich
When I was thinking about this, one of the particularly effective uses of technology in the classroom is for making the lives of women who have been obscured more public and comprehensible for students. To do this, I use Powerpoint, I use HTML, I use something called MOOs. I want to look now at a presentation I put together on a woman named Margery Kempe, who was a medieval writer and spiritualist and an extremely difficult personality; she's very disruptive, and prickly, and she writes in Middle English, so there's a lot of things for my students to grapple with. But one of the nice things about technology—and one of the most obvious—is that it's visual. The information that you're trying to covey can be conveyed much more memorably because it's visual. So, for example, one of the things that made Margery Kempe so troubling to her contemporaries was that she was always gallivanting off some place or another, so [showing screen shots] we can have maps, we can have timelines, that make that aspect of her personality

very apparent, and also help people to understand why her contemporaries were so opposed to her.

In addition, we have multimedia options. When I was talking about fellow female mystic Hildegard Bingen, I had pictures of where she was from and also sound clips of songs she wrote in the period, which gives you an idea what women were doing and also of the sound of the period. Something else that technology is particularly good for is making a dramatic impression. When you're trying to convey the sort of opposition that these women were facing—which has something to do with why they were so difficult—you can do that with a really iconoclastic picture or a really potent saying. So, for example, on this page [notes another screen shot] this is a quotation from her book, somebody's response to Margery Kempe is "Burneth this false heretic," which gives you some idea of the difficulties she ran into, which helps people to deal with some of her more awkard aspects.

Career Women

- **Aristocratic women** might have political careers, or might become abbesses, some very powerful.

- Wealthy **merchants' widows** took up shipping.

- **Tradesman's wives** often assisted their husbands. Middle class women also engaged in embroidery, millinery, ribbon-making, yarn-spinning, silk spinning, gold spinning, silk weaving, candle-making, pottery, pin-and-needle-making, the bookmaking crafts (parchmenting, authorship, working as scribes, illuminating texts, translation, binding, and fastener-making), bookselling, dressmaking, coif-making, glove-making, lace-making, baking, ale-making, innkeeping, running poultry shops, and butchering.

- **Working class women** could be servants or farmers, as well as laundering, picking grapes, or being a street vendor.

- **In general**, women were relegated to the lower paid, less skilled jobs in any field, and when they performed the same work as men, they were paid about half. Many guilds discouraged or prohibited women from working in their fields. As cities became more crowded in the later Middle Ages, women were pushed out of many professions.

In addition to which, a lot of people find these obscure women too irrelevant to their modern lives, so the Internet allows you to juxtapose side-by-side modern concerns with historical concerns. You can do this with bulleted points, you can do this with images, you can do this by using more modern language—say, calling them career women, which is, of course, anachronistic, but gives an idea of how their concerns overlap with ours. Another problem with dealing with these women whose histories are buried is that people often have a lack of context for the history. Technology allows you to make that context available to your students, without actually taking up a lot of class time—which can be a real problem if you're dealing with women from a lot of different time periods, you don't have an opportunity to spend enough class time one the history, so you can simply post it online so it's available to them whenever they want it and it's really condensed—in a really short span of time you can give them a pretty good idea of the period. In addition to "normal" history, which is what you learn in high

school, you also need to talk about social history when you're dealing with women because social history is where they were most active in that most women weren't involved with wars or politics. So, in addition to being useful, social history also can be sometimes whimsical: I included a couple of recipes from the period to give them a sense of the food. One begins with "dismember that heron," which is always a fun beginning to a recipe, I think.

Finally, another use technology, which is sort of a sneaky use, is that it has a lot of authority that these women frequently don't have in the eyes of the general public: they're not canonical, they're not in the Norton Anthology, their lives aren't on TV. But technology has an authority intuitive to it—in fact, it's got kind of a masculine authority. So when you associate these women with these technological, sort of masculine skill sets, it gives them an authority that people might not have otherwise readily recognized.

There are some drawbacks. Namely, there's the "Disney effect": it's really fun to make these Web sites and you can use cute fonts, you can use pretty pictures, but if you do that too much you can end up with a sanitized, cutsie-ized, quaint version of the past, when often the past is an ugly, brutish, violent, smelly place, and you need to convey that as well. Finally, learning to use the technology can be kind of daunting, so if you decide to use the technology in your class, make sure that you do it enough to make the learning curve worth the effort. But beyond that, it's a fabulous, creative and efficient way to make these women's lives present.

Audra Rouse

I'm going to talk about how to focus class content on gender issues when they're not an intrinsic part of the class. What Melanie was talking about just now was teaching that she does in a class on women writers, so it had the gender aspect built into it. A lot of us in the English graduate program get to teach a variety of classes in which we can insert our own interests and teach what we want to teach. But most of the time most of us end up teaching something like RHE 306 Rhetoric and Composition, which has a sort of generic syllabus and comes with curriculum-required textbooks: one of these required books is the First-Year Forum text, which is chosen each year by the Department and determines a lot of the content of the class. In all the time I've been teaching here—and that's a pretty long time—there's only been one that's written by a woman. So there's not automatically a lot of gender content in the class; for those of us devoted to teaching that content, we have to figure out ways to inject it into an otherwise more or less generic, gender-less syllabus.

Some of the issues involved in that are: some of the students might not be as open to that because they didn't sign up to take a women's studies class and might not really have that in mind. That makes it even more important, if you're dedicated to feminism and feminist ideals, to give students an opportunity to interrogate their ideas about

gender because this might be one of the only classes in which they get the chance to do that. I try to take every opportunity where it seems reasonable and pedagogically useful, to do something about gender.

One of the ways that I do this is with this assignment that I use to introduce the definitional argument *[see Appendix A]*, which is just one of several types of argument we teach in 306. I use this assignment instead of reading one of the essays in a textbook I use, called *Everything's an Argument*. One of the essays in the "definitional" section is actually a feminist essay called "Pink Think" by Lynn Peril. But to me, this essay is a little dated and exactly what I don't want to show my students about feminism because it just sounds like someone complaining about a lot of things that are outdated—that just don't sound very contemporary. It's not a very hip version of feminism, so if I'm tying to sell it a little bit, I don't really want to use that. I do this [assignment] instead, and I think it works a lot better because it doesn't impose a definition of feminism or a particular idea of feminism, it just gives students an opportunity to think about what they already think about feminism, and then to critique and rethink it. I start by brainstorming at the board: I just ask students, "What is feminism? Just free-associate—what words do you associate with that." And whatever they say, no matter how bad or off-topic, I write it on the board without judgment. "Okay, these are the ideas that we associate with feminism in our culture." And there's usually a mix of things like "independent women" and "pro woman" and things like "Nazi," "totally outdated," and "lesbian."

Then I divide them into five groups and pass out the assignment here. The first step is establishing a working definition of feminism. The students use their own knowledge and past experience to create a definition; they create a list of criteria—what makes a feminist? what attributes do you have to have to qualify as a feminist? This is where they technology comes in: they type their definitions up and then look at test cases online. Each group gets a set of two Web sites to compare—things that have vaguely to do with women or gender but are not easily identifiable as feminist. I don't give them, say, the Feminist Majority Foundation; I give them Web sites that may or may not be considered feminist and they compare them to their ideas about what feminism is.

It's a pretty simple use of technology—using Web sites—but has an immediacy to it. Students actually get a look at current Web sites of actual organizations. I used to analyze, say, a poem, or something more removed from their daily lives, then have them decide if it was feminist or not. But this just seems to work a lot better because it feels like it's in the present moment—it's not just some kind of abstract idea that I'm imposing on them, but I'm actually making it apply to something real.

The really interesting part comes with step three, which is revaluating the definition. Students look back at their definitions and at what they've learned by analyzing their pairs of Web sites and decide if their definition really held up. A lot of times students, especially students

with the most negative definitions of feminism, discover that their definitions didn't really work very well. For example, the Girl Scouts Web site usually comes across to people as being feminist, but it doesn't have all these other "bad" things they associated with feminism. So it gives people a reality check about their preconceptions about the idea of feminism, makes them think about it a little more critically, without me imposing any ideas about it on them, usually they come to conclusions on their own.

II: Class Structure
Creating different circuits of authority
Practicing spatialized rather than linear analysis

Lee Rumbarger

My topic is "creating different circuits of authority in the classroom." And I think that the most obvious way of thinking about "authority" is to think of the instructor as the classroom authority figure. I know that one of the things that happens to me in class is this feeling of playing ping-pong matches with my students: I'll ask a question, someone will answer, we'll have a back-and-forth; I'll ask another question, there will be another back-and-forth. The communication is always channeled through me. One easy and helpful way technology can impact classes is in the use of email lists or online discussion forums or class-authored blogs. People in the class can spring up ideas and comment on each other's ideas, without it going through you, the instructor.

But another way of thinking about authority is to think of the text itself as a site of authority: we read these things, we lend them the credibility of our attention and imagination, we write essays about them. But when you're teaching a writing class, you ultimately want students to think of themselves as authors, ready to share their own ideas and in their own voices.

I teach a class called Rhetoric of the Homefront, which is a lower-division rhetoric course that looks at three homefronts—Baghdad during the 2003 Iraq war, London during the Blitz, and the United States during an ongoing "war on terror." I try to pair official histories with alternative narratives about these conflicts—so we'll read George W. Bush's "Saddam Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours" speech, and then we'll read the "Baghdad Blogger," Salam Pax, a young Iraqi who kept an online journal during the bombings. We'll read Winston Churchill, then we'll read Virginia Woolf's diaries. During that unit on the Blitz, I ask my students to do what I call the Stories from the Homefront project, which is a technology-aided project.

I put this [shows images] up on the screen now to show you this timeline on the left, headlines from *The New York Times* on the right. These are what I think of as official markers of history, what "made the front page." The timeline is from *Perspectives on the Past*, the text

I used as a high school student in Texas. It comes at the end of the chapter on World War II: these are the events that you're supposed to master to make an "A" on the history test. I'm trying to have the students not only see the history of these moments, but also a kind of insurgent history, the stories that swell between those lines of the timeline.

So I have them do this project where I ask them to imagine a person living in London during the Blitz, write a character sketch of that person, do a significant amount of research on what life could have been like for that imaginary person. And then they put together a multimedia exhibition—it's narrative; it's photographs that they find, scan, take; it's music. Then they write a rhetorical analysis of what they've created, explaining what they were trying to get across and what strategies they had for conveying that message.

Here are a couple of examples [shows screen shots]: "Mrs. Reynolds' Room," with its vanity table. These small images off to the side are links, and the types of materials included are letters from this woman to her husband who's off fighting in the war. They're written in very beautiful, rosy, well-structured sentences, with that kind of lovely script font. They're paired with this woman's diary entries, which are jagged, cut off sentences, cut off entries. The argument being conveyed through these bits of narrative and, also pictured, the vanity table, lipstick, photographs, is this idea of keeping up appearances in the grip of conflict.

Here [shows screen shot], the work of a group of students who are future journalists. They created a newspaper, the *London Weekly*. And I thought that this was such an interesting project because we'd talked about press censorship during this time: in their drafts, they actually blacked our text as if they were censors—anything that could be demoralizing, or offer too much information. So we get this staged news. But they've also included reporters' personal diary entries, which start to get at the stories they wish they could tell, or the things beneath the censor's markings.

So I think the technology helps to invite our students to be producers of texts, not just analyzers of texts. Creators of archives— and people who are able to appreciate not just a variety of stories, but also how arguments are made through images, light and color and sound, and in style, say, of how they write these diary entries.

Kristen Hogan
The class that I'm going to be talking about is the class I'm teaching now, which is a sophomore literature class called Women's Popular Genres—Jan and Audra have taught it too. I'm going to talk a little bit about authority as well, this time through spatialized analysis vs. linear analysis. Let me first talk a little bit about why it's important for me to think about teaching with computers in the feminist classroom.

When I started out at college as an undergraduate here at UT, I was

supposed to become an engineer, in part because that was the feminist thing to do—there aren't a lot of women engineers, so since I could do that, so I should do that. Then I discovered that I love literature; and of course though the field is feminized in its student population, in the professorial ranks women are underrepresented, underhired, underpromoted. I want to interrogate a little bit the push to promote women's involvement in the sciences as automatically feminist, and I want to reexamine the involvement of women in the liberal arts as a possibly feminist act.

So to me, using technology in the computer classroom breaks apart the divide between "masculine" technology and sciences where, when women succeed, it's feminist, and the feminized liberal arts where, when women succeed, it's just what they've always done. So I see the resistance of this dichotomous political measure as the "cyborg" that Donna Haraway talks about—she uses the metaphor of the cyborg to talk about being in touch with all of our parts, and that's how I see the computer classroom functioning at its ideal best.

I hope that this will be interesting to you students in particular in thinking about what ways of learning are most interesting to you and thinking about how teachers are conceptualizing lessons. You can think about different ways to interact with your texts. This semester I'm having my students read a little bit of educational philosophy, because I think it's important for students to reflect on teaching practices and know that everybody learns differently and some kinds of teaching will be really enjoyable to you, and others will be painful.

When I'm thinking about spatialized vs. linear analysis, one reason why I think that spatialized analysis is feminist is because it does de-center authority. And also because it breaks up a kind of linear hier-archy—there's something on top and something at the bottom, some-thing at the beginning and something at the end. I help my students to develop a specialized analytical practice in two ways: one of those is a daily practice through daily exercises, and the other is a semester-long production of an archive that uses spatial relationships.

Let me start with the daily, which is the shape that's on the first side of this diagram [*see Appendix B*]. This was an exercise I did with my students when we were reading Iola Leroy, a Reconstruction-era novel by an African American woman who was on the lecture circuit and a major activist. I asked my students to, in groups, use Omnigraffle to draw the "shape" of the novel. Omnigraffle is a program in which you can pick out shapes, and include text, and move these elements around. I asked students to draw the novel's shape either on the level of a sentence, a paragraph, or chapter, or the whole book.

What I wanted to do was get students to interact with not only the text in the ways it's told, but think about the ways they might recon-struct the story in different shapes: that challenges the authority of "the text" as a single text, which was particularly important for this author, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, who worked so much with the

oral genre as a lecturer and could actively relate to her audience during public speaking events. Using Omnigraffle was one way we could make the text relate to us and see what we as readers of the text take from the text and how we put that together in different ways.

What is really interesting about the diagram of the shape of the book [gestures to diagram] is that the two groups that did the shape of the book came up with essentially the same shape [shows second diagram]. It's pretty interesting to think about the shape of the book in this way. Other students included different shapes, wavy lines, different time lines and indications of how the past and the present are interacting in the text. So this gives the ability to have emotional and responsive connections with the text—to be able to write our story of the text.

The other way that I approach spatialized analysis in my class is through having students in groups create their own blogs. So a group of about three students would have a blog together based around one text in the class that they're going to lead class discussion on, but they also do literary blog posts throughout the semester, which can be anything they feel like posting—their emotional responses to the text, what it brings up for them, how they might relate it to what's going on in their lives or in the culture, current events. I title the assignment "women's popular blogging" to identify these blogs as ways of creating and taking part in a popular genre, which relates directly to our class, Women's Popular Genres. As a class, we then relate the blogs to women's popular literature and we talk about making the class blogs act as a women's popular genre. My students are mostly women with a few men, and I think that flip of class constitution by gender is a great experience for everyone in the class; and then, to get involved with computers challenges the "separation" of just who's using technology.

By the end of the semester, then, they have an archive of their interactions with the text, which I really like because it puts the texts in conversation with each other: their entries on different texts right next to each other. At the end of the semester I will to ask them to analyze what they think the blog as a text shows them about the semester, so, again, it's really getting their emotional involvement and responses to the text. Also, it does a little bit of what Melanie was talking about involving images, in the sense that they have to design their blog to relate to their text, so it allows them to juxtapose images and to think about what the construction of a Web site means and what the collection of images means. Ultimately, I hope that they, and all of us, can carry this out into the world and think of the texts we're faced with through television, politics, to question the motivation of and the choices behind the creation of those texts.

III. Evaluation Process
Online portfolios in feminist pedagogy

Lisa Avery
I'm currently teaching 306, which is just the basic comp class that you probably took at some point. It's not ostensibly a feminist class; I'm required to use the same First-Year Forum text—which is not necessarily feminist—as everyone else. Jan and I are going to talk about the Learning Record Online, how it can be used to assess students, and whether or not that can fit into a feminist pedagogy. We both think it can, and that it works really well.

The LRO is designed, and this is a quotation from its Web site, to facilitate the idea that, "Humane and trustworthy assessments can only be made on the basis of what students demonstrate they know and can do." This, as opposed to having some sort of ideal and seeing whether or not they fit into that ideal—in other words, looking at what's not there. "Your grammar is bad; you don't have good grammar, that's missing; therefore, you get a 'C.'" So the whole means of assessing is a little different. I argue that this works out in a variety of different feminist ways: I think it changes the relationship between the professor and the student; I think it changes the way students are empowered to think about their own evaluation in the classroom; I think it does build a community; I think it changes the way individual voices are heard and privileged in a classroom; I think it really respects personal experience. And I think that all of those end up challenging the paradigm of the grading system in general. So I think that's what it does, which is pretty great, if I'm right.

We're going to sort of "tag team" about the various parts of the LRO— but we're going to keep it short enough so we can actually talk to you. The Learning Record Online has several parts: an interview and reflection about reading and learning habits, which is completed in the first week or so of class; an observation section, where students keep track of their course work throughout the semester; a work samples section, and two assessment sections which are used to evaluate the learning process in a more formal way.

Jan Fernheimer
I'm going to talk about two parts of the Learning Record [distributes handout]. The Learning Record as a portfolio includes a collection of pieces that students assemble at the midterm and the final to pull some of the picture together of the kinds of work and learning that they're doing in the classroom.

The first thing I have here, printed with permission from one of my students last fall, is an example of "Part A" of the portfolio. "Part A" is two parts: one is the interview students are asked to conduct with someone else, whether that's a parent, a friend, a former teacher, someone who's known them in a learning context and for a long time. That person

either sends an email or they do an audio interview that the student transcribes into the Record, providing a history of that particular student. And then the student also does their own reflection on their own history in terms of their course strands.

The Learning Record itself has two different parts of criteria that it uses to help students and instructors think about the ways in which students are learning. The basics are that there are five major dimensions of learning—they include things like confidence and independence, prior and developing experience, or emerging leaning skills. And those kinds of things carry for whichever class an instructor is using the Leaning Record in. Instructors themselves, then, develop course strands or objectives, goals for the specific classes that they're teaching. So I first started using it in a literature class and now I'm using it in for RHE 306, which is a basic argumentation class, and so the course strands changed. Literary analysis was a big and prominent course strand in the literature class; now it's been replaced with a stronger emphasis on written argumentation.

In any case, these kinds of criteria—the ways in which the students are thinking about their own learning and the instructor—shift. And so, at the beginning of the semester, they get a chance before the class is has even really begun, to ask, "How does my history as a writer, as a critical reader and critical thinker, influence the way that I think about all these tasks that I'm going to be asked to do in this particular classroom?" And I think that what's really valuable about this part of the portfolio is that it brings in that personal experience and because of the nature of the technology itself—the "official" aspect of the portfolio—legitimates things that might not necessarily be counted in or included in what a teacher gets to know about a student.

It also sets a context so you have a way of thinking about your students not just as these beings that sit in class and pass paper back and forth to you, but they come with a fuller, richer social history. It can also help how you develop community and rapport with students because if you know that someone comes with baggage, that "ever since I was four everyone told me I was a bad writer," you're probably going to want to comment on their writing in a little bit different tone than someone who says, "I've been reading since I was four and my parents always encouraged me; I knew I was a great writer."

So it lets you in on a little bit more on information that you wouldn't necessarily have and I think that's really valuable in terms of all the other things that Lisa has mentioned and in terms of the kinds of authority you want to introduce and legitimate. And the other part of that is the "Observations" that also are part of the portfolio. Students make observations on a regular basis; the instructor sets the frequency and the kinds of observations they want the students to be making. In general, the prompt asks students to make descriptive statements about the kinds of things that are happening inside and outside class.

You can look at examples and see [notes handout]; I've included students talking about the learning they did inside class. And, if you

see the entry on the last page, a student who went somewhere during Spring Break and translated the critical reading skills she was developing in class to what she was seeing out in the world, which was so exciting for me as an instructor to see, but also exciting and instructive for the student to see because it meant that the things we were doing in class translated—it wasn't just school work. I think that the Observations and the "Part A" part of the Learning Record are a place where you can introduce that personal and outside-of-school experience in a way that relates the two together. The "Connections Between Classes" in another place where students can begin to talk about the kinds of learning that do or don't work for them either in one environment or another. It's pretty magical when you see people making connections between what goes on inside the classroom and outside of it.

Lisa Avery

I wanted to add that one of my favorite things about the LRO is that right up front there's a little thing that asks you what languages you read, speak and write, and, as an instructor, that's incredibly useful to me because knowing that someone has English as a second language is helpful—knowing what that language is and how long they've been speaking it.

So, if someone speaks Spanish in the home (or in the case of one of my current students, Russian in the home), it changes their knowledge of the English language. And just being able to state that in a way that doesn't just explain away bad writing or good writing is incredibly useful. It seems to give my students more of an impetus to say, "I speak two languages; one I might not be as good at, but that's great—I know two, " rather than saying, "I don't write English particularly well because I didn't grow up reading it," which is a negative statement. Just having that out in front allows students to put things down as skills rather than as deficits, so I'm really pleased with that.

When it comes to evaluation, in my class one of the key things is that papers aren't "worth" anything, in one sense: there's no paper that's worth 20-percent of your grade, so you can't "fail" a paper. That's incredibly empowering both for the teacher and for the student because the focus is on the process—that doesn't mean, of course, that you can't demonstrate mastery of a skill, of a certain kind of argument, of writing successful paragraphs, and, in fact, you have to do that at the midterm and at the final in order to successfully argue for your grade.

But again, authority comes back to "here's what I can produce and develop" and keeps it away from basically arbitrary assessments of "participation is worth 5 percent of your grade," "a definitional argument is worth 20 percent of your grade." I have an example that I'll read that speaks to the Learning Record's uses for community-building and student empowerment. One student writes:

In this course, we have written many papers in which I put a respectable amount of effort. When things were not shining too brightly, I finally realized that my writing needed some improvement. I took all of my sources, recent peer reviews and self-revisions and tried to come up with the best solution to make my writing more effective. I built stronger conficdence within myself by being more prompt about coming to class on time, starting on my topic proposals, rough drafts and final drafts. When I learned to use my time wisely I felt better about the work that I was turning in. I believe that the confidence that I have gained from this course can be used in other courses to get me through without stress.

Here, you have a lot of different things going on all at once: you have a clear response to a certain kind of empowerment. You also see the ways in which my authority as the "grader of the paper" is being utterly usurped by other kinds of thinking about writing—and I mean that in a very positive way. It's not just what I had to say about a paper, it's what the peer reviews had to say, what the revisions say, the process of writing the paper rather than some kind of final product. When it comes to evaluating these things, these kinds of insights are all backed up by actual evidence of the work that you've done, so if the evidence matches your own evaluation, then you get the grade that you want. And I think, all in all, it changes the relationship of the student to the grade and so the end, rather than felling successful because you got a certain grade in the class, you have a this online record of everything that you did in 16 weeks that speaks to development in a way that an "A," or a "B," or a "C," or a "D" or an "F" really can't. And I think that's the real value of the Learning Record

[workshop participant]
So, to clarify, what does "LRO" stand for?

Lisa Avery
Learning Record Online

[work shop participant]
And it's a form?

Lisa Avery
It's an electronic portfolio system that has a bunch of different parts.

Jan Fernheimer
The different parts, like you see here [indicates handout] are the interview that someone else does, then one a student writes about themselves; "Observations" are made throughout the semester; at the midterm and at the final, the student writes an overall essay that argues for the progress, the development, the kinds of skills and strategies that

they've learned within the criteria of the "dimensions of learning" and the particular "course strands." As part of that process they include evidence from work samples, which can be as varied as emails that they exchange with an instructor or other student, things they post on the discussion blog or forum, papers from other classes, work they've done in that class. Typical kinds of work that didn't "count" like peer reviews that they've done in class, if they've done a really excellent job giving helpful feedback; kinds of ways they've initiated or participated in class discussions and have documented that participation through "Observations." It opens up the array of types of learning experiences that get counted.

Lisa Avery
It's available at http://lro.cwrl.utexas.edu

Jan Fernheimer
There are several full portfolio samples there you can look at from a couple of different classes.

Kristen Hogan
Next we thought we'd look at the questions that everyone generated, and we'd like to hear who you are, if you could introduce yourselves and say why this workshop spoke to you.

[Participants introduce themselves; one participant, a graduate student, brings up for discussion the difference between being asked to use technology as an instructor because students expect it versus technology as a "formative process in your pedagogy."]

Lisa Avery
I think it's safe to say that there was at least one technophobe in the room before we started teaching with technology. [agreement of panelists] It's astonishingly easy once you go through the first semester.

Lee Rumbarger
I think a lot of us started really small too. The first semester I used email to communicate and built a course Web site and that was really good; the next semester, I did a little more. I think you build up.

Jan Fernheimer
I think we're blessed and lucky to be in an environment that supports experimental pedagogy that we're doing. The Computer Writing and Research Lab was created to support these innovative strategies. I'm sitting here listening to my colleagues thinking, "Wow, I thought we'd talked about pedagogy in meetings but, if I'd known the kind of cool stuff people were up to and could have shared that earlier, it would have been amazing. I see these people in the labs and in the halls, and

that's part of what makes the CWRL a collaborative environment. But that's not to say you can't do this work anywhere: the wonderful thing about technology is it expands your network of collaboration and connection. It's tapping in to that and, as Lee said, doing small things. My Web sites still will never look like Melanie's. I've latched onto the blog because it does everything for you—all you have to do is type and hit "post," and it looks nice enough and you can still get the benefits out of it without having to totally go off the deep end. You chose your battles the first couple of semesters you teach with technology—you always come prepared to have it not work at some point.

[one workshop participant asks how students who aren't necessarily self-identified as "feminists" respond to the panelists' teaching practices]

Lisa Avery
Some classes are self selecting. When you're in a class called "Women's Popular Genres," you're probably not going to have people who are really resistant to feminism in there. In my RHE 306 class, I'm absolutely a feminist, and my politics play a role in how I do things, but that's not necessarily visible. I think in some ways it is and in some ways it has to be, but it's not like I walk in wearing an "I'm a feminist and if you'd don't like it get out of my class" T-shirt. I think that's a good question because I think that some of the things I do and don't say are really responsible, but I often worry that I don't articulate my positions clearly enough.

Kristen Hogan
For me, there have been students in my class who've been really resistant because they think that in "Women's Popular Genres: Romance, Sentimentality and the Gothic," we're going to read conventional romance novels from the present day—and they enjoy reading them and want to talk about them. As you may know, the course is actually very different. For those of you who haven't taken it, the idea is to talk about the lineage of romance writing and sentimentality, or feeling, as a genre that's particularly focused on women readers and how that comes across in texts like Jane Eyre or Uncle Tom's Cabin. So we're really talking about feeling and community in very political ways. Like Lisa said, we haven't overtly talked about feminism in my class this semester, so I'm just teaching in a way that I think is feminist and reading women's texts. I hope that they'll become more critical readers and we've just had other issues to focus on that are related to feminism but aren't "is this author a feminist?"

I have taught a class called the "Rhetoric of Feminist Spaces," so I think, alternatively, there are classes in which we definitely engage with, "what is a feminist?" and people have a range of ideas of what that means, and then, by the end, we check in again and have different ideas. For me, it's an issue of the focus of the class.

Audra Rouse

I'm teaching RHE 306 right now and, as you can see from my sample assignment, I stick feminism in there all the time very blatantly and openly, but I don't do it in such a way as "here's the definition of feminism and what you should think about it." As long as you allow students to express their resistance, then so what if they have resistance—you just put it out there and don't tell them what to think, but you give the opportunity to rethink their ideas. And if they don't change their minds or develop new ideas, that's fine too, but you can open us a space for them to critique their ideas. A lot of times people are resistant, but don't really know why—it's mostly just because they haven't thought about I that much so they rely on a lot of stereotypes and vague thinking. When they actually look at examples, and have to talk about why they think things are or are not feminist, they reevaluate their ideas. So I think it's fine if students are resistant—in fact, I'm happy if they are.

Melanie Ulrich

I think it's important for me to say right out front that I'm a feminist. One of the first assignments I teach in RHE 306, which is not a feminist class, has to do with Web sites. And when you're doing cultural criticism, gender issues are going to come up. So I say directly, "I'm a feminist; I'm a liberal; I hate Bush; I'm agnostic" so they know where my biases are. I think that, in and of itself, is rhetorically convincing.

When I was a first or second year graduate student here, I TA-ed for a class and asked as a question on a pop quiz, "Was the Wife of Bath a feminist?" And I was floored by all the responses I got that said, "Yes, she must be feminist because she's such a castrating bitch." Well, in slightly different language. [laughter] After that, I thought, I clearly have to model: I like to say what my biases are anyway and as long as I'm respectful of other people's opinions—and I try really really hard to be open. But more than that, I want people to look at me and say, "She doesn't castrate people on the weekend."

Lee Rumbarger

Do you find that, once you've put that out there, some people see bias in any kind of critical feedback?

Melanie Ulrich

Oddly, no. I've had conservatives in class. Right now I have a Bush-supporter in one of my classes who is confrontational in a playful way, if that makes sense. Usually there are women in the class, too, who decide, "Yeah, I can get into this." When feminist issues come up, they're very willing to say, "That's not fair to women." The recent issue with the Harvard president came up and my students were very willing to talk about it; in fact, they brought it up.

Audra Rouse

Do you think being so open about your views will discourage students from writing about topics where they blatantly disagree with you, though? Say, about abortion?

Melanie Ulrich

It hasn't so far.

Lisa Avery

It hasn't in my class, either: currently, I've got an anti-abortion paper and I have two pro Iraq war papers and, for me, it's very easy to be up front with students and say, "You understand that I disagree with you; here's what you need to do to make your argument stronger to convince even people who might not agree with you." People seem to really understand that I'm not evaluating whether or not you're right—that's not going to make you write any better. I'm interested in how you're going to write your argument. I think people on the whole are pretty open to saying, "Yeah, you're right. I need to make a better argument." They're still not particularly fun for me to read.

Jan Fernheimer

To me, it depends on the audience you're dealing with. In a class in which I'd build up a particular rapport and appreciation, I could be more "out." When I was teaching a class on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I didn't come out as a Jew to my students until very late on, not to mention a pro-Israel Jew. And that definitely allowed my students to write papers that were not in a political spirit I would have necessarily supported; it also allowed them to challenge one another and I didn't have to get into that. I think it's really hard to get students comfortable and to a place where they're willing to challenge one another so you don't have to get in there and do the dirty work. Sometimes you have to, especially when you have students who share the same uninterrogated belief systems. I always end op "outing" myself in my classes in all kinds of ways, multiple kinds of identities. But I've never had it be a problem for all the reasons that you guys have mentioned. Most of my students are asked to write to persuade an informed oppositional audience anyway, so they have to work with that idea to begin with.

[A workshop participant discusses how important class size might be in allowing students the chance to come to their own conclusions and support their own positions; in smaller classes, you can build different levels of trust and have different kinds of interactions, she points out.]

Kristen Hogan

I think it does depend on the community of the class too. I've TAed for really large English classes, and particularly one professor who's just amazing at getting students in a 200-person class to interact with

her. And it's amazing to me that it's not just the same small group of people, it's a larger group. I think that just depends on the students that you have in the class and whether they would like to interact in a large group. But we're going to have to wrap it up because we're over time.

Questions from Workshop Participants

o   *Does technology help translate feminist ideas and issues in ways that make them more digestible by non-feminist undergrads and, if so, how?*

o   *How does linearity of space come into play with feminist pedagogy?*

o   *How do you maintain a feminist approach even when the course content is not explicitly feminist?*

o   *What kinds of computer classroom activities qualify as "feminist pedagogy" and does this necessarily need to be obvious to all participants?*

o   *How do you maintain a balance between the feminist ideal of de-centering authority, yet still maintain a reasonable level of authority in the classroom, especially if you are a woman teaching a class with men?*

o   *Are there ways that technology inhibits/compromises feminist pedagogy?*

o   *If technology classroom theory seems to echo some tenets of feminist pedagogy, is it inherently feminist just to teach in a computer classroom?*

o   *Does the identity of the instructor have anything to do with it [with fem ped]?*

o   *I'm just interested in how it has been argued that technology CAN help reduce or prevent a hierarchically structured classroom and what your views on the legitimacy of these arguments are. Also, what kind of hierarchical structures already exist in classrooms without this technology?*

o   *Does technology and its use in the classroom benefit students who might otherwise have other teaching techniques?*

o   *Are male and female students equally adept in dealing with technology?*

o   *What distinguishes feminist pedagogy from other styles of teaching?*

o   *How can one succeed in reaching students who may or may not agree or be responsive to the ideas of feminism?*

o   *How is feminism reflected by the use of technology? Is it because the technology is being used to spread feminist scholarship?*

o   *How is the use of the feminist pedagogical methods growing in the nation?*

Appendix A
Audra Rouse
RHE 306: Rhetoric and Composition
Defining Feminism

> I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is: I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute. ~Rebecca West, 1913

> [Feminism is] a socialist, anti-family, political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians. ~Pat Robertson

> Feminism is the radical notion that women are people. ~Cheris Kramarae and Paula Treichler

> [Feminists are] just women who don't want to be treated like shit. ~Su, an Australian woman interviewed for the 1996 anthology DIY Feminism.

I.   **Establish a working definition.** Develop a team definition for feminism: what attributes are necessary and sufficient to qualify something or someone as "feminist"? Make a list of criteria. Write up this definition on your own, without using outside sources.

II.   **Test cases.** Examine the following web sites and decide whether or not they are "feminist" based on your criteria. Be prepared to cite specific reasons why they do or do not fit your definition.

1. iVillage—the Internet for Women <http://www.women.net/>
Bust Magazine <http://www.bust.com/>

2. Girl Scouts <http://www.girlscouts.org/>
Gurl.com <http://www.gurl.com/>

3. xy: men, masculinities and gender politics <http://www.xyonline.net/>
Dads & Daughters <http://www.dadsanddaughters.org/>

4. Ladies against Women <http://www.ladiesagainstwomen.com/>
Independent Women's Forum <http://www.iwf.org/>

5. The League of Women Voters <http://www.lwv.org/>
 To the Contrary <http://www.pbs.org/ttc/>

III. Reevaluating your definition. After you have examined your test cases, consider how well your definition holds up. At this point you may want to consult on-line reference sources to see how your definition compares to other common definitions of the term. Write a second paragraph explaining any changes you would now make to your definition and turn your work in to the Teacher Folder.

*Appendix B*
PRACTICING SPATIALIZED RATHER THAN LINEAR ANALYSIS

"Cyborg imagery can help express two crucial arguments in this essay: first, the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now; and second, taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means refusing an anti-science metaphysics, a demonology of technology, and so means embracing the skilful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, **in communication with all of our parts**. It is not just that science and technology are possible means of great human satisfaction, as well as a matrix of complex dominations. Cyborg imagery can suggest **a way out of the maze of dualisms** in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia. It is an imagination of **a feminist speaking in tongues** to strike fear into the circuits of the supersavers of the new right. It means both **building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories**. Though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess."
--Donna Haraway.
Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature. New York: Routledge, 1991. 181.

SHAPE OF TEXT: OMNIGRAFFLE (*Iola Leroy* – Omnigraffle Assignment)
Use Omnigraffle to draw the shape of the text on the level of: 1. book; 2. chapter; 3. paragraph
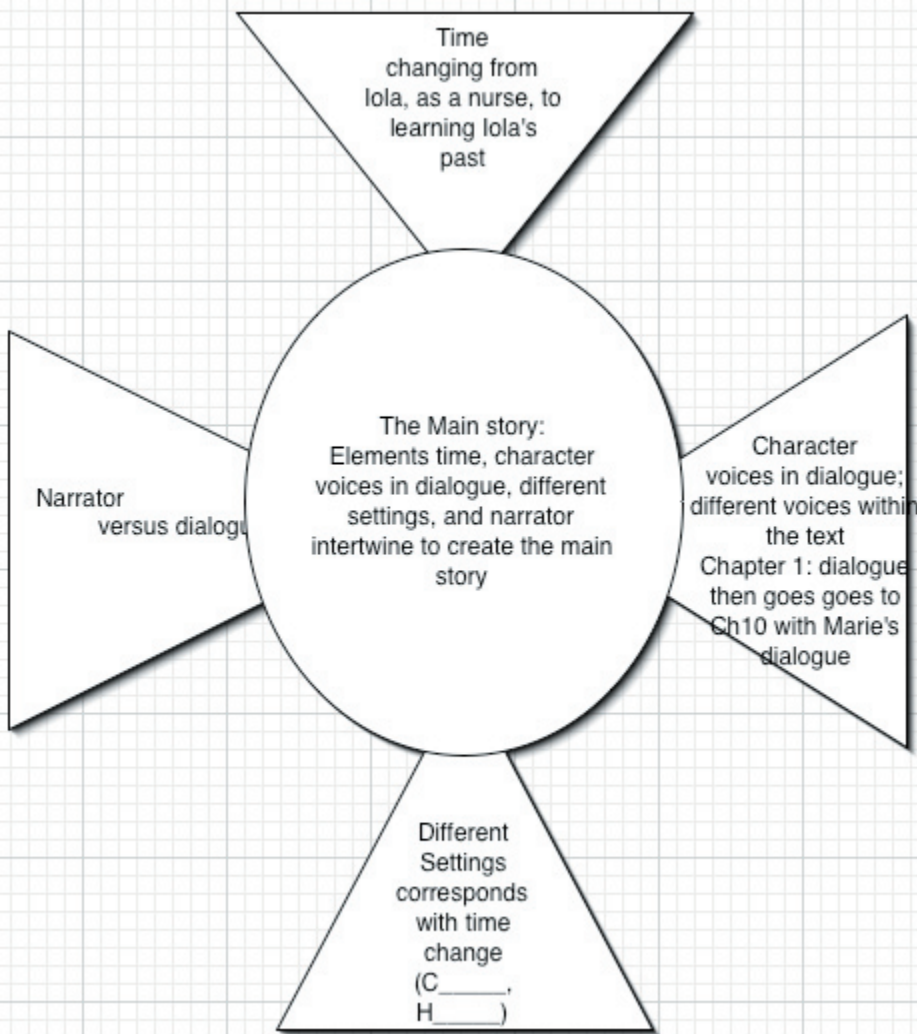
SPACE OF ARCHIVES: BLOGS *(see Reading Schedule from course website for blog links)*

WOMEN'S POPULAR GENRES
Romance, Sentimentality, & the Gothic

project assignments

Blog and Group Panel Assignment:
Women's Popular Blogging
"A popular literature, whose respectability was continually a subject of debate, began to flourish in the eighteenth century, once the technology and reading public was available to create a mass publishing industry" (Ann Cvetkovich, *Mixed Feelings* 15).

Web publishing has introduced new (or at least revised) popular genres: websites, weblogs, and chat rooms have their own framing scenes, stock characters, and affective strategies.

Like print exchange, web access is not the great unifier (see Eleanor Russel Mason's *brillo magazine* article "Resisting Erase-ism on the 'Net'"), but women are building spaces for critique, commentary, and resources online (check out links from "Women-Related Online Periodicals").

The computer component for our course will include taking women's popular genres online and enacting the possibility of the weblog (or blog) as a women's popular genre.

What Is a Blog? *(back to top)*
Blogs are web diaries usually generated by individuals. Bloggers post commentary on a range of subjects, and visitors to the blog may post responses. Blogs can be focused on a particular issue or can explore one blogger's ideas in general.

Our blogs will be literary blogs, that is, they will chart your experience reading the literature of our class.
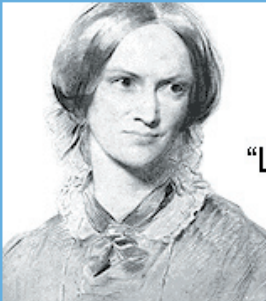
Go to:
Women's Popular Blogging
What Is a Blog?
Why All This Talk about Blogs
Creating the Group Blog
Preparing to Lead Class
Leading Class Discussion
Evaluating Blog & Group
Individual Literary Blog Posts

Paper Format
Short Papers
Final Paper

Download Paper Assignments:
Group 1&2 Paper #1 Assign.

Rebecca

"Last night I dreamt I went to Manderlay again."