# Feedback and Assessment

While today's topic was feedback and assessment, we also needed to do some work toward a couple of the big assignments coming up on the horizon. So while we waited for the time of our guest speaker's visit, we revisited the [textbook assignment](#) as way to start thinking through what we may want to change and update in USF's textbook.

We gathered together some of the common topics from the reviews and then discussed them in tandem with looking at a summary of assignments from 97 institutions across the US. What we learned from these different data points—including your own growing knowledge—was that there are some things that need to be included but lots of room to do things better.

The related conversation about how to code qualitative data and make sense of messy data was a useful one that I was glad that Sara also touched on about the process of coding, how codes are determined, and how many do you need. This is an important conversation we need to continue as we move toward your own research study designs.

Following is the whiteboard where we did out work.
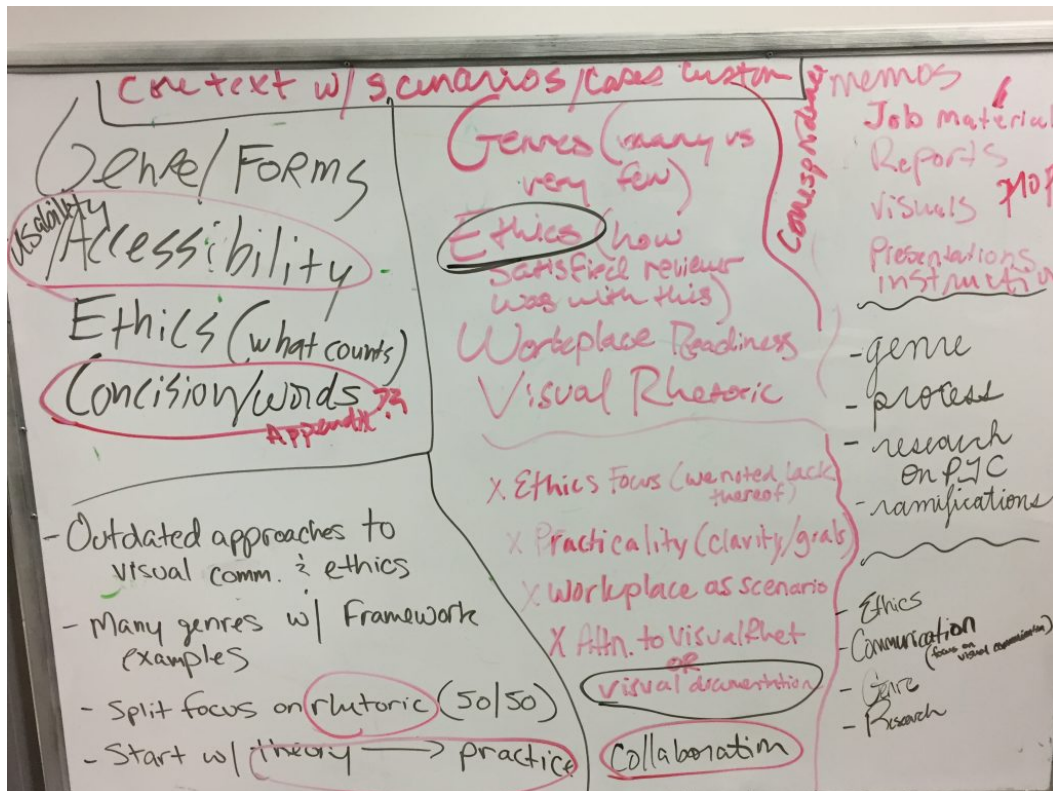
The circled items are topics that need to be included along with the upper right hand corner of an assortment of specific genres that need to be considered. We also settled on a core text with [specialized scenarios or cases.](#)

This discussion of topics and assignments was really fruitful because it brought together the two main themes of the course: the content of TPC service courses and how to teach (in general and the service course specifically). Questions about how the classroom exercise was conducted (thanks for challenging the process!!) tied back to previous conversations (particularly last week) about how to purposely create exercises, assignments, and readings that move toward learning outcomes. While the exercise was a little clunky on one hand, it brought together past discussions, assignments, and homework in a way where we could talk about the structure of the course. In particular, the scaffolding of the assignments was made completely transparent in how they all go together. Voila!

Feedback and Assessment

The discussion about the textbooks and assignments lead us into the main topic for tonight, which was feedback (formative comments that are meant to improve student writing) and assessment (summative "things" that are generally a grade).

While we didn't get to the rubrics that you found, we did have a pretty good discussion that seemed to be a bit of a downer. The primary reason for that downer was the ongoing issue of the need to provide feedback but the fact that often students don't read it. The reading for this week were united in showing the areas that need improvement in the current standard of practice.

Sara Doan's visit to class was insightful because she connected her current research on comparing instructor attitudes about feedback to their actual practices to her own teaching practices. This meta-awareness and reflection was a great point to bring into the course because pedagogical reflection is essential to being an effective teacher and working toward finding new ways of engaging students. The intersections of Sara's research with teaching practice make it a seamless transition, but a big takeaway is that this reflective work on practices needs to be done.

It was also great that Sara pointed out some of the same problems with the current research that y'all found as well. And another big takeaway is the desperate need for this type of pedagogical research to drive practice (rather than relying on the lore we live on now).

If we had to have one takeaway is that feedback in a service course is different and that it needs to include an explanation as to why the change needs to happen as well as an example. Like much of what we've discussed all term, TPC pedagogy is driven by examples and then the making of the thing. As Sara rightly pointed out, sometimes we get too

caught in critique in the classroom, and for the TPC service course classroom, making—the writing—always needs to be the central focus. To get students to do that better means implementing feedback practices at the draft stage to assist students in understanding the rhetorical complexities of the writing situations.

To help with this latter idea and to expand on Sara's excellent point about writing being part of a system, we constructed a lawn mower company on the eve of a new product launch and anniversary party. As you played the role of different divisions—from CEO to sales to executive assistant to the assembly line—it was clear how the writing that was needed by each person/division had to be connected to others (in a system) and they worked together to accomplish some action tied to a business goal. In less than 10 minutes, we acted out one of Sara's key points. More importantly, it was a visual and performative representation of how you can make the same connections for students even without work experience and even without knowing anything about making lawnmowers!

Thank you for your attention tonight and continued good work. Have a great week!


Outcomes and collaboration

Tonight (2-6), we needed to catch up and do some of the teaching and pedagogy things that we haven't been able to get

through. This sometimes happens when discussions are rich and lively, which is what has happened in our case.

But from a teaching perspective, you have to be prepared to make adjustments to the schedule as things go along. So I'll be doing a pretty substantial shifting of things over the next few days, and I'll also need to find ways (classroom exercises and discussions) to make sure that we build on the readings you've done (cause as y'all made clear you don't like to read things that we don't use

Freewrite

We started class with an old school free write that had the following prompt:
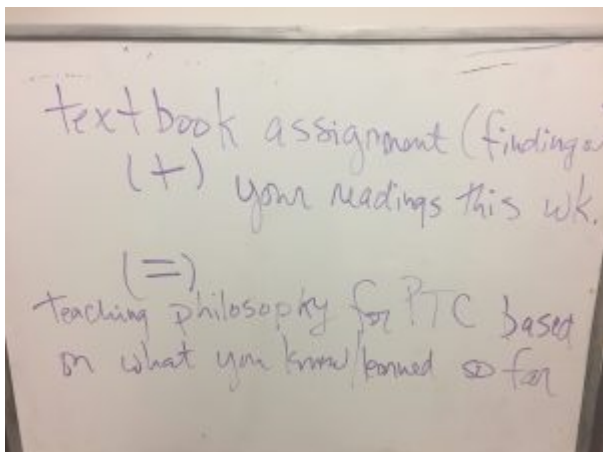
This lead to a discussion about the purpose of this sort of exercise in the classroom and then a separate (related) discussion about the necessity for each of them to orient themselves with their own "philosophy" toward the course and the approach of teaching it (rhetorical and genre based).

As one of the students so perfectly stated, this type of free write exercise is definitely a metacognitive exercise that is encouraging synthesis of a number of ideas. We took the recent assignment plus the readings for this week to find ways those things intersected and actually could be applied to how to teach the service course.

This focus on teaching this week was a good emphasis point to indicate that we are moving from the bigger concerns of the field to how those concerns actually play out in the classroom. What was so great about your free writes was that you were working toward a "philosophy" of how you could apply some of the things we've talked about and read in meaningful ways in the service course.

The free write exercise was also a good segway into a discussion of outcomes, which brought in the readings from last week. IN pairs, you were asked to write five outcomes and focus on crafting ones that fit with your philosophies and integrated the idea of writing verbs oriented outcomes. The verbs match to levels of learning and help to craft assignments that can actually measure the outcome.

Outcomes And Assignments

We were thinking through outcomes that started at the bottom of the taxonomy and moved to the top. The ones to specifically focus on are

- define and understand
- analysis (evaluate)
- create (synthesis)

Considering the service course in terms of these sorts of outcomes moves them from understanding basic concepts to creating workplace types of documents. To do this effectively means that assignments need to be created and scaffolded to match the student learning outcomes.
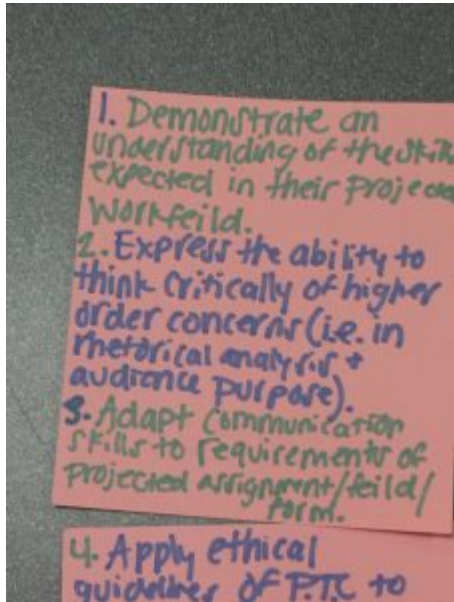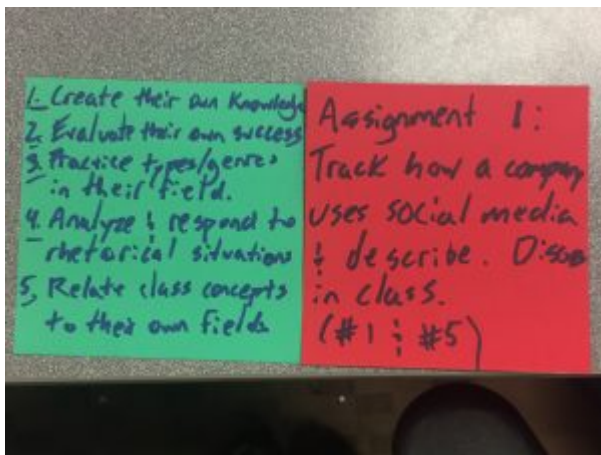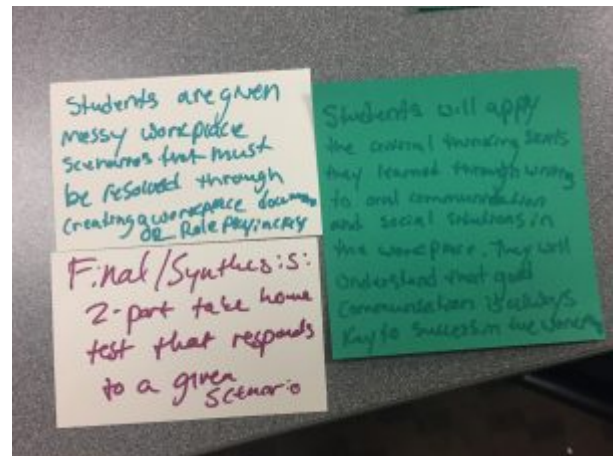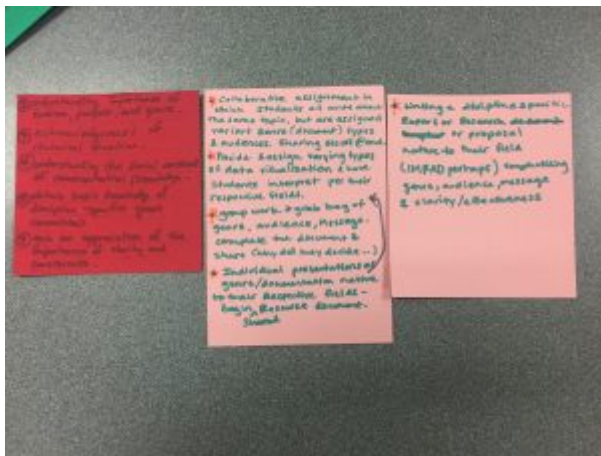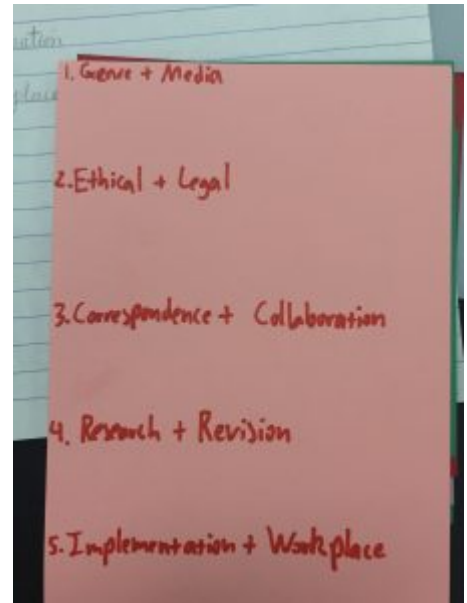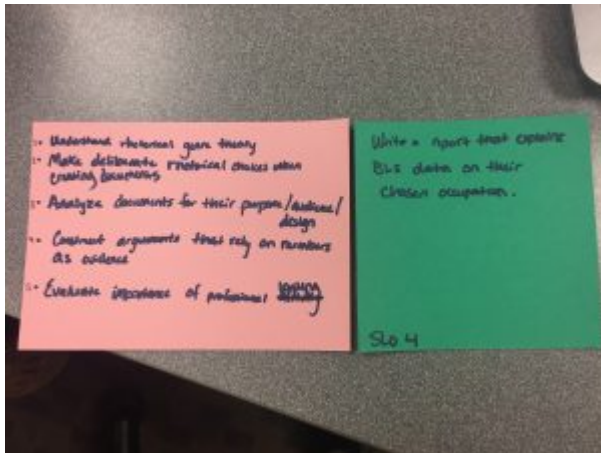
Thus, after writing a series of five outcomes, you then had to write a brief assignment that would match the sudden learning outcomes and the assignments needed to scaffold.

The series of images that follow are some of the outcomes and assignment pairs. All in all the exercise was quiet successful.

The biggest problem was that in many cases the assignments that were created were more like exercises that would be done in class to introduce and reinforce the key concepts. It seemed that in some cases, you didn't fully grasp that assignments are different. But that's to be expected the first time you're really thinking through the ideas of how r*eadings, exercises, assignments and assessments all need to point toward the student learning outcomes*.

The other critique of the assignments was in some case they were too complex and actually one of the assignments could have been broken apart into three smaller scaffolded assignments that still achieved the student learning outcomes. This too is to be expected because it takes time to work through the nuances of course building.

- Understand rhetorical genre theory
- Make deliberate rhetorical choices when creating documents
- Analyze documents for their purpose/audience/design
- Construct arguments that rely on numbers as evidence
- Evaluate importance of professional...

Write a report that explains BLS data on their chosen occupation.

SLO 4

1. Genre + Media

2. Ethical + Legal

3. Correspondence + Collaboration

4. Research + Revision

5. Implementation + Workplace

Students are given messy workplace scenarios that must be resolved through creating workplace documents OR Role Play/necessary

Final/Synthesis: 2-part take home test that responds to a given scenario

Students will apply the critical thinking skills they learned through writing to oral communication and social situations in the workplace. They will understand that good communication is/includes key to success in the workplace

1. Create their own Knowledge
2. Evaluate their own success
3. Practice types/genres in their field.
4. Analyze & respond to rhetorical situations
5. Relate class concepts to their own fields

Assignment 1: Track how a company uses social media & describe. Discuss in class. (#1 & #5)

Using the smaller colored paper and pens helps with visualization and in aligning ideas. We'll be revisiting these things in a couple of weeks before you have to finish your syllabus assignment.

Collaboration

The last part of class we focused on talking about collaboration. We all seemed to agree that collaboration was a particularly important outcome for the service course, but it raise the question on how to teach students how to collaborate.

I have always been adamant about helping students learn how to collaborate. You just can't tell them they are doing a high stakes collaborative assignment and not give them the skills to do that work.

My strategy boils down to have specific assignments and incorporating a series of classroom exercises specifically about collaboration strategies. The latter of which are in the sort of box below and also described in more detail here: http://tek-ritr.com/group-projects-in-the-classroom/
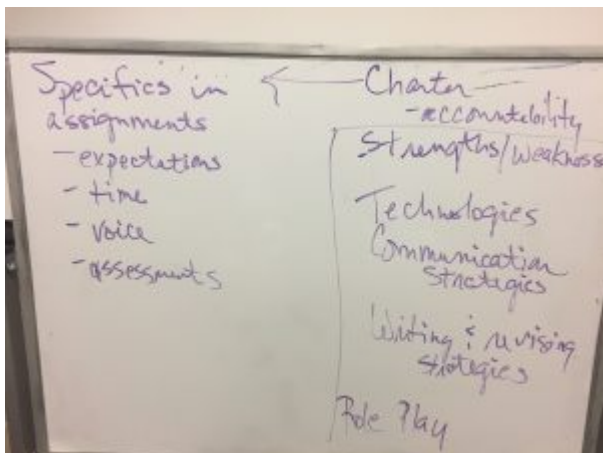
The thing we focused on tonight was having students role play different difficult personalities that are often found in group projects (the czar, slacker, nagger, and jerk). The personality types can come out of a discussion (which we did a mini-one) of the worst collaboration experiences. [note: ** yes, these are broad stereotypes and this approach can be critiqued. But, if explained and this fact admitted, it helps students get into the exercise and accomplishes the idea of addressing head on bad past experiences AND opening ways to address these problems.]

The slacker group in progress.

I was impressed with the way you embraced the exercise, and as long as you remember how weird and awkward you felt, it will work fine in any classroom. You laugh a lot —just like we did—but it does help students understand some strategies for dealing with problems that arise. And that's what we're here to do, to give students some strategies they can use.

The greatest line was the in character slacker (seated above) who said, "a lot of work is up here" pointing to his head.

Great work, everyone!!

Service Course visit

In class tonight (1-30), Joanna Schreiber visited. Joanna teaches at Georgia Southern, and we both have developed an interest in understanding the service course. The goal of Joanna's visit was to bring in a different perspective about what is important to the approach of teaching the service

course both from a research perspective, as well as a practice perspective.

Some of the main points that Joanna brought up that are important and need to be remembered and carried forward through the rest of the term (and your teaching of the service course): *Genre can be a rich way to teach* but it is vital that they not be flattened to reduce the rhetorical complexities that students will need to address in the workplace. This goes to the ongoing point that I've made several times that we need to teach proposing and not proposals.

I really appreciated her point that thinking through he differences (if there really are any) is a useful programmatic and course level exercise because it gets at the power dimensions and ethical orientation to course and program design and how other stakeholder views fits into that. Often times other stakeholders on campus do not know what we do so it's important to make sure (from the programmatic level) that someone is having conversations with other stakeholders.

Joanna also gave some really specific advice on how to teach that is worth repeating here:

- Rhetorical foundation is key
- Genres can be good but they need to have dimensions
- Assignment sequences
- Metacognitive moves through classroom exercises
- Not a quiz course (where they read and you give them a quiz). Needs to be focused on application of the concepts

And finally, she really brought home the idea that writing is more than an end product. Writing is knowledge work and the service course is the ideal location to help students see how writing and their content specialties can come together in important ways.

Once Joanna finished up her visit, I appreciate the discussion

that we had that ran the gamut about the politics and the institutional pressure on the service course. I appreciated the idea that you are putting together the pieces to understand the different pressures that can be placed on a single course (or series of courses) and how that can impact pedagogical and programmatic decisions.

Textbook Assignment Debrief

We then moved on to connecting Joanna's visit to the textbook assignment. I loved the idea of what is a textbook supposed to do? In short, the textbook is a tool to help get students started around key ideas and concepts. It shouldn't be a crutch that you rely on too much to the point you lose your own creativity.

The consensus was that there were parts to the books that you liked and parts that you didn't. But this assignment will help us to determine what **you** think needs to be included in our custom textbook and the approach we should make in creating cases or scenarios.

The textbook discussion was also really lively as the debates ranged from the ethics of assigning expensive books to how books should be integrated into the classroom. Y'all had strong opinions about too many books, books that are not really used, books that take over the classroom, and so much more. I didn't take good notes, but I did leave class feeling as though we did a great job of dissecting and critiquing the textbook's place in a class and for pedagogy.

Writing and Work

Thank you for your attention and participation today. I know I consistently ask you to do things a little outside of your comfort zones and I am appreciative of your effort!

Today's class had the goal of enriching the understanding of how the service course's main aim is to get students ready to write for the world of work.

To do this work, we had three activities planned: discussion of student found readings, discussion of assigned readings, and then an exercise based on student answers to "what is good writing?"

However, as the students were working now writing a quick takeaway and then how use the take away in class, I realized that the student found articles weren't going to do the work that I had hoped. Totally, my fault. While you did exactly as I asked you to do, the sound articles were typically too theoretically focused and so diverse in topics that it was difficult to make the connections between them, everyday work practices, and the teaching of TPC. Sometimes exercises don't work so that meant doing a quick pivot.
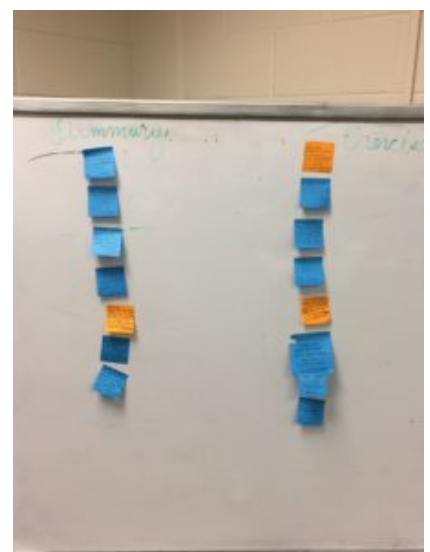
the takeaway on one side and the

classroom
application   the
other.   Small
stickies to work on
concise language.

Half of the student found articles worked ok in that they had
specific actionable things that could be worked out, but since
the rest didn't we shifted to doing one of my favorite service
course exercises. We all searched for a report online. As is
always the case, you found lots of different examples from
legal, journalistic, informational, recommendation, and one
that did a number of things. The point of that exercise was to
talk though the different ways generic conventions can play
out. A "report" can mean a lot of different things in a lot of
organizational settings and cultures. The key is to understand
what the purpose of the report is and match it to the purpose
and goal.

This led into a great discussion about the readings I had
assigned. Y'all did a great job in distilling down the big
takeaways:

- organizational cultures
- different types of writing that have some similarities
- rhetorical situations are messy and complicated
  (including writing issues of grammar an convention)
- one must let go of the singular author and embrace
  corporate authority since that's how much of the writing
  is done in the workplace

Atchafalya River Basin

I was most impressed with your "reading landscapes" exercise as you took the things the you know (like close reading and literary analysis) and applied it to material spaces. This exercise was designed to get you thinking about how you and your students can begin to understand the organizational cultures that impact how business is done, including the writing that takes place.
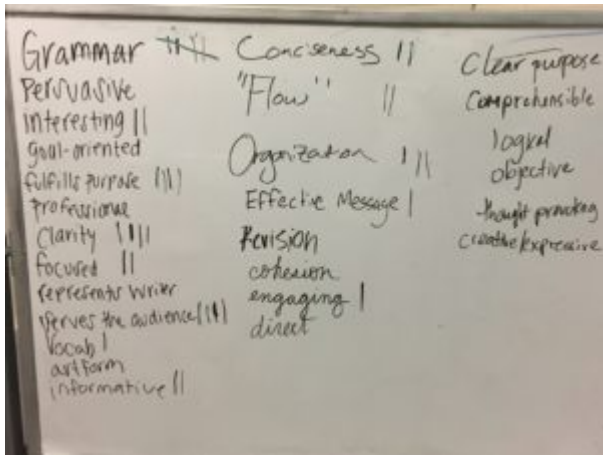
Anyone can learn a lot about an organization by reading the physical, material spaces and asking informed questions. This is the key to orienting the purpose of the writing to the goals of the organization. It's also a key in getting students to shift from academic writing to writing in the workplace. And it will help new members of an organization figure out what type of report they need to write! While it took you a minute to warm up, y'all finally got the hang of reading landscapes and after enough pointing out things you saw and asking follow-up questions (like what could it mean that the instructor work station is far from the screen?), y'all finally it on many of the concepts that I was hoping you'd get. You were ably to read the material space and and make some informed decisions about what the organization values. (It's always pretty easy to find a space to compare any humanities classroom too!)

We ended the class by looking at student responses to the prompt "what is good writing?" This is an exercise that can be useful in the service course to get students thinking about writing and the different aims of writing. As one student aptly point out, using these responses in class would be a good way to open a lot of different discussions. This was a great connection and illustrates that I'm trying to model practices and processes for you to incorporate (with your own style and flair) into your courses.

The two images below are samples of the students working

through trying to find themes, similar ideas, perspectives, or whatever your favorite term is.

Here's the summary of the big theme's that y'all find in the responses:

This last exercise was also a way to start thinking about pedagogical and programmatic research and attempting to craft questions from the data that you have. But, it's also important to build your research skills—particularly in framing good research questions—no matter what job you do. If you stay in higher education (as professor, alt-ac or any number of positions), you'll be doing research of some type or another, and if you move onto to industry, you'll either be doing research or supervising people who will be doing it. We'll talk more about the questions you brainstorm next week.

Good job everyone!!

Frameworks Recap

One of first goals for class was to put the readings on Frameworks in conversation with our readings from last week on definitions. To do this, you were asked to visualize how the readings went together. This is one of my favorite class activities to do because it encourages you to think differently, and it always produces some interesting results that make the subsequent discussion pretty lively. Following are your visual interpretations of the frameworks.
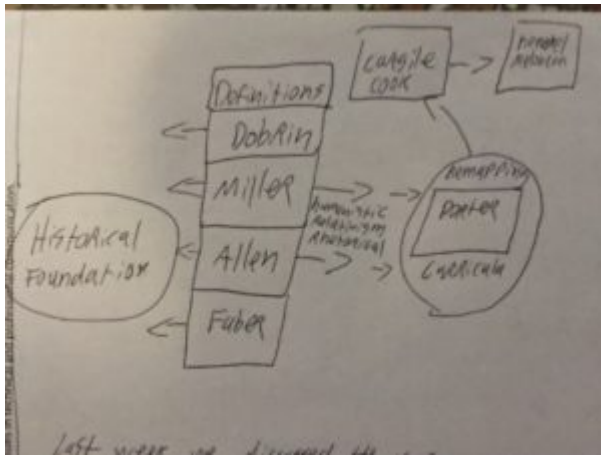
As an historical scholar in my initial academic training, I always have a warm spot for the historical approach. What was great about this visualization was trying to chart the shifts through the lens of history, and it grounded the discussion in the fact TPC does have a history and that history is important to current practices.

I loved this visualization because it took the task in the most literal way trying to put every reading from both weeks in conversation. In taking this approach, this visualization offered us a way to see the expanse of TPC and the fact that these ideas do overlap and connect.
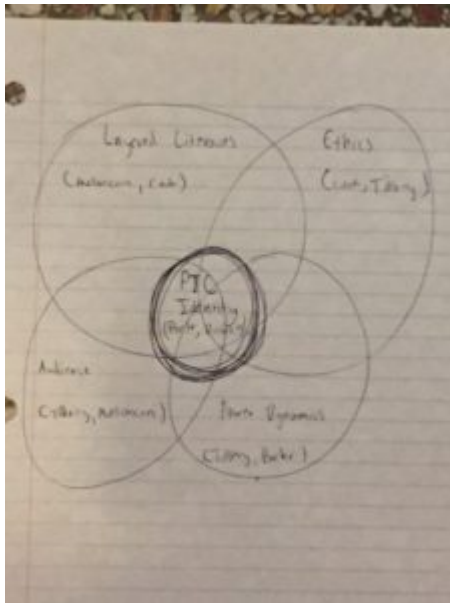
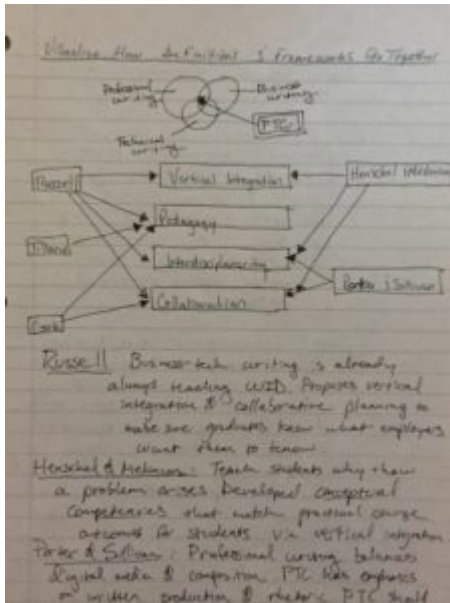So we went from history to a big "map" and then we shifted to how big identities all revolve around TPC identity. Just the fact that identity was the term placed in the center of this four-pronged Venn made it an important contribution.
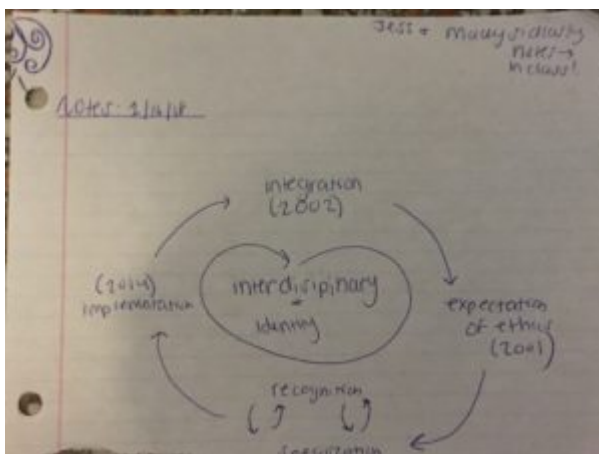
Closely related to this Venn diagram was a contribution that put another important word in the middle, interdisciplinary for everything else to circulate around.

Part of the identity of the field are the different types of service course offered, and this visualization of placing those different courses within the framework of the department was a smart take on the readings.

Closely related to the three kinds of service courses, this visualization took the readings and then related them to the actual courses and assignments that we offer at USF. What was so great about this visualization was its interpretation of taking the field and viewing it through the local context.

The final example was one where the students took the exercise prompt and sort of went their own way, which is fine and totally expected. What I loved about this one was the fact it was an actual demonstration of technical and professional communication from headings, titles, where space, visuals, and explanations.

The overall goal of the exercise was to move from the summary of the articles to a synthesis of them and to figure out what they could tell us about the field and about teaching in the field.

All in all it was a success.

Pedagogy and Teaching Practices

The second part of class focused on teaching practices. Specifically, we discussed how classroom exercises need to be purposefully designed either to advance classroom learning objectives or to build classroom community. Classroom exercises also need to be explicitly explained as to why they are doing them and what aims of the course they are forwarding. We can't always assume students are making these connections and talking about the how's and why's help them make connections between the exercises and the course content.

Students in the service course are a little hesitant to fully engage in the course because they may not see the connection to their major or future careers. To consistently talk about how writing enhances their disciplinary knowledge is useful and more importantly, to connect classroom activities to the broader goals helps with student "buy-in."

So we brainstormed and shared some sample exercises and discussed how to make exercises engaging and address the overall goals of the course.

Definitions recap

So as I'm looking back on tonight's class, it went pretty well in the sense that we managed to do the big things that we wanted to do:give an overview of the field and start to get comfortable with the overall goals of the course.

In a course like this one, it's hard to know where we are, which is why we ended the class with just a question and answer session. Gave us time to wind down and gave me a sense of where you were with your thinking.

We'll revisit what you wrote down about wanting to learn in the penultimate class meeting to see how we did. This is one way of closing the loop and connecting back to things that went on previously, which is a good strategy for helping students connect the dots.

Tonight, we just had to lay some groundwork that gave you a sense of TPC historically from both the academic and the practitioner standpoint. Next week, I hope that you'll see how

the "foundations" intersect with some of the history and definitions, but you should also be prepared to start making your own leaps about teaching. But I appreciated your questions that questioned the definitions and started to tease out some of the contradictions. I've [answered some of your questions](#) to also help recap the class.

I realized that we didn't get to two of the combined questions (from Spencer and Jess and from Josh, Kara, and Drew). We will be using those next week to actually jumpstart our discussion.

If I had to pare down one thing for you to takeaway from tonight and the readings is that like any field TPC is still working on defining the boundaries of knowledge, but it is and has always been focused on communicating information (let's call it technical if you want) to a specific audience for a specific purpose. What distinguishes it from other types of writing is in its aims. It's all about some action.

The one takeaway from learning how to teach is stand up straight and deliver information with confidence.

I appreciate your attention and your participation, but know that in the future, you'll be talking much more.

Expectations

One of the things that I will always disclose is that I was a terrible, lousy, pain in the ass student. There are lots of reasons for this and it manifested itself in class in a number of ways. Don't get me wrong. I was not disrespectful or disruptive, but I was definitely a challenging student. Ironically, I learned how to teach in large part from those teachers who had to put up with me

What this means for you as a student in a class where I'm designated as teacher is that I know how hard it can be to juggle life and school; i know most of the tricks that give the allusion that you're doing things when you're really not; I understand how it can be to learn new things, particularly things that challenge your own assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes. So I'll be as understanding and empathetic and sympathetic as I possibly can.

But….you knew that was coming…..

Because whether its required course or not, you are here because you want to be. You made the decision to come to graduate school, and I'm here to help you anyway I can.

I like to get out of the way a few things so that you know

- what my expectations are about your participation
- what you can expect of me
- what are expectations about professionalism

Expectations about your participation

If it's listed on the schedule that you need to do something before class, I truly do have the expectation that you'll do it before class and come prepared to work with that knowledge in class. Do you have to be expert in it? No. Cause that's why you're here. But you need to have a damn good idea about some of the major takeaways OR come prepared with some questions so we can get you to those takeaways.

I also have the expectation that for those three hours a week we see one another that you're going to really try and be engaged for those three hours. I know these block classes are hard. They're hard on us all, but we're going to do the best we can. One of the ways we do this is to move and to play and to make and to question. All of these require your participation and they also require stepping outside of your comfort zone at times. All I ask is that you try and not be

afraid to fail cause that's part of the learning process.

You will have to invest about 3-9 hours (this all depends on you, but this is a rough estimate from past classes) outside of class to achieve the goals of the course. As in any new work routine, students may need more hours during the initial weeks as they learn to carry out the assignments in a way that balances efficiency (time required) and effectiveness (extent of coverage, depth of comprehension).

If you have concerns as we move through the term, please talk to me about them.

Your assignments should be carefully written and edited and fulfill the requirements of the assignments. They should be approached with a professional attitude and demeanor and be professional quality.

Expectations about me

One of the most important things you can expect from me is having an inclusive classroom. What that means is our classroom is a space where we can have open, fruitful discussions and all opinions and points of view will be respected. It's also a space where I'll work with you to make allowances for different types of learning abilities.

In addition, my job is to

- Establish the objectives, assignments, and schedule for the course.
- Share my knowledge and opinions about topics covered in the readings (where you can disagree if want)
- Facilitate the transfer of information between and among students through discussions of assigned readings
- Encourage students to express their opinions and formulate their own arguments on the topic at hand
- Help students make connections between their existing knowledge and the information being presented in class

- Publish and maintain the course website that contains policies, readings, assignments, and related information about the course
- Be readily accessible to students during my office hours or through email.
- Review and offer directive and formative advice on plans and drafts related to the assignments

Moreover, I have and always will run an open classroom. What that means is you can ask me anything in class or out. Openness means, though, that the classroom is a safe, open space so if you are unsure how to raise a particular issue where we can discuss it safely and openly then ask me outside of class how to do this.

Expectations about professionalism

I recognize that this term, "professionalism," can be construed in any number of ways and can be considered something of a negative by some people. So for me and the way I'm using this term is that every graduate course is a mini-lesson in your professionalization, which is a set of habits and practices that are often expected of employees in the vast majority of organizations.

Yes, even academics have things that mark them as professionals, and more importantly, good professionalism often means that your colleagues think that you are actually a good colleague and simply someone they must endure.

In a course like this one, professionalism is even more important since we're moving toward being teachers in our own classrooms.

You have the opportunity to continue to develop necessary professional skills, such as, reliable communication with me and your classmates, problem-solving approaches, cooperation and collaboration, to name but a few. Use this time wisely to try out new approaches and techniques.