Multimedia in the Writing Center: Visual Rhetoric and Tutor Training

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Multimedia in the Writing Center: Visual Rhetoric and Tutor Training

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Williams (Part 1, 2001)

“…restricting rhetorical instruction to verbal media, even if computers are used for instruction, implies that we are unwilling to recognize that literacy is in flux…” (Part 1, 22)
Williams (Part 2, 2001)

“...composition... pedagogy should include both verbal and visual instruction in a hypertextual environment in order to help students develop facility with an expanded set of literate practices...” (Part 2, 124).
Central Concern

What is the impact of visual rhetoric and new media on writing center theory and practice, and what are the implications for writing centers when students expect or need feedback on their visual projects?
Michael Pemberton argues

“...the consequences for writing centers are clear: more students with different texts in unfamiliar genres will be making new demands on tutor expertise” (15)
Is this a Writing Center issue?

Why should writing centers address visual rhetoric at all, much less in a tutor-training course?
Pemberton continues …

"But even if most instructors will not encourage hypertext papers or teach Web design in their courses, others certainly will…"
Pemberton continues ...

"Technical writing classes now incorporate Web documents and design as a matter of course, and a great many information technology, journalism, and graphic design classes view Web design and hypertext as integral parts of their curricula."
Pemberton continues …

"…writing centers may feel it is their responsibility to prepare tutors to meet these students’ rhetorical needs as well as the needs of students with more traditional assignments." (19)
Analysis

Students identified the usage of logos, ethos, and pathos and discussed audience and purpose, focusing on why the designers made certain choices with graphics and text.
Production

Students were required to create a visual argument on any topic of their choice, and they could use any media they wanted—digital photography, hypertext, drawings, posters, etc. They could incorporate some text, but the primary mode of argumentation would be visual.
Student #1

Purdue University...

...A Clean Campus
Student #1

…I now feel as though I have a much better understanding of the types of questions English 106 students ask themselves when working on this assignment. I am better equipped to field their questions if they should come up during a tutorial. Most of all, I believe I am finally starting to understand where the essential elements of composition fit into visual rhetoric projects.
Student #2

While composing this piece, I first wanted to make a progression from light skinned, blonde and straight hair models to darker skinned, curly and dark hair models. However, I could not even obtain pictures of black women who did not straighten their hair. I was disappointed, but it strengthens the argument that models need to have these ‘white’ features to remain desirable.
Want to Treat Others Better Than Some People Treat You?

Enroll in Etiquette 203
Where etiquette is more than just table manners, it’s a courteous way of life.
Student #3

“...I wanted my visual project to attempt to move people away from thinking that etiquette is simply a collection of rigid table manners...”
Student #3

She identifies her audience as students in the School of Management—hence the office setting in the photo—and describes why she used the caption and why she chose the color red, referencing Lisa Graham’s book *Basics of Design: Layout and Typography for Beginners*. 
1 out of 7
HOOSIERS are FARMERS

& their roosters

don't change their clocks

We're gaining time,
we're losing time.
Student #4

This student, like the previous student, discusses her design choices in her reflective essay. She mentions that she consciously chose a “harvest yellow-orange” background because of its agricultural connection and because it reflects the image of a rising sun. She describes her usage of cornstalks in the numbers on the clock because corn is “one of Indiana’s major crops grown by Indiana farmers.”
Conclusion

Their reflective essays demonstrated an emerging awareness of the importance of visual literacy and the nuances of developing a visual argument.

The unit on visual rhetoric helped these students gain confidence in their ability to address multimedia assignments in a writing tutorial.