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Portfolio Exam

Assigned number:

81801

This exam includes:

Intellectual Autobiography - 1,149 words

Portfolio Reflection - 898 words

Annotated Bibliography - 16 texts, including 1,888 word rationale

Syllabus, including Analytical Explanation (1,067 words) and Teaching Statement (654 words)

Conference Paper - 3,263 words, including 159-word Abstract

This exam fulfills the comprehensive stipulations in the following ways (texts may be repeated):

1. Three different centuries:

- a. Text: Sonnet 20: A woman's face with nature's own hand painted (1609); Part: Syllabus
- b. Text: "The Problematic of Experience: Redefining Critical Work in Ethnography and Pedagogy" (1998); Part: Conference Paper
- c. Text: *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (2017); Part: Annotated Bibliography

2. One Pre-1800 text & One Post-1800 text:

- a. Text: "Sonnet 20: A woman's face with nature's own hand painted" (1609); Part: Syllabus
- b. Text: *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (2017); Part: Annotated Bibliography

3. Two different national traditions:

- a. Text: "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (USA); Part: Annotated Bib
- b. Text: *Fierces Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir* - Kai Cheng Thom (Canada); Part: Syllabus

Framing Essay
Intellectual Autobiography - 1,149 words

Cognitive problems start to muddy me: language becomes a trigger, treating a symptom instead of a cause. Everything is a symptom: I lose words, stutter, twitch and tremble. I have to document some of what it feels like sans-diagnosis but still impermeable, panic rising in me like a tide, an endless grief swallowing me.

This summer, I get really sick again. When I return from the South—a trip I hoped would provide catharsis, closure—my PTSD rages. I am plagued by visions of exes gone dark, the long decay into drugs and gaslighting, stuff I haven't yet recovered from. I can't sleep, I wake soaked and shivering, each erases memory cast against a grim backdrop in stage lighting.

Here in this Portfolio Exam, I've presented a broad scope on what I work on: embodiment's evolution into the digital, the disabled body in poetics and prose, posthumanism in cultural rhetorics around race, rhetorics throughout. For me, language is the central line of this portfolio. The ways that we talk about the raced body, compulsory abledness, texts, narrative, our own bodies, illness; these questions are central to me as I navigate life with chronic illnesses and chronic pain.

Knowledge is the beginning of something tumultuous: I am jealous of writers writing about their traumas. What gives you the [right] ability to hold these traumas close to you in the ways that you must hold them close?

I am surviving but for how long?.

Michelle Payne writes about the emergence of trauma in student writing: “why did this happen—we couldn't face the huge wash of trauma across our culture”—trauma studies has emerged as a lens through which to examine suffering: the holocaust, genocides, the disabling of bodies by state violence. What does it mean if I myself hold it? If I both study it and *am* it?

I have to leave my psychiatrist. She's graduating from her residency program and starting a new job. In our final appointment, I have to sign paperwork detailing our treatment plan: “reduce anxiety by 50%,” it says.

On the form I sign, my now-ex psychiatrist has listed:

Pt. Identified Strengths/Assets:

“strong and capable”

“intelligent”

“thoughtful”

“funny”

“resilient”

In *Sick*, Porochista Khakpour details her abundance of medical consults. Advice pours in, and Sontag urges us to resist metaphor, but if I have to splice chunks of myself off to survive the onslaught of abled people recommending fasts, yoga studios, cleanse programs in Bali, hiking, naturalism, reiki, essential oils, eradicating mold, getting more sleep, schema therapy, Rolfing, stevia supplements, running, going vegan, stretching, breathwork, CBD, magnesium, visiting a chiropractor—

how can I avoid the metaphor of exhaustion?

Pain makes me selfish; I close in towards it when I am unable to ignore it. I forget the bodies of others, of desire for anything but a dissipation of the pain. I desire only painlessness. Even when I press hard against my partner, my body is tended waiting for it: the inevitable twinge through my shoulders or across my back and I am rendered static by pain or the promise of pain.

The night I write all this, I am itchy all over. *It could be anything* I recite: *scented laundry detergent pesticides in the cotton sheets polyester sheets air conditioning a mast cell response acid reflux neurological Lyme* I see spots in the panicked 2:30am shower where the water feels both too hot and like ice over my frizzling nerves.

My heart pounds and I am panicked underneath the skin surge.

A disability aesthetic, you ask. The temporarily-abled (TA) attempt to delineate one for us, where life in pain is unsustainable, that self-selecting eugenics is a private eugenics. There is no reproductive justice that does not center how to live cared for, by the state, by a network of interdependence and monies allocated for caretaking, the feminized labor of paying attention to needs, anticipating pain or hunger or the need for a bath.

Melanie Yergeau thinks poop makes an affective response more rich: disgust is an unintentional emotion, a bodily revulsion. Did you know you can change these responses? I have done it. Disgust is involuntary, but desire can be shaped, coached into a form more acceptable.

The ways madness have been sculpted have a history: did you know about asylums as response to the psychosis of working? Working for nothing feels normal, but the psychosis is said to be pathological. When you had visions in the past, you became an Oracle.

When I was 3, my mother took me to a public playground in Boston. I wore my hair short and was tomboyish and unapologetic about my self—I haven't changed much, in this sense. A pack of boys approached and jeered, *you're a boy you look like a boy you're a boy*. Without hesitating, I balled my fists and plunged them into my toddler hips and shouted back: *I am not a boy*.

If I can easily trace this history despite my weak memory, my fluidic past, how can I decipher when I became the “wild subject” I am today (Payne; Worsham)? If, for Payne, *I* am the student testifying to gendered violence, trauma, ensuing mental illness, am I able to examine my own texts as an archive of femme madness? Queer non-narrative?

I argue that the rhetorics emergent from trauma surrounding gender presentation, affect, and adherence to “normalcy” are not only forms of resistance, as Payne explicates, but inherently femme and radical. These femme rhetorics appear everywhere: in Payne's archives of student writing, in the defiant manicured femme on the uptown A, in every occasion where a male co-worker has found me “aggressive” or “intimidating” by writ of my body and my voice.

What is it to write about infestation?

When asked what I am working on at the residency, I falter and am sure of a few things but the answers are all wrong: I am reading Foucault on madness; I write down the names of goddesses of sloth; I watch doctor shows. The other women say they are working on memoirs but they don't know that I write down everything they say, annotating my day, the way my body morphs from limber to shrouded in a cloak of knitted fascia. What I write about? What do I *not* write about?

I migrate between couch and porch swing, making toast and scouring the bookshelf. It is just like Home; I learn now how to make my home anywhere.

I catch myself saying it: *bodymind* as if I know what that is. I read it all the time as I “prepare for orals,” a process in which I decide on dozens of books to read as I work towards my PhD. But it is distant from me. I both have and am a body, but I hardly acknowledge this. It's too huge, to admit a physical distinct form, a limit.

I write myself a body.

Portfolio Exam Reflections - 898 words

How can I reflect on a collection of writing seemingly discursive, seemingly disjointed? My own ways of understanding writing and theorizing seem this way, too: a collection of tenuously associated embodiment-centered fragments. I know there is a thread throughout, and I am still trying to weave it into something cogent, something complete, or complete-able. While you may situate me with Composition and Rhetoric, or Writing Studies, my interdisciplinary motives are on full display in this portfolio.

This year, I've taken courses that have urged my areas of inquiry outward. From my first semester Introduction to Doctoral Studies course with Kandice Chuh and her focus on critical university studies to my second semester course in the Urban Education department with Carmen Kynard, focusing on qualitative research methodologies, I've had the opportunity to reconsider my academic interests in relationship to the perspectives these two inspiring scholars have presented. This portfolio successfully encapsulates the intellectual work I've been doing, and will provide the committee with some insight into what I'll be working on for the next few years.

With special credit to Jessica Yood, I've been able to begin articulating some of these intersecting theoretical threads in the attached Conference Paper, which gestures towards some of the questions I'll spend much more time on in my dissertation. Here, I've looked into connections between digital linguistic activism and the culture wars era, attempting to make connections between the failures of the radical disability activism community in achieving intersectionality and the new possibilities for identity online. I believe that the NEMLA panel [Ability as Identity, Identity as Ability](#), for which this paper is written, will provide a rich in-person space for theorizing identity in relation to embodiment and difference. Since writing the Conference Paper, I have added several

additional sections that expand on the themes you'll find within the paper and am finalizing edits for submitting to *Present Tense: A Journal of Rhetoric in Society*. In this version of the paper, you'll see evidence of my ability to move between and amongst intellectual traditions.

The Annotated Bibliography explores several canonical feminist science studies texts, including Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto," alongside new work in disability studies and digital spaces. With help from Matt Gold, I feel that I successfully read these texts in relationship to one another and within the frame of my own interests in embodiment, disability, and digital humanities, especially composition. I used this bibliography as an opportunity to do the work of drawing connections between discursive texts: I connected Eli Clare's multigenre disability studies text *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* to Tiffany Lethabo King's work on the posthuman as essentially anti-Black, working with the "posthuman" as a tether to scholarship in the digital humanities that is beginning to define itself as "post-digital." In addition, my reading of core texts in genre studies contribute to my growing understanding of how genre is culturally constructed, and how cultural politics profoundly affect the ways in which texts are read. These intersections between composition studies and embodiment studies will impact my specialization as I develop my reading lists for Orals. The Annotated Bibliography provides a broad-scope look at my current and developing interests across many fields of inquiry.

The included syllabus is the full text for my fall 2018 Freshman Inquiry Writing Seminar at the City College of New York. I felt that the entire document, including course policies and required information from the CCNY Writing Program, was important to this exam as it demonstrates my experience as an instructor and the real-life constraints of syllabi taught within academic institutions. While in many ways, I'd prefer a streamlined 5-6 page calendar and list of readings, CUNY students

especially need to know what resources are available to them as they enter college. Many of my students are the first in their families to attend a university and lack the guidance and mentorship available to more privileged students, so incorporating this information is crucial to setting a standard of accessibility for the course. Accessibility is much more than ramps for wheelchair users: students entering college must have access to information about offices on campus, including tutoring services, financial aid, disability services, advising protocol, among many others. I felt this inclusion would be incomplete without these details, as access is an enormous aspect of my pedagogy.

The syllabus also reveals my feminist, pro-trans reading practices, which are central to both my work as scholar and teacher. Since pitching and teaching the first-ever student-led class focusing on queer and multigenre texts during my undergraduate career, I have stayed engaged in contemporary literature as both an avid reader and a widely-published writer. This affords me the chance to read cutting-edge work by marginalized writers, and I've been including many of these new texts on my syllabi for several years. This syllabus reflects this practice, and teaching a new Queer Texts course offers me the opportunity to focus heavily on new writing by queer and trans writers. I'm a 21st-century scholar, and I bring my own reading practices into my teaching as much as I am able.

All in all, this portfolio offers a peep into what goes into my intellectual work: my politics, my identities, my ethical stance. It's crucial to me to bring these values into my scholarship, and this portfolio offers the committee a vision of who I am as a scholar, as well as who I'm becoming.

Annotated Bibliography Rationale - 1,888 words

This bibliography explores the relationships at the confluence of digital study, composition theory, disability/embodyment theory, and the emergent “posthuman,” a term that signifies many post-digital theories surrounding the distribution of knowledge and identity outside of the embodied subject. I’ve focused somewhat equally on each of these discrete but overlapping aspects for this bibliography: Alexander & Rhodes, Bitzer, Miller, and Devitt are all central scholars in genre and composition theory; McRuer, King, Price, Clare, Tuck, Yergeau, and White all center embodied identities and invite questions surrounding new forms of embodiment emergent within digital technologies; and Samuels & McGann, Paperson, boyd, and Carr offer contextual and methodological thinking about approaching digital humanities study in the contemporary university and beyond. Following these scholars, we must consider the actual bodies engaging with technologies and what forms of access they may or may not have; additionally, what kinds of *access* do particular spaces make available?

As a composition and rhetoric scholar, I am tasked with explicating the language around this complex relationship, and I am confident that the interstitial spaces between body-digital-genre are rich with opportunities for theorizing the future of my discipline, as well as broader questions emergent in multimedia humanities study. Without examining body-digital-genre as intersectional, I run the risk of essentializing the body as fundamentally separate from digital space, a concept that Michele White tackles in her review of literature on several accounts that theorize the body in relation to the digital. Several scholars White cites discuss how the body engages the digital as opposed to ratifying the myth that the body and the digital are discrete entities: Munster introduces the notion of “lag” as a space of engagement: as the body interacts with the digital, it navigates using

technologies that touch the body, such as mouse, keyboard, joystick, touchscreen, etc. This produces “lag” in that there are myriad interactions that must occur for the human body to sync with the technology in use. Munster, Wegenstein, and other writers invoked by White also articulate the relationship between human-technological interactions as essentially embodied, but relying on a form of selfhood much more fluid and fragmented than often theorized by poststructural feminists. Instead of treating the body as essentially whole, these writers emphasize the historical context of bodies’ depictions as precursors to the extended selfhoods available through digital technologies. In other examples, White shows how new media and performance have worked with *body-as-information* by engaging participants to input or interpret body data, both “dematerializ[ing]” the body and insisting on the relationship between technology and “sensation” (617). White goes on to explicate the role of the body and technologies as both “mediated and mediators” (619).

The space here is rich for theorizing body-digital-genre: technology that is not specifically assistive makes particular assumptions about the body engaging with it: abled, figured (as opposed to disfigured), rational; if these normative expectations are implicit in technological design, is it possible to apply this ideology to other body ideologies? Does the technological object reinforce other hegemonic body values as well? While I’d argue that of course technological production enforces body normativity, this is difficult to prove. Production of such technologies does in fact occur in spaces charged with politics, not in a neutral innovative zone. If we can identify these compositional spaces as inherently political (which I believe we can), then it’s important to then identify technological production as linked to capitalism and ideologies that enable capitalism’s extant functions. Following this, we can claim that technology, by assuming body—and identity—normativity, reinforces these forms as ideal.

Margaret Price tackles the ideal, or rational, mind juxtaposed with the mentally disabled *bodymind*: instead of privileging rationality, as is the norm in academic, digital, and intellectual spaces, she posits that compositionists especially should rather cultivate an emphasis on the *ethical* subject instead of the *rational* one. This ethical subject is especially interesting in its relationship to technology: instead of relying on linear forms of knowledge in design, scholars can embrace expansive, complex forms of identity, representation, and theory in digital spaces. The ethical subject is also attuned to oppressive methodology that objectifies marginalized identities, and actively works to develop their own reflexive political and technological rhetorical practices.

This ethical subject pushes against much of the theorizing around the “posthuman,” or the human subject malleable in its connection to material culture. Posthuman discourse demands this rationality, essentially erasing the somatic or affective from the experience of humanness. As Tiffany Lethabo King and Sylvia Wynter discuss, this posthumanity is problematic in its assumptions that the objective, or rational, mind can be extricated from its somatic shell to achieve some form of Harawayian cyborgism. In fact, La Paperson tackles this exact term and its political neutrality; by reformulating Haraway’s *cyborg* as a fugitive *scyborg*, Paperson uses the rhetoric of technological assemblage against itself, instead demanding that scyborg identity is innately counter-hegemonic. This follows classic poststructural logics in its adoption and subsequent wielding of identity, and its reformulation of a binary theoretical space (cyborg v. human) into a political entity with access to elite intellectual spaces. The scyborg does not fear technology; it *is* a technology, and is comfortable meshing forms into a Deleuzian rhizome of resistance.

Then, we must consider the actual bodies engaging with technologies and what forms of access they may or may not have; additionally, what kinds of *access* do particular spaces make

available? Many normative discussions about the human and the digital render a liberal anxiety over “digital natives” exposing themselves to security risks in online spaces, commonly underscored by sensationalized news media narratives. danah boyd’s longitudinal study of millennial social media usage in *It’s Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* paints a different picture: boyd shows young people co-developing critical media literacies and puzzling out ways to create and maintain authentic relationships in both digital and embodied spaces. Further, boyd parallels this new public with the increasing privatization of public spaces historically used as social venues for young and working-class people.

This conception of *space* is crucial to my thinking around digital rhetorics: the Internet is privatizing rapidly just like the aforementioned public spaces, and collective responses to this gatekeeping have been mixed. The rich disability community on Twitter has defined itself through hashtags and a small population of retweets and private/anonymous accounts. Other communities have embraced these closed-door protocols to “hold space,” a feminist activist term referring to an interpersonal ethos of interdependent affective care, for folks to fully express themselves extralegally and disembodied-ly: sex workers, trans women, and disabled creatives can earn under-the-table money to complement diminishing social support networks and maintain active Twitter relationships through comments, threads, and retweets. These *spaces* resemble the public spaces boyd alludes to in *It’s Complicated*, but challenge more traditional narratives around friendship, interdependence, and community. Here it is important to consider the relationship between these *disembodied spaces* and late capitalist isolation: can these *disembodied* spaces augment or even replace meatspace?

In disability studies, the emphasis on accessibility practices reveals horror stories of physical (and psychic) barriers to physical meeting spaces; digital spaces offer community without the constant challenges of no curb cuts, out-of-service elevators, chemical fragrances, and other common access barriers (Carr, Price, Clare). Moves into digital spaces subvert these access requirements by allowing for identity-based formulations of disability community instead of *embodied* identity-based affiliations found IRL. But, does this *disembodiment* equate to a form of *posthuman* identity?

In many ways, discourse surrounding the *posthuman* echoes the desire to distance the posthuman from the othered *nonhuman*. Historically, humanities study has used Kantian rationality as a basis for *human* identification; this narrative obscures the ways in which *humanness* has been used as a tool of oppression by categorizing people as *nonhuman* to justify violence against them. If posthumanism desires to fragment the Kantian subject, the “neutral” subject humanities study has centered since the Enlightenment, what of the *marginalized subject*, the embodied subject *subjected to* violence and oppression in the forms of settler colonialism, ghettoization—both geographic and intellectual—and architectures of oppression?

By the term *architecture* here, I mean the systemic infrastructural conception of the human: the architecture of posthuman rhetoric, then, reifies and reinforces these ghettos to which the marginalized subject is confined. Through White, Wegenstein also identifies architecture as essentially technological, and in fact as a form of new media by how space is deployed and manipulated to differentiate subjectivity, perspective, and movement. However, these theories do not explicate how *architecture* is too the material exclusion built into public and private spaces that exclude sick and disabled subjects; a rejection of these architectures of oppression implement

universal design, a concept of inclusive building and design that centers the needs of disabled bodies, or, in this case, any body implicitly or explicitly excluded from spaces where policy decisions, design values, and objectivist sciences of architecture occurs. *Universal design*, for me, includes rhetorics of access: jargon-free, natural language, but also a cultural ethos that values the importance of non-normative forms of communication—including minoritized dialects—that centralize an expansive definition of the *human*.

Posthuman rhetoric functions as colonial violence by further stripping the agency of radical subjectivities by defining them still as *in the margins*: “minority” language is deployed as code for *unlike the human*. The implicit affiliation of the author is with the reader: the *us* intends to include scholars in humanities study by treating marginalized rhetorics and identities as objects of curiosity, of study (King). This logic follows settler colonialist ideologies of occupying marginalized communities through the scrim of *research*, ensuring the objectivist stance fetishized by humanities study (Tuck, Paperson).

The further a subject is located from the idealized Kantian subject, the closer *they* (again, author identifies with the researcher) move towards the margins, which ensnare these objectified folks in a double-bind. The marginalizing architecture of scholarship includes the ineffectual nonprofit industrial complex, privatized medicine, the university: all well-oiled gatekeepers who welcome assimilated subjects while maintaining a closed-border policy to subjects unwilling—or unable—to pimp their own trauma for access to resources (Tuck). Thus the snare of neoliberalism appears again: the *uncooperative* individual is to blame for their own struggle to survive.

Resistance to these forms appears in abundance online: #WeirdTwitter (#WT), the surrealist turn on the robust social media platform, specifically resists cooperation and the imposition of

restrictive genre through what Guy DeBord calls *détournement*: using public digital space for surrealist purposes, undercutting the *networking value* of social media, of a public digital persona. #WT implements another Situationist technique of *dérive*, or what Debord described as "a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances," to subvert the intended purpose of Twitter by using its constraints to make something that challenges normativity, that queers dominant narrative (Alexander & Rhodes).

These Situationist techniques are just two methodological and pedagogical approaches to decolonizing oppressive architectures inherent to scholarly practice and many corporatized digital spaces. I intend to explore other online communities that use different strategies to resist Lennard Davis's "hegemony of normalcy" (qtd. in Carr 53). Opportunities exist on #WT and other digital platforms for re-inscribing embodied identities into disembodied genres, or perhaps *postgenres*, by resisting isolationist posthuman discourse and implementing critical multimedia engagements.

Annotated Bibliography

Alexander, Jonathan and Jacqueline Rhodes. *On Multimodality: New Media in Composition Studies*. USA: Conference on College Composition and Communication of the National Council of Teachers of English, 2014.

Situationism is the avant-garde continental movement in the mid 20th century that centered reclamatory aesthetics through a proto-queer reimagining of culture. Rhodes and Alexander want us (researchers, instructors, etc) to *détourner* by creating our own multimodal texts, which they themselves have done in various “professional” spaces throughout their careers. The authors are adamant that instructors must explore our own spectacular *technai*, our selves, and digital rhetorics in tandem. Alexander and Rhodes spend time advocating “for the power of images and mashups to create rhetorical possibilities that... question standard narratives” (Rhodes and Alexander 109); in brief, remix is totally queer.

#WeirdTwitter does its own version of *détournement*: using public digital space for surrealist purposes, undercutting the *networking value* of social media, of a public digital persona, instead implementing another Situationist technique of *dérive*, or what Guy Debord described as "a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances," to subvert the intended purpose of Twitter by using its constraints to make something that challenges normativity, that queers dominant narrative (Alexander and Rhodes 109-115).

By problematizing the status quo, #WeirdTwitter has established itself as a markedly queer space in the digital sphere; though many active #WT users are anonymous, many public figures that have been influenced by the rhetoric of #WT are queer, gender non-conforming, trans, or otherwise implementing a queering of dominant discourse by their embodied identities. While Twitter is a disembodied space, the enactment of queer *détournement* ties these reimaginings to an embodied, and othered, identity; #WeirdTwitter is thereby expansive and autonomous. Opportunities exist on #WT and other digital platforms for re-inscribing embodied identities. Alexander and Rhodes lay

the groundwork for exploring digital composing in critical and theoretical ways, and take seriously the call to work in these digital contexts as well.

Bitzer, Lloyd. "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25, Selections from Vol. 1 (1992): 1-14.

The "rhetorical situation as a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance" (4); Bitzer views *participation* as a crucial form of social engagement, as rhetoric occurs within a cultural moment; genre is inextricably tied to social situation, and, in fact, cannot exist without a generic situation in which to engage (3). "[A] work of rhetoric is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself; it functions ultimately to produce action or a change in the world; *it performs some task*" (emphasis mine, 3).

- exigence → "an imperfection marked by *urgency*" (6)
- audience → "those persons who are *capable of being influenced* by discourse" (7)
- constraints → influences which "have the power to *constrain decision and action*" (emphases mine, 8)

Applying Bitzer's theory to #WeirdTwitter, as I have worked towards in the past, presented new and complicated views on digital genre: while the presence of constraint in Twitter is obvious (140/280 characters), how do we determine audience? Exigence too is in flux, dependent upon the site of discourse; the imperfection here is perhaps Twitter's intention: to foment "networking" in a professional/managerial context. #WT's largely anti-authoritarian ideology presents challenges to digital branding and identity management, and Bitzer's "urgency" may point us to DIY digital culture or to any unchecked capitalist ideology in digital space. Connecting these to embodiment theory means that I have to define Bitzer's "constraints" as embodied as well: what kinds of rhetorical agency are available to non-hegemonic/abled bodies? How do these bodies impact the kinds of rhetorics they perform, and where they perform them?

boyd, danah. *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens*. USA: Yale University Press, 2014.

danah boyd's longitudinal study of millennial social media usage paints a unique picture of literacy and technology in integrated social contexts. In boyd's study, young people co-develop critical media literacies and puzzle out ways to create and maintain authentic relationships in both digital and embodied spaces. boyd parallels the privatization of public spaces historically used as social venues for non-property-owning people, often young people, with the rapid uptick in technology use as a means to socialize among young people.

This conception of *space* is crucial to my thinking around digital rhetorics: the Internet is privatizing rapidly just like the aforementioned public spaces, and collective responses to this gatekeeping have been mixed. The rich disability community on Twitter has defined itself through hashtags and a small population of retweets and private/anonymous accounts. Other communities have embraced these closed-door protocols to hold space for folks to fully express themselves extralegally and disembodied-ly: sex workers, trans women, and disabled creatives earning under-the-table money to complement meager social security checks all maintain active Twitter relationships through comments, threads, and retweets. These *spaces* resemble the public spaces boyd alludes to, but challenge more traditional narratives around friendship, interdependence, and community.

Carr, Diane. "Constructing disability in online worlds: conceptualising disability in online research." *London Review of Education* 8.1 March 2010. 51-61.

Carr begins this article by providing important contextual information on existing research on deafness, disability, and internet communications; by historicizing this research, Carr underscores the importance of interdisciplinary reading when addressing new media and identity-oriented work. Carr directly addresses the methodological forms she has chosen to implement here, and provides a compelling argument for an expansive view of research method as politicized and multiple, that "destabilizes the role of researcher-as-expert" (54). Carr's reflection on her own methodology is beneficial for me as an emerging researcher, and highlights my own questions surrounding my interdisciplinary interests.

Citing disability scholar Lennard Davis, Carr embraces the sociopolitical model of disability as articulated by Davis: “In the task of rethinking and theorizing disability, one of the first steps is to understand the relationship between a physical impairment and the political, social, even spatial environment that places impairment in a matrix of meanings and significations” (Davis qtd. in Carr 53). Carr uses this model to explore the significance of the technological context of *Second Life*'s addition of the voice feature, about which she has interviewed d/Deaf residents of *SL* in an effort to theorize possible implications of technologies as methodological and pedagogical tools.

The interview section blends responses from all five research participants to discuss perspectives on access and the new voice feature added to *SL*. Carr fluidly facilitates this conversation, acknowledging her own positionality as a d/Deaf scholar, but privileging the responses of the interviewees. Carr makes an important connection to affective response as “loss” experienced by all of the interviewees; she clarifies that the “loss” is not always fully negative, but rather, interviewees demonstrated flexibility and “strategies of adjustment” within their *SL* spaces (57).

Clare, Eli. *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure*. Duke University Press, 2017.

Eli Clare's long anticipated follow-up to *Exile and Pride* wrestles with the tension in disability studies and communities between cure and access, and how the two are implicitly structured as oppositional, and how abled communities fetishize and push cure on disabled folks without much attention to accessibility needs of folks with incurable conditions. Clare details how his own understanding of cure and wellness have evolved and shifted as he's radicalized around disability, and laments his own manipulated history with ableist diagnoses and “special needs.” Clare's part-memoir, part-theory text on the intersections of disability and queerness centers the author's own narrative as a means to discuss the complex politics of ecology and capitalism. The author also chronicles his development into an intersectional disability activist, and how their connections to their queer communities radicalized them. The multiplicity of narratives in Clare's theoretical memoir appear as intersectional understandings of how capitalism, activism, and intellectualism

coalesce to make meaning and semiotics of bodies and labor. Clare's clear prose has both a conscience and a brain, and this text was a refreshing amalgam of critical and experimental work.

Clare's new book handles the complexities of care and health with deft grace and attention. He's chosen to split the book into smaller lyric essay forms. One of the most successful of these is in "Violence of Cure," in which Clare examines case files, charity websites, and pop culture depictions of disability, unpacking how other modes of social control operate within cure ideologies. Clare's discussions of disabled futures reminds me of both Kafer and McRuer, with help from Donna Haraway; he establishes connections between mild eugenicist medical practices to a future where fewer and fewer disabled-from-birth individuals have been "selected" as reproducible. Instead, Clare does some of the work of connecting disability to critical animal studies and speciesist notions of personhood.

Devitt, Amy. "Generalizing About Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept." *College Composition and Communication* 44.4 (1993): 573-586.

Devitt's "Generalizing About Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept" is an influential 1993 article on new approaches within genre studies to respond to contemporary (maybe even digital?) demands. Genre is a "dynamic and... essentially semiotic social construct," which positions genre as a crucial feature of digital writing, especially online spaces that we can consider *public* (Devitt 573).

Devitt articulates a shift from form (classification) to context (cultural artifact/subject) (573); and further, a shift from product to process, alluding to Bakhtin (Devitt 574). Genre when viewed as static codes *product* as the value; thus, rejection of culturally-coded forms (genres) can be read as "individual genius" instead of incorrect (574). This issue still holds powerful sway over literary studies wherein genius is counter-cultural, anti-authoritarian, but still participating in "generic" spaces. Literary scholars treat authors and texts as objects of study, and the more an author fits into Devitt's "genius" paradigm, the more provocative attention can be paid to these masculine modes of knowledge as static, intractable, objective. While other disciplines are similarly preoccupied by

coding text categorically, Devitt's example of literature posits that this implicit inscription of texts as stagnated objects (of study), eliminates the notion that texts are instead evolving cultural/communicative artifacts (574). According to Devitt, as digital rhetoric has gained influence across culture, genre has accommodated to the constraints of digital spaces in a collaborative "co-construction" of text and context that occurs longitudinally: "Genres develop...because they respond appropriately to situations that writers encounter repeatedly" (Devitt 576).

Devitt also articulates how genre is culturally-specific; notions of "appropriateness" in variable communicative contexts differentiate based on cultural codes and mores. In essence, genre is both influential upon and shaped by cultural norms; writers "read" rhetorical situations and manipulate/re-interpolate genres to "respond appropriately." In this sense, genre "not only responds to but also constructs recurring situation" (577). The exigence here is, simply, communication.

Semiotic and *social* means that identity plays an integral role in Devitt's—and my—conception of genre. Tracing back to Goffman, we can understand identity as a performance of the self, a series of deliberately-made choices that articulate the "inner" self and translate it to an outward—or social—space. For my purposes, these spaces are digital, or inherently stripped of embodiment in more structuralist, physical terms. Instead, individual rhetors make choices about the texts that they create within these digital spaces: alphabetic, visual, aural, etc. These cues coalesce in an intentional re-embodied collection of *semiotic moments*, or signs, that offer up information about the user themselves. This actually offers expansions on the forms of embodiment that folks can take in the material world: closeted queer and trans people construct simulacra of themselves as fully out; disabled and chronically ill people can access spaces that institutional inaccessibility excludes them from; academics can attend conferences, listen to lectures, and teach online.

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. Routledge, 1991. 149-181.

Haraway's infamous Cyborg Manifesto articulates a confluence of extent feminist and socialist theory surrounding the body and the machine. Haraway tackles technologies that have created what she terms "the breached boundary" between animal and machine, which reveals complex truths about epistemological and ontological systems in play in the late 20th century. Capitalism demands the production of material objects, and the cyborg has emerged from this space as a signifier of tensions between "nature" and "culture." Haraway is emphatic that the cyborg is utopian and idealizes the "post-gender" world she views as crucial for feminist liberation; since the cyborg cannot reproduce itself (as it is only a product), its body demarcates a removal from the compulsory reproduction demanded by heteropatriarchy.

Haraway, citing Sandoval, articulates how decolonizing Western humanities "destabiliz[es]" identities claimed and articulated in that culture (154-155), and following, how emergent epistemological notions of feminism as a cultural artifact further dissolve bonds between discursive feminisms. Cyborg feminism undoes this need to categorize, as it is comfortable with entropy. In considering my work around body-digital-genre, Haraway is emphatic that "communications technologies and biotechnologies are the crucial tools recrafting our bodies" (161) and that these technologies often operate as Foucaudian forms of enforcing meaning. By refiguring Marxian-socialist feminist discourse, Haraway attempts to frame new economic structures as essentializing gendered/raced/classed identities through external enforcement in the contexts of wage labor and the "homework economy" that continually devalues unpaid, feminized labor (163). On pages 166-168, Haraway uses an unusual formal approach by breaking down various sociopolitical spheres and how these politics appear and are enforced in these contexts, culminating in a call to action to embrace "a feminist science" (169). Finally, Haraway invokes the work of women of color theorists like Audre Lorde and Cherrie Moraga as cyborg theorists, and centers the work of other marginalized writers as sources of cyborgian knowledge.

However, it remains unclear how exactly Haraway proposes that this amorphous "we" (feminists? proto-cyborgs? post-structuralists?) gain this cyborg status. Additionally, Haraway's suspicion of all technologies as functional enforcers of classed, raced, and gendered inequalities reads a bit dated;

while it's important to maintain a critical hermeneutics of suspicion towards any dominant-culture artifact, technology has been increasingly used in counter-hegemonic ways since Haraway's writing in 1991.

King, Tiffany Lethabo. "Humans Involved: Lurking in the Lines of Posthumanist Flight." *Critical Ethnic Studies* 3.1 (Spring 2017): 162-185.

King here presents a critique of posthumanism as a facet of existing axes of oppression. Is *posthuman* really just seeking distance from the othered *nonhuman*? If posthumanism desires to fragment the liberal subject, what if the marginalized subject, the embodied subject is*** *subjected to* violence and oppression in the forms of settler colonialism, ghettoization—both geographic and intellectual—and architectures of oppression.

By the term *architecture*, I mean the systemic infrastructural conception of the human: the architecture of rhetoric, then, reifies and reinforces these ghettos to which the marginalized subject is confined. Rhetoric here functions to further strip the work of radical subjectivities by defining them still as *in the margins*: "minority" language is deployed as code for *unlike us, unlike the human*.

The further a subject moves from this *whole* idealized Kantian subject, the closer they move towards the margins, which encircle and ensnare. This marginal architecture includes the ineffectual nonprofit industrial complex, privatized medicine, the university: all well-oiled gatekeepers who welcome assimilated subjects while maintaining a closed-border policy to subjects unwilling—or unable—to pimp their own trauma for access to resources (King). Thus the snare of neoliberalism appears again: the *uncooperative* individual is to blame for their own struggle to survive.

King is emphatic that the increasing embrace of posthuman rhetoric is directly tied to the insidious forms that anti-Blackness adopt, especially in the academy. DH work often invokes this posthumanist rhetoric, as if technologies' emergence has somehow dismantled subjectivity, and if these technologies are not imbued with the ideologies of their creators, e.g. Apple's facial

recognition technology unable to recognize Black faces. There is an abundance of rich critique in King's piece, and it's important to center these arguments for radical subjectivities in theorizing body-digital-genre.

Miller, Carolyn R. "Genre as Social Action." *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. Eds. Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway. Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1994.

Carolyn Miller's article "Genre as Social Action" lays the groundwork for the continued emergence of rhetorical genre studies as a scholarly force inside of composition and rhetoric. In it, she positions genres as "forms of social action... [that] enable their users to carry out situated symbolic actions...[and] to perform social actions and relations, enact social roles, and frame social realities" (58-59). This interplay between rhetor and rhetorical (social) situation is central, Miller argues, to "how genres, through their use, dynamically maintain, reveal tensions within, and help reproduce social practices and realities" (59).

This semiotic relationship between genre and culture has been addressed by Bazerman, Bitzer, Bawarshi, and Devitt, to name a few, but Miller's firm grasp on genre as ontological and contextual renders this article a classic: context dictates "communicative purpose(s), discourse community membership, genre nomenclature, or even genre chains and occluded genres" (59).

Miller also articulates that communication must be "viewed as an ongoing, intersubjective performance, one that is mediated by genres and other culturally available tools" (59). I have long considered what Miller means by this "intersubjective performance," and have previously connected this term to my research on Weird Twitter as a rhetorical situation that provides abundant insight into online discourse communities: e.g., How do individuals convey identity and voice through manipulation of genre to address the rhetorical situation of their own construction (considering private/anonymous/dis-identified users) (what about bots?)?

In brief, Miller, and rhetorical genre studies more generally, wants to know more about “the role that genres play in how individuals experience, co-construct, and enact social practices and sites of activity” (59). This “co-construction” is central to my connection between embodied offline subjectivity and dis-/re-embodied online identity: what groupings of cultural signs can/do users enact to convey identity markers that hold value to them online?

McRuer, Robert. “Composing Bodies; or, De-Composition: Queer Theory, Disability Studies, and Alternative Corporealities.” *Journal of Rhetoric, Culture, and Politics* 24.1 (2004): 47-78.

McRuer posits that composing itself (as a practice) is messy and dis-composed; he then advocates for connecting the agitation of the composing, laboring body into composition classrooms (49) and even claims that enforcing “programmatically” and compulsory performance of rote forms and docile bodies (51) in composition classrooms, we are serving capitalist interests. This service strips composition of any radical political possibilities, and composing’s innate connection to embodiment renders this disconnect highly problematic. For McRuer, it is in composition that we have a political obligation to challenge hegemonic identities and narratives; there is an opportunity for embodiment to be taken seriously, and McRuer holds that engaging student writers in moments of otherness, what he terms “queer/disabled moments,” opens possibilities of resistance. He further advocates for queering or “cripping” texts, challenging essentialist ideologies within cultural artifacts (59), invoking Sedgwick to explicate his use of “queer” as a verb: “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances... [that] aren’t made (or *can’t* be made) to signify monolithically” (57). This anti-capitalist perspective on pedagogy is a valuable method for bridging theories on embodiment and composition, and it’s my intention to connect these to hybrid teaching and digital spaces as well.

Paperson, La. *A Third University is Possible*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

La Paperson—pseudonym of K. Wayne Yang, editor-in-chief of *Critical Ethnic Studies*—offers a critical, decolonial perspective on the university as “an assemblage of machines” ripe for decolonizing action (xiii). Paperson adopts Haraway’s cyborg and refigures it as a fugitive “scyborg,” a decolonizing agent active in dismantling academic essentialisms. This short book, divided into four primary chapters and an illustrative introduction, articulates the need for an emergent “third university” that privileges “third-world” writing and thinking around how institutions function within white supremacist settler colonialism. Paperson intentionally wields “third world” as a reclamation of vocabulary long abandoned in intellectual work for its marginalizing tone, but not for its inaccuracies (34). Paperson readily acknowledges his positionality as a product of neocolonial institutions and as “a North American settler ‘of color’” (xxiii), but also articulates that his desire to theorize the third university allows him the coveted identity of scyborg, which he extends to the reader generously: “I hope to make room for you” (xxiv).

Paperson goes on to discuss the emergence of “settler colonial studies” since 2006, citing this as evidence of how the university capitalizes on knowledge developed by Indigenous and Black thinkers without attribution, and further, how this cooptation is demonstrative of the essentially colonizing nature of the university as an assemblage (9-15). Paperson also explains the expansion of the body to connect to land itself, a concept articulated by Native scholars for decades, and how this theory complicates European notions of biopolitics and capitalist machinery. Citing Achille Mbembe, Alexander Wehiliye, and Saidiya Hartman, Paperson unpacks the racism implicit in Foucault’s biopolitics and the colonialist violence of Marxism erasing the colonization and violence perpetrated on the Global South to enable comfort for the Global North (18-21). Capitalizing on the research on critical university studies, Paperson articulates the relationship between the “first world university” and colonialist ideologies of entitlement, surveillance, and criminalization as forms of state/institutional power. He explains the roles that the scyborg must adopt to challenge these paradigms from the inside of the institution, citing Ferguson and wa Thiong’o’s work as accounts of scyborg activity. The “s” prefix derives from “system,” in that Paperson encourages the manipulation of systems to which the agent has access from within the first world university (61).

Overall, Paperson makes a valuable contribution to theorizing the role of activist scholarship within the contemporary university, and the call to continue this work by extended resources to underserved folks while—perhaps slowly—dismantling the oppressive infrastructural paradigms of subject-object research, apolitical posthuman rhetorics which erase race, and settler colonialist ideologies.

Price, Margaret. *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*. The University of Michigan Press, 2011.

Rhetoric scholar Margaret Price's study of mental illness at work in academic spaces focuses on the author's own mental disability and her experiences of charged "kairotic spaces," e.g. academic conferences, job interviews/campus visits, classrooms, and other professional settings. Price acknowledges the double-edged nature of "coming out" as mentally disabled, and appreciates the need for support from department chairs/WPAs/others in gatekeeping roles in academic space, but cannot quite reconcile how to navigate these messy interactions. Price works with a critical understanding of mental illness and of academia as an institution, including acknowledging the structural ableism of teaching-service-research. Price uses her position as a tenured faculty member to articulate some of the difficulties of mentally disabled faculty, especially in precarious positions of adjunct, PhD student, etc. Price also acknowledges the messiness of contingent employment, and advocates "teach[ing] for health insurance." A couple of sections stand out: Price's critical examination of "attendance" as a baseline factor in student success, her takedown of psychiatric/medical "neutrality," and her entire chapter devoted to labor issues for disabled academics.

This text feels especially impactful for me right now, as my own chronic illnesses and level of professionalization have both greatly amplified in the past year. Price works to negotiate her own "passing," and how invisible disability functions in professional spaces, and how ableism pervades academia, especially considering the (perceived) relationship between mental health and intellectual work, namely that they are incompatible. Price demands that gatekeepers radicalize around disability

justice and accessibility, not just that mentally disabled academics perform the “coming out” labor. I found Price’s understanding of how disabled people must “pass” to gain ground under late capitalist labor models riveting; I so appreciate the attention to labor issues, even if they aren’t affecting Price directly. Price proves that she’s not tuned out to the intersections of oppression that affect disabled people, nor the massive labor imbalance occurring in the contemporary university. Price’s interest in rhetorical choices mean that she’s aware of the ways that language work to legitimize some and delegitimize others, and she commits fully to unpacking the language at work in academic contexts.

Samuels, Lisa and Jerome McGann. “Deformance and Interpretation.” *New Literary History* 30.1
 “Poetry & Poetics,” Winter 1999. 25-56.

Samuels and McGann posit a new form of critical reading practice based on texts by Emily Dickinson and Dante. While they are primarily interested in theoretical readings of “works of art,” I believe that it is productive to attempt to connect this work to rhetoric and writing studies scholarship. Following Barthes, the authors are curious about interactive meaning and the “delight and pleasure” of literary forms (31). The authors expand on these theories by focusing on performatives as opposed to deformances, emphasizing that both occur readily in “literary” works, but much less so in “critical work” (34). They choose to focus on “interpretive deformation,” which they present as “heretical and other kinds of nonnormative readings of established cultural artifacts” (35). This wording struck me as illuminating: by what metric are readings established as “nonnormative?” I immediately turned towards my own research on “discomposition” on digital/social platforms, such as Twitter, and the crucial eye on marginalized communities utilizing these platforms as counter to their “networking” functions; by refusing online professionalism, queer, trans, and disabled individuals re-model themselves in compelling—and political—ways. In effect, if a website can constitute an “established cultural artifact,” then these repurposings fulfill the authors’ interest in the “interpretive deformance.” In Rhetoric Studies, the creators’ understanding of audience and medium are central here.

Unfortunately, Samuels and McGann do not labor to convey their meanings in lucid prose; the sentences are at times so hefty as to lose balance, and I found myself revisiting the same paragraphs again and again seeking clarity. Ironically, on p. 31, the authors claim that Dante's own practices "do not settle such questions but instead complicate them." While this text does offer strategies against reductive interpretive practices, its communicative style challenges its clarity.

Tuck, Eve. "Breaking up with Deleuze: desire and valuing the irreconcilable." *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 23.5, Sept-Oct 2010, 635-650.

Tuck implements the extended metaphor of the dissolution of a romantic relationship to articulate her historical relationship to Gilles Deleuze; while she ultimately embraces several Deleuzian concepts in her own work, she carefully explicates the limitations of his theories, many of which she feels are incomplete/undertheorized. Tuck, a GC graduate from Urban Education and a prominent young scholar in decolonial theory and critical ethnic studies, masterfully organizes this article to critique the one-dimensionality of much of continental philosophy, instead pilfering a few choice theories and essentially tossing the rest. This reverse-colonizing of some central poststructuralist theorists and texts is not incidental: Tuck is committed to liberatory methodologies and makes use of them in this piece. Her methodological centering of *desire* is central to her approach, and she works to extract this *desire* from even the messiest of Deleuzian theory. Tuck's work and ethics are delightful evidence of critical decolonial work happening today, and her consistency in centering radical subjectivities makes her work vital to my work surrounding embodiments online.

White, Michele. "Review: Networked Bodies and Extended Corporealities: Theorizing the Relationship between the Body, Embodiment, and Contemporary New Media." *Feminist Studies* 35.3 "The Politics Of Embodiment." Fall 2009, 603-624.

White's review of several new books on feminist studies in new media presents a brief review of the existing literature that positions embodiment as messy, female, and disposable; its foil is the mind: masculine, rational, and privileged in most of current writing about technology, both critical and

literary. She articulates the tensions between embodiment theory and new media, claiming that the dominant framework dismisses the body and embraces a false utopian view of technology as “neutral” (605).

The literature reviewed in this article also tackle the tendency to neutralize technologies, and each writer challenges these understandings by examining cultural artifacts, from contemporary performance work to “cabinets of curiosity,” early modern “precursors to the museum” (609). The cited examples reveal various theories that emerge from the space between new media and the body; it’s important to White that we not essentialize a binary relationship between body/technology, and she demonstrates how technology is both corporeal and noncorporeal. Invoking Merleau-Ponty’s concepts of *flesh* and Deleuze’s *fold*, White deftly integrates the examples cited by her chosen authors to discuss the posthuman, methodologies in new media and embodiment studies, and potential areas for further examination. The undercurrent of this piece emphasizes the need for feminist phenomenological explorations of technologically-mediated spaces. White is careful to demonstrate that the posthuman fantasy of abandoning the corporeal body is fetishistic and simplistic; instead, White embraces the messiness of reconciling technology and body, making this article crucial to my own theorizing of these relationships.

Yergeau, Melanie. *Disable All the Things: On Affect, Metadata, and Audience*. Computers & Writing Conference Keynote, 2014.

Melanie Yergeau’s 2014 Computers and Writing keynote speech focuses on the implied “non-rhetoricity” of the disabled subject; aligning herself with Margaret Price, Lennard Davis, and Catherine Prendergast, among others, she examines that writing studies’ interest in *audience* implicitly replicates segregation faced by disabled folks outside of scholarly spaces, but more incisively, that pedagogical, scholarly, and professional spaces replicate and institutionalize these structures through inviting public outcry around “accommodations” in school.

Yergeau doubles down to emphasize how much of the disabled life must be led online—she herself blogs, plays Second Life, maintains active presence on Tumblr, and considers herself an activist online. Yergeau expands on these social centers to discuss her notions of disabling all the things, meaning supplanting access-negative ideology and rhetorics with cultures of *access*. She goes on to explicate trigger warnings specifically as “a crippled kind of metadata” that troubles the aforementioned assumption of an abled audience, instead centering a disabled listener (7).

Later, Yergeau presents several “rehabilitative impulse[s]” that position tech as corrective measure to inculcate behavior modification in the mentally disabled: affective-training robots and “Emotional Markup Language” that codes normative emotional response into existing texts. These therapeutic approaches to disability lean into further stereotyping of mentally disabled people, evoking the calls for institutionalization and segregation that Yergeau discusses earlier (e.g., a traumatized person belongs in a hospital, not a classroom). By reconfiguring trigger warnings to act as metadata *about* the ensuing text, Yergeau positions the impetus for teachers to do work towards inclusivity as a mandate, and a digitally-literate one.

Conference Paper

CFP:

NeMLA 2019 session: [Ability as Identity, Identity as Ability](#)

deadline for submissions:

September 30, 2018

name of organization:

Northeast Modern Language Association

How is individual or collective identity constituted by, or articulated in terms of, ability(ies), broadly conceived? How is such identity expressed in opposition to its other(s), whether in- or dis-ability per se or a specific dis/in/differently abled other? What follows from such constitution or articulation?

Beginning with ancient sacred and philosophical texts—both the Torah and Aristotle’s writings, for example, in the region of the Mediterranean—the human has been articulated in terms of what human beings are able to do. Human subgroups also have been defined historically according to ability, including divisions of gender and race. Such categories both reflect and condition ability, in social and physical ways, as matters of ability are matters of access. Identity politics engages such matters, as criticism from (and of) identity perspectives focus on how articulations of identity and ability are involved with each other. Key questions address modes of articulation, focusing for example on how linkages between ability and identity become imposed on individuals or are self-expressed, and how the legibility of ability shifts according to perspectives and contexts. Identity involving ability can be hybrid and complex, to include nationality, linguistic facility, social and economic class, educational background, and relationships to legal systems—besides which are common observations about physical and mental impairment. Moreover, ability can be variously identified as potential, demonstrated, durational, documented, and otherwise recognized in terms of salience or temporality. In sum, there is an intricate set of connections to be developed among articulations of ability and identity, as read in various kinds of texts, other media, and social circumstances.

Abstracts for 15-20 minute papers that analyze literary and cultural materials, or that develop theoretical implications of reading identity as ability or vice versa.

Abstract - 159 words

As digital culture has grown in its expansiveness, so have the strategies used to other and subjugate cultural literacies that do not adhere to a functionally hegemonic core. Despite recent data dumps and enabling of right-wing hate speech by social media giants Facebook and Twitter, disabled communities are thriving by manipulating the constraints and tools afforded *by* these media to enforce anonymity and safety, and, especially, the co-construction of population-specific rhetorics. Throughout the 1990s culture wars, the argument for a shared set of cultural values and texts permeated mainstream American dialectics, but radical queer/crip communities have retooled this call for community-based dialects into multimodal and linguistic artifacts that challenge historically hegemonic common languages. In these ways, marginalized communities activate language as specific rhetorical ability that is intimately tied to identity. This paper historicizes disability activism and writing theory from the 1940s through the digital age in an effort to theorize the practice of asserting marginalized language as activist.

LOVE & RAGE: Disabled Body as Absent Referent in the Culture Wars - 3,263 words

It's difficult to pinpoint the moment when the internet emerged as the massive force of media and cultural production that it currently occupies as I am writing in 2018. Scholarly works claim *The End of Print*, while news media decry Millennial disengagement with peers or families, citing smartphones and emojis as the source of the egregious decline of perceived cultural literacy. While the argument for a shared set of cultural values and texts undermines the myriad culturally-specific dialects, artifacts, and practices of Americans with minoritized identities, this was indeed intentional. As American culture has grown in its expansiveness, so have the strategies used to other and subjugate cultural literacies that do not adhere to a functionally hegemonic core.

Instead of promulgating this Culture Wars rhetoric, this text calls for expanding definitions of literacy to embrace digital rhetoric, emojis, and memes as central in the validation of marginalized rhetorics. In particular, I focus on how identity-focused groups, especially disabled internet users, have constructed safer online spaces that privilege auto-ethnography, code meshing, and genre-bending, amorphous textual expression. Despite recent data dumps and enabling of right-wing hate speech by social media giants Facebook and Twitter, crip communities are thriving by manipulating the constraints and tools afforded *by* these media to enforce anonymity and safety, and, especially, the co-construction of population-specific rhetorics.

The increasing publicness of discourse since the late 1960s—arguably post-Vietnam and post-student protests of 1968—articulated anxieties of the digital age before they even occurred. Tensions between populations previously segregated by geography emerged as televised with commentary, and the American public saw in real time the impact of previously abstract political policies and their enforcement. The 1980s and 1990s marked a shift in narrativization of minoritized communities as sites of deviance, and the uptick in media access positioned these conflicts as legitimately public. Conflict is a proven avenue for media success (“if it bleeds it leads”), and mass

media deployed rhetorical strategies to enhance much of the cultural isolationism already occurring in American cultural identity. Mass media exploited stereotypes and fear of the amorphous other, illustrating implicit anti-Blackness and fear of difference that have marked American history.

Many of the dramas in 90s cultural politics revolved—somewhat ironically—around identity; as ACT UP and ADAPT were organizing for access to abundant public resources, populations that had heretofore steered the cultural ship panicked. White middle Americans who found themselves at the center of an identity crisis when faced with the realities of other people’s, well, identities. Again ironically, each “side” in these wars organized around commonalities: queers, out and visible for the first time, rolled their dying boyfriends into the streets in hospital beds while white right-wingers retreated into white-dominant suburbs, churches, and schools.

Writing studies scholar Linda Brodkey addresses this increasing factionalism in “Difference and a Pedagogy of Difference,” claiming that difference operates primarily as a construct used to deny access to marginal groups while privileging others. Citing sociologist Todd Gitlin, Brodkey articulates the relationship between identity as essentialist and exclusionary and the embrace of this separatist caucusing by popular culture as a response to the increasing visibility of difference in the forms of disability, race, sexuality, and gender. This form of understanding difference rejects intersectionality and coalition-building as “superficial” and instead legitimizes the increasing sociocultural gulf between the marginalized and the privileged (194). The broad misread of “identity politics” as divisive essentialism also rampant in American politics now (2018) can trace its roots to the Culture Wars, in that “identity” was re-articulated as the looming threat to an idyllic post-war boom that aging whites craved and then weaponized. Alt-right “Make America Great Again” rhetoric relies heavily on nostalgia for a pre-media age when violence went unreported instead of viral. Conversely, Brodkey posits that “difference must be posed as a condition of community,” revealing a prescient intuition about the future of community in visual, and then digital, genres (195).

Tensions between radical coalition-building and American ideologies of compulsory normativity, individualism, and obedience appear elsewhere in the years leading up to the Culture Wars: educator Robert J. Havighurst embodies two key strategies of the Culture Wars in the realms of education. Havighurst's influential essay "The Social Foundations of General Education," published in *The Fifty-First Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* in 1943, articulates a prescient tension: there is a battle between an "organized society" and the promotion of "freedom and integrity of the individual," both of which are being taught in schools. Further, Havighurst asks the question, "what 'ideal social type' does the [educational] program tend to produce" (89)? This question assumes that there is a goal at the end of an education program not to solely educate, but to produce an "ideal" citizen. But who sets this criteria? It's evident that Havighurst wrestled with questions that would emerge again, enhanced by visibility and broader cultural discourse in the late 20th century; indeed, these questions of norming are at the core of tensions that would become the Culture Wars. Havighurst evades discussing identity directly, acting as synecdoche for mid-20th-century anxiety around race, gender/sexuality, and pre-ADA disability, instead explaining that it may be completely impossible to create an "ideal social type" when he states:

Education is a social process, our schools and colleges neither operate in empty space nor serve identical communities . . . What may be a highly satisfactory curriculum for one group of pupils may be highly unsuitable for another. And the difference is often not due to discrepancies in the intellectual capacities of the students but to the social situation in which the boys and girls [*sic*] are placed. (76)

By Havighurst's omission of detail surrounding identity, the "ideal" subject is effectively scrubbed of identity, rendering even the assimilating disabled body as invisible but still implicated. The disabled body—never mind the raced, classed, gendered body—becomes the absent referent in this discourse; politicized by Carol J. Adams in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, the absent referent is always implicated but intentionally left undiscussed. This framework only further marginalizes the referent. The referent is un-agentive, passive, and structurally helpless.

Requiring an individualized solution to a cultural technology is standard discourse in the Culture Wars. Later in “The Social Foundations...,” Havighurst describes what may be the criteria for the “ideal social type” and thus, the requirements to be a contender in the Culture Wars:

On the other hand, the state has certain broad purposes and values, such as the brotherhood of man [*sic*], the freedom and integrity of the individual, the material prosperity of the greatest possible number of people. These purposes and values should be taught and promoted in general education, as a means of serving and improving the state. (91)

These “broad purposes and values” should theoretically embrace a form of critical *multiculturalism*, but education is used to create what Havighurst calls a “brotherhood of man [*sic*]” that shares (and enforces) collective values. Perhaps the missing link here is that Havighurst’s “organized society” is not explicitly—rhetorically—interested in creating counter-hegemonic or inclusive cultural technologies, as not-so-subtly evidenced by the classic sexist language that centers this “brotherhood,” dodging accountability surrounding women’s “freedom and integrity” or “prosperity.”

The co-emergence of the Culture Wars and mass media presented some complex rhetorical problems. One of the most visible incarnations of identity-focused social movements were the ADAPT protests—especially the infamous crawl up the capitol hill steps in a desperate tactic of support for the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990—cemented the visibility of non-normative bodies in American cultural politics. Disabled people were no longer abstract, institutionalized and thereby invisible, citizens with a public voice. Despite this, looking back, it’s difficult to trace the role of disabled activists in the age we now call the Culture Wars. This weird vanishing act is fascinating by its absence in abled rhetoric of the 90s, and the ongoing invisibility of disability in current (mis)representations of identity politics in 2018.

This direct action, and the following day’s occupation of the Capitol by disabled activists, captured press attention and the support of many members of Congress who assured activists that

the ADA would pass the House of Representatives (Winter). This event marked a pivotal increase in the visibility of disabled bodies in the American cultural imagination. But this visibility did not evolve into widespread disability liberation. Instead, disability activism embraced its factionalism and adopted the gold medal in the oppression Olympics, rejecting opportunities for coalition building with other marginalized groups and ultimately missing opportunities to radicalize, instead insisting on an activism towards assimilation. The decision of disability activists to embrace respectability politics marked a burgeoning trend in white-dominated identity groups: a willingness to collaborate with hegemonic violence in order to gain a sliver of privilege.

Building on this notion, attorney Mike Waterstone posits that, “[d]isability has never entered the Culture Wars, and in many ways disability rights have transcended traditional political commitments” (5). This presents a compelling perspective on the exclusion of disability from the identity uproar: in public culture, disability is most often represented as “inspiration porn,” a term coined by wheelchair user and activist Stella Young in 2012. In Young’s TEDxSydney Talk, she chooses the term “porn” intentionally, seeking to illustrate the objectifying, consumptive nature of the abled gaze which views living in a disabled body as exceptional. Inspiration porn is a crucial tactic of the Culture Wars, as these narratives illustrate the power of individual will in “overcoming” structural forms of exclusion, either with augmented (expensive) technologies or a reformulation of “attitude.” Young articulates how disabled bodies exist in the public sphere primarily as “objects of inspiration:” “we’ve been sold the lie that disability is ‘a bad thing’ and that inhabiting a disabled body is an achievement by virtue of using their bodies to the best of their ability.” Young centers the social model of disability in her talk, explaining that inaccessible environments and cultural rhetorics are the source of disability.

Waterstone understands this distinction, and analyzes several legal decisions following passage of the ADA, examining the relationship between sociocultural movements during the

Culture Wars and throughout the 20th century, arguing that public pressure has a critical impact on how the law is interpreted (4-7). Since much disability activism centered passage of the ADA, and not necessarily its implementation, Waterstone claims that there was not sufficient public pressure on the judiciary to justify expanding ADA protections, as disability is “a more amorphous group identity” and disability activism did not organize across identity lines (5). This oversight resulted in a significant drop in public discourse surrounding disability rights post-ADA, and the resultant “lack of conflict” encouraged “judicial backlash” in cases involving discrimination around disability, as judges were hesitant to expand the “disabled” category (6-7). Essentially, Waterstone underscores Brodkey’s assertion that difference should be central to political coalition-building. Because of the disability rights’ move towards insularity, public concerns around “identity” central to the Culture Wars were enabled to ignore disability as a category of difference.

Following Tobin Siebers’s analysis of “ugly laws” and activist art, I’d like to reconsider the Capitol Crawl as an event that successfully transmuted visibility into access: by creating a spectacle of non-normativity—wheelchair users collectively wriggling up the Capitol steps—abled viewers, facilitated by video media, were forced to confront the host of stereotypes they affiliated with disabled bodies. This ensuing affective response capitalized on Young’s “inspiration porn” theories, effectively demanding attention to bodies which, culturally, we are taught to pity, scorn, or avert our gaze from. The response was almost instantaneous. The ADA passed immediately following the direct action, and a mythos was born: author of the bill, Senator Tom Harkin from Iowa, claimed that the image of an eight-year-old wheelchair user slithering up the Capitol steps was the decisive image invoked by many representatives when discussing their votes.

In this case, Siebers’s analysis of affective responses to disabled bodies functions: an abled viewer indeed situates the disabled body as spectacle, and further understands *disability* as a form of bodily difference observable to others. What remains questionable is Siebers’s—and other disability

studies scholars’—glossing over of intersections around race. Invoking architectural theory, Siebers deploys Imrie’s term “design apartheid” to describe the shameful lack of accessibility in modern architecture (202). While inaccessibility is indeed a problem, and one worth organizing around, the invocation of “apartheid”—referencing the violent suppression of rights for Black citizens in South Africa from 1948-1991—reveals a crucial flaw in disability theory writ large. The domination of the field by white people enables a critical unconsciousness surrounding race, especially at the expense of Black people. Racialized language is often invoked by white writers seeking to convey the institutionalized nature of discrimination against disabled people; a recent (2018) editorial in the *Review of Disability Studies*—authored by Dr. Megan Conway, the journal’s editor-in-chief—flails (and fails) similarly.

Titled “Disabled Lives Matter,” Conway attempts to articulate the insidious nature of inaccessibility in the public sphere. However, her appropriation of activist language coined and implemented by Black queer women to combat anti-Black police violence and mass incarceration at the hands of the state has been the target of abundant backlash on social media. This is an unfortunate trend in disability activism, as well. A 1997 protest at Port Authority played host to signs reading, “At least Rosa Parks could get on the bus,” which woefully disrespects Parks’s and others’ activism for equal legal protections throughout the 1960s and later (Pierre-Pierre). The inability of disability studies to successfully practice intersectional attention to forms of oppression illustrates one of the more insidious forms of Culture Wars protocol: assimilation is rewarded with a modicum of political power—an editorial role at a major journal in the field—&&& then these assimilationists can promulgate their own strategies of exclusion at more and more peripheral levels. The truly evocative aspect of this anecdote is, of course, the immediate and collaborative nature of the callout; Facebook groups and clouds of overlapping Twitter users can screenshot even the most fluid media and present these images in conjunction to text that clarifies the ways in which viewers *should*

interpret the image. Although Dr. Conway edited her initial response in “Disabled Women in Academia” and “Teaching Disability Studies,” many users had already captured her response as an image. The power available by the ability to disrupt a dominant—or visible—narrative with one’s own language cannot be overstated, especially within these niche, identity-specific clusters. The increased ability to create media and spread it, even through small, overlapping communities of online users, presents a growing disruption to continuing Culture Wars strategies that continually rely on popular and mass media.

In tracing the failures of education to resolves these cultural tensions, it’s important to consider the historical norming role of writing composition courses, which are the most common form of Havighurst’s general education protocol: Linda Brodkey provides a valuable lens on the late 1980s/early 1990s in her piece “Difference and a Pedagogy of Difference” from *Writing Permitted in Designated Areas Only*. In the summer of 1990, the dean of liberal arts at The University of Texas postponing the implementation of Brodkey’s revamped composition curriculum; she had been co-developing a syllabus with graduate students and faculty titled “Writing About Difference” (181). Brodkey goes on to consider the series of events surrounding the shutdown, concluding that cultural anxieties around the aforementioned “multiculturalism” had undermined the development of the new course, and made it a target of white liberal hand-wringers. Here, Havighurst’s “ideal citizens” seem to be white, socioeconomically privileged students who could easily pass through the UT curriculum without ever confronting complex theories surrounding race, disability, or gender. Here, the Culture Wars come to life in the composition classroom, situating the responsibility of norming—that is, enforcing sociopolitical normativity—onto educational curriculum and individual instructors.

This appearance of the spectral “political unconscious” on campus marked a key turn in Culture Wars rhetoric: by occupying elite colleges and universities, cultural anxieties around

difference—arguably the central tenet of the Culture Wars era—were enabled to occupy other public institutions in increasingly aggressive ways. While Brodkey was shut out of developing her own curriculum, she persists in citing “learning and teaching a theoretically recognizable and responsible version of difference” as the central responsibility of gatekeepers in composition and writing studies (195). She goes on to define difference in these terms:

a negative quality that is *imputed* to someone or something as an essential and defining feature that rationalizes the surveillance and regulation of an entire population in search of the often trivial but consequential ‘differences’ that justify systematically isolating groups of people for special and inequitable treatment. (emphasis in original, 195)

Here Brodkey illuminates the Culture Wars’ mission writ large: by assigning difference as divisive, neoliberal and right-wing cultural figures capitalize on white exceptionalism and enable people with acceptable, or normative, identities to claim a social disadvantage. This fosters an ethos of entitlement that have had lasting impacts on the cultural landscape: the 2016 election of Trump illustrated the power available to whites who claimed disenfranchisement in the face of difference.

These entitlements also contribute to the continuing failure of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Abled people have long decried the unfairness of accommodations, enabled by “gotcha” media depicting wheelchair users standing, dancing, or exercising or photos of disabled people expressing positive emotions. Cultural rhetorics around illness demand adherence to a rigid set of behavioral guidelines, including “performing pain” for legibility by abled folks through facial expressions (grimaces), particular kinds of body movements (limping, adopting protective posture), and narratives (Facebook posts revealing illness in culturally acceptable language); abled people regularly target and harass disabled people for “infractions” that violate these cultural narratives. As a response to the continued policing of disabled bodies, the spring of 2018, Twitter user @menajew began the hashtag #DisabledJoy, encouraging other disabled Twitter users to post photos and videos of themselves experiencing joy or other positive emotions.

This practice of self-definition is a crucial practice in what contemporary writing studies scholars Lu and Horner term “critical [auto]ethnography” (257). While their work explicates the responsibilities of conducting research from within the academy, I believe this practice articulates an important political strategy in resisting ongoing Culture Wars anxieties in our current digital age. Lu and Horner encourage researchers to conduct research in collaboration with the research object, arguing that this practice creates more “inclusive rhetoric” that embraces both embodied and linguistic forms of knowledge (259). By “politicizing the ontological,” researchers can historicize and theorize their work through critical self-reflection on research practices and their own positionality, including assumptions and predetermined cultural narratives they may have projected onto the research object (261). Understanding and acknowledging the “asymmetrical power relations” inherent in research across disciplines, but especially in ethnographic work, is a primary responsibility of the researcher seeking to practice ethical scholarship (262). @menajew’s call for first-person narrative from activists reflect the implementation of Lu and Horner’s strategies, and set a critical precedent for inviting marginalized folks to speak for themselves.

As digital forms of expression gain legitimacy in the cultural landscape, marginalized groups who have not historically had the privilege to tell their own stories under the representational frameworks that seek to eliminate difference—or cast it as dangerous—we as scholars in cultural rhetoric have the responsibility to create space in the academy for marginalized folks to self-define, and to critically examine our own politics in relation to our chosen subject. Like during the Capitol Crawl, visibility is created by gatekeepers in media and cultural politics, and we have the responsibility to read widely and multimodally, as online spaces are already rich with theory and ethnography. Despite failures of our culture to address ongoing inequities, we as gatekeepers must authorize non-dominant discursive spaces and rhetorics.

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Teaching Statement - 654 words

The cultural ethos centering hyper-wealthy white cis men is amorphous and ruthless; more than ever, it's best to assimilate, shrink, vanish. My own host of privileges—whiteness, resource and educational access, cis-passing-ness—aren't erased by my identities as queer and disabled, but I am more aware than ever of the precariousness of my own health, of how my gender's il/legibility affects how my students interact with me, how much or little I am required to perform my marked identities.

However, I've grown to understand that teaching at CCNY means constantly negotiating my in-flux privileges by committing to radical, liberatory pedagogies, ideologies that serve my students more than they serve me. Additionally, coming from a writing center background, I have been spoiled by the one-to-one ratio of writing center work. Flipping into a classroom of 28 City College students in the fall of 2016 was an unexpectedly uncomfortable experience, in more ways than one.

The majority of City College students, and indeed, of CUNY students in general, are working class New Yorkers who have responsibilities outside of their student identities, especially as caretakers and financial contributors to their families. Many of these students also live with their immediate families—I conducted the following admittedly unscientific survey in the spring of 2017 my English 21007: Writing for Engineers course: 28/28 of students lived at home; 20/28 had part-time or full-time jobs; and a handful identified as “not confident” in their English language abilities.

My first day of class, three students who had arrived together before class began raised their hands to ask permission to converse in Bengali, their native language and the language they speak with their families. I was stunned: *of course* they could speak to each other however they chose! As I

expressed my shock that they would think to ask for permission, they explained that in their 100-level course, and throughout their high school experiences, they had been punished for speaking a language other than English; indeed, previous instructors had referred to their classrooms as “English-only zones,” and students violating the policy were mocked and humiliated in front of other students for their accents, their “poor grammar,” and even how their other language *sounded*.

Writing about this now, I am perhaps more furious than ever at the linguistic discrimination my students have faced, and how they’ve grown to dread English classes because of these traumas.

Thus, it's been vitally important to me to imbue my pedagogy with low-stakes activities, humanism, and compassion as much as possible. I've surprised myself by adjusting to this reality extremely quickly, and I've been flexible with students surrounding assignment deadlines, including my decision late in the fall 2017 semester to implement a policy forgiving one late penalty for *any* assignment after the majority of my students missed deadline after deadline.

In fact, in consideration of my students’ experiences and my own growing interest in accessibility in pedagogy, I planned a Freshman Inquiry Writing Seminar centering texts by writers of color, immigrants, and queer and trans people and proposed it to the English Department as a hybrid course, emphasizing that online learning is more inclusive of students with trauma histories or other disabilities. The Department accepted my proposal, and in the fall 2017 semester, I taught CCNY’s first ever hybrid literature course.

English instruction still has loads of work to do in unlearning the oppressive systems we serve when we enforce linguistic hegemony, and any activist can speak to the slow speed of broad institutional change. In the meantime, however, we can adjust attendance policies, post lectures and readings online, cultivate a broad understanding of *participation*, hybridize classrooms, *demand*

hybridized classrooms, and generally acknowledge the ways that the academy invalidates and excludes students with disabilities.

Considering my own experiences as instructor and student, white femme, disabled queer, coupled with what I'm learning about student needs, I've worked with a multiplicity of pedagogical texts in the development of my pedagogy.

That's So Gay!:

Queer Texts in the U.S.

First-Year Inquiry Writing Seminar (FIQWS)

Fall 2018

XXX, Adjunct Lecturer

XXX@ccny.cuny.edu | (646) 801-1462

T/R 3:30-4:45; North Academic Center 6/268

City College of New York

“Part of what undoes shame is to be heard, to be seen... I did that on a grand scale. I don't want people to look at me and go, see, queer people, this is how it's done. It's like, no, this is how it shouldn't have to be done.”

- Hannah Gadsby

“So it is better to speak remembering we were never meant to survive.”

- Audre Lorde



@femme4memes

Gender is facing an identity crisis: queer identities in the new era of gender and genre are subverting paradigms of communication and genre by working with language and narrative in new ways. Queer biography and autobiography mark an important turn in contemporary literature and poetics: the shift from a male-dominant gaze towards a kaleidoscopic perspective on queer embodiment, trans and non-binary narrative, and speculative writing about other worlds & possibilities, which offer us as readers new opportunities for storytelling and thinking about writing. These forms also make space for other identities traditionally excluded from mainstream cultural narrative spaces, and we're witnessing the emergence of queerness as digital, hybrid, and ephemeral. This course will center the expanding lexicon offered by queer writers, and ground students through including some of the queer studies canon.

*****CONTENT NOTE***:** Many of the texts we'll be examining deal with complex issues of violence, abuse, and trauma. Please do what you need to in order to prepare yourself for frank discussions of these themes and more. I will do my best to provide more specific content warnings throughout the semester as well.

CLASS CONSTITUTION: We will collaboratively discuss our commitments to our classroom as a space of communal learning and diverse experience. You will be expected to adhere to our agreements throughout the semester, both in-class and online.

Course Learning Outcomes

- 1) Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view
- 2) Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions
- 3) Articulate how meaning is created in the arts or communications and how experience is interpreted and conveyed

- 4) Use appropriate technologies to conduct research and to communicate
- 5) Demonstrate knowledge of the skills involved in the creative process

From City College’s Center for Teaching and Learning:

Hybrid and online learning explore the potential for learning at a distance. Students can participate as their schedules allow and use instructional technologies for group work and collaboration. Online learning also relieves the college of classroom space demands during peak teaching times.

Hybrid learning arguably combines “the best of both worlds”: face-to-face contact between instructor and students with unlimited options that various technology tools can offer. Hybrid learning provides more support for those students while giving more flexibility to those with multiple responsibilities in their lives. Hybrid learning is one of the fastest growing and most successful instructional delivery models, as it uses a wide variety of tools to reach different types of students.

Texts

Poetry:

“Sonnet 20: A woman’s face with nature’s own hand painted” - William Shakespeare

Trigger - Venus Selenite

“On Using the Trans Panic Defense” & “Behold! A Spectacle” - Chrysanthemum Tran

“Ekphrasis on Unsolicited Dick Pic” & “Burning Haibun” - Torrin A. Greathouse

“The Bath” - Tyler Vile

“Girl” & “Bronx Antipastoral (#1-#6)” - Christina Olivares

“Dear Gone” by Grey Vild

IGOT LOST / I GOT DELETED - Andrea Abi-Karam

Fiction:

Fierces Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir - Kai Cheng Thom

"A Love Like in the Movies," and "Couldn't Hear You Talk Anymore" by Casey Plett

"Falafel" by Ryka Aoki

Nonfiction:

excerpts from *That's Revolting!: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation* by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore

excerpts from *Zami: A New Spelling for My Name* by Audre Lorde

"Uses of Anger" - Audre Lorde

"The Transformation of Silence into Action and Language" - Audre Lorde

excerpts from *Between Men* by Eve Sedgwick

"The Comedy-Destroying, Soul-Affirming Art of Hannah Gadsby" by Melena Ryzik

excerpts from *The Argonauts* - Maggie Nelson

"Body of a Poem: Transition as Act of Consent//Writing as Act of Consent//Ghosts as Act of Consent" - Zefyr Lisowski

"When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own" by Jacqueline Jones Royster

excerpts from *The Queer Art of Failure* by Jack Halberstam

"The Literary Renaissance of Trans Women Writers" - Katharine Cross

"Rise of the Gender Novel" by Casey Plett

"Being Undocumented and Queer Means You Cannot Bury Your Dead" by YOSIMAR REYES

"How Pose Changed My Life — And Season 2 Will Change the Future" by DEVIN-NORELLE

"How *Dancer From the Dance* Changed Queer Lit Forever" - by MIKE MIKSCHÉ

Visual/Digital Texts:

Black Mirror Season 3 Episode 6: San Junipero (Netflix)

Questions Non Trans People Are Too Afraid To Ask | BuzzFeed

Nanette (Netflix) - Hannah Gadsby

Brujas - Princess Nokia

Pose (FX)

Kat Blaque

Make Me Feel - Janelle Monae

Transgender Rights: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO)

Mykki Blanco feat. Jean Deaux - "Loner"

Porpentine games!

Techné by Jackie Rhodes//Jon Alexander

Assignments

Literacy Narrative: students will compose a short (500-750 word) autobiographical piece of writing that situates themselves and their identities in the context of the textual world. what biases do students bring to textual interactions? what unique points of view might students bring? what expertise do students already have re: particular types of media and why/how?

Summary & Response Assignment: students will select a text from first 4 weeks and read in relationship to another from this period; visual v. alphabetic text; what different functions do these genres serve?; Your goal here is to inform your audience (your classmates and me) of how your identity interacts in a macro-level context and to demonstrate how these relationships manifest using specific examples from texts in our class as well as your own outside research. 4-6 pages, MLA format, multimodal aspects encouraged with extra points!

Research Project on Textual Artifact: students will choose a textual artifact from **one or two** of the categories we've discussed (visual, aural, literary, theoretical, etc./others?) and work to dis-articulate and complicate various attributes of their chosen text in connection to larger cultural motifs/icons/signs; 1500-2000-word essay & multimodal component (handmade or digital); at least 5 scholarly sources/2 "everyday" sources; Here, you must convince us of a coherent, specific claim

(your thesis) using textual evidence and your own analysis. 6-8 pages, MLA format, multimodal for points!

Reflective Annotated Bibliography: students will use library, database, and information technology skills to actively develop bibliographies for their own research projects for the topic & composition sections of this course; students will critically reflect upon these texts and evaluate their usefulness, bias, rhetorical efficacy, and limitations in relationship to their own research.

Portfolio & Reflective Letter: this is your chance to show me what you've learned. This portfolio will collect all of your written work from throughout the semester, including a curated selection of in-class freewrites, and will give you the opportunity to provide me with concrete evidence from your own writings demonstrating your engagement with the goals of our course. We will spend a whole class period addressing the genre of reflective portfolio letters, so don't worry if this doesn't make sense yet.

Peer Review Groups

Group work is mandatory and regular in this class. You will be paired with other students to workshop drafts of your written assignments throughout the semester. It is imperative that you attend class in order to maximize your group time, and you will be scored on your own revisions, as well as on feedback from the other members of your group.

Blackboard Discussions & In-Class Writing

Blackboard will give us the opportunity to get conversations going about our readings. We'll also be using class time to loosen up our writerly selves, including a brief freewrite at the beginning of each full-class meeting. Come up to me and say "communication is vulnerability" for a few extra points on your participation grade for actually reading the syllabus!

Creative Autobiography - Digital

We'll construct our own brief creative biographies of our self, of the identities we've explored this semester. This assignment is intentionally freeform, and I'm hoping you'll embrace the opportunity to be creative.

Peer Reviews and Self-Assessments

For each essay assignment, you'll be asked to use the criteria listed in the assignments to review your peers' essays as well as your own. Your goal here is to create a positive, supportive learning environment. While we are all learning to write (no matter how good we already are), we are also expert readers. The fact that you may struggle to produce a particular kind of essay doesn't mean that you can't evaluate another student's essay. On the contrary, reading someone else's work can not only assist that writer but it can also give you insight into your own writing.

Grading

BBDB writing - 20%	Summary & response assignment - 12.5%
Peer & self evaluation & group work - 20%	Research project - 12.5%
Creative autobiography - 10%	Reflective Annotated Bibliography - 15%
Reading quizzes - 10%	Final portfolio - 10%

Resources

Blackboard

Fear not! BB can actually be great. We're using it to discuss our often complex readings, which will occur once a week throughout most of the semester (see calendar below for details).

The Writing Center

The CCNY Writing Center offers a supportive learning environment where students can have one-on-one tutoring sessions with writing consultants. It is a great resource for you to obtain extra help as you write and revise your papers. They DO NOT proofread your papers, but offer assistance on improving certain aspects of them. They also offer ESL tutoring. To set up an appointment or semester-long sessions, contact them in person at the Writing Center, which is located in the NAC, 3rd floor plaza or call (212) 650-8104.

Gateway Advising Center, NAC 1/220

Students without a declared major can receive academic advising, especially if you have questions about your course of study, core requirements, etc.

AccessAbility Center Tutoring Services, NAC 1/218

Provides one-on-one tutoring and workshops to all registered students with learning or physical disabilities.

SEEK Peer Academic Learning Center, NAC 4/224

Phone: 212-650-5786; email: seekpals@ccny.cuny.edu

Offers counseling and peer tutoring for students in need of academic and financial support who have registered for the SEEK Program.

Course Policies

What's Up with FIQWS?

XXX and I are collaborating to bring you these courses. This means that we communicate regularly and collaborate on grades, assignments, and your overall performance in the courses; we *strongly* recommend that you give each section of this course your full attention.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will have 10% deducted *if the assignment is submitted within 24 hours of the due date*. After this 24-window, up to 48 hours after the deadline, assignments will have 20% deducted. ***Assignments will not be accepted after 48 hours after the deadline.*** Technological foibles are not an excuse for lateness. Plan ahead.

Digital Stuff

I am OK with you using devices in class, but please know that small-group work requires your full attention, as does creating your own writing, both of which will be primary focuses of this course. If I find that your device distracts you from engaging with these tasks, I reserve the right to revoke this privilege.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is copying and using other people's words without proper acknowledgment or citation as it is indicated in the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity. You are expected to read, understand, and adhere to this policy.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend every class session of this course and to be on time. Consistent absences, late arrivals, and early departures will have a negative impact on what you get out of this course. If you have special circumstances, please contact me. I'm happy to work with you to help you complete this course.

Food & Drink

Please, no food in class. You may bring a drink, but you are expected to clean up after yourself.

Student Code of Conduct

All student members of the College community are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates mutual respect for the rights and personal/academic well-being of others, preserves the integrity of the social and academic environment, and supports the mission of the

College. The College has an inherent right to address behavior that impedes, obstructs, or threatens the maintenance of order and attainment of the aforementioned goals by violating the standards of conduct set forth in the University student conduct policies noted below as well as other policies that may be established by the respective Schools, Global Sites, and administrative offices of the University. The goals of the CCNY Community Standards are:

- To promote an environment that supports the overall mission of the University
- To protect the University community from disruption and harm
- To encourage appropriate standards of individual and group behavior
- To foster ethical values and civic virtues
- To foster personal learning and growth while at the same time holding individuals and groups accountable to the standards of expectations established by the Code of Conduct

Calendar

Date	In-Class Activities	For Next Class
Week #1 August 28, 2018 F2F	What's a Text?; developing a list of "expert strategies" for reading texts & dealing with texts in students' own language	Bring a text that inspires, or that you dig, or that you want to share (hard copy)
August 30, 2018 F2F	BBDB: Rhetoric/MAIDS discussion; dismember/collage a text	To watch: <i>POSE</i> ; answer questions abt MAIDS w/r/t <i>POSE</i>
Week #2	Intro to literacy narrative	To watch: <i>Nanette</i> (Netflix); BBDB:

September 4, 2018 F2F	assignment	how is this a literacy narrative? What does Gadsby *do* with her stories?
September 6, 2018 ONLINE	Literacy narrative discussion & peer review	To read: Sedgwick <i>Between Men</i> intro
Week #3 September 11, 2018 NO CLASSES SCHEDULED	—	BBDB: Discussion Board Do's & Don't's (sample BBDB posts); BBDB: Respond to Sedgwick and <i>at least 2</i> of your classmates by end of Week #3
September 13, 2018 F2F	Discussion Q: What questions do you have for Sedgwick?	Literacy narrative due 9/20
Week #4 September 18, 2018 NO CLASSES SCHEDULED	—	Literacy narrative self-evaluation (following rubric) due 9/26; To read: "When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own" by Jacqueline Jones Royster
September 20, 2018 F2F	FIRST-YEAR CONVOCATION ; Quick lectures: MAIDS, the parlor model	To read: " <u>Sonnet 20: A woman's face with nature's own hand painted</u> " by William Shakespeare; To watch: Textual Hierarchies: The Presentation!
Week #5 September 25, 2018 F2F	Intro to summary & response assignment	To do: Literacy narrative self-evaluation (following rubric) due 9/27

<p>September 27, 2018 ONLINE</p>	<p>Discussion Q: what textual hierarchies can you name? what relationship can you see between these systems? describe the tensions you witness</p>	<p>To watch: Questions Non Trans People Are Too Afraid To Ask Buzzfeed and Kat Blaque; To read: Trans femme poetry: “On Using the Trans Panic Defense” & “Behold! A Spectacle” - Chrysanthemum Tran “Ekphrasis on Unsolicited Dick Pic” & “Burning Haibun” - Torrin A. Greathouse “The Bath” - Tyler Vile</p>
<p>Week #6 October 2, 2018 F2F</p>	<p>Discussion: trans femme poetics; common themes, metaphors, techniques; trans 101; summary & response assignment ???s; Discussion Q: If you do not identify as trans, how would you react to some of the questions from the BuzzFeed video?</p>	<p>To watch: <i>Pose</i> (FX); Transgender Rights: Last Week Tonight with John Oliver (HBO) To read: “How Pose Changed My Life — And Season 2 Will Change the Future” by DEVIN-NORELLE</p>
<p>October 4, 2018 ONLINE</p>	<p>Discussion Q: what identity hierarchies can you name? explain your understanding of the relationships amongst/within these hierarchies; discuss your own identities and how you understand your own positionality</p>	<p>To do: summary & response assignment due 10/10</p>

<p>Week #7 October 9, 2018 F2F</p>	<p>summary & response assignment ???s;</p>	<p>To read: <u>excerpts from <i>The Argonauts</i></u> - Maggie Nelson <u>“Body of a Poem: Transition as Act of Consent//Writing as Act of Consent//Ghosts as Act of Consent”</u> - Zefyr Lisowski</p>
<p>October 11, 2018 ONLINE</p>	<p>Discussion Q: write a brief annotation of the text: citation (MLA), reflection, quotables</p>	<p>To do: discussion on form, who gets to write? 250 words for 10/16</p>
<p>Week #8 October 16, 2018 F2F</p>	<p>RESEARCH LECTURE starring XXX: study guides, finding sources, logging in offline, citation generators, how to make sure your source is *legit*</p>	<p>To read: <u>“The Literary Renaissance of Trans Women Writers”</u> - Katharine Cross and <u>“Rise of the Gender Novel”</u> by Casey Plett</p>
<p>October 18, 2018 ONLINE</p>	<p>To do: BBDB what other media items have recently openly discussed gender and sexuality? 150-200 words making connections between Cross/Plett and your text by 10/23</p>	<p>To read: <i>Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Trans Girl’s Confabulous Memoir</i> by Kai Cheng Thom</p>
<p>Week #9 October 23, 2018 F2F</p>	<p>Discussion Q: Pick a passage from <i>Fierce Femmes</i> that you think relates back to the theme of our course; describe how the writer achieves this, and why you think this passage is valuable</p>	<p>To continue reading: <i>Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Trans Girl’s Confabulous Memoir</i> by Kai Cheng Thom</p>

October 25, 2018 ONLINE	To do: BBDB response to <i>Fierce Femmes</i> discussion board Qs, including at least two (2) responses to your classmates' posts by 10/30	To continue reading: <i>Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir</i> by Kai Cheng Thom
Week #10 October 30, 2018 F2F	Quick lectures: femme theory, femmephobia	To finish reading: <i>Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir</i> by Kai Cheng Thom
November 1, 2018 ONLINE	To do: Respond to <i>Fierce Femmes</i> discussion board Qs, including at least two (2) responses to your classmates' posts by 11/6	To read: <u>excerpts from <i>Zami: A New Spelling for My Name</i></u> by Audre Lorde
Week #11 November 6, 2018 F2F	Last day to withdraw with a grade of "W" // Last day to file for Pass/NC option	To read: <u>"Uses of Anger"</u> by Audre Lorde and <u>"The Transformation of Silence into Action and Language"</u> by Audre Lorde
November 8, 2018 ONLINE	BBDB: 250-word response to Lorde's activist writing for 11/13	To read: <u>"Girl" & "Bronx Antipastoral (#1-#6)"</u> - Christina Olivares <u>"Dear Gone"</u> by Grey Vild <u><i>I GOT LOST / I GOT DELETED</i></u> - Andrea Abi-Karam
Week #12 November 13, 2018 F2F	Quick lectures: queer feminism; trans poetics	Collaboration! To watch: <u>Mykki Blanco feat. Jean Deaux - "Loner"</u> ; <u>Make Me Feel - Janelle Monae</u>

		To read: excerpts of <i>Techné</i> by Jackie Rhodes//Jon Alexander
November 15, 2018 ONLINE	BBDB: Collaboration: <i>Propose a collaboration between 2 artists you admire; why?</i>	To read: excerpts from <i>That's Revolting!: Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation</i> by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore
Week #13 November 20, 2018	THXGIVING - NO CLASSES SCHEDULED	— CATCH UP WEEK —
November 22, 2018	THXGIVING - NO CLASSES SCHEDULED	— CATCH UP WEEK —
Week #14 November 27, 2018 F2F	Discussion Q: How do you define your own politics in relation to the state? How are your identities treated by the state?	SPEC. FIC. To read: “ <u>Falafel</u> ” by Ryka Aoki To watch: “San Junipero” (Netflix)
November 29, 2018 ONLINE	Discussion Q: Respond to <i>Black Mirror</i> discussion board Qs, including at least two (2) responses to your classmates’ posts by 12/4	—
Week #15 December 4, 2018 F2F	In-Class Portfolio Workshop: Wordpress, portfolio overview	To do: BBDB on MAIDS in portfolio, 500 words for 12/11
December 6, 2018 ONLINE	Discussion Q: how will you implement MAIDS in <i>your</i>	To do: portfolio draft for 12/11

	portfolio?	
Week #16 December 11, 2018 F2F	PORTFOLIO WORKSHOP	To do: portfolio due 12/20
December 12, 2018 F2F	LAST DAY OF FALL CLASSES	To do: portfolio due 12/20

Analytical Explanation - 1,067 words

Trans writers have been historically excluded from the Western literary canons, prompting the creation of works that challenge cisgender normative sociocultural expectations. The trans memoir genre often mirrors cisgender fetishization of trans characters leaving them metaphorically dismembered, chopping the body into objectified representations of the gendered body: breasts, genitals, throat, and others. The trans memoir follows one of two fetishistic paths: the runaway who transitions and lives happily ever after or the trans person ends up dead, usually murdered (3). This mainstream narrative is not to suggest that trans individuals do not have other stories to tell, rather this template has become the “only kind of story trans women are *allowed* to tell” (Thom). Cis audiences demand lurid details of the biochemical and embodied aspects of transition, including profoundly private information about surgeries, hormones, and details about life before coming out as trans, which many trans people find disrespectful.

One of the challenging aspects of trans narrative is how many of these narratives have been articulated in popular culture by cisgender creators: memoir *The Argonauts*, television series *Transparent*, film *The Danish Girl* all provide fetishistic personal information about the trans characters represented therein. Privileging these cisgender paradigms disallows trans writers the agency to write in forms that avoid these tropes, which subsequently doubles down on the exclusion of trans creators from cultural studies and contemporary discourse. For many non-queer or trans readers, fetishistic narratives provide an unnuanced look at the grueling process of coming out and transition, a sensationalism that appeals to cis readers.

By crafting a narrative that genre-blends memoir, fairytale and form, trans author Kai Cheng Thom challenges the cis-normative expectations of trans writing in her novel *Fierce Femmes and*

Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir. This text highlights the importance and narrative possibility of a text divergent from the traditional “transition” story. I’ve chosen several other texts that embrace genre-bending forms in an effort to destabilize reductive ideas of trans writing, including “On Using the Trans Panic Defense” and “Behold! A Spectacle” by Chrysanthemum Tran, “Burning Haibun” - Torrin A. Greathouse, and Ryka Aoki’s science-fiction story “Falafel”. These texts all complicate trans narratives as for a predominately cisgender audience by subverting traditional literary forms: they incorporate fabulism, science fiction and fantasy archetypes, and poetic forms into the text.

In *Fierce Femmes*, a group of trans women—the Lipstick Lacerators—living on the fringes of society in the City of Smoke and Lights fight in a cold war against the masculinized police state; in the text, this struggle escalates into a violent femme resistance against not only the police and other men who abuse them, but against the normative expectations thrust upon these women who live queer lives as sex workers, thieves, and families. The women’s efforts to harm and silence abusive men serves as a correction to the disproportionate silencing and violence trans women have experienced both in the story and in larger cultural spheres; the fictionalized representation highlights the reality that trans women and trans women of color experience violence and murder in endemic rates by empowering the characters with supernatural strength and magical abilities. Many trans writers have leaned into writing speculative fiction, as these genres provide opportunities for characters to access power in ways they cannot off the page.

In an effort to historicize trans and genderqueer narrative, I’ve included William Shakespeare’s Sonnet 20 (“A woman’s face with nature’s own hand painted”), a text which has been read increasingly as gender-fluid in its tricky use of pronouncing and feminine rhyme scheme. While I

intentionally avoid assigning many texts from the omnipresent Western canon, this text provides students an opportunity to think about queerness as historical, rejecting the notion that queerness and gender ambiguity is a 21st-century concept.

In *Fierce Femmes*, the protagonist fluidly moves between gender, race and power as she embraces her new identity within a community of tough trans women. Exploring these signifiers that ultimately mark trans women as more or less disposable, Thom fearlessly explicates the tensions between the Lacerators: some women “pass” as cisgender, while others—especially the Black women—are consistently targeted for being visibly trans. The protagonist must wrestle with her own fluid privileges as thin and girlish, even while she copes with trauma and racism. Many other texts in this syllabus complicate ideas around the intersections of identity, especially *Zami: A New Spelling for My Name* and “The Transformation of Silence into Action and Language” by Audre Lorde and Zefyr Lisowski’s “Body of a Poem: Transition as Act of Consent//Writing as Act of Consent//Ghosts as Act of Consent.” These texts create what revisionary rhetorician Nancy Walker describes as “disobedient revision[s],” or revisioning familiar narratives to force the reader to consider the contrast between the sociocultural norm and the divergent text (Walker 3).

Trans femme (or assigned-male-at-birth [AMAB]) writers are still undervalued and undertaught in university classrooms. Since I have the responsibility of choosing texts for City College’s first-ever queer lit class actually *taught by* queer instructors, I purposefully centered writing by trans women in this syllabus. The institution has always predicated text assignments upon literary trends of the time, and especially on the immutable Western canonic tradition, which has historically excluded narratives that cannot be “universalized” to speak to cisgender, heterosexual white men.

I'm interested in exploring the reality that state violence is a powerful source of violence and terror to brown and Black trans people, sex workers, and poor and working-class queers.

Contemporary activism has largely centered this conflict, and explicating/historicizing state violence is a crucial discussion to have with young New Yorkers. By including *Fierce Femmes*, we embrace a familiar strain of story even while the story's world represents the harsh conditions of having an identity that lacks cultural power. Many of these students might see some of their own experiences in these texts and we can begin to explicate the political impact of empathy and storytelling.

I've chosen to include this text on the syllabus for my Freshman Inquiry Writing Seminar (FIQWS) on Queer Texts because of the aforementioned exclusion of trans writers from even the LGBTQ+ canon. While we've preserved the work of queer and feminist writers with trans-exclusionary politics such as Germaine Greer, Eileen Myles, and Adrienne Rich, the boom of contemporary transgender writers remains largely invisible on literature syllabi. This syllabus overall tackles this erasure by centering writing *by* trans authors rather than writing *about* trans people.