

Literacy, Curriculum, and Pedagogies: Considerations for Anthropologists Teaching First-Year Composition

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Abstract

Despite the fact that this article began as a formal response to Chattaraj (2020), it serves a larger purpose in contextualizing the first-year composition classroom and the training required to provide effective instruction to students across all academic fields. Although an anthropologically-minded approach to the teaching of writing can be quite beneficial, suggesting that an anthropologist can—or even should—assume the responsibilities of first-year composition without additional training is ill-advised. To this end, this article draws upon not only the prior literature on Composition/Rhetoric, but also on the place and benefits of writing in the anthropology classroom more generally. Because the initial publication (i.e. Chattaraj, 2020) relied strictly on personal anecdotal evidence for academic success in a particular classroom setting at a liberal arts university, the findings are not generalizable to most post-secondary institutions due to the institutional accreditation requirements for educators, the concerning statistics on the literacy rates of incoming undergraduate students, the general objectives of curricular pathways, and the remarkable consistency found in first-year composition courses. As a result, this response presents a transparent overview of the first-year composition classroom and offers concrete suggestions for anthropologists who endeavour to support writing across the curriculum and/or in the disciplines.

Keywords: first-year writing, composition, rhetoric, anthropology, pedagogy

Introduction

Higher education in the United States is at a critical turning point, presented with the opportunity to reinvent itself or perpetuate the *status quo* that has led, particularly during the COVID-19 Pandemic, to many universities eliminating entire majors, consolidating with other institutions, or even closing their doors permanently¹. In fact, increasingly declining undergraduate student enrolment has also negatively impacted the job market for recent graduates of doctoral programs in search of academic positions. It is primarily for this reason that Chattaraj's (2020) article – “Anthropology and Writing Pedagogy: Why Anthropologists Should Teach Writing Seminars” – was written and published in the ninth volume of *Teaching Anthropology*, i.e. often insurmountable odds of securing a full-time academic position in one's field of expertise may encourage one to consider positions outside of his or her specialty².

¹ Although it remains unclear how many universities have closed solely because of COVID-19, as many such institutions were already in dire financial straits, annual data from the Postsecondary Education Participants System of the U.S. Department of Education indicate that 128 institutions or campuses closed in 2021; 439, in 2020; and 620, in 2019. For more information on consolidation and predictions for the market in light of COVID-19, the reader is encouraged to consult Kurzweil (2021) and Azziz (2021), respectively.

² As Chattaraj (2020) noted, “I meandered into teaching in a standalone writing program after being unable to achieve tenure-track employment in the discipline of anthropology, after applying for over 100 jobs over a three-year period” (p. 43). However, this is *not* a new trend. For a period of almost three decades (1987-2013), there was a gradual, consistent increase in the number of awarded undergraduate degrees in anthropology. Beginning in 2013, however, there was a sharp decline unmitigated by departmental size (cf. Ginsberg, 2017). Unfortunately, the outlook is significantly bleaker for those in the humanities, often with marginally fewer jobs in industry available than those for their counterparts in the social sciences, particularly when one eschews Chattaraj's (2020) essentialized view of anthropology as opposed to one that recognizes four distinct subfields (cultural, linguistic, biological, physical), each of which offers unique opportunities in the industrial, governmental, and private sectors.

As a result, Chattaraj (2020) suggests that recent anthropology graduates should consider not only placing greater emphasis upon writing instruction in their own courses, but also the possibility of undertaking primary teaching responsibilities in writing seminars, as:

anthropology is a fruitful discipline from which to teach writing because through anthropological writing students are exposed to a wide range of evidence and data. Encountering this range early in their college writing careers prepares students for the divergent evidentiary practices of different disciplines, fields and writing situations. (p. 41)

To this end, she states specifically that “a partial solution to this problem is for anthropologists to actively seek out and teach the compulsory first-year writing seminars that many liberal arts universities and colleges offer” (p. 36). This is reinforced later on the same page when she suggests that “early-career anthropologists consider opportunities for employment specifically within university writing programs” (p. 36, emphasis original). Nonetheless, while most would agree fervently on the value of reading and writing across the curriculum, the latter point is one that is far more problematic for three reasons.

First, Chattaraj’s (2020) article is based entirely on personal anecdotal evidence in a particular classroom setting at a liberal arts university that is not generalizable for most recent graduates at the majority of American colleges and universities. Baker, Baldwin, and Makker (2012) noted, in their own words, that there were 130 “true liberal arts colleges” in the United States, utilizing the same criteria in and responding to Breneman (1990). On the other hand, according to the U.S. Department of Education (2021), there were 4,726 degree-granting two- and four-year post-secondary institutions in the United States during the same year. This means that such institutions accounted at the time for under three percent of the extant institutions in this nation, a percentage that has also likely decreased during the last ten years. Consequently, any career-based suggestions for recent graduates must consider the most likely educational environments into which they will (ideally) be entering.

Second, encouraging such graduates to enter a field for which they do not meet the entry-level educational background or training fails to recognize that post-secondary institutions must meet accreditation requirements that are infrequently negotiable. For instance, a cursory search on *HigherEdJobs* bears witness to this: For positions in composition or writing instruction where a degree is specified, the requirement is a minimum of eighteen graduate hours in English, and sometimes a degree in a ‘closely related field’ is specifically stated as acceptable. Based on the responsibilities of these positions, it becomes readily apparent that such ‘closely related field[s]’ most often include areas like Composition/Rhetoric, creative writing, literature, linguistics, and TESOL, admittedly an unsurprising discovery, given that the CCCC (2016b) reiterated many of these areas in their *Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing* and additionally remarked that “[e]ffective college teachers of writing require a broad base of theoretical knowledge, including rhetorical knowledge [...] linguistic knowledge [...] instructional knowledge [...] ethical and effective research methods [...] and] technical knowledge.” Thus, although there is some overlap, as rightfully stated and exemplified by Chattaraj (2020), in the material presented and/or the methods utilized in the humanities and social sciences, there is not enough that a degree in one is readily accepted as adequate preparation for a teaching position in the other³. Should a graduate in anthropology receive a full-time position teaching composition or writing, this is far more likely, as reflected in the case of the author of the original article, to be a fortuitous but unlikely outcome. Similarly, one would expect opposition or incredulity at the suggestion that composition instructors should apply for positions teaching cultural anthropology, given that they regularly engage with (non-)fictional representations of human nature, traditions, beliefs, culture, etc.

Third, every institutional major and minor mandates specific coursework and allows the opportunity for electives to be selected individually from other areas, sometimes open-ended, sometimes restricted to a certain department or school, and sometimes between particular courses. Nonetheless, one of the first courses that a student will take – in fact, one that frequently correlates with retention and graduation rates – is composition or writing (see

³ As Miller and Cripps (2005) state, a course in first-year composition that is mandatory for all students need not be offered a priori by the English Department; however, instead of suggesting that faculty members from other academic programs or departments assume these teaching responsibilities, they suggest something seemingly more radical: “[S]ince the first-year course [composition] course could never prepare students to write in every discipline, the best pedagogical response might well lie with challenging students to build connections across disciplinary boundaries to generate responses to pressing contemporary problems” (p. 131).

e.g. Garrett et al., 2017; Kovacs, 2016; NCTE, 2013)⁴. Conversely, courses in other areas generally follow, as it is difficult for one to write across a variety of curricular areas without first establishing a strong foundation in writing for a general audience. As a result, while an anthropological perspective, which is a lens and not a pedagogy, can be advantageous in a first-year writing⁵ course, to have an anthropologist exclusively teach such a course, should he or she not also have graduate-level training and/or extensive experience in a relevant area⁶, would be to put the cart before the horse, especially given the worrisome scholarship concerning students' literacy rates and increasing placement in developmental/remedial pre- or co-requisite courses.

As a result, the present article serves as a response to Chattaraj (2020) and attempts to present a fuller picture of what takes place in the composition classroom, to offer concrete suggestions for how an anthropologist could approach such topics and responsibilities, and to present an overview of the literature addressing both the pedagogies employed in Composition/Rhetoric and some of the struggles that writing instructors face (or could face) due to troubling findings on incoming students' literacy rates.

Students and Literacy Rates

Despite being such a commonly invoked term in educational circles, 'literacy' eludes a straightforward definition and depends heavily upon the context in which it is referenced. For instance, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy did not find a significant difference, either positive or negative, in literacy rates over the period of a decade (1992-2003), though they are careful to distinguish among prose literacy, document literacy, and quantitative literacy. The first two refer to the ability to search and understand texts, though prose literacy is continuous and document literacy is non-continuous. The third refers to the ability to perform calculations and/or computations. A similar study was undertaken between 2012/2014 and 2017 (cf. U.S. Department of Education, 2017), in which such skills were trifurcated into literacy, numeracy, and digital problem solving, which also resulted in "no statistically significant changes in the percentages of adults performing at each proficiency level in any of the three." As a result, this might give the impression that rates of literacy are stagnant at best, itself a troubling finding.

Additionally, Pilgrim and Martinez (2013) present a literature review that unifies five different types of literacy that more effectively describe the twenty-first century student: information literacy, multiliteracies, new literacy, digital literacy, and web literacy. These refer, of course, to a more text-based understanding of 'literacy' that more adequately characterizes the responsibilities and assignments of students in the present-day classroom, including searching for, locating, and evaluating information in a variety of media. As they note, "[...] online reading tasks differ from offline tasks. Teachers need to understand the similarities and differences in order to use reading and writing strategies and apply skills within an online reading environment" (p. 66).

Despite all of the different—and sometimes competing—definitions of 'literacy' as a concept, however, incoming undergraduate students increasingly require remediation. Greene and Winters (2005) found that two-

⁴There are also, of course, non-curricular correlates, particularly those that relate to one's socioeconomic status, ethnicity, L1 and L2 status, etc., as indicated e.g. in Ishler and Upcraft (2005). Additionally, one of the commonplace distinctions is between the dual concepts of 'retention' and 'persistence,' where the latter might be negatively influenced by a student's attendance/participation, preparedness, punctuality with submitted assignments, etc. Bizzell (1986:294) refers to such students as "outlanders," i.e. those are identifiable by "their appearance to many teachers and to themselves as the students who are most alien in the college community."

⁵Because this article presents its discussion and findings primarily within an American context, some of the terminology might be less straightforwardly recognized. For instance, this specific course might be identified by a variety of names, including first-year composition, first-year writing, writing skills, freshman English, etc. Moreover, as an anonymous reviewer rightly noted, the course itself might be housed in an entirely different department due to institutional (re)structuring and, consequently, carry not only a different name but also a different focus. Nevertheless, we refer here to the first non-developmental/non-remedial writing-intensive course taken by all students at the undergraduate level.

⁶This is also a position supported in the *Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing*, published in revised form by the CCCC (2015a). In fact, the tenth of these twelve statements indicates that "[s]ound writing instruction extends from a knowledge of theories of writing (including, but not limited to, those theories developed in the field of composition and rhetoric) [...] Institutions and programs emphasize this purpose by ensuring that instructors have background in and experience with theories of writing. Ideally, instructors have ongoing access to and support for professional development, including (but not limited to) attendance at local, regional, or national Composition and Rhetoric conferences. Institutions employing graduate students from outside of the discipline of Composition and Rhetoric to teach writing courses support development of this background knowledge by ensuring students receive sufficient grounding in and practice/mentoring with regard to key concepts associated with theories of writing."

thirds of graduating high school seniors were unprepared or underprepared for college-level instruction, and Jimenez et al (2016) found that between forty to sixty percent of college students need additional instruction in at least one of three areas: reading, writing, and mathematics. More recently, Logue (2018) came to an even more startling conclusion: Sixty-eight percent of first-year students at community colleges needed such instruction, and forty percent needed it at four-year institutions. Finally, Perin and Holschuh (2019) note that “[o]nly 26% to 38% of secondary education graduates in the United States are proficient readers or writers but many continue to postsecondary education, where they take developmental education courses designed to help them improve their basic academic skills” (p. 363).

Thus, a significant proportion of incoming students, upon arrival at a post-secondary institution, are not prepared to undertake the kind of sustained reading and writing that occur in first-year composition, let alone the coursework for their majors. In an evaluation of the “[f]indings from 28 survey, observation, and mixed method studies involving the writing practices of more than 7,000 teachers,” two-thirds of which concerned teaching in the United States, Graham (2019) indicates that there are four commonly attested factors that negatively impact students’ writing abilities, viz. limited time dedicated exclusively toward writing; very few opportunities to undertake in-class writing; the infrequent implementation of different pedagogical practices and procedures and limited exposure to opportunities to engage with a variety of written genres; and a lack of digital tools used for reading and writing.

As such, offering writing instruction without a full perspective of the obstacles and struggles that students face, particularly if one does not have a solid background in Composition/Rhetoric pedagogy, could be ineffective or even harmful. In fact, Connors (1980) communicates this more directly by stating that “[t]he feeling of those who look down upon composition seems to be that ‘anyone can teach it’ and that therefore it is a low-level activity. I hope this [dissertation] suggests that not everyone can teach it well” (p. 6, original underlining).

Topics in the Composition/Writing Classroom

Chatteraj (2020) notes that “[w]hat is taught in such courses varies widely, and there is little consensus on what should be covered in their curricula” (p. 36). However, this is inaccurate: While there certainly are various approaches to teaching first-year composition, as indicated in the next section, all roads lead to Rome⁷. In fact, once one excludes commonly used anthologies, there is remarkable consistency both in the overarching goals of first-year composition and the required textbooks, which is precisely why the author could issue the following characterization:

Still, some common features of these important courses include teaching students how to make an argument that is supported by reasoning and evidence, [...] to understand academic writing as part of a structured argumentative tradition, [...] to read academic and other sources critically, [...] to cite and avoid plagiarism, [...] to do basic (and mostly) textual research, [...] to analyse and synthesise (again mostly textual) sources. (p. 36)

Additionally, the theoretical underpinning of these courses is that the ‘process’ is privileged over the ‘product.’ Such scaffolding is inconsistently and/or infrequently implemented in non-English courses, typically due to the extensive content that must otherwise be covered, which allows far less time to emphasize writing as something more than simply the submission of a final written product for evaluation. As Andrea Lunsford notes, however, students “almost never profit from lectures or ‘teacher-centered’ classes or from studying and memorizing isolated rules, but from continuous trial-and-error writing” (qtd. in Connors 1980, p. 2).

One of the initial lessons that students receive introduces and addresses the rhetorical situation, which comprises the audience, purpose, genre, stance, medium, and context. As Chatteraj (2020) rightly notes, the majority of undergraduate students have been taught at the secondary level to work principally with literary texts. This prepares them, albeit primarily as a result of state-mandated assessments and not the lack of instruction in anthropology, to compose summaries, to recognize literary elements, and to utilize textual evidence to support a thesis statement. However, learning about the rhetorical situation requires students to elevate the discussion far

⁷ Likewise, Smith (1977) notes that “[y]ou can teach a writing course about almost any subject under the sun, but you have to have a subject” (p. 252). Although not stated explicitly, the ‘subject’ here refers to a specific thematic organization for the course or pedagogical approach to instruction. While scholars like Jackson (2020) agree with Chatteraj’s assertion, others, such as Robertson and Taczak (2018), note that this “little consensus” is not reflective of faculty members’ inconsistency but, rather, is significantly impacted by the long-term existence of first-year composition prior to the establishment of an independent field dedicated exclusively to Composition/Rhetoric.

beyond this and to identify and address the positionality of the author, the purpose of a given text, the convention and/or characteristics of the genre to which the text belongs, the stance of the author and accompanying evidence, the medium through which the message is transmitted (textual, visual, auditory, multimodal, etc.), and the broader context to which the text responds and/or in which it is situated. Although an apprehension of these aspects of otherwise traditionally anthropological works is possible and viable, many of the initial readings in first-year composition are already (auto-)ethnographic in nature.

When students have become acquainted with the rhetorical situation, they are ready to dive deeper into the relationship between ‘form’ and ‘content’ and how this impacts the readerly experience. As they begin to recognize how this relationship functions, they often start to compose their own sustained pieces of writing in a variety of rhetorical modes. Historically, these were consistently delineated into narration, description, exposition, and argumentation (see e.g. Newman, 1827; McElroy, 1885; Newcomer, 1893; and Kellogg, 1894). More recently, however, there are as many as ten rhetorical modes introduced and exemplified to students through their written assignments and required readings⁸.

After this point, the four major rhetorical appeals (pathos, ethos, logos, kairos) are presented to students, typically followed by discussions of argumentation, logical fallacies, sources of evidence, and strategies to evaluate and/or assess the reliability of particular sources of evidence. The last of these has become so widespread, especially during the age of so-called ‘Alternative Facts,’ that evaluative metrics like the CRAAP, SIFT, and RADAR assessments⁹ have become widely taught and utilized at the secondary and post-secondary levels. Coupled with this shift to argumentation, students are introduced to citational practices, field-specific formatting conventions, and academic (dis)honesty.

Only very rarely are grammar, punctuation, spelling, and style explicitly included in the standardized curricula for first-year composition, as these are more often than not implemented in the pre- or co-requisite developmental courses (cf. Spier, 2021). Furthermore, the majority of handbooks and/or anthologies required for first-year composition typically relegate only a selected portion of the text, typically in an appendix, to ancillary suggestions for or guidelines on the conventions of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and style in Modern Standard English. Of course, this can also be complicated by dialectal differences (see e.g. Pullum, 1999) and translanguaging (see e.g. García and Wei, 2013), both of which are frequently perceived as improper. These are, however, substantially different processes from e.g. “spriting (speak+write) and talkument (a spoken document) [...] the novel ways in which modern young people communicate (Rosenberger, qtd. in Collins, 2013, p. 116).

Arguing in support of both writing in the disciplines and the more general pedagogical concept of transfer, Chattaraj (2020) states that “writing strategies and practices that a student learns in a university writing seminar may be effectively utilized in other academic and professional settings” (p. 37). Unfortunately, this is neither a novel position nor a strong defense for an anthropologist to teach first-year composition, as this is the ultimate goal of every instructor of the course. In fact, the primary objective in these classes has consistently been to guide students through critical thinking, to read increasingly complex texts, to write across genres, to interact with texts and their own experiences through the use of the writing process, to evaluate source credibility, to develop correct and ethical citations, and, perhaps most importantly, to use their own voices to make arguments about the realities that they endure. Expressionist and critical pedagogical theory have been taught in first-year composition for decades, encouraging students to interact with their environment and examine or refute the way it has attempted to shape them and others.

⁸ These are typically defined as narration, illustration/exemplification, description, definition, classification/division, comparison and contrast, process-analysis, problem-solution, argumentation, and persuasion. Although the rhetorical modes are useful in contextualizing a particular written assignment or reading-based task, critiques have been offered to suggest that they are otherwise abstracted representations of the conventions of particular genres and/or frames of thought without present-day utility. For instance, Connors (1981), building on his earlier dissertation (1980), issued the following remark: “When we look closely at the nature of modal distinctions, it is not hard to see why: the modes classify and emphasize the product of writing, having almost nothing to do with the purpose for which the writer sat down, pen in hand” (p. 454). This would seem to us to be only a half-truth, as the writer must still remain aware of his or her audience, purpose, etc. prior to undertaking the writing process.

⁹ *CRAAP* stands for currency, relevance, authority, accuracy, and purpose. *SIFT* stands for stop; investigate the source; find better coverage; and trace claims, quotes, and media to the original context. *RADAR* stands for relevance, authority, date, appearance, and the reason for writing. Each evaluation was developed as a response to more freely accessible information on the internet and corresponds to the scholarship of Blakeslee (2004), Caulfield (2017, 2019), and Mandalios (2013), respectively.

Thus, these classes do exactly what Chattaraj (2020) argues can seemingly only occur in an anthropologically-oriented writing course, viz. to include “the discipline’s core methodology of participant observation, lived experience, rather than a synthesis of pre-existing texts, is the core source from which arguments and conclusions about the social world are derived” (p. 35). In fact, current teachers of introductory writing courses—typically those who specialize in the field—teach much more than “a synthesis of preexisting texts” or “literary analysis [with the] main source of evidence [being only] textual” (p. 39) and have done so for many years due to their specialized training in the best practices of Composition/Rhetoric. One need only examine these pedagogies to recognize what is taking place. Furthermore, she offers seven forms of evidence¹⁰ as essential yet fails to acknowledge that these are already taught within a significant proportion of composition classrooms. As such, if students are already receiving this instruction, then there must be a more compelling rationale for an anthropologist to undertake the responsibilities of first-year composition.

Pedagogies in Composition/Rhetoric

When discussing writing instruction and best practices in the first-year composition classroom, one must examine the pedagogies within the field of Composition/Rhetoric and their implementation in the creation of first-year writing courses, especially when the possibility is considered of non-experts undertaking such instruction. In *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, Tate et al (2014) begin their first chapter—“What Is Composition Pedagogy?”—by providing information, definitions, and related narratives for seventeen pedagogical approaches that correspond to the following: basic writing, collaborative writing, community-engaged, critical, cultural studies, expressive, feminist, genre, literature and composition, new media, online and hybrid, process, researched writing, rhetoric and argumentation, second language writing, writing in the disciplines (WID) and writing across the curriculum (WAC), and writing centers. From these different pedagogical vantage points, instructors of first-year writing can develop practical, effective applications of the theories within the classroom. The authors in this monumental text wrote from authoritative stances as professors of writing, rhetoric, technical communication, and English. In fact, Gary Tate is recognized as having established and advanced the field of composition as a result of his scholarship and editorial work.

In fact, texts like *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* should be required reading for those teaching first-year composition, as even the back cover of this volume provides the following description to readers:

Reflecting the rich complexity of contemporary college composition pedagogy, *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* presents original essays on the most important approaches to teaching writing. Each essay is written by an experienced teacher/scholar and describes one of the major pedagogies employed today to familiarize newcomers with the topography of Composition Studies. An invaluable tool for graduate students and new teachers, this bibliographic resource provides an exceptional introduction to Composition Studies and the extensive range of available pedagogical approaches... The essays within now [in the 2014 edition] contain an increased focus on issues raised by diversity, each pedagogy's approach to assessment, and technology's effect on composition. (n.p.)

Thus, the text’s introduction and essays written by “experienced teacher/scholar[s]” are useful not only to those already well-versed in the field, but also to graduate students and to those who are generally unfamiliar or less familiar with the teaching of writing and/or its theoretical and practical applications. For instance, according to Herron (2015), “The second edition of *A Guide* offers a breadth of coverage, range of perspectives, and conciseness not found in many texts that help new and seasoned composition teachers and scholars remain current on the climate of composition studies” (p. 121). Furthermore, its usage and integration are applauded by experts in the field as demonstrated by expert reviews found through Oxford University Press:

A Guide to Composition Pedagogies provides students with the theoretical framework that they will need to understand teaching composition and to develop their own pedagogical concepts. More importantly, it provides realistic, applicable examples of what can and does happen in composition classrooms and how instructors of composition shape students' college experiences as writers and thinkers. (Zitzer-Comfort, qtd. on *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*)

Similarly, in Roen’s (2002) review of an earlier edition of this volume, he applauds the text and its practical use in teaching first-year composition, arguing, “I think that they provide great service to newcomers” in the field (p.

¹⁰ The seven forms are thick description, statistics, historical evidence and primary sources, media analysis, self-conducted surveys and interviews, and literary and cultural analysis (Chattaraj, pp. 39-40).

115). In specifically addressing Kennedy and Howard's examination of collaborative pedagogy and Thaiss and McLeod's chapter on writing across the disciplines and across the curriculum, he shares that

even new composition teachers will be able to use [Kennedy and Howard's] chapter to design pedagogical practices for their own classrooms [... and ...] use [Thaiss and McLeod's] chapter as they plan to work with faculty in other disciplines. To be fair, though, I note that the collection is suitable for the kinds of settings in which I have worked with first-year teaching assistants during the past two decades... Each discussion includes substantial attention to the practical applications of the readings. (p. 116)

On the other hand, he remarks regarding Composition/Rhetoric more broadly that

[o]ur field has a long history in the scholarship of teaching, and this book is another example of how that honored tradition continues to thrive. In my current position of directing a campus-wide center for learning and teaching, I read the scholarship of teaching in many fields ranging from the physical sciences to the fine arts. Although there are many fine scholars writing about teaching in other disciplines, books such as *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* remind me that rhetoric and composition has served and continues to serve as a model field – one devoted to serious inquiry into its pedagogies. (p. 117)

Teachers of developmental, first-year, and advanced composition often are non-experts in the field, graduate students, and/or teaching assistants. Those with a formal academic background in English are usually provided with guidance and instruction about teaching writing to students with best practices in mind, such as those provided in Bean (2011), Collins (2013), Connors (1980), Jackson (2020), Otte and Mlynarczyk (2010), Roen et al. (2002), and/or Siegal and Gilliland (2021). Conversely, those who enter the writing classroom without this background run the risk of teaching based on intuition alone (cf. Singh and Lukkarila, 2017, pp. 5ff), an avoidable situation if adequate professional development or training is provided to these instructors (see e.g. Pytlík and Liggett 2001).

Suggestions and Conclusions

Despite our best attempt to foreground the beneficial exchanges underway in the first-year composition classroom and to minimize the criticism we direct toward Chattaraj's (2020) article, there are certainly two noteworthy points raised in her article. First, every discipline should engage in concerted reflection upon which kinds of evidence are deemed acceptable and appropriate—by whom, in which context, and to what end. Global access to knowledge has changed significantly over the past three decades, and erstwhile institutional models that encouraged or even required students only to cite journal articles and books seem in some circles to be obsolescent, particularly given that the internet facilitates rapid access not only to social media and blogs, but also to collaborative encyclopedias, podcasts, and streaming videos. Additionally, there is a place for both qualitative and quantitative approaches (see e.g. Hornikx, 2018). Second, introducing an anthropological perspective to discussions in the first-year composition classroom can illuminate topics that might otherwise be reduced to more general conversations of technique, style, and genre. These are two significant contributions of Chattaraj's article; however, the most important questions remain: How can – or should – an anthropologist incorporate writing to a greater degree in his or her own classroom? On the other hand, if an anthropologist does find him- or herself employed in a full-time position as an instructor of writing, how can he or she successfully and effectively incorporate many years of graduate training, perhaps exclusively, in anthropology?

Fortunately, the first question can be answered much more straightforwardly than the second. Because writing retains a certain degree of primacy in the field of anthropology, Scheld (2009) states that “[w]riting fieldnotes is a central methodology for documenting and analyzing culture. And written personal reflections upon this process are viewed as providing insight into how knowledge is produced by a “situated” researcher” (p. 59). While Chattaraj (2020) dedicates considerable time to extolling the value of participant observation, this is a field-specific methodology and not, in fact, the central concept in the field of anthropology; instead, cultural relativity is and has been successfully incorporated into the first-year composition classroom by non-anthropologists (see e.g. Smith, 1977). Furthermore, Scheld (2009) also states that anthropologists do not devote enough time to the role or process of writing in their classrooms, thus inspiring her article, which outlines a class assignment in which students write letters to the authors of ethnographic texts; as a result, they respond to and engage with the material on an anthropological level while also further developing their skills in composition and rhetoric. In fact, in order to write such a letter, the student must be aware of all aspects of the rhetorical situation; the relationship between form and content, particularly in the original ethnography, but also in the letter response; the rhetorical modes evinced in the ethnography and those used for rhetorical effect in the letter; and the appeals to persuasion

that are utilized, as the student will (ideally) not simply commend the ethnographer for his or her excellent work but, rather, offer twenty-first century insight into the phenomena discussed. Nevertheless, the inextricably practical and conceptual link between writing and anthropology is so well defined that it merited Wulff's encyclopedic entry (2021) and earlier edited volume (2016) entitled *The Anthropologist as Writer: Genres and Contexts in the Twenty-First Century*. Additionally, accompanying handbooks have been released to promote reflective writing for students of anthropology (see e.g. Bodoh-Creed, 2018).

Conversely, the second question is far more difficult to answer. To utilize exclusively primary sources that address anthropological concepts and phenomena in a first-year composition classroom is likely ineffectual, as Smith (1977) suggested some four decades ago with reference to an adjacent field:

One possible resource might be the three sources of epistemic rhetoric discussed above: social psychology, sociology of knowledge, and philosophy of science. But while a few readings from these sources might be helpful, in the main, they are too technical for undergraduates. They would confound the imagination, not capture. (p. 254)

Instead, an instructor of first-year composition with formal training in anthropology could consider promoting more expansive evidentiary practices, i.e. by encouraging students to look beyond the kinds of evidence with which they are already familiar and, instead, to determine what makes a particular type of evidence more or less appropriate or reliable for the task at-hand. If a student were to write about a historical event, he or she could conduct interviews with survivors or witnesses; conversely, that same student could, instead, consult newspaper or media accounts of the event, scholarly analyses, etc. Although the latter is likely more common in a first-year composition classroom, there is no reason to believe that the former is *a priori* any less reliable or insightful. On the other hand, because first-year composition attempts to equip students from every major to write more effectively, it would seem to us that a purely anthropological perspective with solely anthropologically-oriented objectives and assignments would be counterintuitive: Although a chemistry student might write a report that includes some impressionistic data, he or she need not rely solely on it, as to do so would be to undermine the validity of the study. Similarly, although a history student might write an essay outlining the oral history of a particular ethnolinguistic group, he or she need not rely solely on these interviews, as to do so would be to ignore the extant scholarship in primary and secondary literature.

Thus, a natural coalescence of these anthropological goals and traditional assignments might be the most effective, a point that Chattaraj (2020) seems to suggest indirectly but actively argues against. There is, for instance, nothing strictly anthropological about a student undertaking a statistical analysis of effective transportation in (so-called) developing countries or conducting a media analysis of informal housing settlements, both of which are provided as examples of students' final projects. In fact, the former is reminiscent of the typical assignment in a business course, while the latter often arises in first-year composition through multimodal rhetorical analysis. To this end, the anthropologist can ensure his or her success—and that of the students—in a first-year composition classroom by keeping in mind the valuable contribution of an anthropological perspective, ensuring that he or she engages in professional development and training in best practices and relevant pedagogies for the teaching of writing, promoting process-based writing throughout the semester, encouraging students of anthropology to work in the university's writing center, reminding students that texts 'speak' to one another, and utilizing accessible texts that help him or her reach the curricular goals, e.g. with any one of the numerous, increasingly popular essay anthologies on popular culture. Finally, such instructors must acknowledge the incredible contributions of the field of Composition/Rhetoric, as Perdigón (2018) reminds the reader that traditional genres (e.g. the academic essay) and prototypical first-year writing assignments serve a more general educational function, result in greater transferability of skills across fields, and encourage students to write less frequently about what they believe about a text and, instead, more frequently about what a text actually states and how it does so rhetorically. If an anthropologist intends to teach first-year composition, these cross-curricular objectives must be addressed and actively incorporated into instruction because, as Connors (1980) notes, "[...] if you enter the writing classroom with no knowledge [of composition], you will do a bad job, pure and simple" (p. 4).

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