Project Overview

This project continues to shift and change as I work on it. After the workshop last night I see it as an attempt to better understand the connection, or relationship, between the more popular definitions of digital rhetoric, and how they play out in the various calls to insert more technology in the classroom by way of developing multiliteracies, digital literacies, etc. and the resulting assignments or practices encouraged to be part of the composition classroom. These sources include a few of the more popular definitions and understandings of digital rhetoric, one in Arroyo that chooses to use electracy rather than digital rhetoric in her work on participation in digital spaces, as well Emerson’s work on the importance of visible technology. These sources, I think, provide just a small but hopefully strong background on where and how this is all ties together in a wonderfully messy way. My goal for the project for this class is to be able to draw connections between scholars understanding of digital rhetoric, where it intersects with the integration of technology in a comp classroom, and where we might go next.

References

Arroyo, S. J. (2013). *Participatory composition: Video culture, writing, and electracy*. SIU Press.

Arroyo uses Gregory Ulmer’s concept of electracy as the framework for her approach to participatory composition, while also attempting to validate the importance of electracy as a theory and action within participatory culture, specifically seen in video culture. According to Arroyo, Electracy goes beyond digital literacy because it includes civic engagement, community building, and participation. The participation aspect of electracy is also what differs it from digital rhetoric. Where digital rhetoric may be split between theory and practice Arroyo argues that this is not the case with electracy because both the theory and practice are embedded within electracy. Arroyo achieves this by analyzing video culture, which she hopes will ultimately lead composition to a more participatory act by joining technology and culture through electracy and its practices. While not dealing directly within digital rhetoric Arroyo’s book still touches on rhetorical choices made in digital spaces, interactions with interface, and other common themes among digital rhetoric scholarship. The difference is that she views electracy as going beyond digital rhetoric and digital literacies. This is helpful for two reasons. The first is I can use it to demonstrate that some scholars, like Arroyo, choose to do work in an area that most may consider under the umbrella of digital rhetoric, but label it differently because they feel lit does not work well with current definitions and understandings of digital rhetoric. The second is that it provides an example of how a different understanding or approach to work in digital spaces results in the separation of digital rhetoric. I think this points to more work needed in defining or updating definitions of digital rhetoric.

Council of Writing Program Administrators. (n.d.). Retrieved March 19, 2016, from http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html

The WPA Outcomes Statement identifies outcomes for composition courses. The statement defines rhetorical knowledge as the “ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts” and deems it the “basis for composing.” The statement also provides bullet points for what students should be able to do by the end of a composition course. The areas covered are rhetorical knowledge, critical thinking, reading, composing, processes, and knowledge of conventions. Within the section titled Processes attention is given to composing with a variety of technology and modalities as well as in a collaborative or social (networked) manner. I plan to specifically use this to demonstrate that the composition classroom is an accepted space in which to apply digital rhetoric theories, as mentioned in Clark’s article. If this is true, then it is unwise to be complacent in integration of technology and view that as including digital rhetoric in comp classes, because doing so does not take in account other issues within digital rhetoric, and digital humanities that current scholarship addresses.

Clark, J. E. (2010). The digital imperative: Making the case for a 21st-century pedagogy. *Computers and Composition*, *27*(1), 27-35.

Clark calls for a move toward 21st century pedagogy to “further students’ digital literacy.” This article is not unlike others that also call for the same, and the answer in fulfilling that specific call is to create distance from the essay. The alphabetic text heavy assignment resists the benefits of digital rhetoric. Clark views the composition classroom as an “emerging space for digital rhetoric,” and as a result this presents an opportunity for a new digital imperative, which includes specific practices in the composition classroom that help students create a digital persona and help them learn to create compositions in digital media. To not do this would be to “ignore the imperative of now,” which Clark clearly views as detrimental to our students. It touches on the increasingly wired lifestyles of our society, and approaches the idea that technology also influences culture. This article is proof of the many calls to do more work in digital rhetoric, and while it does supply examples, they continue to view technology as something to be used in the class because of the advances and increased usage outside of the classroom. This is helpful to me because it demonstrates the common approach to digital rhetoric and the integration of theories and ideas within digital rhetoric in the composition classroom. This article, most importantly, does broach the notion that technology may change us as we change it. Though it is not discussed in great detail, it provides evidence that digital rhetoric and composition classroom assignments and practices may need to approach technology differently than in the past.

Emerson, L. (2014). Indistinguishable from Magic: Invisible Interfaces and Digital Literature as Demystifier *Reading Writing Interfaces*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P.

Emerson’s chapter discusses the troublesome nature of the interface. Specifically, Emerson focuses on the attempt to make an interface invisible under the guise of making it natural, which is problematic because it hides the technology from the user. This creates the false notion that users don’t need to know how something works to use it, nor do they need to think about how it works, or what goes into making it work. This type of hidden technology is known as black box technology, which is unknown or hidden technology. If this ubiquitous comp continues, then the coding that makes up an interface will be viewed as magical. The user will have little to no understanding of how it works, only that they use it. With interfaces so heavily integrated into our daily lives the question becomes how to make visible this black box technology. This source is helpful to my project because it provides an example of how or what to question about technology and our heavy use of it. Specifically, if black box technology and the view of interface technology as magic is problematic, then how do we approach it in a classroom setting? I see this as fitting in with the idea that technology we use changes us as we change it. The overall relevance is that by using a definition or building an understanding of digital rhetoric that reflects this critique of specific types of technology will result in a change of the types of assignments and practices used in the composition classroom.

Eyman, D. (2015). *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice*. University of Michigan Press.  
Eyman’s introductions charts the chapters as first exploring the definition of digital rhetoric, then moving on to theories in digital rhetoric, and finally looking at research methods and case studies. The first chapter traces the definition of digital rhetoric from Lanham’s 1993 work to Zappen, Welch and others. He notes where their definitions move away from focusing solely on hyptertext to include digital literacy, and computational rhetoric. The changes in the definition and what is included within them suggest a relationship between understand and approach that reacts to the uses and demands as brought on by changes in technology. Eyman is useful because he provides an overview of the term digital rhetoric and the different definitions since its introduction by Lanham. I plan to use it as an example of the most recent work in this area, and compare it to other similar works to decipher how it builds upon what was previously done.

Lanham, R. A. (2006). *The economics of attention :Style and substance in the age of information*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Retrieved from [http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/](http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/" \t "_blank) ecip0517/2005022857.html

Lanham is credited with coining the term digital rhetoric. While he does not supply a specific definition he introduces the concept of a computer as something both logical and rhetorical in use. He notes that the computer is seen as logical, but not rhetorical. He views the electronic word as a means to electronic expression and as such it fits within the Western Arts & Letters. Lanham attempts not only to legitimize the electronic word, and electronic expressions, but also creates the space for the work that follows under his term of digital rhetoric. He focuses more on the manipulation of text by zooming in and out, and using different typefaces and fonts, which is understandable given that this piece first appeared in 1992, and again in 1993. It is important to include Lanham’s work because he coined digital rhetoric. Therefore, knowing and understanding what he used the term for in 1993, and how that understanding and approach has changed over time.

Losh, E. M. (2009). “Hacking Aristotle: What is Digital Rhetoric” *Virtualpolitik : An electronic history of government media-making in a time of war, scandal, disaster, miscommunication, and mistakes*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Losh’s chapter provides a comprehensive four-part definition of digital rhetoric that encompasses several aspects of scholarship within digital rhetoric. The definition she provides touches on digital genres as a means of discourse, public rhetoric/political messages distributed through networks, the computer generated media becoming objects of study in their own right, and the use of mathematical theories of communication within information science to gauge linguistic exchanges. Losh states that the fourth definition ultimately influences practices occurring in the first because it (#4) influences the ideology behind practices that occur when people enter discourse in digital genres. I plan to use this definition to chart the difference in approach and understanding of what digital rhetoric is, what it can do, and ultimately how it is interdisciplinary. It is also helpful because it is the most extensive definition among my sources.

Selber, S. (2004). *Multiliteracies for a digital age*. SIU Press.  
Selber provides a guide for instructors to develop what he believes will be an effective curriculum that will address the need for computer literacy, and ultimately the multiliteracies that students need. He urges instructors to embrace teaching multiliteracies by incorporating pedagogy that assists in the development of a student’s functional, rhetorical, and critical literacy. Functional literacy can be achieved by not being limited to the computer as a tool mindset, which does not allow for students to think of the political implications of a computer. In developing a critical literacy of computers students are aware of the politics of the computer, but still actively use them. Essentially, the technology and politics of it are transparent to them. They view the computer not as something they use, but as something that was built and manufactured within a system, which they also happen to use. The goal of rhetorical literacy is for students to be able to work within a digital environment and be active in changing that environment based on their understandings of the environment. Selber’s book helps to demonstrate that our approach towards technology influences the practices taking place in a composition classroom. Where he focused on multiliteraces, my larger project will attempt to update his work and focus more on the connection between digital rhetoric and implementing digital projects in the composition classroom.

Wysocki, A. F., & Johnson-Eilola, J. (1999). Blinded by the Letter: Why Are We Using Literacy as a Metaphor for Everything Else?. *Passions, pedagogies, and 21st century technologies*, 349-368.  
Wysocki and Jonhson-Eilola critique the ways in which literacy is often thought of, and taught. They do not question the importance of literacy. Rather, they point out the areas in which literacy fails. Literacy, according to them, is approached as a skill that equals the playing field for all, but does not address systemic issues. It is an assumption that to be literate in any area is to have a set of skills that are both desirable and beneficial. They view “technological literacy” and other types of literacy as an attempt to obtain perceived privileges, social or economic. This approach is based in creating a neutral skill. The authors explore the concept of articulation, which if used can help to broaden the understanding of literacy as a process. This understanding of literacy helps to question the position and social aspect of literacy. It’s an approach less about new or different possibilities for literacy, but for how we think about and question literacy. I plan to use this as a large part of my argument that based on the definition, or understanding of digital rhetoric the many calls to include technology specific practices in the composition classroom often take a similar approach in developing the literacies and skills of students as discussed in this article.

Zappen, J. P. (2005). Digital rhetoric: Toward an integrated theory. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *14*(3), 319-325.  
Zappen reviews literature on digital rhetoric. He addresses the many areas of interest surrounding digital rhetoric, and views digital rhetoric as somewhat troublesome to define and understand. Part of the issue is the attempt to use a 2,000-year-old rhetorical tradition in understanding and work in digital rhetoric. Applying such an old tradition is problematic because it creates constraints on the new media, and scholarship. Zappen pays close attention to how persuasion, specifically, is applied to the digital spaces researched under the digital rhetoric umbrella. Ultimately he urges that the definition of digital rhetoric go beyond persuasion, and instead move toward an integrated theory. The integrated theory would focus on a reworking of traditional rhetoric in digital spaces, how identities and communities are formed in digital spaces, and the limitations/restrictions of using new (digital) media. Therefore, digital rhetoric theories should reflect the ways in which traditional rhetoric is altered in digital spaces, and allow for an expanded view of the role rhetoric can play in technology. Zappen’s understanding of digital rhetoric is helpful to me because begin to move beyond looking at how traditional rhetoric plays out in a digital space by incorporating how this view of persuasion (traditional rhetoric) also forms identities, and communities. This builds on Lanham’s digital rhetoric term as term that refers to digital texts, and centers it more in rhetoric, but still there is an issue of what type of work theories in digital rhetoric should do.