

ENG 7980

History and Theories of Composition



Final Project



Everyone in composition studies has tacit theories of composition: how it should be taught, how it should be researched, and who we are as a field. The Final Project is designed not only to get students to start making those tacit theories concrete but also to encourage students to justify their positions on those issues. The Final Project is not intended to be the final say on your theories about composition, however. Instead, it's designed to get you thinking about these issues so that you can continue to build and change your theories over your career. In particular, the Final Project should work through the following questions:

- How do you define “composition”?
- What is the relationship between composition studies and English studies?
- How should composition be taught?
- What are the goals of composition in FYC and upper-level composition classes?
- How can these goals be met?
- How should composition be studied? Why?
- What are the goals of composition research?
- What methodologies can best lead us to these goals?
- What ties us together as a discipline?
- What are the central “threshold concepts” of composition studies?
- How do these concepts inform your teaching and research?

To answer these questions, you will first write a proposal answering these questions that will get feedback from your peers and Ryan. You will then write a report that is well grounded in the theories of the field. You will present your theories of composition in a presentation during the final week of class.

Objectives

- To make your theories of composition explicit and grounded in theory.
- To think through problems facing composition studies.
- To connect your theories to practice, both in teaching and research.

Requirements

- Reports must be a minimum of 5000 words or the multimodal equivalent.
- Presentations should be between 7 and 10 minutes.
- Presentations should be prepared in advance, practiced, and supported with supplements.

Due Dates

- Proposals are due on Tuesday, November 28th.
- Presentations will be given on Thursday, December 7th, and Tuesday, December 12th.
- Reports are due on Tuesday, December 12th.

The Proposal

The proposal is graded and submitted separately from the rest of the assignment. Essentially, it is a basic outline of your theories of composition: you should try to answer the questions above—even if your answers are not fully formed yet. You will talk through the proposal with your peers and with Ryan, and we will try to help you develop your theories of composition further. Grading for the proposal will be based only on completion: did you attempt to answer the questions above? However, the more complete your theories are during the proposal, the better feedback we can give you on them.

Supplements

Regardless of the form of your final project, you are encouraged to include supplemental material as part of your report. This includes anything that may help to illuminate your theories of composition with clear and concrete examples. Supplements may include (but are not limited to): excerpts from syllabi, assignment sheets, classroom handouts, explanations of classroom activities, samples of your writing, documentation from your research, and so on. Like the rest of the report, the supplements should be written by you: you are *not* permitted to use materials created by someone else; citation from experts should be used to support your points, not in place of your points. Supplements count toward the word count but should be used mindfully: including a whole syllabus is not acceptable if you only are referring to one segment of it, for example.

Additional Requirements and Tips

- The report for your final project is not a list. While I intend for you to answer all of the questions above, you should do so in the process of explaining your theories of composition—they should not be used as an organizing mechanism. As you may see, the answers to those questions will have a significant amount of overlap. Depending on your own theories of composition, certain questions may be answered at the same time or answers may be spread throughout the document. Organize mindfully based on your own theories.
- Your theories should be well grounded in the theories of the field. This means you are likely to cite readings from the class, including your supplemental readings from the Expansion Project, Context Project, and Gap Project.
- It's unlikely that you'll have time to include everything from your report in your presentation. Good presentations usually cover fewer things well instead of many things poorly. I suggest focusing in on the parts of your report that you think are most important or that you find most interesting.
- Both proposals and reports should be submitted in Google Drive as a Google Doc (not as a Word doc or PDF). Multimodal projects can be submitted as a file in Google Drive or as a link in a Google Doc. Please name your document with your name, the class, and the specific assignment: e.g. "Malcolm Reynolds ENG 7980 Final Project."

Grading

The following criteria will be used to determine grades for the Final Project report:

Expectations	Exceeded	Met	Not Met
Response to Questions	You answer all of the questions clearly, directly, and concisely.	You answer all of the questions.	You miss one or more of the questions above or one or more of the answers evades the question.
Explanation of Theories	Your theories are explained thoroughly and clearly. A reader can explain your theories after reading. Examples and applications make the explanations clearer.	Your theories are explained clearly. Examples and applications are given.	Your theories are unclear. Examples and/or applications are not given.
Use of Sources	Your theories are well grounded in the theories of the field. You use appropriate citations that help to support your points.	Your theories make reference to the theories of the field.	You do not use the theories of the field to ground your own theories, or you misrepresent others' theories.
Organization	You have used your own theories to guide your organization: similar concepts are grouped together and build on one another.	You have organized your report in a way that's easy to follow. There is reference to other parts of the report that connect.	Your organization is disconnected and/or hard to follow. Related ideas are separated and/or do not reference one another.
Supplements	You use supplemental material to effectively support your theories. The supplements help to build on points instead of overwhelming them.	You use supplemental material as examples of your theories. Supplements do not overwhelm your points.	You do not use supplemental material or supplemental material is used in place of theories instead of to support them.
Form	The form of the report helps to make the information clearer. The writer has used a unique or engaging design.	N/A	N/A

Grading (Continued)

The following criteria will be used to determine grades for the Final Project presentation:

Expectations	Exceeded	Met	Not Met
Preparation	You are very well practiced. You move through your presentation well, time points well, and fall within the time limits.	You have practiced. You do not stumble regularly or read from a script.	You are not practiced. You stumble regularly, read, work out ideas as you're saying them, and/or fall outside of the time limits.
Curation	You have selected which theories to use and which examples to give very well. You have chosen interesting and engaging parts of your report to cover.	You have selected which theories to use and which examples to give carefully.	You have tried to cover all of the topics from your report or selected which parts to cover poorly.
Explanation	You explain your theories clearly and concisely. You provide examples and application that make your points clearer.	You explain your theories well. You provide examples and application.	You do not explain your theories well. Examples and application are missing or confusing.
Supplements	You use supplements to help your audience understand the material. Handouts and presentation software are used effectively.	You use supplements. Handouts and/or presentation software are used.	Supplements are not used or are used ineffectively.
Questions	You answer questions well.	You are able to answer questions.	You are not able to answer questions.

Your grade for both the report and the presentation for the Final Project will be determined by how well you meet the above criteria.

- A You exceed the expectations for two or more of the criteria. All others are met.
- A- You exceed the expectations for one of the criteria. All others are met.
- B+ You meet the expectations for all of the criteria.
- B You do not meet the expectations for one of the criteria. All others are met.
- B- You do not meet the expectations for two of the criteria. All others are met.