Audience Is Everything: Rewriting Composition Classrooms to Incite Democratic Participation, Social Activism, and Public Discourse

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Abstract

It is often assumed that the college classroom signifies a "public" space and that the writing done therein is an inherent form of "activism" (Ervin, 1997). But this supposition is misplaced. The reality is that composition courses teach rhetorical skills in a sort of abstract vacuum where the writer is expected to compose for an academic audience alone—often an audience of one: the instructor. The notion, then, that writing for a composition course is a form of public activism is misleading because the classroom is, in fact, a restricted community in which writing is transmitted to a privileged audience instead of a public one. Because academic writing is taught and disseminated within realms that remain largely inaccessible to those outside of the institution, academia has created a semi-closed circuit that mobilizes writing and research but only in an orbital, exclusive fashion.

Such limitations of audience and purpose prompt three concerns for the college composition classroom: the disengagement of the composition student; the perpetuation of dominant, hidden ideologies; and the neglect of our democratic responsibility to foster discourse between author and society. Composition courses offer a unique opportunity to address these issues using public discourse. This essay will explore the problems of engagement, ideology, and discourse by surveying student opinions regarding composition classes and by positing that an opportunity for improved composition pedagogy exists in our ethical obligation to use the composition classroom to generate practiced, democratic advocates. In recognizing our social responsibility to the communities that sustain our institutions, instructors can repudiate the gravitation toward armchair politicking and instead incite real-world change alongside our students. And in teaching writing as and through communication, we may just salvage what remains of our students' longings to write what matters.

Keywords: English composition, academic writing, audience, public discourse

Introduction

"Audience is everything." This is the line that I fed my college-level English composition students in each and every course that I taught. Like the realtor's age-old mantra on location, I emphasized the importance of audience until the very mention of it was met with eyeballs rolling in sockets and audible huffs and pffts. I am not the only one, though, to tout this or a similar phrase. As an undergraduate writing major, I too was indoctrinated early on as to the necessity of audience awareness. The professors that I looked up to and then went on to work alongside stressed the need for budding college writers to accommodate a specific readership.

In addition to faculty, this audience-is-everything tune is a recitation sung by masters in the field of composition pedagogy. What I refer to below as an "ideal" audience, Paul Silvia (2007) calls an "inner audience," claiming that "an image of who will read your paper . . . will help you with your writing decisions" (p. 80). Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford (1984) assert, "the writing process is not complete unless another person, someone other than the writer, reads the text also" (p. 169). Peter Elbow (1981) reminds readers to "pay lots of attention as you write to your audience and its needs" (p. 177). Although these are just three examples in a veritable galaxy of writers who write on writing, it is safe to assume that the lecture on audience import is rooted deeply in the discipline's history.

It took me six years of teaching higher education writing courses to begin to wonder about and to question my concept of audience. One day, I asked a student struggling to find her authorial voice, "Who is your audience?"

"You," she replied coolly.

"Right, but to whom are you really writing—who do you want to read this essay?"

Her reply: "Well, no one. Because I wouldn't write an essay like this outside of class."

While at first this student may appear to have been suffering either from extreme sarcasm or a lack of understanding, these words, however flippantly delivered, left an impression on me. As her comment sank in, I began to see the difficulty in our positions: I was indeed the audience, and no matter how much time I spent lecturing on an "ideal" audience, my students were not being encouraged to engage in the type of writing in which audience truly mattered. In asking students to imagine an ideal audience but to write for an actual audience of one (me), I was essentially disconnecting my students from the goal of writing as communication. My exercises in audience awareness were not only somewhat futile and perhaps disengaging to student writers but they were also allowing for the recurrence of many layers of hidden ideologies to pass by, unquestioned and unevaluated. In addition to disengagement and the perpetuation of ideological agendas, the instructor-as-audience problem indicates a third issue: public discourse. Containing student writing to the classroom leads students to "an impoverished sense of writing as communication because they have only written in a school setting to teachers" (Elbow, 1987:51). Writing, we must not forget, is communication, but this communal piece is lost on composition students who are expected to write for elite, in-house audiences that rarely extend to true public spheres.

In this paper, I argue that approaching the composition classroom from a perspective of social responsibility and public discourse sheds an essential light on the goals and outcomes of academic writing. This essay will explore the results of a survey of student opinions about composition courses both as they are and as they might be. In doing so, I hope to illustrate that dissatisfied, disengaged students can be reanimated if instructors address the problem of audience. By replacing the practice of the in-class writing devoid of a public audience with the

opportunity to write for and to people, groups, or institutions in the public domain, we create the opportunity to address the issues of student engagement, ideological and hegemonic preservation, and social responsibility.

Literature Review

This review of the literature includes primary research in the form of empirical studies. However, I also draw upon secondary sources and analyses because I view interpretation and the translation of lived experiences as valid forms of knowing. To exclude these from my study or to devalue them does not support the qualitative researcher's notion that "research is a process of trying to gain a better understanding of the complexities of human experience" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 21). To gain a more holistic understanding of our world, I strive to draw from different disciplines and rely on various types of resources to help me weave a more comprehensive tapestry of understanding.

Composition & Student Engagement

Student engagement has been a persistent topic for several decades (Astin, 1984). From effects on minorities (Ream & Rumberger, 2008) to attrition rates (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011) to teaching effectiveness (Polikoff, 2015), discussions revolving around student engagement permeate academic institutions. Breaking down the aspects of student engagement typically results in a three-pronged model. For Trowler (2010), this includes emotional engagement, cognitive engagement, and what she terms "behavioral" engagement, which she defines as "behavioural norms, such as attendance and involvement, and . . . the absence of disruptive or negative behaviour" (p. 5). For Parsons et al. (2014), this three-dimensional model includes both emotional and cognitive engagement, as Trowler's does, but these authors refer to the third aspect as "affective" engagement, which is "a sense of belonging in the classroom and an interest, curiosity, or enthusiasm around specific topics or tasks" (para. 5). While there are variances in naming the elements that constitute student engagement, essentially, researchers agree that for a student to be "engaged," she must be interested, active, and challenged.

For the composition classroom in higher education, however, student engagement does not come easily. To begin, first- and second-year students who are required to take English composition courses enter these spaces with no lack of writing anxiety. The pressures of producing an immaculate end product (Bayat, 2014), the "fear of teacher's negative comments," "insufficient writing techniques" (Younas et al., 2014, para. 15), and a lack of the time needed for "process, revision, and collaboration" (Rose, 2011:46) all serve to heighten students' anxieties and impede their writing endeavors. Next, students are disconnected from the work that they do in part because of the lack of an authentic audience. I use the term "authentic" audience to imply a reader who is invested in the text to an extent that supersedes the instructor's investment, which can be reduced to the quantification of student writing to a numeric grade. An authentic audience is an "active, critical audience" and, more importantly, one that does not seek to employ the text as a mere measurement of a student's aptitude for writing (Von Mucke, 2010:61). The missing public—or authentic—audience serves to create a rift between the student's experiences within the classroom and his/her life outside of it.

Composition & Ideology

The literature regarding composition and ideology revolves around these questions: what should or should not be taught in the college writing classroom and should particular ideologies

be interwoven into such courses in order to "bring about political and social change" (Hairston, 1992:185). One camp insists that college composition should revolve around creating clear, concise, academic writers by teaching the writing process—Peter Elbow, Andrea Lunsford, Lisa Ede, Donald Murray, Maxine Hairston, and Linda Flower are just a few. Hairston (1992), for example, rails against a composition classroom focused on political agendas and ideological discussions. She regrets that "required writing courses" are increasingly used as "vehicles for social reform rather than as student-centered workshops designed to build students' confidence and competence as writers" (p. 180). The opposing camp, which includes theorists such as James Berlin, Patricia Bizzell, Charles Paine, John Trimbur, and Linda Brodkey, among others, supports the notion that composition pedagogy cannot afford to ignore the need to connect "literacies with [the] responsibilities of a global citizenship" (Hawisher et al., 2009:55). This dispute indicates that those who teach composition cannot agree on even fundamental aspects of the discipline such as the purpose of teaching writing.

Moving away from this sort of dichotomous approach to composition pedagogy, I focus instead on the problematic nature of the instructor as sole audience, claiming that such a biased audience for student writers serves to amplify a completely different set of ideological suppositions that come standard with the teaching of composition. Because composition can be taught in a way that "favor[s] one version of economic, social, and political arrangements over other versions," the authoritative audience of one accentuates and promotes an unchallenged master narrative and with it whatever ideologies the particular instructor brings into the classroom (Berlin, 1988:477). In other words, a whole range of hidden ideologies is perpetuated by the instructor-audience despite the instructor's stance on the appropriateness of teaching ideology in a composition classroom. These hidden ideologies, in turn, provide "students with a rather limited form of literacy" and obscure the complexities of the art of communicating through writing (Ward, 1994:4). Within the classroom, "ideological assumptions" are blindly presented "as mere 'common sense,' and . . . contribute to sustaining existing power relations" (Fairclough, 1989:77). These assumptions—which maintain the status quo—cannot be challenged or even recognized by novice writers when the one in power plays both the role of audience as well as instructor.

Composition, Democracy, & Public Discourse

For the sake of argument, I will define democracy as "a way of living in which we collectively deliberate over our shared problems" (Wood, 1998:180). Those who call for educational reform in the spirit of Wood's (1998) idea of democracy are many. John Dewey, Michael Apple, James Sears, Roger Soder, John Goodlad, Carole Edelsky, and many more envision public education as the way by which to "make this a better world to live in" (Teitelbaum, 1998:40). In their minds, our challenge as educators is to set "new standards of excellence" that revolve around "human dignity, social and economic justice, spiritual enlightenment, and peace and sustainability" (Sears, 2004:5). Striving towards such ends, however, may in fact succeed in cultivating students who will not only be knowledgeable but also ready and willing democratic participants.

The composition classroom provides a unique avenue through which we might inspire this type of democratic and socially aware student. Writing, discourse, communication—these are "social activities" (Heller, 2003). To remove the social aspect of writing is detrimental to the process and the product, and yet, this is essentially what instructors do when we attempt to teach writing skills without an authentic audience. Writing should be a conversation with the public

(Bruffee, 1983). And Dewey (1916) agrees. A forerunner in the movement to use education as the pursuit of democratic ideals, Dewey (1916) reminds us, "there is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication" (p. 4). With this formative work in mind, it seems likely that the teaching of composition currently undermines democratic ideals by neglecting the part of the equation that links composition to communication.

Methodology

My ultimate goal as a professor of composition is to find ways to answer this question: How can I better foster student engagement, confidence, and success? This research project was my starting point; it was a way for me to collect the student narratives necessary to address those three goals. I conducted qualitative research because it provides a way for students to tell their own stories in their own voices, offering a more complete picture of the student writing experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to address issues of experience, I approached this study using a social constructivist framework and the idea that meaning is constructed. The overall goal of this study was to discover my students' "subjective meanings to their experiences," and to do so, I relied "on the participants' views of the situation" (Creswell, 2013:24-25).

Research Question(s)

The research questions that fuel this study are relatively uncomplicated. The purpose of this research is to determine students' general opinions about their previous and/or current college composition courses. Here is what I set out to learn:

1. How do students feel about college composition courses?
2. How do students define the purpose of a composition class?
   a. And what do they say *should* be the purpose of a composition class?
3. What can composition instructors do to foster student engagement and success while simultaneously addressing the need to foster democratic participants?

Framework & Approach

Within the social constructivist worldview, I chose to employ a phenomenological approach that I then supplemented with a narrative approach. I used phenomenology as my main approach because, in the end, my goal was to understand how students feel about their experiences pertaining to composition courses. I gave my participants a chance to describe their experiences—or their "essence[s] of perception" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962:vii)—and from their descriptions, I have woven together their voices in order to work toward a "gradual development of knowing" (Hegel, 2009:21). In addition, I incorporated a narrative approach because this study deals with the unique stories of the participants, and I subscribe to the idea that "the narrative is the main mode of human knowledge . . . and the main mode of communication" (as cited in Czarniawska, 1998:3).

In light of my phenomenological and narrative approaches, participants were asked to write their replies to questions posed in an online survey. One reason for an online questionnaire was to provide students with a convenient and less-intrusive option of answering questions. But there are two other reasons I opted to do written instead of verbal interviews: the act of storytelling and the act of writing. Storytelling "can situate us as tellers of our own truths" (Benmayor, 2012:vii). In having participants consider these questions on their own time and compose smallish narratives of their experiences and opinions, I provided them with the occasion

to reflect on and then compose their "lived realities" (Benmayor, 2012:viii). Flores Carmona and Luschen (2014) purport that storytelling is more than just a creative endeavor—it "is an important aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice education" (p. 2). With this text in mind, I elected to encourage participants to craft their own critical stories of their experiences in English composition courses.

After convenience to the student and the act of storytelling, my third reason for using a written survey was to empower my students to write. Writing is often mistaken as the mere act of documenting what is already in our minds. But the act of writing is more closely related to the creation of new ideas than the recording of existing ideas—it enables us to form connections that are yet undefined. Jim Suchan (2004) agrees and writes that the act of writing is "a process of discovery, knowledge creation, self-revelation, and . . . personal identity formation" (p. 311). I wanted to provide my participants with this same type of opportunity for self-analysis and idea generation—an opportunity to construct their identities and to make meaning.

Data Collection

This study was conducted at a Midwestern community college. I chose a community college due to the general mission statements of such institutions, which focus on student success, community engagement, and social responsibility over research. The vision statement of this particular college challenges "students to meet the needs of the community and the world." Given this statement of purpose, I thought it would be appropriate to conduct my study at this community college as my argument is based upon the need for a greater attempt on behalf of academia to engage in public dialogue with the surrounding community. The participants for the study were recruited from English Composition II courses. The rationale for surveying second-year students was that these students have more experience with college-level composition courses and therefore have more to say about them. All English Composition II instructors teaching during the Summer 2015 semester were emailed. They were informed of this study and encouraged to email their students and invite them to participate. Per NMSU's Institutional Review Board (12067-A) as well as a second IRB through the community college, students were emailed a cover letter explaining the study's parameters and providing the link that would take them to the survey. Fifteen students participated in the online survey.

Data Analysis

The data analysis aspect of qualitative research gives me cause for concern. Like St. Pierre and Jackson (2014), I am "concerned about analysis that treats words (e.g., participants' words in interview transcripts) as brute data waiting to be coded" (p. 715). When "words are reduced to numbers," what we are essentially doing is engaging in a "positivism that presumes that language can, indeed, be brute and value-free" (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014:715-16). This push to quantify participants' words and to transform experiences into coded data negates the very reason for collecting critical narratives.

As a qualitative researcher, as a scholar who most closely aligns with a social constructivist theory, and as a professor of composition, I struggle with the fact "that analysis in qualitative methodology continues to be mired in positivism" (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014:717). Jackson and Mazzei (2012) take this problem of data and discuss it in terms of normativity or "sameness" (p. 4). By grouping and coding participant writing, what we as researchers are doing is compartmentalizing lived experiences into categories of normal versus abnormal, studying and validating that which is "normal," according to our numbers, and discarding that which is

different. In the spirit of queer theory, the act of quantifying and coding certainly does not allow researchers to "critically examine processes of normalization and reproductions of power relationships" (Shlasko, 2005:125). My worry is that in our continued attempts to defend the validity of qualitative research, we as qualitative researchers sacrifice not only the essences of the voices of those who write and speak to us but also the positions we claim within our particular theoretical frameworks.

Conflictions aside—if that is at all possible—I recognize the need to interpret qualitative research results. After all, research is meaningless without analysis and interpretation. Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning suggests that understandings are formed not individually or internally but through culture and context—socially constructed. Therefore, for this research study, I have taken the written results of my survey and attempted to generate a narrative that encompasses the voices of all of my participants, both those who conform and those who do not. I have also noted the silences in this narrative; I perceive the absence of words to be just as important as the words themselves. My endeavor to capture my participants' experiences in a holistic fashion is my way of validating my participants' critical narratives as well as remaining true to the spirit of qualitative research.

Results

The survey results indicate three main factors that affect students' perceptions of college English composition courses:

1. writing pretexts and previous feelings toward the discipline,
2. personal experiences with individual courses and instructors,
3. and perceptions of what liberal education means and the purpose of college composition courses.

Pretexts

All students come to the table with different pretexts regarding academic writing. Those participants in this study who did not harbor negative feelings towards writing indicated that they were "happy" taking composition courses. Most participants, however, were unable to state that they were happy taking composition courses simply because they did not consider themselves "big English fan[s] so it makes it really hard for [them] to like the class and give it [their] all." While students recognized that "as much as [they] did not want to take composition courses," they did recognize that if they want to get a degree, they "just [have] to do it." A student's pretexts partly determines her current feelings.

In-Class Experiences

Pretexts are not the only aspect shaping students' feelings towards composition courses. Specific in-class experiences also affect their perceptions. The minority of students who reported being happy to take composition classes also reported having had positive in-class experiences. These students feel that teachers who present "amazing class ideas and an amazing course structure . . . can completely revolutionize the way English is taught." What this means is that teachers and curriculum that have the potential to positively influence how students perceive the discipline. Moreover, if students are wiling to acknowledge and then adjust their pretexts, then they are able to change their perceptions from negative to positive. Here is one example from the survey: "After seeing what the course would exactly be like, I did not mind it what so ever . . . I liked the way it was set up. Overall my college composition classes [went] over very well."

These contented voices, however, are the minority. As mentioned, the majority of participants dislike having to take English composition, and part of the reason is due to ineffective teachers or disengaging classes. For example, participants revealed that many teachers fail to "make the class interesting to everyone" and seemed to design their curriculum solely for the benefit of the "writing talented." Certain pedagogical choices do not allow those students who may not be strong academic writers to gain an appreciation for the discipline. Participants also noted feeling resentful of composition courses when they could not place them in relation to their majors. Here is what one reported: "I didn't find this course hard, it was just difficult to be enthusiastic about it because it didn't pertain to my major as much as other classes." Essentially, the way a course is taught and the experiences students have in specific courses directly influence how students view the discipline as a whole.

Perceptions of Purpose

The most determining factor in regard to student perceptions of composition classes is the notion of purpose. Those who recounted being happy taking composition classes seemed to more fully understand the definition of liberal education. Participants happy to take composition courses defined a liberal arts education in the following ways:

- "a broad education"
- one in which "the student is exposed to many subjects and gains a comprehensive eduction [sic], rather than a specific or tailored one"
- the "Freedom to learn what interests you"
- "a very well rounded education" in which "every student should have a strong knowledge in math, reading, science, english [sic], government, social studies, economics."

Only one student who reported being dissatisfied with the composition experience chose to define liberal education. This individual described liberal education as "one that doesn't hold much of a career path for many students." The other students who reported being unhappy to take composition courses elected to skip this question. What this silence implies is that students who dislike taking composition courses are either unable or unwilling to define the meaning of a liberal arts education. It is likely that these students do not understand or do not subscribe to Dewey's (1916) notion that education is a process of "self-renewal" (p. 9).

Unlike the silences in regard to defining a liberal arts education, when asked to define the purpose of the English composition course, participants unanimously replied. And this time, there is almost no distinction between those who claimed being happy and those who claimed being unhappy with composition courses. Only one student wrote a reply that showed his or her deep distaste for composition classes; this individual stated that the purpose of the composition course is "to take more money from [the] student." Beyond that one response, however, the participants collectively agree on the purpose of taking composition courses. Even those who indicated their dissatisfaction (minus the one participant detailed above) answer this question in a way that shows that the majority of students understand the importance of written communication. The purpose of the college composition course, according to students, is this:

- "to have the knowledge to write in the professional world"
- "to explore our writing abilities and discover new ways to express ideas"
- "to improve/strengthen verbal and written communication skills"

Whether or not students claim to understand the goals of a liberal education, and whether or not they are happy taking English composition, all but one understand the need to improve written

communication through coursework. In other words, students do indeed want to improve as writers, and they recognize that they will need this skill beyond the classroom.

Student Suggestions

The fact that nearly all participants understand the purpose of composition classes does not negate the fact that the majority of them are still unhappy with these courses. This distaste could be due, in part, to what they think composition courses should accomplish. When asked how they would change the teaching of English composition courses, students recommend two main changes: more autonomy and more writing practice in genres that extend beyond academic essay writing. In particular, students would like "more choices for composition/writing courses for specific majors. For example if you are focusing on business you should be allowed to choose a business writing/composition course. This course would not necessarily have research papers but more report styles that you see in the business world." Likewise, students would appreciate courses that are "somewhat specialized. For example they could be on email writing, resume writing, and other things that may be more beneficial." The participants indicated wanting assignments "ranging from very small writing assignments to one or two large ones, and everything in between. [They] would also make sure the students encounter a diversity of writing techniques." If "teachers let their students have more availability to choose which assignments that they would like to dive into more," this particular student believes that student perceptions of composition classes would greatly improve. Participants, in short, recommend that instructors find ways to make the teaching of composition more relevant to their current and future needs.

Conclusion

We know that the majority of college composition students are not happy. While they understand the need to think critically and to be able to communicate successfully through writing, they fail to see how composition classes apply to their lives outside of the classroom. Composing essays to a professor does not, to their minds, equate to the writing they will be required to do beyond the institution. Quite frankly, I do not blame them. I would hesitate to suggest limiting the teaching of composition to business or technical writing because doing so might undermine the overall vision of a liberal arts education. However, I can certainly see the need to address what is taught in the composition classroom, how it is taught, and where it is taught in order to meet the changing demands of twenty-first century learners. After all, today's students

> must learn abilities that will sustain them through multiple career changes, new roles in marriage and community life, and forbidding political crises in the environment, economy, and social justice. If compositionists and rhetoricians are to act upon the current research and theory in our own journals, writing programs can no longer be limited to introducing students to the rhetoric of academic fields and majors. (Parks & Goldblatt, 2000:586)

To engage today's student, English composition instructors must find ways to make this skill relevant and applicable.

Recommendations

In regard to where composition takes place, I recommend supplementing the instructor-audience with an authentic, public audience. In essence, we should take writing out of the classroom. Heilker (1997) also focuses on the problem of where composition takes place:

"writing teachers need to relocate the *where* of composition instruction outside the academic classroom because the classroom does not and cannot offer students real rhetorical situations in which to understand writing as social action [original emphasis]" (p. 71). Providing authentic rhetorical exercises will help students appreciate and engage the complex nature of writing as communication.

To address the "where" of composition, higher education instructors might look toward the principles of experiential and service learning theories. These theories have the potential to alleviate the three problems posted in this paper: student engagement, ideology, and social responsibility. In particular, I advocate Heilker's (1997) "fifth form of service-learning in composition," which connects student writers with people, organizations, and businesses in the community that have writing needs (p. 74). The appeal is that "these writing tasks do not simulate or replicate or ask students to hypothesize about *anything*"; instead, these assignments "enable students to work with a very specific 'content': the mission of the agency" with whom they would be working (Heilker, 1997:75). Addressing this overarching problem of audience can reinvigorate our students and their desires to write what is important. It can stem the ways in which instructors perpetuate their own hidden agendas and ideologies. It can fulfill our obligation to enter into and maintain public discourse with the communities that house our institutions. Let us show our students that "rigorous intellectual work is prized . . . because of its ability to make a difference in how we understand and act powerfully on the social world in which we live" (Apple & Beane, 2007:151). In dislodging the instructor-audience, we will no doubt create a space in which our students are able to reclaim autonomy, purpose, and joy within the composition classroom as well as the ability and desire to take their writing beyond it.

A classroom is never simply a means of evaluating a student's learning or work. Education, if we can agree with John Dewey, is an avenue for developing democratic citizenship whereby social change becomes possible. To fulfill this end, the composition classroom, in particular, must strive to produce texts and writing that can be used for civil disobedience and public discourse. A student who is empowered to take her writing beyond the classroom and into the public arena becomes a powerful voice for equity and social change.

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Appendix: Survey

1. What is your academic standing?
   - I'm a first-year student
   - I'm a second-year student
   - I'm beyond my second year
   - I take random classes as I can
   - other
2. Have you attempted any college writing/composition courses before this one? Indicate yes or no and how many composition courses you've *attempted* (not just passed). (Include previous sections of this course if this is not the first time you're attempting it.) *Example: Yes, I've attempted 3 previous courses: EN 101 twice and EN 102 once before this current course.*
3. If you have attempted one or more composition courses or sections, were these required for your degree path? And were you happy to take them?
   - the courses were/are required, but I was NOT happy about having to take them
   - the courses were/are required, and I was HAPPY about having to take them
   - the courses were/are NOT required, and I was HAPPY to take them
   - I have not attempted any college composition courses before this one
4. What would you say is the point of taking college composition courses? In other words, why do you think the academic institution requires or offers them?
5. What do you think SHOULD be the point of taking college composition courses? In other words, how would you personally like to benefit from such courses?
6. Tell me how you would change the teaching of writing/composition if you could plan the curriculum. How would you teach or approach it and why?
7. What is your idea of the phrase "liberal education"?
8. Based on how you understand liberal education, do you think composition courses fit into or oppose the idea of liberal education? Why and in what ways?
9. How happy are you with your overall academic experience up to this point?
   - click on 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 thumbs up icons to indicate your happiness
10. Finally, is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with composition courses? Anything you can tell me about your feelings, ideas, perceptions, successes, or failings in this regard would be great!