RE-ENVISIONING PEER RESPONSE
In Four Acts

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMNT

To open our session, we would like to recognize and acknowledge the indigenous people of this land: the Lenape, Shawnee, and Hodinöhšönih — the six Nations, that is, the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, Cayuga and Tuscarora. We are gathered today on Jö:deogë', an a Seneca word for Pittsburgh or "between two rivers": the welhik hane and Mënaonkihëla. These are the Lenape words for the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, which translate to the "best flowing river of the hills" and "where the banks cave in and erode." While a land acknowledgment is not enough, it is an important social justice and decolonial practice that promotes indigenous visibility and a reminder that we are on settled indigenous land. Let this land acknowledgment be an opening for all of us to contemplate a way to join in decolonial and indigenous movements for sovereignty and self-determination. Lastly, we are grateful to Melissa Borgia-Askey and Sandy Gajehsoh Dowdy for valuable etymological and pronunciation help. Also, we thank Andrea Riley Mukavetz and the American Indian Caucus for helping with this land acknowledgment.

ACT I
AN ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PEER RESPONSE
Key Findings and Best Practices

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WHY RE-ENVISION PEER RESPONSE?

- **Peer Review is widespread and frequently troublesome.** Its' effectiveness is inconsistent and "success", difficult to determine.

- **"Review" can create an evaluative lens.** The result? Potential anxiety, lack of productivity, even dissention: often based from perceptions about writing skills and language proficiency.

- **Reframing as "Peer Response" (DiPardo & Freedman) promotes live engagement and true collaboration**: It's both interactive and performative: an opportunity for live feedback. **Peer Response re-envisioned can become a mode for acts of inclusivity,** rather than exclusion. **This shift can help students see peer feedback as non-evaluative, opening the doors for other types of learning to occur.**

RESEARCH STUDY

- 2013/2014: Multilingual Classroom Based Study
- How effective are Peer Response Activities?
- To understand complexity: more comprehensive research model

CONTEXTUALIST ECOLOGICAL APPROACH

- **Ecological Methodology:** (the study of the interactions between individuals and their environments): embraces methodological pluralism and outwardly engages in interrogating the interaction of multiple contextual elements at once.

- Recorded interactions with conversation analysis, observed ecology during activities, surveys, interview protocols with instructors and students, tracked draft development, discourse analysis of critical reflection components: *I compared what happened with what students said happened with what instructors thought was happening and what was happening through draft development.*

SO, WHAT WAS HAPPENING?

- **Previous studies: overemphasis in draft uptake and talk.**
  - I found evidence of uptake in 3 ways: **course lexicon, instructor proxy, and learner uptake.**
  - **Talking as a measure:** my study showed students engaged in PR in all kinds of ways (listening, writing, thinking) and benefitted in all kinds of ways (most notably being able to develop a metacognitive understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses).
- **Overall, many pedagogical implications:**
  - The **significance of transparency** in promoting engagement
  - Understanding the **importance of flexibility** in task design, especially with respect to logistics and environment.
  - **Developing concrete modes of task assessment**, beyond just draft development uptake or talk time.

TASK DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Research on Peer Response has pointed to **task design and implementation** as the **single-most important variable** contributing to "success".

- **Establishing how "success" is determined is key**; and this aspect of the activity should ideally be transparent to students.

- However, **over-emphasis on "task" can exclude consideration of other relevant variables**, such as student incomes, attitudes, and material conditions, among others.

HOW TO THINK THROUGH TASK DESIGN

Before Peer Response, you must think through your goals, your goals for your students, and decide what type of Peer Response you'd like to do.

This includes thinking through:

1. **WHAT you want to accomplish pedagogically** (i.e. work on a particular skill, have peers provide holistic feedback, etc.),

2. **WHEN in the writing process your peer response will occur** (i.e. before/after students have turned in their papers or before/after students have received feedback, etc.),

3. **HOW students will be completing the peer response** (online, via paper, as an in-class activity, as homework, etc.).

WHEN TO DO PEER RESPONSE

- **Consider your classroom dynamics** (outgoing, shy, NSs, NNESs, mixed, skill levels).
- **Consider your classroom environment** (smart or not)
- **Think about your scaffolding** (Longer papers likely need more revision, certain skills need more development, like argument)
- **Be responsive to student writing** (common issues)
- **Prioritize!** Would it be better as homework or an in-class activity or a hybrid?
- **Follow the practice of "I do", "We do", "You do".**

HOW SHOULD PEER RESPONSE OCCUR?

- **Pairing and Grouping** (random, assigned, selected, cohorts, threes, pairs, etc.)
- **Document driven or conversation driven** (or both)
- **In or out of class** (bridging homework and activity)
- **Instructor role during PR**
- **Instructor modeling** (how you give feedback, online PR can help with future modeling)
- **Critically engaging students** (developing revision plans, responding to feedback, determining what feedback to integrate)
- **Connect critical engagement to course outcomes.**

TROUBLESHOOTING AND ASSESSING

What to do when PR isn't going well
- **Modeling** can help
- Emphasizing **transferability** to future contexts
- **Upping the stakes** (participation grade, homework, collaborative writing)
- **Being attentive** to student communication/work styles
- **Play a more/less active role**

How to assess "success"?
- **Create a rubric**, make expectations clear. Determine the goal upfront and communicate that or generate that with students. Draft development only is a very limited goal.
- **Online submissions allow you to oversee**
- **Make it fully realized** (revision plans, writer's memos)
- **Get creative!** Realize the limitations of rubrics and look to other disciplines for inspiration. *Embrace the interactivity.*

ACT II
The Pedagogy of Play: A Creative Approach to Peer Response

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1. Academic Siloism

"Creative writing and composition studies would do better by keeping more open borders, if not sharing a departmental house then at least being friendly neighbors with fenceless backyards."

--Hesse, Douglas. "The Place of Creative Writing in Composition Studies." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 62, no. 1., Sept. 2010, pp. 43.

2. The Trouble with Peer Response as "Assessment"

"The more students are led to focus on *how well* they're doing, the less engaged they tend to be with *what* they're doing."

--Alfie Kohn, "The Case Against Grades," *Counterpoints*, vol. 451, Peter Lang, Jan. 2013, pp. 145.

Peer Review Checklist
Put a check (✓) after completing each item from the list below.

☐ Is the formatting correct for this essay (1" margins, 12 point font, Times Roman, double spaced, no extra space after the title, essay has a unique title)?

☐ Does the title give an idea of what the essay will be about (not a bland description that just states the topic)? Write a note about how this person could improve this title.

☐ Do the opening sentences of this essay make clear what the topic is of this essay? Do they capture reader interest while maintaining an academic tone? Why/why not?

☐ Is enough context provided to make clear what controversy this essay is addressing and why?

☐ Underline the thesis of this paper. Was the thesis easily identifiable? Why/Why not?

☐ Does the introduction have a clear, focused argumentative thesis? Does the thesis make a strong claim and does the thesis avoid listing or too general/vague claims? Why/why not?

☐ Go through the essay and underline all topic sentences. If you can't find a topic sentence (a sentence which explains what you will discuss in that paragraph--usually the first sentence), make a note in the margins of their paper.

☐ Are topic sentences clearly related to thesis? Do they make a clear claim that provides support for the thesis

3. The Writer's Workshop as Playful Alternative

"In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the workshop model has been increasingly utilized as an intervention with at-risk and underserved writing populations, from inner-city middle-school students to incarcerated adults (Haddix, 2012; Schwalb, 2006), primarily as a vehicle for personal transformation, student engagement, and improved writing and communication skills (Howie & Bagnall, 2013; Mezirow, 2009)."

--Lori Howe, "A Review of Creative Writing Workshop Pedagogy in Educational Research: Methodological Challenges and Affordances, *The Journal of Poetry Therapy*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2016, pp. 195.

4. A Classroom-Tested Method for Peer Workshop

Students work in groups of 4-5. Time limits and group sizes are adjusted depending on class size & amount of class time. Nominate a "time keeper" for each group (they will use a timer, to keep their group on task).

3-5 minutes	What's Working & Why—students take turns; everyone must speak
10-15 minutes	What's Not Working, Why, & What To Do About It; open discussion of ideas
3 minutes	Writer's Questions/Response to Feedback

Writer not permitted to speak

**Strongly Recommended: Run a "mock workshop" the week prior to the first student-led workshop, using sample papers. That way, the instructor can show students what kind of feedback is desired, and intervene as needed.

ACT III
AUTHOR CENTERED REFLECTIVE READING
A Rogerian Approach to Peer Response

Tamara Luque Black, Ph.D.
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Carl Rogers: Reflective Listening

Therapist's Hypothesis: The capacity for growth, problem-solving, and insight resides within the speaker

Reflective Listening: Listening actively for the speaker's intended message and then expressing that meaning back for verification

I argue that Rogerian Reflective Listening can be usefully extended in a new direction:

Students **can be coached to apply these techniques in peer response workshops.**

Reflective Listening is considered an elementary and non-directive approach that can be easily picked up by people without specialized psychological training (Arnold 2014; Fisher 2005; McBride et al., 2018).

The Mirror & Its Tain

Self

Back of the mirror (tain)

Listener (therapist)

Questioning, checking perceptions

Genuineness

Other

Mirror's reflective surface

Speaker (client)

Listening actively & supportively

Empathy

Self-Other Differentiation & Critical Empathy

Self-Other differentiation is necessary for empathy (Coplan 2011; Leake 2016).

This recognition of difference creates an ongoing tension between self/other, differentiation/overlap, testing/supporting. I argue that this tension can fruitfully drive the peer response conversation.

Author Centered Reflective Reading

- Engaging the urge to understand what the author is saying

- Resisting the urge to rush to judgement

- Providing non-directive support of the author's aims

- Testing understandings / Checking perceptions

- Clarifying the author's meanings

ACRR Model Lesson Plan

- Authors journal

- ACRR "training" & Class Discussion
  - "When you say ___, I think you mean ___. Is that right? What did I miss?"

  - "Here, ___ seems crucial to your perspective. Is it? If not, what were you trying to emphasize?"

  - "Is my characterization of your work accurate? If not, what should I revise to make my representation more accurate?"

ACRR Model Lesson Plan

- Authors journal

- ACRR "training" & Class Discussion

- With an ACRR mindset, jot notes on partner's draft

- Readers journal

- Compare & Share
  - Compare the journal entries. Paraphrase & test understandings. Focus mostly on moments of contrast & difference. Work collaboratively to support the author's goals & to clarify their perspective & its expression. Repeat for partner.

Because the reader both offers support (mirror's reflective surface) and tests understandings (tain), the process is **empathetic, critical, and dialogical**.

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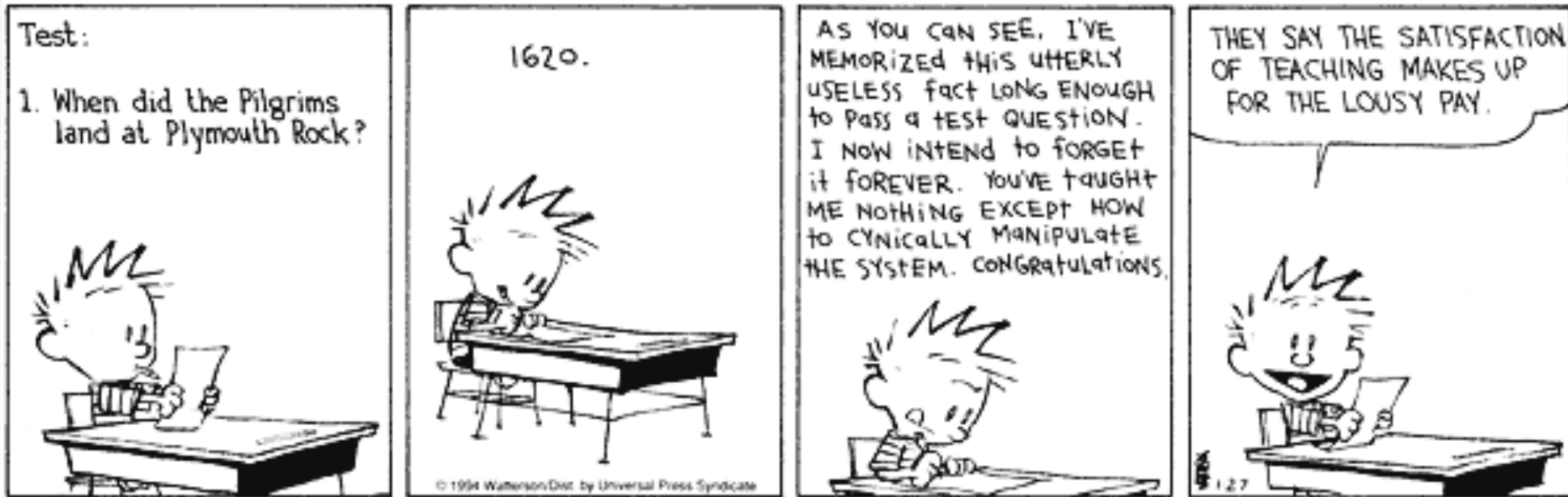
ACT IV

"Should I Stay or Should I Go?"

Google Docs & The Challenge of Walking Away

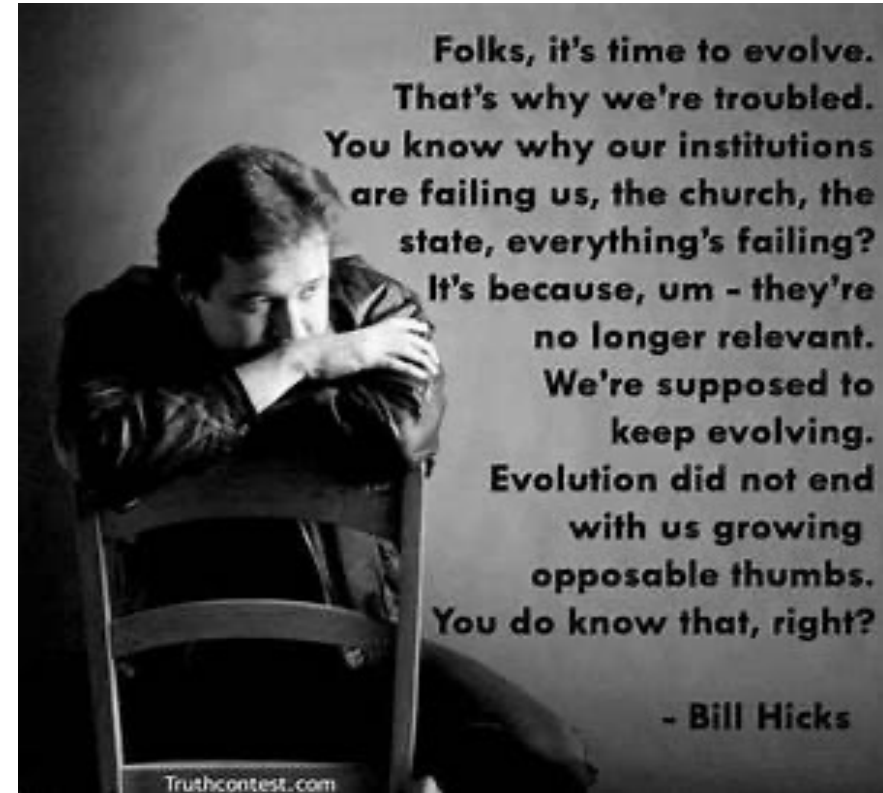*Daniel Dissinger, Ph.D.*
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THE CHALLENGE

"Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire 72).

HIGH STAKES

"Education is deemed authentic, therefore, to the extent that it demands active student involvement and deliberately aids in the formation of student critical consciousness" (Gilyard 27).

Relinquishing my hold on project topics with increasingly open prompts, coupled with student-driven peer response sessions using Google Docs has inspired my students to cultivate a personal connection to critical thinking skills, scholastic curiosity, and intellectual VOICE.

Folks, it's time to evolve. That's why we're troubled. You know why our institutions are failing us, the church, the state, everything's failing? It's because, um – they're no longer relevant. We're supposed to keep evolving. Evolution did not end with us growing opposable thumbs. You do know that, right?

– Bill Hicks

Truthcontest.com

PERSONAL INVESTMENT

No, because I don't want to hear what's hot and feel I have to copy it. I'll just make up my own thing.

-Missy Elliott

"Authentic education is not carried on by 'A' for 'B' or by 'A' about 'B' but rather by 'A' with 'B,' mediated by the world—a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it" (Freire 93).

Removing myself (C) from the process transfers power over to my students has resulted in an increase in personal investment in their writing, a focus on personalized writing processes, and a steering away from "GRADE PANIC". Projects have become more MEANINGFUL, CREATIVE, and centered on CRITICAL THINKING.

AUTONOMY

"This is one of the joys of education as the practice of freedom, for it allows students to assume responsibility for their choices […] Engaged pedagogy necessarily values student expression" (hooks 19-20).

Mediating a space for student autonomy in peer response comes out of a constant challenge to relinquish my hold on the process, language, and rules set up by each individual community of student writers in my class.
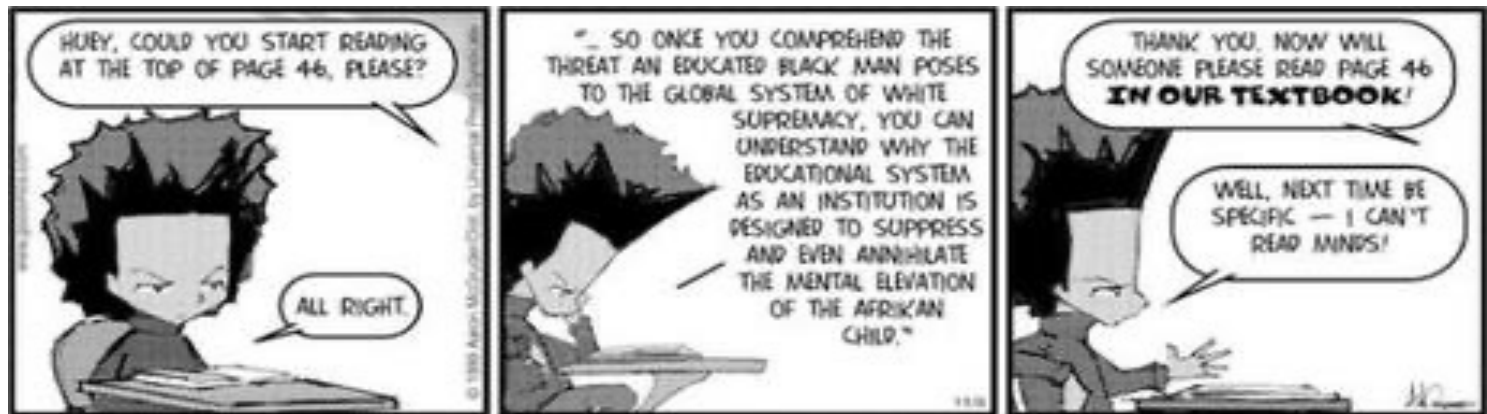
WHY GOOGLE DOC?

- Multimodal, multimedia, & digital discourses already being engaged.
- Real-time collaboration, writing, & reflection.
- Jargon free environment, which fosters authentic critical thinking.
- Continual peer response and community building after class.
- Student ownership over progress, process, and ideas without instructor paternalism.
- These are transferable skills for after this course.

"The educational system, whose scale of operations grew in extent and intensity throughout the nineteenth century, no doubt directly helped devalue popular modes of expression, dismissing them as 'slang' and 'gibberish'" (Bourdieu 49).

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QUESTIONS?
We would love to continue the conversation!

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