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Dejoy, Nancy

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REVISING CURRICULUM

The challenges of directing first-year writing programs staffed primarily by people whose knowledge about composition studies is limited, and whose real interests lie elsewhere, are currently a reality in our field. But looking at the invention, arrangement, and revision activities apparent in the work that faculty do inside and outside of the composition classroom, and articulating the ways that the issues in that work relate to composition studies and the teaching of writing, allows us to bridge the gaps too often accepted as necessary for and by first-year writing teachers. The professional, individual, and programmatic problems of staffing first-year courses with adjuncts are well documented. However, if curriculum building, collaborative and cross-class work, and integrating varied interests in relation to the field become the grounds of composition studies, it will be less acceptable to construct first-year writing teachers as people who come in to teach individual classes and more important to think of them as people who come to participate in and contribute to a program. In this chapter, I focus on the ways that rethinking the first-semester course to open spaces for student participation and contribution can (and should) also invite faculty to participate in and contribute to composition studies. In my experience, guidelines and goals for first-year programs too often exist solely in relation to what types of texts students are supposed to be able to produce and not enough in relation to:

1) The goals for the faculty who teach the courses and the hopes for addressing the inequities embedded in the program (especially in programs staffed by adjunct and/or part-time faculty who desire full-time employment and all of the benefits it affords)

2) The creation of programs that integrate faculty interests in ways that inspire collaboration across sections of the course and
3) The relationship between the work that happens in first-year writing classrooms and the development of composition studies more generally.

If, as Sharon Crowley argues, the first-phase process movement was more successful at creating a profession than it was at changing the teaching of writing in significant ways, it created that profession in some fairly traditional ways (“Current-Traditional”). For example, it created institutional hierarchies, publication practices, and reward systems that did not challenge many of the assumptions about student discourse and its role in the profession, failing to open new subject positions not only for students but also for many teachers. In “Coming to Terms: Theory, Writing, Politics,” Lynn Worsham compares this trajectory to the one taken by literary studies:

For the last thirty years, composition studies has labored tirelessly to claim a place in the university as a legitimate academic discipline. We have been focused, in other words, on defining and legitimizing our work, on professionalizing ourselves in the context of the university culture and conventions. With single-minded purpose, we have sought to stand beside literary studies, as one scholarly profession among others, with our own ways of doing business with texts, and our own expertise. We have marked success in the usual ways: by the proliferation of graduate programs; the increase in the number of tenure-earning faculty positions held by composition “specialists”; the creation of a modest number of distinguished chairs for our own coterie of academic “stars”; and the increase in the number of scholarly journals and book series devoted to writing. (102)

In leaving these structural assumptions and positions unchallenged, the profession set a conservative trajectory for composition studies. But the process movement cannot be contained in this traditional way, partly because it invites us to acknowledge the multi-vocal nature of literacy, partly because it makes present the absent possibilities for expression and critical literacy suppressed by previous dominant models, and partly because it itself is a complex approach based not only on identification of and with
prescribed standards, norms and practices. Most important, however, the process movement cannot be contained by traditional constructions of disciplinarity because the literate spaces opened by that movement invite individuals, groups, and the field to understand themselves as able to do something other than consume and adhere to prescribed norms and standards. Instead, it encourages integration of the areas of English Studies most often separated from one another to create institutionalized structures: reading and writing, the literary and the rhetorical, student discourses, teacher discourses, and the discourses of the field. The frustrations that we experience when these possibilities come up against a material reality that constructs the discipline as unable to accommodate these possibilities are very real. The responses I suggest acknowledge this frustration and work toward changing these material conditions. I am challenging some basic assumptions, but the commitment to changing the conditions of first year writing in ways that empower and are empowered by its constituents is not in conflict with the process movement. The idea that change can happen, that it can be positive and productive, and that it can help us make room for a variety of voices and more egalitarian literacy practices is integrated in and fundamental to composition studies. To enact this fundamental commitment, however, we must work toward transitions that alter the communal spaces that constitute the field. Here, I hope to show how five specific factors—reading, writing, community-literacy activities, cross-class activities, and collaboration—can foster views of literacy, environments, and revisions that open spaces for contribution and participation to faculty as they open these spaces for students. To make these transitions, we must create introductions to writing that are based upon these activities; only by doing so can we refigure our ideas about the potential for participation and contribution. Such refiguring is, I believe, vital to the life of the profession and to the individuals whose lives are touched by the profession. They are critical activities, not in the sense that they favor critique and its products, but insofar as they 1) position understanding of the field as important to the teaching of writing, and 2) create spaces for participation and contribution that do not pre-scribe identification with as the
only or valorized route to subjectivity for members of the writing classes. In what follows here, I will use materials from interviews with two colleagues who have been collaborating with me to create and teach a first-semester course that engages the invention, arrangement, and revision strategies discussed in the previous chapter. As I have been illustrating, opening conversations about invention, arrangement, and revision gives us new ways to create relationships between and among the members of writing classes. There are other shared and complementary aspects to the course, as will become clear throughout my descriptions. While I will use specific examples from my own institutional context to illustrate my points, I am not proposing that every institutional context can or should open spaces for participation and contribution in composition in the same ways. In fact, in any particular context one will have to pay attention and take the risks involved in collaborative curriculum building to center composition studies in the composition classroom and meet these goals. Things that can’t be orchestrated will come into play. Three activities, however, are critical to the collaborative endeavor:

1) Viewing writing within the larger literacy contexts informing people’s lives
2) Creating an environment that allows teaching and learning to occur in ways that reflect the multiple and varied possibilities of literate action
3) Revising writing in light of 1 and 2.

These activities are critical because they are what people in composition studies do: we look at and try to understand literacy contexts in ways that help us foster and engage literate action, and we work together to revise composition in relation to what we see and the possibilities called up by what we see. If we look at literacy contexts in limited ways, for example, as determined by modes of discourse whose conventions are set and static, the possibilities for literate action will be defined by adherence and conformity, and the teaching of writing will be a process of reproducing those conventions. In fact, if we conflate composition studies to any one method of looking, practicing, and/or responding to invitations for literate
action, we misrepresent the discipline and its endeavors. We may be “teaching writing” within whatever limitations we choose or are required to apply when we conflate things in these ways, but we are not doing composition studies. That this repression of the field leads to feelings of disconnection for members of writing classes—teachers and students alike—should be no surprise. In such scenarios we don’t illustrate or practice what it means for our explorations of a subject to connect people to disciplines and their practices, nor do we invite people to explore the relationships between what is configured as disciplinary knowledge inside academia and their larger social contexts. Instead, we pretend that deep knowledge about the terms and possibilities for participation and contribution are not necessary or will happen somewhere else and that, therefore, it is not our responsibility to open these spaces for our students, our colleagues, and ourselves. I can’t stress enough how important it is to consider composition studies as the opening of these spaces for participation and contribution, and to think about the success of the discipline in relation to these openings.

Let me emphasize that I am not arguing that any one- or two-semester course or sequence can invite an individual to become an active agent in composition studies as it is currently configured, especially if the discipline continues to become professionalized in traditional ways. What I am arguing is that participation and contribution are critical concepts in learning processes that do not restrict teacher/learner relationships to consumption and reproduction. The idea that we come together to participate in and contribute to knowledge bases, pedagogies, value systems, and structures of learning is vital in first-year writing courses, where students are introduced to the expectations of composing (in) higher education, and where many faculty are introduced to the expectations they can/should have for students and themselves as members of the composition community. The approach to first-year writing presented here was designed to create collaborative spaces within which interested faculty could construct sections of a first-year writing sequence that would use shared and complementary materials and assignments to center participation and contribution as vital components of literacy. We did so despite
the fact that each of us had experienced the field as uninterested in our discourses and the discourses of our students in many different ways.

I present these ideas not as guidelines to be followed, but as one way to think about the transition toward more inclusive composition practices. How one moves outside of the naturalized assumptions about writing classes matters less at this point in our history than that we make the move.\textsuperscript{28} Opening spaces for participation and contribution means finding ways to let reading and writing exist in different relationships than those usually favored in writing classrooms. In addition, thinking about more than reading and writing, in this case cross-class work, collaboration, and community-based literacy activities, gives us more realistic ways to understand the literacy contributions and needs of members of our classroom communities and the larger communities to which they belong. Cross-class work, for example, pushes us to think about our students as a discourse community in new ways, ways that allow literate activities to cross the material boundaries that are composed when writing classes are configured as isolated spaces (sometimes even as we position reading about boundaries as a core course activity). The uneasiness we all feel when we try to talk across the boundaries that keep teachers and students in different sections of the course separate from one another (whether they are sections of students and teachers segregated by placement into different kinds of sections, e.g., honors, basic writing, standard sections, or sections within these segregated communities) opens all kinds of spaces for conversations about boundary crossing, the terms upon which boundaries are set up, and the ways we might interrupt the maintenance of those boundaries. Approaches that invite us to participate in such activities, forums in which our experiences as teachers and learners are informed by activities that speak to the real, present potential for boundary crossing called up by writing, enriches our study in many ways. The material, conceptual, institutional, social, psychological, and historical terms of the boundaries become clear as our reading, writing, and experience put us in contact with the ways that those boundaries are manifest in our lives and the lives of others as literate people in our communities.
Equally important is the fact that challenging the class boundaries of academia in these ways gives us a chance to practice crossing boundaries, to build knowledge together about the obstacles and benefits of such work, and to struggle toward common grounds for overcoming the limitations of a culture that has tended to use literacy education to segregate teachers and learners from one another (e.g., tracking, isolation of different kinds of learners from one another, administrative practices, etc.).

**REVISIONING READING/WRITING RELATIONSHIPS**

The assumption that we cannot learn anything about the act of writing from reading is part of the larger context within which the prewrite/write/rewrite model of process becomes dominant. This construction of literacy as necessarily informed by a split between reading and writing has done much to position faculty and students in non-participatory ways. As James A. Reither notes in “Writing and Knowing: Toward Redefining the Writing Process,” this view of reading and the model of process it endorses, precisely because it has taught us so much—has bewitched and beguiled us into thinking of writing as a self-contained process that evolves essentially out of a relationship between writers and their emerging texts. That is, we conceptualize and teach writing on the “model of the individual writer shaping thought through language” (Bazerman, “Relationship” 657), as if the process began in the writer (perhaps with an experience of cognitive dissonance) and not in the writer’s relationship to the world. In this truncated view, all writing—whether the writer is a seasoned veteran or a “placidly inexperienced nineteen-year-old” (Shor 72)—begins naturally and properly with probing the contents of the memory and the mind to discover information, ideas, and language that are the substance of writing. This model of what happens when people write does not include, at least not centrally, any substantive coming to know beyond that which occurs as writers probe their own present experience and knowledge.²⁹ (288)

The results of literate behavior in this scenario rest upon, and constitute, a disconnect between “the writer” and larger conversations and routes to participation. The faculty I have been collaborating
with agree that the assumptions about the relationship between reading and writing buried within this model have caused major problems for them as teachers whose areas of interest seem to exist far outside of composition studies even though half of their load requires them to teach first-year writing. Configuring the course as a place where “literature” faculty step in and follow models for teaching writing that are not concerned with the integration of reading and writing has made the faculty I work with feel disempowered in the composition classroom, as if they have to choose between their areas of expertise (in these cases the study of eighteenth-century literacy trends and post-colonial literature, respectively) and teaching writing.

In my discussions with faculty, they often indicate that even though the teaching of writing is expected of them, the training, approaches, and methods of doing so that are common in their experiences have not encouraged them to see the teaching of first-year writing as part of the intellectual terrain of the field—even though their training has made them critical of the approaches and methods they have been mentored in and have seen others practicing. The split between reading and writing about the teaching of composition and doing the teaching is called up by models that rest on a more generalized split between reading and writing, which themselves rest upon the idea that the specialized areas of English studies that first-year writing teachers bring to the endeavor do not share any common ground upon which pedagogies of composition might be based. Challenging these splits began for us when I developed a way to set aside the dominant, pre-scribed notions of writing as a process without setting aside the notion of writing as a process. Equally important was a commitment to doing so in a way that would bridge the gaps between reading and writing that I had come to understand as severely limiting in my own life and in the lives of my students and colleagues. I was frustrated with the ways the splits between reading and writing misrepresent how the discipline of composition itself has been constructed through readings of classical texts, student texts, cross-disciplinary texts about writing, cognition, creativity, and theory (even though it tended to encourage only the reading of textbooks and student papers written for the course in first-year composition classes). This
split creates and maintains gaps between faculty areas of interest and teaching responsibilities that are not addressed by models of process that assume no common ground between and among the diverse areas of interest held by people who teach first-year writing. As Mariolina Salvatori reminds us, this less than integrated configuration of literate subjectivity began to be challenged in the 1980s:

Instead of being seen as an intrusion onto the field of composition, or a pretext for paying attention to something other than student’s writing, as in the thinking of the 1970s, reading reseen in the 1980s through new theories and practices, was now appealed as a means of “bridging the gap” between the two activities and disciplines, a way of paying attention to reading and writing differently. (165–66)

As Salvatori further notes, however,

It is one thing to say that, even to articulate how, reading and writing are interconnected (as most of the authors featured in Bridging the Gap and Reading and Writing Differently do); and it is another to imagine and to develop teaching practices that both enact and benefit from the interconnectedness. (168)

Salvatori and others enact this interconnectedness by proposing staged assignments that ask students to read and reread texts, tracking the moves they make as readers. But focusing only on student readings and/or proposing reading processes that do not also help faculty and students understand, practice, and participate in composition studies is shortsighted at best. At worst it extends to faculty the limiting notion of student subjectivity that Susan Jarrett, Susan Miller, Linda Flower, Bruce McComiskey and others interested in revising process identify in their work. When positioned as people who embody a method or model of writing, teachers, like students, enact rather than analyze the materials of the writing class. In other words, the discourses of composition pedagogy are also often spoken in the absence of the majority of people who teach first-year writing courses and, as Salvatori notes, if we want to invite faculty and students to participate in rather than merely enact writing pedagogies: “We cannot afford not to come to terms with the consequences of these streamlining
interventions (… the separation of reading from writing, the proliferation of specialized programs within departments, the reduction of pedagogy from a philosophical science to a repertoire of “tips for teaching”) (174). As Michael W. Kline notes in “Teaching a Single Textbook ‘Rhetoric’: The Potential Heaviness of the Book,” these “streamlining interventions” have often led to:

rhetorics [that] avoid acknowledging their status as arguments, as deliberative claims that derive from value-laden warrants; instead, they posture as authoritative and mysterious texts, prescribing writing [and teaching] behaviors and establishing standards of good writing [and teaching] without revealing how and why the values underlying the advice they give were constructed historically in discourse about rhetoric. (139)

That early process-model interventions have led to these “mysterious” rhetorics is a serious matter not only for students, but also for first-year composition faculty who tend to use such textbook rhetorics to direct their own reading, writing, and pedagogies. What we need, then, is an approach to first-year composition that simultaneously opens spaces for participation and contribution for teachers and students. This means that our ideas about curriculum and program development cannot ignore the fact that the field is made up of teachers and students whose lives are seriously affected by the material conditions of our first-year writing programs, including the reading materials we choose to include and exclude in those courses. Considering the members of the writing classes and the goals set for their interactions in relationship to one another is one way to begin creating the kind of professional sphere called up by composition studies.

What happens when we begin to set aside composition textbooks that suppress the history of composition studies and favor models of first-year writing that position first-year writing students and teachers as people who lack skills, exposure to composition studies, and, ultimately, the ability to participate in and contribute to composition studies? What would happen if we acknowledged the rich variety of literacy experiences and abilities that students and teachers bring to first-year courses, and focused on
putting those rich histories in relation to composition studies in ways that invite participation and contribution? What would happen if we made the fact that formal education has seriously limited how those experiences and abilities can and do inform our knowledge bases, abilities, and opportunities for practice the major concern of first-year writing? To begin exploring these questions, we must stop configuring first-year writing courses as isolated spaces within which the subjects of composition are continually deferred—with disciplinary matters repressed within the prewrite/write/rewrite model of process and writing students restricted to producing texts and other literacy events that don’t go anywhere. This is, in fact, the major reason we must move away from a prewrite/write/rewrite model of process: its repression of the field at the level of practice is the major source of limited notions of literacy in first-year writing courses. It institutes a theory/practice split that separated the field of composition studies from the teaching of first-year writing (more about this split in chapter five). Changing texts or assignments or writing practices without working to change the disciplinary context within which those things emerge and without altering basic assumptions has blocked revisions to composition studies that could define participation and contribution as goals for all members of the writing classes. As I noted in the previous chapter, Stephen North has discussed this matter in relation to graduate studies in English, commenting briefly on the ways members of the discipline must reconfigure English studies to include careers outside of academia (such as careers in community literacy agencies) and outlining in more detail the ways discursive practices in graduate studies must change.33 But first-year writing faculty often face even more detached relationships with composition studies, and addressing this fact is important as we rethink other parts of the profession.

As I illustrated in the previous chapter, the traditional prewrite/write/rewrite model has been one of the major methods through which the intellectual and disciplinary matters of composition studies have been repressed and upon which opportunities for the participation and contributions of many members of the writing
classes have been suppressed. Before moving to a description of the process through which my colleagues and I have begun to challenge these limitations, it is important to remember that the course happens in the context of using invention, arrangement, and revision to open the field back out to teachers and students. Analyzing these elements reintroduces reading as one activity through which it is possible to learn something about writing—and about written discourse—without sacrificing a focus on process to some misplaced notion of texts as the gods of what needs to be said, explained, and reproduced. To help readers remember that this is the context within which the rest of the course occurs, and to remind readers that analysis of invention, arrangement, and revision positions students to enter conversations in new ways even in classes where the teacher is not focusing on those issues, my students and I have decided that I should present some individual student analyses of invention, arrangement, and revision before describing the course. I will, therefore, present two individual analyses of invention, arrangement, and revision. Remember, these analyses are starting points for discussing reading and writing. They create grounds for discussions that allow teachers to see students’ analyses as opening spaces for reading and writing. We are considering the questions: What is invention? What’s being invented? What is arrangement? What’s being arranged? What is revision? What’s being revised?

In the article discussed in this response, William A. Diehl and Larry Mikulecky explore “one of the roles of reading instruction receiving increased attention . . . , that of preparing individuals for the literacy demands of occupations” (371). We often read this article (or one like it) early in the semester to both broaden our basis for understanding literacy as an area of study and to enrich the ways we can reflect upon the relationships between our own literacy histories and our expanding literacy needs. Teachers’ focuses for exploring the discipline can also emerge from this activity, especially when readings about occupational matters and the issue of identification (see second analysis below) are raised early in the course.
ANALYSIS ONE
Jennifer Hartenbower’s Analysis of
“The Nature of Reading at Work”

Invention

What Is Invention?
had to have knowledge and understanding of “functional” job literacy
need to have read and analyzed the research of others in the field of
reading at work
understand the way literacy is taught and assessed in school and for jobs
understand the four categories of strategies used in reading for work
see and analyze the difference between school and work literacy

What Is Being Invented?
a new way of looking at literacy in the work place
show that there is a difference in the level of literacy required for school
and work
understanding of how much more helpful it is to have the readings in
context with actual physical processes
show that there is error in the way that required literacy levels in the
work place are being assessed

Arrangement

What Is Arrangement?
whole to part
division into the two sections of job reading and school reading
inclusion of the research of other experts on the subject
use of sample situations to reinforce the ideas of reading in association
with a physical activity

What Is Being Arranged?
“representative” literacy tasks vs. real-life literacy tasks
job-related literacy in comparison to school literacy
literacy demands vs. literacy availability
job reading tasks vs. school reading tasks
reading comprehension in relation to cracking the code
read-to-learn as opposed to read-to-do
reading with information-rich context as opposed to reading in isola-
tion
Revision

*What Is Revision?*
- the use of whole to part arrangement
- the use of hypothetical situations to illustrate points
- the paragraph about the majority of job reading is required daily or at least once a week
- the several references to the idea that more research needs to be done in this field.

*What Is Being Revised?*
- the idea that one’s reading comprehension in isolation does not necessarily show the person’s ability to do a job accurately
- the notion that more research needs to be done in this field
- the difference between on-the-job reading and school/training reading situations
- change the way literacy is assessed in the work place
- the idea that maybe schools are not appropriately preparing students to be functionally literate

In chapter two of *Hunger of Memory*, Richard Rodriguez discusses the ways that his education separated him from his parents and, eventually, brought him to a place where he could understand and challenge the terms upon which that separation was based. We often read this selection (or others like it) early in the semester. Analyzing this type of text allows us to explore the ways that identification with often informs our literacy histories in significant ways and to begin building conceptual frames that open alternative routes to literate subjectivity.

**Analysis 2**

*Amanda Hamilton’s analysis of “Chapter 2” of The Hunger of Memory*

Invention

*What Is Invention?*
- secondary research
- research and review of published materials—uses many ideas from another published work (Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy*)
gives detailed background information
lists credentials (Ph.D.) and schools he graduated from
lists his own published works
uses definitions of “scholarship boy” to describe himself and other stu-
dents

What Is Being Invented?
idea that individuals must eventually leave their comfort zones to learn
and understand new knowledge and participate socially
idea that students deemed “scholarship boys” experience success
because of their special anxiety to learn
definition of “scholarship boy” – good student, troubled son
idea that working-class citizens’ lifestyles are different than the ways
children learn in school
idea that there will be a separation between the student and his parents
idea that parents will powerfully measure the changes in their children
after they attend school
idea that parents will be supportive and give up so much so that their
children can be successful
idea that parents want more for their children, want better chances, than
what they had
idea that a person should always try to better himself (and his family),
whether educationally, spiritually, or financially
idea that with an education one can do anything he sets his mind to
idea that teachers are knowledgeable, confident, and authoritative
idea that a reader needs to feel camaraderie and communication with
a writer
idea that theme gives a book its value
idea that “scholarship boys” are mimics, do not think for themselves, and
do not form their own opinions
idea that students with such an eager desire to learn only imitate others’
opinions

Arrangement
What Is Arrangement?
uses ideas filled with irony – what he was expressing was actually differ-
ent than what he was feeling
uses dialogue to recap parts of conversations from his past
uses flashback
uses quotes from published materials
uses repetition of what it means to be a “scholarship boy”

**What Is Being Arranged?**

his success is being put in relation to his resulting loss
he compares himself as the “scholarship boy” in relation to the fourteen
year old girl in the classroom – both anxious to learn
when student sees his parents, he is reminded of the person he used to
be
old way of life that has been lost is put in relation to new life that has
educational benefits
the experience of growing up and becoming educated is put in relation
to the idea that many people share the common experience of edu-
cation so they can enter the world
borrowed ideas of a “scholarship boy” are put in relation to original
ideas of other individuals

**Revision**

**What Is Revision?**

uses long quotations to interest readers
produces many ideas about education
creates a feeling of emptiness in becoming obsessed with learning
shares many personal experiences to capture readers
influences readers with personal feelings and beliefs

**What Is Being Revised?**

idea that adjusting from childhood habits to a classroom environment is
difficult only for working-class children
idea that one can succeed without receiving help from others and with-
out having determination and persistence
idea that an individual can forget information or situations by trying to
forget them
idea that reading all the time makes an individual a good reader
idea that “scholarship boys” are good students
idea that schools change students too much

As we discuss these analyses in class and work toward shared un-
derstandings of the relationships between and among invention,
arrangement, and revision within and across our analyses, we are able to broaden our ideas of writing, of form/content relationships, and the repertoire of strategies available to us as we use language to make meaning of and in our own processes and products. Using the analyses to look across texts of the same type (for example, literacy histories) and across texts of different types (for example literacy histories and scholarship about the history of literacy in the west), invites us to begin understanding the ways that invention, arrangement and revision are engaged in different, complementary, and similar ways according to rhetorical situations and purposes. As I have discussed at length in previous chapters, we do so not only to identify these strategies, but also to develop an understanding of the ways that student writers are and are not invited to see this rich spectrum of possibilities as available to them and to understand the challenges of moving past the limited notions of these activities that we bring with us to our writing classrooms and writing activities. The collaborations, cross-class activities, reading, writing, and community literacy activities that accompany this work happen in the context of these discussions.

**DEFINING SHARED COURSE FOCUSES AND SELECTING COURSE MATERIALS**

Obviously, individual sections of any class in a first-year writing sequence must take into account the larger curricular goals for that course, the relationship between those goals and other courses in the sequence (should they exist), and the various other contexts within which learners will be expected to apply the knowledge they have gained in that class. Encouraging faculty to work together to create individual sections of a first-semester course in ways that allow students and faculty to work across sections is not always easy. Too often, requiring a shared textbook or reader takes the place of collaborative work that allows for cross-class activities. To address this problem, and to begin making transitions that would help us overcome the ways that first-year writing classes are structured as isolated spaces, I worked with my colleagues...
Bonnie Gunzenhauser and Rosemarie King-Grindy to create syllabi around shared and complementary activities. Selecting what will be shared across sections and what will be selected to complement work across sections is an important part of challenging the literacy boundaries that have become naturalized in our introductions to composition studies. While those boundaries may be constructed differently at different institutions, thereby requiring different responses, it is important to attempt these crossings if we are to change the ground of first-year writing. I offer an outline of the ways we decided to create approaches to first-semester writing based on a shared and complementary approach not to prescribe the product of our work, but to clarify the issues that arise as important when we attempt this kind of border crossing.

We began with a clear sense that moving away from the pre-write/write/rewrite models informing our initial introductions to teaching first-year writing had been critical in our work as teachers. We knew that using the concepts of invention, arrangement, and revision would be one of the shared components of our classes because they had helped us begin to see the ways that the course might be redefined as a place where students and faculty could practice participation and contribution. In our own process of working together, it had become clear that being able to talk across texts, experiences, and areas of expertise had enriched our understanding of literacy in significant ways, so we decided to find ways to allow that to happen across our sections of the course. This would allow students to write to one another about what we were studying without requiring them to use the same texts. In addition, it would have the effect of foregrounding the writing issues we were studying; students could write to one another about the relationship between the invention, arrangement, and revision activities and the content of the essays. Having shared components in the formal writing assignments would also allow students to read across their formal texts in similar ways. In both cases, students would be building a knowledge base that, in practice, invited them to understand writing and reading as dynamic processes that can have significant effects on our relationships to the discipline and to the world.
COLLABORATIONS

Many layers of collaborative work inform the approach to composition studies that I put forth here. As discussed above, cross-class work is one important layer of constituting composition studies as a collaborative endeavor in which different members of the writing classes can participate and contribute. In class, students also write formal and informal texts collaboratively. Community literacy collaborations are one way to make this happen. Not all schools and/or faculty are in a position to engage in such work, however, and that should not be seen as a detriment to other kinds of collaborative work that can help to position participation and contribution as vital to composition studies. Collaboration between and among faculty colleagues who create curricula, syllabi, assignments, lists of readings, and other activities that cross traditional class boundaries can also have positive effects, even when community-based literacy work is not possible. Working together to identify these opportunities in specific institutional contexts can become part of the work of faculty members who teach the course. It is not enough to create shared goals for a curriculum, we must do so in ways that construct participation and contribution as important to the teaching of writing and to the departments in which that teaching occurs.

My colleagues and I have also written grants to support our work, focusing early on grants that would give us time to read together about the history of reading in the West, the history of composition studies, the teaching of research, and texts from each of our areas of expertise that related to those issues. We have presented together on campus and at a variety of conferences, and we have created syllabi, assignments, and other classroom materials collaboratively. Students from these courses and I have also collaborated, sometimes while they were in the course but more often after they have finished the class and begun projects of their own. We have revised course materials, presented on campus and at conferences, and supported one another in a variety of writing projects. I suspect that many people who teach first-year writing are engaged in similar activities, but that those activities remain
disconnected from their conceptions of composition studies. As we begin to bring these activities into view through new work or descriptions of current work, we must simultaneously revise our ideas about the discipline if we are to value them in more general ways (more about this in chapter five).

In the conversation that follows, Bonnie, Rosemarie, and I discuss how our work together has affected our teaching, research, scholarship, and service; I have encouraged these faculty, and many others, to think about these components of their professional lives in integrated ways. Both my current institution and my introduction to service-learning through a colleague and Illinois Campus Compact helped me to work toward a view of administering first-year writing programs in ways that encourage the integration of teaching, research, scholarship, and service to enhance faculty development, improve the program, and revise the profession. I will present our conversation without interruption to illustrate some of the ways that our work together helped to produce more integrated ideas about and experiences of the field. Our conversations took place in my home during a two-hour recorded session.34

Nancy: How has our collaboration affected your ideas about composition studies and the teaching of first-year writing?

Rosemarie: I had never thought about reading as much as I have since we started doing this. I always assumed that students didn’t really know how to read, but this has given me tools to help them learn how to be good critical, rhetorical readers. In a way I have always felt like I was sort of floundering, and now there’s this nice concrete model that works not just for reading but also for the teaching of the writing too. I would just sort of go through the text and say here’s the things I want to call attention to rather than saying you need to look at every piece of writing that is something we have written, not something that magically appeared. But this [invention, arrangement, and revision] has given me a vocabulary, ideas about how to approach that much more efficiently than I’ve done before.
Nancy: Did you use pre-writing?

Rosemarie: I’ve never done pre-writing except when I was in graduate school, and you had to. And I did my requisite composition theory courses, and we learned about these various things. I really never did fit into that. I did it for my mandatory one semester and then did my own thing after that.

Bonnie: I would agree about the fact that a big part of the value of this collaboration for me has been finding a way to connect reading and writing more fruitfully. The idea that using literature to teach composition is not particularly effective—that was not a new idea to me. The kind of composition training I have had was reader-response based. Readers expect this, and so as a writer it’s your job to understand those expectations and to construct documents in ways that fulfill those expectations, which I actually don’t dislike and I think it makes a lot of sense. But I think it assumes a pretty high degree of competency already for the writer. And, I think that when you’re teaching first-year composition you can’t assume that level of sophistication. And, I think it’s part of our job to cultivate a higher level of sophistication. And so using reading so as not just to give students ideas to engage with, but as a way to look at texts as written documents constructed for a variety of purposes, using a variety of methods or invention strategies, has been really invaluable as a way of integrating the contents of the course in a way so that reading and writing function together as a way of bringing students to greater sophistication as readers and as writers.

Rosemarie: And as thinkers.

Bonnie: Yes, as thinkers.

Nancy: For me the invention, arrangement, and revision strategies came first; I started using that in class. Starting to understand what it meant to pick texts that made that as effective as possible was a slower process and a much more collaborative process because, of course, that really came together when we started working together. When
we first did the joint lectures I remember thinking that the three pieces [of our work] are also things we should be thinking about when picking readings for the course. I knew I wanted non-fiction that we could look at writers as well as readers, but it was really hard—especially before it was about literacy and I just sort of picked these random things from popular culture or whatever.

How have invention, arrangement, and revision affected your ideas about composition studies, if at all?

Bonnie: That assumes I had a lot of ideas about composition studies beforehand.

Nancy: But, if you didn’t have a lot and now you do, I want to talk about that too. And if you don’t have any more than you did before that, it’s fine too. I’m just wondering, especially since our work has moved you both into presenting about the teaching of writing.

Bonnie: Our collaboration has made me aware in a way I was not aware before of all the odd ways that people go about teaching first-year writing—the fact that it’s often the course that people feel has been foisted upon them. It’s a course where people try to shoe-horn in their own interests at the expense of attending responsibly to cultivating good reading and writing skills in their students. That’s not just to be critical. I think that most of the people who teach composition don’t have much understanding of composition studies or composition theory. It’s just a thing they end up doing. Part of the reason, I think, the . . . strategies work so well is because they are very portable. And, I think part of the reason we’ve been able to collaborate so well is we’re each very different in our intellectual orientation and our scholarly orientation. But, like Rosemary was saying, invention, arrangement, and revision give us a common vocabulary that we can use when looking at almost any text or set of texts. And so, it seems to me that one key thing for composition studies is coming up with some kind of analytic vocabulary that allows people from a whole variety of perspectives to participate and teach responsibly. And in a way that has
intellectual content as far as being connected to course readings. That, I think, is the big difference because most people could probably say something about I cluster, I brainstorm, I free-write, and I teach my students to do that. And then they write a paper, and I have them read each other’s paper, and then they revise. And so, I’m teaching them a responsible kind of process. And, that’s O.K., but ideally you can teach them both a responsible process and, like Rosemary was saying earlier, help them to become more sophisticated thinkers as far as engaging the texts and ideas and the kinds of things they presumably came to college to engage in.

Rosemarie: The way that we try to do our course really encourages students to see the relevance of reading and writing in their lives in ways that the standard English 101 and 102 classes don’t. Because we have invention, arrangement, and revision, because we start with them and stay with them and evolve over the course of the semester, it becomes a tool students carry out beyond our class. In contrast, the classes I’ve seen and even been forced to teach on occasion, which are okay, now we’re doing the narrative, now we’re doing the this kind—never the twain shall meet kind of thing – students don’t really see how it has any effect except now I know how to write this kind of paper. And another thing, the reading that a lot of students do in those other kinds of classes is [to say if they] agree or disagree and why—a kind of dualistic way of thinking is encouraged rather than discouraged, I see frequently. And I think we’re great. I think we’re doing a good job of trying to get them to avoid that kind of thing and to look at things in different ways instead of the either/or mentality, which couldn’t be more timely.

Nancy: Some of the materials are about people who have had very different literacy issues than our students have had, and sometimes not as different as we imagine, and so any kind of approach that elicits judgment before it asks people to think about these differences can be very mean.
Rosemarie: I don’t know how often it happens at our school, but I know at another school among some of the teachers, there’s almost no reading that goes on in the first semester. Students are asked to write argument papers, and they have little or no knowledge of what they’re supposed to be writing about. And, again, having a schematic or focus on literacy as a topic really helps because they do get some knowledge of a particular area that has some depth and some complexity and lots of different angles, and that’s a really valuable thing for them to see they have to have substance behind what they’re saying. And, I don’t always see that to the degree that it needs to be seen because it’s coming out of a certain model of composition teaching that is that sort of free-writing, rewriting kind of thing. It just encourages not just all sorts of bad habits but also a dangerous way of looking at the world, I think.

Bonnie: It’s interesting. I think the literacy has worked well for us as a focus, but I know that in my experience it has worked better as a focus when the students are doing service learning than when they aren’t. Because, yes I think our course helps them to see the importance of reading and writing in their lives, but I also think that unless they’re seeing at play in their work with people who have real live problems with literacy issues, by about November, they feel like, Oh, my God, reading and writing—it’s enough already.

Nancy: If they’re not doing the service learning, they feel that way. It’s just a topic. I haven’t done it without the service learning.

Bonnie: I have been forced to, and people said that to me and they said that in course evaluations. It made a big difference.

Rosemarie: And, it did for me, too, on the semesters—one or two years—I was paired with two different cohorts. In the one we were going up to Clinton and doing that, and the other one was doing something completely different. And in one semester, in particular, that was problematic for
the students. The other time I did it, it was a group that was—just by luck—interested enough in the topic, and we did the gen-X stuff and got into that. It is harder—service learning makes a big difference. I think you’re right. It really does help to pull things together.

_Nancy:_ Has our work together affected your research? I know it has affected our service work at our university.

_Bonnie:_ It’s affected my research in that—in my own research before I ever started doing this—I was interested in the social function of reading and writing in the Romantic period. And, when I came here, teaching composition was half of my load, and it’s nice to find a way to integrate half of your teaching load with your scholarly life. And, so, having a way to think theoretically and collaboratively—a way to teach composition that was helping our students understand the potential social power of reading and writing, or the power of literate action, was great for me. It allowed me to think of what I was doing as all kind of a piece. And when we did the grant together, and when we read those books together, and when we did our evening lecture event, we developed a common ground for understanding what we’re doing. So I think more than the isolated presentations we’ve done—just the way it’s allowed me internally to integrate my sense of what I’m up to as a teacher and researcher has been probably the biggest thing for me.

_Rosemarie:_ Obviously my research interests aren’t that explicitly connected. But obviously literacy issues have a whole lot to do with what’s going on in South Africa, with Gordimer’s audience. I just don’t read things the same way as I did before. And I find myself making those kinds of connections and being more critical of her as a result of the work we’ve done here. Access to materials and things like that . . . the socio-political and the social class out of which she’s coming and those kind of things have been in the foreground of my thinking more than they were before we started doing this. The students just love the lecture that we do together, and one of the things that’s
really neat about it is it does show them here are three people with very different interests, but whose work is all connected to literacy in some way. That’s really useful.

Bonnie: For me, it might be the only place in the course where I actually can come clean about my real area of expertise and what it is. And so, having something good in the first semester of their first year, where people actually do come clean about their real intellectual interests and say, “Look, this connects to what we’re doing in this class and you can, too”—I think it’s a good model for them. And I think some of the assignments we use—like that reflective paper where we ask them to think about how their literacy history has changed and how that might play out in their own career choice or future life choices, invites them to do the same thing—to think about how this fits into their actual intellectual lives and not just how—they have their “A” and they can go on their way and get down to the real business. I think that’s good—great!

Nancy: You said something that made me remember all that reading we did together—especially for the grant—because like the Gordimer stuff about writing, and listening to Rosemary’s work, has made me read some more of Writing Being. Not only has that influenced my scholarship, but also how I’m able to be in the classroom and the kinds of things I’m able to refer to. The same with the 18th century literacy movement work that Bonnie does. That has been really eye-opening—partly because I had 2 courses in 18th century rhetoric. We don’t look at any of that stuff. You don’t look at Hannah Moore. I never even heard her name. And that seems to me a really important person for somebody who’s studying the history of writing. It gives you a whole new perspective on why Campbell, Blair, and Whatley got as popular as they did. Gaps in my knowledge base have been addressed through our work together, but it hasn’t made me feel like, “Oh, my God, I don’t know what I’m doing.” To get introduced to new stuff and not feel threatened by your lack of knowledge of the historical context and the really deep
roots of what you have been missing is something that is really interesting to me. And it’s something I think about more generally in class. You know, when we do the hooks stuff, students will say, “Oh, she’s just saying everything is white people’s problems. And this is just about white man’s guilt.” It’s easier for me to respond now. I’m much less defensive because of our work together.

Bonnie: I think ideally that’s what collaboration does. It allows you to augment your knowledge base without feeling like an idiot for not knowing the things you didn’t know.

Nancy: That’s really the stuff I had for us to talk about. We talked about it affecting teaching and scholarship. I have also service—university service and community service at our disposal. Obviously the community literacy stuff is a big way that it’s affected all of our service activities. Anything else?

Bonnie: I think the lecture is the something else.

Nancy: The lecture—that’s been interesting. You both talk about the lecture a lot.

Bonnie: I think lecture aside, the biggest thing, for me, has been that when you’re at a small teaching institution, you’re always going to be the only person in your field. And so, if you’re going to have any kind of collective, intellectual life at your institution, it’s going to have to come through collaborative efforts that bridge gaps across different fields. And, I think first-year writing is a really natural place for that to happen because so many people teach it. And, I think that one thing this collaboration has accomplished and shown me is that there are ways to collaborate that are both true to the aims of teaching what first-year writing should be about and that make room for intellectual interests that might not explicitly seem to be very connected at all to issues in composition studies. But that, in fact, can be connected without gluing things together in an artificial way.

As our conversation illustrates, teaching first-year writing can be an alienating experience when faculty feel there is no connection
between the ways they have been taught to teach those courses and the values that drive their ideas about English studies. The split between reading and writing is at the heart of this dilemma, but methods that simplify issues such as genre, audience, the relevance of literacy in various contexts, and the relationship between the courses and their knowledge about other aspects of English studies also interrupted participants’ ability to think about participation and contribution as vital to their work in this area. Our collaborative grant work, the development of shared and complementary approaches to course design, building bridges across our individual areas of expertise by reading and writing across those differences, lecturing and presenting together, and creating a shared ground for reflection helped us to get past the histories that had interrupted the possibilities for collaborative participation and contribution in our lives as first-year writing teachers, and as researchers and scholars.

CROSS-CLASS WORK

Working across the class boundaries that usually define composition courses can also help us make transitions that invite members of the writing classes to view writing within the larger literacy contexts informing people’s lives and to understand the possibilities of literate action. These crossings may seem less significant than those I will discuss in the next section when I talk about our community literacy work. But they are equally important to creating a community of people—teachers and students—who explore, define, and communicate about disciplinary matters in ways that challenge habits that create and maintain the class structures of higher education. We cross these boundaries in a number of ways.

For example, curricula based on shared and complementary readings allow us to work together to create contextualized views of literacy. Using the shared invention, arrangement, and revision questions and the shared readings, learners from one section of the course can write to those in other sections about complementary materials. When we are reading literacy histories, readers of hooks’ Remembered Rapture and readers of Welty’s One Writer’s Beginnings can write to one another about how the texts deal with
our shared focuses for study. (Whether communication occurs electronically or in hard-copy form depends upon what resources are available, what the participants prefer, etc. Participants can discuss the issue and set criteria for decision-making. These kinds of discussions often open interesting questions about technology and literacy.)

Students also do cross-class peer critiques of first and/or second versions of their own papers. (Again, participants can decide how they want to exchange papers. I have rolling file cabinets outside my office door. Each student in each participating section has a folder in the cart so that there is a central drop-off and pick-up place for exchanges of hard-copy versions of written work. If schedules allow, teachers can exchange sets of papers and deliver them in class.) Readers can use the shared invention, arrangement, and revision questions to read each other’s texts. Other issues and questions writers would like readers to address, and those that have grown from our analyses can be added to peer reading guides. For example, at some point in our analyses, issues of format, font and other visual components of invention, arrangement, and/or revision will become important. Issues about audience always arise from our analyses, as do issues of style, access to information, etc. We address these issues as they arise. Sometimes it takes students a little while to get used to the idea that their texts will be read in the same way as other course materials; they are used to their work being responded to in very different ways than are the other texts informing their educational situations. Challenging this assumption also invites discussions about the place of writing—in this case student writing—in the larger literacy contexts informing our lives, and creates ways to reflect upon how related assumptions limit the possibilities for literate action. As is often the case, the quality of peer critiques varies greatly, although having common issues that students address as readers and writers has, in general, increased our ability to focus on the form/content relationship at the level of process. It has helped me to see and experience the ways in which merely reading student texts or placing them at the center of first-year writing does not necessarily change the ground of and for composition studies. It has also opened new disciplinary
conversations with colleagues at my home institution and at other institutions.

Other cross-class activities have involved students researching and writing across sections of the course, faculty lectures that address students from different classes (this has been especially true across honors sections of the course), faculty projects like designing shared and complementary curricula, presenting together about the work at conferences, and the planning of joint writing ventures.

COMMUNITY BASED LITERACY WORK

As part of their course requirements, students tutor for one hour per week in community literacy classes that I have helped my community partner, Project READ, move onto our campus. Three types of courses are held on campus: general education (GED) classes, English as a second language (ESL) classes and Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes. Before classes were held on campus, the west side of Decatur did not have a place to hold community literacy classes. Because the other major site for such courses is quite far from the west side, because many of the students who drop out of high school attended school on the west side, and because our site is more accessible via public transportation, creating this site was important for a number of reasons. There is, of course, a long history behind the reality that creates a situation in which students can now tutor on campus rather than being transported to other sites. (The first semester I had students tutor as part of course requirements they went to four different sites—and so did I.) And there is a long history to why working with a community literacy partner and its constituencies is a course requirement. In relation to the goals under discussion here—opening spaces for contribution and participation and the activities that can help us make that transition, i.e. viewing writing within the larger contexts of literacy and opening possibilities for literate action—the requirement serves two main purposes. First, it configures present experiences that bear on the writing issues being composed through first-year composition classes. Second, as a result, it focuses our work in ways that allow for a dialectic relationship between past and current
experience, between known and new knowledge, between learning from and contributing to our study of writing.

Students in these sections of first-year writing and GED students start the semester by writing their own literacy histories and sharing what they discover through exploring their own literacy educations. The university students will have attended in-class training sessions run by our community partner agency. At training sessions, Millikin students will be oriented toward the multi-dimensional view of literacy (e.g., family literacy, computer literacy, math literacy and so on) used by that organization as well as beginning their tutor training. Obviously readings connected to these forms of literacy and/or readings that address those issues in some way will be important during the time students are receiving their training.

FORMAL WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Because the approach to composition being outlined here aims at helping the members of the writing classes make transitions that open spaces for participation and contribution, there is, in some ways, a high level of similarity between the kinds of assignments made popular in first-phase process movement pedagogies and those put forth in the revisions I suggest here. One of these similarities is that the initial assignment is strongly connected to experience (although this scene includes personal experiences of people other than the individual writer in the isolated composition class). Another is that each assignment focuses on writing as a process (although in this scene students explore writing as a process rather than enact a particular version of it). There are also differences, however, because the assignments are constructed to foster approaches that open spaces for participation and contribution. Therefore, assignments follow a pattern established as important to that goal. Our first semester course is called Critical Writing, Reading, and Research. Contextualizing the personal, considering the historical context of a subject, considering the cultural context of a subject, putting one’s understanding of these things in relation to relevant disciplinary contexts and discussions, and reflecting in ways that make one’s new understanding of a subject
in light of those activities are critical endeavors that accommodate many disciplinary formations of what it means to be prepared to participate in and contribute to, rather than merely consume, a discipline.

The first paper, then, is an exploration of the relationships between literacy and experience that invites investigations of the social, familial, and educational factors that affect those relationships. Obviously, individuals will have different experiences, and creating a picture of those differences across individual student papers should be a significant activity once those papers are completed. That is, the papers are not graded and left behind, but become texts to read together in ways that add something to what we can know about reading and writing. In this way, students are engaged in creating knowledge about some of the same things members of the profession are interested in developing knowledge about. Putting these two bodies of knowledge in relationship to one another becomes possible through this activity.

Paper two is an exploration of some historical aspect of literacy that becomes important during the first formal assignment. Again, this is an important area of research in composition studies and opens another opportunity to put the field and student discourses in relationship with one another. The papers can be integrated into the course as texts that help us understand the similarities and differences between and among the ways that historical contexts relate to current literacy developments.

Paper three is designed to give us a chance to understand the cultural contexts that affect, but are often transparent in, our literacy lives. Many faculty move to popular culture to create a frame for this assignment. Obviously, there are many ways in which our professional discourses are concerned about these issues. Consequently, we create further ground upon which these two usually separated spheres for creating understanding might speak and listen to one another in enriching ways.

Paper four is a deep exploration of how first-year writing students are constructed in disciplinary conversations within composition studies. We create texts that use our literacy histories and other course materials to respond to those constructions. Our
goal is to create responses that will be relevant to the field and to explore the barriers to and possibilities for getting access to professional forums. Course readings, experiences as community literacy tutors, relevant personal experiences and/or the knowledge developed through analysis of student papers are put in relation to disciplinary issues that individual students think deserve further attention. In this assignment, students practice participating by offering new relevant focuses for those of us who construct their lives as members of our writing classes.

Paper five is a revised literacy history that focuses upon ways to integrate the knowledge we have developed over the semester into the literacy lives of individuals, our future goals, the program, the experiences of future participants, and the teaching of first-semester writing more generally. The integration of new knowledge into these arenas is, of course, part of the work of professionals in the field as well, creating further opportunities for connection-making and collaboration across these discourses. We cannot set aside the fact that the course is often students’ only introduction to the kinds of writing that they will be expected to do throughout their time in higher education. We also must remember that many people who teach the course have been using a modes and/or aims-based approach that favors beginning the semester with a personal narrative, and that the approach has much to recommend it if we are going to invite faculty and students to contribute to and participate in composition studies. As I said earlier, however, making the transition to courses focused on participation and contribution requires the creation of a new context for writing; changing one element of the situation and leaving all others the same has not resulted in changing the material and/or ideological positions of most members of the writing classes. All of the assignments work toward helping us view writing within the larger literacy contexts informing people’s lives and creating an environment within which those views reflect the possibilities of literate activity. There is no assumed split here between the history of composition studies and these goals. It would, in fact, be impossible for me to argue that experience, theory, or the practice of teaching and learning within first-phase process model movement assumptions
did not inform the ways students and others invited me to create the approach to composition put forth here. While identification with those assumptions is not the only, or even primary, feature of that relationship, other kinds of relationships with that history and its materials—counter-identification, resistance, and even rejection—are an intimate part of the work. In fact, if we limit writing to identificatory activities, we simply can’t begin to understand participation and contribution as vital to composition studies.

Before discussing in more detail the particular ways that formal writing assignments occur in these attempts to open spaces for participation and contribution to become defining features of the disciplinary practices of first-year writing, let me note that it would be possible to discuss the same sequence of assignments in relation to different goals—for example, consumption of a particular rendition of writing as a process, or as adaptation to some normalized set of linguistic expectations or assumptions about audience. The academic context within which writing assignments occur is at least as important as is any other rhetorical situation they are expected to address, especially when the two situations accompany one another but are different in significant ways. Here, formal writing assignments exist in relation to explorations that put writing in relation to a variety of literacy contexts for the purpose of understanding and challenging the ways that the possibilities for literate action are defined within those contexts.

The first assignment of the course works toward the goal of viewing writing within the literacy contexts informing people’s lives by asking students—first-year writing students at the university and students in the GED class we’ll tutor in—to write literacy histories. Millikin students will have read a variety of literacy histories by this point in the semester; GED students will have been introduced to a fairly traditional notion of prewriting (e.g., brainstorming, clustering, etc.) and will be working on prewriting activities with a tutor from the course. The course tutors will introduce the GED students to other invention strategies that we have seen at work in our own literacy autobiographies and in our other readings. Asking questions of adults who might remember literacy events in the students’ lives, creating metaphors for explaining literacy,
defining literacy in relation to unusual language events, etc. are all strategies that university students might share as ways for GED students to think about getting ready to write their essays. Because GED students are preparing for a timed essay (50 minutes long), they tend to favor strategies they can use in that timed situation, and so do we. GED students come with the expectation that they will receive writing instruction from a university professor (me) and will have tutors who have agreed to foreground their goal of passing the exam. When tutors have extra time to spend with students, they focus on studying for other parts of the exam (e.g. social studies, science, grammar and usage, math) with the GED students as has been promised. University students often know lots of strategies for taking timed essay exams that our GED students can really benefit from practicing, and students often spend lots of time discussing these strategies, especially those that help improve reading speed and comprehension. The first assignment, then, helps all constituents understand how writing is positioned and positions students in different ways according to the expectations put forth and the evaluation criteria and assessment practices that will be used even as it invites students to explore their individual literacy histories. Overt discussions about the ways that these assumptions and practices define possibilities for literate action take place in university and GED classrooms. This activity continues throughout the semester, and is the focus for university students’ community literacy journals. ESL and ABE issues are also addressed in course readings and discussions; students tutoring in those classes keep track of how what we are learning in class does and does not transfer into those situations.

The second formal writing assignment creates a context for understanding the importance of historical studies in literacy situations that favor participation and contribution. We read texts about some historical aspect of literacy that surfaced as significant in our literacy histories. We analyze the invention, arrangement, and revision activities in historical texts and begin to develop an understanding of the differences in these strategies within and across different kinds of texts (e.g., the historical texts and the literacy autobiographies). Writing assignments focus on integration
of historical contexts and the affects of that integration on our abilities to understand ourselves and our lives as literate human beings in new ways and on the process of coming to see how that new understanding might be significant to larger discussions about literacy.

The third formal writing assignment invites students to explore and practice alternative literacy strategies. This assignment introduces students to the ways considering cultural contexts affects our understanding in general, and on the ways cultural studies informs composition studies in particular. It is designed to help us begin to understand how more traditionally critical approaches help us view the literacy contexts informing people’s lives. Readings might include a reversal essay like Horace Miner’s “Body Rituals Among the Nacirema,” or a piece of science fiction that creates an alternative world that comments on reality in some way (e.g. Herland). The goal here is to open a discussion about how critique reflects a view of the world that calls for literacy paradigms that are not restricted by the assumption that identification of is always or necessarily just a precursor to identification with. Readings illustrate ways that writers engage invention, arrangement, and revision strategies when their purpose is to invite something other than identification with their subject. At this stage of the course, we explore literate subjectivity as being composed through and in complex ways that can call up responses other than identification with and that, therefore, may indicate needs and activities that would not otherwise come into view. University students practice using some of the invention, arrangement, and revision strategies they identified in the readings and/or others that they create. GED students are working on an essay that asks them to identify a problem in their neighborhood and pose solutions for that problem (a common prompt on the exam). Each group is engaged in literacy activities that call for identification of (the structure of a set of cultural artifacts or a neighborhood problem, for example) without prescribing identification with (the cultural products are critiqued and the problem is responded to rather than described). In other words, this work helps us understand negative responses, refusals, rejections, problem/solution formats etc. as literate activities.
The fourth formal writing assignment helps us to use our own course of study to make a contribution for some specific purpose. The project is sometimes a collaborative piece both within and across sections of the course. Often, our Project READ partners enter the conversation, attending classes to talk about how the community literacy work is going and to help give focus to our work. Readings and particular writing assignments are determined according to project needs. Recently, for example, Project READ staff needed to write an extra grant because of state funding cuts. After discussing the matter with them, it was decided that members of two sections of the course would meet with a variety of students in the GED, ESL, and Adult Basic Education courses to tape their literacy histories. Tapes were then transcribed by university students and became part of the grant. Students in other sections 1) worked with the director and staff of Project READ to create a history of that organization and 2) did research to update information about the populations served by that organization. Other projects have included research and the creation of documents to improve retention in Project READ courses, research and proposals that clarified the computer literacy needs of the GED part of the program, the creation of public service announcements, and book drives. Oftentimes this project requires the use of a variety of kinds of technology, tape recorders, cameras, web research, online library research, etc. We discuss all of the technologies we use in relation to the invention, arrangement, and revision activities we gain access to through these technologies and as a result of their availability. In addition to these issues, collaborative work focused in this way allows us to begin to understand what it means to use literacy for projects that include members of populations with very different histories, starting places, ideas about needs and so on and to struggle together to act in ways that respect these differences as we work toward defining and reaching a common goal.

One other activity is also occurring at this time and, in fact, in recent revisions to the course assignment sequence, this activity is becoming central. At this point in the semester, students are also reading texts about first-year writing students. They are analyzing those texts, especially the ways those texts construct first-year
writers, so that we may make overt the differences between those constructions of student writers and student writing and the actual student writers and student texts in the class. The texts students produce about these matters relate directly to a significant disciplinary conversation they can contribute to in real ways.

In earlier versions of this curriculum, the fourth assignment was a deep exploration of the ways that we can use a variety of kinds of knowledge—experience, imagination, various forms of primary and secondary research as well as various kinds of invention and arrangement strategies—to center revision in our composing processes. Some of my colleagues and I found Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own* a good way to open conversations about revision at this point in the course, and to move students toward a deeper understanding of the study of writing. The book makes the relationships between and among the six questions about invention, arrangement, and revision clear, and it does so in ways that invite reflection upon the historical, critical, and collaborative literacy contexts explored earlier in the semester. Students would write a formal stream of consciousness paper, exploring the relationship between literacy and some chosen second term (Woolf’s text explores the relationships between women and fiction and money and space). Over the course of writing this paper, conversations about integrating new knowledge about a subject, in this case literacy, in ways that inform our scholarly lives and our lives more generally became prominent. Understanding the ways that thinking about invention, arrangement, and revision as readers and as writers invites learners to become participants in the conversations informing the pedagogies that define the material realities of their status as members of the writing classes is also a common conversation when this assignment is employed. GED students will be working on a 200– to 250–word essay that also asks them to write about a relationship so that conversations about the writing issues connected to that process are primary for all of the writers who are working together.

For the final formal assignment, students create revised literacy histories. This focus on revision gives us lots of time to reflect on the knowledge about literacy that we have consumed and
produced over the course of our time together, and to focus on
how that knowledge revises our insights into our literacy pasts,
our current literacy situations, and our ideas of ourselves as teach-
ers and learners. Students choose and/or create new invention,
arrangement, and revision strategies for this assignment. Together
we all focus on the ways that becoming members of the composi-
tion class who use knowledge and experience to contribute to as
well as consume the knowledge bases that preceded our participa-
tion requires different activities than those usually required of us
in educational settings. Students are encouraged to put their work
in relation to some other area or areas of their lives as learners.
Many put their work in relation to their growing literacy needs in
their chosen discipline, in higher education more generally, or in
relation to the needs of their families or other community groups
they are involved with.

As is the case in many programs, this first-semester course is
followed by a second-semester course focused on developing the
skills, knowledge building, and attitudes that foster engaged criti-
cal research informed by a strong sense of purpose. Students who
have been introduced to the concepts of invention, arrangement,
and revision can apply those concepts as readers who can analyze
the discursive patterns across the texts they read for their research
projects. For example, recently a student who was researching
gender patterns in communication between college-age men and
women who are romantically involved for the purpose of improv-
ing communication among members in that group noticed that
discourses about this subject in popular publications and those
in academic publications were significantly different. Analyzing
invention, arrangement, and revision uncovered not only textual
feature differences, but differences in the assumptions and purpos-
es informing these two types of discourses about the same things.
For example, the popular texts tended to discuss gender differ-
ences as essential and unchangeable while the academic sources
tended to discuss gender as socially constructed and more flexible
(especially across class and sexual preference). The purpose of the
popular texts was often to give advice, while the academic sources
often took challenging assumptions as their purpose. When this
student turned to writing, she decided to use invention, arrange-
ment, and revision strategies from both sets of texts to illustrate the
ways that her audience members needed to see both the benefits
of researching issues that they tended to see as naturalized and
the importance of changing attitudes and behaviors as a result of
that knowledge. She was able to meet her own purpose of helping
romantically involved heterosexual college students communicate
more effectively by helping them identify their assumptions about
and purposes for communication in their relationships. She was
also able to indicate some attitudinal and behavioral changes they
could use to improve communication. She did primary research
to identify the major concerns men and women had about their
communication problems with romantic partners so that she could
organize her text in ways that would engage readers early on and
connect the materials she understood as important in this conver-
sation to her readers’ concerns.

Because invention, arrangement, and revision can function as
both analytic and generative concepts and activities, students and
faculty can move toward more integrated experiences as read-
ers and writers across literacy situations. As grounds for analysis,
these concepts invite readers to understand the relationship
between form and content in new ways, and to develop increas-
ingly sophisticated ideas about the expectations for participation
and contribution. As generative practices, invention, arrangement,
and revision allow writers to make decisions based upon their
knowledge of these expectations without restricting them to the
replication of textual features they see at work in any one text or
genre. Students find that participating in and contributing to the
conversations informing their research about a variety of topics
often requires them to make overt the limited perspectives that
shape the texts in which they ground their research. While not all
students make inclusion of a new perspective the purpose of their
research papers, they all do come to understand that contributing
to the conversations that construct the assumptions and realities
upon which our lives are based is an important activity.

Within this assignment sequence, invention, arrangement, and
revision can also operate as analytic and generative concepts for
faculty teaching in the program. We have analyzed the differences between and among the patterns of invention, arrangement, and revision in published research, in research textbooks, and in student papers. Our analyses have allowed us to generate course goals and materials that do not confine us to status-quo assumptions about student research. We have been able to develop approaches to the second-semester course that make understanding those status-quo assumptions a critical activity for all of the members of our writing classes. Because the prewrite/write/rewrite model is too focused on prescribing certain sets of activities, it cannot help us to develop critical literacy in these ways. Using invention, arrangement, and revision as analytic and generative concepts sets the ground for making transitions toward practices that invite all members of the writing classes to participate in and contribute to composition studies, and to configure participation and contribution as vital components of literacy more generally.

CONCLUSION

I have described the ways that colleagues and I have begun to open spaces for participation and contribution not to prescribe those particular practices (which change as new faculty join our efforts and as student contributions redefine our work), but to suggest how opening these spaces led us to question the isolationist view of curriculum design that limited our potential as teachers and scholars in the same ways it limited the potential of our students. Collaboration, cross-class work, and assignments that put student discourses and the discourses of the discipline in relationships with one another became possible as we moved away from the traditional prewrite/write/rewrite notion of process. These activities may prove effective across institutional settings. In any case, moving from prewrite/write/rewrite to invention, arrangement, and revision calls up different ways of centering participation and contribution as vital to composition studies.