

Welcome letter from the conference chair

4/7/2018

Hello and Welcome,

I am pleased to welcome you to both UH-West O'ahu's beautiful (and ever-expanding) campus and the second annual First-Year Writing Symposium. As it was originally conceived, the Symposium is a small pedagogically-focused event where First-Year writing instructors from across the UH system (2- and 4- year institutions) can gather to share current research, best practices, and pedagogical strategies in order to innovate UH's composition curricula; support student success in UH's FW courses; build and maintain a community of composition educators across the system; and showcase the important and impressive work of UH's adjunct and contingent staff. My hope is that UHWO's iteration of this event carries this tradition forward in meaningful and inspiring ways.

This year's theme focuses on fostering students' rhetorical awareness. While this may not be an explicit FW Hallmark in the UH system, it is a national best practices (according to the recently updated WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition), and one can certainly feel its tacit presence in any rhetorically-focused composition classroom.

According to the WPA, "rhetorical knowledge is the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts. Rhetorical knowledge is the basis of composing. Writers develop rhetorical knowledge by negotiating purpose, audience, context, and conventions as they compose a variety of texts for different situations." Much to our students' chagrin, we cannot simply provide them with a universal template for an "A paper." However, aligning ourselves with current transfer, post-process, and genre studies theories from the field of Composition can help us innovate our teaching practices in ways that provide our students with the metacognitive composing skills they need to adapt to a variety of future writing contexts, situations, audiences, genres, and even modalities. Helping our students gain critical awareness of and strategies for adaptation to the rhetorical situations they find themselves in can help them utilize "all the available means of persuasion" thus making them more effective 21st century communicators.

My hope is that the sessions you attend and the conversations you have with colleagues today help you better understand, challenge, complicate, and thus innovate your teaching of rhetorical awareness. My hope is that today's event also helps us deliver more effective and perhaps consistent rhetorical pedagogies across the system's FW courses. Overall, however, my hope is that today's event more meaningfully connects you to your writing colleagues and community across the system.

From the entire FYC cohort at UHWO, we thank you for visiting our campus and for taking the time to attend the 2018 First-Year Writing Symposium. We hope you enjoy your day and we look forward to hearing from you about hosting the 2019 event.

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