

**AN ECOLOGY OF PLACE IN COMPOSITION STUDIES**

by

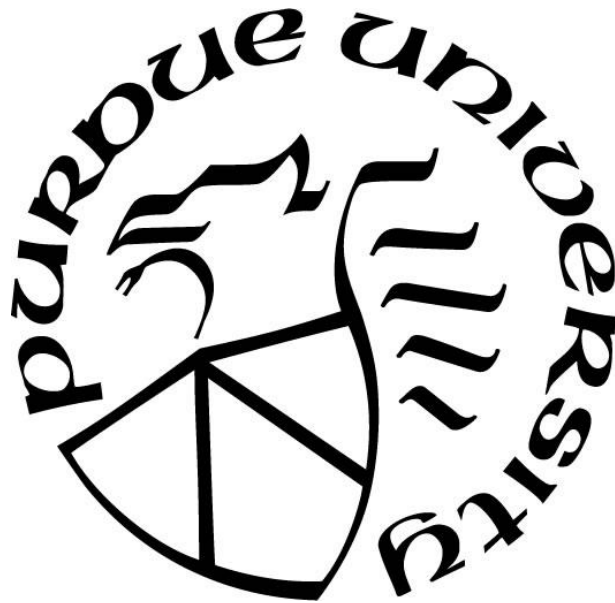
**Jonathan Scott Wallin**

**A Dissertation**

*Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University*

*In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of*

**Doctor of Philosophy**



Department of English  
West Lafayette, Indiana

December 2016

ProQuest Number: 10251919

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10251919

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

**THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL  
STATEMENT OF DISSERTATION APPROVAL**

Dr. Patricia Sullivan, Chair

Department of English

Dr. Jennifer Bay

Department of English

Dr. Richard Johnson-Sheehan

Department of English

Dr. Thomas Rickert

Department of English

**Approved by:**

Dr. Nancy J. Peterson

Head of the Departmental Graduate Program

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to Dr. Patricia Sullivan for her consistent confidence in my ability as a student. I can't imagine where I would be without the help and guidance she has offered me, from my first year here at Purdue, up through the final push to finish this dissertation. I give her my undying gratitude and thanks. Thanks also to Dr. Jenny Bay, whose enthusiasm for working with the greater Lafayette community inspired me to pursue the projects I write about in this dissertation. Thanks to Dr. Thomas Rickert for the guidance he gave me when I first became interested with concepts of place. Thanks to Dr. Richard Johnson-Sheehan for his consistent, thorough, and expert comments on all of my writing he saw. Thanks to Dr. Madison Sowell, my mentor and my friend. Thanks to my parents. You were both instrumental in my success. Above all, thank you to Kanien for the tireless support you've given to me through all of these years of school.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	vi
ABSTRACT.....	vii
CHAPTER 1. SEEKING A PEDAGOGY OF PLACE.....	1
1.1 Place versus Space .....	1
1.2 Place and the Rhetorical Situation .....	3
1.3 Forecast of Chapters.....	4
CHAPTER 2. THE EXPERIENCE OF PLACE.....	9
2.1 Moving Place.....	9
2.2 Placing Writing .....	11
2.3 Ecomposition.....	12
2.4 Moving towards Place.....	25
CHAPTER 3. A PHENOMENOLOGY OF PLACE.....	28
3.1 Developing a Consciousness of Place.....	28
3.2 Early Concepts of Place .....	31
3.3 The Physics .....	40
3.4 A Break from the Field: Neo-Aristotelean and Neo-Platonist Ideals.....	41
3.5 Seeking a Semiotic that Better Expresses the Nuance of Place .....	44
3.6 Geography and Place.....	49
3.7 Writing in the Community and Engaging with Place .....	57
CHAPTER 4. WRITING IN THE COMMUNITY, ENGAGING WITH PLACE.....	58
4.1 Project One: Community Contact with West Lafayette’s Nature Center .....	58
4.2 My Own Negotiation of Place.....	58
4.3 Student Community Project: Initial Description.....	60
4.4 Implications of the LNC Project for Place .....	62
4.5 Project Two: Lafayette Streets and Sanitation .....	65
CHAPTER 5. TEACHING STUDENTS TO WRITE IN PLACE.....	73
5.1 Figuring Place .....	74
5.2 Mapping Our Campus .....	77
5.3 The TED Talk.....	82
5.4 Working With the Lilly Nature Center .....	84

5.5 The Nature Trail Proposal .....	86
5.6 Conclusion.....	88
WORKS CITED .....	90
APPENDIX A – COURSE SYLLABUS – ENGLISH 108: ACCELERATED ENGLISH COMPOSITION .....	97
APPENDIX B – ASSIGNMENT SHEETS.....	100
APPENDIX C – COURSE SCHEDULE .....	102
APPENDIX D – PROPOSAL FOR ADA-ACCESSIBLE NATURE TRAIL AT THE LILLY NATURE CENTER .....	106

**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure 4-1 .....	62
Figure 5-1 .....	75
Figure 5-2 .....	76
Figure 5-3 .....	78
Figure 5-4 .....	79

**ABSTRACT**

Author: Wallin, Jonathan S. Ph.D.  
Institution: Purdue University  
Degree Received: December 2016  
Title: An Ecology of Place in Composition Studies  
Major Professor: Patricia Sullivan

My dissertation, *An Ecology of Place in Composition Studies*, proposes a place-based approach to teaching writing in community engagement. My project addresses contemporary criticisms of ecocomposition by uniting the ecological foundations of the movement with pedagogical strategies used in philosophy and geography to teach students about place. Why is this needed? Students going to college resituate themselves, and often find themselves needing to adjust their compasses to find their place at the university. This contributes to a longstanding question that has been answered via rhetorical situation in rhetoric. It offers a practice of inquiry that serves to engage our students not solely with community partners, but also with the places inhabited by both the students and the partners they work with. In undertaking an immersive reflection of these places, students stand to move beyond a superficial consideration of situation and context, gaining an understanding of the nuance and details that encompass these ecological relationships.

But it also has a practical origin in that students who are leaving their families and going to college must renegotiate their understanding of place in order to be successful in both the writing classroom, and as students and people.

I contend that infusing writing instruction with a study of place is a step towards helping our students establish an ecological mindset, a mindset which recognizes how our



actions interact with the actions and reactions of others, ultimately leading to outcomes that we cannot easily foresee. An ecological mindset favors empathy, understanding, and an acceptance of our role as constructive members of the communities in which we live. My dissertation reflects on the importance of an understanding of place in developing these attitudes as a writer, as a student, and as a citizen.

## CHAPTER 1. SEEKING A PEDAGOGY OF PLACE

“Ecocomposition has (already) failed as an intellectual enterprise.”

– Sidney I. Dobrin, *Postcomposition*

“I have to confess that I feel a certain ambivalence about the notion of ecocomposition.”

—Marylin Cooper, Foreword to *Ecocomposition*

Chapter 1, *Seeking a Pedagogy of Place*, differentiates between space and place, identifies place as a needed component of rhetorical pedagogy, and forecasts the rest of the dissertation.

### 1.1 Place versus Space

Place is often conflated with space, which does damage to students who are seeking to reorient themselves to the routines and habits of practice necessitated by the demands of university life. This project aims to develop a writing curriculum based on place. At its heart, it is about helping students explore how they interact with the world we live in, the connections we have to our surroundings, and what these relationships mean for writers. I draw on the work of philosophers, humanistic geographers, ecologists, and rhetoricians throughout the project.

As I said, space and place are often conflated. As instructors, we often speak of our classrooms as safe spaces. Such an act designates the classroom as a space in which students can feel at ease, free from the stigmas of racism, sexism, bigotry, and hate. However, such a designation says nothing about the particulars that coalesce to bring about a sense of place: the locale, the feel of the room, the position of the room among the rest of rooms in the building, its position on campus, as an integral part of a community, a state, a country, and the world.

Sense of place means many things to many people. I prefer to think of it, as Charles Withers characterizes the term. He argues that “Sense of place is taken to embrace the affective attachment that people have to place.” (640). Yi-Fu Tuan’s use of the phrase is similar. He claims that sense of place is a feeling that stems from the associations and emotions people feel about a place, and how those are expressed over time. For my dissertation, I follow their lead.

Calling a classroom a safe space also fails to account for the dynamism and changeability of the classroom as a place that evolves through the lived experiences of those who inhabit it, if only for a semester. This project focuses on place rather than space in order to capture the situated qualities necessary for students to see their writing as part of their evolving understanding of the ecology of place they constantly negotiate as adults.

Edward Casey, in his text *The Fate of Place*, traces the philosophical conception of place through various periods of history. He separate space from place from the beginning, arguing that space, as a concept, held little interest for classical philosophy. As I explore in Chapter 3, Plato believed that places came into being as disorganized matter became organized and thrust into forms (and hence distinguished from space). Place required embodiment, and was a predecessor of being (32). In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, philosophers became infatuated with space (182). Place was stripped of any notion of the body, and fell into obscurity until its revival and reconnection to embodiment by thinkers like Freud, Heidegger, and Deleuze and Guattari (301). Casey notes that these thinkers viewed place as space realized. Place was thus recovered from an abstract notion of

ungrounded, spatial existence. Space was conceptually confining, disconnected from bodies and the material. Place was embodied space, concrete and material.

Contemporarily, many postmodern thinkers have continued to refigure place as a concept that involves not only the spatiality of the body in relation to its environmental and social surroundings, but as something driven and influenced by affective notions of relationality and materiality, more a product of invention than some derivative of an absolute (see Chapter 3 of this dissertation, as well as Grosberg, Massumi, Rice, Rickert, and Cresswell).

## **1.2 Place and the Rhetorical Situation**

Since Bitzer proclaimed the rhetorical situation as central to acts of rhetoric, the rhetorical situation has been embraced by composition as critical to audience analysis, situational work, context—a variety of key topics. Place certainly is part of the rhetorical situation that Bitzer described, and others (see Scott Consigny), refined, and has been central to composition at large and to the ecocomposition movement as well.

Others have studied the role of place in writing instruction. Marilyn Cooper's 1986 essay "The Ecology of Writing" does important work to pave the way for the study of place and its effect on writers. She envisions writing as a type of relationship among many involved constituents, arguing that "an ecology of writing encompasses much more than the individual writer and her immediate context. An ecologist explores how writers interact to form systems," including how they interact with place (368). Place also forms a fundamental aspect of the ecological approach to writing pedagogy explored by Sid Dobrin and Christian Weisser in the early 2000s. Their book *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches* builds on Cooper's work, looking to establish a

pedagogical niche that favors a critical approach to environmental pedagogy. Nedra Reynolds works with place in *Geographies of Writing*, though her theoretical work stops short of establishing workable pedagogical practice. In *Distant Publics*, Jenny Rice talks about place, inquiry, and how examinations of place can alter the outcomes of student projects in community engagement.

I will argue that place, when viewed ecologically, deepens what can be a superficial treatment of context or audience brought about by a loose appropriation of Bitzer's key concepts. This work is expanded in Chapter 2. and builds until, in Chapter 5, I present the tools I used in the classroom that aid in expanding the rhetorical situation. I present the heuristic I used with my students to teach and reinforce the notion that, as we recognize the role place plays in shaping who we are, we become aware of the material role we play in the contexts and rhetorical situations that make up every aspect of our lives. This heuristic helps lead students towards a recognition of place as a key factor in the work involved in becoming a writer. I argue that students, upon recognizing how they are situated within these ecologies of place, learn to account and express this situatedness in the writing tasks they complete in the classroom, in the community, and in their own reflections.

### **1.3 Forecast of Chapters**

Chapter 2 will review the literature foundational to the ecocomposition movement, which is composition studies' first prominent response to place as central to writing. The chapter reviews the main arguments fostered by ecocompositionists, recounts critiques, and seeks a path forward. I revisit the foundational work of Marilyn Cooper and Richard M. Coe, whose essays were among the first to connect writing

practice and theories of place. I both critique the ecocomposition movement and respond to its critics.

Though ecocompositionists recognized the danger of equating escapist narratives with ecological applications of writing instruction, the movement as a whole never entirely overcame the problem. Ecocomposition is still equated with environmental activist pedagogy, despite the work of Weisser, Dobrin, Killingsworth and Palmer, and others, to recognize urban and rural ecologies and celebrate the role place plays in exploring these connections with students.

Chapter 2 also looks at place-based rhetorics that fall outside the realm of ecocomposition. I explore the writing of Nedra Reynolds, Thomas Hothem, Peter Goggin, and Gesa Kirsch, exploring and critiquing their treatment of place.

Chapter 3 explores accounts of place from geographical and philosophical perspectives. It draws on the work of Plato, Aristotle, Edmund Husserl, Edward Casey, Tim Cresswell, Yi-Fu Tuan, and others, in order to show how each of them deepens the complexity of place as a rhetorically situated concept. Tim Cresswell offers three approaches to place that help us differentiate how we interact with place as a concept: descriptive, social constructionist, and phenomenological. He categorizes these approaches as levels.

Cresswell makes this distinction carefully, advising his readers that the three approaches should not be viewed as a hierarchical distinction. Instead, each level represents an increase in depth or interaction with the surroundings we inhabit. This allows for a multivocal understanding of place that can at times be highly situated, and at other times reasonably abstract.

This chapter provides a philosophical overview of place that draws from the works of Plato's *Timaeus*, Aristotle's *Physics*, and more contemporary scholars. I question the utility of neo-Platonic and neo-Aristotelean approaches to place, and argue that, though an inescapable aspect of writing instruction in college classrooms today, a focus on place helps our students more fully appreciate the immediacy of contextual, rhetorical awareness.

In this chapter I also return to ecocomposition, using the work of Edward Casey, Tim Ingold, and other contemporary readings of place both to complicate the notions of systems ecology present in ecocomposition, and to build a foundation for a place-based, community engagement writing pedagogy.

Casey argues that the concept of place forms the basis for all we do. "To be at all—to exist in any way—is to be somewhere, and to be somewhere is to be in some kind of place" (ix). Casey sees place as the most fundamental aspect of existence, an idea shared by geographer Tim Cresswell. In a text Cresswell wrote to serve as an advanced survey of geographic theory, *Geographic Thought*, he argues that place has long formed the conceptual baseline for common philosophical queries. Quoting Strabo, Cresswell sees geography as a means of understanding "'the great problem of life and happiness.' This was and is a central philosophical and theoretical problem. How do we lead a happy life? What constitutes a good life? How should people relate to the nonhuman world? How do we make our life meaningful?" (2). These profound questions are geographical at heart, and understanding place is a fundamental part of exploring them.

This chapter draws from multiple disciplines outside of rhetoric and composition, including ecology, geography, and philosophy. Why do I take such a multidisciplinary

approach? Ecology and systems theory have brought to composition the idea that writing happens among a complex networks of interaction at play during a writing process.

Philosophers look at place from a formative, ontological perspective. Geographers provide language that can help students recognize the multi-modal place-ness of writing. Though other disciplines could offer further insights, these disciplines provide the project with a fresh perspective that 1) has enriched my understanding of place, 2) complicated what is at stake in developing a “sense of place” (Tuan), and 3) provided me with a lexicon whereby the study of place becomes complementary to composition studies.

Bringing in outside voices in order to complicate an issue can be a worthwhile endeavor. It helps fixate less on “here's what X is fixing in Y” and more on “Here are some different perspectives, derived from X/Y/Z. Acknowledging and studying a perspective derived from such fresh voices can lead students to make significant discoveries about their relationship to places in which they've been / are / are going.

I use ecology, geography, and philosophy in my efforts to make place more visible to students and to offer them more tools with which to consider place, and thus help them better understand how place, writing, and ecology converge.

Chapters 4 and 5 take up two current topics intimately connected with place in composition studies. Chapter 4 addresses community engagement as a pedagogical response to place. Specifically, the chapter catalogues my participation in two engagement projects as a student of public rhetoric. This chapter focuses on the practice of participating in ecological and place-based community engagement pedagogies and reveals how that participation operates from multiple vantages. I share a unique



perspective, as I was able to work with a Lafayette-area community partner as a student participant and as a coordinating instructor.

My final chapter recounts how I put all of this together in a teaching setting. I explore the work my students did—both in the lead-up to engaging with our community partner, as well as the work they performed with that partner. This chapter recounts the responses of two quite different students. The difference between these students lies primarily in how radically they had to negotiate place in order to understand the writing that is needed in place situation. While both were successful, different sorts of stresses were evidenced along the way.

I recount and analyze their experiences in order to show a place-based pedagogy is unique in its articulation and embodiment [unfolding]. What I show with these students is that they were experiencing different classes, and you have to expect that every one of them is experiencing a different class. This is why a phenomenological approach is helpful. We're not just giving them five steps with which they can address the rhetorical situation. We are equipping them with tools to interact with the ecologies in which they find themselves. Chapter 5 also offers a heuristic as a tool to assist students in the negotiation of place. In the next chapter I take up ecomposition.

## CHAPTER 2. THE EXPERIENCE OF PLACE

### 2.1 Moving Place

My brother Greg is a claims rep for Progressive Insurance. After he graduated from college and got the job, he moved to Gillette, Wyoming. Gillette is a poster child for the “boom or bust” town, as its existence depends entirely on the price of oil, coal, and natural gas. It has no significant geological markers, no natural beauty, no busy nightlife or cultural center. Aesthetically, it epitomizes the wasteland. People live there to work in coal mines, oil and gas fields, and to power the resources that support these industries. Towns like this exist all over America, but Gillette’s isolation really sets it apart. To deal with that isolation Greg established a routine of working in the city during the week, and traveling on the weekends to nearby places that offered him a reprieve from the monotony of the town. And while the pallid nature of his surroundings were not ideal, the place became livable over time. The town also changed from one of run down apartments, trailer parks, and strip malls to a collection of sites and stories that made life meaningful. Just as the landscape seemed to impose itself upon him, he found he could alter his sense of place by inventing it in his own right.

After living in Gillette for a year Greg was transferred to Cody, Wyoming—a small city right on the eastern edge of Yellowstone National Park. Cody possesses much more character than Gillette. It is the birthplace of Jackson Pollock, takes its name from the storied soldier and showman Buffalo Bill Cody, and houses the largest firearms museum in the United States. Greg was the first Progressive representative to live in Cody. As such, the company wasn’t prepared to rent him an office, instead requiring him

to work from home. Initially, he welcomed the convenience of his home office. As Gilles Deleuze notes in his “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” the prospect of placelessness brought with it an initial freedom. But it didn’t take long before he felt completely enclosed by the arrangement, unable to meet his need for some separation between work life and life life. As Deleuze puts it, his home office “could at first express new freedom, but [it] could participate as well in mechanisms of control that are equal to the harshest of confinements” (4). His employer sympathized with him, but insisted the company could not afford to establish an office there for at least another year.

To compensate, he cordoned off one section of his living room by hanging sheets from the ceiling, and made sure his entire work life— computer, fax machine, printer, and work telephone— could be limited to that specific place. Although this city seemingly had much more to offer in terms of locale, the lack of definitive place markers in his life made the transition more problematic. The imposition of place as geographical location was inconsequential until he was able to invent it in a fashion suitable to his needs. Just as Greg interacted with place as he navigated his professional obligations, so do our students work through similar negotiations. Some live in dormitories, negotiated spaces with little to no privacy. Some are drawn across places of work, places of study, places of eating, places of socializing, and places of recreation—all without an actual *place* they call their own. Throughout this project I will explore how, as our student writers navigate through our classes and interact with the writing we assign, they also interact with the places in which this writing happens.

## 2.2 Placing Writing

Writing classrooms are crowded spaces on multiple levels. Not only are writing instructors responsible for teaching the rhetorical principles traditionally associated with writing, but they must also teach these principles across the many technologies our students encounter—from creating PowerPoint presentations to decorum and propriety on Twitter and Facebook—both while students attend university, and after they have concluded their studies. Why, then, should we consider *place* in these already crowded curricula? For one, the same thinkers that established rhetoric as a key component to early education also felt strongly about the foundational nature of place. Both Plato in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle in the *Physics* taught that understanding place was fundamental in making sense of the world and our place within it. More recently, philosophers like Edward S. Casey have worked to recover the concept of place as *lived*, as *affective and ontological*, as philosophically influential beyond the credit it is usually given. In his book *The Fate of Place*, Casey states that, “In our own century, investigations of ethics and politics continue to be universalist in aspiration—to the detriment of place, considered merely parochial in scope. Treatments of logic and language often are still more place-blind, as if speaking and thinking were wholly unaffected by the locality in which they occur” (xii). Place, considered as an affective, formative rhetorical concept, has as much bearing on writing and instruction in writing as it does in other more traditional rhetorical pursuits.

In this dissertation, I establish a literacy of place that reflects and reinforces the principles of quality rhetorical writing curriculum as referenced by the National Council of Teachers of English position statement on “Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching

of Writing.” The statement acknowledges that even though approaches to teaching writing vary from one institution to another, specific rhetorical principles should form the foundation of a sound curriculum. I establish this literacy by first examining the sub-discipline of ecocomposition—starting with its roots in Richard M. Coe and Marilyn Cooper—and challenging Dobrin’s assertion that the movement has failed (Dobrin, *Postcomposition* 125). I argue that by infusing the groundwork laid by ecocompositionists with theories of place found in contemporary studies of human geography, place becomes a catalyst for student engagement in writing classrooms, especially those involved in community engagement service projects.

In the classroom, composition instructors often argue that a thing, or more regularly a concept beyond the thing, is a site/source of power. We teach students rhetorical principles of consumption and production in order to “arm” them—for both their academic career and beyond—with the tools necessary to succeed in reading/digesting/consuming *texts* (in the all-encompassing notion of the term), and to succeed in producing texts that appreciate and take into account concepts of medium, purpose, context, audience, community, and more. And though most instructors probably have a good idea of how *place* works alongside *rhetoric*, most rhetorical curricula ignore the fundamentals of place I explore in this work.

### **2.3 Ecocomposition**

As far back as 1986, and probably even before, the concept of place has had some presence in theories of writing and writing instruction. Though she does not use the term place specifically, Marilyn Cooper’s 1986 essay “The Ecology of Writing” lays the groundwork for the study of place and outlines its future role in ecological writing

theories. She envisions writing as a type of relationship among many involved constituents: “An ecology of writing encompasses much more than the individual writer and her immediate context. An ecologist explores how writers interact to form systems” (368). She does not work to enumerate in concrete terms what constitutes a system, nor does she try and nominate specific constituents that must be present for a system to function. And though she focuses primarily on establishing an ecological model—a model that accounts for the dynamism implicit in systems of writing—she hints at place in her closing paragraph: “Writing is one of the activities by which we locate ourselves in the enmeshed systems that make up the social world. It is not simply a way of thinking but more fundamentally a way of acting” (373). Without discussing the concept outright, Cooper hints at place with such expressions as “we locate ourselves” and “the social world.” For instance, place is incredibly difficult to talk about because it’s so enmeshed in all of our lives—and therefore never really considered, even though it is connected with a “way of acting”. Since we can’t be out of a place—being is completely dependent on being somewhere—the initial impulse of most of society is to never deal with place as an affective, rhetorical entity. Cooper is moving beyond this concept when she talks about locating oneself in enmeshed systems that make up the social world. Place is a component of these systems. Yet “place” is more or less ignored in favor of other components—context, purpose, being, scope, whatever—until ecocomposition becomes a “thing” in the late 1990s. Contrast this neglect of place with the enthusiastic manner in which compositionists embraced Cooper’s assertions that writing is not a solitary, lonely act, but is instead an endeavor enmeshed in societal interaction. Cooper states that “all the characteristics of any individual writer or piece of writing both determine and are

determined by the characteristics of all the other writers and writings in the systems” (368). The idea of writing as a social act has become enmeshed and standardized throughout the theory of composition pedagogy (NCTE, Kitzhaber, Sullivan and Porter). As Lester Faigley wrote in his 1986 *College English* article, “Competing Theories of Process: A Critique and a Proposal,” discussions of composition developed from expressivist and cognitive viewpoints into what he termed “the *social view*” of writing (528). The social view, he explains, originated as scholars including Patricia Bizzell and David Bartholomae introduced “poststructuralist theories of language” into composition studies, focusing on discourse communities and more (535). Faigley also references the work of Charles Bazerman, Greg Myers, and Shirley Brice Heath as fundamental to the adoption of the conceit that writing is social (536).

Cooper herself discusses this in the foreword she wrote for Christian Weisser and Sidney Dobrin’s 2001 edited collection *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. In it, she hesitates to fully endorse the idea and concept of ecocomposition. She opens with this line: “I have to confess that I feel a certain ambivalence about the notion of ecocomposition.” Her ambivalence stems from her idea that most of the work in ecocomposition with which she was familiar could be reduced “to a matter of teaching nature writing.” This concern, that ecocomposition is nothing more than an attempt to position nature as a binary opposite to culture, is perhaps the most significant impediment faced by scholars working to develop ecological theories and practices of writing. Cooper acknowledges that the collection of essays succeeds in moving away from this tendency, with the authors “only occasionally slipping into the binary language of nature versus culture” (xi). Dobrin and Weisser, she notes, have done an excellent job in emphasizing

that “ecomposition is about relationships.” She then argues that by moving towards this ecological understanding of writing, “the field of composition studies aligns itself with the dominant paradigm shift of the last century.” She recounts this shift in academia—first noted in 1920 by Fritjof Capra—as a move from an attempt to understand systems (relationships) through an analysis of constituent parts or objects to the more contemporary trend of “understanding relationships as dynamic patterns” (xii). According to Cooper, this shift is evident throughout the disciplines.

We recognize it in such diverse sites as the shift in biology from the study of characteristics of the individual organism to the functioning of a biome; the shift from Daltonian chemistry of matter to the geochemical study of cycles of carbon or calcium; Martin Heidegger’s attempt to shift the basis of knowledge from subjects acting on objects to a preontological being-in-the-world; the shift from a modernist unitary code of ethics to a postmodern morality realized in the responsibility of others. (Cooper “Foreword” xii)

In writing pedagogy however, this appeared as the shift from a product-based focus on the characteristics of good writing towards an attention “to the interrelated processes that constitute writing.” Further in writing assessment, this is seen as a shift from accounting for proficiency with entrance and exit exams to the use of writing portfolios and capstone thesis projects (Yancey). Seen through this paradigm, ecomposition’s study of systems and the dynamic relationships within them is a positive and much needed development.

Cooper also recounts the ideas that formed the basis for her 1986 *College English* essay “The Ecology of Writing,” wishing she had “written more about the changing



patterns in the systems of writing and less about the structures and contents of the systems...realizing that the systems that constitute writing and writers are not just *like* ecological systems, but are precisely ecological systems, and that there are not boundaries between writing and the other interlocked, cycling systems of our world” (xiv).

Ecocomposition, at least in theory, should attempt to do precisely that—to examine the relationships between and interconnectedness of writers, writing, contexts, audiences, and the places in which all of these relationships are realized. Place, then, for both Cooper and ecocomposition as a whole, isn’t worth pursuing as a site for the analysis of its constituent parts. Instead, place should be investigated as a player in the complex system of relationships and interactions surrounding and encompassing the process of writing.

Cooper’s ambivalence is understandable. Much of what makes up environmental rhetoric and nature writing does exactly what she doesn’t like. It sets up a dichotomous system based primarily on the agonistic premise of an agent working to destroy an object—usually a landscape, an ecosystem, the world. These works <too vague here. Identify one or more examples texts> tends to involve nature writing, escapism, and the worship of landscape as solutions to environmental wrongs. Ecocomposition is more involved in examining relationships than it is in evangelizing *pop environmentalism*, though I would argue that conservation remains as one aspect of the movement. Again, Cooper’s ambivalence stems from the tendency of scholars who study environmental discourse and rhetoric in ways that allow them to view agents as actors who work *on* objects—the environments and places they feature.

M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer’s Book, *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America*, plays this out in active discourse and living

practice (1). Though they frame the discourse in reference as environmental rhetoric, their use of agonistic discourse sees actors as destructive agents working with and against objects that make up the body of non-ecological environmental discourse and pedagogy. Killingsworth and Palmer see the work of environmental rhetoric as a task of reconciliation—how those accustomed to a “standard of living attained through technological progress”—must reconcile their lifestyles with the enormous and unsustainable cost required to perpetuate such a manner of living (3). Their concerns outstrip ecological writing by decades, hearkening back to the basic principles of environmentalism that surfaced shortly after the industrial revolution. In sum, the dilemma they address can be boiled down to this: Western society has gotten used to a world that provides them an enormously inordinate amount of resources to fuel a lifestyle that is, according to most popular and scientific notions, completely unsustainable (see Bromley). This, according to Killingsworth and Palmer, constitutes environmental rhetoric’s primary dilemma: the mediation, through discourse, of mankind’s relationship between goods, products, and the resources from which they are derived (3). And though ecocomposition might seem to speak to the same dilemma, its goals are in reality much different.

Killingsworth and Palmer’s environmental approach is amplified when the authors pin the crisis upon “a crucial epistemological problem—humankind’s ‘alienation from nature’” (4). Not only are they arguing for a dichotomous relationship between a product-hungry public and the natural world upon which this production encroaches, but they are setting up the solution to be a return to the land. This point is one of the foundational drivers of environmental discourse. Alienation, then, once reversed, can

solve the problem. Cue visions of classrooms waltzing on mountain paths and writing next to lakes. They have identified the actors as inhabitants of a continuum that moves from those who “will view nature as a warehouse of resources for human use” at one end, and “an opposing group [that views] human beings as an untidy disturbance of natural history, a glitch in the earth’s otherwise efficient ecosystem” (4). They acknowledge that these positions are extremes, and that most people will find they inhabit a more ambiguous position between the two. Further, the two posit that conceptualizing the discourse in this manner—as an oppositional problem exacerbated by how people relate to nature—leaves environmental rhetoric with the difficult task of influencing “not only [an] audience’s ethical attitudes but also the way the reader regards the entire community of nature” (4).

Killingsworth and Palmer have no qualms positioning actors as those who work on the world. Traditionally, it is this juxtaposition of people working to save or destroy the planet that should serve to spur a reader to action. There is an ecological balance that has been upset by our consumption-directed habits and practices, and such a balance must be restored by shifting behavior away from non-nature and back towards nature. The system becomes one of conflict, and the battle becomes one of ideals. Return to nature, and the forces that drive us towards wanton destruction will shift, with reconciliation coming as a transition from an unfavorable ideal to the ideal favored by the authors. Cooper argues that these efforts are primarily centered on seeing nature as some sort of truth, and that by returning to nature, transgressors are expected to reform and act upon objects in a manner less objectionable. She claims that, “Instead of learning from nature how all things are tied together in the web of life, they seek to impose their own private

and preferred vision of pristine wilderness, attributing an intrinsic meaning and value to nature untrammelled by human culture” (xvii). This concept of environmental balance and its basis in an idealized set of behaviors and attitudes is not ecological in its origin or its approach. As Cooper closes her foreword, she claims, “Ecological balance has nothing to do with ideals, but refers to the inexorable patterns that form in response to changes in the web of life.” This makes it clear that Cooper contends ecocomposition should not be seen as a greening of writing in the same sense that we see *greenings* of college and business campuses, retail and entertainment venues, and pretty much all other visible corporate entity in this country and the world beyond. Without discussing the motives or efficacy of such efforts, Cooper argues it is essential to separate the pursuits of these endeavors and the goals of ecocomposition. While one seeks to directly influence ideals that impact habit and practice in an effort to relieve ecological stress, the other looks to ecology for an instrument of thought that can help writers and teachers of writing understand the complex relationships that encompass our writing acts.

The collection in which Cooper’s foreword appears—Christian Weisser and Sid Dobrin’s *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*—works towards an ecological understanding of writing <what is the meaning for it? You have established that Cooper did not accept the greening approach Killingsworth and Palmer promoted...characterize what ecocomp tries to do instead. You may have hinted at it, but haven’t characterized it>, [Define ecocomp here] and builds a theory that interfaces well with concepts of place. Dobrin and Weisser edited a second collection in 2002 that sought to outline the goals and purpose of pursuing ecocomposition. In that book, *Natural Discourse: Toward Ecocomposition*, they had stated that writers should be

encouraged to “interact with systems that affect their writing” (19), in part as a means of focusing the work of students not on an instructor, but on their own practices and products.

Ecocomposition, then, places itself as a pseudo-critical pedagogy. Ira Shor explains critical pedagogies are pedagogies in which students are encouraged to critique the traditional roles of student, teacher, and institution, as well as adopt a critical viewpoint of the discourse with which they come in contact, both in the classroom and in life outside of the university. Critical pedagogies ask students to assume a questioning viewpoint and gain critical consciousness of how exploitation in all walks of life often originates, or is justified, through the discourse encountered constantly in daily life (Shor 21). Ecocomposition strives to engage students at this critical level, asking students to question common narratives <about?> and reach their own conclusions about these narratives. I frame ecocomposition as a pseudo-critical pedagogy because it is less concerned with exploitation of the masses and more concerned with the relationship between the writer and the prevalent narratives that make up the systems wherein writing takes place. Weisser and Dobrin’s work supports this view, stating that ecocomposition should work “post-process toward the critical categories of race, gender, class and culture” (Weisser and Dobrin, “Breaking” 567). Specifically, it should work on centralizing writers’ relationships with place in a critical fashion (568).

Finally, ecocomposition works to identify valuable experience students bring to the classroom, centering the pedagogical experience around them. This move is often performed by self-reflective instructors striving to displace themselves as the locus of attention in a classroom, placing students and their interests at the foreground instead

(Elbow 120). And this, perhaps, is where ecocomposition has struggled the most. Traditional conceptions of the pedagogy—a rhetorical take on ecocriticism constructed mainly of nature writing and issues of environmentalism—create the unease Cooper outlined above. She indicates ecocomposition must focus on writing “ecologically,” to use her term, but at the same time promote a pedagogy that need not be tied to environmentalism.

Ever-present in discussions of ecocomposition are the risks of shifting this pseudo-critical pedagogy into a platform from which the professor evangelizes his ideological conceptions of environmentalism or escapism, moving away from the goals of ecocomposition and towards a type of indoctrination of principles (Hothem). Thomas Hothem warns that, due to ecocomposition’s connections to ecocriticism (however tenuous and fragile the connections might be), nature writing and its underscoring principles often form the meat of the ecocomposition course. These can lead to “seductive notions of solitary inspiration these movements have instilled in us, and hence to the kind of enhanced escapism we have inherited from such writers as William Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau” (36). Such a pedagogy privileges escapist experience, when often many students have never undergone such an experience (Keller and Weiser 195).

Hothem continues by saying, “Indeed, given the rich tradition of nature writing on which it draws...the practice of ecocomposition should carefully reconsider its ties to nature writing as we know it, and revalue landscapes that students have known all along yet haven’t necessarily had the tools (or time) to critique” (36). By valuing place not as an ideal locale of isolation far from the reaches of society, but as a locale where students

find themselves during quotidian pursuits of life, ecocomposition increases the valuation of experience they already bring to the classroom. This practice helps remove the risk of alienation escapist narratives tend to generate (Killingsworth 41).

M. Jimmie Killingsworth and John Krajicek note that privileging the ecology of environmentalism can also lead to alienation. They share a situation in which their students read an essay on bioregionalism by Jim Dodge. In the essay, Dodge outlined the unsustainable practice of consuming goods that were produced, processed, packaged, and shipped from distant locales to the communities in which people live. He spoke of reliance on natural systems as an alternative to the consumption habits common to most Americans, couching his argument in the scientific language of regional ecology. Killingsworth and Krajicek's students felt that Dodge's solution was derived from a sanctification of the natural with which they could not identify. Killingsworth and Krajicek frame their protests as an indication of how scientific environmentalism can quickly alienate students (41). Their students felt that "these nature writers seem rather windy, garrulous, like somebody who's been alone too much and, once in company, can't quit talking" (41).

Killingsworth and Krajicek go on to note that "our students are encountering a species of environmentalism unique to Western culture and central to the political ethos that has driven the environmental protection movement in the United States for over one hundred years" (41). Students resist this connection, and adherence to ecocomposition as such a pedagogy "may alienate the teacher of composition...from a large percentage of any contemporary class of students, and may thereby stand in the way of effective teaching" (42).

Dobrin theorizes how place should be used to combat these idealized visions of environment in *Ecocomposition*'s first essay, "Writing Takes Place." In it he notes that "'ecology' is often used synonymously with 'environmentalism' by the popular press," and ecocomposition, similarly, is often assumed to deal "solely with nature writing and with environmental rhetoric and that it addresses environmentalism as a subject" (13). These topics do influence ecocomposition. But they are not the only ideas informing the sub-discipline. Ecocomposition, Dobrin continues, "is encouraged by not just ecology and composition, but by ecocriticism, cultural studies, ecofeminism, environmental justice, conservation, service learning, race and ecoracism, public intellectualism, and a host of other critical areas of study. Primarily, however, ecocomposition is informed by rhetoric and composition" (13). Dobrin lists these other influences on ecocomposition to establish it as a "critical" pedagogy, and to leave room for an issues-based curriculum without marrying the idea to the popular political ideology associated with environmentalism. But it also serves to establish the larger tenet Dobrin and Weisser explore in their collection: ecocomposition is, in its most effective iteration, more an examination of relationships—between a student and his or her environment, his or her place—than a critical pedagogy designed to indoctrinate environmentalism (Cooper xv).

Dobrin argues that writing cannot be removed from life—that intellectual pursuits shouldn't (and can't) "be separated from our daily lives, from the places we live those lives, that is, ecocomposition asks that we consider our own roles and the roles of our environments in larger systems alongside all others" (15). Place in ecocomposition can be seen as the sites we often frequent—our offices, our classrooms, our universities, our homes. This idea is well supported by other ecocompositionists, as well. Julie Drew



explores how “*place* plays a role in producing texts, and how such relationships affect the discursive work that writers attempt from within the university.” She is speaking not only of the physical space that makes up most scenes of writing instruction—the composition classroom—but also of the sense of being such a locale takes on, and how the dynamics defining student-teacher relationships influence how a sense of place is established. “In fact,” she continues, “the very idea of nature, or natural environment, in the composition classroom might arguably be subsumed within the larger notion of place that certainly includes, but is not limited to nature” (57).

Mark C. Long, Arlene Plevin, Colleen Connolly, Paul Lindholt, and others agree that place should not be limited to the natural, but must take into account how we interact with any locale in which writing occurs. Place becomes the space we occupy when conceiving, producing, revising, and consuming the written word. This might seem to be a privileging of the mundane and quotidian over natural, unspoiled, secluded nature retreats, and to a large extent, it is. But this should not discount the valuable contribution such retreat can play in ecocomposition pedagogies. Instead, it is constructive to maintain focus on life as it happens—in mundane environments as much as in the outdoors or the wilderness. When students realize how their relationship with these everyday locales contributes to the ecological functions of “environment,” they begin to realize the impact place has on them, and they have on place.

Place, then, is positioned at the foundation of the pedagogy ecocompositionists are working to build. Arlene Plevin argues that centralizing place in ecocomposition can be liberating as it works to decenter the instructor and bring the focus of the course to the students and their writing. She notes in her essay titled “The Liberatory Positioning of

Place in Ecocomposition,” that “integrating place into the classroom” is a radical move, one that can continue a “teacher’s desire to diffuse his or her authority, in decentering the classroom” (148).

#### **2.4 Moving towards Place**

Peter Goggin looks at ecologies of place “as a metaphor and organizing principle for examining relationships between people and the natural, synthetic, and social systems of the places they dwell in.” He qualifies his use of metaphor by stating he’s not looking at the scientific relationships that ecologists study and pursue, but instead looks to “ecological inquiry...and the interpretation of environment by people in local contexts,” examining how understanding and analysis of local systems can be generalized to apply to broad, larger systems, and the reverse. In essence, Goggin’s collection is looking to ecological notions of place for in order to establish a broad methodology for investigating how people interact with and live in places. There is general overlap between what Goggin describes as his goal and how we (as a discipline) have come to view the work of Marilyn Cooper. Cooper advocates for an investigation into all the minute decisions and factors, all those things taking place in the “web” that encompasses a writer, and eventually leads to a specific piece of writing. The majority of Goggin’s collection doesn’t deal with writing directly, but with rhetorical analysis of environmental issues—an analysis of the rhetoric behind drilling, development, industrial interest, and more.

Goggin also is not developing the ideas Dobrin and Cooper touch on—the work to view writing processes through complex systems theory of ecology. In *Postcomposition*, Dobrin is looking to establish a type of post-postmodern theory of writing that says all systems are complex, and we can’t really gauge what factors

contribute to how writing artifacts are obtained—at least not with certainty. It is the act of embracing uncertainty that seems to drive Dobrin to link writing processes and ecological theories. The fact that ecocomposition hasn't developed working theories of writing that can account for the complexity of the act of writing is the primary reason he feels the movement has failed.

Goggin, on the other hand, doesn't explore theories of writing at all. His use of the ecological model doesn't extend beyond the metaphorical sense as he has defined it in his introduction. In fact, Goggin's collection relies on such a broad definition of "ecologies of place" that its use is limited. *Any* rhetorical interaction *must* "take place." The difficulty of this discussion foreshadows Ed Casey's claim that "place" is so foundational a concept that it's incredibly difficult to work into meaningful scholarship. For Goggin, ecologies of place mean that people looking for a local environmental issues and analyzing them within specific, localized contexts.

Goggin's approach to place does not contribute to an ecological understanding of writing and what such an understanding means for students. His volume, rather, is a collection of essays that deal with environmental and social issues as faced by people in specific places. At heart, it's trying to accomplish things with clear respect to ecological models of writing. But it's using the model as a lens for interpretation more than as a theoretical base for building institutional knowledge. I'm looking to establish a type of taxonomy for place and writing that makes sense within the context of first-year writing and community engagement

I do find some of the collection useful in advancing the sense of place that I seek. I can see, for example, assigning Gesa Kirsch's essay, "Land Ethic for Urban Dwellers",

as a potential reading for my classroom. It looks at urban places and wonders what an urban land ethic should look like. She does this by performing a rhetorical analysis of the Longfellow Bridge rehabilitation in Boston. In her essay she performs an analysis of the environmental discourse that surrounds the preservation efforts related specifically to the bridge, as well as the preservation of other urban landmarks. Her essay is intriguing because most activist discourse labeled as “environmental rhetoric” is concerned with preserving natural places. When Kirsch looks at efforts to preserve urban places and calls it environmental rhetoric, she’s working against a common position taken by environmental writers. But she stops short of developing an urban dwellers land ethic, relying primarily on the story and analysis of what took place in the community efforts to preserve the bridge. The way Kirsch thinks about place—as a function of complex interconnectedness and opposing interests—is what I would cultivate within my writing classrooms. To do this, I look to the work of geographers and philosophers, learning the language they use when speaking of place, and working to augment it in a way that will benefit students within the writing classroom.

## CHAPTER 3. A PHENOMENOLOGY OF PLACE

### 3.1 Developing a Consciousness of Place

Place may seem less difficult for students to conceptualize than many of the terms we commonly use in writing classes, such as purpose, audience, and context. Our experience of place is something so native to most of us, something so much a part of us, that place is more challenging for students to work with than ecocomposition portrays it to be. Theorizing something that is ever present, yet almost always distant from conscious thought, makes this thinking an arduous undertaking. Part of the challenge of place stems from how familiar the idea of a place has become. In this chapter I establish place as a phenomenological concept, a concept that is absent from most approaches to ecocomposition. To do this I draw on the work of classical thinkers Plato and Aristotle, modern philosophers like Michel de Certeau and Edward Casey, and humanistic geographers like Yi Fu Tuan and Tim Cresswell. My reason for taking this detour into these theoretical underpinnings of place is to defamiliarize place in a manner that allows students to look to place as a resource to assist them in addressing the issues and problems they take up as they learn to write. I hope to encourage students to consider place more complexly so it may be configured in ways that open it to multiple perspectives. Ultimately, the strategic components I will use in helping students build their resources to consider place include (1) the ethos of place, (2) constructing understandings of place that invite/support insights into the nature of place we don't get from ecocomposition; and (3) the semiotics and language of place; I begin with ethos. But first I will discuss understandings of place.

Though *Timaeus* and *Physics* are less studied by scholars in rhetoric and composition than Plato and Aristotle's other works, that these classical works were concerned with how places fashion being makes for a remarkable point of departure. When someone asks, "Why would you talk about place in a writing classroom? Shouldn't you focus on more fundamental rhetorical principles?" Being able to rely on Plato and Aristotle as legitimizing foundational thinkers is a good move. But the discussion of place continues today, in smaller ways and through the study of phenomenology. Phenomenology, as a philosophical term/concept (or even as a method), studies "appearances" (as opposed to reality). It analyzes a person's perception of an event (as opposed to angling to establish the intentionality of an event). Thomas Rickert alludes to this event perception in *Ambient Rhetorics*, emphasizing the notion that phenomena that often go unobserved have material consequences in quotidian pursuits and can be useful. I find such phenomenological thinking persuasive in the consideration of place as well as the consideration of event.

For example, the popular radio show and podcast *Radiolab* is renowned for combining stories and science into documentaries. In an episode on Alan Turing, guest James Gleick, a historian of science who studies the impact of science on modern culture, attempts to explain the most fundamental breakthrough of the Turing Machine. As Gleick begins his explanation, host Robert Krulwich questions whether Turing's work really is remarkable. Gleick explains that the machine consists of three things: an infinitely long stretch of tape, an ability to write 1s and 0s, and a set of instructions. And basically, if these things could actually exist (which, as is immediately evident from the requirement of an infinite length of tape, is a practical impossibility), the machine could do anything

conceivable in mathematics. Krulwich still isn't impressed, and says, "Is this such a big idea? I mean, all you're saying, really, is that he figured out how to put logic, or how to program a machine. I mean—" at which point Gleick interrupts him. "But, but, no, Robert, you're already cheating. Because as soon as you say you're going to give the machine some logic, and then as soon as you use the word program, you're using very modern bits of knowledge that we've all internalized, but the idea of putting logic *into a machine*...no one thought of that. That's just weird" (Krulwich and Abumrad).

Theorizing about place demands the same act of self-reflection from us as Gleick demanded from Krulwich. Louise Wetherbee Phelps put it well when she said that "theory can never tell people directly what to do" (Phelps 863). To theorize is to reflect, and often the object of our reflection initially seems unworthy of our efforts. However, once we reflect, the complexity of the issue (or issues) under consideration begins to unfold. What makes up a set of knowledge doesn't usually come with instructions on how the knowledge should be applied. And furthermore, "The more fundamental the inquiry, the less theory has to say about conduct; and the more mediation is required to translate it into practical-moral choices" (Phelps 863).

While the concept of the Turing machine isn't directly connected to what I want to discuss, it is related to the problem of entertaining the kind of discussion I seek to foster: the difficulty that comes with this type of theorization resonates in the conversation Krulwich had with Gleick. A person must be *somewhere*. There is no way of *being* without place. The void is a void—a nothingness. It is incomprehensible. Place, as something explicit, is completely tied to being, and theorizing in terms of place suffers from the familiar—essential—internalization of the concept requisite to existence. But

academics do talk about place. Philosophers are aware of place, but although it receives no prominent attention there. Rhetoricians talk of it, and compositionists are also aware of place, with it being especially apparent in the faltering niche of ecomposition. What I will do in this project is explore how place is formed <in writing or writing classrooms or in communication theory?> and how place is formative. I contend that a more robust understanding of place will lead to the development of the a writing curriculum such as the one found in Chapter 4.

Students (and perhaps many of us) often conflate space with place, particularly when they begin their thinking about place; such a move threatens to make place more abstracted than it needs to be. In his 1997 book *The Fate of Place*, Edward S. Casey works to recover place as lived, as affective experience, has been philosophically influential beyond the credit it is given. “In our own century, investigations of ethics and politics continue to be universalist in aspiration—to the detriment of place, considered merely parochial in scope. Treatments of logic and language often are still more place-blind, as if speaking and thinking were wholly unaffected by the locality in which they occur” (xii). In an effort to reestablish place as a philosophical concept of record, Casey looks to Plato’s *Timaeus* and Aristotle’s *Physics*. Casey brings place into its own, separating it from space. Place isn’t opposed to space, but the concept of place gives us a more substantive offering in terms of situation and locatedness.

### **3.2 Early Concepts of Place**

The notion that place plays a role in becoming is nothing new or radical. But place, as it differs from space, as a concept of philosophical thought, has experienced a notable evolution. In Plato’s *Timaeus*, the concept transitions from a type of space



(*khôra*), towards a more Aristotelean notion of place (*topos*). The main agents in establishing this *topos* include the Receptacle and the Demiurge. The Receptacle acts as a space of collection, that, described loosely, serves to contain whatever it is that the Demiurge assembles (or assists in assembling). The Receptacle itself is a type of *khôra*, but it contains specific, actualized localities. These are the primal regions, and the particular places within each primal region. As the Demiurge works to form and create, to bring entities into being—a sort of starting point that exists before being becomes becoming—which initiates acts of becoming, *khôra* gives ground to *topos* and unrealized space becomes place: particular, local, and distinct.

In this section, I explore Consider this progression as it occurs within the *Timaeus*. The dialogue is significant to my study of place for two reasons. The first stems from the ethos of Plato among scholars within the disciplines of rhetoric and composition. Starting with Plato gives bestows on this exploration of place an authority that it would otherwise not possess. The second reason I start with Plato stems from the nature of the *Timaeus* as a story of origins. Though the dialogue is often plodding—especially in the middle and latter sections where Timaeus offers detailed accounts of how cosmic entities are involved in the formation of specific bodily systems—it follows a creation narrative that progresses from an erratic and chaotic assembly of motion and qualities to a material and physical corpus (more/other than a body). It moves from a type of nothing, in the sense that the qualities and instances from which the Demiurge pulls aren't relevant as anything other than source material—to something that is both concrete and recognizable. And though the dialogue is most often considered to be a type of cosmogenesis, Casey argues that the *Timaeus* functions as a topogenesis as well. Not

only does Plato work to tell the story of how the universe and mankind came into existence, he also reflects on how, in becoming, mankind must be somewhere. In sum, I look to the *Timaeus* for insight into how place arrived as a concept worthy of philosophical and scholarly pursuit.

Plato recognizes the idea of place as one of the foundational concepts of being and thinking. As I mentioned above, the *Timaeus* contains Plato's account of how the universe was formed. It is different from much of Plato's work in that, after an initial and relatively short exchange between Socrates, Timaeus, Critias, and Hermocrates, Timaeus delivers a speech that remains uninterrupted for the duration of the dialogue. In the 1997 Hackett edition of *Plato: Complete Works*, John M. Cooper writes this in his introduction: "But Timaeus' speech is unique among [Plato's single-speaker dialogues] in having extensive philosophical content: here we get philosophy, but grandiose and rhetorically elaborate cosmic theorizing, not the down-to-earth dialectical investigation of most of Plato's philosophical works" (Cooper 1224). Cooper notes that the *Timaeus* was the only dialogue available in Latin, and that it was once the most-read of all his works. I won't speculate as to why, but the dialogue isn't given much attention by those within our discipline. A title search on comppile.org returned just one result, a 1997 doctoral dissertation in philosophy. <would be more authoritative to search the ProQuest disseration database, though probably less dramatic> And even though such research is far from exhaustive, few would argue with the idea that rhetoricians and compositionists have not made it a habit to explore the *Timaeus*.

At the outset of his speech to Socrates, Timaeus establishes broad principles that govern how both physical and metaphysical aspects of being are brought into existence.

The spiritual aspects are characterized as a type of cosmogenesis, the process through which not just the existence of mankind, but also the framework necessary for sustainable life came to be. Timaeus establishes three starting points in his account of the universe. The first is the changeless model, the second is an imitation of that model, and the third he calls the “Receptacle” (Plato 49a5). The Receptacle represents the first instance of location (the act of locating something) presented in the *Timaeus*. It is the primary counter of the void, the first sense of a “where” in the transition towards existence.

But the Receptacle is not quite a place. Plato looks to it as an ideation of place, but not an actual place itself: “We look at it as a dream when we say that everything that exists must of necessity be somewhere, in some place and occupying some space, and that that which doesn’t exist somewhere, whether on earth or in heaven, doesn’t exist at all” (52b2). As Casey points out, Husserl identified the receptacle “as an underlying ‘region of regions.’” For Husserl, the region of regions formed an aspect of consciousness, an aspect of metaphysics rather than a physical phenomenon. Casey argues that the regions exist substantially, as part of the material world. He agrees that the receptacle is “what lies *under (hupo)* (emphasis in original) that which appears in the material world,” but grants it more materiality than Husserl. He continues: “The receptacle is accordingly the bearer (but not the begetter) of all that occurs in the sensible world. It bears up (under) all that is located in (elemental) regions and (particular) places, thereby ‘providing a situation for all things that come into being’ (52b). But despite its considerable locatory power, the Receptacle remains the referent of a bare cosmological ‘this.’ There is, after all, no Form of Space” (Casey 37). As Plato’s account progresses from a type of nothing (void) towards the realization of existence, the Receptacle

becomes the first holding point, an instance of stability, a clear space, but not yet a place. At this point, his account doesn't require as much belief as would a story or a myth, but it is not quite fixed in science, either. The Receptacle points to place without fully committing to it. According to Casey, "The Platonic cosmology of regionalized Place precariously and provocatively straddles the tenebrous middle realm between the mythics of elemental matrices and the physics of pinpointed places" (37). As unrealized as it is, the Receptacle typifies space (*khôra*), at least when considered wholly. To enter is to be placed somewhere, though nowhere in particular. Place (*topos*), within the Receptacle, occurs at points in which fully formed beings (what Casey calls "sensible bodies") are found to occupy. "Each such place is thus a locus within a primal region composed of similar bodies; the locus itself is not stationary but is in effect the traced trajectory of the movement of those bodies as they *change place* from moment to moment" (41, emphasis in original).

The Receptacle provides some spatial location to whatever it is that enters it. Such a spatial distinction is a requisite step on the path of becoming. To be observable means to be somewhere or someplace. Timaeus summarizes it thus: "Let this, then, be a summary of the account I would offer, as computed by my 'vote.' There are being, space (*khôra*), and becoming, three distinct things which existed even before the universe came to be" (52d2). The concept of being, if it is to be explored and developed, must involve an existence tied to a place. As space, its role is to provide both three-dimensional extension and a specific location for any observable particular to be "in" at a given time: for any particular to be, it must be occupy some spatial location (52b3–5).

Though discussions of *chora* and its implications in the *Timaeus* abound (see Derrida, El-Bizri), it is clear that the term does evoke a notion of placement, or more basically, of place. Though much of Plato's work in *Timaeus* is foggy, one clear, important conclusion to take from it is that acknowledging place as a formative entity gives place (as a concept) a favorable position in how modern thought was established. The receptacle tends to form things, and things leave it. Like the receptacle, place also forms things, both phenomenologically and materially. Place is consequential to both the construction of material being and the pursuit of a phenomenological understanding of place. As place forms things in the material world, it also forms perspectives and perceptions phenomenologically. This reading of the *Timaeus* lays the ground work for an exploration of place and the role it plays in the development of ontological notions of self and identity. Plato ties place to being in a manner that marks the two as inseparable. To talk about being is to acknowledge place.

As Casey puts it, "The Timaeian tale is thus a story of increasing implacement. The first to stages [Space and Primal Regions] both preexist and *succeed* the intervention of the Demiurge [in the third stage, Particular Places within Primal Regions]: choric spatiality and regionality remain throughout" (Casey 41, original emphasis). Casey continues to explain how the Demiurge does not wholly impose his will as he organizes, nor does he wholly draw from the materials being organized. Casey balances immanence and imposition in a manner that allows for both the will of the Demiurge to be carried out, and also accounts for the will of what is being organized, immanently drawn out throughout the creationary process (Casey 43).

Such a distinction is important for a study on place. If the receptacle just imposed, then the locality and what it might offer becomes less relevant. Countering imposition with immanence allows for a study of place that looks not only to the place, but what has been made of it by the entity formed. Another approach to this idea is to think of a place and its inhabitants working together to establish meaning (through ontological reflection). Place imposes some order on an occupier, but the occupier being formed therein draws out of the “internal constituents” (Whitehead 138), through action and reaction, also draws out of the place enough to move from the homogenous—the requisite product of imposition—to the heterogeneous. Place becomes an actor, along with the Demiurge, and the two work in concert to form material beings, distinct not only through the imposition of one, but also through the immanence of the other.

Casey reads the dialogue as a move from heterogeneous space to homogeneous space, a transition that favors distinction, one of the qualities that sets places apart from spaces (Casey 41). His focus on the Receptacle as a space unrealized, a space in which (or perhaps through which) places eventually emerge, does not limit Platonic place with an indistinctness that perhaps such a reading suggests.

But we are by no means restricted to the Receptacle as a paradigm of emplacement, evocative and suggestive as this paradigm remains still today. Other models are possible if it is indeed true that *placing and being placed are matters of connecting*, whether in the context of cosmogony or cosmology, of phenomenology or metaphysics, or in everyday life. Just as there is no place without depth, so there is no place that does not connect the disparities of being and experience, of perception and language, of chaos and cosmos. And if it is also true that (as Kierkegaard said) “existence

separates,” then we need to heed E.M. Forster’s celebrated counsel: “only connect!” Both Kierkegaard and Forster were thinking more of people than of places. But it is in and by places that the most lasting and ramified connections, including personal connections, are to be made. (48)

Place, at some point, becomes an amalgamation of connections, similar in more than one sense to Cooper’s ecological web. Many points of reference combine to exert influence in ways that might never be completely apparent, perhaps the most resilient and beneficial point of reference we can use when teaching our students about place.

In order to render this separation Casey turns to the *Timaeus*, and recounts how Plato uses the Demiurge to move from “an originally refractory space into a domain of domesticated places,” where place is established through an organization of constituents already present in a Receptacle. Place wasn’t created to fill a void, or combat a “no-place,” but was formed through the recognition of the states of “sensible qualities” (32). Primordial place consists of regions or “primal zones in which elementary sensibilia cling to each other in momentary assemblages” (34). These regions (Casey terms them “protoregions”) “arise in the very beginning,” and form “substantive places-of-occupation,” or Chora. Choric regions are substantive without being a substance. “Rather than a thing, it is a locator matrix for things. Such a region is finally a matter of place rather than space—if ‘place’ implies finite locatedness and ‘space’ infinite or indefinite extension” (34). Moving from the absent to the organized—organized in terms of “like associated with like” (34)—involves the will of an “ultimate creator, shadowy and undefined, imposing his design on the universe” (42), which sets Plato up to address “the two doctrines of law, [i.e. between] Immanence and Imposition” (42).

Casey believes Plato doesn't force immanence over the imposition (nor the converse). It's not really a matter of which, but Derrida's neither/nor, or "neither one nor the other, *and* both." In specific, it's not really a matter of some entity imposing place on the unorganized, nor is it a matter of place emerging on its own from the unorganized. Instead, it's about place becoming: taking with it some "formic truths," so to speak, but not at the expense of what is immanent. Casey continues: "Yet, by the same token, it is not the case that place is a mere *product* of such creation. We have found, massively, that place in one sense or another is continually at stake *throughout* the process of creation: if not in the form of discrete *topoi*, then as predeterminate (and often quite indeterminate) parts of the scene of creation" (43-44). The work is to establish place as a given that can't be taken for granted. "Indeed, wherever an 'in' is employed, place is already at stake—if not literally, then as an active force all the same" (44).

Casey poses a profound question: "Could it be that the most primordial items are not elements, much less atoms, but choric regions?" How does the chora factor into where I'm going? Studying place is ultimately about making connections: connections to the physical world, connections to others, connections to ideas and feelings. Place is about relationships, and the Chora helps move this along. Discovery, the act of finding, is a part of this. Casey, working from Milton, points out that "To be lost is still to exist, however amorphously or covertly" (47). And "there is no place that does not connect the disparities of being and experience, of perception and language, of chaos and cosmos...But it is in and by places that the most lasting and ramified connections, including personal connections, are to be made" (48). That's what the *Timaeus* offers. Moving from no-place to place through Casey's reading of Plato will bring me to this



point. Place exists in the physical world, stemming from regions of geographical / ideological / notional association. Chora is significant because it's about a place *becoming*, about change across time, about the significance of recognizing ontology as something highly informed by place.

### 3.3 The Physics

Moving forward in time, Aristotle seems to corroborate what Plato is saying. It's in his *Physics*. I'm also arriving here from Casey, though Cresswell and Eugene Walter (*Placeways*) corroborate this view of Aristotle. The quote Casey uses is "for Aristotle, place 'takes precedence over all other things' (*Physics* 208b35). In particular, it assumes priority over the infinite, void, and time" (Casey 51). Casey argues that any study of the physical world must take place into account. Here, Aristotle is providing a second opinion that in order to understand ourselves, we need to understand place.

Casey uses Aristotle's *Physics* to build up the idea that the concept of place has primordial significance—significance on a basal level. "It is precisely because of its indispensable role within the physical world that, for Aristotle, place 'takes precedence of all other things' (*Physics* 208b35). In particular, it assumes priority over the infinite, void, and time...On Aristotle's view, one simply cannot study the physical world without taking place into account: 'A student of nature must have knowledge about place' (208a27)." Casey is getting into place in terms of the phenomenological descriptive, "how things present themselves to the human observer in his or her immediate life-world" (53). Place is "in itself" and place is "relative to other things." This notion seems like an extension of the immanent nature of place Casey deals with in the second chapter of *The Fate of Place*. Place *is*, and that can't be taken away. But place is also interpreted,

which can't be taken away either. In Aristotle's terms, place exists regardless of what the observer might consider. But it also exists relative to the observer at the same time. This speaks back to my opening.

Studying place is tricky because it's pertinent to everything we do in life, and a careful theoretical consideration of place is anything but obvious. Again, Casey posits, "As a vessel holds water or air within it, so a place holds a body or bodies within it in a snug fit" (55). Snug fit...the relationship between a place and a body is formative. Just as a bottle molds the contents placed within it, holding it to the shape or contour of the bottle, so a place holds bodies—shaping them accordingly. On page 56, Casey sets up Aristotle's conception of place as problematic, and that he's going to try and solve this problem throughout the chapter.

At this point, I've briefly reviewed through Casey's lens two ancient thinkers highly regarded as helping form classical notions of rhetorical thought. And though the discipline of rhetoric and composition doesn't deploy a strong concept of place when forming its identity, reading classical texts helps establish a rhetorical imperative to explore place conceptually—to question the assumptions and connotations associated with its term, and to explore its value in the face of *space*, a term that seems to be more universally accepted.

### **3.4 A Break from the Field: Neo-Aristotelean and Neo-Platonist Ideals**

The previous two sections addressed classical notions of place as put forward by Plato and Aristotle. To summarize, Plato feels that place, along with other rhetorical concepts he addresses, seeks for truth in adhering to forms that transcend existence. Place, as it is established among bodies whose forms stem from such transcendental

ideals, assumes the same idyllic roots that, contemporarily, we no longer seek, but still reference within our classrooms. The neo-Aristotelean forms of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* are still present in many contemporary writing texts, and drive much of our fixation on the rhetorical situation. I learned to teach rhetoric through the rhetorical triangle, where writer, reader, and context were somehow equated with these appeals. I can still remember when, during the week of preparation I received before becoming an instructor, I watched a faculty member draw the triangle on a dry erase board, where each point represented one aspect of the rhetorical situation. The faculty member then drew a second triangle, this time connecting *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* along each of the triangle's points.

The rhetorical situation and its appropriateness in our classrooms has been contented for decades, Though Lloyd Bitzer is often revered as the father of the rhetorical situation, his 1968 speech (published in 1992 In a *Philosophy & Rhetoric* essay titled "The Rhetorical Situation,") triggered many responses from scholars across the discipline of rhetoric and composition. Briefly, Bitzer's main point centered around the inclusion of situation within the realm of the rhetorical situation. Essays by Scott Consigny, Richard Vatz, James Kinneavy, and others all contributed to this discussion, which by no means originated from Bitzer. Each of these authors seemed to agree that the rhetorical situation should consist of the speaker, audience, subject, and occasion. Bitzer argued that the situation should become the "controlling and fundamental concern of rhetorical theory," as it was one important element that had long been neglected. Bitzer's work has always been highly regarded (Google Scholar indicates that his essay has been cited an enormous 2,664 times), and clearly shaped the manner in which I was taught to bring rhetoric into

my classroom. It is not my intention to displace this work, but to infuse it with place. Throughout the aforementioned discussions, place is constantly hinted at, but never given any prominent positioning in the various hierarchies and diagrams and classroom guides.

More recently, Andrea Lunsford et. al.'s text, *Everyone's an Author*, triangulated the rhetorical situation with audience, context, and purpose. The author was displaced by purpose, and the reader by audience. As a field, we talk about context as if it's an obstacle our students must overcome. We teach that a text is shaped through ethics, politics, and physical characteristics, and as long as our students hear that from us, they'll be ready to write throughout their lives. This, it seems, is not a very enriching idea. To be fair, I've painted a fairly cynical view of what happens in the classroom. However, I'm struck that not many textbook authors teach introductory or advanced composition courses on a regular basis. Such work is relegated to graduate students and part time instructors, many of whom pay little attention to the craft of teaching, to say nothing about the body of research (written by composition scholars who as well have limited face time with composition students) that seeks to inform teaching practice.

I contend that infusing context and the rhetorical situation with a study of place will lead our students down a better path. Place exists as an unseen factor in the physical and social ecologies wherein all writing occurs, but is rarely if ever accounted for. These discussions acknowledge that the context of an issue written about in Maine might not resonate with readers in New Mexico or Alabama. However, they fail to put forward a practice that might lead our students to recognize that place plays an enormous factor in how things are written and how things are received, especially within classrooms where

our students are expected to engage with agents who live and work in the communities that surround our universities.

A study of place can yield insight into how each element of the rhetorical situation might react when confronted with its other parts. Students aware of the physical, social, and ontological aspects of place will inherently possess a better understanding of audience and the contexts in which their writing occurs.

### **3.5 Seeking a Semiotic that Better Expresses the Nuance of Place**

Once the exigence for an understanding of place has been established, the matter of teaching the concept must be explored. Contemporarily, many postmodern thinkers have continued to refigure place as a concept that involves not only the spatiality of the body in relation to its environmental and social surroundings, but as something driven and influenced by affective notions of relationality and materiality, more a product of invention than some derivative of an absolute. In *Placeways*, Eugene Walter works to establish and articulate place as “topistic reality.” For Walter, topisticity works to provide place with an adjective that can account for the fleetingly capable connotation implied—both implicitly and explicitly—in the habitual reference to a “sense of place.” It is no longer possible to derive “‘patial’ from ‘place,’” as was done with spatial from space (20–21). Forming the neologism topistic, “derived from the Greek word *topos*,” is Walter’s first step “to recover methods and ideas of a holistic form of inquiry designed to render the identity, character, and experience of a place intelligible.”

Place is a notion rife with meaning, the full extent of which encompass “sensory perceptions, moral judgments, passions, feelings, ideas and orientations,” all of which “belong to an order of intelligibility that [Walter] calls ‘topistic reality’” (21). Walter is

careful to distance himself and his work from what might be described as positivistic inquiries of place. “Some readers may object,” he proclaims, “that most of the population of Rome or Athens may be oblivious to the feelings and meanings evoked by their cities. True enough, but their insensitivity does not destroy the reality of topistic experience” (21). Basing topistic inquiry solely on the awareness of observable phenomena displayed across a statistically significant portion of a population fails to account for the “balance of intellect, common sense, and imagination” required for the study of place. Topistics and topistic inquiry form the foundation of Walter’s study of place, and work well to describe all that the phrase “a sense of place” has come to entail. Place cannot be conceived of as mere geographical location, but must also take into consideration all that works to create it. As Walter summarizes,

A place is a unity of experience, organizing the intercommunication and mutual influence of all beings within it. Every place, then, implies a form of dwelling together, and all the realities in a place—living people, images, memories, animals, plants, as well as bacteria and other hidden forces—make a group of effective presences dwelling together. Even though we rarely acknowledge them all, they participate in one another’s natures and constitute a topistic structure, the system of mutual immanence. People—with their complex ways of dwelling together and apart—are the most vivid and significant presences in a local system of immanence. (23)

With this, topistics effectively moves place beyond the abstractness of space, accounting for the complex manner in which place embodies and situates knowledge, meaning, and culture.

The concept of topisticity is also present in de Certeau's essay, "Walking in the City." Life in the city is made up of pedestrian speech acts. Movement, observation, and translocation function as semiotic markers, things which can be both "read" and mapped. In this sense that life "marks" a place—records itself onto a place—language is like place, and place is like language, in that both of these constructs serve to situate bodies among that which surrounds us. "To the fact that the adverbs *here* and *there* are the indicators of the locutionary seat in verbal communication...we must add that this location (*here—there*)...also has the function of introducing an other in relation to this 'I' and of thus establishing a conjunctive and disjunctive articulation of places" (99). I speak from here, my locutionary seat, projecting my locutions to there. I also *move* from, among, and around my topistic seat, articulating place in a similar fashion.

In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau focuses on the linguistic mapping that occurs as a walker experiences the physical and spiritual ethos of a locale. He also accounts for the role human experience plays in forming topistic realities. This experience bridges the gap between the city as a space and the city as a place. As a space, the city is devoid of affect, a stoic materiality devoid of meaning and affect. But people walking, people living, people reading the city—drawing on experience, channeling memory, and responding to the unconscious tugs of affect—actuate "the pedestrian unfolding of the stories accumulated in a place (moving about the city and traveling)" (110). This unfolding gives rise to the possibility of topistic mapping, whereby individuals might come to acknowledge how place has worked to inform their very being. As Casey, Malpas, Conrey, and others have argued, acknowledging place becomes an ontological exercise, an inquiry of being.

While de Certeau maintained it was through people that a space becomes something more, it would be more precise to insist it is affect that leads individuals to take space and transition to place, investing the spatial with a power to influence and drive, all without any overt consideration of how they fashion this sense of place. While a place can impose a topistic reality upon its inhabitants, workers, children, siblings, friends, students, mothers, beggars—the reality is as much a product of their own shaping as it is innate in the land / sea / cityscape. A place is invented as much as it invents. Despite its actuality, it serves to be reconceived and repurposed by those who inhabit it. As Lawrence Grossberg puts it in *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, place “describes an affective reality, or better, a complex set of affective articulations and registers that constitute different ways of living in already socially determined locations” (34). Those “already socially determined locations” could be considered spatial coordinates—empty, cold, opposing the void. But the “different ways of living” that arise from “affective articulations and registers” bring them warmth and meaning.

Another robust definition of place comes from social anthropologist Tim Ingold. His conception of place relies on a complex interweaving of experience and location, and how the two work to form a unique construction of knowledge. He rejects the idea that populated most notions of place throughout antiquity, the idea that “we can only live, and know, *in* places” (146). Living, he argues, happens not *in* place, but among places. It happens as he wanders “between the sitting room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, study, and so on, as well as in the garden.” But living doesn’t just happen at home, either. “I travel daily to my place of work, to the shops, and to other places of business, while my children go to school.” Philosophers would agree with him, claiming



that “places exist like Russian dolls on many levels in a nested series,” as a city contains neighborhoods, which themselves contain houses, and a house contains rooms, and rooms contain chairs, and so on and so forth. This viewpoint might work for philosophers, but for Ingold it is insufficient. “Only a philosopher could look from his sitting room and see his whole house!” Ingold proclaims. “For its ordinary residents, the house or apartment is disclosed processionally, as a temporal series of vistas, occlusions, and transitions unfolding along the myriad of pathways they take, from room to room and in and out of doors, as they go about their daily tasks.” Where space encompasses being, accounting for it as a nesting of complex levels of habitation, place distinguishes it. Being “is drawn from lives that are never exclusively here or there, lived *in* this place or that, but always on the way from one place to another” (147). Life unfolds across many places, encountering them each in turn, taking from them and giving to them, both informing and being informed. “Human existence is not fundamentally place-*bound*, as Christopher Tilley (2004: 25) maintains, but place *binding*. It unfolds not in places but along paths...Proceeding along a path, every inhabitant lays a trail” (Ingold 148). This movement along a path, movement that encompasses Ingold’s notion of place, he terms wayfaring. “Where inhabitants meet, trails are entwined, as the life of each becomes bound up with the other. Every entwining is a knot, and the more that lifelines are entwined, the greater the density of the knot.” In all these notions of place—Ingold, Grossberg, Walter, de Certeau, Casey—embodiment plays a crucial role. Places cannot exist detached from the bodies that inhabit them. Place and topisticity relies on their presence—all that they bring with them in terms of memory, culture, expectation, experience, etc.—to become something meaningful.

This idea harkens back to de Certeau's notion of place as an unfolding of experience among pathways that intersect and remake the city into something personal, something other than what planners and architects intended it to be. And understanding place in this fashion opens up the door to topistic inquiry, revealing its value to those of us who teach writing, those of us looking for methods of inquiry informed, at least in some part, by principles not grounded in notions of rationality and modernism, but by an acknowledgment of the complexity encompassing any notion of being we work to explore with our students.

### **3.6 Geography and Place**

I now move from a philosophical conception of place to a geographical one. Charles Withers, a geographer from the University of Edinburgh, writes of his discipline's distinction between space and place in his essay, "Place and the 'Spatial Turn' in Geography and in History." He writes that geography, as a discipline, currently exists as questions of place: "*Where* you are in the world as part of questions about *how* you are and *who* you are in the world—has considerably heightened significance and for some places and people more than others" (638). Withers continues on to say that notions of place, "as a particular location, and the character or sense of place—are only part of the meanings associated with place in geographical and historical work. Like space, its regular epistemic dancing partner...place is a widespread yet complex term."

As the discipline of geography evolved in the 1970s, it responded to "new forms of mathematically-oriented spatial science" by becoming less concerned with physical locality, and more concerned with ideas relating to "the sense of place" (640). They did so, Withers argues, "as a rejection of the emphasis upon space as a matter of

depersonalized power geometry, from distaste for the related law-like generalizations with which geography sought scientific status and from increased attention to place as a lived particularity, and not space as an abstract generality.” Withers agrees with Tuan that space is an arena for action and movement, whereas place is about “stopping, resting, becoming and becoming involved.”

Edward Relph, according to Withers, “emphasized a more experiential notion of place.” For Relph, place was almost spiritual in nature, intimately associated with dwelling and with “being in the world.” Of this, Relph writes, “The basic meaning of place, its essence, does not therefore come from locations, nor from the trivial functions that places serve, nor from the community that occupies it, nor from the superficial or mundane experiences...the essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centers of human existence” (43). Relph, while arguing for distinctions that Tim Cresswell would soften with his more contemporary work, set the stage for place to be seen as different from space primarily because place existed as a social, cultural, and phenomenological construct. As place started to take on these deeper qualities, it moved away from space, from physical locality and topographic distinction. According to Withers, Relph was an exceptionally early departure, seeing “place as different from space and from territory by virtue of the emotional responses inherent in place” (641).

The distinction geographers make between place and space becomes even more important as the discipline looked to place to inform how we construct meaning. According to Withers, this occurred within philosophy and geography almost concurrently. It happened as

the philosophers Edward Casey and J.E. Malpas and the geographer Robert Sack emphasized a more profound way of thinking about place that saw place as deeper than meaning and materiality, something that could not be reduced to the social, the cultural or the natural. For Malpas, ‘The idea of place encompasses both the idea of the social activities and institutions that are expressed in and through the structure of a particular place (and which can be seen as partially determinative of that place) and the idea of the physical objects and events in the world (along with the associated causal processes) that constrain, and are sometimes constrained by, those social activities and institutions. . . . It is within the structure of place that the very possibility of the social arises’ (35-36). For Cresswell, ‘Malpas and Sack are arguing that humans cannot construct anything without first being in place, that *place is primary to the construction of meaning and society*. Place is primary because it is the experiential fact of our existence’ (32). For geographers such as Allan Pred, place was central to social meaning not as a fixed spatial container, but because it was always in a state of becoming, always the results of historically-contingent processes and social practices. (641-642)

Casey makes similar claims, citing that the eminence of place as critical to being stems from Plato, but continues on through modern and contemporary philosophy. Place, as space realized, leads to a structure of inquiry that gets at the heart of how being, living, and experience are all tied together.

It is from humanistic geographer Tim Cresswell that outlines the relationship of place, theory, writing, being, and more in his text *Geographic Thought*. Some of what Cresswell does falls in line with goals of composition as a discipline. He talks about

Kant's role in modern geography, noting that "Kant's geography sprang from his belief that geographical ideas were an important element in 'trying to enlighten his students more about the people and world around them in order that they might live (pragmatically as well as morally) better lives' (Louden 2000:65)...Geography provided a pragmatic and moral basis for more metaphysical explorations" (Cresswell 36). Cresswell also connects geography, through notions of "absolute space," to issues like private property, nation-states. Kant's notion of space is "responsible for a collection of things that include the nation-state and private property" (37).

Tim Cresswell writes that the study of place can be divided into three categories or levels: descriptive, social constructionist, and phenomenological. The descriptive approach is closely linked with regional geography, wherein the world is considered to be a "set of places, each of which can be studied as a unique and particular entity" (Cresswell, *Place* 51). Primary concerns in a descriptive approach center on distinctiveness and particularity. Students following this approach might write about a place's geographical characteristics, or about the layout of a town's buildings and streets, or how physical characteristics lead to specific interactions between a place and its inhabitants.

The social constructionist approach to accounting for place also pays attention to how a place is physically unique, "but only as instances of more general underlying social processes" (51). Social constructionist study of place seeks to develop place as a product of interaction between physical localities and the social conditions that surround it. A harbor is not a harbor solely because it provides deep access for large vessels, but also because of the distribution and consumption habits fueled by capitalism and

materialism. In a social constructionist approach, social forces are the primary agents in how a place is shaped.

A phenomenological approach to place differs from the first two in that it is not concerned with the physical or social nature of a place, but with the formative, affective, even rhetorical nature of all places. As Cresswell writes, a phenomenological approach “seeks to define the essence of human existence as one that is necessarily and importantly ‘in-place.’ This approach is less concerned with ‘places’ and more concerned with ‘Place’” (51).

Cresswell doesn't intend these three levels to be used as discrete sets, where utilizing one prevents the use of another. Instead, it should be recognized that there is almost always overlap between the three. They do, however, represent depth. The first level involves the interpretation of a place based on how it is seen and interpreted on the surface. The second level plumbs a bit deeper, seeking to interpret place based on more than what can be seen by introducing more abstract notions of ownership, liberty, and oppression into the interpretation. The third level moves even deeper, attempting to uncover “a deep universal sense of what place means to humanity” (51). Cresswell is clear that these distinctions should not be considered levels of importance, as looking at place across the entire spectrum is “important and necessary to understand the full complexity of the role of place in human life” (51).

Geographers offer us good, specific language we can use to help our students talk about their experiences with place in a meaningful way. Yi-Fu Tuan is often considered to be the father of place. In his book *Of Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Tuan explores the formative experiences that eventually lead those who inhabit a place to

develop a sense of place. Tuan argues that a true sense of place is the product of time and reflection. “An object or place achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is, through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind.” This totality relies not only on knowing, but also on experience and reflection. Tuan continues, “Long residence enables us to know a place intimately, yet its image may lack sharpness unless we can also see it from the outside and reflect upon our experience” (18). Tuan focuses on a “sense of place” as something of a destination, a point one reaches only after making specific stops and undertaking specific actions. The writing classroom is not an ideal place to pursue Tuan’s vision, though the lexicon he had a hand in developing will help our students wrestle with their own senses of place and how these senses were developed.

It is through the work of Casey, Cresswell, Malpas, Withers, and others that I developed a heuristic to use with my writing students. The heuristic is designed around the three levels of interaction specified by Tim Cresswell in *Place: A Short Introduction*. I’ve referred to these levels or approaches before—once in Chapter 1, and more recently in Chapter 3. The levels—descriptive, social constructionist, and phenomenological—form an architecture that helps students both understand the different approaches we can take when writing and reflecting about place, and also provides a concrete foundation from which they can branch as they develop the requisite skills to react to and reflect on the places they inhabit, and how those places play a part in how meaning is formed. My primary goal with the heuristic is to help students reflect on place in a meaningful fashion, thereby enhancing their understanding of context and rhetorical situations. The heuristic is also useful because it is very open: students can reflect on the mystical quality of landscape that tends to haunt and infect us; students can talk about place as a function

of social and physical interaction (Baltimore is a port city because of the port); students can also talk about place in a fashion that recognizes how formative places are in constructing a sense of self. Sense of place à sense of self.

Geographers also realize that place isn't something that is stable. In his textbook *Geographic Thought*, Cresswell makes this case more than once: places are dynamic, and places are dynamic for different reasons. Because the places through which a river flows have physical differences, the river changes course over time. Because the dynamics of a city are driven by its inhabitants, these dynamics change alongside the changes of the inhabitants. For example, gentrification and the displacement that occurs because of it is acceptable because the poor that are displaced are not visible to those moving in. Without defining the dynamics of a neighborhood before and after such a change takes place, it's quite reasonable to believe that these dynamics will be different. In fact, our positioning with places in space and in time will always change how we maintain a sense of place.

How many of us have returned to our childhood homes to see them changed almost beyond recognition. New stores, restaurants, malls, and other sites of consumption often seem to spring up overnight. Small houses are torn down and replaced with homes that barely fit the lots. This clearly seems pejorative—the arrival of new things ousting the old. But such judgments are difficult to make. There are certainly clear cut cases of urban sprawl, urban decay, gentrification, and other evolutions of place that irrevocably change a place for its inhabitants. I'll share how, after a 30-year absence, my parents and I returned to the house where I was born, found little that had changed, but were nonetheless disoriented by the passing of time.



I was born outside of Detroit, but lived there only three years before my parents moved us out west. I was clearly too young to develop any lasting sense of place. When I returned to that house with my parents in 2014, they were both left trying to reconcile their understanding of the neighborhood when they left with how they were seeing it upon our return. As residents, they knew the names of everyone on their block. They had friends of similar age with similarly-aged children. Their understanding of the place stemmed from their shared experience of children playing in the streets, people congregating around backyard barbecues, and other aspects of the lives they lived in Michigan. What they returned to were just homes. The physical structures were the same, but the place itself was completely foreign to them. I felt very little. I had seen the place in pictures, but it couldn't seem like returning to a home, as I had never thought of the place as home to begin with. I had rarely thought of the place at all. What I witnessed was that, even though the physicality of the place had been almost completely preserved—there were no nearby strip malls or movie theaters or McMansions that had rendered the place unrecognizable. Instead, the houses were by and large the same. And yet, the passing of time saw the dynamics shift, and the sense of place my parents had developed had little bearing on their current experience. Even after speaking with an elderly woman who came outside to greet us—a woman my parents knew from the time they'd lived there—it was clear the place had moved on without them, and that they'd never get that back.

### **3.7 Writing in the Community and Engaging with Place**

It is with this idea in mind—the idea that place and being are intertwined in ways that impact the ability of students to write—that I approach classrooms. In Chapter 4, I will explore how place played a role in two community engagement projects in which I was involved as a student participant. I explore how place and community engagement cannot be decoupled, and how the connection between them gives rise to productive reflection and discovery. In Chapter 5, I explore a place-based pedagogy that I taught as an instructor. During this third project, I worked with a community partner from the first project, but in a sharply different role. I led the coordination efforts as an instructor, building up to the engagement project with pedagogical choices informed by the theories of place I've just discussed. It is in this role that I discover the impact of my place-based pedagogy on the writing projects we undertook with our community partner. I also reflect on the limitations of the pedagogy, and whether or not I would choose to implement it in a first-year writing environment again.

## CHAPTER 4. WRITING IN THE COMMUNITY, ENGAGING WITH PLACE

### **4.1 Project One: Community Contact with West Lafayette's Nature Center**

It is early January 2015, 45° F and raining, an unseasonably warm day for the Lafayette area. I make my way across a small parking lot into an unassuming municipal building surrounded by woods and grass. I've come to the Lilly Nature Center, the off-campus community partner I've chosen as the site for the semester's large service learning project. I've worked with them before. Dan Dunten, the city of West Lafayette's parks stewardship manager, is our main point of contact.

I was introduced to Dan in 2012 by Dr. Jennifer Bay, a professor at Purdue. Through her coordination with Dan, I and two other students helped write technical instructions and other documentation for a web-accessible camera that surveyed the Celery Bog, a wetlands and refuge for birds and other aquatic life that has become the nature center's primary attraction. In addition to being the first time Dan and I had worked together, the project also helped me establish connections to the community of Purdue and West Lafayette.

### **4.2 My Own Negotiation of Place**

I was a second-year graduate student at the time I undertook this project. Moving from the mountains of Utah to the plains of the Midwest had been hard on me, and I often felt at odds with both the environment and the community where I now lived. I had moved my entire family—myself, my wife, and our two daughters—to Indiana. We had given up hikes in the mountains, lakeside camping, mountain biking, skiing, and more in order to study at Purdue.

The program was challenging and fulfilling. We enjoyed living in a new neighborhood, and were busily engaged with our church congregation as well. But I had built certain barriers between myself and the place where I lived that were preventing me from thinking of Purdue as anything more than a temporary change in longitude. Working with the bog helped me get outside of myself and embrace Purdue and its surrounding community. Something took place that, while not entirely quantifiable, helped me see the place from a different perspective. And that perspective led to an opening-up (a letting-go) of my previously emplaced (and mountain west) self that eventually led to the positive formation of a new sense of place.

As Yi-Fu Tuan remarks in his book *Of Space and Place*, “Human beings not only discern geometric patterns in nature and create abstract spaces in the mind, they also try to embody their feelings, images, and thoughts in tangible material” (17). The feelings I was having about Lafayette were neither negative nor positive. I would question whether they were fully embodied feelings or even partially embodied feelings. I knew my way around the area. I had places where I preferred to eat and shop, and where I liked to spend time with friends and family. I was past the point of “[discerning] geometric patterns” and “[creating] abstract spaces in [my] mind.” But something was still missing. Tuan continues, “An object or place achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is, through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind” (18). My experience had not been total, and I take some issue with the idea that a totalizing experience is worth pursuing or talking about, but I hadn’t involved myself fully in active reflection. Again Tuan: “Long residence enables us to know a place intimately, yet its image may lack sharpness unless we can also see it from the outside and reflect upon our

experience” (18). Once I was able to consciously connect with the place of Lafayette through my work at the Celery Bog, and through the reflection that the community engagement seminar required, I started to develop a more satisfying sense of place, a sense that increased my connection to the community and enhanced my experience in Lafayette.

#### **4.3 Student Community Project: Initial Description**

The project I describe above itself was fairly straightforward. The Lilly Nature Center (LNC) purchased and installed a webcam for two reasons. First, the actual bog was separated from the nature center by a steep climb down a trail. It wasn't accessible to people who were mobility impaired. The nature center would utilize the webcam to give those people a bog-like experience while visiting the nature center. They had a large screen set up in a viewing area, and had purchased a joystick that could be used to pan the camera and zoom in on wildlife or other sights of interest.

Second, the webcam allowed people to log in from anywhere in the world to view the birds and other wetlands wildlife from their computers. Not only was this an exciting technological development for the nature center, it was also a means by which some of their long-time supporters who had difficulties leaving their homes could once again take part in the natural offerings of the Celery Bog.

All of this was in place when we arrived. The writing problem with which we were faced was to create a set of technical instructions that were accessible to a wide range of readers. To this end, we discussed demographic data with Dan and the IT worker employed by the city. The nature center would only allow adults to utilize the webcam on-site. Dan estimated that most users were older than 40, though he had no numbers to

back up his assumptions. From here, we familiarized ourselves with the technology, created and workshopped drafts of our instructions until we had final drafts available for printing. We also applied for and received a grant from Purdue to print the instructions for the LNC. You can see one of the documents in the accompanying image (Figure 1, below).

The webcam was also accessible via the web, and people could control it remotely, viewing the bog on their computer screens. However, remote operation of the webcam required users to install software on their home computers, something many were unwilling or incapable of doing without a guide to assist them. This formed the second portion of our project: we needed to write instructions to help people handle confusing interface issues that were preventing people from using the webcam. At the conclusion of the project, we delivered five documents to Dan: instructions for the in-house display and controls, signage for the in-house display and controls, instructions for LNC volunteers on teaching others to work the camera, a troubleshooting guide for the instructions, and a guide for installation of software for offsite control of the camera.

Some were printed for distribution within the nature center, and some were intended to be placed on the nature center's website for online reference.

#### 4.4 Implications of the LNC Project for Place

This project with the Lilly Nature Center had far-reaching implications. First, I was able to develop a trusting relationship with Dan and other LNC staff. While this was one of Dr. Bay's goals for the graduate course, these relationships proved beneficial to me outside of my life as a student. I began to see the Nature Center as a place worth frequenting. While accompanying my daughter there during a kindergarten field trip, I was able to speak with Dan about the project and discuss the results our work had produced. I also started making trips there to walk on the trails and utilize the exhibits with family members on my own time. Even though I was required to perform the work in order to receive course credit (and qualify as an instructor eligible to teach community engagement sections of freshman composition), I was able to create and invest in relationships to the nature center as institution, its people, and the land surrounding it that helped me negotiate and transform my sense of the place of Purdue.

## CELERY BOG WEBCAM

Instructions for Use


This equipment is **very expensive** so we ask that you be very careful when operating the joystick. **Please return the joystick to the volunteer at the information desk when finished.**

1. **Turn the television on.** Push the top button (by the yellow dot) on the right side of the TV. A small green light located on the front left corner will come on.
2. **Connect the cable.** The joystick cable fits in the cable located on the floor between the two chairs. If the two ends do not connect, flip the plug over and try again. **Do not force the ends together.** If the joystick does not work after a few seconds, try unplugging and plugging it back in.
3. **Use the joystick.** **Zoom in** by pushing the orange trigger (#1) on the front of the joystick. **Zoom out** by pushing the striped orange and black button (#2) on the top of the joystick. **Rotate the view left or right** by pushing the joystick left or right. **Look up** by pulling back. **Look down** by pushing forward. All the other buttons are disabled, so pushing them does not affect anything.





Zoom in by pushing the orange trigger on the front (#1).



Zoom out by pushing the striped orange and black button on top (#2).




Pan the view left or right by tilting the joystick left or right all the way. **Look up** by pulling back. **Look down** by pushing forward.


**Please note:** The webcam "freezes" up when you get to this pole on the screen. It is adjusting at this point and will continue rotating after three seconds if you continue to hold down the joystick to the right or left.

The webcam may also be operated from other remote computers, so someone else may be moving the camera. During certain times, operating the camera will be limited to allow WLFI Channel 18 to use in news broadcasts.

✦ You can view the Celery Bog Webcam **from your home computer!** ✦  
Ask a volunteer for a postcard with instructions.

*The Celery Bog Webcam allows individuals to observe nature in and around the wetlands. It is made possible through grants from the West Lafayette Parks and Recreation Foundation, Syracuse Audubon Society, Lafayette-West Lafayette Convention & Visitors Bureau, and the **Timonard Endowment** program.*





Lilly Nature Center | 1620 Lindberg Road, West Lafayette, Indiana 47906

Figure 4-1

As Tuan argues in *Space and Place*, “An object or place achieves concrete reality when our experience of it is total, that is, through all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind. Long residence enables us to know a place intimately, yet its image may lack sharpness unless we can also see it from the outside and reflect upon our experience” (18). This was certainly the case with me. I had been a resident of the area for two years, but until I engaged with the place of Purdue in a fashion that asked me to interact outside of my comfort zone—and reflect upon that interaction—my sense of place was transient, outward, and in some ways disaffected.

Employing engagement projects in writing classrooms is not free of dilemma. Both Paula Mathieu’s book *Tactics of Hope* and William DeGenaro’s essay “The Affective Dimensions of Service Learning” explore how students interact with communities as they participate in courses designed for service learning. Both authors discuss the risk that some students feel no kinship to the community—some actually feel alienated by the community with which they’re asked to work.

One of Mathieu’s primary concerns is that top-down, institutionalized forms of service learning are often set up to benefit the institution more than the community partner (280). She argues that many service learning programs arose in response to students who were in school primarily to increase their potential earning power. She cites the foundation of Campus Compact by presidents from Brown, Georgetown, and Stanford as an effort to “counter public images of college students as ‘materialistic and self-absorbed, more interested in making money than in helping their neighbors’ by identifying service learning as a primary strategy for advancing a more positive image of college students” (278). This approach often leads institutions to pursue projects only as



far as they benefit the institution. Partners are often left hanging with unfinished or shoddy work once the semester has concluded (281). Projects are conceived that require a commitment beyond the length of a single semester. Student concerns and desires are placed before those of the partner, and they expect a commitment from the partner without any guarantee of quality or utility on their own part (282).

My first project with the Lilly Nature Center managed to avoid most of these perils for a couple of reasons. First, the project was not carried out in the top-down fashion of institutionalized service learning. Dr. Bay, instead, had arranged for potential community partners from among endeavors with which she was personally familiar, allowing each student in the course to choose from among these potential partners. This built the foundation for a type of agency that Mathieu laments is not often present in engagement projects. I, as a student, was able to choose from one of a few possibilities. The partner was able to rely on the relationship with the instructor to ensure the project was doable, as well as to ensure the deliverables were actually delivered at the conclusion of the course. The end result was a net positive experience for me, an involved student, as well as for the partner, who expressed gratitude that felt genuine to those of us participating in the project. Even more, it helped me overcome issues of place and was one of many steps that I now reflect on as crucial points in my development as a student, as a teacher, and as a person. (All that “person” implies here could be expounded upon for ages...my role as husband, as father, as citizen, as resident...) Finally, participating in this project helped cultivate an awareness of the ties between community engagement and place, an awareness that would play heavily into the planning and execution of my own teaching in the future.

#### **4.5 Project Two: Lafayette Streets and Sanitation**

The second community engagement project I participated in at Purdue was a consulting opportunity that took place with the City of Lafayette city's Streets and Sanitation department. The mayor of Lafayette had asked each division of the municipal government to assess their online presence and boost their presence both on social media and also on traditional community websites. We—the four students working with Streets and Sanitation—surveyed the websites and online presence of six other communities, discussing their strengths and weaknesses in a recommendation report that we delivered to the department. We also worked with them to help publicize an upcoming recycling initiative by creating a video of the mayor introducing a change in how the city collected trash and recycling. This 30-second spot was delivered to them for distribution how they saw fit, with our recommendations as to how it might be utilized most effectively. The project was not easy, and it entailed navigating place in a way that I hadn't encountered in my previous experience.

The first difficulty we encountered involved our ability and willingness to perform the tasks that Streets and Sanitation had asked of us. While we appreciated the exigence of the project, we weren't sure it was wise for use to attempt a website redesign for a couple of reasons, both of which have clear implications in how complex interactions among people and location lead to the experience of place. The mayor had tasked each city department with a review of how they were represented online. He had given the department directors an initiative to expand their web presence, but hadn't given them any resources to aid them in the task. For some in our group, this felt like a boon to us as students. If the mayor had allocated funds for an external review, our group

would have been overlooked and our chance to perform the work would have never materialized. But for others, this was a reason to avoid participation. They felt that, as an incorporated government entity, such a task should utilize resources within the community that required monetary remuneration. Such an act would have a net positive effect, basically giving work to an agency that had material roots within the city.

This dilemma was one of the ethical issues we discussed during the seminar I mentioned earlier in this chapter. Should university students participate in projects that could potentially be carried out for pay by established community institutions? The example that came up during the seminar was a menu redesign for a local restaurant. Would the work of the students be taking something away from a design firm within the community? If so, would the impact of helping a business do this free-of-charge be greater than the impact of the potential loss of work within the community? While I can't speak to the outcome of the discussion we had, I left with the distinct impression that such projects were to be avoided. They should be avoided because it probably isn't okay for students to take on the role of production that could replace the function of services offered within a community. These situations should also be avoided because the relationship between the student group and the community partner lacked many of the reparations open to an arrangement between two businesses. If the work was deemed inferior, would the business pursue recompense from the university? At its face, such an issue seems absurd. But in a society in which any undesirable outcome may lead to proceedings in a court of law, the danger of this seems real. These concerns also have material consequences in the perception and formation of place that surrounds this

relationship, which I will discuss after I introduce the other half of potential problems we had to overcome.

These second problems arose from how certain members of our group perceived the mayor and the city council, and how these city officials had reacted to certain groups within the community. Some group members felt like outsiders because they did not align themselves with some of the city government's decisions. Just as William DeGenaro warns in his article "The Affective Dimensions of Service Learning," members of our group not only felt like community outsiders, they felt like the community was actively trying to marginalize and isolate them. In essence, they found themselves being asked to help people who, according to group members, were actively marginalizing their position within the community. In contrast, our work with Dan Dunten raised no such issues, despite the fact that he, too, was acting as a representative of the municipality. Though pinning down the actual difference might be impossible, it most likely stems from the figures involved. Dan was an unassuming city staff member. Mayor Roswarski is an alpha, dominant executive with a pronounced physical presence.

These primary concerns—the material consequences of performing the work, and the ideological disconnect between established community institutions and members of our group—encompass the complex systems involved in these interactions. Communities survive as places based on social and material exchange, both of which were being called into question throughout the Streets and Sanitation project.

In the end, our group felt the work was worth doing for a couple of reasons. First, it was clear that if we didn't perform the social media assessment, the work would have gone uncompleted. We learned in meetings with the Streets and Sanitation staff that their

department was the only department that had done any work at all to satisfy the mayor's request. We also felt that working directly with the city government was different from working with a local business. Though our contribution to Streets and Sanitation did replicate the type of service offered by design and consulting firms, we felt that the circumstances more than justified our participation.

The ideological concerns were somewhat more difficult to resolve. Part of what we concluded through our survey of other city websites was that most social media initiatives had very little visible impact. We expected to see things like announcements about interruptions in trash pickup, snow removal guidelines, FAQs for new residents—all of which could be improved through the use of social media. Instead, we saw videos departments had produced with less than 100 views on YouTube. We saw Facebook pages with almost no followers, no regular updates, and no real delivery of content. We also saw dormant Twitter accounts and other attempts that departments had abandoned or not maintained. And while our metrics for evaluating impact were somewhat imprecise, the picture painted by the metrics was that investing in social media was often a flash-in-the-pan endeavor without significant, ongoing investment. We made it clear that many firms employed people with the sole purpose of managing social media. Unless they could do something similar, the chance of them maintaining any social media presence was slim.

With this ethical discussion firmly in mind, our recommendation to them was to have us work directly on a single issue that could be solved within the material and temporal confines of the semester. They told us that each year the city government saved close to \$200,000 through the city's recycling program. It was through these efforts that

the city itself didn't charge a fee for trash removal outside of what was already paid through property taxes. The head of the department told us that they were on the verge of piloting a new program that would do away with small, rectangular recycling bins, substituting those bins for large, wheeled recycling containers. The hope was that the larger recycling bins would motivate residents to recycle more and throw less trash away.

The work for us was to create some content that could help generate some interest in this initiative, raising awareness that a change was on the horizon. We decided to produce a 30-second video spot that could be aired as a PSA on the local broadcast television station. We wrote a script, obtained video equipment, and were prepared to shoot the video featuring Dan Crowell—Commissioner of Streets and Sanitation—reading the script. Dan was somewhat reticent to read the script, and proposed Mayor Tony Roswarski read it instead. We agreed, though some of our group members later expressed concerns. The mayor had gained a reputation among the graduate students as someone who was less tolerant of difference than what should be expected from the head of the city. No one was unwilling to work with him on these grounds, but this made us reflect on what the real message of the video would become. While we were all excited about the ecological potential of spreading a message that would have a positive environmental impact, we didn't want this to become a campaign video for the mayor's reelection.

As a group, we came to an understanding that existed as some imperfect form of consensus. The mayor and some of the Streets and Sanitation staff wanted to highlight the fiscal benefits of recycling as the primary reason for citizens to increase their recycling efforts. We reflected on how framing the issue as a better financial choice for

the city pushed the frame of conservation out of the picture. We were fairly comfortable proceeding in this direction. While at heart I want people to care for our places for the same reasons I care--preserving ecological stability, minimizing our ecological footprint, preserving resources and environments for future generations--doing things for less-than-ideal reasons is better than not doing them at all. This change in direction did evoke reflection from us, and we concluded that it wasn't our job to act as crusaders for an ideal. In *Powers of Freedom*, Nikolas Rose talks about the concept of complexification. To summarize, complexification is a term that There are issues / systems / moments in life where the complexity of a thing defies "those binaries that have structured our political thinking and our theorizing about the political for so long: domination and emancipation; power and resistance; strategy and tactics; Same and Other; civility and desire" (Rose 277). He goes on to say that "There is not a single discourse or strategy of power confronted by forces of resistance, but a set of conflicting points and issues of opposition, alliance and division of labour. And our present has arisen as much from the logics of contestation as from any imperatives of control" (277). Our resolution during this project defied the idea that we had to choose between the binary of participate or not participate. We felt comfortable engaging in an activity with those whose ideology was different than ours because of the points at which these ideologies met.

In retrospect, it is relatively easy for me to locate these points of intersection in place. One member of our group was an Indiana native. As she progressed through graduate school, her motivation to continue through the program shifted. She had come to the program with an interest in becoming a scholar and a teacher. However, the more time she spent in Lafayette, the more her motivation shifted towards that place. She

eventually decided to pursue a career within the community, choosing this over one of scholarship. She argued that any project that stood to benefit the community was a project worth pursuing. One point of intersection. Another member felt that establishing contacts with the city staff would increase her chances of fostering meaningful service opportunities for her own students in the future. Another point of intersection. I felt that even though the issue was being framed in a less-than-ideal fashion, the results of our efforts would produce a net-positive impact for the environment. Finally, another group member felt that the motives of the mayor vis-à-vis policy decisions unrelated to our project were irrelevant to our undertaking. Working outside of an ideal was a necessary part of getting things done.

This instance of community engagement intersects with place along all three of the levels I outlined from Cresswell in Chapter 3 (namely descriptive, social constructionist, and phenomenological). The recycling effort we aim to promote affects the geography of the community. More waste being recycled means less waste being stored in a landfill. The issue of staff and student interaction, and the conflict with the mayor, illustrate the social/formative level. The issue of the graduate student's ontological shift (I want to be a scholar-->I want to live in Lafayette) illustrate the ontological and phenomenological level of place.

The unexpected complexity that surfaced in this second project wasn't something that instructors should minimize or even avoid. Since the project was attached to a graduate seminar, we were well-equipped to handle the bumps in the road. We also had excellent guidance from the professor. She attended the meetings we had with the city



staffers, and was an active liaison during all aspects of the project. She even attended the video shoot where we shot our footage of the mayor.

Reflecting on these complexities, I would hesitate to place a group of freshmen writers in a similar situation. In Chapter 5, *Writing in Place*, I recount my experience as an instructor leading an engagement project with the community partner from the first half of this chapter, Dan Dunten and the Lilly Nature Center. I describe specific pedagogical exercises that I used to lead up to the engagement project. I also track how two students reacted to these assignments and how their senses of place shifted throughout the semester.

## CHAPTER 5. TEACHING STUDENTS TO WRITE IN PLACE

For this final chapter, I use literatures that have discussed place (from Chapters 2 and 3) and the recounting of my own experiences with place and community engagement in public rhetoric courses (Chapter 4) to focus my construction of a place-based writing course. I aim in this fifth chapter to offer a pedagogical enactment of ecology for composition studies. I do not claim this work presents “the” way; instead I claim it constitutes a responsible path. My work in this chapter proceeds via a focus on the writings of two of my students from English 108 and how their understanding of place and writing progressed as they participated in my place-based composition course. They arrived in the course from quite different place-based backgrounds (as many students do). The first, Student A, was from Tippecanoe County in Indiana. The second, Student B, grew up in California. Both of these students came to campus with specific attitudes and expectations of what college life would be like at Purdue. Both had developed a sense of place for the region in which they were raised. For Student A, that place included many West Lafayette landmarks. For Student B, it did not. These two students present an interesting dichotomy for this reflection. As I began to get to know them better, I found myself asking the question, “How would these differences in experience affect each student’s ability and willingness to engage with a community partner?”

Throughout this chapter, I will focus on the how I taught place in my English 108 class: what we read, what we discussed, the assignments, tools, and reflections we used to help us understand how place plays a role in our lives and in our writing. I examine the dynamics of working with a community partner both as a student participant and as a

coordinating instructor. To start, I will explore the development of the two aforementioned students as writers in West Lafayette across their work throughout the course.

### **5.1 Figuring Place**

Below, in figures 5-1 and 5-2, I have included the heuristic I gave my students during the first week of our class. This heuristic (see Polya), which draws on a tradition in both composition studies and earlier in rhetorical education, presents both key concepts to probe and extended lists of questions that might be used to push that probing to deeper levels. Heuristics, defined by many as “rules of thumb,” often are used in writing to generate possibilities and probe potential solutions in situations (or problem-solving occasions) that do not respond to algorithmic processes/answers. One of my reasons for generating a heuristic for place was my conviction that probing place-based questions, while important to success in negotiating their places in the texts they were crafting, was an unexpected probative practice for students in a writing class. In offering a heuristic, I sought to provide a tool that would support their efforts. The heuristic stems from the work I discussed in Chapter 3. The three levels of place come directly from Tim Cresswell’s work on place. As discussed in Chapter 3, the questions that make up the bulk of the heuristic stem from the work of Cresswell, Malpas, Casey, Withers, and others.

Figuring Place

English 108

Fall 2014

Jon Wallin

This **heuristic** (think of a heuristic as a type of walk-through designed to help you learn something for yourself) is designed to assist you in making observations and drawing conclusions about the places you inhabit.

Think of the Cresswell reading we discussed in class. In it, he categorized three levels of interaction with the places we inhabit:

descriptive

social constructionist

phenomenological

Recall that Cresswell doesn't think these levels are hierarchical—one is not inherently superior to another. Instead, the three levels represent three depths. Descriptive interactions aren't as deep as social constructionist interactions, which in turn aren't as deep as phenomenological interactions. It is important to remember that these levels don't have distinct borders. As you venture through your examination, you will find that some of the questions labeled as descriptive also have social implications, and vice-versa. While maintaining categories is beneficial, don't focus on distinction so much that it becomes your primary pursuit.

Remember that this isn't a worksheet. These questions are not comprehensive. Write your answers in your journals (or in a Word document or a Google Doc). Reflect on the questions before you answer. You are making an effort to understand how we, as individuals and as members of communities, interact with our surroundings. By exploring these interactions, you will come to understand how a sense of place is developed, and how such a sense impacts you as you live and as you write.

Figure 5-1

**Descriptive**

Where are you?  
 How often do you find yourself in this place?  
 What physical characteristics set this place apart from its surroundings?  
 Describe the most prominent features of the place.  
 Describe the most subtle features of the place.  
 How is this place lit?  
 How does this place smell?  
 How is it colored?  
 How do the seasons influence this place?  
 What confines this place? Where are its borders?  
 What goes on in this place? Work? Play? Sleep? Eating? Other activities?  
 Who works here? Who plays here?  
 Is this place pleasant? Why or why not?

**Social Constructionist**

Who created this place?  
 Who uses this place?  
 To whom does it belong?  
 What is the history of this place?  
 Is this a public or a private place? Is it semi-public or semi-private?  
 Are you a guest? Why?  
 How is this place intended to be used?  
 How can such intentions be subverted?  
 What do others do in this place?  
 How would you characterize the interactions of others?  
 Do these interactions seem typical or atypical?  
 Does this place open and close? Who decides this? How is it enforced?

**Phenomenological**

How do you see this place?  
 What does this place know?  
 How has this place complicated the lives of its inhabitants?  
 How does this place influence the way in which you see yourself? 'This class?' 'The community?' 'The world?'  
 What associations do you make with this place?  
 How were these associations formed?  
 Do your associations seem universal? In other words, would you guess that others have similar associations as you? Why or why not?

Figure 5-2

## 5.2 Mapping Our Campus

The first major assignment in my ENG 108 course centered on students creating a “deep map” of the Purdue campus (adapted from Brook and McIntosh). I encouraged them to look at campus not from the perspective of a traditional map, with the goal of helping one navigate from point A to point B, but from their own perspective, highlighting how they moved from their residence hall to the dining hall to their various classrooms, places of recreation, and more. (See Appendix B for the assignment sheet I used.) This assignment served multiple purposes for this class. First, it interfaced well with our early readings. In addition to the text listed on the syllabus (Blair, Murphy & Almjeld, *Cross Currents: Cultures, Communities, Technologies*, see Appendix A for more details), I assigned them readings from Tim Cresswell’s book, *Place: A Brief Introduction* (Chapters 1 and 2), as well as two essays that were not explorations of place as a concept, but were example of two different ways an author might account for place in their writing. The first, “Beginnings,” the first chapter from John R. Stilgoe’s book *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History and Awareness in Everyday Places*, encouraged students to take note of where they are, to occasionally travel without purpose (the goal being to see the world outside of the perspective of locomotion), and to interact with spaces without, to the best of their abilities, expectations of what would come from their interactions. The second of these two readings was Barry Lopez’s *The American Geographies*, an essay much more traditionally aligned with nature writing and the environment. In this essay, Lopez encourages his readers to experience America not just through its famous places, but by understanding the importance and beauty of landscape many might consider mundane.

When my students received the “Mapping our Campus” assignment sheet, they knew that the final project for the course would involve working with a community partner. I had introduced the Celery Bog, and I had assigned students to travel to the Bog on their own time to try and familiarize themselves with the land and the Lilly Nature Center. However, they didn’t know the details of the project we would undertake. Even though Dan Dunten and I had communicated multiple times before the start of the semester, zeroing in on one project out of three or four he had proposed, I didn’t give all of these details to my students. I wanted them to build an understanding of place, of community, of what it meant to work with a community partner, and of what was at stake—for both the partner and the students.

As outlined in Appendix B, students were to examine existing maps of campus, analyze them in groups, and build an understanding of how different maps serve different

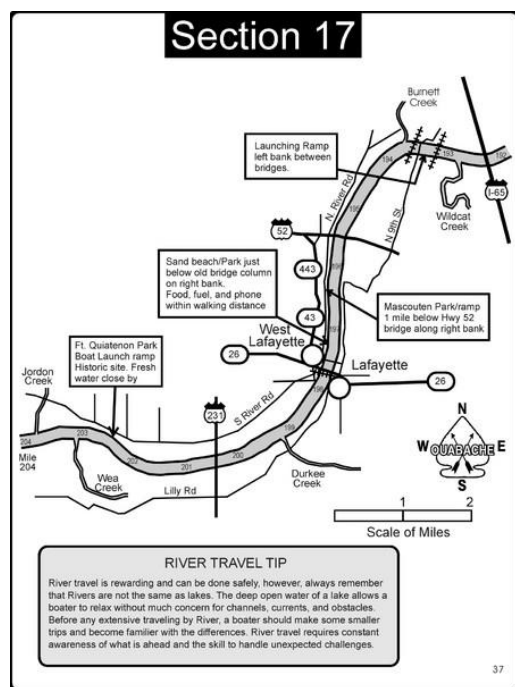


Figure 5-3

purposes. Some maps are designed to communicate without bias. A general map of Purdue’s campus doesn’t favor one place over another—at least not overwhelmingly so. Contrast this to the idea of a campus parking map (See figure 5-3), where parking lots are detailed in a fashion that helps them stand out from the other places on the map. One group brought in a map from a book called *The Wabash River Guidebook* (see figure 5-4). They noted that all of the details surrounding the





were due, I told them about the upcoming project, and we discussed what it might take to craft a proposal that would benefit both the Celery Bog and those that would eventually utilize the trail. I asked them how they had considered accessibility in the past, and how they accounted for accessibility in their personal maps of campus. Most of them hadn't, which wasn't unexpected. I asked them to spend the next two days considering how their mapping might change to account for accessibility. They then created overlays for their maps that demonstrated how the routes they navigated would change if they were sight-, hearing-, or mobility-impaired. They also wrote a 1-2 page reflection about the mapping project, posted to the class website. [I have no IRB exemption, and as such can't share actual student work. Thus, I summarize the work they did that they posted online.]

Student A, who had lived in Tippecanoe County most of his life, felt that he was initially disadvantaged when creating a map. Because both the community and the terrain were very familiar, he had none of the freshness the others brought to the assignment, and expressed the difficulty he had in breaking away from the expectations implicit in his long association with the city. But as he progressed through the unit, he started looking at the community less as a place he had always moved through, and more as a place he inhabited.

Student B by contrast, arrived in West Lafayette from an urban and western community. His reflection started with his desire to describe his surroundings, the places with which he was familiar, and how he interacted with those places. However, as he worked on his map, he found that he was less interested in representing the physicality of a location, and more drawn towards what he felt while walking the campus. As this progressed, he became more focused on finding a home in West Lafayette—not in the

physical sense, but in the sense of belonging and familiarity that the idea of a home often connotes. The campus, he noted, was not just the place of the university he was attending, but would also be his home for the coming four years. He wondered which places would become memorable for him, memorable from the people he would get to know, or from other things he could not foresee.

These two reflections display a progression through two of Tim Cresswell's levels of interaction with place. Initially, both students wanted to describe the setting of the campus, to note how they moved across campus, and to situate the locations with which they interacted. As they reflected and moved through campus more deliberately, having read Stilgoe and Lopez and Cresswell, they migrated towards a more social constructionist view of place. In lieu of pointing out the distinctness of the places they frequented, they talked more about how the interactions they had with the places themselves, and with others who inhabited these places, shaped their experience. Student A, in retracing familiar routes, came to a more profound understanding of West Lafayette as an organism within which he played a part. Student B concluded his reflection with the observation that his experience governed his perception of campus. And since his was in part similar to and in part unique from the experience of others on campus, each person he saw would tell a familiar, yet different, story of campus.

As an instructor, this progression illustrated that, even within the confines of a classroom, where students are beholden to the teacher/student power dynamic, and participate as much for a grade as for any other reason, my students were able to reflect meaningfully on the places they inhabit, and how the sense of place they had developed (and were continually developing) was informed by both the physicality of their location,

as well as by the people with which they interacted. My goal in assigning this work was to help build within the students in my class a clear sense of belonging to a community. I hoped that they would realize the potential they had to make an impact on those with whom they lived, and that such a realization would open them up to think favorably of the work we were to do with Dan Dunten and the Lilly Nature Center.

### **5.3 The TED Talk**

Though I won't go into much detail, the second assignment I gave my students was to write a type of personal narrative, blended with argument and research, that should center on the theme of 2014's Cancer, Culture, and Community Colloquium, "Confronting our environmental health risks." (See Appendix B-2). This assignment fit well with the place-based focus of the course. While not explicit, the nature of the assignment meant that students would address the topic through their own experiences, which would inevitably lead to a reflection of how their experience intersected with health and the environment.

Student A's TED talk reflected his personal interests in gardening and agriculture. He argued that small-scale composting was something any college student could do. His paper consisted of an argument centered on why students might consider composting, how such behavior would benefit the environment and the health of the general public, as well as steps students could take to create an indoor, small-scale composting operation. Rather than focusing on place at a local level, Student A's talk reflected an understanding that small acts of stewardship could have a positive impact on a much larger community. In the same way that people often recycle "for the good of the planet," Student A advocated we should compost for these same reasons.

Student B's TED talk centered on chronic sleep deprivation and higher order learning. The talk integrated his own experience as a sleep-deprived college freshman with research on the risks of such behavior, both short- and long-term. Student B's argument was not dependent on place at any scale. He argued that students everywhere needed to take sleep more seriously. Though the implications of losing sleep do affect people in the communities in which they live, Student B made no effort to connect his argument with place. This comes as no surprise, as the assignment was not geared towards place in the fashion of the first and final assignments.

Both students wrote a reflection on the TED Talk assignment. Student A, predictably, highlighted the connection between place, environment, and health. Student B did not. As an instructor, what I glean from this is that I shouldn't be surprised that one student made connections without me explicitly highlighting these connections in class, while a second student made no such connections. My experience has led me to believe that, for a freshman writing course, it is of utmost importance that the instructor be explicit when covering issues of theme. Though we all want our students to make subtle connections on their own, it's good to remember that our classes exist as one component of our students' focus.

Coming to this understanding has had a lasting impact on how I interact with students at my current institution, Southern Virginia University. Without exploring the demographic difference between SVU students and Purdue students, it is still safe to observe that I must be even clearer about connections I want my SVU students to make than I ever was here at Purdue. Reflecting on this English 108 course acknowledges that prior teaching experiences have a lot of bearing on the way that I currently teach.

#### **5.4 Working With the Lilly Nature Center**

Work with Dan Dunten started during the summer of 2014. I contacted Dan Dunten in March of 2014, informing him that I would be teaching a group of 18 freshmen, and that we wanted to work on a writing project with the nature center. He told me he had no specific projects in mind, but that he was open to meeting me to talk about what we could undertake. I was curious whether or not he would remember me from Celery Bog webcam project from 2012. Though he didn't remember me specifically, he had a clear recollection of the work we did. We talked about the materials we had created, if they were still being used, and how the webcam project had evolved over the past two years.

I highlight this exchange because, as I learned during the community engagement seminar (the seminar during which I had worked with Dan previously), one of the most essential elements to a successful community engagement project was a relationship of trust between the partner and the instructor. I was not surprised to learn that other Purdue graduate students had worked with Dan, and he had come away from those interactions with confidence that there was little risk, on his part, in agreeing to work with me and my students. As noted in Chapter 3, community engagement projects are a riskier undertaking than traditional classroom writing projects. The community partner assumes risks, including the risk that work they do will be negatively impacted by shoddy or incomplete work, that the instructor involved in the project will not see it through to the end, or that the instructor will disappear at the conclusion of the course, either unwilling or unable to continue the relationship with the partner.

The instructor also assumes risks. These include the risk that the community partner will demand more than what is reasonably accomplished throughout the course of a semester. The instructor also risks to damage the relationship between the institution they represent and the community partner (as well as the community at large). There are risks for students, too. Students might be asked to engage with a partner in a community that they feel has isolated them or their classmates. Students also risk engaging in a project that demands an unfair proportion of their time, which could negatively impact their performance in other areas of school, work, and social life.

An awareness of these risks, coupled with the good reputation between Purdue's writing instructors and the Lilly Nature Center, were enough to ensure that Dan trusted me to do right by the Nature Center. Dan and I also discussed the limits imposed on us by the length of the semester, by my position as a fifth-year graduate student (poised to leave Purdue), and by other aspects of my life. (Kanien was expecting a baby, I was on the job market, etc.)

Most of these exchanges took place in person. Dan was never verbose in his email exchanges, and he preferred to meet in person at the nature center. I found this convenient as well, as my family and I went there often to walk the trails, watch the birds, and explore the displays inside the center. My position as a coordinating instructor was enhanced by the experience I had had working with Dan as a student. Throughout the pre-semester coordinating work, I also gained an understanding of who Dan was, how he saw himself at the nature center, and how internal politics effected his work. Dan had recently applied for the position of director at the nature center, and he wasn't confident that he would stay there if they didn't hire him. As it played out, he was passed over for

the position, but decided to stay on in his current role nonetheless. These often unforeseen dynamics can jeopardize engagement projects, thereby increasing the risks involved in undertaking them. The fact that, by the start of the Fall 2014 semester, I was a familiar face to Dan and others at the nature center, greatly enhanced my ability to complete the project successfully.

### **5.5 The Nature Trail Proposal**

The students broke into groups and I assigned them specific aspects of the trail proposal. The proposal is available to view in Appendix D. Three groups were responsible for researching and proposing specific exhibits for the trail. One group was responsible for researching funding. One group was responsible for researching ADA regulations for accessibility-related guidelines. Student A worked with the group that proposed the tactile leaf and bark display. Student A's primary role within the group was to seek out similar endeavors and research what it took to complete the projects. He contributed to portions of the tactile display proposal, and interviewed various nature center patrons that Dan Dunten requested we speak with. Of his work, Student A reflected that his background in botany was extremely helpful to him. He also expressed how his familiarity with the area made him comfortable going into homes of locals and talking to them about the project, and what they would like to see.

Student B worked with the group that researched grants and local funding. His role within the group was to attend a grant-seeking workshop held at the local public library (with other group members), and utilize their grant database to find local grants that would serve as potential sources for funding.

Towards the latter third of the semester, the students and I met with Dan at the nature center for a second time. During the meeting, Dan expressed that, in conversations with the Lilly Nature Center Board of Directors, he had learned the board was not interested in seeing this project carried out to completion in the near future. Dan told us that it wouldn't make sense to go into a lot of concrete detail about the trail, and that we should instead focus on creating a resource that another group could come in and build off of in the future.

This development disappointed many of the students, and ended up occupying, from that point forward, most of the reflection that both Student A and Student B performed. Student A repeatedly mentioned that, when the focus of the project shifted from something concrete to work on a concept, it was a bit more difficult to stay motivated and do the work. Student A reflected that the project he had spent the most time on—a map display—was scuttled entirely. He concluded that, even though the focus of the group changed and lost a bit of its luster, it was still extremely satisfying to work on a proposal with a partner he knew well from his childhood.

Student B had a similar, but not identical reaction. I wouldn't categorize his reaction as a disappointment. Student B reflected that it was easier for him to research potential sources of funding than it would have been to actually submit grant proposals. He reflected that he felt uneasy with the idea that most grant proposals would need to be submitted after the end of the semester, effectively asking him to perform work for the class after the course had concluded. He expressed that he would have been willing to perform the work, but that, once the idea was off the table, he felt relieved. Though I am not able to directly conclude that either Student A or Student B felt that their sense of



place had been improved by studying place, I can say with confidence that each student increased their understanding of the role of a sense of place, how sense of place shifts, and the role sense of place plays in the dynamics of being a writer, a student, and a member of a community.

Both Student A and Student B were aware of the need of the community partner, and how their writing would work to fill that need. Both expressed concerns not just for the impact the project would have on the community partner, but also how the project would impact them as writing students, and how it would impact the community as a whole. As the course instructor, I am confident that, considered as a body of students, the place-based instruction did impact the manner in which students engaged with the project. Though it did not mitigate all risks, the students' reflections indicate that they better understood the impact their writing could have on a community, and how the writing was influenced by a variety of factors, each of which was situated within the context of the classroom, the school, and the community. This nuanced contextual understanding, while not unique to the place-based writing classroom, was clearly more pronounced because of the initial focus on place.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

At the start of this dissertation project, I set out to establish a variation of the ecocomposition movement that gave a fuller accounting of place. I wanted to explore theories of place from philosophy and geography, and integrate those theories into my community engagement classroom. These theories of place work to help students understand that writing takes place within a complex ecological system, one in which relationships and environments play an integral role in shaping the rhetorical situation:

writers, subjects, readers, and the contexts within which each of these elements are found. Foregrounding instruction with reflections of place lead my students to reflect on their role as writers, as members of multiple communities, and as participants in a writing project that extended beyond the walls of the classroom. Place-based writing instruction enriches contextual understanding for students, as well as enhances their willingness to engage with community partners. And, perhaps above all, place-based writing instruction helps students come to grips with the often-difficult shifts that accompany us as we move from place to place.

## WORKS CITED

- Aristotle. *Physics*. Trans. Daniel W. Graham. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.
- Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *When A Writer Can't Write*. Ed. Mike Rose. New York: Guilford, 1985. 134-65.
- Bazerman, Charles. "Physicists Reading Physics: Schema-Laden Purposes and Purpose-Laden Schema." *Written Communication* 2 (1985): 3-23.
- Billick, Ian, and Mary V. Price. *The Ecology of Place: Contributions of Place-Based Research to Ecological Understanding*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2011.
- Bitzer, Lloyd F. "'The Rhetorical Situation.'" *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 1.1 (1968): 1-14.
- Bizzell, Patricia. "Cognition, Convention, and Certainty: What We Need to Know about Writing." *PRE/TEXT* 3 (1982): 213-43.
- Bromley, Simon. "The United States and the Control of World Oil." *Government and Opposition* 40.2 (2005): 225-55.
- Brooke, Robert, and Jason McIntosh. "Deep Maps: Teaching Rhetorical Engagement through Place-Conscious Education." *The Locations of Composition* (2007) 131-49.
- Casey, Edward S. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1998.
- Coe, Richard M. "Eco-logic for the Composition Classroom." *College Composition and Communication* 26.3 (1975): 232-237.

- Connolly, Colleen. "Ecology and Composition Studies: A Feminist Perspective on Living Relationships." *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. Ed. Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin. Albany, NY: SUNY P (2001): 179-91.
- Conrey, Sean. M. *Coming to Terms with Place: Toward a Phenomenological Technique of Rhetorical Placemaking*. Dissertation. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue U, 2006.
- Consigny, Scott. "Rhetoric and its Situations." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 7.3 (1974): 175-186.
- Cooper, John M. "Introduction to *Timaeus*." *Plato: Complete Works*. Ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson. New York: Hackett, 1997.
- Cooper, Marilyn M. "Foreword." *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. Ed. Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin. Albany, NY: SUNY P (2001) xi-xviii.
- . "The Ecology of Writing." *College English* 48.4 (1986): 364–375.
- Cresswell, Tim. *Geographic Thought: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Wiley, 2013.
- . *Place: A Short Introduction*. 1st ed. Malden, MA: Wiley, 2004.
- de Certeau, Michele. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. 3rd ed. Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 2011.
- De Genaro, William. "The Affective Dimensions of Service Learning." *Reflections: A Journal of Community Literacy and Service Learning* 9.3 (2010): 192-220.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59. Winter (1992): 3–7.
- Derrida, Jacques. *On the Name*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford UP, 1993.
- Dobrin, Sidney I. *Postcomposition*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2011.

- Dobrin, Sidney I. "Writing Takes Place." *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. Ed. Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin. Albany, NY: SUNY P (2001)11-25.
- Dobrin, Sidney I., and Christian R. Weisser. "Breaking Ground in Ecocomposition: Exploring Relationships between Discourse and Environment." *College English* 64.5 (2002): 566–589.
- , *Natural Discourse: Toward Ecocomposition*. Albany, NY: SUNY P, 2002.
- Dodge, Jim. "Living By Life: Some Bioregional Theory and Practice." *CoEvolution Quarterly* 32 (1981): 6-12.
- Drew, Julie. "(Teaching) Writing: Composition, Cultural Studies, Production." *JAC* 19. 3 (1999): 411–429.
- El-Bizri, Nader. "Qui-Êtes Vous Khôra? Receiving Plato's Timaeus." *Existential Meletai-Sophias* 11 (2001): 473–490.
- Elbow, Peter. *Writing without Teachers*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.
- Faigley, Lester. "Competing Theories of Process: A Critique and a Proposal." *College English* 48.6 (1986): 527–542.
- , *Fragments of Rationality*. 1st ed. U of Pittsburgh P, 1993.
- Goggin, Peter N., ed. *Environmental Rhetoric and Ecologies of Place*. New York: Routledge, 2013.
- Grossberg, Lawrence. *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2010.
- Heath, Shirley Brice. *Ways with Words*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1983.
- Hothem, Thomas. "Suburban Studies and College Writing." *Pedagogy* 9 (2009): 35–59.

- Husserl, Edmund, and Dermot Moran. *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*. Revised ed. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Ingold, Tim. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. London: Routledge, 2011.
- Keller, Christopher J., and Christian R. Weisser, eds. *The Locations of Composition*. Albany, NY: SUNY P, 2007.
- Kitzhaber, Albert R. "Reform in English." *College English* 26.5 (1965): 337–344
- Killingsworth, M. Jimmie, and Jacqueline S. Palmer. *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America*. 1st ed. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1991.
- Killingsworth, M. Jimmie, and John Krajicek. "Ecology, Alienation, and Literacy: Constraints and Possibilities in Ecomposition." *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. Ed. Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin. Albany: SUNY P (2001): 39-56.
- Kinneavy, James L. "Kairos A Neglected Concept in Classical Rhetoric." *Rhetoric and Praxis*. Washington, DC: Catholic U of America P, 1986.
- Kirsch, Gesa. "A Land Ethic for Urban Dwellers." *Environmental Rhetoric and Ecologies of Place*. New York: Routledge (2013): 69-83.
- Krulwich, Robert and Jad Abumrad. "The Turing Problem." *Radiolab*. WNYC, March 2012.
- Lindholdt, Paul. "Restoring Bioregions through Applied Composition." *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. Ed. Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin. Albany, NY: SUNY P (2001): 235-252.

- Long, Mark C. "Education and Environmental Literacy: Reflections on Teaching Ecocomposition in Keene State College's Environmental House." Weisser and Dobrin. 131-146.
- Lopez, Barry. "The American Geographies." *Environment* 1 (2006): 222.
- Lunsford, Andrea A., et al. *Everyone's an Author*. New York: Norton, 2013.
- Malpas, Jeff E. *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Massumi, Brian. *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2002.
- Mathieu, Paula. *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition*. Boynton/Cook Publishers, 2005.
- Myers, Greg. "Texts as Knowledge Claims: The Social Construction of Two Biologists' Articles." *Social Studies of Science* 15 (1985): 593-630.
- NCTE. "Writing Assessment: A Position Statement." N.p., n.d. 15 May 2010.
- Phelps, Louise Wetherbee. "Practical Wisdom and the Geography of Knowledge in Composition." *College English* 53.8 (1991): 863-885.
- Plato. *Plato: Timaeus*. Trans. Donald J. Zeyl. New York: Hackett. 1997.
- Plevin, Arlene. "The Liberatory Positioning of Place in Ecocomposition: Reconsidering Paulo Freire." *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. Ed. Christian R. Weisser and Sidney I. Dobrin. Albany, NY: SUNY P (2001): 147-162.
- Polya, George. *How to Solve It: A New Aspect of Mathematical Method*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1945.

- Porter, James E. et al. "Institutional Critique: A Rhetorical Methodology for Change." *College Composition and Communication* 51.4 (2000): 610–642.
- Pred, Allan. "Structuration and Place: On the Becoming of Sense of Place and Structure of Feeling." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 13.1 (1983): 45-68.
- Relph, Edward. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion, 1976.
- Reynolds, Nedra. *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2007.
- Rice, Jenny. *Distant Publics: Development Rhetoric and the Subject of Crisis*. Pittsburgh: U. of Pittsburgh P, 2012.
- Rickert, Thomas. *Ambient Rhetoric: The Attunements of Rhetorical Being*. Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2013.
- . "Toward the Chōra: Kristeva, Derrida, and Ulmer on Emplaced Invention." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 40.3 (2007): 251-273.
- Rose, Nikolas. *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999.
- Sack, Robert David. *Place, Modernity, and the Consumer's World: A Relational Framework for Geographical Analysis*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992.
- Shor, Ira. "Critical Pedagogy Is Too Big to Fail." *Journal of Basic Writing* 28.2 (2009): 6–27.
- Stilgoe, John R. *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History and Awareness in Everyday Places*. New York: Bloomsbury, 1999.
- Sullivan, Patricia, and James E. Porter. *Opening Spaces: Writing Technologies and Critical Research Practices*. Greenwich, CT: Ablex.



- Syverson, Peg. "An Ecological View of Literacy Learning." *Literacy* 42.2 (2008): 109-117.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1977.
- Vatz, Richard E. "The Myth of the Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 6.3 (1973): 154-161.
- Walter, E. V. *Placeways: A Theory of the Human Environment*. Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 1988.
- Weisser, Christian R., and Sidney I. Dobrin, eds. *Ecocomposition: Theoretical and Pedagogical Approaches*. Albany, NY: SUNY P, 2001.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *Adventures of Ideas*. 1st Free Press Pbk. Ed edition. New York: The Free Press, 1967.
- Withers, Charles W. J. "Place and the 'Spatial Turn' in Geography and in History." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70.4 (2009): 637-658.
- Yancey, Kathleen Blake. "Looking Back as We Look Forward: Historicizing Writing Assessment." *College Composition and Communication* 50.3 (1999): 483-503.
- Yancey, Kathleen, et al. "CCCC Position Statement on Teaching, Learning, and Assessing Writing in Digital Environments." *College Composition and Communication* 55.4 (2004): 785-790.

## APPENDIX A – COURSE SYLLABUS – ENGLISH 108: ACCELERATED ENGLISH COMPOSITION

Jon Wallin <wallinj@purdue.edu>  
English 108— Accelerated First-Year Composition  
Time: 2:30 – 3:20 p.m. MWF  
by appointment  
Spring 2014  
CRN/Section: 63659/006

Office: Heav 303A  
Phone: 801-497-1706  
Office Hours: 10:30-12:30 T, and

Welcome to English 108, the accelerated first-year composition course at Purdue. We'll be working in three different spaces this semester—a traditional classroom, a computer classroom, and at the Celery Bog, our community partner for the semester. We'll be engaging in challenging activities that will involve reading, writing, collaborative work, visual design, and rhetorical/creative uses of technology.

### schedule

We meet in different places on different days, so I've crafted this handy box to help you keep days and locations straight.

Monday	Wednesday	Friday
HEAV 106	HEAV 106	WTHR 214

### required texts:

- Blair, Murphy & Almjeld, *Cross Currents: Cultures, Communities, Technologies*. (ISBN 1413014747)
- *Composing Yourself*, (ISBN: 9781598717457)
- Dan Fagin, *Toms River* (ISBN: 055380653X)
- class website: <http://www.itap.purdue.edu/learning/tools/blackboard/>

### culture, community, technology, and place

Media play a significant role in creating and maintaining our cultural identities. This course seeks to explore the relationship between media, culture, Throughout the semester, we'll explore the relationship between place, culture, identity, work, and writing. We'll do this by engaging in readings from the book and other sources, writing—both personal, introspective writing and public writing, and working within the community in which Purdue plays such an integral part.

We'll pay close attention to the “currents” mentioned in the introduction of our primary text: “The relationship between larger national and global cultures and local subcultures, the relationship between these cultures and the values and alliances that circulate within them, and the relationship between these values and the communication genres and technologies we use to share the values and thus create and sustain local and global communities.

### assignments

Here's what we'll be working on throughout the semester. Our first project will be the **Student Mapping Project**. In short, this assignment will involve creating various non-traditional maps that illustrate how you interact with the place of Purdue, and maps that might encourage others to interact with campus and the surrounding area in somewhat untraditional ways. The second major assignment is a **personal narrative / TED talk**, in which the student will explore the connection between their life experiences, area

of study, and the relationship between health and the environment. The final major assignment is the Celery Bog collaboration project. This will involve working with Dan Dunton of the Celery Bog to develop various resources that will help with community outreach and project development. Aside from these three major projects, you'll also be expected to keep a weekly journal to catalogue both the work you do in the class (reading responses, project notes, etc.), and the work you do with our community partner.

### grades

The grades break down like this:

- Projects: 3 x 25% = 75%
- Reflection Journal X = 15%
- Participation: 10%

All major assignments will be graded on the standard plus-minus letter-grade scale: A=100-94, A-=93-90, B+=89-87, B=86-84, B-=83-80, C+=79-77, C=76-74, C-=73-70, D+=69-67, D=66-64, D-=63-60, F=59 or below. Students must participate in all of the three major projects and complete a majority of the required journal entries in order to pass this class. Students with questions about final grades should review university policies regarding grade appeals, which are outlined by the Dean of Students here: <http://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/gradeappeal.pdf>. The University regulations are here: [http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/pages/stu\\_conduct/stu\\_regulations.html](http://www.purdue.edu/univregs/pages/stu_conduct/stu_regulations.html).

### behavior

This course relies heavily on discussion. We'll be doing a lot of reading, and discussing most of the reading in class. While it can be intimidating to make comments in front of your peers, you're expected to make a good effort to do so. Being nervous about class discussion is completely understandable. It's also appropriate to react and respond to the comments people are making in class. Learning to think quick and respond coherently in face-to-face interaction is an important rhetorical skill. But the class must **always** be considered a safe zone—a place where you can comment without fear of being mocked or belittled. Inflammatory remarks, personal attacks on me or other class members, racism (serious or humorous), or other hurtful comments will not be tolerated. If you make these types of comments I'll first call it to your attention. If, after you've been warned, you continue, I will ask you to leave class. If you consistently violate the [Purdue University Student Bill of Rights](#), (the above incidents are covered under Articles 4, 6, and 8), I'll call campus security and have you escorted to the Dean's office.

### attendance

Here's how I account for “regular” attendance. I don't use a system of “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Instead, you're allowed to miss **three classes** for any reason. I don't care what it is. Your first three absences, regardless of the reason you missed class, count towards these allowed absences. After that, I lower your grade as I see fit. Attention to personal life while in the computer labs (Facebook, email, texting, etc) will result in you being marked absent for the day. If you're texting or sleeping regularly during class, I'll notify you out of class. If you don't stop, you'll be marked absent. If you are consistently late, you stand to forfeit a portion of your attendance/participation grade, depending on the frequency and severity of your lateness. Generally speaking, if you're late three times, it counts as a full absence.

If you have three (or less than three) absences, your grade won't be adversely affected by attendance, and you'll be well on track to receiving full credit for participation. For each absence you accrue over the allowed limit (3), you will lose 1/3 of a full letter grade from your final grade. That means, if you have earned an A, but have missed class five times, you will receive a B+. However, if you miss more than 11 class periods, you will fail the course, even if you've completed and submitted all major assignments.

If my attendance policy is unclear, please drop by my office and we'll talk about it (HEAV 303A).

### participation

You get credit for participating in discussions, doing group and individual presentations, and doing assigned readings throughout the semester. If you are consistently absent or late to class, you will lose participation points (on top of attendance penalties).

### **grief absence policy**

Purdue University recognizes that a time of bereavement is very difficult for a student. The University therefore provides the following rights to students facing the loss of a family member through the Grief Absence Policy for Students (GAPS). GAPS Policy: Students will be excused for funeral leave and given the opportunity to earn equivalent credit and to demonstrate evidence of meeting the learning outcomes for missed assignments or assessments in the event of the death of a member of the student's family.[....]

A student should contact the ODOS (the Office of the Dean of Students) to request that a notice of his or her leave be sent to instructors. The student will provide documentation of the death or funeral service attended to the ODOS. Given proper documentation, the instructor will excuse the student from class and provide the opportunity to earn equivalent credit and to demonstrate evidence of meeting the learning outcomes for missed assignments or assessments. If the student is not satisfied with the implementation of this policy by a faculty member, he or she is encouraged to contact the Department Head and if necessary, the ODOS, for further review of his or her case. In a case where grades are negatively affected, the student may follow the established grade appeals process.

### **plagiarism**

This is the copying, deliberate or not, of another person's work and/or ideas without the proper citation. If you plagiarize, regardless of your intention, you will fail the assignment in question and you will be referred to ODOS. This can result in failure of the project, the course, and other disciplinary action. We will discuss it further in class, but you also need to be aware of what it is and how to avoid it. When in doubt, you can always check with me.

### **academic honesty**

Academic honesty is similar to plagiarism. In fact, plagiarism falls under the umbrella category of academic dishonesty. Other dishonest behavior in the classroom—lying about attendance, file submission, group work participation, or other academic proceedings will result in you being referred to ODOS, and the impact these offenses have on your grade will be determined by myself and ODOS.

### **late work**

I will count off a letter grade for each day your work is late unless you make arrangements with me prior to the due date. Problems can arise, but the key to their successful resolution is communication. Keep me informed; avoid simply not showing up. And don't come to class the day of the due date hoping to get an extension. Let me know ahead of time why you can't turn your work in, and chances are we'll be able to work something out.

### **disability**

If you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please see me privately within the first week of class to make arrangements.

### **pandemic and catastrophe**

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Information about possible changes will be communicated by me through email. If you have questions, please email me, and for more information, see ITAP's Campus Emergency website: <http://www.itap.purdue.edu/tlt/faculty/>

## APPENDIX B – ASSIGNMENT SHEETS

Mapping our Campus  
 English 108  
 Fall 2014  
 Jon Wallin

---

This project consists of three distinct phases. During the first phase you'll be gathering information about and paying attention to the places you frequent across campus and beyond. You'll then use that information to form an alternative map of campus—one that gives a personalized account of the ways you move across and interact with places throughout your day. During the final phase of the project you'll create a key that serves to elucidate your creation to others—both in the class and beyond.

### Phase 1

Visit an information desk and collect everything that includes a map. Compare the maps and make a checklist for what the maps show and don't show (building names, streets, bus routes and stops, bike routes, parking, landmarks, hotels, and more).

Augment one of the maps you've found to contain insider knowledge that would not appear on the maps produced by Purdue (or its auxiliaries / subsidiaries). For example, where can you find a good burger on or close to campus? The best coffee or cookies? Quiet places to study? Places to meet friends? Make a list of places that need to be included in your map and draw it up.

### Phase 2

On a large sheet of paper, draw a map of campus that is rich with places and pathways you inhabit today. In particular, pay attention to the places that you normally reside in, locations of important people who are important to you, commonly traveled routes, bike or walking trails, parks, locations on campus, sites where memorable events occurred, favorite places, businesses you frequent, bodies of water, landmarks, other geographic elements. **You will have to differentiate these different types of movement and places as best as you can.**

Above all, this map must make sense to you. Don't worry about accurate measurements, but do try to make your map proportionally consistent. The rest of us should be able to make sense of your map's scale. Also consider the scope of the map. Is the place you currently inhabit concentrated in one area of Purdue? Does it extend beyond campus into West Lafayette or Lafayette? You might also draw one or two detailed inset maps of areas that deserve mapping out in more detail. Or, you might draw a locator inset map that positions your local map within some geographically larger area.

### Phase 3

You should also make a key. This key should be (1) a visual representation attached or included on your map and (2) a narrative that answers these questions:

- a) What images/locations feature most prominently on your map? What is the centermost "thing on your map? What is at the edges?
- b) What people or groups of people do you associate different locations on your map?
- c) What plants and animals inhabit your map (if any—don't just add them if they don't matter)?
- d) What places do you walk, ride or drive by regularly? How did you represent these places? Why?
- e) What places do you walk, ride or drive by regularly but never enter (indoor and outdoor places)?
- f) Who does *not* inhabit your map?
- g) What is *not* on your map?
- h) How would you describe the place in which you live to others?
- i) What would you title your map?

## The TED Talk

English 106

Fall 2014

Jon Wallin

For this assignment, you will be asked to write a type of personal narrative that pulls from genres such as a memoir, a commentary, and a more traditional argument. We will, in part, be modeling talks given at TED conferences. TED was founded as a means [platform] through which people could spread ideas, “usually in the form of short, powerful talks.” Though many of these talks come from business, industry, or leaders of an intellectual field, many also come from people who have nothing more than a compelling story to share. Your goal is to write such a story, centering it around the theme for the November 3 TEDxPurdueU event, “Confronting Our Environmental Health Risks.”

Writing an effective TED talk will require you to do a number of things. First, you must make a connection between the theme and your own life. [Using the concept mapping skills you’ve built up during the previous unit,] try and chart the connections between your past experiences, the environment, and either your health or public health in general. Look for connections that might not be initially obvious, as often more subtle connections will lead to a more interesting story.

You should also try and make connections between your life experiences and the path you’ve chosen (or are considering) here at Purdue. Since most of you are just starting your educational career, you will need to research where your field has connections with health and the environment. For example, if you are studying to become a mechanical engineer, you might look at health problems MEs work to solve. If your major is Applied Exercise and Health, your exploratory research would be somewhat different. Some of you will have compelling stories that don’t seem to fit with your major or course of study, which is fine. Though you’re not required to connect your story to your major, doing so can add purpose and meaning to the story you want to tell.

Finally, your talk must make an effective argument. Effective writing has a clear purpose, and this assignment is no different. Though you might start your work by making connections between various aspects of your past and future experience, the finished product will need to argue for something. Many TED presenters make heavy use of visuals. Don’t be afraid to do this yourself. The final product doesn’t have to be just words on a page. Consider your purpose and context, and choose a medium that best suits your message. While some of your talks will most resemble an essay, others will produce annotated presentations, photo essays, or even videos.

TED Talk	
<b>Length:</b>	<b>750-900 words</b>
<b>Draft due:</b>	<b>Oct 10</b>
<b>Final due:</b>	<b>Oct 17</b>

## APPENDIX C – COURSE SCHEDULE

English 108  
Fall 2014  
Jon Wallin

---

	Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments Due
<b>WEEK 1</b>	Mon Aug 25	Syllabus		
	Wed Aug 27	Literacy and Community	<i>CrossCurrents</i> (CC) ch. 1	Info Sheet
	Fri Aug 29	Information Literacies, professional communication	Lopez, “The American Geographies” and Stilgoe, “Beginnings” (Blackboard)	Community Literacy write-up
<b>WEEK 2</b>	Mon Sept 1	Labor Day—No class		
	Wed Sept 3	Mapping and Place – Intro to Unit 1	CC ch. 2: 23-44, 61-73 <i>Composing Yourself</i> ch.1-5	ICaP policy sheet
	Fri Sept 5	Mapping 2	Barton and Barton, “What Deep Maps Are.” (Blackboard)	
<b>WEEK 3</b>	Mon Sept 8	Identity and Memory	CC ch. 3: 77- 104	
	Wed Sept 10	Potential Bog Visit / Identity 2	CC ch. 3: 115-125	
	Fri Sept 12	Community Engagement	CC ch. 6: 225-235, 246-259	Place profile due (CC 126)
<b>WEEK 4</b>	Mon Sept 15	Peer Workshop – Campus Maps		Map drafts due
	Wed Sept 17	Intro to TED talk assignment		
	Fri Sept 19	Health and Environment	CC ch. 8: 311-320, 326-328	Journal Check 1
<b>W</b>	Mon	Health and Environment 2	CC ch. 8: 329-341	Mapping assignment

	Sept 22			due
	Wed Sept 24	<b>Celery Bog – Preliminary Research</b>		
	Fri Sept 26	Visual Arguments		visual
WEEK 6	Mon Sep 29	Social Networks	CC ch. 7: 263-289	
	Wed Oct 01	Innovation/Industry and Ecology	<i>Toms River</i> ch. 1-2	
	Fri Oct 03		CC ch. 7: 292-306; Blackboard readings	
WEEK 7	Mon Oct 06	<b>Celery Bog – Project plan</b>		
	Wed Oct 08	Exploring the TEDyouth project	<a href="http://goo.gl/oIRTLh">http://goo.gl/oIRTLh</a>	
	Fri Oct 10	Peer Workshop – TED talk		<b>TED talk drafts due</b>
WEEK 8	Mon Oct 13	No Class – October Break		
	Wed Oct 15	Conferencing 1		
	Fri Oct 17	Conferencing 2		
WEEK 9	Mon Oct 20	Group Breakout Session – Bog plans		<b>TED talk due</b>
	Wed Oct 22	Group Breakout Session 2 – Finalized Bog Plans		
	Fri Oct 24	Toms River – Audience analysis	<i>Toms River</i> ch. 3-4	Journal Check 2
WEEK 10	Mon Oct 27	Toms River – Establishing Place	<i>Toms River</i> ch. 5-7	
	Wed Oct 29	Grants and Funding for Bog Project		
	Fri Oct 31	Group Workshop w/ Jon		



WEEK 11	Mon Nov 03	Cancer, Culture, Community week – Dan Fagin questions	<i>Toms River</i> ch. 9-14, 22	
	Wed Nov 05	Group Breakout Session 3 – Progress Update and forecasts		
	Fri Nov 07	No Class – Attend TEDx / Dan Fagin talk		
WEEK 12	Mon Nov 10	Project Workshop – peer audits		
	Wed Nov 12	Dan Dunton Presentations		
	Fri Nov 14	Workshop w/ Dunton feedback		
WEEK 13	Mon Nov 17	Project Workshop		
	Wed Nov 19	Project Workshop		
	Fri Nov 21	Group Conferences 1 – 2:30 — 2 – 2:50		Journal Check 3
WEEK 14	Mon Nov 24	Group Conferences 3 – 2:30 — 4 – 2:50		
	Wed Nov 26	No Class – Thanksgiving Break		
	Fri Nov 28	No Class – Thanksgiving Break		
WEEK 15	Mon Dec 01	Group Conferences		
	Wed Dec 03	Project Workshop		
	Fri Dec 05	Project Presentations		<b>Proposal Final Draft</b>
WEEK	Mon Dec 08	Present work to Celery Bog		
	Wed Dec 10			

	Fri Dec 12			Journals

## APPENDIX D – PROPOSAL FOR ADA-ACCESSIBLE NATURE TRAIL AT THE LILLY NATURE CENTER

---

THE LILLY NATURE CENTER - WEST LAFAYETTE



### The Lilly Nature Center Handicap Trails

Prepared for: The Lilly Nature Center The West Lafayette Celery Bog

Prepared by: The Purdue English 108 Fall Semester 2014 class

---

---

**THE LILLY NATURE CENTER - WEST LAFAYETTE**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Objective

To provide financial resources as well as guidelines for the construction of a handicap trail.

### Goals

To add features to the celery bog nature trail that would enhance its already diverse offerings. The additions would add new experiences for anyone visiting the trail, enhancing their perception of the trail and the education. These features will also cater to the needs of blind, deaf, or wheelchair-bound visitors to the trail. Giving the Celery Bog Nature Park a unique trait among nature parks in Indiana.

### Outline

Topics that are covered in this proposal:

- Obtaining outside resources for the funding of the handicap trail through the use of the GrantSelect Program that is available for free use at the Tippecanoe County Public Library.
  - Information on obtaining 2 local grants from the West Lafayette/ Lafayette area.
  - General guidelines that must be considered before construction of the trail as provided by the American Association Of People With Disabilities.
-

---

**THE LILLY NATURE CENTER - WEST LAFAYETTE**

## GRANT SELECT

Outside of Tipmont and EnviroWatts grants, new ones are offered every year across the country. So to maximize our options, we used a program called Grant Select to search for additional grants that could be used by the Lilly Nature Center. This program can be used by visiting the Grant Select website at any Tippecanoe County Public Library. Once you have arrived at the website, you can begin an advanced search in which you can specify your state and the type of grant you are searching for. The Lilly Nature Center falls under multiple criteria, such as nature preservation and education, and accessibility for this specific project. Once you have filtered through the options, you may begin the search, and the database should provide hundreds of pages of both local and corporate grants. The database will then direct you to more information on said grants.

### Outside Sources

Several outside sources of funding found through the GrantSelect Program at the Tippecanoe County Public Library.

Grant	Foundation	Amount	Notes	Application
<b>AAUW Community Action Grants</b>	AAUW	...	Eleanor Roosevelt Fund Award	Nomination Process
<b>Lawrence Foundation Grants</b>	Lawrence Foundation	...		Online Application
<b>John W. Anderson Foundation Grants</b>	Noble County Community Fund	... to \$150,000		Online Application
<b>Alexander &amp; Baldwin Foundation Mainland Grants</b>		...		Online Application

---

---

THE LILLY NATURE CENTER - WEST LAFAYETTE

## LOCAL SOURCES

### Tipmont EnviroWatts Trust Fund

**Grant proposals will be reviewed using the following criteria:**

- a) Is there an established need for the program/project for which the grant is requested?
- b) Is it appropriate for the Trust to make a grant for the requested purpose, or are there more compatible sources of potential funding?
- c) Does the Trust have adequate resources to effectively respond to this need?
- d) Is it good for the surrounding area?

**The Tipmont REMC EnviroWatts Trust granting cycles are as follows:**

Cycle 1

3rd Monday in December — Deadline for applications

2nd Monday in January — Board action on grant request

Cycle 2

3rd Monday in March — Deadline for applications

2nd Monday in April — Board action on grant request

Cycle 3

1st Monday in June — Deadline for applications

2nd Monday in July — Board action on grant request

Cycle 4

1st Monday in September — Deadline for applications

2nd Monday in October — Board action on grant request

---

---

THE LILLY NATURE CENTER - WEST LAFAYETTE

## LOCAL SOURCES CONTINUED

### The Community Foundation of Greater Lafayette

**Grant Proposal Must Include:**

- Organization Information
- Project Request Information
- Two signatures
- Board list (please include titles of officers and training each has received in Board Governance Series)
- Narrative (number each question in the narrative)
- Grant Project Budget. Include two estimates or bids
- Organization Budget for current fiscal year
- Summary Financial Review Form
- Audit/Financial Review (electronic submission preferred to [grant@cfglaf.org](mailto:grant@cfglaf.org)) – one copy only

**2014 Proposal Deadlines:**

Funding Tiers Applications Due Funding Decision

Tier 1 – Requests of \$15,000 and above Noon, April 1 May 31

Tier 2 – Requests between \$7,500 and \$14,999 Noon, September 2 October 31

Field of Interest Noon, September 2 October 31

Tier 3 – Requests under \$7,500 Accepted year-round, Within 2-4 weeks of request last submission date is Noon, December 1.

---

---

THE LILLY NATURE CENTER - WEST LAFAYETTE

## GENERAL TRAIL GUIDELINES

- Clear tread width: 36" minimum
  - Obstacles (roots/stones) 2" max
  - Cross Slope: 5% max
    - 8.33% for 200' max
    - 10% for 30' max
    - 12.5% for 10' max
  - No more than 30% of the trail may exceed Running Slope of 8.33%
  - Passing space at least every 1000' when trail width is less than 60"
  - Signs must be provided indicating length of accessible trail segment
  - Can win an Annual Achievement Award if built (all winning trails look pricey though)
-



---

THE LILLY NATURE CENTER - WEST LAFAYETTE

## LOCAL GRANTS

The Community Foundation of Greater Lafayette

<http://cfqlaf.org/docs/2014GrantApplication.pdf>



Tipmont Envirowatts Trust

[https://tipmont.org/system/files/EnviroWatts%20Application%20Guidelines%20-%20revised%20Oct%202012\\_0.pdf](https://tipmont.org/system/files/EnviroWatts%20Application%20Guidelines%20-%20revised%20Oct%202012_0.pdf)



---

## DISABILITY ACCESS TO THE NATURE TRAIL

### Proposal #1

#### Weatherproof Displays

One of the proposals to enhance the experience of the nature trail would be a series of weatherproof LCD displays along the trail. These displays would have touch-input interfaces, and speakers. The displays would be the primary supplemental resource for hearing-impaired visitors to the park. They would run a Raspberry Pi operating system, and would have slideshows and audio files that can be viewed and interacted with by the visitors. The content could be uploaded remotely by anyone given rudimentary instruction on the process.

All of the cost data can be found in the side bar, assuming the nature park chooses to power the display with in-ground wiring. However, it should be noted that the cost of installing the power lines cannot be accurately estimated, as not disturbing the environment would be a costly, unique constraint. It is likely that installation would far surpass the cost of the displays. An alternative would be installing a \$60-\$100 solar panel on each display. The entire system would power itself and no wires would have to be run through the ground.

In this part of the proposal to create a more handicap accessible trail for the Celery Bog we set out to try and create technological improvements that would aid with handicapped individuals with their experience on the trails. We achieved this through two projects which consist of a weatherproof LED screen display and various improvements to the celery bog mobile application.

In the first project we decided we would need a **stand** for the display, a weatherproof case for the display, means to power the display, and software to run the various slideshows and diagrams we would want to show on the trail. The stand required to mount the weatherproof display has a minimal cost of around 53\$. It is an aluminium stand that is provided with a polycarbonate display shelf. Depending on the size of the weatherproof display, the case can be dismantled or used for the display. The stand weighs only 4 kg and is provided with a sturdy base. The installation of the stand is quite basic. It would just have to be fixed to the ground with the usage of bolts.

The **battery** is a 50000-mAh battery. The battery costs around \$15 and one could attach a solar panel or just simply charge the battery for when you want the display to be in use. The battery comes with two 5V USB ports. Installation is pretty simple but one would probably need an adapter cord depending on how the screen is powered. The installation would consist of just plugging it in, charging it using the solar panel or in another fashion, and then plugging it into the screen.

---

---

The televisions used for the display have a lot of size options available. There are two components used in the **display** and that is the weatherproof enclosure and the actual television. The weatherproof enclosure comes in two different sizes. One size supports televisions between a 19 and 29 inch diagonal and costs 400\$ whereas the other enclosure supports 30 to 40 inch diagonals for 550\$. Now typically a television between 20 and 24 inches will cost 150-250\$ and a television between 33" and 39" will cost 350\$ to 450\$. Therefore the total costs for the television will run between 550\$ and 1000\$. There is also a second option of getting an actual weatherproof television but those start at around 1,500\$ and can go all the way up to 4000\$. To set the television up it would be as simple as connected the television to the power supply and plugging an HDMI cord from the television into the Raspberry Pi controller after placing it into the weatherproof enclosure.

A raspberry pi would be used as the **hardware** for running the slideshows and content on the display. You would first need to install an operating system onto the raspberry pi which we would suggest being Linux. The raspberry pi has an HDMI port which would be connected to the screen with an HDMI cord and two USB ports. You could put the content on a flash drive and simply plug the flash drive into the usb port and load your content onto the screen. The raspberry pi could also be run from the battery using the extra usb port or by having an adapter as long as the power output was 5V.

---

---

## Celery Bog Application

Our second proposal is an app that would be installed on a handful of phones that would supplement a visitor's experience on the nature trail. The app would be written for the Apple iPhone, and would play chosen audio files as the visitor walked along the trail. The files would narrate history, and facts that could not be observed with the naked eye. This would be a wonderful resource for blind visitors on the trail, but could certainly be enjoyed by anyone.

We would gather the iPhones via donation, as almost everyone has old phones simply sitting around. Flyers posted around Purdue should gather plenty, especially since only five or six would be required. After this the phones would have the app installed, and would be locked down so that the phone can only be used for the app. This proposal also requires a bit of infrastructure. A low cost Wi-Fi zone would have to be established, with nodes being installed every 500 to 600 feet along the path, communicating with a Wi-Fi extender from the main building. These nodes would broadcast a signal, and as the phone got within a certain distance of the node it would begin playing the audio file the node is paired with. This would give information unique to the visitor's location, and would be a phenomenal resource for the visually impaired.

---

---

## DISABILITY ACCESS TO THE NATURE TRAIL

### **Proposal #2**

#### **Tree/Leaf Place-card**

For a kinesthetic experience at the Celery Bog nature trail, one project would involve different types of trees that are common to the bog. The general idea is to get some sort of mold of the bark of these trees; take the texture of the bark from this mold and place it on a placard on the trail (perhaps near to an actual example of that tree). This would allow everyone, whether disabled or not, to experience how the tree feels. Examples of trees that could be used are Red Maple, White Ash, and Sugar Maple.

In a similar vein, ingrain the shape of one of the leaves of this tree and place it on the same placard. The general outline of the leaf would likely be enough, but one could also take the mold of a leaf and go for the full effect.

The placards themselves would likely be made of either metal or a plastic/resin, and would feature braille lettering alongside normal text. Any number of trees and leaves could be added to a single placard, or multiple placards could be placed along the trail, depending upon location.

One possible dealer is PlaqueMaker ([www.plaquemaker.com](http://www.plaquemaker.com)). They offer a selection of outdoor plaques made of materials ranging from acrylic to granite, with prices from \$20.00 for a small plaque to ~\$500 for very large plaques.

---

---

## Sign Language Display

The goal of this display is to present visitors with an educational experience that is related to both the Celery Bog and those with disabilities. To do this, the display incorporates many different words relating to nature or the Celery Bog translated in to American Sign Language. Included are examples of how this could be used to represent the four different seasons (along with a variety of other topics).

The main idea behind this display is flexibility. The main feature of this display is the ability for the different words to be changed out in favor of others. This could lead to different, topical, displays (for example, the four seasons of the year, or different words and phrases related to the Celery Bog in general). It would be possible to set the display and leave it, if a low-maintenance display is desired, or it could be changed out as frequently as is wanted.

There are a few different methods that could be used to present the display, ranging from glass display cases to simple cork boards. If the display is to be used outside, something that protects it from the elements is probably preferable. To this end, glass or plexiglass display cases are simple enough to find from outlets such as IKEA or Michael's, though depending upon the size that is needed, the price will vary. If the display is indoors, all that would really be required is a cork board and tacks or tape, since there is less a risk of weathering or theft.

Different translated words are simple to find: many websites produce non-copywritten diagrams of the American Sign Language words. A template could be used to keep the layout of the cards similar, and different words could be substituted as need be. Lifeprint.com keeps a dictionary of ASL words and phrases, and Michigan State University keeps their ASLbrowser website, both of which could be used to find acceptable images for the display.

All-in-all, the sign language display is an amazing opportunity to add to the educational aspect of the Celery Bog. Visitors arrive to experience the natural environment, and leave just a little bit more enlightened than they were at the beginning.

---

---

## Expenses

### Summary

As any nature enthusiast knows, accessibility should not be the limiting factor that decides whether someone can experience the natural world. As the Celery Bog seeks to continually improve accessibility for persons with disabilities, we considered a wide range of criteria for multiple trail types and materials to estimate the feasibility of the creation of a new ADA-certified nature trail. This estimation was difficult due to several conflicting factors for each potential material, but ultimately the team's trail recommendations are explained in this summary. Please note that the considerations for cost are based on rough estimates from information readily available to the public, and may not fully reflect the final cost to the Celery Bog.

We looked at five primary building materials: limestone / gravel, asphalt, concrete, pervious concrete, and Trex wood product. We found limestone to have a relatively feasible cost for the amount required, but its long term maintenance costs and very low accessibility factor eliminate it as a viable option. Similarly, asphalt is low in initial cost but requires high levels of maintenance and has potentially the most negative environmental impact. We ruled out both concrete and its pervious variations due to negative ecological impacts, technically challenging and invasive installations, and high cost. If the goal is for the trail to be as disability-friendly and environmentally positive as possible, then the team recommends the use of Trex wood product for the trail's walkway. While Trex may be higher in cost than other considered materials, its wide range of benefits as enumerated below make it the best long-term option for an optimal trail.

---

---

## Introduction

Everyone on this earth should have access to a nature trail, including those who have a disability. Our group was given the problem of trying to figure out the best type of trail that would be ADA-certified. Most trails are not accessible by those who have a disability due to the way the trails are made. Usually trails are too narrow and cannot fit wheelchairs, the slope is too high or varies too quickly, and the material the trail is made up of is not suitable for those with disabilities. These are the major items that need to be in place for an ADA-certified trail.

On top of these requirements, we also had to analyze other aspects that are unique to a nature trail. The Celery Bog does experience some flooding, so this was factored in when developing components of the trail design. Some of the more obvious aspects that our group took into consideration were cost, maintenance, and environmental friendliness. We felt that all three of these were crucial in deciding what type of material would be best for the trail.

Other considerations for the trail include the ADA's requirements for trail incline. In order to accommodate people of all abilities, no more than 30% of trail length can exceed a slope of 1:12. The maximum length for 1:12 slope is 200 ft before resting interval. More extreme inclines require more frequent resting points. For a 1:10 slope, the trail can go 30 ft before resting a interval. For a 1:8 slope, the trail can go 10 feet before resting a interval. Finally, the cross slope of the trail cannot exceed a 1:20 grade.

---



---

## Data

Cost estimates below are listed for both three foot wide and five foot wide trails. Due to ADA requirements for wheelchair passing, a three foot wide trail requires a "passing point" every 1000 feet. These passing points must be five feet wide to allow two wheelchairs to pass one another. Five foot trails are wide enough to allow passing at all points, negating the need for passing points. Note that potential interspersed flat points make ideal locations for desired interactive trail features.

Type of Material	Cost per unit	Cost 3ft Materials 1980 sq.ft	Cost 5ft Materials 3300 sq.ft	Ease of Installation Factor (1-5)	Long-term Maintenance Cost	Environmental friendliness (1-5)	ADA friendliness factor (1-5)
Limestone	\$30 cubic yard	(6in depth) 36 cubic yards	61.1 cubic yards	4	high	3	1
Trex (walkway only)	\$3.33 per ft of 2x4 actual \$11.42 per sq. ft	~2263 planks 566 12 ft planks if cut into 4 \$22,980	~2263 planks 566 20ft planks if cut into 4 \$38,260	1	minimal	5	3.5
Trex (one side railing)	assume 2 inch width (4.5 inch width + gap)	1760 posts @ \$0.99 per post	+55 horizontal 12ft beams \$2,200	1	minimal	5	3.5
Concrete	\$3.25-\$5.25/sq.ft	\$6,440-\$10,400	\$10,730-\$17,330	3	~\$370 per year per 1/8 of a mile	1	5
Pervious Concrete	\$2.00-\$6.50/sq.ft	\$3960-\$12870	\$6600-\$21450	3	almost none, doesn't get potholes	4	5
Asphalt	\$77 per ton	Tons: 51.34 \$3,950	Tons: 85.55 \$6,590	2	~\$1050 per year per 1/8 of a mile	1	4

---

---

Trex Composite Decking

- Expensive
- Long term maintenance is low
- Minimal environmental impact
- Most natural looking

Asphalt

- Relatively inexpensive
- High maintenance costs
- Installation requires large machinery, hurts environment

Concrete

- More expensive than asphalt, but overall a low cost
- Installation requires large machinery, hurts environment

Limestone

- High washout rate
- Frequent compacting needed
- Not great for wheelchairs
- Requires high grade of limestone for disability-friendliness

Pervious Concrete

- Installation requires large machinery, harmful to environment
  - Long term maintenance is low
  - Water drainage is environmentally friendly
  - Our second recommendation
-

---

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the team recommends Trex decking materials for the final trail. Given the nature of the Celery Bog's wide range of slopes, ground types, and high propensity to flooding, the use of Trex wood allows for the most easily controlled ADA-certified slope, has the least environmental impact, requires the least long-term maintenance and costs for upkeep, and is perhaps the most attractive option.

If Trex proves not to be economically feasible, then the next best option for consideration is pervious concrete. For areas with a low natural slope, easily accessible to the machinery necessary to lay concrete, pervious concrete offers the best disability-friendly surface. Additionally, this uniquely designed material allows for water to seep through to the ground layer and thus prevents flooding and most types of erosion; its low environmental impact is a strong selling point for a certain limited subset of locations.

---

## Winter

*Winter Sign Language for Lily Nature Center Celery Bog*



### Sign for **Winter**

Did you know the first day of winter is December 21<sup>st</sup>? This is known as the winter solstice.



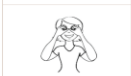
### Sign for **hare**

Did you know that hares are white in the winter to protect themselves from predators? This is called camouflage.



### Sign for **migrate**

Don't see many animals at the Celery Bog right now? That's because in winter, a lot of animals migrate to somewhere warmer.



### Sign for **owl**

Did you know that there are snow owls in the celery bog? They are white and have yellow eyes.

