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The Writing is the Wall: Expanding the Means of Communication with Multimodal Approaches to Teaching Composition

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THE WRITING IS THE WALL: EXPANDING THE MEANS OF
COMMUNICATION WITH MULTIMODAL APPROACHES TO
TEACHING COMPOSITION

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THESIS

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For the Degree of Master of Arts
With a Major in English with a focus on Rhetoric and Composition

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Acknowledgments:

“Those that stood beside me. I glad you understand. Behind these written words. I share the simple plan. To hang on to the way that we feel”

-Chuck Schuldiner

The author of this text would like to take the time to thank the following people for making all this possible.

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Abstract

As the paradigm of communication shifts into the digital realm, it seems only logical that instructors’ pedagogical approaches to teaching writing should shift as well. Though there is still much merit to teaching tradition approaches to composition, are there more modern methods that could be employed to teach communication in a contemporary setting? This thesis shall examine the role that new media can play in a multimodal composition course, as new media seems to be the most effective way to teach rhetorical communication skills in a modern setting. By looking at new media elements, such as podcasts, wikis, and images, this thesis shall attempt to understand how these media come into rhetorical meaning, and examine how instructors can effectively integrate new media into their curriculum for their composition courses. The research of this thesis suggest that while implementing multimodal approaches can be an effective way to teach communication strategies, instructors must careful craft their pedagogies to ensure that these multimodal approaches are fully understood by students.
Introduction or:

How I Learned to

Stop Worrying and

Love New Media
New media, and multimodal assignments provide an innovative way to expose students to the purpose of composition, rhetoric, and communication in a modern context. Learning how to compose in modern environments by using new media is a critical skill that students need to learn so they may progress as writers in a world dominated by technology. As such, this thesis will look at some specific examples of new media, and how they can function within a composition course. In the first chapter digital aspects of new media, podcasts and wikis will be examined in detail to see how students can come to understand how to compose using these media. The second chapter will look at images, specifically how images can convey different rhetorical messages based on how they are employed within a multimodal text. The third and final chapter will look at pedagogical approaches, and investigate specific ways that instructors can effectively introduce multimodal approaches to contemporary composition courses. The goal of this thesis is to examine new media and multimodality to see how these features of the modern world can be used in composition courses.

While there is indeed much merit to teaching new media and multimodality, instructors must be wary about how they integrate assignments, and how they contextualize this style of composing. The multimodal assignments cannot be merely assigned to students for an effective pedagogical action to take place, but the entire process of composing these pieces must be carefully planned so that the deep rhetorical purpose of composition is clear to these students. By looking at various articles, this thesis shall seek to develop a greater understanding of multimodality, and new media approaches for composing. With
this research, it is the hope of this author to show the deep pedagogical value for
students in learning to compose in this new style, and to also show the proper
pedagogical process to ensure an effective approach to composing using new
media and multimodality; students must be made aware of how the composition
process differs with new media approaches, and how rhetorical awareness is
crucial at ever level. The goal of this thesis is to show how various multimodal
approaches can be effectively infused within a curriculum and how new media
assignments are more than mere mechanics, but true rhetorical compositions.

Questions arise in the advent of new pedagogies, and it is necessary to
address these questions, and dispel possible misconceptions about the role of
multimodal approaches to teaching composition. Given the need to integrate
technology into the curriculum, what will be replaced? Will students be able to
understand how this technology works? Will I, the instructor, be able to decipher
this recondite labyrinth of new media? What pedagogical approaches can be used
by instructors to prevent their students from simply applying their previous
knowledge of textual compositions to new media? How can instructors ensure
that their students truly grasp the purpose of multimodal composition? What can
multimodality mean for me as an instructor; how can it help me as an instructor?
This is just a small sample of the copious questions that exist in regard to
multimodal composition, and these are some of the questions that this
introduction shall seek to answer while preparing the foundation for a more
thorough examination on multimodal approaches, and teaching styles in the
chapters to come.
To begin, it is expedient to note how instructors view multimodal classes, and how they view the utility, and practicality, of multimodality. Ultimately, the success of a course of any kind is completely dependent on the instructor. If an instructor lacks confidence in their pedagogical approach, success seems unlikely. In the article “Integrating Multimodality Into the Composition Curricula: Survey Methodology and Results from a CCCC Research Grand,” Daniel Anderson et al. provide a great deal of qualitative research collected through a survey on how instructors implement multimodal assignments in their classes. This survey can provide insight on how instructors view multimodality, what potential merits they see in it, and what thoughts they have on using multimodal assignments in a composition class.

In this piece, Anderson et al. note that instructors who do not teach multimodal courses often question what aspects of a traditional pedagogy are replaced by teaching new media. Anderson et al. note that 76% of their survey respondents “believed nothing was being replaced” (70), and this seems a bit odd because one would think something would need to be displaced in order to inject technology into a more traditional writing class. Here, however, a sizeable majority feels that multimodal assignments do not detract from the educational value of their composition courses, but they seem to feel multimodality only enhances a course. These surveyed instructors feel as if they are merely teaching the same aspects of effective communication in a new light; Anderson et al. go on to note that the survey respondents state that “their teaching of multimodal composing as an ‘alteration,’ ‘shift,’ or ‘remediation’ of conventional
Composition Instruction”. Thus, for those surveyed, nothing is being replaced, but the content is merely being shifted into a new realm for the modern world. While there is much merit to multimodal teaching, as the forthcoming chapters will seek to show, the education goals of composition courses may not be compromised at all. It is vital for students to attain a firm understanding of the purpose, process, and meaning of research and writing skills that are so critical to their academic development, and those surveyed here do not feel that they are sacrificing anything in terms of the traditional pedagogical goals, but they are enhancing them by showing students how the traditional functions of text based writing can be applied to new media.

The results from Anderson et al.’s survey are quite interesting because instructors believe nothing is being replaced, even though they are teaching composition and communication using completely different media than the traditional essay. How can this be? It would seem that much time must be dedicated to simply teaching pupils how operate the software in which they will compose; however, this may not be the case at all, as instructors may be somewhat myopic in their assessment of the new media skills already possessed by their pupils.

In her article, “The Multimodal Writing Process: Changing Practices in Contemporary Classrooms”, Christine Joy Edward-Grove discusses an interesting concept know as third-space learning which takes into consideration the fact that educators are “no longer bound by the four walls of the classroom...” (Edwards-Groves 49). In addition to the expanded concept of classroom, this theory also
takes into account the fact that students bring with them a great deal of efficacy that instructors may not give them credit for. As Edwards-Groves notes, paraphrasing Gutierrez et al., that “as students step into their classrooms, they bring with them a broadening range of technoliteracies knowledge and skills learnt and practiced within out-of-classroom or ‘third-space learning site’…” (50), thus students already have an idea of how the mechanics of digital communication work, and they just need to have these concepts contextualized within rhetorical purpose. In the modern technological world, students seemingly have access to technology at all times, and because of this, instructors are not burdened with spending copious amounts of their own class time teaching this technology because students have access to it on their own, and they may also be proficient in said technology.

With the idea of third-space learning sites, instruction is no longer limited to what occurs inside a classroom, and students themselves are more than capable of learning, and experimenting with these new media on their own, just as they able to take their writing assignments home, and work on various traditional rhetorical techniques. As Edwards-Groves notes, paraphrasing ideas from Matthewman, that “the ‘Net’ generation…have a very different interaction styles with technology than previous generations; and in learning situations they thrive on the utility of technology creativity, social interaction and community” (52); children of contemporary society were not introduced to technology, they were born into it. As such, it would appear as if the role of the instructor in a multimodal setting would be more of a facilitator than a full on instructor.
Edwards-Groves notes that while discussing how she constructed a multimodal assignment that a particular student, Chelsea, stated that she “sort of got the ideas from my teacher and then went home to play with till I got it right’’ (56). Edwards-Grove continues that by “introducing Chelsea to this multimodal way of constructing and presenting text, the teacher produced a generative learning opportunity for Chelsea as she went home to play and practice on her own”. Thus, the role of Edwards-Groves here was not to teach the technology, but to facilitate its use, and allow the student to make use of the third-space learning environment. The role of the teacher in this situation is to show students how to compose in various media and to teach them how communication occurs in various settings, such as podcasts, and wikis. Teaching the mechanics of the technology should not be a primary concern for the instructor, as modern students have been exposed to this technology for their entire lives, and they are able to embrace, and decipher its use on their own as they compose their modern composition creations in the realm of these third-space learning sites.

One single article may not be enough to abate the fears of professors who are not privy to a life lived entirely with technology. As such, it is important to note that the thoughts of Edwards-Groves, and the idea of internal efficacy for technology, are not isolated to her article as Karen Weingarten and Corey Frost, authors of the piece “Authoring Wikis: Rethinking Authorship through Digital Collaboration” also discuss students, and their ability to use technology in a modern classroom.
Weingarten and Frost note when they discuss their wiki assignment with colleagues they are often asked “will the students be able to figure out the technology? (And will I?)” (55), and to this, the authors simply state “the answer is definitely yes”. The authors here also note that “we have found that our students—some of whom either share a computer with family members or do not own one at all—have always willingly completed assignments that require internet access” (48). Thus showing how perhaps this paradigm of technophobia may be slightly overblown, as both instructors, and students alike, seem capable of completed the demands of multimodal assignments. Additionally, other scholars, such as Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher also note students’ technological abilities. In their article, “Globalism and Multimodality In a Digitized World,” Hawisher and Selfe note “that most young people discover how to use computer applications by themselves…without a great deal of formal instruction” (60). So it would seem that the students themselves are more than capable of working with technology, as such, is it possible that a majority of the uneasiness of working with modern tools comes from instructors?

Some of the uneasiness about students and their ability to operate technology may come from the instructor’s own fears. Going back to the survey from Anderson et al., noted that of those surveyed, “97 percent reported…that they trained themselves how to implement multimodal pedagogies into their classrooms…” (74). The survey goes on to also show that a mere “36 percent…reported that their institution or department conducted ‘somewhat effective technology training programs and only an additional
5 percent...indicated that their institution’s technology training was ‘very effective...’.

Thus, given these statistics, it seems as if instructors may view themselves being completely alone when attempting to teach multimodality. Though their students have been born into this technology, their instructors were likely not, and are perhaps lacking in technological efficacy. Because of this, instructors themselves may be projecting their fears onto their students.

Though the trepidation faced by professors may be a superfluous sentiment, it is important to rein potential zeal over multimodality pedagogies. To again quote Edwards-Groves, “multimodality does not replace important foundational writing skills but that the elements of the writing process are extended to account for the shift in textual practices technology demands” (62). Multimodal pedagogies, though an innovative and exciting, are not meant to replace the traditions of a more conventional approach to teaching composition. While taking a multimodal approach to composition courses, instructors must remember that it is their goal to teach effective rhetorical discourse above all else. New media, and multimodal assignments, are but the vehicles for a new era of digital communication, and not the replacement paradigm of rhetorical theory.

Though a mere prolegomenon, the previous pages sought to answer some common questions that can occur when a drastic change, such as shifting to multimodal pedagogies, is suggested for curriculum. The following chapters will delve deeper into certain multimodal approaches, as this thesis hopes to show the prodigious potential in teaching multimodal approaches to teaching composition.
Chapter I:

Podcasts, Wikis, and the Meaning of

Digital Rhetoric
As technology becomes more and more prevalent in the lives of students, teachers, and society the relevant question that presents itself is how can instructors use this information, and this culture change within their classrooms? As the techniques for communication change, our methodologies for teaching our students change as well. As the pen and paper paradigm begins to shift, instructors should be at the ready, anticipating and adapting to what comes next. While the world hovers on the precipice of digital transformation, instructors should use this knowledge to modify their existing pedagogical approaches so our students can learn to communicate in a modern setting while retaining the rhetorical traditions that build strong, meaningful, discourse. Though there are many digital tools that can be exploited to extrapolate pedagogical progress, this chapter will focus specifically on podcasting and wikis, and their use within the classroom. There is indeed copious media that can be invoked for composition, but this chapter shall look specifically at podcasts and wikis. Though the media used for communication may differ from class to class, the goal of teaching these assignments is to provide students with an understanding on how the media used changes the composition process; these basic ideologies can be transferred to many different assignments that can be used to create multimodal communication. This chapter will look at not only how these assignments can be composed, but also look how these assignments can also provide and deeper understanding of the rhetorical importance of audience, ethos, and kairos in a modern setting. This chapter shall additionally look at strategies that can be applied to digital compositions to create more effective communication and expand the vocabulary
available to students for communicating not only in class, but in the future as well.

As such, the goal of this chapter will be to look at how digital media for composition, such as podcasts, and wikis, comes to mean in a rhetorical sense. Students must first understand how communication comes into existence in these media, how arguments are created and interpreted, before they can begin to manipulate these media for their own rhetorical purposes. Though this digital media may differ greatly in form from a traditional research paper, the goal, regardless of media, is still the same: make and support an argument to rhetorically persuade an audience.

To begin to understand the value, and perhaps necessity, of teaching multimodality, it is perhaps first necessary to agonize one of the greatest shortcomings of the traditional research paper before the anagnorisis of the merits in multimodality can be had. Dan Melzer, in his article “Writing Assignments Across the Curriculum: A National Study of College Writing”, reports on an exhaustive survey of what types of writing are being taught at the college level, and the results are worrisome because it appears that students are taught little more than how to write for the immediate purpose of appeasing their professors.

It was the goal of Melzer in this study to show “not just a snapshot” (129) view of what students are being taught in their college writing courses, but to provide a “an overview of college writing through a large-scale survey of writing assignments across disciplines.” With these goals in mind, Melzer’s study was cyclopean in scope, and held not the notion of simply seeking out amphiboly,
orthography, or pestiferous punctuation, but the notion of becoming cognizant of the crux of contemporary composition in college courses. With these goals in mind, Melzer conducted over five years of research, from 2002-2006, which resulted in the collection of 2,100 pieces of writing from 400 undergraduate courses. Again, as Melzer sought to showcase a thorough, not myopic view of composition in college, over 100 different courses from each of the following disciplines were selected: natural and applied sciences, social sciences, business, and arts and humanities. Melzer observed a wide variety of classes, not just English courses, as it was the purpose of his article to provide a comprehensive look at how writing assignments vary across the curriculum. This approach also allowed Melzer to gain insight on how students’ composed not only in their formative years as writers, but as their careers progressed as well. This approach by Melzer allowed him to create a more comprehensive look at how writing courses affected students’ composition throughout their time in academia.

Though Melzer’s study finds many worrisome trends within the copious papers he collected, the fact that 82% of all the writing samples he collected were produced with the purpose of composing under the guise of “Student to Examiner” (132) may be the most disquieting. Such a constrained audience, writing to a singular entity, surely stunts students’ success in their lives outside of academia. When writing to such a constrained audience, our students our loosing the chance to become privy to the purpose of composing. The purpose of engaging in academic writing should be a narrow minded exercise in creating an agreeable argument for an instructor, but to create moving rhetorical discourse
that has the power to persuade not a single entity, but a vast audience. What utility does writing with such a narrow purpose provide a student outside of an academic setting? Wayne Booth noted a similar phenomenon in his piece, “The Rhetorical Stance”.

Booth’s piece was published in 1963, but even at this time, the process of writing was quite myopic. Booth quips that “A student once said to me, complaining about a colleague, ‘I soon learned that all I had to do to get an A was imitate [James] Thurber’” (144). Even in the 60s, students saw that the audience for their work was so diminutive that they could assume Booth’s pedant stance, which consists of “ignoring or underplaying the personal relation of speaker and audience…the notion of a job to be done for a particular audience is left out” (141), and suffer no recourse. The student in Booth’s anecdote found that a passing grade could be attained not on merit, but by ignoring the grander purpose of rhetoric, and by tailoring their work to appease the only eyes that would judge it. Because of this, the purpose of using communication to influence action upon an exigency by persuading a rhetorical audience into action is not necessary, and a student learns nothing of rhetoric, or communication, but only how to transmogrify their communication to imitate, or appease their instructors. This aside by Booth, taken in conjunction with the results of Melzer’s study, seems to show that little has changed in terms of the purpose for composing college writing.

The results of Melzer’s study, and Booth’s alarming aside, show that students are seemingly writing only to their instructors, perhaps not even
composing their own original thoughts, and only imitating an agreeable voice for the sake of a counterfeited grade. Because of these problems, students suffer a stunting of their understanding of the greater purpose of effective writing. This is indeed worrisome, as how can students learn to function outside of academia, when all they are learning is how to appease a single professor? How then can this trend be reversed? In what ways can educators infuse their curriculum, and shift the paradigm of writing away from the esoteric, and into the exoteric? A possible answer to that may be found in a curriculum full of multimodal assignments, as this would open up many new media for communication, as well as the possibility of exposing students to a larger audience. Using new media, such as podcasts and wikis, forces students to contemplate audience in a way that simply may not resonate with them while composing to an instructor alone, as these assignments can be open not just to an instructor, or even an entire class, but the world at large. Though instructors may besiege their pupils the importance of writing with an audience in mind, can that ideology really resonate when a student knows an instructor will be the sole person to set eyes upon their creation?

In Cynthia Selfe’s piece “The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning”, Selfe notes that “By broadening the choice of composing modalities, I argue we expand the field of play for students with different learning styles and different ways of reflecting on the world…” (644), and broadening the scope of composition seems to be a wise choice, especially after the results of Melzer’s study. To extirpate the myopic scope of writing to a limited audience, it may be wise to shift away from using a mode of minute utility (the research paper), and
infuse new media approaches to one’s curriculum. New media can be quite valuable to not only teach students a wide variety of composition styles that may be more useful outside of academia, but perhaps these digital media also hold the intrinsic value of showing students how rhetorical traditions of old can be applied to the modern world.

For students to truly glean every bit of rhetorical, and pedagogical sustenance, they must be willing to take some risks with their work. Leigh A. Jones is one such scholar who is aware of the risks needed to enhance the education bestowed to students in the setting of composition courses. In her article, “Podcasting and Performativity: Multimodal Invention in an Advanced Writing Class”, Jones begins by saying that she herself “decided to take a risk…and try something new at the beginning of an advanced writing course: podcasting” (76). Though it may seem an unorthodox method of composition, Jones actually found a great deal of merit in the pedagogy of podcasting. Not only were Jones’ students more engaged in the activities that she assigned for her class, but they additionally discovered deeper classical rhetorical conventions, and how they could be applied to modern media. One reason for the success of Jones’ podcasting course is the fact that she allowed her students to experiment with this medium in a low risk environment, which in turn lead to increased engagement as there was less risk for her students, and high rewards in terms of understanding the role of this new form of communication.

To begin, Jones first notes that she found that “podcasting has become a popular project for students at the end of a semester” (76), but Jones was not
satisfied with podcasting operating in such a limited role within her class. Within podcasting, Jones saw much merit and pedagogical potential as not only an enjoyable assignment to end a semester with, but also as “an epistemological tool in the invention process…” (78) right from the semester’s start. Jones was particularly curious how podcasting “would work as a prelude to drafting rather than a presentation of their finished work” (76), and this aspect was critical to making Jones assignment supremely effective.

In terms of risk, there is little in the drafting stage, as students here are merely feeling out potential ideas for their final product. For Jones, the podcasting assignment was not the final project for her class, but a mere part of drafting. With negligible pressure, students were able to feel at ease with this assignment, and experiment with their podcasts. Because Jones had the foresight to scaffold her assignment as such, students became more engaged, and willing to work with the material. Jones notes that she allowed her students to “revise their performance as many times as they wanted…and then share their performance with students to receive feedback” (79). By allowing multiple opportunities for revision, Jones also allowed her students multiple chances to not only take the initial risk with podcasting, but also the chance to experiment with the medium several times so they could truly begin to see what worked, and what did not, and thus determine how to genuinely communicate effectively in a new medium.

With the opportunity to have multiple attempts at the podcasting portion of this project, Jones’ students felt more inclined to take risks and embrace the assignment. Jones notes that her students “jumped into the assignment, [and] took
creative risks—the kind they feared with writing assignments—and seemed to enjoy doing so” (76). In addition to embracing the assignment, Jones also noticed that her students also “talked more freely about their writing, and they ultimately produced more authoritative, sophisticated writing, taking ownership over their academic voices…” Not only did her students embrace this assignment, but they also seemed to take more ownership over their work, and take a very serious approach to this assignment. This is partially because her students knew they had multiple attempts to achieve the success they wanted, and as such, they felt free to experiment, and try new things. Because Jones’ students “could re-record their podcasts as many times as they wanted before [the class] listened to them…they could experiment with different voices and rhetorical effects until they were happy with the recording” (82). As the work for the podcasting assignment is done in the early stages of writing, students are not bound to whatever ideas they conjure at that point, and by being free to take multiple attempts, students are willing to take risks, and see and learn from their failures, and thus become cognizant of what works, what does not work, and most importantly, how the process of communication changes while composing with new media.

With the podcast acting as a prolegomenon to a more traditional draft, Jones’ students were able to take risks with the podcasting portion, see how communication changes within various media. Students were able to being to understand how to communicate in new ways, and see how the media of choice changes how communication is constructed. By having the multimodal portion of her assignment take place in a low risk setting during the drafting phase, Jones
was able to assuage the uneasiness her students may have felt, and thus, they were more than willing to take risks, and reap the rewards of this podcasting assignment. Using multimodality as a part of drafting, in a low risk environment, seems to be the best way to get students to engage with a new style of writing. Students will worry about their grades, and were a multimodal concept a high-risk assignment, or the final product for a class, students would likely fret over the tremendous stakes, and revert to past paradigms in an attempt to preserve their passing marks. As such, structuring multimodality in a low risk setting seems to be best as students are more at ease to explore, learn, and truly commit to this new method for communicating their rhetorical ideas.

For Jones, having her students learn that podcasts differed greatly from text-based assignments was critical. Using new media drastically changes how works are produced, and interpreted. Jones is not alone in noting this, as Justin Tremel and Jamie Jesson also used podcasting to show students how new media alters the composition process. In their article “Podcasting in the Rhetoric Classroom”, note that their

Students turned in a transcript of their ‘papers’ so that it was clear this was still a writing assignment. But performing the essays aloud created an experience that differed from the typical writing assignment. Hearing their essays read aloud often illustrated dramatically the areas that students need to improve in their compositions. (Section 10)

Here, for Tremel and Jesson, they had their students create actual written transcripts of their podcasts, here their students were still able to compose
traditional writing to abate their fears, but by having their students read their writing aloud, students were able to see that a text based essay changes in tone completely when read aloud, and students would also be able to see that if they were to transcribe their podcast, that particular form of discourse would lose much of its effect in a new medium. All of this is done with the hope that their students will see that “podcasts, although using elements of traditional instruction, should be recognized as a distinct instructional medium” (Section 13). Here, Tremel and Jesson were able to introduce podcasting to their students early in the semester, so they could freely explore with the assignment, and also come to realize how using new media drastically changes their work, so they could apply these lessons throughout the entire semester.

Jones and Tremel and Jesson use of podcasting as an exordium to multimodality in the drafting phase was critical to this assignment’s success. This approach allowed students to operate in a low risk environment so that they could fully see how a change in medium also changed how communication is structured. While this is one advantage to podcasting, there are many more advantages to be discussed regarding podcasts, and composition courses.

Proper research is perhaps the most crucial components in creating effective communication. Jones notes that perhaps one of “the most useful possibilities for a writing class is that podcasts can help us address the rhetorical conventions of research-based learning and expression that we expect from student writings by connecting the writing process to performance” (77). Here, Jones begins to discuss one of the most critical aspects of composition:
conducting proper research, and she elaborates on how podcasting can be an effective vehicle to convey this message to students.

Research, and learning how to research effectively is perhaps one of the most crucial aspects of a composition course. While composing a research paper, students may see the task as compiling facts for their instructor, and the goal of effective scholarly research is far greater than that. The podcasting portion of this activity allows students to see how their research works in a grander scale. Students can also see immediately how their classmates react to their work, and they can also take part in discussions after their presentation. This allows students to hear first hand from their classmates what parts of their arguments were effective, which areas needed more support, and which areas were relevant and interesting for discussion. Through this process, students can begin to see how scholarly writing truly works. Academic discourse is not static, once something is said others take and interpret their creation, and begin a new portion of the academic dialogue on a topic. By creating podcasts, and the discussions that follow, students can see how their argument is interpreted, how they can create better arguments in the future, and they can also begin to see how the academic debate is constructed.

Another additional benefit to podcasting is that students can also see more clearly how the classical, oral driven, rhetorical conventions can come to life in modern times, as they themselves are partaking in the traditions of old. The roots of rhetoric are situated in oral tradition. Thus, by having students compose first written scripts, as noted in Tremel and Jesson, and then replay them for their
class, students can see how some written techniques might not translate well into speech, and vice versa. To again quote Tremel and Jesson, using podcasting as an oral frame, students can then begin

analyzing the rhetorical appeals of radio pundits like Rush Limbaugh or Al Franken….students can have trouble picking up on tone and other elements of address that are more elusive than semantic meaning.

Analyzing and writing about spoken arguments or works of literature can help students bridge the gap between sound and sense. (Section 12)

Here, Tremel and Jesson again state that rhetorically analyzing a radiobroadcast, or podcast, students can begin to see the gap “between sound and sense”, or the gap between the oral meaning juxtaposed with the textual meaning. Students could analyze classic orators, or radio pundits, to see how they structure their arguments, and then juxtapose the methods of oral discourse against written works to see how each piece is structured, see how they are similar, and see how they differ. Through activities such as this, students can again see how the medium alters the message.

In addition to the helping students understand the role or research, podcasting can also be useful for expanding a student’s perception of audience. Melzer notes that students writing research papers may suffer from a stunted sense of audience, and Jones notes that “Podcasting differs from written and visual methods of invention…because it requires students to articulate their topic aloud, but more importantly, it is a public performance not solely for the writer and instructor’s eyes” (79). Students, while podcasting, are forced to view an
expanded sense of audience because, in Jones’ case, these performances were played for the class in a live setting. As such, students must be cognizant of their audience, what it is this audience will be expecting, how they will react to the material being presented, and if they will be persuaded by the presentation. Unlike traditional written assignments, where a student has to only worry about their argument’s effectiveness as it pertains to their professor, by presenting podcasts live to their class, and possibly the world if their work is made available online, students are granted the opportunity to be mindful of how their argument works on a larger scale.

Another aspect of pedagogical prosperity noted by Jones is the fact that podcasting allows students to take a more authoritative position on their subject, and this, to a degree, also teaches students about ethos. Jones notes that oral presentations and podcasts shift “to some degree, the power dynamics in the classroom by shifting the perception of who hold authority over subject matter” (80). Students were previously subjugated to the will of their instructor, as they were mere peons compared to their professor. However, with podcasting, students can assume a role of authority over their audience, as they are in charge of the discourse. Like any good classical rhetor, given this power, a student must become privy to the all the idiosyncrasies of their topic, lest they have their credibility destroyed by having insufficient facts. This authority shift is not something that is inherit in podcasting per se, but something that must be built into the pedagogy of podcasting to ensure maximum effectiveness.
Jones notes that by taking on an authoritative role with podcasting
“students were able to practice asserting themselves actively in class. Rather than
perpetuating the traditional discursive exchange between students and the
instructor…podcasting performance disrupted the space in class and made us all
audience member” (81), but how do instructors allow students to become
authoritative? One possible solution can be found in choice of topics.

When assigning topics for podcasting, it seems wise to let students choose
something that they are personally interested in. As Jones notes when students
are “drawing from…lived experiences using performance, an activity such as
podcasting allows students to enact an authoritative voice that potentially carries
over into the performance of writing” (81). Theoretically, if a student grew up on
a farm, and they were composing a podcast about farming, they would have a
much more authoritative voice on the subject, because it is something they have
personally done. By allowing students to compose a piece based on their own
personal strengths and experiences, instructors can facilitate an authoritative voice
in their pupils.

Again, as students were able to take an authoritative role by presenting
their podcasts to their classmates, they felt more incline to take risks, and felt
more ownership in their work as the topics they individually choose are very
important to them.

Though there is much merit to podcasting, other media are worth of
discussion as well. Moving on from podcasts, wikis will now be discussed.
Wikis, like podcasts, have been growing in popularity as an assignment, but what
pedagogical fruit can be harvested from this branch of the tree of technology? By implementing a wiki assignment correctly, an instructor can open the minds of students to not only a new method for communication, but an enhanced understanding of ethos, and kairos as well.

To begin, it is prudent to note briefly what a wiki is. A wiki is an open environment collaborative learning opportunity for students. Typically, wiki assignments ask students to compose individual articles that take a specialized view of a larger subject. For example, in their article, “Sharing an Assessment Ecology: Digital Media, Wikis, and the Social Work of Knowledge”, Christopher Manion and Richard “Dickie” Selfe make note of the use of wikis in three distinct courses. Their article examines the function of wikis within an anthropology, psychology, and writing course. As a template, a wiki could seemingly be applied to any subject matter, as within any field there are countless nuances that students could spend an entire academic career exploring.

Returning now to the pedagogical value of wikis, wikis, and other forms of new media have within them the potential to teach young students the importance of ethos. Ethos and new media may seem a strange mix, there does seem to be much potential in new media for creating discussions on ethos.

In her article, “Rhetorically Analyzing Online Composition Spaces”, Laura A. Ewing examines digital media, and how it can be exploited to teach students about ethos. Though Ewing does not make specific mention of the media discussed in this piece, the concepts postulated by Ewing can still be easily tied to wikis, and podcasts as well. In this piece, Ewing notes that new media
assignments seem to be an effective way to expose students to the idea of credibility, or ethos.

In the process new multimodal composition, Ewing notes that while the rhetorical jargon used to describe “the term ‘ethos’ was new to many, the concept was not, and this concept opened the class discussion to their responsibility when writing publically” (557). Students are seemingly aware of what rhetorical credibility is, even if they are unable to understand its meaning through the same antediluvian terms invoked by historians, scholars, and ancient rhetoricians; students seem to understand ethos in a more yeoman-like context. Ewing states that she was “intrigued by how much consideration the students took in creating online representations of themselves” (557), and also that her students were able to see the difference from their “Facebook ‘self’ to their Tumblr ‘self’…” and as such, “they were able to recognize the distinct choices they made and the ethos they created”. Here, Ewing shows how students came to recognize the need to create, and uphold, an authoritative, and knowledgeable rhetorical character while composing in a new media setting. Though Ewing notes specifically on Facebook and Tumblr, the concepts seem even more applicable to both podcasts ‘self’ and the wiki ‘self’, as students will still be able to recognize the choices they’ve made, and see how it compares with other authors in their class, and beyond.

With these online assignments, and the extra emphasis placed on ethos, students not only came to understand how their own credibility would be created and judged, but they also became cognizant of the ethos of others as well. Ewing notes that while watching “argumentative videos on YouTube” (557) her pupils
“found that many of the video arguments were initially persuasive but lacked evidence and credibility. This led us into discussions of pathos and the ethical use of visual rhetoric” (558). Here, Ewing’s students seem more aware of rhetorical invocations of sophism and mere chicanery, and how these methods, which may be effective over the uninitiated, were of little use when juxtaposed with actual rhetorical strategies. Ewing’s students were able to see how important a speaker’s credibility was, and this was due to the fact that they were forced to think about who they were, who their audience was, and how they must present themselves to convey the most convincing argument.

In an open source situation like a wiki, students can not only observe the changes they themselves are making, but they can also juxtapose their work with that of their peers. Through a wiki, a student can observe the changes that their classmates are making, and compare that to the changes that they themselves are making. This can allow students to see what transgressions are being made with compositions they deem to be ineffective, and how revisions of rectitude are created by righteous students. A wiki setting allows students the chance to observe how their peers are composing, and take pause to observe the work, the research the use to support it, and think if their peer is creating a credible perception, and use that to judge their own e-ethos, and if they themselves need to refine their work.

Wikis and podcasts provide an excellent chance for students to learn how ethos works first hand by allowing them the chance to juxtapose their work
against others. In addition to this opportunity to learn of ethos, wikis also hold a valuable chance for students to learn about kairos as well.

To continue this discussion on wikis, it seems to be the right time to discuss kairos, or rhetorical timing. In Collin Brooke’s text, *Lingua Fracta*, some aspects of wikis are discussed, in particular Wikipedia, one of the most prominent wikis currently in use. Brooke notes that “Wikipedia is far more open than comparable reference works” (188), meaning that it can be edited by anyone at anytime. Brooke notes that this leads to problems such as “how are other academics to trust anything that is written by someone under an alias when they have no way of measuring their remarks against reality” (186), and while this is indeed a problem with Wikipedia, it opens up a great opportunity to discuss kairos, or rhetorical timing.

With wikis being such an open medium for discussion, students can now see kairos in action. Traditional academic writing takes months of peer review, and revisions, thus, the academic discussion may change greatly in that time. With a wiki, changes can be made instantly, and as soon as a change in academic discourse has occurred, or if some paradigm-shifting event were to occur, changes can be made instantly on a wiki to accommodate what has occurred. While this instant access to information may seem ideal, it provides a chance to discuss proper timing.

Brooke’s notes that “Wikipedia entries are too often taken as static products-as objects that are simply correct or not, when in fact many of the ‘pages’ are ongoing…” (171). Just like the academic discourse occurring in peer-
reviewed journals, the debate is ongoing in wikis as well. Though students may not be able to get published in their first year composition courses, wikis can be observed, so that students can begin to conjure an idea of how the academic debate is structured. Students can see what topics are still relevant to the discussion, and what is cast aside and currently unimportant. Students can also observe wikis to see how soon events are written on after occurring; though the standards of Wikipedia may be lower, it is perhaps still worthy to see how much time elapses, and how much supporting information is needed before an article is published. Though a rhetorical event may occur, perhaps the kairos of a situation does not warrant an immediate response. Information may come out to offer an antithetical explanation, or perhaps a source will be proven fraudulent; under either of these situations a rhetor’s ethos will be hurt, as immediate action may not always be the best rhetorical action, and this anagnorisis can be critical for young rhetors.

Ethos and kairos are both important aspects of creating effective rhetoric, but these breakthroughs should be of secondary concern when teaching new media such as podcasts and wikis. Prior to teaching any type of rhetorical action in a class, it is of the utmost importance to instill in students the importance of conducting proper research, and exposing students to the proper process of research is another attribute of the wiki. Given the vast amount of information available that comes with any modern discipline’s field of study, wikis seem an ideal medium because students can individually look at specific aspects of a field, and their peers can research and discover the nuances of many other aspects of the
field, thus allowing students to collectively create a better understanding of a subject. For a wiki assignment, students can be split into groups, or work individually, and research on specific nuances of a field or topic. As such, students can create their own work, and view the work of their peers as well; more time will be spent on this aspect of wiki writing latter. The initial topic to be discussed in regards to wikis is their ability to easily transfer a traditional style of writing into a new setting as they conduct traditional research and writing, but for the purpose of a new style of communication.

One of the biggest potential draws of implementing a wiki assignment can be found in the fact that wikis can act as a bridge between classic essay and the modern multimodal assignment; as discussed earlier, it is critical to gradually acclimate students to composing with new media. Manion and Selfe note that wikis can function as a way to bridge the gap between traditional research assignments, and multimodal assignments. In their article, Selfe outlines his personal pedagogical approach to teaching wikis, and reveals some interesting approaches that are particularly useful for instructors. During his class, Selfe notes that “students were responsible for researching, reviewing, and annotating professional resources: online and print pieces…The class started off with very traditional assessment responsibilities. Students handed in resource draft work every week…and a peer-review group” (34). Selfe also notes that “Initially, resource entries were text heavy, and they provided students with abundant traditional research, writing, developmental editing, and proofreading opportunities” (32), and these are critical functions to composition that need to be
retained even within multimodal pedagogical practices. Much like the pedagogical approaches of Jones and Tremel and Jesson, wikis can be integrated early in the semester so that students can use their previous paradigms for communication, and see how they are incongruent with the new media in which they compose.

Selfe briefly mentioned the editing process when describing wikis, but revision is yet another key aspect of teaching effective communication in a composition course. Karen Weingarten and Corey Frost discuss revision in more detail in their article “Authoring Wikis: Rethinking Authorship through Digital Collaboration”. In this article, Weingarten and Frost note that using a wiki, and a collaborative writing style can be used “to bypass some of the trepidation students feel about editing their peers’ work…It shifts the focus from authorship to the actual work of writing…” (51). The authors continue that the wiki shifts the paradigm of editing from correcting simple grammar and format errors to the greater purpose of revision and that is answering the question “What is the most effective way to create the text and to verify its quality/accuracy?’…This shift is fundamental to the open source model on which wikis are based”. While grammar and format are important aspects of writing to understand, Weingarten and Frost note that wikis can be used to bestow students with a more nuanced sense of what it truly means to revise. Proper peer-revision should go beyond simple mechanical errors, and with wikis, it seems that students focus more on the actual content of a work, and work with their peers to decide if a draft is communicating an idea as effectively as possible.
Much like revising, learning to effectively research a topic, and decipher what sources are relevant and important, is critical to any type of communication. Those who compose must be mindful of what they are saying, and have an appropriate level of support for their conjectures. As such, it is critical to know how to research, and how to research effectively. Selfe is well aware of this, and as such he structures the wiki assignment to begin by collecting the building blocks for the wiki. Though it may be tempting to devote an entire class to teaching a new medium for communication, as there is merit in that, it would be foolish to avoid the important aspect of collecting, and developing effective research. The end goal of multimodal courses, and traditional courses, is to teach students how to communicate effectively, and regardless of the media being used, knowing how to collect research, and how to implement it, is of substantial importance. Initially, Selfe’s students collect research in a very traditional manner, and compose in a more traditional and text oriented fashion.

Another effective aspect of beginning a wiki assignment in the realm of traditional research can be found in the fact that it allows for a much easier transition for students into a new realm of communication. As noted in the podcasting section of this chapter, it is critical for instructors to ease their students into new media used for composing. By allowing students the time to slowly grow into their new writing space, students will be more willing to take chances and learn how to compose within their new media. If students are merely thrown into a new style of communication, they will merely apply what they already
know and compose a text essay in a podcast, wiki, or whatever medium an instructor has chosen.

Much like Jones’ podcasting class, Selfe’s wiki assignment eases students into the unknown. Throwing students into a wiki assignment may cause them to panic, and merely apply what they know about writing traditional papers to a new medium, thus, negating the purpose of teaching them how to communicate in a modern sense. By allowing students to begin their work in a more traditional sense, and easing them in to the new medium, as Selfe does by beginning the assignment with more traditional writing pieces and then slowly implementing them into a wiki, students are gradually able to see how communication changes, and see what it is that they need to do to create an effective multimodal piece of communication.

Weingarten and Frost are in agreement with starting a wiki within the realm of a traditional research assignment, then slowly transferring this information into a wiki, as they note that the “writing process is less intimidating to a student when they are provided with a solid starting point…” (53); the idea of writing a wiki can initially overwhelm a student, but by allowing to begin this new style of work in familiar setting students can successfully abate their fears. Selfe continues as he notes that his “students learned firsthand through production, peer review, and usability activates how to effectively use the wiki system to meet the particular demands of their projects” (32). Weingarten and Frost again agree with Selfe’s assessment as they state “collaborative editing can also be useful when presenting models for unfamiliar writing assignments” (53).
Thus, students were allowed to begin creating their wikis in a more traditional research based paper, and they were gradually able to see how it would function within a wiki instead of just composing a wiki from the beginning, in which case students may have fallen into the trap of merely composing a traditional essay in a new medium. Also, through a collaborative editing effort, students can come to better understand how wikis, and communication in the medium, work.

By scaffolding the assignment this way, students were able to learn the critical functions of a traditional research paper, and see how it works within a wiki. A research paper and a wiki both seek to bestow information, and knowledge to an audience, but the setup is very different, and Selfe’s pedagogical approach allows students to see this, as they can juxtapose their own work as the compose both a more traditional piece of research writing, and a wiki.

Wikis, much like podcasts, have much merit and potential as pedagogical tools for enhancing the efficacy of student communication. However, also like podcasting, instructors must tread lightly while invoking wikis. Thought there is great potential, there are also many pitfalls, and instructors must be mindful of these as well, or they run the risk of having their students merely compose a piece in a format familiar to them, thus negating the purpose of teaching students how to effectively communicate in a new way.

Multimodality is no panacea for the plight of myopic misconceptions of audience and purpose. When teachers assign multimodal assignments, they cannot merely assume that audience and purpose for writing will manifest itself to students. It is still the job of the instructor to instill these ideas to their pupils.
While multimodal approaches may be a useful tool for enhancing the understanding of the purpose of communication, it must be understood that there is still a caveat to this pedagogical approach, and instructors run the risk of forsaking real progress if they merely assume a multimodal approach will instantly, and effortlessly, open students’ eye to the true purpose of rhetorical communication.

Even thought the podcasts and wikis are somewhat different when juxtaposed with a traditional written essay, the end goal of effective communication remains the same, and there is perhaps more utility in students learning how to create effective communication in a variety of genres as opposed to composing only effective research papers. As Ewing says herself, “My goal as a writing teacher was to demonstrate to my students how their writing my be utilized in the forms they already knew but for distinct rhetorical purposes” (555). Ewing wanted to show her students how classical rhetorical strategies are still applicable in a modern context, and by doing so, she was able to craft a powerful pedagogy, and show her students how the classical conventions of rhetoric are still relevant.

Wikis and podcasts are fast becoming popular assignments for composition classes that seek to show students that writing is not a myopic exercise in appeasing a single instructor, as the media can be exploited to show a broader sense of audience. Additionally, podcasts and wikis can also be used to show students how some classical rhetorical features, such as ethos, and kairos, can be understood in a modern setting. However, as previously noted, integrating
multimodality is no panacea for the ills of composition courses. If instructors want their students to understand how rhetorical communication takes place, and how it also takes place outside of the context of a research paper, their curriculum needs to be firmly embedded with rhetorical overtones. Additionally, instructors are likely to see much aversion to these assignments as well, as students themselves may be quite unfamiliar with how to properly compose in these settings. As such, instructors must also make sure that there is ample reward for their students to take the necessary risks, so that students fully commit themselves to attempting a new style of composition, as opposed to merely applying the conventions of a research paper to a new medium. Yes, there are many risks involved in attempting to integrate multimodality, but the rewards are there as well. Instructors need to maintain a delicate balance as they seek to show how composition is constructed in a modern setting.
Chapter II

Picture This: The Rhetorical

Functions of Images in New Media
Can you picture a world where text is the only way to communicate? Likely not, as visual dominate our lives. Images are attributed with the ability to convey the same meaning as a chilaid of words, and while this may or may not be true, images can indeed be powerful rhetorical tool to enhance communication. With images, and the great rhetorical utility they hold, but how can students come to understand the role of images, and their role in the creation of rhetorical communication? As such, this piece shall specifically examine the role images can play in communication. Images can become an incredibly useful tool for students learning to compose with new media. However, in order to use images effectively, students must first learn how images come to mean. It is only through a nuanced understanding of images, and what meaning they hold, that students can begin to use images effectively. For years students have been given copious lessons in how text-based communication comes to mean, and in order to augment that text with images, students must become cognizant of the unique ways in which images attain meaning. This piece shall specifically look at the ideas of Erwin Panofsky and the kairotic aspect of images so that instructors and students can attain a better understanding of how images come to mean. It is through this understanding that students can begin to see how images work rhetorically, and it is only then that images can be used in true harmony within the process of rhetorical creation.

In a general sense, images can easily be looked down upon as lacking any rhetorical importance. In their article “Toward a Theory of Visual Argument”, scholars David Birdsell and Leo Groarke thoroughly discuss images and examine
the unjust prejudice levied against pictures. Perhaps the most common complaint against images, as noted by Birdsell and Groarke, is “that visual images are in some intrinsic way arbitrary, vague and ambiguous” (310). The authors continue by noting “This presumption encourages the view that visual images are less precise than words, and especially the written word.” While it is indeed true that images can be vague, ambiguous, and equivocal the same adjectives of amphiboly can be applied to words as well. In order to remedy this, students must come to understand the rhetorical purpose images play within a piece, so that they can understand the higher level in which images can function.

Text, just as images, must be deeply entrenched within the greater rhetorical purpose of a piece. Though many may claim images are vague, and without purpose, this presupposes the idea that a rhetor will chose an image by happenstance, paying no mind to the role that visual aids play in a piece. Though this is possible, and a rhetor may just as easily pick words, phrases and idioms that are vague and purposeless, their prodigious vocabulary, and years of experience using words rhetorically largely prevents textual amphiboly. As such, this lack of visual literacy is something in dire need of change, as images can effectively augment communication, but students must first become aware of how images come to communicate.

If instructors want their students to use images effectively, students must begin to understand how images come to mean, and this begins with their relationship to text. To begin to build this vocabulary, and to unlock the pedagogical power of images, Christian Rosenquist’s piece, “Visual Form, Ethics,
and a Typology of Purpose: Teaching Effective Information Design”, is an excellent place to begin. In this piece, Rosenquist discusses how images and text are not to be separated, but how these features work together to create a single meaning. Within the rhetorical process of creating meaning with images, there is no demarcation between text and image; both operate as one, and must be composed in conjunction.

In this piece, Rosenquist notes that the “most recent definition [of visual rhetoric] is the effective use of visual elements for communicating information” (45); within this definition, Rosenquist states how the role of visuals is to communicate something, which is the same role text plays in communication. Regardless of the media used to postulate an idea, the rhetorical goal of communication is to convey an idea, as noted by Rosenquist above; the goal of images, as well as text, is to communicate something as well. This view is critical for students to understand, as the purpose of visual aids is to convey a message, and images can be used to augment the message a text is trying to convey. For Rosenquist, the role of visual rhetoric is to communicate, so, for Rosenquist, images and text should work together to communicate an idea as they are both working towards the same goal.

For Rosenquist, the text and image should work together while composing a piece of visual rhetoric, and as such it may prove helpful for students should ask some specific questions about their work to get to the rhetorical roots of the message they are trying to convey. What am I trying to communicate? What does this image mean? How does this image relate to the exigences at hand?
How will this image work with my text? How do I interpret this image? How will my audience interpret this image? These are just some of the questions young rhetors should be asking themselves when adding images to their piece. To Rosenquist, images can be an effective way to augment textual communication; however, images can not only be thrown in at happenstance, but must follow the same rhetorical strategies of traditional text, and asking some of the questions listed above may be a useful starting point.

Rosenquist goes on to explain in greater detail how she perceives images to work within a piece. Rosenquist notes that “Images are effective visual elements if (and only if) their natural purposes align with the actual document purpose, but they can fail or misfire if the image chosen somehow distracts from misaligns with [the] actual document purpose” (46). Here, for Rosenquist, images are something that must act in accordance with a text, and not act as mere chicanery to cover up a lack of rhetorical substance. However, the question that now arises is how can students make sure that their images align with the purpose of their document?

To begin to understand how images can work in alignment with text, it is critical for students to develop a language for using images, and an understanding for their rhetorical role in a piece. When students are able to think about how images come to mean, and at what various levels they mean, it is then that images can be used effectively within a text. Because images can entail much more than just an explicit idea, students must become aware of how images can have drastically different implicit meanings as well based on how an image is
interpreted. Frank Serafini is one particular scholar who broaches the issue of visual meaning, and he writes specifically on this subject in his article "Expanding Perspectives For Comprehending Visual Images In Multimodal Texts". Within this article, Serafini brings forth many ideas and concepts that can be implemented to enhance pedagogical productivity, and provides a solid foundation of the process in which images come to mean.

If the ultimate goal of college composition courses is to bestow students with the tools to communicate effectively, students must first have some semblance of a vocabulary to understand how their media comes to mean. Serafini’s article here does a strong job in providing a basic, foundation for an understanding of images at a deeper level. In his article, Serafini makes specific note of art historian Erwin Panofsky, and elaborates on the concepts of Panofsky so that students may begin to understand how images come to mean.

Panofsky provided Serafini with a useful framework for applying rhetorical ideology to images. Serafini notes that “Panofsky identified three strata, or levels, of meaning: (1) preiconographic, (2) iconographic, and (3) iconological” (344), and these three levels of meaning will be discussed in much greater detail in the forthcoming paragraphs. Much like words, the meaning of images can be endless, and an entire text could be written on how images come to mean, and that scope extends far outside the simple goals of this essay. As such, it is important to keep in mind that the system provided by Serafini is just one way to understand how images can come to mean.
The three core concepts of meaning discussed by Serafini can provide a vital foundation for understanding how images work, and at this point, it might prove prudent to not discuss the deeper meaning in terms of abstract theory, but to look at actual images, and discuss the image’s meaning at each of the three levels described in this piece. At this point in the essay, the focus will now shift to a dissection of an image, and show how much meaning can be found within in a simple image. Though it would be easy to pick an iconic image, such as the Tiananmen Square Tank Man, or Thich Quang Duc’s self immolation, it may serve a broader purpose to take an image perceived to be less historical, rhetorical, and canonical to show how this technique can be applied to all images. This approach will provide more utility to students, as they can see how all images, not just historic ones, can contain deep meaning.

The image to be discussed now shall be the cover from Megadeth’s 2004 album *The System Has Failed* (Fig. 1). This album cover may come off as unassuming at first, and would likely tossed aside quickly by critics and casual onlookers as having little rhetorical merit or meaning. However, as the following paragraphs will attempt to show, there is meaning to be found within this image, and the techniques used to extrapolate meaning from this image are transferable to other images that young rhetors may wish to use.
To begin, this piece will now focus on Fig. 1 and discuss at length how it relates to the three levels of meanings found in Serafini’s piece. Serafini notes that the first level in which objects come to mean is preiconographic level. At this level, images focus “on the interpretation of the primary or natural meaning…of visual data with objects known from experience” (344). In other words, students can identify with this first strata on the basis of what a particular image is in a pure, un-rhetorical sense; objects are interpreted in the most Platonic way possible, as they are only conjured up by what their role is as an object.

When these ideas are applied to Fig. 1, students will interpret an image at only this most rudimentary level. As this level of meaning, students will only discern that there are many people on this album cover, a skeleton/monster, and a building; meaning, at the preiconographic level does not go any deeper, and objects and people are only understood as what they are at the most basic level. Though the people depicted on this particular album cover represent something
more than just the general idea of people, and the building provides a powerful backdrop for a strong political message, these distinctions do not manifest themselves at this level of interpretation.

At the second level, the iconographic level, the meaning of an image goes deeper than just an embryonic understanding of what something is trying to represent at its most basic level. At this level, Serafini notes that iconographic images focus “on the interpretation of secondary or conventional meanings which requires viewers to move beyond the literal image to consider their experiences during the interpretative process” (344). At this level, the meaning of simple people from the pre-iconographic level expands greatly. At this level, the collection of people on the album cover are now distinguished from mere humans, and specifically realized as the vast collection of political figures they represent.

At the iconographic level images come to mean based on lived experiences. As a human born in the late 1980s from planet Earth, viewers will be able to recognize the prominent political figures that adorn Fig. 1. Created in 2004, Fig. 1 shows then President George W. Bush, vice-president Dick Cheney, ex-president Bill Clinton, and a host of other major American political figures past and present that would be easily recognizable by a majority of the Earth’s population.

A final discussion in how Fig. 1 comes to mean at the iconographic level, though it maybe less obvious, is the setting. The scene in Fig. 1 is taking place in front of the United States Supreme Court. This amalgamation of politicians purchasing “Not Guilty” verdicts from Vic Rattlehead, Megadeth’s mascot who
will be discussed at length latter, creates a very distinct message, and one that is open to many interpretations, and potential meanings; however, these are all surmises made at another level of meaning.

All of the preceding observations took place at the iconographic level. Again, at this level images come to mean based on the experiences a person has in life. At this level, a person will observe an image, and come to understand it based on what they themselves have seen in life. Abstraction, and judgment has not yet taken place, as that will come at the next level of interpretation.

The final level that Serafini discusses is the iconological state of an image. At this level images focus “on the interpretation of the intrinsic meaning and incorporates the underlying principals and philosophical ideas where cultural ideologies are revealed” (344). Here, doxa comes into play as images begin to mean more than just a dictionary definition and go beyond the literal meaning of who these people and objects are. At this level, readers begin to formulate what message an image is trying to represent both literally, culturally, and symbolically.

In Fig. 1, one possible meaning that viewers can interpret is one of political misanthropy, as a vast amount of politicians purchasing verdicts of “Not Guilty” from Vic Rattlehead, the embodiment of the virtues of see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil; this creature is blind, deaf, and dumb to all of their misgivings, and only cares that his fee is paid, as he stets up shop for verdicts of not guilty outside the Supreme Court. The inclusion of presidents, both current and former,
also plants the seeds for the message of continued failure by elected leaders, and a need for change.

At this level, images can hold various meanings based on how an image is presented, and thus, how a rhetor frames an image can drastically change its meaning at the iconological level. To show how this can occur, another image that represents similar themes in Fig. 1 shall be juxtaposed with a new image, Fig. 2, to show how the same theme in an image can have drastically different meaning.

In Fig. 1, the skeleton, Vic Rattlehead, is most obviously associated with death; however, there is more to this creation than an allusion to the afterlife. This being is adorned with specific marks of torture, as he now permanently wears a visor riveted across his eyes, iron staples forcing its mouth shut, and finally, metal caps cover its ears. Going deeper in meaning, this skeleton is also a represents of the three wise monkeys: Mizaru, Kikazaru, and Iwazaru. These three figures are more likely remembered as the embodiment of the virtues of see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil. The interpretations of Mizaru, Kikazaru, and Iwazaru as being noble or ignoble could lead to endless debate, and how a rhetor frames these qualities in an image will greatly alter meaning, but these types of interpretations do not happen at this level of meaning.

In Fig. 1, there are significant negative overtones given to the virtues of the three wise monkeys. In Fig. 1, these virtues, represented by the Megadeth mascot, Vic Rattlehead, carry highly pestiferous connotations of torture, as well as an undeniable ambivalence to political corruption. However, there are other
times the same image may be used to convey more positive sentiments about these virtues, such as in Fig. 2, which shows Uncle Sam looking sternly over the three wise monkeys reinforcing a more noble sense of these virtues.

Fig. 2. James E Westcott’s photograph, *Uncle Sam and the Three Wise Monkeys.*

This poster, Fig. 2, photographed by James Westcott, the official army photographer of the Manhattan Project, shows the virtues of the three wise monkeys in a much more positive light. Secrecy for the Manhattan Project was a top priority, so reinforcing these virtues has a much more idealistic sense within this image. In Fig. 1, given the transmogrification of the three wise monkeys, and their virtues, into a skeletal monster selling indulgences for political sin, Fig. 1 provides a darker, disapproving representation of this ideology. Conversely, given the connotations of WWII, Fig. 2 can be interpreted in a much more
positive light, by American audiences, as this breakthrough ended the war, and its secrecy may have saved many American lives.

Again, there are many ways to interpret images, and based on the context of an images, very similar images can have very different meaning. Students need to be aware of how images come to mean at various levels, so that they can use images effectively in their own compositions. If a piece of work was looking to show an endearing representation of the three wise monkeys, Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 both portray this concept, but given the connotations within these images, Fig. 2 would be a far better choice than Fig. 1, and students need to be aware of how to properly use images so they may achieve maximum rhetorical effectiveness.

The preceding paragraphs show a few ways images can be interpreted at the iconological level. This is, however, a bit of a tricky level to explain as at this stage images go beyond literal meaning, and begin to take on metaphorical and philosophical meaning, and an audience will have different reactions based on various experiences in their lives, which will greatly change how they interpret meaning. Though the explanation of how Fig. 1 and Fig. 2 differ may seem logical to this author, to others, based on their background and experiences, their interpretations may differ greatly based on their culture, education, or a host of other characteristics. Thus, the potential users of images must now be mindful of their rhetorical responsibility of understanding their audience, and they must anticipate many possible interpretations of images. Rhetors must be able to anticipate possible responses that their audience will conjure up, and it is then their job to exploit it for their own rhetorical purpose.
The three levels of meaning discussed in Serafini’s can be useful for more than just students of visual rhetoric, as these ideas can seemingly transcend. These concepts can be used to show students how to create a more nuanced understanding of not only images, but text, as well. It is critical to understand that a single entity may have multiple meaning, and to effectively employ an object rhetorically, a rhetor must understand the various meanings at these levels.

Moving on from the levels at which images come to mean, the next topic will be images, and their relationship to kairos. The question of images and their relation to time may seem to be a preternatural juxtaposition, as images are typically viewed as static objects, representing a moment in time that will never exist again. However, there may be need to reevaluate this position when thinking about the rhetorical nature of images.

In his piece, “Time and Qualitative Time,” John Smith discusses the idea of kairos, rhetorical time, as it relates to chronos, or temporal time. In this article, Smith deals with time as it pertains to more classical, oral driven invocations of rhetoric. However, the concepts Smith discusses in this piece seem to have some potential overlap with visual rhetoric, and this section of this piece shall try to show how some of Smith’s concepts can be easily applied to rhetorical concepts of images.
Fig. 3. J. Scott Applewood’s photograph, *George Bush: Mission Accomplished*.

For this particular portion of this essay, an image of George W. Bush from his “Mission Accomplished” speech, Fig. 3, will be examined. There is much to discuss with this image, and through this discussion, it is hoped that instructors, and students alike, may come to understand more completely how images work and how timing is also something to be mindful when creating visual compositions.

Prior to beginning a discussion of this image, it is first necessary to discuss kairos, or rhetorical timing, before immediately applying it to images. To begin, in his article, Smith makes note that kairos is “the idea of the ‘right time’ for something to happen in contrast to ‘any time’” (52). In this quote, we have Smith differentiating kairos as not time in a sense of a passage of seconds, but a particular time when a rhetor should take action. This concept seems not only useful to classical conceptions of rhetoric, such as papers or speeches, but seemingly could be applied quite easily to images as well.
When rhetors select images to use with their works, the images themselves are not to be chosen at happenstance, but specific attention must be paid to when the image was created, what meaning the image held at that moment, and what the image means now in the modern context. For the image of President Bush shown in Fig. 3, such a powerful proclamation may have made an immediate, and assertive impact as a visual aid in communication shortly after this speech, but as the years went on, and the war continued, the meaning of this image changed as well.

At one point, Fig. 3 may have viewed as a very powerful, and positive rhetorical image for President Bush. In Ben Voth’s piece “George Bush at a Global Gettysburg”, Voth discusses the rhetorical implications of Fig. 3 in greater detail as he notes that:

This dramatic speech aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln represents a bolder assertion of freedom…The visual imagery of President Bush landing his own fighter jet on the deck of the carrier with service members posting massive banners saying, ‘Mission Accomplished’ constituted a stirring affirmation of the successful end of combat operations in Iraq…(33)

Here, Voth shows a highly idealistic, and powerful representation of this images. At the time, this would have indeed been a powerful piece, as President Bush, entering this rhetorical arena by piloting his own aircraft, declared mission accomplished; as commander in chief, a certain amount of credibility would be
given to this proclamation, and the image, and all the events that preceded it, indeed did create a powerful aura around the idea of this image.

Though Fig. 3 may have one connoted a sense of national pride, optimism abroad, and political decisiveness as noted by Voth, nearly a decade latter the meaning has shown much malleability. In the article “Epidemiology of Combat Wounds in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom: Orthopedic Burden of Disease” LTC. Philip J. Belmont Jr., MAJ Andrew Schoenfield, and CPT Gens Goodman note that from October 7, 2001 and August 24, 2009, American combat forces in OIF/OEF [Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom] have sustained over 40,000 casualties with 5,117 soldiers dying in theater…3,457 soldiers have been killed in hostile engagements, while a further 31,483 have been wounded in action… (3) Here, Belmont Jr. et al. provide a somber look at this conflict, and were this statistical date used in conjunction with Fig. 3, it would create a meaning far less optimist than the aura created by paring Fig. 3 with Voth. The authors here comment on several additional years of vicious combat, and note specifically the staggering number of casualties caused by this combat. Thus, the rhetorical effect of Fig. 3 would differ greatly when viewed through time. Though it was proclaimed “Mission Accomplished” years of fighting followed, and the data provided by Belmont Jt. et al. provides a much darker tone for this image. Thus, the meaning of this image may be drastically changed by how it is presented in
conjunction with rhetorical text, and meaning may also differ drastically over the years, and will likely change drastically again in years to come.

The malleable nature of Fig. 3 also applies for many other images, as timing is indeed everything, and if a rhetor wishes to use images to more thoroughly enhance their communication, they must pay specific attention to the kairos of an image. Images do not exist in a vacuum, but are entrenched in the past, and the present.

Interestingly enough, when taking the kairotic aspects of an image and amalgamating it with Serafini’s piece, the only level of meaning that seems to be affected is the iconological level. Taking Fig. 3 into consideration, regardless of when this image is used, at the preiconographic level, this is still just a man. At the iconographic level, this man is still George Bush, though given extreme circumstances, say if President went on a Bush brutal killing spree, the iconographic interpretation could indeed shift drastically from seeing this man as former President, and a murder instead. So while there is potential for the malleability of meaning at iconographic level, meaning seems to be more susceptible to change at the iconological level.

At the iconological level, meaning can change drastically, as discussed in the previous pages with subtle changes occurring over time. So, when thinking about kairos and the three levels of meaning, students would be wise to note how images are relatively stable at the preiconographic and iconographic level, but at the iconological level, meaning can sway drastically based on when an image is being discussed, and how the doxa has shifted since the image was captured, or
created. Again, it is crucial to note that while the literal meaning of an image will never change at the preiconographic and iconographic levels, as George Bush will always be George Bush in Fig. 3, the symbolic meaning, the iconological meaning, is susceptible to change, and this holds true for every image.

Returning now to Smith, the author here notes the significance of kairos is tied to its “ordinal place in the sequences and intersection of historical events. It is for this reason…that *kairos* is peculiarly relevant to the interpretation of historical events…” (47). Here, Smith notes how images cannot come to mean not in a vacuum, but must contextualized within history to have true meaning. Rhetoric cannot simply exist on its own, within words or images, as it is a purposeful act that exist within the relationship of man, and time. Images cannot exist on their own, but come to mean based on their context, and the world around them, and this is something that is constantly changing. The meaning of an image may change drastically over time, and an image can see its meaning completely altered. Just like Fig. 3, what once may have been viewed as a patriotic symbol of success upon creation, may have taken on new meaning as years, and fighting, went on. This is something rhetors must be particularly mindful of, as the context of history, and how it is perceived is constantly changing.

As our perception of history changes, so to must the meaning of images that capture that history. Because of this, the kairotic features of speech must also be applied to whatever visual a rhetor uses to support their own work. Though images of soldiers entrenched in battle may be a striking visual sure to stir emotion, there are times when an image such as this may be inappropriate for a
variety of reasons. In a time of active war, or while speaking to a group of veterans, it may be the inappropriate time, or lacking in kairos, to augment an anti-war speech with pictures of severed limbs and soldiers entrenched in battle, as perhaps not enough time has passed for these images to be deemed acceptable for rhetorical use based on the doxa of the culture. Additionally, an audience may strongly oppose using visual, and label a rhetorical speech as pandering because of the images used.

The previous pages have postulated paradigms for producing multimodal texts. Though using images may seem a unique way to infuse multimodality into composition pedagogy, instructors must be very careful how they add image-based assignments to their curriculum. Birdsell and Groarke state that modern “Students of argumentation emerge without the tools needed for proficiency in assessing visual modes of reasoning and persuasion” (309), and thus instructors may also feel some pressure to add images to their pedagogical approaches, but specific care must be taken to add this aspect to composition courses.

Though scholars seem to believe it worthy to teach multimodality, perhaps it would be best use two examples from instructors to show why it is important to teach multimodality, and why it is more important to teach multimodality with proper attention paid to the rhetorical process. In these examples, two scholarly articles will be briefly mentioned to show how students benefited from understanding multimodality, and how students failed to achieve all they could with communication when proper mind was mot paid to the rhetorical purpose of multimodal features.
To begin this final portion of this chapter, Arleen Archer’s article, “A Multimodal Approach to Academic "Literacies": Problematising the Visual/Verbal Divide,” will be briefly invoked, as in this article she shows how images can open up new avenues for communication, and allow students new opportunities for communication that they may have been unaware of previously.

In this article by Archer, she is examining the process in which students compose texts, specifically “the differences between the written reports and the visual genre of the poster” (449). Archer is interesting in finding out “whether different modes and genres enable different discourses to emerge…” (450). In this piece, Archer looks at a group of engineering students and observes how they communicate with a poster assignment; however, prior to this assignment, Archer focuses on literacy, but not in a traditional sense of being able to read and write text.

For Archer, her focus is on New Literacies Studies (NLS), which is an attempt “to give social practices account of literacy where ‘literacies’ point to any form of social communication that requires a semiotic code and are not mode-specific” (450), so, for Archer, literacy is something more than a text based skill, but rather being able to interact within the world, and understand not only print text, but a variety of other media used for communication, and how they come to mean, similar to the thoughts of Rosenquist. Archer gives a more nuanced definition of this modern form of literacy when she notes that

To be ‘literate’ then does not simply mean having acquired the technical skills to decode and encode signs, but having mastered a set of social
practices related to a set of signs which are inevitably plural and
diverse…Literacies are therefore understood as multiple, socially situated
and contested (450).

Again, for Archer, as well as others, images are understood in conjunction with a
text and society, not apart from either of these aspects.

Archer’s poster assignment sought to “convey information, argue, or
propose an idea in a succinct and compact way” (453), and these goals are very
similar to those of the written word, but for Archer, she is asking her students to
achieve these goals with a poster assignment which augments text with images.
As such, the goals of composition do no change, and are still quite rhetorical. The
key difference is, however, that Archer is asking her students to do something
more than use simple text, and incorporate multiple modes of communication.

Archer’s poster assignment opens up discourse options to her engineering
students that were previously unavailable. As Archer states, “the texts that the
students produce is a coexistence of different domains of practice…the…visual
nature of the poster genre seems to enable a more comfortable mix of domains
than the written report…” (455). Here, multimodality allows engineering students
to engage styles of communication previously closed to them. Archer notes that
the “genere of the poster…is able to accommodate humour, human values and the
ordinary, whereas the technologically oriented discourse of the written reports is
more impersonal, objective and humourless” (458). Here, Archer is pointing out
that these students of engineering typically focus on the scientific aspects within
their writing. As such, these empirical features do not offer much of a chance to
students to explore the variety of ways to communicate, ways that are more colloquial, or ways that use humor. While these engineering students focused so specifically on a very pragmatic communication style, there are still several other methods for communication available for them, and this multimodal poster assignment allowed these students to see communication and composition in a broader sense.

No longer bound by their discipline, this assignment allowed these students to invoke a new vocabulary, and this assignment was a success because Archer prefaced this project by providing her students with a firm understanding of a new idea of literacy. Because of Archer’s prolegomenon on the new meaning of literacy, her students were able to view the images and text working together to create a rhetorical message. For her students, the role that the images played on the poster was made clear to her students from the onset. Because Archer’s students were contextualized within the rhetorical purpose of the images, they were able to create a piece that may have had separate parts, but came into meaning as a single being. This understanding is crucial, as for students to produce legitimately rhetorical multimodal documents the must understand the process of multimodal composition, and the new type of literacy for images, or whatever medium is being invoked in a rhetorical context.

While Archer’s assignment was a success, partly because she scaffolded her assignment with a keen rhetorical understanding for how things would come to mean in her poster assignment, Cheryl Ball did not meet equal success in a multimodal project of her own. Ball discusses her multimodal assignment in
the piece, “Genre and Transfer in a Multimodal Composition Class”. This section was authored with the assistance of her students Schofield Bowen, and Tyrell Brent Fenn; however, as Ball was the instructor all, citations shall be made to Ball henceforth, as it is her personal reflection as an instructor that is of relevance to this piece.

Ball discusses in detail a project she assigned in this class; Ball’s students were to create a documentary film, and over the course of this class, the students merely “applied the generic structure and conventions of a five-paragraphs essay…” (27) in the videos that they produced. These generic projects were the result of faulty planning because Ball did not contextualize their projects in multimodality. Though Ball had hoped to raise “awareness of critical and rhetorical (as well as technological) literacies…” (19), this did not occur. The students here merely made a five-paragraph essay in a video because they did not understand the difference, or how communication changes across mediums. They did not understand sufficiently the new language for the multimodal part of their project.

Ball’s assignment required students to “create three supplemental texts, separate from the documentary…” (24), and this is a critical shortcoming. Rhetoric is not an independent activity; the rhetorical structure of this assignment should not have been viewed as separate entities, but rather, one grand creation. All of these assignments are working together for the goal of communicating. By taking each part, and separating them and forcing students to view them as individual entities, the true rhetorical purpose of multimodality is lost. All things
should work in conjunction with one another, and by separating them, that is why students applied a five-paragraph essay format to a video; the students did not understand that the video should work with their written work, not as a stand alone rhetorical piece.

This essay sought to show how images come to mean at various levels; though students may understand how text comes to mean, their experience with images, and their vocabulary for understanding images may be lacking. By exposing students to these ideas on how images come to mean, they can more effectively use images within their composition assignments. The end goal of composing is to communicate something, and if a student wishes to communicate something effectively over new mediums, they must fully understand how said objects, words, and things come to mean within that medium. In the case of this essay, it was images, and by showing three potential levels of meaning, and the kairotic importance of images, some idea on how images mean has hopefully been had. The students of Ball failed to effectively use multimodality because they attempted to understand new mediums as they understood text. Though there is overlap in the end goal of communicating something, how communication occurs in different media was not part of their curriculum, and thus, their shortcomings were caused by that oversight.

Images can be a powerful tool, as within a picture one can find a powerful rhetorical aid, but the invocation of images must be done very carefully. Without knowing how images gain meaning, it can be difficult to use an image properly, and an uniformed rhetor may run the risk of counterfeiting their own ethos by
misusing and image. Because images can be such a valuable rhetorical aid, it is
important for students to understand how to use images effectively, so that they
may expand the means of communication available to them, and use images
properly to create a stronger rhetorical message. This section sought to show
strategies for successfully integrating images into rhetorical communication. In
order for the images to truly resonate at a rhetorical level, rhetors must understand
how images come to mean, so they can anticipate how their audience may
interpret their work.
Chapter III:

The Perennial Quest: Searching for the

Perfect New Media Pedagogy
As technology changes, communication must change as well. Instructors must be aware of these changes as they prepare their pupils to compose in a modern setting. However, given the fluctuating nature of technology, should this be a priority? Should instructors spend entire semesters teaching new media to students when this same media could be obsolete in only a few short years? Yes, given the rapid development of technology, it would be almost impossible to suggest a single medium that will be relevant for years to come; however, while media may change, the importance of creating strong rhetorical communication will endure forever, because while the media may change, the message will not. Thus, it becomes important for students to learn how communication is composed in a rhetorical sense, so they may understand the rhetorical implications of the composition process. When students learn this, they learn the true goal of effective rhetorical communication. If students come to understand how they should go about composing, these skills can be applied to any medium of communication, thus teaching strong rhetorical composition skills becomes critical as the text-based paradigm slowly abates in prominence. With that said, this piece shall focus on how instructors can construct an effective pedagogical strategy to ensure that their students understand how to properly compose, and understand, the process of rhetorical communication in various media. This chapter shall examine what approaches instructors can take while implementing multimodal curricula to ensure that students understand the true rhetorical purpose of multimodal composition.
To begin, it seems wise to note why new media should be implemented at all. Gail Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe, in their article “Globalism And Multimodality In A Digitized World,” quote Gunther Kress as he notes that “'The landscape of communication of the 1990s is an irrefutably multisemiotic one; and the visual mode in particular has already taken a central position in many regions of this landscape’” (qtd. in Hawisher and Selfe 57). Here, Kress discusses how the methods for communication are changing. Even two decades ago, Kress was able to see how the visual would come to dominate, and his words ring true even today. As technology, the internet, and digital communication reach ubiquitous levels, it seems prudent to shift our pedagogical paradigms to adapted with technology so students can compose with these shifts, and not against them.

While Kress noted specifically on the changing role of communication in general, Hawisher and Selfe shifted Kress’ ideas into the pedagogical realm. In the forthcoming quotation, Hawisher and Selfe comment on the role of the instructor, and how they must adapt to teach modern, digital communication:

in the twenty-first century many of us cling to the familiar educational tools of the immediate past and continue to teach the rhetorical means to manipulate limited alphabetic representations of reality. Some of our students…raised on visual media find schools increasingly irrelevant-often a burden to be endured in order to obtain degrees that will enable them to pursue their goals (57)

Here, Hawisher and Selfe note specifically on the changes occurring within communication. The text-based paradigms of yore may have been usurped by the
anthropogenic invention of technology; a new, multimodal representation of text may be necessary to better serve the communication needs of the modern student. While alphabetic communication is still a powerful tool, it is indeed limited, and may not resonate with a new generation of students raised entirely on technology. Collin Brooke, author of *Lingua Fracta*, notes that it indeed may be time to modernize approaches to teaching rhetorical theory, the cannons in particular as he feels that “Whatever vitality they may have held for ancient rhetors and rhetoricians has not accompanied the cannons to present day” (30). Here, Brooke notes that the classical conventions of rhetoric may lack resonance with present day rhetors, as the cannons were created with text-based, and oral presentations in mind, thus necessitating change. Though the rhetorical cannons can still provide valuable lessons to students, were they reimagined in a modern context, students might find more utility in these cannons. Hawisher and Selfe note how the alphabetic representation is limited, so Brooke suggests reimagining the cannons within a digital context in order to have students truly understand the purpose of rhetorical communication in a modern context. Though they are not discussed in detail in this piece, Brooke does go into great detail to reimagine the cannons within the context of new media, and this may be a valuable venture. The cannons of rhetoric, and the reason and logic for rhetorical communication, may again become a viable tool in teaching effective communication when re-contextualized within a realm that modern students can understand.

Though it may seem difficult to so sharply shift the scene of classical communication into a computer centered context, it may be what is best not only
for a student’s understanding, but economics as well. Karen Weingarten and Corey Frost state “blogging and wiki-writing are exactly what educators concerned with preparing workers for a 21\textsuperscript{st}-century economy should be focusing on” (Authoring Wikis 56). As the world shifts into an increased reliance on new media for communication, these skills will be necessary for students’ survival in a post-college setting. Even those opposed to technology must recognize its necessity in this digital age.

Shafinaz Ahmed, a student interviewed in Hawisher and Selfe’s piece, states that though she has “never been a big fan of using technology” (64), and that the “thought of [using] technology makes me cringe; it’s foreign to me…if I had it my way, it’d say like that. However, I know this cannot be” (64). Though students such as Ahmed may wish to avoid this shift, it is not possible. The world demands that students have these skills and because of this there needs to be a shift in the paradigm of rhetoric, one that allows the discipline to be centered on new media may, as new media approaches seem to be the best way to teach students the purpose of classical rhetorical composition in a modern setting.

Now that some context has been given on why new media and multimodality should be taught, it is important to address perhaps the most important question in this entire chapter is “Where exactly does the constructive rhetorical work of a production begin and end?” (Rice “Rhetoric’s Mechanics” 368). Viewing these new compositions as rhetorical creations is critical. If we view new media as simply a mechanic used to convey communication, and not an
integral part of the rhetorical process of creation, students will never fully understand how to implement effective multimodal components to their work.

Jenny Edbauer Rice, author of “Rhetoric’s Mechanics: Retooling the Equipment of Writing Production,” states that the purpose of her article is to show “the role of technology’s mechanics…for those of us who want to serve as rhetorical producers and teachers of production in the twenty-first century” (368), and understanding how to integrate the function of new media into rhetoric is of the utmost importance if instructors want students to understand how rhetoric functions within new media. The act of composing a text cannot be separated from the media used to present it. The media used to present a text will not only change how a text is produced, but also greatly change how an audience interprets it.

In this article, Rice states that in Gorgias, Plato questions “whether or not practicing rhetoric is ‘mechanical’ in the same way that a baker makes bread mechanically…” (367). Rice’s framing of the question in this way is perhaps the best way to look at how multimodal tools are used in a classroom. The process of producing communication in new media is indeed rhetorical, and new media is much more than a mere mechanic. If we see new media as merely mechanics, than the act of creating multimodal compositions is not rhetorical at all, but a separate act from rhetoric. If new media is a mechanic, than the act of composing a text is still rhetorical, but applying that composition to new media is mechanical. Rice goes on to explore these questions in greater detail as she
presents an argument for new media as an intricate part of modern rhetorical pedagogy.

To begin, looking at new media as a mere mechanic can be problematic to future generations of students. In her article Rice notes how a focus on grammar and mechanics caused by the late 19th century English examinations by Harvard University caused many outside of the discipline to view Writing Centers and composition courses “as repair stations” (369), and that many “Compositionists have found themselves repeatedly explaining that these pedagogical spaces are not run by mechanics who ‘fix’ broken student writing.” If multimodal compositions are labeled as mere mechanics, the same fate may befall them. If courses are viewed as mere “repair stations” for students who do not know how to operate new media, or places where instructors only teach how media is used, students will not be given the chance to understand how composition in multimodal situations should actually occur. Yes, while it is critical to have proper grammar, and have an understanding on how to create a wiki or podcast, what is more important is why you communicate, and how that communication must occur within new media.

To begin her argument, Rice notes some of the potential pitfalls multimodal composition courses may cause as she states:

when technology is added to the mix, the contours of ‘what we do’ are again thrown into question. Even for those of us who enthusiastically embrace Web-based and multimedia writing….the demands of mechanical
wizardry can often seem beyond the scope of overworked, writing instructors, rhetorical theorists, and pedagogy scholars (367)

Rice notes these possibly shortcomings, and difficulties that instructors may face not to show what must be overcome, but to show a valuable difference that may be overlooked. Yes, it may be difficult for instructors to master new media, but if an attempt is not made, Rice notes that the academic population runs the “risk [of] calcifying a distinction between the production work of texts (including the operations of buttons, cords, and wires that cut and record texts) and the produced texts themselves” (367-368).

Here, Rice believes that if a demarcation is created between the media used to produce the text, and the actual text produced, a great disservice will be done to our students. Much like Harvard English caused a panic, and caused English courses and services to be viewed as mere grammar courses, a similar fate can befall new media composition scholars. If instructors are unwilling to learn and teach new media, and leave that task to technology scholars, students will be blinded to the fact that the creation of a multimodal text is inseparable from the media used to create it.

If there is anything mechanical about the teaching of new media Rice views these mechanics in a completely different light. For Rice, instead of teaching the mechanics of grammar, or new media, a mechanic should teach students “to imagine and improvise solutions and help others imagine what they will need in order to create, repair, or refit almost anything that has parts” (372), and this should be the role of the multimodal instructor. Teaching the mechanics
on how to operate a piece of new media is nowhere near as important as teaching students the purpose of multimodal composition. Knowing how to operate new media, and how to rhetorically craft a message is the most important aspect of multimodal composition courses, not the mechanics of how to operate the media.

When working with new media in multimodal composition courses, instructors should focus on imbuing their students with the nuances of how composition comes to mean in various new media. Teaching students how to operate the tools of new media is not as important as teaching students how the composition process and the meaning of a piece can changes based what type of media is used to present this material. The ideal mechanic that Rice discusses in her piece is what instructors of new media should strive to be, teaching their students how to create effective communication, not simply how to work media.

While the preceding pages have sought to justify the why of teaching multimodal composition, just as important, if not more, is the how. The following pages will now transition into a discussion on how instructors can potentially construct their courses to ensure that students understand multimodal composition, and the intricacies contained within.

For an effective multimodal assignment to occur, a sense of singularity must exist between the actual text that is composed, and the media that is being used to deliver said text. The two ultimately create a single entity, and if they are viewed in an antithetical light, the greater merits of multimodal composition will not be reaped. Rice warned against “calcifying a distinction between the production work of text…and the produced texts themselves” (367-368), but how
can this be done? There are specific nuances to how thoughts and ideas are communicated in various media, and these are crucial to keep in mind while composing. The produced texts cannot be separated from the new media that delivers them, and as such, the question that arises is how can instructors be sure that students understand the connection between medium and message.

One potential way to make sure that media and message remain a single entity is to make sure one’s multimodal pedagogical approach is firmly grounded in rhetorical purpose. Though multimodal assignments have value for teaching students how to compose in a new way, it is still critical to pay attention to the details in planning an assignment, or an instructor risks negating the intended effect of teaching students how to compose in a new way. In a broader sense, Christopher Manion and Dickie Selfe, authors of “Sharing an Assessment Ecology: Digital Media, Wikis, and the Social Work of Knowledge,” give three specific ways wikis should be viewed by instructors to ensure that this assignment provides the most value to their students. Though these three pedagogical practices deal specifically with wikis, these three theories can be applied to a variety of media. These concepts are critical for instructors to keep in mind while composing any multimodal curricula of their own, because for students to begin to understand how multimodal composition works, they must be aware that the media and the message are inseparable.

To begin, Manion and Selfe state that a wiki assignments should “be grounded in our values about knowledge” (26). This first point about wikis is critical, because no matter what media is being used, the goal of any multimodal
assignment is to bestow students with the purpose of effective communication. In a wiki setting, students could merely add frivolous points to a page, and pass that off as legitimate research, or students could add distracting images to a PowerPoint presentation to mitigate their marginal research. While these features may be potentially important to creating an effective multimodal composition, the goal of academic research writing, should go beyond these types of facts, and students should be looking to nuance a topic, and provide legitimate insight to add to the academic conversation. In any course, be it a classical or contemporary approach, students should learn how to communicate effectively and understand the greater purpose of academic writing beyond the myopic scope of student to instructor shown by Melzer earlier in this thesis, or the pragmatic pursuit of grade points. Student writing should instead seek to create legitimate academic discourse that hopes to enhance an academic community’s understanding of a topic.

Manion and Selfe underscore the necessity of contextualizing wikis within proper research writing when they say the goal of wikis should be to imbue students with “the habits of thoughts and practice we want our students to take up, as well as our understanding of how knowledge should be created, disseminated, and valued in the classroom and in the field” (26). Here, the goal of any multimodal assignment should go beyond merely composing for a course or a teacher, and should emphasize what kind of research is appropriate not only in their academic lives, but also in their post-college careers. Biographical research might be critical in composing a wiki for a composition course, but students
should move beyond merely collecting these facts. Using a wiki model an
instructor’s goal should be to show students not how to collect facts, but why
these facts matter and how contribute to enhancing a community’s understanding
of a topic. The goal of a wiki, or any college level writing assignment, is not only
to collect research, a valuable skill that needs to be taught, but to show how
research can be applied to contribute to a more meaningful academic
conversation.

The second step outlined by Manion and Selfe for crafting an effective
wiki continues with the idea of understanding the role of research. The authors
here note that a wiki assignment should be designed “around these habits and
values, and more importantly, turn over the responsibility for enacting this
knowledge practice to our students” (26). As noted in the previous paragraph,
wikis are an important tool for understanding research. This second point by
Manion and Selfe continues to show how proper research, and proper use of
research is critical for any composition in any media. The purpose of any
composition course should be to teach the importance of research, and what can
be done with this research beyond merely collecting facts for an instructor.
Courses in composition should also teach students what questions they can ask of
their research, and how they can continue their studies to the next level, regardless
of what media is used to present their research.

The last line in the previous quote by Manion and Selfe is quite important
as they note the goal of a wiki is to “turn over the responsibility for enacting this
knowledge practice to our students” (26). Instructors teaching new media should
understand that their goal is to teach students how research works at a higher level, so that students may understand how to compile many sources, and how to use them to communicate new arguments effectively using various new media. Traditional research essays function in a similar way as they too teach students how to conduct research, but again the scope can become quite limited. Manion and Selfe want to teach students the purpose of research, and the goal of good research is not just to achieve an “A”, but to create a new legitimate contribution to the scholarly debate, so students must come to understand not only how to conduct proper research in a new media setting, but why as well.

The final point that Manion and Selfe make about multimodal compositions is critical for understanding why multimodal approaches should be used at all. Here, Manion and Selfe notes that instructor’s “approach to assessment should be distributed across a range of stakeholders and contextualized in ways that make work meaningful to students beyond the classroom” (26). The goal of a wiki, and any type of legitimate academic writing, is to show students how to compose for the world at large, and not merely for an instructor or a single class. Thus, Manion and Selfe postulate that these assignments should be viewed in regards not only to their usefulness within a particular class, but how useful they are to a variety of audiences. If the goal of a composition course is to teach students how to compose effectively, it is critical for students to understand that there is an audience beyond their instructor, and their classmates. A piece could be unequivocally brilliant in the eyes of an instructor, but if the piece fails to gain any traction or interest among a larger
group, the student has not created an effective piece of communication, because it lacks resonance larger audience.

Selfe and Manion provided some insight on how an instructor can structure various assignments to be effective, but the question remains, how can students begin to understand the greater purpose of multimodal composition? An ambient approach to rhetoric may be the best way to show students the importance of viewing their multimodal assignments as a single piece of work, and not random entities amalgamated into one. It can be easy to apply pestiferous paragons of old to new media, but in ambience, there is perhaps a solution to this potential problem. In his text *Ambient Rhetoric*, Thomas Rickert discusses an ambient approach to rhetorical situations, and this ambient approach may be the key to teaching students how to properly perceive composition in a multimodal setting.

For Rickert, there is a sense of oneness in composing. On the very first page of his text Ricker notes that society is “entering an age of ambience, one in which boundaries between subject and object, human and nonhuman, and information and matter dissolve” (1). By this, Rickert is creating the idea that the delimitation between man, environment, message, and media is evanescing. All of these sources work together in composing the meaning that is assigned to any rhetorical creation. This idea works well with multimodal composition, as students must understand that their chosen media will alter how their message must be composed, and how it will ultimately be interpreted. Though writers themselves may feel they enjoy a privileged position in the creation of
communication the human writer is no more important than the environment, or the medium used to communicate; all parts are equal in composing a piece of communication. To again quote Rickert, “ambience involves more than just the whole person, as it were; ambience is inseparable from the person in the environment that gives rise to ambience” (9). Ambience here involves everything present in one’s environment. One’s environment works with a person to create meaning, and this thought process is critical for Rice’s effort to avoid new media being classified as a mere mechanic. Taking an ambient look at rhetoric shows how the process of composition cannot be viewed as a separate entity from the final product. Where a piece was composed, how a piece was composed, and in what medium a piece was composed all work together to create its ultimate meaning.

Earlier in this document, podcasts were discussed at length, and they will be dissected again here, but for a different purpose. Here, a sound recording will be viewed in an ambient sense in order to show the strong rhetorical relation between podcasting, and ambient rhetorical approaches.

In his text, Rickert mentions sound recordings several times to showcase his identity of ambience. Rickert notes that recordings are “not just the pure expression of an artist given directly to our ear…” (108) as there is more to the process of recording than just notes a piece of sheet music. Rickert continues that a recording’s “particular ‘sound’ takes part in the environment in which it emerges…” Here, Rickert points out the fact that there is so much more to a recorded piece than the words that are stated, or the music that is played. The
environment in which a piece is recorded also contributes greatly to the ultimate product. Rice herself became privy to this very idea, as in her article she comments on an interview she did and how she discovered why “proper microphone placement is crucial” (381), and notes how this completely changed the dynamics of her interview.

While talking to local Durham residents about Malcolm X Liberation University, Rice discovers that one particular interview she did was quite engaging, but because of her oversight in the recording of this interview, the final product was drastically different. Rice notes, “Although the story they told of Malcolm X Liberation University had been so real and dramatic to me and my partner, the recording delivered a cold, distant sound that undercut the story’s power” (381). Rice made the oversight of not understanding how important the actual recording was to her audio piece. Here, Rice thought that content existed independently from the medium, and the environment, but that was not the case. Though the content of what was said remained unchanged in terms of the actual words uttered, the ultimate perception of the message was altered severely and this is something students need to be aware of because the interview, the environment, and the medium all contribute equally in the creation of the final piece. Rice was not aware of this, and saw the meaning of her piece become drastically altered by this oversight.

Students, while composing a podcast, may view the piece as only an audio recording of a written piece, but there is much more occurring while a podcast is being composed. As Rice found out, how a piece is recorded can drastically alter
its meaning, and students must become aware that the actual recording of audio can drastically alter the message it produces. As Rickert previously mentioned, a piece is more than merely what is being recorded, but the environment in which something is recorded also plays a role in the finished product.

Rickert builds off the ideas of Erik Davis when describing John Bonham’s drums in the Led Zeppelin song “When the Levee Breaks” to further nuance an understanding on how environment can alter a piece. Much like Rice’s experience, the environment in which this piece was recorded drastically alters the final rhetorical product. Rickert states “the recording captured not just Bonham playing the drums or just the drums responding to the room but the room responding to the drums” (8). Bonham himself is not entirely responsible for the timbre of his drums in this song, but the room, Headley Grange, also contributes to the final product. Rickert notes that this was done intentionally, as it would have been simple to isolate each individual drum and cymbal in a soundproof studio, but the recording here is done “to capture not an isolated drum sound or just a drum sound as perfected through Bonham’s considerable technique but a sound’s ambient fulfillment in an environment that brings its own unique qualities.” The final four words here are key to capturing the essence of ambient sound composition. Each room will have its own unique sound, and the unique sound of a room will be responsible in contributing to the final rhetorical message created.

Rickert finally notes that “In another environment, other qualities emerge, and even with the same drums and drummer in the same band, a different sound
will result” (8). The variable of environment is key here. Given the exact same

drum pattern, played by the same drummer in a different location, a completely
different creation would indeed occur. The environment was crucial in shaping
the specific timbre of Bonham’s drumming, and the same goes for any kind of
sound recording. If a student records a podcast alone in their room, the stoic
subdued nature of domesticity will dominate the recording. If a student were to
record in an outdoor environment, that too would change the ultimate sound, as
the movement of the air will provide a whole new breath of meaning into the
sound that is captured.

These above examples show how the act of sound recording is greater than
just the words on a script, or the intentions of performers. The environment in
which something is recorded will also contribute to how a finished product sounds
and comes to mean. It is through understanding the rhetorical nature of ambience
that students can begin to see how podcasts, and any other forms of sound
recordings, are not merely a mechanic, but the media itself is actually contributing
to the final rhetorical creation. Rickert notes that our environments “inhabit us
just as we inhabit them” (42), driving the point home that man and environment
work together, not separately.

Moving on from podcasts, wikis, and their relationship to the ambient will
be discussed here as well. Rickert text dedicates a great deal of time discussing
chōra, or place. The ambient idea of place seems directly applicable to wikis, as
wikis offer a unique, interactive, and collaborative ecology that differs greatly
from traditional scholarly writing. An ambient understanding of the chōra, and
the unique nature of an online composition space may help students understand
the unique nuances of rhetorical communication within a wiki.

To begin this discussion, Rickert notes that

we should begin to consider media not simply the medium by which we
interact and communicate with others but more literally a place…media
function ambiently and ecologically—they are no longer stable….they are
interactive, evolving, and generative (44).

Here, Rickert gives an ambient definition of the chôra in a new media setting.
The place in which rhetorical discourse occurs in the digital realm is not static,
but constantly changing. As such, the individual author must agnize the fact that
they are not alone in composing a piece, but rather a collective entity working
together with others to create a piece. Much like how the natural environment
contributes to the creating of sound, other authors contribute to wikis, and because
of this, it is critical for students not to view wiki composition in a vacuum, but
rather in an ambient way so they can understand that their role is not definitive,
and that they are merely a part in a larger community working together to create a
piece.

Brooks further notes that a feature of wikis is that this medium “is far
more open than comparable reference works” (188), and he continues by noting
that “there are often Wikipedia entries posted the day that something happens”
(190), and Weingarten and Frost note that “the entire text of a wiki is constantly
being changed” (48). Also, in addition to multiple authors sharing a single
composition space, Selfe and Manion also note that while composing wikis their
students realized that as “they began to collecting audio interviews, constructing collages, and annotating digital objects…the visual and oral nature of their work became more important to them and to the success of the site” (32). Because wikis provide a unique environment in which many writers can contribute, and in which many media can be used in the process of composing, an ambient understanding is necessary for students to understand their role in the composition of a larger work.

In the digital world of the wiki, not only are many authors contributing to a piece, but several media can be used to create a singular message. Given this complex process of creating a singular piece, it can become difficult for students to understand their role in the composition process. While writing a tradition essay, the student alone is tasked with creating meaning through a single medium but in a wiki several authors contribute equally to creating a singular piece. Thus, it becomes important for students to realize that others contribute equally to the academic conversation. As Rickert notes, “All beings must be part of the giving of what gives, and the world is what is given, both as meaning and as what withdraws from meaning, even if world is not equivalently given” (161). Though the previous quote may be difficult to digest, it encompasses how ambience can be applied to wikis, and thus will be dissected in greater detail.

The quote that closed the preceding paragraph is important, but to begin to understand Rickert’s deeper meaning, and its application to wikis, this quote first needs to be contextualized. Rickert composed his quote about “All beings…” (161) in a chapter dedicated to ambient attunement, in which Rickert discusses
how pieces of rhetoric come to mean in an ambient sense. With his “All beings…” quote, Ricker is attempting to show that the composition process is not an individual process, but a group effort between man, environment, and in this case technology. Rickert goes on to note in this chapter that in “ambient rhetoric, the important point…is this sense that persuadeability does not appear as simple immanence, as something that emerges from our given social interactions of individuals and aggregates,” meaning that it is not merely human interactions that create meaning, but a combination of everything in existence, much like the iconographic level of images in Serafini’s piece, meaning comes not only from an individual, but the world in which they live. Rickert latter goes on to note that “Rhetoric is not exclusively a symbolic art, nor does it issue sole from human beings. Rhetoric is fundamentally wedded to the world and emerges within that world” (176), thus the world itself is our partner in composition at all times.

Wikis can encapsulate many authors, media, and messages, and as such students composing wikis must be aware that the process of composing within a wiki is much different than composing a paper by themselves. In a wiki setting, students cannot expect to compose a single piece from start to finish by themselves, as others will also join in the composition process and add their own rhetorical perceptions to a piece. In addition to multiple authors, multiple media, such as sound or video can also be added, creating a massive amalgamation of contributions. Students must be aware of this new open method of composition. As “All beings must be part of the giving of what gives, and the world is what is given, both as meaning and as what withdraws from meaning, even if world is not
equivalently given” (161). Everything contributes to ultimate meaning, one person is incapable of composing in a vacuum, and must agnize that many others are contributing as well, and students must acknowledge how this drastically changes the composition process, and as such “All beings must be part of giving what gives…” within the composition process.

In addition to podcasts and wikis, images will also be discussed in an ambience sense to close this portion of this piece. To begin the final portion of this chapter, Arleen Archer’s article, “A Multimodal Approach to Academic "Literacies": Problematising the Visual/Verbal Divide”, will again be briefly invoked, as this article shows how multimodality can open up new avenues for communication and allow students new opportunities for communication that they may have been unaware of previously. In this piece, Archer looks at how images can be used in conjunction with text to create new meaning, but again, it is important for students to note that images cannot merely be added mechanically to text, and they must come to understand the greater rhetorical purpose of this addition in order to create a truly effective piece. Rickert’s ambient approach is again the best way for instructors to inseparably tie the process of composition to the media being used to convey the communication.

In this article by Archer she is examining how students go about composing texts, specifically “the differences between the written reports and the visual genre of the poster” (449). Archer is interested in finding out “whether different modes and genres enable different discourses to emerge…” (450). In this piece, Archer looks at a group of engineering students and observes how they
communicate with a poster assignment; however, prior to this assignment, Archer focused on literacy, but not in a traditional sense of being able to read and write text.

For Archer, her focus is on New Literacies Studies (NLS), which is an attempt “to give social practices account of literacy where ‘literacies’ point to any form of social communication that requires a semiotic code and are not mode-specific” (450), so for Archer, literacy is something more than a text based skill, but rather being able to interact within the world, and understand not only text, but a variety of other texts, and how they come to mean. Archer gives a more nuanced definition of this modern form of literacy when she notes that

To be ‘literate’ then does not simply mean having acquired the technical skills to decode and encode signs, but having mastered a set of social practices related to a set of signs which are inevitably plural and diverse…Literacies are therefore understood as multiple, socially situated and contested (450).

The last lines here by Archer are most important, as to be literate, one must understand that images, and various media, all come to mean not in a vacuum, but in a highly social, environmental context. Rickert notes in his text that “language is not solely symbolicity but symbolicity tied to being thought as enclutured and enworlded” (193). Images do not have a fixed meaning assigned to them, rather, they come to mean within a culture, just like Archer mentions as she states images are understood socially. Students need to be aware of this while composing multimodal assignments that contain images, because though they may perceive a
certain meaning within an image, their audience may have a different perception, and thus environment can again completely alter a piece’s meaning. Rickert also mentions in his text the concept of linguistic idealism, which can also be a helpful tool for students to understand how new media, including images, can come to mean.

Archer noted that images and meaning can be contested, and this is where Rickert’s linguistic idealism becomes relevant to Archer’s quote. Rickert notes that linguistic idealism is “the idea that we have a world and things only insofar as we have words for them” (177). With this, Rickert is stating that an image, or an idea, can only having meaning if the audience has the ability to process and understand the stimuli; certain words, ideas, and images may not have meaning that translates to different audiences. Given the ever-changing nature of meaning, rhetors must be keenly aware of this while composing. Though a rhetor may thing an image, or any type of media, may have a preconceived idea of what something means, this may not be necessarily true for the audience receiving it. Thus, students must be aware of the fact that images cannot be added to compositions at will, as an author must understand that adding an images can greatly change the meaning of a piece.

Archer understood the importance of the inclusion of images in her poster assignment. Archer embedded her work with the concept of NLS. By taking this concept a step further, and adding in Rickert’s ambient sense of composition, and linguistic idealism, the role of images in a rhetorical creation can more completely
understood by students, and they can become privy to the purpose, and process of composing while using images.

Brooke notes that new media is “the next logical step in the growth of our discipline” (5), and being aware of how to effectively teach new media through multimodal composition courses is critical to ensure pedagogical success. Taking the traditions, values, and approaches of classical rhetorical compositions and showing students how these methods for composing can be applied to the new media the drives modern communication is a critical skill for success in the new age of communication. With that said, the blind application of multimodal pedagogies to contemporary composition classes would be disastrous. Instructors themselves must first understand how communication takes place within various new media, because the methods of communicating within various media changes greatly. Instructors must be privy to how the process of composing changes within the various types of media. It is not enough for modern students to know how to operate new media, but they must also have a strong grasp on what it truly means to compose in new media. Students must be aware of the unique process that comes with composing in each media, and perhaps the best way for students to understand the inseparable nature of media and message is through an ambient approach. This chapter attempted to show the importance of teaching multimodal composition, and the importance of correctly teaching multimodality to ensure that students understood how to compose effective multimodal pieces.
Conclusion:

A Moment of Clarity
Turning and turning is the widening gyre of rhetoric. With the influx of new media, and multimodal breakthroughs within the last decade some classical scholars may insist that mere anarchy is loose upon the field as the cannons become undone and the crimson tide of the digital paradigm drowns the discipline as the noxious practitioners of this paragon are full of the utmost intensity. The locus of rhetoric, and composition, has been textual for some time now, but change is coming. In this increasingly multimodal world, it would be a disservice for instructors to focus only on the textual medium for communication. As such, this thesis sought to investigate new media, and examine its role in communication, its rhetorical importance, and what role it can serve to expand the available options of communication for students. By showing how podcasts, wikis, and images come to mean new avenues of instruction can be had by instructors. By grounding these multimodal approaches within a rhetorical context students can come to understand not only how new media works, but also how composition functions at a deeper rhetorical level as well. This thesis also sought show how new media can be used to augment text-based communication, thus explaining the available means of suasion available for students. These are just some of the benefits that multimodal approaches to composition course can have for students and instructors alike. As learning to manipulate the ubiquitous technology becomes less of a skill, and more of a necessity, multimodal pedagogical approaches seem destined to dominate the vanguard of modern classrooms.
As technology nears universal ubiquity, the paradigm of pen and paper communication becomes increasingly impractical as the only method given to students for communication in their composition courses. If the goal of writing courses is to grant students the tools to communicate effectively, how can the focus be so highly skewed towards text documents? Within new media there is copious potential for effective communication, but students need to be given an expanded understanding to utilize these media effectively. Though the modes may change, the methods for communicating remain the same, and they remain firmly grounded in rhetorical theory. The goal now is attempting to discover how rhetorical theory can be applied to these media so that students can truly understand the rhetorical purpose, and methods, of communicating through multimodal documents. Though instructors may view these features of modern composition unfavorably, the previous chapters sought to show how effective approaches can be taken to new media and multimodal assignments.

Within multimodal approaches, instructors may find a methodology that resonates with their students. Though there is indeed much merit to a traditional text based research paper, as this majority of this thesis is indeed that, students will likely find minimal utility in this type of assignment outside of the context of a writing class. By showing students how rhetorical communication can be applied to new media, and teaching them how to take a rhetorical approach to unconventional communication methods, students be better prepared for what is expected of them beyond a college writing classroom. By taking a multimodal approach to teaching composition, and by showing students how podcasts, wikis,
and images come to mean, students can gain a deeper understanding of how the rhetorical writing process works. Students can then apply these concepts to the next wave of media conjured by the digital creators.

The media discussed in this piece may be relevant for the next thousand years, or the next eleven days, but that is not the point. The goal of this thesis was not to show how to mechanically operate the media presented, but how the rhetorical process in which the media came into meaning.

Hardly are these words out, and the vast image of new media comes, but it does not trouble my sight. After discussing podcasts, wikis, and images at length, their merit, and how they can be introduced and understood has hopefully abated some of the fear of the second coming of composition. New media can be an important piece to modern communication, and something that should not be feared, but explained and taught so that others may make use of these vital tools. Ignoring new media, and the role it can play in communication, only stunts the growth of students, and this misoneistic stance on new media cannot be taken. As such, when new media is an afterthought in the classroom, modern students will “emerge without the tools needed for proficiency in assessing visual modes of reasoning and persuasion” (Birdsell & Groarke 309), thus students are denied an outlet to expand their means of communication. While this thesis was not the definitive discussion on the merits of multimodality, it is the hope of this author that the readers of this piece will begin to think about how multimodal compositions work, and how they can be used to enhance students’ understanding of modern composition. It was not the goal of this thesis to be the iconoclast of
textual rhetoric, but to discuss the many merits of new media, and discuss the key function rhetoric plays in communication regardless of media.
Works Cited


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