

From the Editors: Checking In

Are you ok?

2020 has been a long year.

When we last wrote, COVID-19 had the country—indeed the globe—on late spring lockdown. Since then, the total COVID-19 deaths in the United States has reached over 230,000. The total deaths worldwide are now over 1.25 million. Over the summer, fires raged in the American West, hurricanes battered the Gulf states, and an economic depression set in from coast to coast. At the same time, peaceful social justice protests across the country were met with violence—from counter protesters and police alike—as one of the most bitter, divisive presidential campaigns in recent memory played out across screens, platforms, and geographies. The daily barrage of violence, oppression, mendacity, and unnecessary suffering was, it seemed, more than America could bear. And that was just in the United States.

In our little corner of the world, it often felt like more than teachers could bear, too. Multiple new teaching models emerged—remote, flex, hyflex—each compounding the work of teaching and the exposure of teachers and students more than the last. In some cases, schools began and stayed remote. Others opened, then closed. Still others closed, then reopened, and even now some institutions are moving online after months of being open. The results have been harrowing for higher education teachers and students alike. (This is especially true for those who teach and learn at multiple institutions with differing responses to the crisis). Similarly, academic research has been disrupted across the country. Researchers have had to pause programs and studies, give away precious, guarded writing time, and even fight against retrenchment of the humanities faculty at their institutions. Administrators—often also teachers and researchers—have had to move programs online at a moment's notice, often with no support, no compensation, and no stable institutional response from which to work. For many, this was lonely work: working from home meant missing supportive campus communities, the satisfaction of face-to-face collaboration with colleagues, and the esprit de corps of working with students. For others, this work was far too social: living rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms turned into makeshift offices so that children and partners could continue their work from home as well. For still others, it meant no work at all: the disappearance of guaranteed teaching sections, of needed income, of spaces for institutional and disciplinary belonging.

And, as is too often the case in this country, the suffering was born unequally: women and people of color were disproportionately affected by the virus, the devastation, the shifts; it was an inordinate amount of their work required to try and make things right again.

Just now, however, more Americans came together—despite their differences—to vote and thereby to shape the next era of government. Perhaps, we’ve set a new stage for Americans to listen to each other more and to work together to bridge the social, cultural, professional, racial, and gender inequities that have been exasperated by the pandemic. We look forward to playing our small role in that brighter future.

It was a long year for the world, for the country, for teachers, researchers, and admins, for students, and a long year for us.

So we’re writing to check in on you. We *do* hope you are well. We hope your loved ones are well. We hope that your students and colleagues are well. And we hope you will stay well.

Here at the journal, we are well.

We are also growing. This year, we’ve added a number of new members to the *Composition Studies* team (and promoted others!). Our masthead, starting in spring 2021, will include:

- Megan Busch (South Carolina), as managing editor;
- Lauren Fusilier (Louisville) and Megan van Bergen (UT Knoxville) as blog editors;
- Mike Haen (Wisconsin-Madison), Callie Kostelich (Texas Tech), Emma Kostopoulos (U of Kansas), Alex McAdams (Rice), and Clare Sully-Stendahl (U of King’s College) as content and revision editors; and
- Nitya Pandey (Florida State) and Annemarie Steffes (St. Francis) as social media editors.

We feel humbled to welcome these talented folks to the journal, and we’re confident that *CS* readers will benefit immensely from their skill, dedication, and energy. Our trusted editorial assistant, Wafaa Razeq, will be graduating with her MA from UMass Boston (congrats!) and moving on to a graduate program in library science. We are grateful for her diligent and thorough work, and we wish her all the best in the future.

Additionally, we are thrilled to announce plans for the publication of another open-access, digital special issue in summer 2021. This issue, guest co-edited by Ersula Ore, Kim Wieser, and Christina Cedillo, builds on their work around diversity and justice upcoming in other venues by focusing on the perspectives of BIPOC faculty with respect to disciplinary and institutional exclusionary practices. In summer 2021, the issue will be released fully online on our website. We are also seeking collaborative editorial teams for summer 2022, so if you have a possible topic, please submit a proposal to <compstudiesjournal@gmail.com>

This Issue

The practice of vibrant, creative cover art at *CS* continues. For the fall 2020 issue, Dr. Talitha May created this stark and lively cover. To accompany the composition, Talitha writes:

The woven ecology/social fabric of intersections and repetitions in the cover art meditates on our collective moment. With worldwide Covid-19 deaths in the hundreds of thousands, the flowers take on the role of funeral flowers and invite us to take pause and grieve. The art also draws attention to wicked problems. The landscape suggests that woven throughout our institutions, racism intersects with oppressive systems sustaining inequality. The crowded composition reminds viewers that individuals are complicit in systemic racism—no outside positionality exists. Nonetheless, the open canvas suggests we can create alternative futures.

We find this piece evocative of both our present difficulties and the energy and beauty of a future toward which we can collectively strive. We're grateful to Talitha for lending her art to our cover.

At A Glance: Connections and Collaborations

Always thoughtful, provocative, and probing, Asao Inoue and Mya Poe, well known for their work—individually and collaboratively—on anti-racist writing assessment, created the At A Glance infographic for this issue. This is a compelling contribution: first, because it outlines a number of questions that teachers and administrators can ask themselves when striving towards anti-racism in the classroom and in programmatic initiatives; second, because it is framed as a helpful framework for faculty development more generally; and third, because the infographic is accompanied by a wonderful handout and bibliography, both of which will appear on the *CS* website at <<https://comp-studiesjournal.com/current-issue—fall-2020-48-3/>>

The Articles

The slate of articles in this issue is fitting for our current moment: they cluster, serendipitously, around the theme of *better ways of working together*. Jennifer Ansley's article continues a disciplinary discussion about rethinking archives, how to work in them, and how to teach about them from a queer perspective. By thinking and teaching archives queerly, Ansley not only opens space for investigating archives of queer communities but also for queer ways of investigating archival communities. The result of her framework is that teachers and students approach archives by holding in tension the desire to make sense of

archives and the kind of self-conscious reflection on positionality, narrative, and ethics that knowledge production—and perhaps queerness itself—requires.

Rachel McCabe and Elizabeth Maffetone chronicle how unexpected collaboration—which they term “inventive collaboration”—can emerge from well articulated training programs and, when facilitated by institutional-ecological thinking, can promote student success in writing. With one as instructor and one as writing center specialist, McCabe and Maffetone engage in a kind of collaboration-by-proxy, centered on student writing, that results in a stronger bonds among disparate campus entities, an innovative model for supporting student writers, and evidence of improved agency on the part of the student writer with whom they work.

Finally, Debra Dimond Young and Rachel Morgan provide a study of student writers asking how the combination of community-engaged courses and rhetorically-attuned pedagogy influences student writing processes. In studying 4 sections of a first year communication course, Young and Morgan find three important impacts of “writing for the community” (Deans) that will be of interest to researchers of student writing: changes in students’ conceptions of writing itself; adjustments in the strategies students use for specific audiences; and, based on that, reconfiguration of students’ revision practices.

The Course Designs

This issue offers three course designs, all very different from one to the next. First, Ashanka Kumari and Brita M. Thielen share a unit for an introductory writing course focused on engaging identities, cultivating compassion, and modeling vulnerability: all outcomes of the way in which they—and their students—discuss privilege as a way to link their personal identities to larger systems of opportunity and oppression. Next, weaving their course revision to the threads of programmatic, collegiate, and university expectations, Laura Hardin Marshall and Paul Lynch show how they see the introductory writing course as a laboratory (or a place where thinking happens), not a space oriented to the delivery of written products. This allows teachers and students to engage rhetorical challenges both ancient and contemporary. Finally, Vanessa Cozza’s design outlines how to productively integrate client-based projects (or CBPs) into upper-level technical and professional writing courses. Cozza’s course serves as a model for coordinating internal (at the university) and external (in the community) opportunities to serve as adaptable, immersive learning and writing experiences for students.

The Where We Are Section

This issue’s Where We Are focuses on something we’ve all encountered plenty in 2020: bullshit. Starting from—and then pushing past—Harry Frankfurt’s

important 2005 work, *On Bullshit*, this section offers perspectives on seeing bullshit as an epistemic, identity-informed, discursive formation with implications for personal and public rhetoric, ethics, politics, as well as the classroom. The pieces, each in their own way, strive to both understand and study bullshit and, in doing so, they are ungirded by a shared commitment to intersubjective reality and the role of language in shaping our understanding of and engagement with it.

The Book Reviews

The book reviews begin with Christina V. Cedillo's powerful review essay on (inter-)cultural literacies in which she pushes instructors to be more aware how they uphold white supremacist values. To counter white supremacy, Cedillo draws on Inoue to urge instructors toward "'deep listening' that de-prioritizes [their] own habituated expectations and allows others to speak for themselves" (Inoue 363). Within the context of linguistic and racialized violence, Cedillo's review captures how these two works provide paths for "interrupt[ing] white language supremacy's violent designs."

Next, Jamie White-Farnham's focused review essay tracks an uptick in composition scholarship on ethics through two linked projects with shared subtitles that make their contribution clear: "Rhetoric, Ethics, and the Teaching of Writing." White-Farnham's review outlines how these books push past traditional touchstones for ethics and virtue—moving from the "Q Question" (Quintilian, of course!) and toward the "P Question," (possibilities, naturally). This move, White-Farnham argues, orients attention away from specific theorists of ethics and virtue and toward "a more persuasive and workable . . . both/and" approach to engaging with Western and non-Western rhetorical traditions.

We also have four exciting reviews focused on various aspects of the classroom: digital archives, translingual realities, rhetorical empathy, and paragraphs.

As 2020 slowly winds down and courses wrap up and the last remaining grades are calculated, we're hopeful that brighter days await us all.

In closing, we invite you to answer our opening question, if you're so inclined, in our social media spaces—Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. We genuinely would love to hear and share in the good and the not-so-good; at CS, we believe in listening and learning from each other's moments of hurt and triumph.

MD and Kt
Boston and Denver
November 2020