

CRITICAL PRAXIS FOR RESEARCHED WRITING: A RHETORICAL MODEL FOR TEACHING STUDENTS TO “DO RESEARCH”

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Beginning in 1930 when the first article on “the research paper” was published in *English Journal*, and continuing through to current day, student and teacher attitudes toward this task are described quite negatively. The assignment is described as “thoroughly uncontrolled and purposeless” (Arms 19), “one great chore” (Eldredge 228), “completely artificial” (Brown 241). Student writing is deemed “superficial, unoriginal, and dull” (Harris 99). Teachers when grading are said to “carefully mince words in a despairing effort” (Waldhorn 341). And, grading the work is referred to as “the nadir of [the teacher’s] morale” (Rogers 410).¹

In fact, the sheer number of articles published since 1930 is evidence alone that the assignment has been (and still is) quite problematic and that many teachers were and are still grappling for ways to approach it differently. James Berlin points out that after 1931, “no year of *English Journal* passed without a number of articles on approaches to teaching the research essay” (Berlin, *Rhetoric*, 70). The case is similar for *College English* and *College Composition and Communication* beginning in 1940 and 1956 respectively. But, despite the consistent struggle, and despite changing notions of composition epistemology, research paper pedagogy has elicited many of the same problematic complaints, as well as many of the same solutions, for over eighty years. While many faculty do apply diverse definitions of research writing, such

as Ken Macrorie's I-Search and Rober L. Davis and Mark F. Shadle's multigenre alternatives to papers, the conversation about research writing paints a gloomy picture, including current discussions on InsiderHigherEd.com, various composition listservs, and NCTE online publications which continually highlight research writing issues such as plagiarism and students' inability to seek sources beyond Google.

What I describe here is meant to encourage teachers, particularly in Composition II courses that focus on researched writing, to teach students to do research in a way that more resembles the way real-life inquirers find answers and is more rhetorical in nature. Following pedagogues like Jennie Nelson and Richard Fulkerson, throughout this article I use the term "researched writing" instead of "research writing" or "research paper." *Researched* puts the emphasis on the process, the activity of doing research, whereas calling it simply "research writing" emphasizes the product as static and implies, like "research paper," an isolated genre in which research is the primary criterion. Using the term "researched writing" is more flexible, allows for the possibility that any genre can be researched, and acknowledges the rhetoricity of research as an activity with practical uses and real consequences.

The model I suggest, Critical Praxis for Researched Writing (CPRW), is based on learning models popular in education theory in combination with a rhetoric-based model. It begins with the idea of praxis defined by Ira Shor:

. . . habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse. (129)

A critical praxis, therefore, investigates the intersections of theories, materials, and practices of these ‘habits,’ and is necessary particularly now because of calls for rhetorics and pedagogies of social action. These calls ask that “social-process pedagogies treat critical writing as rhetorical inquiry and political intervention into the cultural forces that construct our subjectivities” (McComiskey 3). Similarly, Kathleen Parvin calls for a critical pedagogy, that “asks students to critique the cultural codes, especially socioeconomic class codes, that construct them as citizens” and also challenges students to “transform their society” (54). Others have made similar calls for students to “critique anything and everything that represents itself as unarguably true” (Brodkey 23) and to become “more questioning as citizens” (Berlin, “Composition,” 52).

I argue that a model that begins with the idea of critical praxis can help teachers better align their goals and expectations for students in assignments that serve not just to assess students’ ability to use sources, but their ability to address a writing situation more effectively through the act of being a critical researcher.

The Main Principles of CPRW

The CPRW model has four principles:

1. Assignments are situated and problem based.
2. Instruction begins with and emphasizes a rhetorical education.
3. Curriculum is founded on a culture of inquiry.
4. Projects value multiple epistemologies.

Principle 1: Situation and Problem-Based Learning

The foundational principle of the CPRW model is its problem-based approach. As I discuss below under the heading of “rhetorical based praxis,” rather than responding to a teacher’s

requirement for sources, students need to see the need for research either as rhetorically persuasive (in recognition of their audience, purpose, and genre), or as necessary to their problem-solving ability (in recognition of their own process). This is why a problem-based learning approach is most suitable in teaching writing that uses research.

Problem-based learning (PBL) was popularized in medical schools in the 1980s and has since become more prominent in disciplines in higher education, mostly in the sciences and in business. PBL, according to Nicholas M. Massa, follows four main stages: problem analysis, self-directed learning, brainstorming, and solution testing (19). These stages are recursive and often occur simultaneously. In its barest form, PBL looks like this, according to Kellah Edens: “Professors introduce a confusing, open-ended problem, like those faced in the workplace and in everyday life, which leads students to an investigation from which subject matter content and instruction emerge” (19). Specialists in education recommend a PBL model for several reasons, but the most cited include student engagement; practice in creating, obtaining, and using interdisciplinary knowledge; and practice with problem-solving.

More recently, PBL models have been advocated in college classrooms and in writing classrooms in particular. Jose A. Amador, Libby Miles, and C. B. Peters describe classroom experiences with problem-based learning in *The Practice of Problem-Based Learning: A Guide to Implementing PBL in the College Classroom*. Miles in particular explains why PBL is valuable in a writing classroom:

In both our pedagogies and in our scholarship, the field of rhetoric values using situations for writing, and many of us feel that teaching writing is best done within social contexts (including, but not limited to academic writing). . . . Many writing classes at all levels of the curriculum place students in different writing situations and ask them to respond to the situation appropriately and effectively. (7)

A PBL model is meant to put students in real-world situations or to simulate problem solving when a real-world situation isn't logistically possible. Robert Sternberg writes, "It is the nature of real-world problems that they are ill-defined and ill-structured, and the sooner students learn to deal with such problems, the better" (12). The real world requires multi-disciplinary thinking and integration across knowledge bases. It makes sense then that educators teach students to approach problems in these ways, not just in individual assignments but also as the foundation of their courses. In particular, the first-year writing classroom is an ideal space for this type of learning. Because the content of the class is rhetoric and writing processes, students can feel free to dip into any of their content knowledge-bases and/or seek out or create new ones; teachers can emphasize the various processes that are necessary to be a good problem-solver through writing, including the necessity of arguments informed by research.

Traditional research paper assignments typically do not represent any type of writing that students need to know how to do in real life. James Williams contends:

If students were performing a 'real' writing task, one arising in the natural context outside school, their writing would be directed by the social conventions of the stimulus. Writing a love letter or making a diary entry, they would automatically take into account such factors as audience, purpose, intention, and tone. Most school-sponsored writing assignments, however, provide little in the way of context, so student responses often seem pointless, vague, and rambling. (295)

In academia, regardless of discipline, research most commonly takes the form of scholarship in journals. But in first-year writing courses, research often takes the form of an artificially constructed genre with little use outside of that particular course. And, since most students are not planning a career in academia, it makes

sense to teach them how to use research to write in practical and real-life genres.

Principle 2: Rhetorical Education

A rhetorical model for teaching researched writing encompasses three elements of rhetorical education: rhetorical analysis, genre analysis, and writing for social change. Students should have an understanding of rhetorical analysis in order to learn to think more critically. Yvonne Merrill discusses the benefits of teaching the rhetorical triangle and other types of rhetorical analysis as a “portable skill,” one which students can take with them to all writing tasks (71). More importantly, she adds, rhetorical analysis teaches students that “writing is demonstrated *thinking*” and not merely linguistic knowledge or a skill set (71). Similarly, more than forty-five years ago, Wayne Booth advocated teaching the rhetorical stance, “which depends on discovering and maintaining in any writing situation a proper balance among the three elements that are at work in any communicative effort: the available arguments about the subject itself, the interests and particularities of the audience, and the voice, the implied character, of the speaker” (141). Students should have an understanding of these communicative elements and how to effectively navigate them.

An understanding of genre is a primary function of a rhetorical education. Anis Bawarshi explains that teaching students to analyze the genres in which they write “redirect[s] the trajectory of the writer’s inquiry from the self to the rhetorical conditions within which the self is constituted” (153). This view, according to Bawarshi, requires methods of teaching “in which students are encouraged to look outward, at how already existing ideological formations such as genres coordinate ways of thinking and acting in different disciplinary contexts, ways that student writers can interrogate, adopt, and eventually learn to enact and/or resist when they write” (154). Using a model that pays attention to genre “teach[es] our students how to become more rhetorically astute and agile, how, in other words, to use genre analysis as a

way to become more effective and critical ‘readers’ of the sites of action within which writing takes place” (165). Bawarshi uses genre analysis in his own classrooms “as an invention technique, a heuristic which does not so much ask students to imagine themselves as the starting point of writing as it encourages them to write by inquiring into and then situating themselves within genred positions of articulation” (167).

Lastly, an important part of a rhetorical education is learning how to participate in one’s community and eventually more largely in society. For years, scholars in composition and rhetoric have been analyzing the social turn which, according to John Trimbur, “represents literacy as an ideological arena and composing as a cultural activity by which writers position and reposition themselves in relation to their own and others’ subjectivities, discourses, practices, and institutions” (109). Many of the theories and practices I describe here directly respond to this social turn, asking students to investigate ideology, culture, and community. Ultimately, the goal is for students to recognize how they can use their writing as action and to persuade others to act in response to problems they recognize in their local and global worlds.

Ellen Cushman argues that rhetoricians should be more responsible in “preparing students for greater civic participation” (376). Kathleen McCormick extends this idea, explaining that writing teachers should “teach students how to perceive the interconnectedness of social conditions and reading and writing practices, how to analyze those conditions and practices, and how, to some extent, to act within and against them” (211). In the CPRW model I advocate for first-year research writers, rhetorical education includes an emphasis on rhetorical analysis, genre theory, and writing for social change. These three elements provide the richness and complexity of a rhetorical education based on a rhetorical theoretical lens and explicit teaching in rhetorical practices aimed at creating undergraduate researchers not just as students but as citizens.

Rhetorical Analysis

CPRW doesn't necessarily require a specific method of rhetorical analysis. What's important is that a method of rhetorical analysis serves as a foundational lens for teaching researched writing, a lens that has as its goals the four I outlined directly above. A basic understanding of rhetoric is necessary in order for students to see the need to write informed pieces, pieces that sometimes require the use of sources. And, importantly, a rhetorical foundation is necessary for students to be able to thoroughly understand and evaluate the sources they're using in their own writing.

Particularly in Comp II classrooms, I begin the course with the basics of rhetorical analysis: audience, purpose, ethos, logos, and pathos (this reduced model can, of course, be expanded depending on the needs and strengths of the particular student population). The goals in teaching rhetorical analysis are always four-fold:

- provide students with some disciplinary basis for learning how to write (beyond general education requirements),
- foster a mutually useful language or way of talking about writing,
- help students understand the variety of means available to them in writing and in understanding what they read, and
- instill in students the idea that writing has an incredibly long and rich social and political history.

There are, of course, many other models of rhetorical analysis as well, such as stasis theory, Kenneth Burke's pentad, Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation, to name a few. The model used isn't necessarily important; what is important is that students come to see the rhetorical purpose of using research in their writing.

Genre Analysis

Students should have a basic understanding of genre in order to understand that some genres require research for rhetorical effectiveness. For instance, a student who doesn't understand the genre features and situations of a product proposal might not realize that researched information about competitor's products is necessary for the proposal to be persuasive. Students who understand the purposes, features, and actions of a variety of genres are more likely to see the need for research when it arises.

Bawarshi's genre analysis guidelines can be used as a worksheet in any writing course (159). It begins by asking students where a genre comes from and where it's found, moves them into thinking about what a genre is and what it does, and then asks them to consider what the use of that genre says about the cultures or situations in which it is used. My own Comp II students found this confusing the first time they did it, because they hadn't ever thought about genre beyond an "assignment" or something that the teacher wants from them. But, once they'd practiced this heuristic a few times, it became a valuable part of their invention process, allowing them to have a more in-depth understanding of the possibilities of the genre they were writing, as well as having a deeper sense of what their written product could do, not just what it should look like. For instance, one student realized that his research proposal should include not just his ideas for what he planned to do in the project, but some source information he'd already found. By using the genre analysis heuristic, he discovered that his audience would be more receptive to his proposal if he'd already done some preliminary research, even though the assignment did not require this; he realized that his proposal would be more persuasive and powerful if he showed his ingenuity and work ethic, not just an abstract idea. By analyzing the roles genres play in their institutions, classrooms, and lives outside of academia, students will be more equipped to challenge standards that pervade the curriculum without question, often quite unproductively (as in the case of the traditional research paper).

Writing for Social Change

There are a number of ways in which students can write for change in their communities, whether it's their family, neighborhood, campus, job, religion, or any number of communities to which they belong. Nedra Reynolds explains, "Since designing, contributing to, and completing 'a common project of social change' proves to be difficult logistically, one challenge, then, is to come as close to that goal as possible, but to allow for alternatives or adaptations" (136). Reynolds contends that students don't need to go too far outside of their campus in order to "participate in social change movements or grassroots activism" (136). In fact, understanding the "politics of space in the immediate university environment" can be a way for students to write for change within a space where they have investment and accessibility (136).

Students can write for change on their campuses or in their other communities by investigating the cultures, participants, practices, and discourses of those spaces. Instead of trying to solve the problems of these communities, they should analyze how these problems came to be. For example, in the last section of this article, I describe an assignment where students do academic research on different issues that middle school students face (e.g. bullying), then they go into a middle school and try to talk to the students and survey them on these same issues. They're not trying to solve the problems, but they look at the extent to which these issues exist and how they came to be. Reynolds contends such an approach challenges students to continue to serve the community once they have a more informed understanding of the conditions and how they can intervene (133). This is particularly important in a Comp II course where multiple avenues for researching these types of conditions exist.

Principle 3: Culture of Inquiry

Creating a culture of inquiry is a fundamental principle in the CPRW model, and it is based on the Student-as-Scholar model, a model of student learning which "combines research-based

learning with student development theory” over a full-length college curriculum (Hodge et al. 6). The Student as Scholar model “requires that a culture of inquiry-based learning be infused throughout the entire liberal arts curriculum, starting with the very first day of college and reinforced in every classroom and program” (8). The model uses “a developmentally appropriate perspective” which accounts for different levels of student development at different stages of their college careers; its basis is the assumption that students can and do “move from a more passive, externally motivated experience to the active, internally motivated posture of the scholar” across the time they are in college (8). For example, early on in students’ research careers, working with sources provided by the instructor might be appropriate. Students should then move on to searching and evaluating sources with the teacher, then searching and evaluating on their own. Then, students could conduct their own primary research or fieldwork. Instruction in the student-as-scholar model should follow Robert Kegan’s “personal development framework,” in which “individuals move from the first to the fifth order of consciousness over their lifetimes—developing along the way internal foundations that help them make meaning of the world” (qtd. in Hodge et al. 11). According to Kegan, college students typically make meaning in the second or third order of consciousness; they start college with “developed durable categories but view the world through an instrumentalist self-absorption lens” and transition into a consciousness where they still have a reliance on authority but begin to value the perspectives of others (11). The ultimate goal is to move students into the fourth order of consciousness, in which students are challenged to authorize themselves to create knowledge, to “rely on internal authority” (11). This self-authorization is important in the face of traditional research writing assignments which typically do not pay enough attention to a student’s personal contribution to those assignments, whether in the form of personal experience, perspective, or informed opinion. Candace Spigelman explains that “Personal writing can do serious academic work; it can make

rational arguments; it can merge appropriately with academic discourse” (2). Early on in research assignments, in Comp I or II courses, students should be encouraged to use “I” in their work and to express how and why they’ve formed various perspectives about what they’ve found in their search.

The CPRW model instills an inquiry-based culture across a Comp II curriculum. For David Hodge et al., an inquiry-based teaching model includes instruction and/or facilitation in critical thinking skills, the elements of conducting research, student self-motivation and reliance on personal authority—“the belief that they can be authors of new knowledge”—and the creation of a community of scholars (9). More specifically, inquiry involves “the capacity to pose and pursue important questions,” “developing skills to find, critically evaluate, analyze, and synthesize information,” and an understanding of the student’s own “capacity to author original material” (10). This culture must be curricular—it cannot subsist solely at the individual classroom level. This means that across the curriculum, disciplines need to emphasize the epistemic nature of research and encourage students to be active contributors to their own research, not simply passive reporters of found information.

The CPRW model extends the idea of a culture of inquiry by including awareness and use of interdisciplinary methodologies. As Gesa Kirsch claimed in 1992 and is still true today, “the diverse disciplinary backgrounds of researchers, the range of complexity of writing processes and written texts, and the new and changing questions developed by each generation of researchers encourage, even demand, the use of multiple methods in composition studies” (265). Our students are diverse too, as are their problems and their ways of looking at problems. Students need to know that they have different options for looking at different types of problems (e.g., a feminist methodology if looking at a problem related to gender). The CPRW model suggests teaching methodology in the context of a particular problem (see PBL section above). The methodologies I describe are of course only some of those available; however, I describe these in particular

because they are most conducive and appropriate to teaching researched writing. Only two of these methodologies include critical practices and feminist methodology. These methodologies challenge objectivist and positivist notions that distance students from their own work, and instead open pathways for students to become a part of their own research process and product.

Critical research methodologies serve as an underlying theory for projects that seek to critique micro and macro institutions. Critical research practices, according to Patricia Sullivan and James Porter, “have heuristic force in the activity of research, . . . identify with the everyday research activities of continuously and critically framing, focusing, gathering, and analyzing the major components of a study (researchers, participants, societies, and events” (57). These methods are self-conscious and reflexive; they can shift and change according to what is uncovered in the study.

Patti Lather explains, “critical inquiry is a response to the experiences, desires, and needs of oppressed people” (63). She continues, “critical inquiry inspires and guides the dispossessed in the process of cultural transformation” (63). Students should be taught to recognize the ways in which they are privileged and the ways in which they are oppressed. The CPRW model, using a problem-based learning approach, can provide an opportunity for students to investigate spaces in their local or extended communities and to understand these spaces in terms of oppression and privilege. This can happen by partnering with local community organizations or social organizations within their campuses; students can do research on the issues these organizations address.

Additionally, establishing a strong and individual sense of ethos in researched writing is a practice very commonly appropriated from feminist methodology in composition research. Sullivan explains, “feminist inquiry wears . . . originates in an ideological agenda that, instead of masking, it declares upfront” (57). Students should come to understand themselves as part of their research process, not as outsiders simply fulfilling requirements of

an assignment. They should understand why and how to create a strong sense of ethos. And, using multiple epistemological approaches in teaching researched writing, as described below, can help students to acknowledge their role in doing their research.

Principle 4: Multiple Epistemologies

James Berlin, in defining epistemic rhetoric, explains:

From the epistemic perspective, knowledge is not a static entity located in the external world, or in subjective states, or even in a correspondence between external and internal structures. Knowledge is dialectical, the result of a relationship involving the interaction of opposing elements. These elements in turn are the very ones that make up the communication process: interlocutor, audience, reality, language. The way they interact to constitute knowledge is not a matter of preexistent relationships waiting to be discovered. The way they interact with each other in forming knowledge emerges instead in acts of communication. (*Rhetoric* 166)

This discovered relationship through an act of communication is the basis for this principle of CPRW: multiple epistemologies. As I discovered in interviewing several Rhode Island high school and college teachers of researched writing, there are at least three different types of knowledge teachers want students to encounter when writing with sources: content knowledge, process knowledge, and integrated knowledge. Here I explain how these three types of knowledge are recognized in the CPRW model.

Content Knowledge

Many of the teachers I spoke to wanted their students to learn something new by encouraging them to choose a topic in which they are personally interested. The assumption is often that

students who choose a topic they're interested in will have the motivation, through the desire for content knowledge, to fulfill a meaningful research process and thus create a successful researched product. The CPRW model argues that student motivation doesn't happen through desire for content knowledge alone. Instead, using a problem-based learning approach, students come to understand ways to solve problems— i.e. the problem motivates the search. The hope is that students will then learn how to search for content knowledge when a real-life problem motivates them to do so.

Process Knowledge

I argue that the way we teach students to do research should model what we as compositionists call “doing research.” This can include much more than “the research paper,” because our research takes many forms more than simple reports; as Libby Miles et al. list, writing researchers present their work as:

pure high theory; sometimes provocative exploratory discourse; sometimes historical recovery, or textual criticism, or anthropological micro-ethnographies, or personal memory work, educational philosophy, postmodern geography, environmental studies, critical information technology, even physiological and behavioral—the list goes on. (511)

To be clear, I am not suggesting that students do research *on* writing, the way compositionists do. To do so is, as pointed out by Libby Miles et al., to deny the rhetorical nature of (researched) writing and to impose unnecessary limits on students who would otherwise be exposed to “different contexts and tasks from different directions” (504). Instead, I am acknowledging the diversity of methods utilized in researched writing by writing researchers—I am suggesting we look to our methods, not our content.

Researchers in composition use a variety of methods, and many of these are represented to students in research writing textbooks or in more general rhetorics including a research writing section. These include but are of course not nearly limited to note taking, annotating, outlining, blogging, journaling, dialogue, etc. Students should be taught how research processes start—sometimes by writing, sometimes by reading, sometimes by talking with others—but always with a rhetorical need. Students need to understand the recursive nature of a research process. Documentation should be taught in context, when students begin to see the need for using other sources and recognizing them as the ideas of others. Because the CPRW model uses a problem-based learning approach, each of these methods is taught in the context of a particular situation.

Integrated Knowledge

At certain points in a research process, a writer needs to sit down with only pen and paper or perhaps computer and write, without a stack of books by her side, without print-outs of articles and other materials littered on the desk in front of her. At certain points, whether it's the beginning of her process, or perhaps the end, or at any point in between, the writer has to authorize herself to posit her own ideas. At the beginning, perhaps she's writing what she already knows or what she wants to find out; at the end, perhaps she's responding to her sources and coming to some conclusions. Regardless, it is at those moments when the writer creates knowledge—the moment of transaction between writer, reader, and reality, as described above by Berlin. It's often hard for professional researchers and writers; it's of course hard for our students. And, it's even harder for students who don't realize that these moments are necessary. This is why the CPRW model advocates integrated knowledge—knowledge students develop by combining their own ideas, perspective, opinions, and experiences, with information they've found while researching. Integrated knowledge is less scary for students than epistemic knowledge—first-year writers are, as we know, not quite ready to

be putting forth new knowledge. They are, however, cognitively able to combine what they know with what they've learned.

The CPRW model facilitates opportunities for students to integrate their own experience with found knowledge. The most obvious way to do this is to challenge students with problems that necessitate field research as part of the solution. Field research can include anything from surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and observation. Gesa Kirsch and Liz Rohan explain, "research does not just take place in the library archives but also when researchers pursue supplementary information and additional perspectives about their data from existing people and places" (1). Going 'out in the field,' whether it's classroom, dorm, campus, or outside the institution, can offer students a rich set of perspectives and information from which to come to new and important conclusions.

The most important thing students can do in learning to write is to question, challenge, and critique where knowledge comes from in an effort to confidently and appropriately assert their own knowledge. Student researchers must understand their own power in creating knowledge, not simply act as containers that their teachers fill with existing knowledge. They should have constant opportunities throughout the research process to discuss and reflect on what they've discovered.

What CPRW Looks Like: A Sample Course Sequence

Course Outcomes

The main outcomes for a CPRW course are as follows:

1. **Critical Praxis:** Students learn how to critique and challenge assumptions of traditional discourse.
2. **Rhetorical Flexibility:** Students learn to address a variety of rhetorical situations using writing and research.
3. **Researched Writing:** Students learn when, why, and how to use sources for rhetorical effectiveness.

In a CPRW course, students learn how to critique and challenge traditional discourse. This is done through daily activities (as described below) that ask students to understand and analyze genres, using genre analysis and rhetorical analysis. Students should learn not just how to write in different genres, not just what genres look like, but how genres respond to and create situations. Then, they should learn how research could impact those genres when rhetorically necessary. For example, in the project described below, students had to use primary data they collected in their fieldwork to design a report that would be usable for their audience—a real middle-school administrator. They could not rely solely on their previous experience of what a “traditional research paper” should look like because they knew that would not be useful to their reader. Instead, they had to invent a genre that would suit the purposes of their audience.

A culture of inquiry is created throughout the course because students are continually asked to solve problems, rather than being told what they need to learn. Their epistemological perspectives are challenged as they move from projects that call on their existing knowledge to projects that require them to combine existing knowledge with found knowledge, and finally to projects that ask them to create new knowledge. Students often work collaboratively to teach each other and to discover what they might collectively need to learn and to discover where and how they might learn it. Of course, this does not preclude asking the instructor to teach it to them. This collaboration is similar to how research is done in the real world, whether in or outside the academy, in which few researchers, regardless of discipline, work in complete isolation.

Large Projects

Large projects should ask students to investigate their worlds—their spaces, places, and assumptions about what is around them—within the context of learning how to write in particular genres. Projects should begin with the most local and expand out to broader space (literal or metaphorical). This is a project I’ve

assigned in a first-year researched writing course, a Composition 2 course²:

Southern New England College is proud of its commitment to the local community and in particular our commitment to providing students with opportunities to work for and with the local community. In this course, you'll utilize research skills learned in class in order to support a community partner. You'll get a chance to see how research works in the 'real world,' outside of just class. This means you'll have an authentic experience, which includes a real life responsibility to a person and group of people who need your help.

This semester we'll be working for the Southwestern Vermont Supervisory Union (SVSU)—this is the administrative body that oversees the Bennington region public school system. In particular, we'll be helping the Director of After School and Summer Programs learn more about how after-school activities function in the Mountain Regional Middle School (MRMS). As part of his job, he needs to know what activities students like, what they don't like, how these activities play a role in their lives, what they learn there, why some participate and some don't—there's a variety of information he needs to obtain. That's where we come in.

In practicing the research skills you'll acquire this semester, we will go into the middle school, meet with the students, interview them and survey them, analyze the information, compare it to information from other sources, and finally we'll compile it into a report for the director. The information will help him to develop stronger programming for young students who need these activities as supplements to their school day.

1. We'll begin by learning about the SVSU and MRMS. We'll do this mostly through web research through links provided by the school system. *You'll write profiles of the organization* and perhaps organizations like it. We'll learn skills in class for evaluating websites for reliability and how to use information from web sites effectively and responsibly.

2. You'll do some research on a particular challenge that arises in the middle school years, choosing from topics such as bullying, cuts in arts programs, competitive athletics, peer pressure, substance abuse, sexual activity, and others that you might have in mind. *You'll then put together an annotated bibliography of your sources* that will summarize and analyze what you've read.

3. Your third project will ask you to investigate the issue from the second project a bit further in order to *make an informed argument*. In class, we'll learn how to use source information to analyze these issues and make arguments about them.

4. For the last project, you'll be working for the program director, not for me. You'll create a survey for the students at the middle school, and you'll craft a report with the survey results. Although you will be graded on your work, more importantly the SVSU needs the work done—*your responsibility is to the site*. We'll talk in class about skills you still need for these projects.

Because a CPRW model is cognizant of students' developmental positions in relation to knowledge, the project moves from easily found knowledge to created knowledge. It asks for students to combine their own authoritative knowledge (from sources provided to them) with some outside knowledge (the research required for the second assignment) and then create knowledge by surveying the students and creating a report.

Students begin to recognize the need for research almost immediately when they realize their personal experience as middle school students several years back is not enough to help them with all four projects. When we get to the last project, using

the PBL model, I ask, “What do you need to know to write this report?” They realize their argument will be more effective if they include voices from actual students; they design questionnaires for the middle schoolers in order to collect data.

The situation is local to their college because most students in our school are from the local area and have attended this middle school. And, it emphasizes the value of their insight and the importance of creating a strong ethos in their writing. Toward the end of the semester, students actually came to me, nervous that their report might not be good enough to submit to the Program Director; they wanted their projects to succeed not for their grade but for the middle school students. The project also follows the rhetorical model I describe above, in that it shows students how to be persuasive in order to enact change in their community. It encourages rhetorical flexibility by asking students to evaluate and pose a recommendation; two writing activities that are common not only in school, but in the ‘real world’ too.

Day-to-day Activities

Class activities should help students respond to the PBL questions, “What do you know? What do you need to know? Where are you going to find more information?” For the profile project, they already know what they need to know from reading the provided websites; the project requires them to tap into their existing knowledge. Instead of an isolated lesson on field methods, students learn these methods within the context of the problem they’re trying to solve. For example, in the more sophisticated data results report, students discover that they don’t have all of the information. They might need to survey the middle-schoolers. So, we talk about how to design questionnaires and surveys, how to analyze data, and how to effectively present the data in writing. Instead of an isolated lesson on field methods, students learn these methods within the context of the problem they’re trying to solve.

Other questions naturally arise from the problem at hand. Students realize in the profile project that they’re being asked to

describe. What does a profile look like? What needs to be included? What's important in describing an organization? In the annotated bibliography project, they're being asked to evaluate. What does it mean to evaluate? What has to happen in a written piece that evaluates? In the report to the Program Director, students realize they need to have a strong understanding of audience and purpose. Genre, like research skills, is taught in context.

CPRW and the Future of Alternative Researched Writing

What I advocate in the CPRW model is meant to encourage teachers to expand the methods that are currently taught to students and to teach these methods in a way that more resembles the way real-life writers write. And I'm not just talking about academic writers. I acknowledge that students do not necessarily desire to be academics, and I'm not arguing that they should become academic writers. Instead, I'd like to make this point: if composition classes teach "transferable procedural knowledge aimed at helping students make connections across disciplines" (Miles et al. 507), then the way researched writing is taught needs to be expanded beyond the limited scope of a traditional research paper.

Integrating CPRW into a curriculum can be challenging. It requires flexibility; it requires the instructor to wait for the students to ask for what they need, while still having a plan for instruction on essential research tools like paraphrasing, quoting, citation, and documentation. While this might provoke some anxiety for the instructor, it's invaluable in helping students to take authority over their own research. Instructors can look to alternative models for research writing, such as I-Search and multi-genre writing for inspiration, and to service-learning models for ideas on how to create projects that show students how research is used as a rhetorical necessity and not just an arbitrary requirement. Amador, Miles, and Peters' PBL book for

instructors discussed above is a valuable resource, as is Mike Palmquist's textbook for students, *The Bedford Researcher*, which treats students as researchers in any discipline and in any genre.

Future empirical research should be done on alternative methods of researched writing, including I-Search, multi-genre writing, and CPRW models. My own students have remarked on how much they've learned using this method, but this should be tested empirically. Most scholarship on alternative methods has been anecdotal, and while valuable, institutions would be more likely to wholly adapt these pedagogies into composition curriculums if empirical studies showed the benefits to students.

The CPRW model addresses the need for students to use their own ideas and existing knowledge in their writing, combined with information they find when they need it. The model encourages interdisciplinary thinking by asking students to address challenges and problems that relate to their community, and by asking them to think broadly about types of sources and how to use them. Most importantly, it teaches students to interact with various types of knowledge in various ways. In this way, they become more effective writers, stronger critical thinkers, and hopefully, more engaged citizens in their worlds.

Note

¹She wishes to thank the anonymous reviewers of this piece along with the editor for their constructive feedback.

²I was fortunate that I personally knew the director at the field site and therefore did not have to do much logistical work to create this project. He and I met frequently throughout the summer preceding the semester to determine his needs and how my students could help him achieve them. Projects that involve community partners typically require IRB approval; however, at the time of this data collection, the college where I taught did not have an IRB in place, nor did the school system in which my students did their research. Therefore, I worked with the field site director to ensure that parental permission was granted for all of the

children to participate, and I used my own experience of IRB protocols to ensure, to the best of my ability, that ethical practices were in place; in this article, the names of the sites have been anonymized for this reason. Facilitating a community-based project without IRB protections is not ideal; students, participants, and faculty should all be protected under the auspices of the home institution in case of any mistreatment of any of the parties involved and to ensure the most ethical and most reliable results. For best practices in facilitating service learning projects in composition, see Linda Addler-Kassner, Edward Zlotkowski, Robert Crooks, and Ann Watters.

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