

THE POTENTIALITY OF POPULAR MEDIA AND CRITICAL THEORY IN FIRST  
YEAR COMPOSITION PEDAGOGIES

By

Amir Hassan & Kellan Deardorff

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in English

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY  
Department of English

MAY 2009

To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of Amir Hassan and Kellan Deardorff find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

---

Victor Villanueva, Ph.D., Chair

---

Robert Eddy, Ph.D.

---

Thomas V. Reed, Ph.D.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge all of our committee members, Victor Villanueva, Robert Eddy, Nancy Bell, and Thomas V. Reed, for their continued guidance and support. Without their insights and criticisms we wouldn't have been able to join the conversation.

# THE POTENTIALITY OF POPULAR MEDIA AND CRITICAL THEORY IN FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION PEDAGOGIES

Abstract

by Amir Hassan & Kellan Deardorff  
Washington State University  
May 2009

Chair: Victor Villanueva

The work that follows is the result of an intense collaborative effort. This manuscript draws primarily upon the theoretical and pedagogical holdings of David Bartholomae, Anthony Petrosky, Paulo Freire, Judith Butler and the political rhetoric of Noam Chomsky in order to introduce a new approach to teaching first year composition. The text argues for use of mass media, specifically animated television satire, in collusion with “critical theory” and other forms of academic writing to introduce the conventions used by academic discourse communities. It also includes an analysis of a specific instance of humor within *South Park* in conjunction with an evaluation of its subversive potential in order to demonstrate the pedagogical value of bringing comedy into the classroom. Further, the text engages the long-standing debate within the composition community concerning the value of difficult language and skepticism over the language of “popular culture.” It concludes by proposing a re-thinking of genre, as posited by Anis Bawarshi, and as it relates to “popular culture,” in order to forge a middle-ground among these divergent theoretical lines.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER	
1. ORIGINS.....	1
2. “SUBVERSIVE” ANIMATED TELEVISION SATIRE.....	6
3. GOALS, AUDIENCE, AND PURPOSE.....	13
4. DIFFICULTY AND PEDAGOGICAL INFLUENCES .....	18
5. NOAM CHOMSKY.....	31
6. CONCLUSION.....	35
7. SAMPLE CHAPTER.....	38
8. WORK CITED.....	50

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to our mothers and fathers  
who provided both emotional and financial support

“The very concept of the evolution of culture is dependent on the capacity of humans to use language for purposes of organizing social cooperation,” (Vijay Bhatia, *Analysing Genre – Language Use in Professional Settings*).

### **Origins**

The work described in this document claims a strange and interesting origin. At the beginning of the M.A. program we both took the required Seminar in Methodology of Composition. The goal of this course is to prepare incoming graduate students to teach first year composition. Some of the requirements for this seminar included but were not limited to constructing a course syllabus and curriculum. We both had similar ideas for the curriculum but not much else. We wanted to use popular media to discuss theoretical issues of American representation and culture such as nationalism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, class struggle and American foreign policy. The main idea was that satirical television shows could serve as an invaluable teaching aid for the dense theoretical writings of influential authors. Having both come from a background in critical theory, we each had specific writers in mind for this task. Amir suggested that we use short excerpts from Benedict Anderson, Judith Butler, Valentin Volosinov, and Etienne Balibar and Kellan insisted upon Jean Baudrillard, Edward Said and Noam Chomsky. Specifically, we use the genre of satirical animated television in conjunction with web, print, and other forms of popular entertainment in order to furnish a context for discussion.

We soon discovered that we were spending a lot of time perfecting the connections between shows such as *The Simpsons*, and texts like Judith Butler’s *Imitation and Gender Insubordination*. We began composing questions and assignments that compared structure and ideas between media and difficult texts in order to help highlight details in the writing that would

otherwise remain covert to traditionally aged first year composition students. Interestingly, our decision to include popular television shows in conjunction with difficult texts eventually led us into a long-standing debate within English Studies concerning the nature of difficult specialized language. We began to call our background of critical theory into question on the basis of our ability to explain many of the key ideas in simpler terminology. Noam Chomsky confirms this in a recent documentary entitled *Noam Chomsky: Rebel Without a Pause*, where among other things he addresses the importance of activism and audience. A student asks, “How do you talk to people without alienating them and still encouraging people to address power dynamics without making it too theoretical?” Chomsky responds,

Well don't you think that these things are just normal aspects of everybody's life which can be described in their own terms? I mean after all, as far I know we're not bringing up any particularly sophisticated concepts that you can't talk about to children. Well does the average person not understand things about sexual abuse or bosses giving orders that you don't like, and destroying the environment? I think these are things that are everybody's concerns. If they're not it's because they just don't have the time or the energy to think about it.

This viewpoint has come under scrutiny on the basis of “anti-intellectualism.” In recent conversation, Christopher Wise told us that he articulates this criticism in his book *Derrida, Africa, and the Middle East*. He asserts that it can be traced back to Kant's argument in *Conflict of the Faculties* where Kant basically tries to affirm the futility of talking philosophy with a “man on the street.” Because the “man on the street” inevitably lacks the training or interest needed to take part in such a discussion, the academic who attempts to philosophize with him/her threatens to undermine the entire liberal democratic project. In sum, the position advocates a



clear separation of politics and philosophy so that there is a disinterested forum for discussion and auto-critique to take place.

Because it is impossible to fully separate form from content, we are willing to concede that difficulty has its merits. Jonathon Culler's *Bad Writing, Good Philosophy* helps to clarify this position. Culler relevantly notes that public complaints about bad writing in philosophy "generally seem complaints about a philosophical mode: a mode of thought one finds uncongenial, concerns of which one doesn't see the pertinence, so that the writing seems pointless and pretentious in its flaunting of specialized language," (47). Certainly there is more to philosophy and criticism than the abuse of professionalized language. Nevertheless, we maintain that the language barrier can be addressed even in a first year composition course through a recapitulation of the genre function. By including genres from so-called "low culture" and "high culture," (few in academe still use these designations) we believe that a middle ground can be reached, and a critique can continue. We are not trying to call our traditionally aged first year composition students the "man on the street." However, there is an analogy here. They often lack training, and sometimes lack interest. We remember the difficulty involved in learning the conventions of a particular discourse community, and the struggle involved in acquiring new literacies. Had someone tried to explain the "rules of the game" (Casanave 2002) in terms we were already familiar with, it seems that we would have been better off.

In order to make our position explicit, it will be necessary to begin by outlining two contradictory viewpoints held by academics in regard to popular language, and by extension popular culture. Judith Butler sums the contradiction up nicely in *Values of Difficulty*:

Whereas the first view claims that any left position must speak the language of the popular, the second worries that the language of the popular is that of an uncritical

consumerism. Whereas the first might accuse the second of elitism, and with some justification, and might also claim that forms of critical consumerism exist, that popular culture, including popular language, is a scene for critical subversion of the status quo, the second might accuse the first of selling out thought, or, indeed, of premising politics on dogmatic anti-intellectualism. [Butler 201]

She eventually sides with the latter argument, claiming that common-language can only produce common-sense. In other words, she would say that there is no way any television show can succeed in subversion. However, this sort of false binary fails to take into account the very important work of Anis Bawarshi and many other genre theorists (Hyland 2006; Paltridge 2006; Coe 2006; Johns 2006; Bhatia 2004; others). According to Bawarshi in *The Genre Function*, “Genres have come to be defined as typified rhetorical ways communicants come to recognize and act in all kinds of situations,” (335). As such, they bear a tremendous impact on the interpretation and value of information. “The relations of the text to the ‘real’ is in fact established by our willingness to place it generically, which amounts to our willingness to ideologically appropriate its brute information,” (Thomas O. Beebee qtd in Bawarshi 349). In other words, genres create contexts that mediate the significance and meaning of all texts and discourse. We argue that popular culture ought to be a scene for subversion, because our experience has taught us that it is possible to alter these contexts. Most importantly, because “GENRES ARE NAMED BY THOSE IN POWER,” (Johns 239) comedy, a genre that is rarely taken seriously or literally, can contain subversive messages with minimal consequences or FLAK (Chomsky 1988). To that end, we posit comedy as the most viable site within the mass media where auto-critique obtains.

In 1995 David Bartholomae and Peter Elbow had a conversation regarding a fundamental pedagogical difference: whether or not it is beneficial to authoritatively redirect student writing in order to disillusion them of cultural assumptions. While we are indebted to David Bartholomae for reasons discussed later, it is worth interrogating a point of departure. Where Elbow advocated a degree of faith in his own students' intelligence, Bartholomae insisted that they would merely reproduce the culture if left to their own devices. Bartholomae famously stated in *Inventing the University*, "The student has to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and he has to do this as though he were easily and comfortably one with his audience... he has to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language," (624). He would agree with Judith Butler in that he privileges specialized language because he finds it intellectually powerful (Wall and Coles 1991). By extension, the issue at stake relates to the idea that "common-language" can only reproduce "common-sense."

Peter Elbow would probably be more sympathetic to the pedagogy we propose. In response to Bartholomae, he wrote "you...say that we should try to show them [students] that they can be 'elegant, smart, independent.' However, you feel this would be lying to them, whereas I insist that they *can* in truth be elegant, smart, and independent," (88). We fully subscribe to this idealistic sentiment regarding student writing, but in order to have it "both ways," we advocate speaking to students in already familiar terms. We believe the manipulation of context can accomplish this. Bawarshi clearly noted, "Because we are conceptually limited... to dismiss non-privileged (that is, nonliterary) discourse as "everyday speech that comes and goes," we do not know how to value it. We ignore it because it is not an obvious part of our "discursive educational practices," (339). As such, we believe it crucial to include "everyday speech," as a means of interrogating contact zones as they occur in multiple discourse

communities (Pratt 1991; Bizzel 1994). However, because we do not want to exclude authors like David Bartholomae and Judith Butler, we want to further analyze the subversive potential of popular culture, and animated television satire in particular.

### **“Subversive” Animated Television Satire**

This section explores the possibility that humor acts to lessen the seriousness of contentious material within contact zones. We also investigate the criteria through which a joke can be understood as subversive or in support of the social order. Subversive or “rebellious” humor, as Michael Billig (2005) explains, “outwardly mocks the rules and the rulers,” (207). By our definition, “subversive” humor mocks the social order, but rarely affects social or political change. Through this lens, it is possible to conceptualize instances of rebellious humor as endearing self-deprecation. Elliott Oring may provide a rich analogy through which to understand this viewpoint. In his book *Jokes and Their Relations* (1992) he emphasizes that “Instances of self-ridicule may not be self-critical,” (124) and self-degradation can contribute “to the success of the self and its programs rather than their defeat,” (124). Although he was referring primarily to conversational humor, if the dominant group is conceived as a “self,” then subversive humor may serve as a form of self-deprecation on a larger scale. Since the interpretation of humor is highly individualized, the issue at stake is not that different people interpret jokes in different ways, but the socio-political consequences of these various interpretations. As such, “subversive” humor does not subvert anything at all, practically speaking, but we argue there is potential. Although we focus primarily on animated television satire, it shares many common features with the genre of political cartoons. Juana Marin-Aresse notes:

Political humor may be directed at the power holders, at particular social groups or institutions, or more abstractly, it may be aimed at specific policies, social norms, or values, thus undermining the 'legitimacy' of a particular government or regime. The aim of a political cartoon is to launch an attack against a specific target by profiling specific actions and/or characteristics of the targets and depicting them as politically incompetent and/or morally wrong. [9]

The main ideological function of the political cartoon is to mount a criticism without engaging serious risk. However, in the case of animated satire the function is to profit from these criticisms. In fact, these shows would not be a part of daily life if they did not attempt to maximize profits and audience. Arthur Berger (2003) wrote, "because radio and television shows want to attract as large an audience as possible," (119) they rely more heavily on convention than invention; these are texts "that audiences can easily understand and that don't challenge them much," (119). Ironically, this very appeal serves to limit their potential to be taken seriously but also makes them ideal for explaining difficult ideas. The "easy" language does not detract from their message so much as their categorization as "casual entertainment."

Like political cartoons, animated satires tend to capitalize on traditional stereotypes and metaphoric representation (Marin-Arrese 10). We argue that profiting from stereotypical representations serves to reinforce pre-existing prejudices. But because politics shape our lives and contentions over political matters engender heated criticism, it is important to find meaningful ways to dialogue on such topics. We use these popular and humorous television shows because we agree with Don Nilsen's (1990) sentiment that, "Anything with this much effect on our daily lives must be responded to, and humor is one of the most basic and effective ways of responding," (35).

As previously stated, the “easy” nature of mass-mediated texts is key to their usage in conjunction with critical theory. This element is precisely what facilitates an effective dialogue between so-called “theoretical” ideas and mass-mediated representations of the very same notions. There has been much scholarship affirming the philosophical and satirical value of these shows (Robert Arp, 2006; Chris Turner, 2004; Brian Ott, 2003; Matthew Henry, 2007; Margaret Betz Hull, 2000). *The Simpsons* in particular has been used to talk about Foucauldian theories of power (Hull 2000) and post-modern identity construction (Henry 2007). In this way, satirical animated television shows are rich in intellectual value, despite their clearly comprehensible language. When students read post-modern philosophy or critical theory, they can easily identify the relevant parallels.

The genius of shows like *The Simpsons* and *South Park* is that they use expectations produced by the genre of comedy in order to mercilessly critique American culture, at the expense of credibility. In doing so, they also avoid serious real-world confrontation. Judith Butler would likely agree that humor has the propensity to make social realities, such as homophobia, gender discrimination, classism, and racism laughable, or okay for privileged audiences. Humor scholars have been debating the social and political impact of potentially divisive humor since the late eighties (Billig 2005; Davies 1990; Oring 2003, 1992; Dorinson and Boskin 1988; to name a few). Ethnic humor in particular has been a subject of controversy in terms of whether or not jokes aimed at certain races are divisive and uphold pre-existing prejudices. One side of the argument will concede “jokes are regularly cited in complaints in and suits charging harassment, and are frequently accepted as evidence of such harassment,” (Oring 1992) but will go on to claim that “ethnic jokes in general are not a good indicator of the joke tellers’ feelings toward the butts of their jokes... people do not necessarily dislike those who

they disesteem, the throwers of custard pies do not regard their targets in the same ways that those who hurl rocks or grenades do,” (Davies 323). A leading proponent of this view, Christie Davies, goes on to note that “those who seek to use ethnic jokes as a predictor of conflict would be better advised to study more immediate indices of political tension, for there is no point in delving for covert resentments in a world where so much direct evidence is available, (323). The other side of this argument, as noted by Michael Billig (2003) is that “ethnic jokes recycle stereotypes, and that anyone laughing at such jokes is validating prejudiced images, regardless of the claims to be ‘just joking’,” (165).

Our own perspective is that the socio-political dimension of divisive humor ought not be ignored. While we concede that it is possible to interpret such humor as “just a joke,” we find these interpretations unfortunate and narrow-minded. Further, this kind of non-interpretation doesn’t bode well for college-level analysis aimed at developing critical reading and writing skills and engaging multiple perspectives. We also concede that the motives behind a divisive joke may not be the same as the motives behind a violent act, but we insist that both feed into a larger institution of prejudice. As scholars in the humanities and as writers, we feel it intellectually irresponsible to back any kind of argument rooted in the logic of “the sword is mightier than the pen.” That is because, “Most conflict humor can be traced to stereotypes...[which] shape our thought processes from a preliterate age... these images are deeply rooted in collective folklore and firmly fixed in individual memory,” as noted by Joseph Dorinson and Joseph Boskin (1988). In other words, humor stereotypes are precisely the images that need to be confronted in college composition classrooms because they represent prejudices held by the majority, who would not commit individual acts of violence. Racism has reached a stage wherein individual acts of meanness or violent aggression are carried out by a minority but

reflect larger ideological problems. Covert prejudices validate individual acts of meanness, and these prejudices are at the very root of America's problems with racism, sexism, sexuality, ableism, and class discrimination (Johnson 2006; Bonilla-Silva 2006). Arthur Berger (2003) argued, "In the United States, where we believe in the American Dream of the "self-made" man and woman, where we believe in 'individualism,' many of us have a sense that we alone determine our own destiny," (15). As such, there is a tendency to resist confrontation of stereotypes, because people are trained to believe that stereotypes don't affect them. This is problematic because as Berger further notes, "We are taught in schools, we are socialized by our parents and peers and priests and pop stars (that is the media), so there is a strong social dimension to our lives, even if we believe we are self-made," (17). Thus, the task of confronting stereotypes is riddled with resistance, and necessitates a delicate touch. Using humor as a predictor of conflict can prove useful in this regard, because very few students are apt to complain about analyzing some of their favorite television shows. When we ask them to consider the socio-political element, they tend to begin identifying stereotypes in other venues, rather than rejecting their potential importance.

As previously mentioned, we are most interested in the way that humor and the associations made with the genre of comedy can influence the interpretation of jokes as supportive or subversive of the social order. Indeed, we tell our students this is the very issue at stake when we implement these shows in the classroom, and we consider multiple interpretative possibilities in order to demonstrate the importance of context. It is important to consider that, "A Character in a comedy is expected to perform certain acts and to interact with other characters according to the structural principles of the literary 'institution' of comedy," (David Fishelove qtd in Bawarshi 347). These variables are an integral part of the expectations produced



by genre. They are both panacea and problem when it comes to questioning social norms. Verily, the teacher can use humor mechanisms in order to encourage student enthusiasm about otherwise contentious material. Humor may lessen the severity, but not the urgency of conflict when we engage contact zones in the classroom. The following is an example of a scene from South Park's *With Apologies to Jesse Jackson* paired with an analysis meant to cover multiple angles of interpretation:

[The United State Senate. Randy is addressing the senators.]

Randy: Senators, I know it is not normally considered "American" to ban words. [Randy is flanked by Fuhrman and Richards] But there is one slur that has caused so much damage that we believe it should finally be made illegal. I'm talking, of course, about the term "nigger guy."

Senator 1: "Nigger guy"?

Randy: Two words which by themselves can be harmless but which together... form a verbal missile of hate.

Richards: Yeah! That's right!

Randy: Oh sure. Some people just use the term in jest - tell a nigger guy joke or two thinking it's no big deal - but they don't realize it can lead to people using the term as an excuse for violence.

Skeeter: [with his two friends] Goddamn nigger guy's tryin' to be all political-like now!

Randy: Senators, I've learned to admit that I'm capable of having- slightly racist thoughts once in a while. Can anybody say they never do? How long will it be before you are all called "nigger guys"? [the senators are somewhat shocked]

Senator 2: Uhhh, hold on a second, are you suggesting "nigger guy" could become a slur that

refers to all white people?

Senator 3: I'm certainly not a nigger guy. I've never thought a racist thought.

Senator 4: [black senator] Aw, come on, you're the biggest nigger guy in Washington.

Senator 1: Mr. Marsh, we see now the importance of your bill. [raises his left hand] All those in favor to ban the term "nigger guy"?

Most Senators: Aye!

Senator 1: Opposed?

Senator 4: Nay?

Senator 1: The motion is passed! [lowers the gavel.]

It stands to reason that critics like Davies might say that this joke is not meant as ridicule, and not meant to be divisive toward black people, but instead a criticism of white institutional dominance. On the other hand, critics like Billig would probably contend that the mere use of stereotypes for the purposes of laughter enforces their validity. As we see it, any usage of the Supreme Court in fiction constitutes some sort of social commentary in that it is a representation of a real political apparatus. In one sense, it is as if the message of the scene is “Hey white people, you and the laws you create are all racist.” From an academic standpoint, it stands to reason that only the dominant group can do racism, because it maintains control at the institutional level. Because there is only one black senator voting on a racially charged issue, and because he is unanimously defeated, this supports the idea that laws will only get passed if the dominant group feels its power being threatened. Only the genre of comedy prevents the message from being taken seriously, but the show ceases to be “casual entertainment” when used in a composition classroom and critically examined. Hence, using this example in conjunction with serious academic work on institutional racism may elicit a quite different reaction from the

viewer. In this context, humor is used to make class discussion enjoyable and productive despite the contentious issue at stake.

We posit that altering the interpretative context of satirical animated television in conversation can help to reduce severe conflict without marginalizing the seriousness of the topics at hand. Obviously humor cannot end racism, homophobia, or gender discrimination, but it can provide an accessible and appealing way to discuss these issues. In terms of power, certain situations or settings (such as that of a classroom) can make you take a joke a bit more seriously, or at least entertain a different perspective. It can lighten the mood enough to pursue generative as opposed to degenerative conversation. By discussing satirical animated television shows seriously, their subversive potential is reinstated.

### **Goals, Audience, and Purpose**

We do not wish to reinforce the idea that there is a split between theory and practice, but certainly there is a difference between a moral ideal and a utilitarian skill. On one hand, there is something to be said for learning how to perform Edited American English. That is the aim of most introductory composition coursework. On the other hand, what about the development of critical consciousness? As we will demonstrate, the development of critical consciousness can have a tremendous impact on the quality of student work.

In keeping with the tradition of first year composition textbooks, the intent of this manuscript is to help students develop academic literacy. Further, our methodology aims to increase this literacy by inducing dialogue between so-called “high theory,” and a collection of satirical animated television shows. This two-way interaction allows students to easily understand the key point of each theoretical text, but we insist that they reference and dialogue with these texts in their written work. Inherent in this statement is the notion that students do not

become more thoughtful and critical writers by imitating conventions. Instead, we believe that this comes about through an imagining, or inventing, of genre and audience (Bartholomae 1985). In order to facilitate this development, this text asks novice readers and writers to engage contact zones as they occur in both academic discourse communities and sites of popular culture. At the end of each suggested reading we have supplied examples of how to analyze form and summarize content along with sample assignments meant to strengthen students' overall understanding of rhetoric (Bartholomae and Petrosky 1986). Identifying not only the main ideas, but also the way each author builds an argument, demonstrates the rhetorical "tricks of the trade" while simultaneously inviting them to join academic conversations. Indeed, our intention is to provide ways for students to implement the same "tricks" in their own writing (Graff and Birkenstein 2006; Bartholomae and Petrosky 1987).

The content of the coursework is housed in the concept of culture, but organized under three main themes: Nationalism, Racism, Sexism/Gender and Sexuality. Most people have strong opinions on these subjects because they remain relevant. Because the topics are pointed, our methodology hopes to strike a balance between intellectual freedom and pedagogical direction. Ideological difference across the selected texts facilitates a spread of perspectives and political leanings. As such, class conversations often give way to heated debate due to the personal investment involved in political discussion. By engaging multiple perspectives, student writing is enriched in both complexity and scope.

If multiple sides are not considered, it becomes possible to dehumanize other groups simply because they have different views or beliefs. Additionally, engaging multiple perspectives facilitates authoritative argument-based composition. This kind of class environment is designed with argument in mind, insofar as one text can be used to challenge

another. However, the goal is for students to learn *how* academics establish authority so that they can challenge texts on their own ground. When authoritative writing effectively challenges students, it can cause them to speak with greater authority. Further, providing enough variety of opinion on the same topic allows them to find points of disagreement, and rise to this challenge. In so doing, they learn how to “stand on the shoulders” of academic texts, and/or “take them to the mats.” This “pedagogical pluralism” framework gives students an opportunity to compare their beliefs with others. As Patricia Bizzell (1984) once famously wrote, “beliefs can no longer be accepted uncritically as Absolutes, once we realize that well-intentioned people may hold beliefs different from our own,” (326). As such, this approach is conducive to engaging multiple perspectives, and fostering critical consciousness.

We want instructors to meet our methods with the notion that this kind of approach is not specific to the texts herein. Utilizing both structural and content analysis provides a foundation, a stepping-stone of sorts toward critically analyzing not only what an author says, but how he or she says it. The ability to identify different types of argument in professional, academic, or otherwise difficult texts also makes students aware of the way they structure their own arguments so they can figure out which methods work and which don’t in specific situations. This is the first step toward students understanding that they don’t have to have read everything in order to speak with authority; they just have to be familiar with the audience and available rhetoric(s). Kenneth Burke makes a good analogy about this process in *The Philosophy of Literary Form*:

You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about...You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put your oar in. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to

your defense; another aligns himself against you. . . . The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. [95]

Conceptualizing writing as an opportunity for conversation helps address issues of rhetorical awareness, acknowledgement of indebtedness, critical thinking, and critical consciousness; but in addition to these, sound knowledge of institutionalized written conventions is an expectation implicit in college level work. In 2006, Suresh Canagarajah challenged the dominance of so-called “Standard Written English,” in his essay *The Place of World Englishes in College Composition: Pluralization Continued*. In it, he explains that instances of non-standard English can be interpreted as ideologically motivated forms of expression, rather than simply “mistakes.” He articulated the exclusion of multiple spoken Englishes from written discourse and the need to preserve those forms of communication through code-meshing, rather than code-switching. Speakers of World Englishes are taught to interweave their native way of speaking with Edited American English in order to demonstrate proficiency in *both*. In doing so, the rhetorical disadvantages of non-standard English can be circumvented.

Although we realize the practical impossibility of “changing the rules” of academic discourse, there is something of rare merit to Canagarajah’s code-meshing concept. We believe that a compromise can be reached between these lofty ideals and the practical application of Edited American English when non-native dialects are conceptualized as a facet of “voice,” within a broader rhetorical “bag of tricks.” Susan Wall and Nicholas Coles (1991) further complicate these issues in their analysis of “interactionist” pedagogies. In these pedagogies, “The relationship between a student’s discourse and that of the academy is seen as dialectical, a two-way process of interaction that will, if it succeeds, necessarily involve teachers and students in

the re-formation of both discourses,” (235). Our aim is to help students use academic conventions in rhetorically effective ways, without completely sacrificing personal voice. In an interactionist approach, “Student culture is assumed to be the basis for further learning and not something to be traded in as part of the price of initiation,” (Wall and Coles 236). As such, we offer a refined interpretation of code-meshing, wherein students engage contact zones as they intersect with discourse and language they are familiar with (satirical animated television) and the language of the academy (Bizzell 1994). Bizzell (1994) noted, “Focusing on a contact zone as a way of organizing literary study would mean attempting to include all material relevant to the struggles going on there,” (482). In other words, in order to do contact zones properly you have to find and integrate all the ways people are using language to discuss those zones – songs, films, TV and other forms of discourse. By teaching contact zones as they occur in both academic and popular culture, students can form arguments on their terms, while nevertheless engaging and utilizing the professional terminology used in the assigned reading. In that way, they are rhetorically effective within, but not subsumed by, the language of academic discourse.

When two people spend a lot of time with each other in dialogue, they tend to pick up each other’s speech habits. Likewise, when we continually dialogue with texts and genres of writing, we begin to pick up syntactic habits. This happens over long periods of *practice*, and is arguably the natural way to learn edited American English. When writing is developed through the influence of well-loved authors, it is rewarding, and personal. However, when texts are unusually difficult more effort is spent on comprehension than conversation. That is not the same thing as real dialogue. In face-to-face conversations, ideas are understood and then responded to. The language of the other person does not need to be internalized in order to understand his or her ideas, and we respond in our *own* language. We do not want our students to write like

philosophers or critical theorists, but we want them to participate in conversation with philosophical and theoretical writing. Our students develop critical consciousness as a means of helping them produce rich, meaty arguments, not overly complicated prose. Our text provides opportunities for real conversation between student and author by addressing the language barrier.

### **Difficulty And Pedagogical Influences**

One of the goals of this methodology is to increase student comprehension of written academic conventions by assigning a number of difficult readings. Certainly, we are not the first to advocate a methodological approach based on engagement with difficult texts. In 1987, David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's *Ways of Reading* provided a foundation for students to learn how to perform close reading and comprehend sophisticated writing. Like Bartholomae and Petrosky, our approach was fueled by the belief that "if we just, finally, gave them [students] something good to read – something rich and meaty – they would change forever their ways of thinking about English," (Bartholomae and Petrosky vii). Such sentiments are not uncommon, particularly among new English teachers. Their book carries a sort of authenticity in its message: *The best way to learn to write, is to learn to read.*

We are greatly indebted to the insights of Bartholomae and Petrosky, particularly in concern to the merits of using difficult writing in composition courses. The central problem is that most difficult writing seems impenetrable to novice readers and writers. *Ways of Reading* attempted to address this problem by providing a set of methodological tools and centering the focus of the class on the difficulty of the texts. We feel that this is especially important work, given the fact that meaning cannot be co-constructed when students are unable to understand the readings enough to talk about them or form opinions. In these scenarios, the burden of



interpretation is left to the teacher, and thus becomes predetermined. Our work further ameliorates this potential hazard through the inclusion of satirical animated television shows as Freirian codifications. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* Freire noted that “Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality*, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but only in communication,” (77). In many ways, this statement captures the spirit behind our entire pedagogy. Like Bartholomae and Petrosky, we include difficult reading as a means of exposing students to the conventions of academic discourse communities. However, we feel that this work is most effectively accomplished when the abstract ideas encountered in difficult texts are made tangible through visual examples. Our choice to use satirical animated television shows is underpinned by Chris Schroeder’s treatment of “cultural capital” and “the capital of the academy,” (2001). We contend that the cultural capital of the student, which obtains in popular media and particularly in genres of comedy and satire, can and should, as Anis Bawarshi (2003) might say, serve as sites for cultural critique and change. Bartholomae and Petrosky privilege the capital of the academy and the literacies resulting from those values, but for good reason. As a matter of practicality, it is more benevolent to teach students how to write in ways the academy will value, than to build politics on their shoulders. Our solution is simple: teach students how to write in ways valued by the academy, but use their cultural capital, so that the teaching itself has value for them. Before that point is expounded upon, and because in many ways our text is in conversation with *Ways of Reading*, it will be necessary to assess the methodological tools offered by Bartholomae and Petrosky.

In some respects, Paulo Freire’s approach to teaching critical consciousness, and *Ways of Reading*, roughly describe a version of the overall goals in this text. It will be useful to begin by evaluating the method of analysis in *Ways of Reading*. It offers students instruction on how to

read for different purposes in its introduction as well as questions for second readings at the end of each anthologized piece. It also supplies assignment sequences that are organized by theme and content. The introduction offers guidance by encouraging students to “make a mark” on the texts they encounter. This refers to the act of note taking and underlining to gain entry into the logic and meaning of difficult writing. Implicit in this suggestion is the power of individual interpretation, which is dutifully granted to the student. In that way, ‘making a mark’ has two meanings: The physical act of marking up a text for future reference, and the responsibility of the reader to impact the meaning of the piece.

Students are also encouraged to read both with and against “the grain.” Reading with the grain implies a level of generosity. The student is asked to try to see things from within the logical framework and perspective of the author. This process reinforces the importance of comprehending theoretical writing as a tool for developing knowledge of convention. Reading against the grain is the process of critical evaluation that is developed after the student has acquired a taste for critical theory. It implies the capacity to think outside of the author’s logic, to compare ideas across texts and find points of disagreement. This enables students to be skeptical of what they are reading, which is an essential element of critical intellectual work.

At the end of each reading, students are provided a series of questions that invite a second reading. Essentially, this apparatus helps to guide students in their interpretive work. It is intended to serve as an entry point, a way into another ‘way of reading’ so to speak. It is worth noting that these questions are not short and opaque phrases. They are filled with context to help the student understand what they are looking for in the text and where they should be looking. The assignment sequences are designed to cater to this.

Some assignments ask students to focus on interpreting and engaging only a single text. This allows the work of “reading with the grain,” or close reading, to take place within the context of writing. By thinking closely about the text, the student can begin theorizing what it means. When this work has been accomplished multiple times, students are asked to think about several of the texts they have read in the context of a single written assignment. The structure of the assignment sequences are such that these selections often share a common theme, making them easy to incorporate into a single essay. In this way, the work of “reading against the grain,” or working critically with an author’s ideas, is accomplished. In giving close attention to several ideas, talking about them in relation to one another, and determining their own opinion on the subject, students begin to perform the moves that form the backbone of intellectualism.

There are some interesting theoretical parallels between *Ways of Reading* and the work of Paulo Freire. Freire advocated a model in which abstract ideas are juxtaposed with concrete “codifications,” such as photographs and sketches. These “codifications should be organized as a ‘thematic fan.’ As the decoders reflect on their codifications, the codifications should open up in the direction of other themes,” (115). As students begin to develop a critical perspective, they are likely to make connections across “themes,” and thus re-analyze pertinent codifications beyond the scope of any one topic. *Ways of Reading* thematically organizes and juxtaposes the anthologized texts without any intermediary. If each text represents a “theme,” the assignments in the supplied assignment sequences create the effect of a “thematic fan” insofar as there is usually at least one prompt that asks students to connect ideas across texts. There is also emphasis on dialogical interpretation in the introduction. Since the ability to connect otherwise unrelated ideas is a fundamental aspect of composition and critical consciousness, the schema is conducive to good writing and critical thinking. Unfortunately, *Ways of Reading* does not

facilitate ideological difference on any of the “themes” in the thematic fan, and in this way, the theoretical parallels with Freire end. We posit that without an intermediary codification to lend context to abstraction, students must put up a far greater struggle to gain entry into difficulty.

We believe that intermediary codifications meant to bridge the gap between reading comprehension and application are an integral part of Freire’s model for developing critical consciousness, and we contend that critical consciousness is an element of strong composition. Our particular codifications were selected in response to Freire’s warning that:

Often, educators and politicians speak and are not understood because their language is not attuned to the concrete situation of the people they address. Accordingly, their talk is just alienated and alienating rhetoric... In order to communicate effectively, educator and politician must understand the structural conditions in which the thought and language of the people is dialectically framed [96]

One of the primary guidelines given for selecting a codification is that it must “represent situations familiar to the individuals whose thematics are being examined, so that they can easily recognize the situations, and thus their own relationship to them,” (115). For that reason, using satirical animated television shows such as *The Simpsons*, *Futurama*, and *South Park* emerged as an unlikely solution. These shows reach wide audiences, and are usually satirical responses to cultural interaction and group representation. Above, we analyzed the subversive potential of this genre and concluded that the possibility of multiple interpretations in conjunction with the interpretative constraints of the genre function would necessitate a contextual shift (Bawarshi 2000). If these shows are approached as neutral entertainment, they can be enjoyed that way. If they are approached from a critical perspective, they can be rich with political meaning. Students read difficult pieces of theory and discuss their meaning in preparation for days where these

shows are exhibited. At that point, we ask them to identify and talk about connections between the things they have read and the significations of the episode. To return to Freire, and make our own theoretical parallels clear:

This method does not involve reducing the concrete to the abstract, but rather maintaining both elements as opposites which interrelate dialectically in the act of reflection... this movement of flux and reflux from abstract to concrete which occurs in the analysis of a coded situation leads to the supersedence of the abstraction *by* the critical perception of the concrete, which has already ceased to be a dense, impenetrable reality... [105]

In other words, using codifications provides a tangible context through which to interpret and apply otherwise “abstract” ideas. Because students enjoy these shows, they are likely to maintain interest and enthusiasm for the coursework. An 18-year-old *Simpsons* fan can understand an author like Judith Butler, especially if explained in the context of the *Simpsons*. We believe that this parallels Freire’s idea that:

In the process of decoding, the participants externalize their thematics and thereby make explicit their ‘real consciousness of the world.’ As they do this, they begin to see how they themselves acted while actually experiencing the situation they are now analyzing, and thus reach a ‘perception of their previous perception’ [115]

Such a perception marks the beginnings of critical consciousness and intellectual self-reflection. It engenders the sort of deep thought expected of sound intellectual work and critical composition. In their writing, students can utilize the ideas found in theoretical texts to fuel their analysis of the media or vice-versa. The very ideas that they identify in pop-media codifications point to the importance of mass media in relation to cultural politics.

We interpreted Freire's mention of "themes" and "thematic fan" to mean a set of broad interrelated topics, maintained through shifting dialogical relationships, and connected in an over-arching but continuously changing whole. In a thematic investigation, "the investigators set their critical 'aim' on the area under study, as if it were for them an enormous, unique, living 'code' to be deciphered," (111). That code is broken down into sub-themes in order to minimize the scope of necessary abstraction. In other words, the broad topic of systemic oppression might be broken down into racism, gender discrimination, homophobia, and class struggle. Ideas build upon one another in such a way that each topic seems easier than the one before it by virtue of conceptual similarity. Such a structure also allows students to compare the ideas of multiple authors writing on the same subject and facilitates comparisons of style, genre, and rhetorical strategy. All of the readings we assign are intellectual and politically motivated, but only a select number could be classified as critical theory. Thematic organization allows for a fluid juxtaposition between texts written with extensive academic language and those written in simpler terms. For example, the nationalism section in our course asks students to compare and contrast the ideas of authors such as Benedict Anderson, Noam Chomsky, and Dinesh D'souza. In addition to emphasizing ideological difference, such a comparison helps demonstrate the way authors in different discourse communities conceptualize audience and build authority. Implicit in this discussion is the relative complexity of ideas among these authors. Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* make very similar claims, but go about constructing their arguments in radically different ways.

Textual comparisons of style and complexity offer another way of conceptualizing the term "code-meshing," (Canagarajah 2006). Our use of Chomsky and Anderson provide one example of meshing academic dialects, but the course is also designed to mesh intellectual

discourse with the language of pop-culture. Those juxtapositions allow for a dual discourse. Students conceptualize ideas in the context of reading assignments first, then in the context of popular television. In this way, they are working with two languages concerned with the same topic. Thus, code-meshing occurs naturally through the interpretive act, and re-emerges through the articulation of ideas in written work.

Critical consciousness fosters student work that is rich in meaning. It engenders careful, deep, and critical intellectual writing, as opposed to writing simply for the sake of a grade. Our use of pop-media as an intermediary codification allows students to map the boundaries of meaning across multiple discourses and Englishes. Freire said that “to exist humanly, is to *name* the world, change it,” (88). By engaging in multiple dialogues with texts and their peers, our students are encouraged to share in that naming.

To more clearly address the issues Freire brings to the conversation, let us ask a not so easy question: What is Critical Consciousness? In the preface to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire’s use of the term *conscientizaçoa* refers to perceiving social, political, and economic contradictions. That is one way of thinking about it. However, it was best described to us by Victor Villanueva in a recent seminar on the rhetorics of political economy. He said that people tend to confuse critical thinking and critical consciousness. The former is the ability to solve problems that have already been posed. The latter is the ability to question the problem itself, to pose new questions and new problems. In a sense, Freire’s use of the term is an accurate reflection of the way critical consciousness is taught. Putting socially accepted norms into question causes a chain reaction insofar as the importance of maintaining a critical perspective becomes clear. Once that perspective is cultivated, however, it can be broadly applied beyond the social and political into other discourses. The ability to question is a practical tool for anyone

who would profess to be an educated person, regardless of discipline. Indeed, fear of critical consciousness is no more than fear of freedom.

We have taken extensive precautions to ensure our work does not constitute leftist indoctrination. Students are actively encouraged to voice their own opinions and perspectives in writing and in class discussions. The teacher relinquishes a great deal of authority, engages students in dialogue, and approaches them as equal human beings. Because both teacher and student share the responsibility of talking about and interpreting the texts, there are no preset “correct” answers.

The issue at stake is that traditional classroom structures and writing assignments do not encourage the same level of cognitive activity as real dialogue. In chapter 2, titled *The Banking Concept of Education*, Freire clearly explains the problems inherent in a traditional pedagogical approach. Because the teacher is constructed as the narrating subject, and students as listening objects, information is memorized rather than reflected upon. He notes:

The outstanding characteristic of this narrative education, then, is the sonority of words, not their transforming power. ‘Four times four is sixteen; the capital of Para is Belem.’ The student records, memorizes, and repeats these phrases, without realizing what four times four really means, or realizing the true significance of ‘capital’ in the affirmation ‘the capital of Para is Belem’... Worse yet, it turns them into ‘containers,’ into ‘receptacles’ to be ‘filled’ by the teacher. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are [71-72].

Indeed, the traditional student-teacher relationship does not require active participation on the part of the student. This also extends to the way that students approach reading. Rather than question the author’s sustaining postulates, they neutrally memorize information. Rather than



write papers based on their own intellectual creativity, they regurgitate the information they have memorized.

At the end of last semester, one of our students told us that ours was the first class to force him to think on his own. “In high school my English teachers would ask me to gather facts and write research papers based on other people’s thinking. In this class, I had to think deeply about what each author had to say in order to form my own thoughts and arguments.” We believe this reflects Freire’s notion that, “Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information” (79). In other words, he noted the difference between thinking and learning what to think. As an alternative, Freire advocates a structure in which “The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach” (80). Such a relationship fosters genuine thought on the part of students rather than simply regurgitation of information. Indeed, “The teacher’s thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the student’s thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thought on them,” (77).

This is not to say that traditional class structures don’t have some advantages. At the English 101 level in particular, a great number of disadvantages accompany relinquishment of power. After all, most first year composition students are accustomed to the traditional teacher-student relationship that they dealt with in high school. Additionally, it is impossible to maintain whole-human dialogue without placing oneself in a position of vulnerability. The teacher no longer retains the last word, and may be placed under scrutiny often. However, relinquishing power may also increase the teacher’s credibility by virtue of engaging students as credible and intelligent human beings. We are reminded of the words of Antonio Gramsci:

...a mediocre teacher may manage to see to it that his pupils become more informed, although he will not succeed in making them better educated... A date is always a date, whoever the examiner is, and a definition always a definition. But an aesthetic judgment or philosophical analysis? [Gramsci 315]

Our text offers a solution to the problem Gramsci put forth by implementing Freire's classroom structure and extending the notion of dialogue to mean active conversation with texts in addition to people. Our students are not asked to agree with anything we say, nor the authors we insist they read. Instead, they are asked to comprehend the ideas and respond to them. In doing so, students think about why they believe the things they do and articulate those thoughts in written argument and in the context of class discussion. When inconsistencies are pointed out, they learn that they are naïve as to what are considered appropriate ways of knowing in the academy, and begin to get more critical. It needs to be understood that ideological difference is privileged in this schema. In fact, disagreement can serve as motivation to fully comprehend intellectual ideas in order to argue against them. This ensures a rich variety of perspectives in class discussion, and thus contributes to the development of critical consciousness.

Yet it is naïve to pretend that pedagogy can be value-neutral. We agree with Patricia Bizzell (1984), who wrote, "it seems more respectful to our students to see what we are doing when we teach as attempting to persuade them to accept our values, not simply inculcating our values," (327). In fact, a composition pedagogy that inculcates values is ineffective precisely because it is not persuasive. In *Considerations for American Freiristas*, Victor Villanueva noted this very issue while relating his teaching observations on a promising young Freire influenced graduate student. "He had introduced the word and he spoke of the world, yet he was not likely

to move those who were not already predisposed to his worldview. His method of persuasion would obstruct such a move. His method was explicitly propaganda,” (256). We have worked diligently to avoid this same mistake, but the theoretical aims – or why this kind of composition curriculum and pedagogy is most important stems from the unfortunate assumption that wide contemporary audiences don’t read books to understand culture as much as they might watch television. This claim may seem provocative, but for traditionally aged students in first year composition courses it is especially true. Using animated satire has done more than provide common ground for communication; it has also helped our course appeal to a traditionally aged first year composition student demographic. In that respect, our method of persuasion is as simple as helping students to identify social commentary in television shows they already watch.

If one wants to discuss or at least reach wide audiences with ideas about social justice, one must turn to popular media. The underlying assumption is that with people reading less, and/or not being able to or not having a reason to read critical theory or philosophy, often the good ideas in those texts go unnoticed or unheard by wide audiences – even by audiences within academe. This is problematic for a few reasons. First, without exposure to professional academic writing, students don’t know how to produce the kind of writing that teachers often try to cultivate. Second, critical theory and philosophy that takes itself and its audience seriously should be accessible to more than an elite cadre of academics. This is the same idea that bell hooks (1994) suggests in that theory can be liberatory if treated to the context of “lived experiences,” (61). In other words, even those who have not read critical theory or philosophy can have their lives affected by things they address. Being able to read and write about critical theory and philosophy affords students another language with which to talk about these complex ideas.

Critical theory often articulates thoughtful and detailed accounts of issues that pervade popular media, which includes everything from the daily news to satirical comedy like South Park. We think that analyzing popular representation in the media helps facilitate an understanding of the role that fiction and satire play in contemporary society. Because all knowledge carries political weight, it is the context that determines politics. Often times, the overall message of this entertainment contradicts the images used to convey it. Since traditionally aged first year composition students are likely to be familiar with the chosen media, it becomes a powerful tool to explain ideas found within some especially difficult texts. As it turns out, Valentin Volosinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* can be explained fairly easily with an episode of *Futurama* and the proper rhetorical apparatus to connect the two. Students can also utilize the ideas found in such texts to fuel their own analysis of the mass media or vice-versa. It can be argued that using pop media to explain critical theory and philosophy "dumbs down" the sophisticated evidence and argument of those texts, engendering only "surface reading," and a fairly mindless aping of theorists and philosophers. Our pedagogy reaches a compromise on this issue by dedicating extensive time to analysis of the texts themselves and their conventions. Popular media codifications are implemented rarely, and only to demonstrate how abstract ideas from the reading can play out in tangible situations. If left to sink or swim with difficult academic writing, most students drown on the first attempt and then stop trying. Ultimately, there is a difference between treating students as equal human beings and talking over their heads. In *Ways of Reading* David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky were correct to note, "many students feel powerless in the face of serious, complicated writing," (vii). In fact, most are simply uninterested in that which they do not yet understand. Difficult writing can have an alienating effect and can foster a feeling of inferiority on the part of the student, but

we contend that pop-media drastically lessens that effect. Significantly, it is left to the student to interpret and apply the media in a way that elucidates the readings.

This is an empowering practice. It allows students to feel that they clearly comprehend each idea. As a result, the tendency to feel inferior is replaced with confidence. Students may call the difficulty of the text into question. They may believe the author's intent was to overcomplicate a simplistic idea. The truth of the matter is that teaching this material has caused us to ask the same questions on occasion. We attribute this to the fact that most good theoretical writing is immediately understandable once adequately expressed. This does not mean these are easy ideas to come up with, but it does mean that they are relatively easy to understand after struggling to become acquainted with them.

### **Noam Chomsky**

We found Noam Chomsky particularly useful in nascent stages of developing critical support for students to find effective ways to engage difficult texts through the kind of social commentary that manifests itself as popular media. For that reason, his work on the political economy of the mass media and foreign policy turned out to play an integral role in this text for four reasons:

First, he stresses the importance of reaching a wide audience on familiar terms such that even children can understand and be familiar with issues of power and politics. Average people have the capacity to understand the complex ideas presented in critical theory and criticism, but often they lack the training and set of tools to sift through the dense prose. As we've said before, we give our students a series of difficult texts, most of which they don't understand the first time through. By the time we've spent several class sessions giving a close read to these texts, the majority of students can talk about the ideas, re-enter the text and finish with a clear

understanding. We want our students to be comfortable reading various academic discourses, but we don't want our students to write in the same kind of dense theoretical style they initially complain about reading. In fact, we tell them this, and that we would much rather they write like Chomsky.

Another way Chomsky's presence on the class reading list obtained in our course came from the mere fact that since our reading list spans the full spectrum of political views, from the far right with Dinesh D'Souza and his text, *The End of Racism*, to the far left with Chomsky's *9-11*, along with excerpts from *Understanding Power*. The basis for this decision comes from, as mentioned above, the want to have students engage multiple perspectives when it comes to examining rhetorics of power and privilege in contemporary culture. Students should know all sides of the argument, and Chomsky's radical political views about America being the leading terrorist nation surprises students as much as D'Souza's claim that racism no longer exists in America. Since the content of our course focuses largely on examining American nationalism, and representation of race, class, gender, and sexuality, we find it important to understand that the full band of political ideologies is far from limited to the simplistic binary of liberal vs. conservative or democrat vs. republican. We enforce the idea that the kinds of conversations students enter into in writing have been going on for a long time and have taken place between many individuals with many different experiences and opinions. Accomplishing this enables students to confront not only a variety of arguments, but more importantly for a composition course, a variety of argumentative styles.

Next, and perhaps most importantly, the reason we suggest Chomsky gets so much play is what can be said about his style of argument and writing. Whether or not students agree with his views, Chomsky writes his political criticism in an accessible way that allows students to

identify structures of argument and not just ideas. We tell our students that Chomsky goes from “abstract” to “concrete”. By making claims and establishing what is at stake in those claims he sets the theoretical context for a massive thoroughly researched data dump. He says what he thinks then argues his opinion in simple terms based on impressive amounts of relevant research and thus, the “abstract” becomes the “concrete”. We also discuss the effectiveness of how Chomsky addresses opposing views and how doing so supports his argument by preempting a wide array of potential criticisms. Not only does this kind of work help students identify and avoid logical fallacies but it also demonstrates effective structures through which to enter a conversation on meaningful levels. A key example of all this provided to our students comes out of *Understanding Power*, where Chomsky is accused of not providing praxis or a plan of action to solve all the problems he identifies. Chomsky responds,

Well, when you say there’s no “praxis,” I don’t exactly know what that means. There are plenty of things that can be done; I don’t think they have to be described in fancy terms... There aren’t any general formulas about that—you just ask where you are, what are the problems that exist, where are people ready to move?... But I’d be very skeptical if somebody comes along with a “praxis”—you know, some formula saying, “Here’s the way we’re supposed to do it.” I’d be *really* skeptical about that, if I were you. [339]

Not only does this support bell hooks’ idea that merely getting together with people and discussing “theoretical” issues is “doing something about it,” (1994) but this excerpt illustrates for students effective structures of argument. Chomsky may come off as a bit essentialist here, suggesting that “praxis” is synonymous with “indoctrination”, but the dramatization helps make the point. Challenging key assumptions and premises of arguments, like the definitions of key terms and, in this case, deciding whether or not a ‘plan of action’ is actually provided, helps

students identify structural details in texts and demonstrate their attention to structural detail in their writing.

The final reason we rhetorically analyze Chomsky with our students in terms of how he discusses sophisticated understanding of complex ideas is how he can be a mediator between densely written theory and the mass media. In *Manufacturing Consent*, Chomsky navigates the political economy of the mass media as a system of dominance and propaganda. It is not necessary to read the entire book for the purposes of the coursework we suggest. In fact, the preface and the first chapter is enough for them to meaningfully translate critical theory into popular media. *Manufacturing Consent*, allows students to synthesize argument about the vested interests held in the media that addresses the same issues addressed in critical theory. In other words, our students are forced to consider the implications of satirical social commentary on television, backed by various corporate interests vs. the vested interests academics have in publishing literary criticism or critical theory. Inherent in this navigation between media and academic writing is an issue of audience and rhetorical awareness. This question of audience is roughly, “How do various audiences interpret various texts?” Because we stress the fact that all knowledge carries political weight and rhetorical purpose we foreground this question of interpretation before we deal with mass media. Students come to agree (or grudgingly admit) that when people watch popular television shows they don’t necessarily approach it expecting to get a moral lesson about society – the kind of thing they do expect when approaching a particularly difficult philosophical or theoretical text. Thus, Chomsky’s talks about how mass media inherently enforce systemic privilege become realized when students confront the sustaining assumption that television shows like *The Simpsons*, *Futurama*, and *South Park* are for entertainment purposes only.



## Conclusion

Arguably, the prevalence of stereotypical representation of different groups in the mass media affects by and large the entire American political landscape. As such, using the mass media serves as a place to integrate theory with practice, or “ways of knowing with habits of being. We practice interrogating habits of being as well as ideas. Through this process we build community,” (hooks 43). The entire idea of a “learning community” is built upon the precept of clear, whole human communication.

Our use of Chomsky as a contrast to the language of critical theory and philosophy, combined with theoretical and philosophical analyses of satirical animated television shows, culminate to help students “understand and rethink the rhetorical choices embedded in each generic habit,” (Bazerman 1988). Our text by no means facilitates the mastery of any one genre. However, by *understanding and rethinking the rhetorical choices* available, students have the option to apply this sort of genre awareness to other disciplines. Anis Bawarshi (2000) once wrote that, “Genres shape and help us recognize our communicative goals, including why these goals exist, what and whose purpose they serve, and how best to achieve them,” (339). By comparing and contrasting multiple rhetorics as they intersect “contact zones,” these communicative choices can be elucidated. Our specific choice to incorporate animated satirical television shows as a means of mitigating conflict within the context of class discussion makes this process more readily comprehensible.

Whether or not Chomsky (and much of the course reading list) works in these ways within our curriculum is more than an optimistic or idealistic claim. The fact that Chomsky indeed works as we suggest is constantly affirmed within our classroom at the end of each semester when we conduct a day of meta-commentary and reflection. Without exception, one of

the first comments made by students is to the effect of, “Even though I will still laugh at my favorite television shows, I can’t watch them in the same way. I see now, where I didn’t see before, how these television shows address social issues through satire and the representation of different groups and how this practice establishes or tries to establish a sort of social ‘norm’.” We both get comments like these every time we teach, which highly suggests that students leave our class better prepared to do critical consciousness in the rest of their college career. We believe that critical consciousness goes hand in hand with good academic writing, that the ability to pose questions is a prerequisite for being able to articulate logical and persuasive argument. So, the fundamental reason this pedagogical approach to first year composition succeeds is because of the way it treats “critical consciousness” and “rhetorical awareness.” Since students are given a wide variety of styles of argument as well as opinion, they can identify which structures of argument are best suited for the kind of information they want to convey. Drawing these kinds of structural and content oriented connections between difficult texts and familiar experiences is critical consciousness. To explain directly how this improves student writing, again we turn to student comments and feedback on the course.

Every composition teacher has heard students confess that they aren’t looking forward to English because they aren’t a good writer or they don’t like writing. After a semester in English where students write about things that affect their lives, these very students that initially complained usually show the most improvement. By the end of the semester these students are more confident and successful writers who often verbalize their gratitude with comments like, “Writing about things I already had opinions on, really helped me better understand my opinions and the kind of conversations being held about those opinions. But more importantly, as I revised my essays, writing about this kind of stuff helped me be a better writer.”

As their instructors, we can readily agree with them, that their writing has improved over the semester. Confidence in language and ideas coupled with exposure to a mixture of difficult critical texts as well as familiar (con)texts provides students a venue to explore new genres of writing and apply it to their own. We think this is what students mean when they say our class makes them a “better writer.”

## Sample Chapter

We have arranged each of the following sections so that the anthologized readings provide the context for the essay assignments. In addition, we posit that the suggested readings can also be used to develop knowledge of conventions e.g. how to introduce and properly use sources, how to summarize and paraphrase, how to develop personal voice and use narratives in academic writing, how to identify parts of an argument, how to identify logical fallacies, and how to effectively combine theoretical and research driven texts within an argument. This is done by pointing out specific instances where these well-known and relatively famous authors perform these academic “moves.” Once familiar, students are able to begin practicing the same rhetorical devices. Also significant, is the fact that students are asked to use the readings as sources in their own work. In addition to facilitating healthy dialogue, such a schema allows students the opportunity to put many of these “moves” to use with and/or against the same texts they have learned them from. We do this so that students are aware of the conventions associated with professional discourse, and are able to more easily establish authority as they attempt to contribute to that very discourse.

The writing assignments themselves begin with head quotes to contextualize the conversation that students are entering. Next, the section titled “context” talks about specific ideas from the reading that bear relevance to the writing task. This is followed by the assignment itself, which usually takes the form of a page requirement, a statement, and one or two broad over-arching questions meant to provide a framework and structure for the essay. Finally, each assignment has a “how to” section that warns against common mistakes (such as failure to define an abstract term), provides further context for the discussion, and gives both explicit and implicit advice about the handling of the subject matter and relevant sources.

We suggest a period of at least three weeks be dedicated to each essay assignment so that students can peer edit and revise once. Near the end of the semester, students are asked to revisit each essay and submit final drafts in the form of a writing portfolio. Although we do not limit the number of allowed revisions, we require at least two and do not recommend any less.

## **Section 1: Nationalism**

### **Locating Bias in the Mass Media**

“We are going to punish somebody for this attack, but just who or what will be blown to smithereens for it is hard to say. Maybe Afghanistan, maybe Pakistan or Iraq, or possibly all three at once.” – Hunter S. Thompson

“Across the world governments... have heard our message. You are either with us, or with the terrorists.” – George W. Bush

Context: Taking into account the current war(s) in the Middle East, this essay will ask you to assess the ways Nationalist politics and ideology do or do not operate today. Explain how biased rhetoric can influence thinking, and what kind of systems place bias in mainstream venues. The purpose of this assignment is for you to defend your opinions on current American foreign policy, particularly in response to Noam Chomsky Benedict Anderson, and Dinesh D’Souza.

Assignment: **Write a 4-6 page argumentative essay: In your opinion, does the American media demonstrate a nationalist bias? What is nationalism? Use examples from American news (TV, radio, internet, and print) as your data. Use examples from readings to**

**substantiate your claims. According to your analysis of media bias, is Chomsky's propaganda model functioning in the U.S.? Why?**

How To: Write a 4-6 page paper, double spaced, where you explore uses of Nationalist rhetoric.

Do not use the term 'media' abstractly as I have done here. Be specific when referring to different types of mass media. How do Anderson's theories coincide or relate to Chomsky's research? In other words, consider the implications of Chomsky's media research in terms of Anderson's argument that print capitalism fuels the imagined community. Ultimately, evaluate whether or not nationalism brings people together, or more radically sets them apart.

Recommended Reading: Valentin Volosinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, pgs 86-89.

Recommended Media: Futurama *A Taste of Freedom*.

The goal of this pairing is for students to consider how words can be more/less meaningful/powerful and effective based on audience. In other words, considering how language works in different groups helps one become more rhetorically aware.

Questions for critical discussion:

1. Why is Zoidberg's interpretation of "freedom" different from everyone else's?
2. How does Volosinov's hunger analogy correlate to this episode?
3. In this episode, why are the consequences for eating a flag, worse than for hurting someone?
4. How does old man waterfall (the lawyer in the episode) illustrate the differences and disconnects of Volosinov's "I-experience" and "We-experience?"

Recommended Reading: Noam Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent*, preface and chapter 1.

Since *Manufacturing Consent* was written before the 1996 telecommunications act, we recommend updating media ownership tables 1-1 and 1-2.

Questions for Critical Discussion:

1. According to Chomsky, what is the function of propaganda in the mass media?
2. Why does Chomsky say that suspicion and criticism of the propaganda model are necessary for its functioning?
3. How does limited ownership function to marginalize dissent?
4. Take a look at the kinds of experts that appear on table 1-4. Which of these do you consider most credible? Least credible? Why?
5. If you were to update the fifth filter, "anti-communism as a control mechanism," what would you rename it?

Small Group Activity:

Read and paraphrase the following passage from Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's *Manufacturing Consent*. While paraphrasing, remember that you are putting the authors' ideas into your own words. Do not add any of your own ideas to the paraphrase.

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behavior that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfill this role requires systematic propaganda.[1]

Once you've finished paraphrasing, interpret and analyze the passage. What are your opinions, and how would you respond to this?

Recommended Reading: Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, introduction and chapter 3.

Before talking about this text, it may be useful to define the following terms: Nationalism, Marxism, Communism, Capitalism, Bourgeoisie, and Proletariat.

Questions for critical discussion:

1. List a few of the reasons Anderson says that communities are imagined.
2. Is capitalism necessary for nationalism to function?
3. Why does Anderson assume nationalism is bad?
4. If nations are imagined, are they still important?
5. According to Anderson's historical account, what was the significance of Martin Luther's theses in the development of "print-capitalism."
6. What does Anderson say happens to language dialects that are not standardized in print?
7. How do standardized vernaculars reinforce the imagined community?

Analyzing Anderson Quotes:

In small groups find your team's quote in the reading. The purpose of this assignment is to pay close attention to the way Anderson introduces and frames his sources. Discuss how each quote is set up in terms of the larger argument. What are the other rhetorical implications of each quote? Is Anderson agreeing, disagreeing, expanding on, interpreting, summarizing, or paraphrasing?

Team 1:

Pgs2-3 "Marxist movements and states have tended to become national not only in form but in substance, i.e., nationalist. There is nothing to suggest that this trend will not continue."



Team 2:

Pg3 “Thus I am driven to the conclusion that no “scientific definition” of the nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists.’

Team 3:

Pg3 “The theory of nationalism represents Marxism’s great historical failure.”

Team 4:

Pgs3-4 “The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie”

Team 5:

Pg5 “Nationalism is the pathology of modern developmental history, as inescapable as ‘neurosis’ in the individual, with much the same essential ambiguity attaching to it, a similar built-in capacity for decent into dementia, rooted in the dilemmas of helplessness thrust upon most of the world (the equivalent of infantilism for societies) and largely incurable.”

Team 6:

Pg6 “Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.”

Small Group Activity:

Read and paraphrase the following passage from Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*.

While paraphrasing, remember that you are putting the authors’ ideas into your own words. Do not add any of your own ideas to the paraphrase.

Print-languages laid the bases for national consciousness in three distinct ways. First and foremost, they created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars. Speakers of the huge variety of Frenches, Englishes, or

Spanishes, who might find it difficult or even impossible to understand one another in conversation, became capable of comprehending one another via print and paper. In the process, they gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that *only those* hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged. These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community. [44]

Once you've finished paraphrasing, interpret and analyze the passage. What are your opinions, and how would you respond to this?

Recommended Reading: Jean Baudrillard's essay *The Spirit of Terrorism*. We find it helpful to begin discussion by prefacing the context for Baudrillard's essay with his own words: "There is an absolute difficulty in speaking of an absolute event. That is to say, in providing an analysis of it that is not an explanation – as I don't think there is any possible explanation of this event [9-11], either by intellectuals or by others – but its analogon, so to speak; an analysis which might possibly be as unacceptable as the event, but strikes the . . . let us say, symbolic imagination in more or less the same way," (37).

Questions for critical discussion:

1. Does Baudrillard think 9-11 was a global event, and what does he say about its implications in terms of globalization?
2. What does Baudrillard say about the relationship between systems of dominance and terrorism or between power and the will to destroy power?

3. How is Baudrillard's discussion of the zero-sum game relevant to the importance of "Finding all available means of argument?"
4. Symbolic representation is important for Baudrillard in this piece, what does he say about "shifting the struggle to the symbolic sphere," (17)?
5. What does Baudrillard say about a "Clash of civilizations?"
6. How would Baudrillard describe the ideology of terror?
7. What is the metaphoric and structural significance of "suicide" in this text? What does Baudrillard suggest is the desired response from suicidal attacks? Do you agree with this argument? Why or why not?
8. By way of solutions, what does Baudrillard offer in this text?

Small Group Activity:

Read and summarize the following passage from Jean Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism*.

Remember that an effective summary addresses the author's main point in a concise manner and does not include any of your ideas.

When a global power monopolizes the situation to this extent, when there is such a formidable condensation of all functions in the technocratic machinery, and when no alternative form of thinking is allowed, what other way is there but a *terroristic situational transfer*? It was the system itself which created the objective conditions for this brutal retaliation. By seizing all the cards for itself, it forced the Other to change the rules. And the new rules are fierce ones, because the stakes are fierce. To a system whose very excess of power poses an insoluble challenge, the terrorists respond with a definitive act which is also not susceptible of exchange. Terrorism is the act that restores an irreducible singularity to the heart of a system of generalized exchange. All the

singularities (species, individuals and cultures) that have paid with their deaths for the installation of a global circulation governed by a single power are taking their revenge today through this *terroristic situational transfer*. [8-9]

Once you've finished summarizing, interpret and analyze the passage. What are your opinions, and how would you respond to this?

Recommended Reading: Noam Chomsky's *Understanding Power* pgs 12-31, 110-117 and 318-323.

Recommended Media: Noam Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* and youtube clip "Must see Chomsky interview part 1 and 2."

Questions for critical discussion:

1. What is significant about Chomsky's talk of "the framework for debate," (13)?
2. How does Chomsky weigh the differences between "state propaganda" (16) in a totalitarian state as opposed to political democracies?
3. What are the rhetorical implications of Chomsky's statement, "If you ask people, 'Do you want new taxes?' they'll say no; but if you ask them, 'do you want better medical services?' they'll say yes," (20)? And how does this relate to his talks about how elite groups convince wide audiences that they share the same interests?
4. How does Chomsky respond to the criticism that this is all a big conspiracy?
5. Do you think Chomsky believes that the media has a "liberal bias?" Why or why not?
6. Why does Chomsky suggest that democracy is regarded as subversive?
7. Why does Chomsky think our current system is unviable?

Responding to Sources:

As should be noted, the Chomsky readings are actual transcripts of lectures, or town hall meetings. Also worth mentioning is the editing process. The order in which things are presented is not necessarily the same as how they transpired. In other words, there has been some degree of rhetorical thought put into the structure of the information presented. The purpose of this assignment is to analyze the rhetoric of Chomsky's use of dialogue. In small groups please find your quote in the reading and discuss how Chomsky responds to these questions or statements. What purposes do his agreements and disagreements (or sometimes a combination of both) serve in the context of his larger argument?

Team 1:

"Why is it that across the board in the media you can't find examples of people using their brains?" (111).

Team 2:

"Why is that," (111)?

Team 3:

"Well, I don't know if that's "intellectual freedom," for a journalist to say that," (113).

Team 4:

"Couldn't an editorialist say it, though, even if a reported can't?" (113).

Team 5:

"You can't make it sound so uniform, though – like there's only one or two people in the entire U.S. media who aren't dishonest or blindly serving power," (113).

Team 6:

"Noam, the problems you describe in the world sound almost chronic to me – systematic underdevelopment and exploitation in the Third World, proliferation of nuclear weapons, the

growing environmental crisis. What means of social organization do you think would be necessary for us to overcome these things?” (313).

Recommended Reading: Noam Chomsky’s *9-11* Chapter 1, pgs 23-26, and Chapter 6.

Questions for critical discussion:

1. Does Chomsky consider 9-11 a global event? Why or why not?
2. How does Chomsky suggest we respond to terrorist attacks?
3. What kind of language does Chomsky use to define “terrorism”? Do you agree or disagree with his definition? Why?
4. How does Chomsky follow up his abstract definition of terrorism with concrete examples?
5. What does Chomsky say about a “Clash of civilizations,” and how does he define “civilization”?
6. According to Chomsky, where does the terrorists’ “hatred” for America come from?
7. Does Chomsky believe that Islam is dangerous to Western civilization?

Recommended Reading: Dinesh D’Souza’s “America the Beautiful: What we’re fighting for.”

Questions for critical discussion:

1. How does D’Souza represent critics of his argument at the beginning of this essay? What, does he say their criticisms are?
2. What does D’Souza say about a “Clash of civilizations”?
3. How does D’Souza define “terrorism”? In what way is this definition similar to and/or different from Chomsky’s definition?

4. What does D'Souza say about colonialism? Are his conclusions convincing? Why or why not?
5. Why does D'Souza see an increase of Islamic fundamentalism and fanaticism? How does he use a historical narrative to support his claims?
6. How does D'Souza define "multi-culturalism"? What are his opinions about it and how is this an important place for his argument?
7. According to D'Souza, why do terrorists hate the West?

## Works Cited

- A Rebel without a Pause*. Dir. Will Pascoe. Perf. Noam Chomsky. Mediabrat. 2003. Film.
- “A Taste of Freedom.” *Futurama*. Fox, Olympia. 22 Dec. 2002. Television.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1983. Print.
- Aristotle. *The Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle*. Trans. W. Rhys Roberts and Ingram Bywater. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984. Print.
- Balibar, Etienne and Immanuel Wallerstein. *Race, Nation, Class*. New York: Verso, 1991. Print.
- Bartholomae, David. “Inventing the University.” *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003. Print.
- Bartholomae, David and Peter Elbow. “Responses to Bartholomae and Elbow.” *College Composition and Communication*. 46 (1995): 84-92. Print.
- Bartholomae, David, and Anthony Petrosky. *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*. Boston: Bedford/ St. Martins, 2008. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. Print.
- , -. *Facts Artifacts and Counterfacts*. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1986. Print.
- Baudrillard, Jean. *The Spirit of Terrorism*. Trns. Chris Turner. New York: Verso, 2002. Print.
- Bawarshi, Anis. “The Genre Function.” *College English*. 62 (2000): 335-359. Print.
- Bazerman, Charles. “The Problem of Writing Knowledge.” *The Norton Book of Composition Studies*. Ed. Susan Miller. New York: Norton, 2009. Print.
- Berger, Arthur Asa. *Media & Society*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003. Print.
- Bhatia, Vijay. *Analysing Genre – Language Use in Professional Settings*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1993. Print.



- Billig, Michael. *Laughter and Ridicule*. London: Sage Publications, 2005. Print.
- Bizzell, Patricia. "Contact Zones and English Studies." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003. Print.
- , -. "William Perry and Liberal Education." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003. Print.
- Burke, Kenneth. *The Philosophy of Literary Form*. New York: Vintage Books, 1957. Print.
- , -. "Values of Difficulty." *Just Being Difficult*. Ed. Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003. 199-216. Print.
- , -. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*. Ed. Diana Fuss. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism Without Racists*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006. Print.
- Canagarajah, A. Suresh. *The Place of World Englishes in Composition: Pluralization Continued*. CCC 57.4 (2006): 586-619. Print.
- Casanave, Christine. *Writing Games*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2002. Print.
- Chomsky, Noam. *9-11*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001. Print.
- , -. *Understanding Power*. New York: Random House, 1980. Print.
- Chomsky, Noam & Edward Herman. *Manufacturing Consent*. New York: Random House, 1988. Print.
- Culler, Jonathan. "Bad Writing and Good Philosophy." *Just Being Difficult*. Ed. Jonathan Culler and Kevin Lamb. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003. 199-216. Print.
- Davies, Christie. *Ethnic Humor Around the World*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Print.

Dorinson, Joseph, and Joseph Boskin. "Racial and Ethnic Humor." *Humor in America: A Research Guide to Genres and Topics*. Ed. Lawrence E. Mintz. London: Greenwood, 1988. 163-94. Print.

D'Souza, Dinesh. "America the Beautiful: What we're Fighting For." *Rereading America*. Eds. Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. Print.

-, -. *The End of Racism*. New York: Free Press, 1995. Print.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005. Print.

*Futurama* Transcripts. <http://www.imsdb.com/transcripts/Futurama-A-Taste-Of-Freedom.html>

"Girls Just want to have Sums." *The Simpsons*. Fox, Olympia. 30 April. 2006. Television.

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006. Print.

Gramsci, Antonio. *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*. New York: New York University

Press, 2000. Print.

hooks, bell. *Teaching To Transgress*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Hull, Margaret. "Postmodern Philosophy Meets Pop Cartoon: Michel Foucault and Matt Groening." *Journal of Popular Culture*. 34 (2004): 57-67. Print.

Johns, Ann. "Crossing the Boundaries of genre studies: Commentaries by experts."

*Journal of Second Language Writing*. 15 (2006): 234-249. Print.

-, -. "Genre awareness for the novice academic student: An ongoing quest." *Language Teaching*.

- 41 (2008): 237-252. Print.
- Johnson, Allan. *Power, Privilege, and Difference*. Mountain View: Mayfield Publishing, 2006. Print.
- Mackey, Margaret. "Television and the Teenage Literate: Discourses of Felicity." *College English*. 65 (2003): 389-410. Print.
- Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*. Dir. Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick. Perf. Noam Chomsky and Herman Edward. Zeitgeist Films, 1992. Film.
- Marin-Arrese, Juana. "Cognition and culture in political cartoons." *Intercultural Pragmatics*. 5 (2008): 1-18. Print.
- Nilsen, Don. "The Social Function of Political Humor." *Journal of Popular Culture*. 24 (1990): 35-47. Print.
- Oring, . *Jokes and Their Relations*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1992. Print.
- , -. *Engaging Humor*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003. Print.
- Ott, Brian. "I'm Bart Simpson, who the hell are you? A Study in Postmodern Identity (Re)Construction." *The Journal of Popular Culture*. 37 (2003): 56-82. Print.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zones." *Profession 91*. New York: MLA, 1991. 33-40. Print.
- Schroeder, Chris. *Reinventing the University*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 2001. Print.
- South Park* Transcripts. <http://www.twiztv.com/scripts/southpark/season11/southpark-1101.htm>
- Solomon, Evan. Interview with Noam Chomsky. Video Clip. *Youtube.com*. May 2009 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CKpCGjD8wg>.
- The Simpsons* Transcripts.

<http://www.twiztv.com/scripts/thexfiles/bonus/thespringfieldfiles.htm>

Trimbur, John. "Consensus and Difference in Collaborative Learning." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003. Print.

Villanueva, Victor. "Considerations for American Freireistas." *The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary*. Eds. Charles Schuster, Richard Bullock, and John Trimbur. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1991. Print.

-, -. *Critical Consciousness vs Critical Thinking*. Washington State University, Washington. October 2008. Lecture.

-, -. "Maybe a Colony: And Still Another Critique of the Comp Community." *The Norton Book of Composition Studies*. Ed. Susan Miller. New York: Norton, 2009. Print.

-, -. "On the Rhetoric and Precedents of Racism." *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory*. Ed. Victor Villanueva. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English, 2003. Print.

Volosinov, Valentin. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Tr. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik. Seminar Press: London, 1929. Print.

Wall, Susan and Nicholas Coles. "Reading Basic Writing: Alternatives to a Pedagogy of Accommodation." *The Politics of Writing Instruction: Postsecondary*. Eds. Charles Schuster, Richard Bullock, and John Trimbur. Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook, 1991. Print.

Wise, Christopher. *Derrida, Africa, and the Middle East*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.

"With Apologies to Jesse Jackson." *South Park*. Comedy Central, Olympia. 7 March. 2007. Television.

