**Contribution to Rhetoric and Composition Jennifer Falcón**

My experience in the classroom has led me to approach my research as an attempt to bridge the gap between theories and practices in digital rhetoric. I frame my approach to teaching digital composition and digital multiliteracies by using Aaron Hess and Amber Davisson’s definition of digital rhetoric as “the study of meaning-making, persuasion, or identification as expressed through language, bodies, machines, and texts that are created, circulated, or experiences through or regarding digital technologies” (p. 6).

My pedagogy and research influence one another, and my goals as a researcher are to bring theories and concepts in digital rhetoric and digital composition (i.e. (black box technology, network theory, and firespaces) to the classroom, in an effort to make the wealth of knowledge available to students so that they can put these concepts into practice. My research adds to conversations on how digital composition and digital multiliteracies push the field to think more critically about a user’s relationship with technology, our understanding of the technology we use, and its role in our lives. I define digital rhetoric not only as the application of rhetorical theories and practices in a digital environment, but as a relationship between the composer and the device, platform, network, or software individuals and groups use to compose and deliver information. Students’ rhetorical choices speak to their understanding of digital platforms, their knowledge and effectiveness in communicating and delivering information.

In my dissertation “Rethinking Multimodality in First-Year Composition: Applying Theories of Digital Rhetoric, Procedural Rhetoric and Electracy to Multimodal Assignments​,” I research how multimodal composition assignments are implemented in first-year composition curriculum. I identify digital multimodal composition as one area of digital composition that most closely aligns itself with theories in digital rhetoric, procedural rhetoric and electracy, which allowed me to investigate how the field of rhetoric and composition applies theories. As multimodal composition practices become more commonplace in first-year composition curriculum it is important to push the practice by applying concepts and ideas available to us under the vast umbrella of digital rhetoric.

In an effort to better understand how first-year composition programs and instructors integrate multimodal assignments in first-year composition curriculum I conducted a quantitative survey. I collected data from 55 survey responses from WPAs and first-year instructors from universities and community colleges. Data collected from survey responses provided me with insight as to how each program implemented multimodal composition assignments in first-year composition curriculum. The surveys provided context and background for each university and first-year composition program, knowledge about the ratio of text only assignments to multimodal or multimedia assignments, and the various types of multimodal assignments taught. I was able to compare standard curriculums to non standard curriculums and how a programmatic approach to multimodality impacts a WPA or instructor’s approach to implementing and teaching multimodal composition assignments.

Nine follow-up interviews were conducted, and grounded theory was used to code and analyze data collected from the survey responses and interviews. This lens allowed me to analyze assignment guidelines, rubrics, survey and interview responses in an effort to determine which theories influence the multimodal composition assignments in first-year composition courses at participating universities. I plan to expand this to a larger quantitative study of universities and community colleges to better understand how WPAs and first-year composition instructors approach multimodality and how this influences writing in digital spaces.

My own approach to implementing multimodal assignments includes low-stakes digital multimodal assignments to explore digital delivery through social networking sites, use tags to appeal to a specific audience and/or engage with a broader audience, and reflect on the rhetorical choices made as a means to introduce concepts and theories in digital rhetoric in the classroom. I presented these assignments and findings at the South Central Modern Language Association conference in 2015 and 2016, WIDE-EMU in 2015, Cultural Rhetorics in 2016, and at the 2017 CCCC Regional Summer Conference at the University of Cincinnati Clermont College. In addition to conference presentations on multimodal assignments I use to introduce network theory, digital delivery and explore online identity, I am currently co-authoring a book chapter that is under review for *Community Action for Social Change: A Digital Archive,* an online book in the *Working and Writing for Change* book series through Parlor Press.