

From the Editors: In Times of Trouble

Greetings & Reflections

We welcome you—warmly!—to our spring 2020 issue. And we do so, again, with gratitude. First, with thanks for our new editorial assistant, Megan J. Busch, a doctoral candidate at the University of South Carolina. Joining Wafaa Razeq as one of our editorial assistants, Megan brings an infectious energy and unmatched organizational strategies, both of which are welcome and needed additions to our team. Additionally, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Emmy Boes and Nick Marsellas, both of whom have cycled off the editorial team, for their help with the fall issue. In addition, you will find a list of reviewers from 2019 in the final pages of the journal. We'd like to express our deepest gratitude to all of them: the journal relies on the dedicated, thorough, and unremunerated work of reviewers; it is reviewers that ensure that potential authors receive helpful and encouraging feedback. If you would like to join them and review for *Composition Studies*, please drop us a line (compstudiesjournal@gmail.com).

Reflecting in and on this moment brings forth feelings of uncertainty, trauma, and fear. We sit writing this editorial with the United States in the grip of more than two months of stay-at-home guidance brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, daily life has been dramatically reshaped, and new terminology has entered the popular lexicon: social distancing, PPE, Zoom, asymptomatic transmission, community spread, contact tracing, case fatality rate.

As we physically distance ourselves from family, friends, students, and colleagues, avoid trips out as much as possible, and slog through online video conference after online video conference, many parents also balance the Herculean task of caring for children day after day, hosting school from the living room or kitchen, and maintaining professional duties. Others of us attempt to care for at-risk and ill family and friends. All of this work happens amidst mass mis- and dis-information campaigns, and in the context of empirically verified unequal distribution of resources (and illness) across lines of race, class, and gender, and alongside furloughs and layoffs embedded within the exponentially increased unemployment numbers serving as a harbinger of the uncertain times for colleges and universities facing budgetary and enrollment shortfalls that nearly guarantee to shutter some campuses. And, at least as of this moment, it seems that this litany simply foretells coming economic instability (or collapse) and the continued effects of catastrophic climate change.

In short, the COVID-19 pandemic has us in a time of trouble. And though we do not mean this introduction as a lament, there is no doubt that various

parts of our individual and collective well-being are challenged, compromised, and threatened.

In 1912, Edwin Hopkins asked, “Can composition be taught under the current conditions?” – and his answer was “no.” Yet, here we are. Composition instructors have long been teaching in crisis. And, in fact, we are a discipline that understands how to work in uncertain times. From crisis came the robust anti-racist, feminist, and anti-discriminatory work that our field continues to pursue. From crisis came our attunement to labor, in all its forms—domestic, professional, civil, and otherwise. From crisis came our histories, methods and methodologies, programs, theories, and pedagogies. We know how to be effective teachers, even—maybe especially—in crisis. It is one reason that our colleagues in other disciplines and departments come to us—to our writing centers and writing programs and digital studios—in times of need. Explicitly or not, students and faculty recognize expertise: they see that we know how to talk about pedagogy, can help with assignment building, can problem solve technological issues, and can back it up with research besides.

Perhaps that is part of why the networks of support in our discipline are so sturdy. Through channels formal and informal, we already see members of the discipline seeking to be a light for our families, loved ones, each other, and colleagues, as well as our students. From virtual workshops to online conferences, from extended Zoom office hours to backchannel check-ins, we notice everywhere small (and large!) efforts to ease a difficult moment. Take a quick glance at social media platforms and you will find colleagues from across the country extending themselves to help one another. Have a question? Feeling unmotivated? Stressed or overwhelmed? Need a pick-me-up or a brief bit of joy? Folks in writing and rhetoric, it seems, are standing by. These platforms, and others, continue to provide networks of support, connecting many people in our discipline when we need it most.

As we navigate these uncertain times, we know our work as educators offers a sense of stability to students; our programs create communities oriented toward better, more just futures; and our scholarship provides a way of negotiating meaning in a tumultuous world.

Points of Continuity

In the process of trying to understand and reflect on the current moment, we have found ourselves lifted up by small bits of continuity. One such bit has been continued work on the journal’s infrastructure.

For instance, this issue includes a new section: At a Glance: Connections & Collaborations. We see this section as a place for collaborative research studies in the field to present their work—on methods and methodologies, data, results, and implications—in visual form. This section will celebrate

the work we do collaboratively, and we welcome—borrowing loosely from Johanna Drucker’s *Graphesis: Visual Forms of Knowledge Production*—visual representations, interpretations, and knowledge-making graphics. If you and your collaborator(s) would like to be featured in this section, we welcome inquiries via email!

One of our goals for the journal was to build out the online and social media presence, and with the release of the spring issue, we have begun to do just that. First, the CS website has moved to a WordPress site, and as an independent journal, our hope is it will be the permanent location. Some other changes include new house style guidelines, a new logo, and even new fonts. As we mentioned in our fall editorial, the website will also house all of the Course Design syllabi and ancillary materials; we hope this will allow easier access and open space for creative composition of those documents. The new website can be found at: <https://compstudiesjournal.com/> We are also on Instagram (compstudiesjournal) and Twitter (@CompStudiesJrnl), and both are actively maintained.

Lastly, in summer 2020, we will release our first special issue on corequisite writing courses specifically addressing equity, access, and institutional change. Our guest editors, Heidi Estrem, Dawn Shepherd, and Samantha Sturman have been hard at work and gearing up for this issue. It will be released fully online on our website. We are also seeking collaborative editorial teams for summer 2021, so if you have a possible topic, please submit a proposal to <compstudiesjournal@gmail.com>

This Issue

This spring issue offers a number of exciting pieces, including the cover, which Jody Shipka designed. We’re grateful for her work in composing an image that, for us, simultaneously evokes the history of text technologies, the domesticity of our current moment, and the ways the two often intersect with gender. Her cover appears in her characteristic assemblage style and with dedication to detail. Those are, we feel compelled to mention, homemade and hand-decorated *Composition Studies* cookies.

At a Glance: Connections & Collaboration

We are thrilled that Anne Gere, Laura Aull, Gayle Gibson, Laurie Hutton, Benjamin Keating, Anne Knutson, Ryan McCarty, Justine Post, Naomi Silver, Sarah Swofford, and Emily Wilson accepted our offer to compose the inaugural piece for this section. Their infographical diptych represents the collaborative longitudinal research in their recently published and co-authored *Developing Writers in Higher Education*.

The Articles

The issue begins with Sandra Tarabochia's interview-based longitudinal study of faculty writers, which sounds the call to see faculty as both authors and self-authors, as writers who deserve support in the long arc of inventing and reinventing themselves anew. Next, Alex Hanson's piece provides a necessary and timely analysis that focuses attention on the experiences of single mothers in rhetoric and composition. In addition to exploring a "career killer survival kit" for single mothers in the discipline, her piece ends with suggestions for change at organizational, institutional, and departmental levels, and a generous appendix for those interested in further resources. Nathaniel Street's "Affirming Difference" is an exploration of the subject-position of WPA that draws on a wide range of theoretical frameworks to urge administrators to open spaces of similarity and difference through disidentification, multiplicity, intersection, and "not-knowing." Finally, Pennie Gray's empirical study documents and theorizes student pushback to giving critical feedback within peer review activity contexts. Gray finds that students' practices of negotiating social space and linguistic face form discursive patterns; understanding these patterns, which she identifies as "politeness profiles," can lead to improved peer review activity design and implementation.

The Course Designs

This issue's course designs focus on graduate and upper-level undergraduate courses, and both represent departures from traditional approaches to theory, history, and community engagement. In a course design co-authored with graduate students, Ryan Shepherd traces the transformation of a graduate course in composition theory and history into a Teaching for Transfer course. Through multifaceted reflections, the authors trace how their theories of writing became, simultaneously, theories of the discipline; share the 11 questions that framed their engagement throughout the course; and suggest possible tweaks to the course. Rebecca Lorimer Leonard and her co-authors find that redesigning an upper-level, undergraduate Writing About Writing course helps them engage more deeply with literacy scholarship on multilingualism and community engagement.

The Where We Are Section

This issue's Where We Are focuses on an issue in the field near and dear to us: undergraduate research (UR) in composition studies. We are pleased at the number and range of voices that agreed to contribute to the section. To begin, Dominic DelliCarpini and Jessie Moore provide a quick but rich history of UR's networks and institutions. Kristine Johnson and J. Michael Rifenburg

then outline the ways that UR can continue to attend to accessibility, including more specific attention to including student voices. Answering their call are the students themselves: Courtney Buck, Emily Nolan, and Jamie Spallino, all undergraduate students, outline their longitudinal research project for Wittenberg University's Writing Center. Tracing their research process from inexperience to expertise, they quite literally "come to terms" with writing center research through innovation, hard work, and friendship. Finally, Hannah Bellwoar, Jill Palmer, and Fisher Stroud from Juniata College provide a multiperspectival reflection on multimedia UR, finding that, for faculty and students alike, the key to successful UR is starting early, negotiating roles, encouraging one another, pushing at perceived boundaries, and allowing students the freedom to "combine their interests with their coursework and pursue research in multiple media to reach the audiences that matter to them."

The Book Reviews

The book reviews commence with Kristine Blair's insightful, capacious review essay in which she overviews two new volumes on rhetorical study of social media; in doing so, she helps us see the way both books position the multiplicities of social networks as a "vital continuation" of rhetoric's historical roots in the study of ethical frameworks. Similarly, the other reviews make and build on important connections in the field: queerness and methodology, serendipity and writing research, race and WPA work, rhetorical study and feminism, and students and faculty reflecting on Writing about Writing pedagogy.

Stay safe. Be well.

MD and Kt
Boston, MA and Denver, CO
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