

2015

# The Show was Yesterday: Redefining the Writing and Research Process through Mixing and Sampling

Gabriel I. Green

Follow this and additional works at: <http://commons.emich.edu/honors>

---

## Recommended Citation

Green, Gabriel I., "The Show was Yesterday: Redefining the Writing and Research Process through Mixing and Sampling" (2015).  
*Senior Honors Theses*. 421.  
<http://commons.emich.edu/honors/421>

This Open Access Senior Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at DigitalCommons@EMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@EMU. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@emich.edu](mailto:lib-ir@emich.edu).

---

# The Show was Yesterday: Redefining the Writing and Research Process through Mixing and Sampling

## **Abstract**

In his 2003 article "The 1963 Hip-Hop Machine: Hip-Hop Pedagogy as Composition," Jeff Rice calls for a 'whatever' pedagogy that presents an "alternative research methodology for composition" using digital sampling as instrument for writing the argumentative essay. "The Show was Yesterday" is an effort to reinvigorate Rice's methodology by updating it in relation to contemporary digital platforms suited to sampling and mixing. Asserting that "The Show was Yesterday" identifies the conventional essay as a metaphor for the encore, or a relatively small artifact that evidences a students' grasps of complex concepts. The "show" therefore, is metaphoric of the holistic process of planning, researching, and the sampling and mixing of sources toward the invention of an original and substantive argument. This paper will expand upon the idea of whatever pedagogy by examining how sampling as an isolated practice demonstrates opportunities for students to gain skills with research, intertextuality, while also arguing that digital sampling provides a reimagined process that is not linear, but locates students in an area to adapt, using materials more effectively for writing performances.

## **Degree Type**

Open Access Senior Honors Thesis

## **Department**

English Language and Literature

## **First Advisor**

Derek N. Mueller

## **Keywords**

composition, pedagogy, sampling, hip-hop

THE SHOW WAS YESTERDAY: REDEFINING THE WRITING AND RESEARCH  
PROCESS THROUGH MIXING AND SAMPLING

By

Gabriel I. Green

A Senior Thesis Submitted to the

Eastern Michigan University

Honors College

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation

with Honors in Written Communication (English Language & Literature)

Approved at Ypsilanti, Michigan, on this date March 31, 2015

Derek N. Mueller  
Supervising Instructor (Print Name and have signed)

Bernard Miller  
Honors Advisor (Print Name and have signed)

Mary K. Ramsey  
Department Head (Print Name and have signed)

Honors Director (Print Name and have signed) \_\_\_\_\_

Green 1

Gabriel I. Green

Honors College

Honors Senior Thesis

30 March 2015

The Show was Yesterday: Redefining the Writing and Researching Process Through

### Mixing and Sampling

**Abstract:** In his 2003 article “The 1963 Hip-Hop Machine: Hip-Hop Pedagogy as Composition,” Jeff Rice calls for a ‘whatever’ pedagogy that presents an “alternative research methodology for composition” using digital sampling as instrument for writing the argumentative essay. “The Show was Yesterday” is an effort to reinvigorate Rice’s methodology by updating it in relation to contemporary digital platforms suited to sampling and mixing. Asserting that “The Show was Yesterday” identifies the conventional essay as a metaphor for the encore, or a relatively small artifact that evidences a student’s grasp of complex concepts. The “show” therefore, is metaphoric of the holistic process of planning, researching, and the sampling and mixing of sources toward the invention of an original and substantive argument. This paper will expand upon the idea of whatever pedagogy by examining how sampling as an isolated practice demonstrates opportunities for students to gain skills with research, intertextuality, while also arguing that digital sampling provides a reimagined process that is not linear, but locates students in an area to adapt, using materials more effectively for writing performances.

*Y'all don't know my struggle*

*Y'all can't match my hustle*

*You can't catch my hustle*

*You can't fathom my love dude*

*Lock yourself in a room doin' five beats a day for three summers*

*Kanye West*

“THE SHOW WAS YESTERDAY!” This is a mantra that I became very familiar with during my undergraduate years at Eastern Michigan University. As a member of a performance organization, Poetry Society, it is this mantra that would permeate throughout greenrooms and backstages prior to showtime before large audiences who would assemble with the expectation of seeing and hearing poetry performances that were both polished and representative of our abilities as poets. This small phrase would be repeated multiple times to combat any feelings of nervousness, anxiety about readiness, or any other jitters that could possibly plague any performers. It served as a reminder that all of the hard work and dedication had been long completed before any of us would ever touch the stage, and that now our only responsibility was to have fun with it.

Asserting that the “Show” was yesterday was our way of reclaiming our performances, not as the rhetorical delivery that would be given to an awaiting audience of spectators and listeners, but as the groundwork put in during practices. It was the arduous process of writing and revising poems, the seemingly endless night hours of continuous recitation with the focal point being the rhetorical canons memory and delivery, or the perceived incessant list of critiques, suggestions and comments used to

get our poetic performances as close to perfect as possible. Hence, the “show” functions as a metaphor of everything done before the day of performance. Placing the time of the show in past tense suggests that the actual performance is merely the encore; a small snapshot that serves as the evidence for all the work put into each performance. “The Show was Yesterday” is both a reaffirming statement and reminder that process above all else is the truest representative of one’s best work.

In “The Essential Don Murray: Lessons From America’s Greatest Writing Teacher,” Murray echoes similar sentiments when he suggests that “when we teach composition we are not teaching a *product*, we are teaching a *process* (1 emphasis added). In making this statement, Murray is ultimately identifying as problematic the pedagogical ideologies that champion the finished product of student writing over all else. He posits that such a philosophy of dissecting and critiquing a finished product of student writing is both irrelevant and potentially detrimental to students. Murray argues that such criticisms work to confirm students’ lack of self-respect, both for their writing and for themselves individually.

While Murray was making his argument in advocacy of all composition students in general, his assertions are compounded exponentially when applied to students of color. Much scholarly work has been written that calls for composition instruction to be a safe space for students to utilize the languages familiar to them (Smitherman), while also producing pedagogical frameworks that looks like, sounds like, and is reflective of the many different identities that exist in composition classrooms (Baker-Bell).

The purpose of this research is draw upon the ideas of Murray and others, to suggest such a framework. As Murray identifies finished products (like the conventional

argumentative essay) as a problem that can be solved by teaching writing through a process-centered approach, my research looks to digital sampling and the idea of “whatever” pedagogy as a potential way to realize these principles.”

### **Review of Literature**

Murray’s calls for writing to be taught as a process stresses the importance of that process being one of discovery (Murray 2). By doing so, students are granted with a heightened sense of agency that will ultimately be reflected in the work submitted by students. He argues that the best way to motivate students is to place “the opportunity for discovery” in their hands (2). Murray provides ten general guidelines for what this would look like with ten implications for teaching writing as process. The implications that apply best to this research are, Implication No. 2 “The student finds his own subject,” Implication No. 3, “The student uses his own language,” and Implication No. 5, “The student is encouraged to attempt any form of writing which may help him discover and communicate what he has to say. The process which produces “creative” and “functional” writing is the same,” (4). It is also worth noting that Murray’s idea of a writing process that is taught, follows a linear guideline of pre-writing, writing, and re-writing. While he does make mention that this isn’t a “rigid lock-step process,” he does little to explore a process that isn’t universal in its formulaity.

Scholars like Lee-Ann Kastman Breuch have outlined some of the issues that this understanding of writing processes as universal, as opposed to a plural process that is likely more representative of identities in the classroom (119). In assessing the history of process/post-process scholarship, Breuch explains how post-process theorists associate and subsequently reject the idea of process pedagogy as, “a system of writing that can be learned and perfected,” (127). She further argues that such an approach to

process oversimplifies what is a rather complex idea (129-130). She goes on to further explain some of the post-process rejection of this iteration of process pedagogy through the shift from, “writing as content to writing as activity” (133). However, if we understand practices like writing and research as activities, it opens up conversations about how we view process in the current educational climate.

My research looks for avenues of reimagining and understanding ideas of process and mastery; not as a neat and linear system that can be taught, perfected, packaged and distributed as a one-size-fits-all pedagogical approach, but rather as a complex (or even messy) approach that is more reflective of digital and other learning environments that students will likely encounter.

The justification for a methodological approach that acknowledges, appreciates, and engages with the literacies that students of color bring to the classroom, is something that scholars of the field have been arguing for years. Scholars have long been calling for pedagogical frameworks that “value the rich resources that multilingual speakers and writers bring with them” to composition classrooms (Baker-Bell 356). In addition there have been many calls for curriculum and pedagogies that are representative of the growing spectrum of identities that become increasingly present in composition framework (Kirkland, Richardson, Baker-Bell). In order to do this, scholars like Elaine Richardson have posited that, “Language and literacy educators should use students’ own discourse practices to critically engage them in research and action” (458). Each student arrives in the composition classroom coming from their own discourse communities. Thus by infusing their own discourse practices into compositional goals of research and writing instruction, students are likely to find,

“styles that are free,” (Richardson 462); students are more likely to engage critically with things that are relevant and identifiable to them.

In terms of mixing and sampling, it can very well be understood through the lens of popular music discourse practices, classical rhetorical theories and ideas of intertextuality. Sampling is defined as, “a form of digital collaboration that entails a dialogue between various pieces of musical soundbites and representations that become overlaid to create a sole ‘text’,” (Craig 23). Craig’s definition is an interpretation of a definition given by Andrew Bartlett. “Sampling in hip hop is not collaboration in any familiar sense of that term. It is a high-tech and highly selective archiving, bringing into dialogue by virtue of even the most slight representation...” (Bartlett 647). Intertextuality on the other hand is understood as the relationship between texts, or more broadly the manifestations of commonplaces *koinoi topoi*, *loci communes* (Plett). Plett refers to this as an intertextual rhetoric wherein *inventio* or invention, “represents a system of discovery procedures (*topoi*), *elocutio* one of figures and tropes, *memoria* one of mnemonic places (*loci*) and images...divided into diverse subsystems and their respective categories,” (314). Plett also utilizes the idea of commonplace in reference to how memory (and/or shared memory with audience) influence decisions about rhetorical invention and delivery. He posits that commonplaces “are not universals, but dependent on space and time, on culture and society” and are “part of shared beliefs and values in a certain community” (325). More simply put, the success and/or failure of an intertextual rhetorical performance is determined by the relevant connection to audience. Within the context of first-year composition, the relationship between intertextuality and process is one where students would gain practical experience with discovering the connections between commonplaces. By engaging with

sampling from a processual standpoint, students would also be able to not only engage with interesting and alternative research methods, but also be able to identify and critically analyze arguments about intertextual decisions in writing.

In an effort to remain true to the sampling game, scholars such as Todd Craig 'samples' from multiple scholarly sources as well as individuals who represent the discourse community of hip hop (the community from which the concept of digital sampling as a composing practice comes), to define sampling (22-23). Craig furthermore complicates the idea of sampling by breaking it down into a hierarchy of three different categories known as "biters" "jackers" and "transformers." By using this understanding of sampling, we are able to not only categorize sampling in terms of hip hop musical practices, but also come to a better understanding of (and navigate more smoothly) complex ideas about intertextuality and plagiarism.

Craig defines these terms in the context of hip hop practices while also providing examples within the scope of a campus environment. For the purpose of this paper, I will use his definitions and apply them to the context of composition practices. Craig defines biters as, "artists who simply take a loop, disregarding the context the loop comes from and potentially creating a composition that goes completely against the grain of what the original source represents," (24). Within the composition classroom, this would be representative of potentially the worst form of intertextuality and bordering along the lines of academic dishonesty. Practices like the aimless and/or reckless copying and pasting of sources and citations into a paper would likely fall under the category of "biters." "Jackers" on the other hand represent those, "who can be seen as borrowers or sharers; someone who lifts directly, but is sharing, so never denying where that piece of writing came from," (Craig 25). This category most

resembles the status quo when it comes to research writing and composition wherein the practice of citing, both in-text and bibliographic, consists of 'sharers' disclosing the borrowed concepts and ideas that inform their arguments.

Where this research looks to enter the conversation is through the path of the "transformer," which Craig describes thusly:

The last category is "transforming." This is a moment where intertextuality works at its best: it lends the writer a new voice through a creative usage of ideas and texts that precede it. The transformative category of sampling within Hip Hop is shown when artists are not only borrowing or sharing, but when they are able to use that intertextuality to transform the initial text of a song in order to create a completely new work, while still archiving and referencing the ideas which they originally were cited from. (26)

Craig argues that through this type of process, composers are able to use borrowed and shared ideas and produce "fresh, innovative and creative" ideas while also paying respect (or citing appropriately) from the original source. This type of intertextuality stresses a composer's ability to draw upon shared cultural knowledge and cite credit to its originator (jacker), while also creating a new rhetorical argument. However, unlike the biter who would likely create a rhetorical statement that goes 'against the grain' of the original context, the transformer would be able to structure a composition that both presents a new idea WHILE paying proper respect to what came before it.

To best illustrate this type of intertextuality, I like to use the example of a composer that serves as my introduction into sampling (and by no means an originator of the compositional form), Kanye West. Prior to his numerous incidents with the

media that have all but tarnished his reputation as a rapper and celebrity, West was best known for his work as a hip hop producer.

In his debut LP *College Dropout*, there is a single entitled, “Through the Wire.” The song features the sampled chorus looped from Chaka Khan’s 1984 single, “Through the Fire.” West’s single features a high pitched loop of the original chorus which states the lyrics,

Through the fire, to the limit, to the wall  
For the chance to be with you  
I'd gladly risk it all  
Through the fire, through whatever, come what may  
For a chance at loving you  
I'd take it all the way  
Right down to the wire, even through the fire. (Metro Lyrics).

The ideas expressed in Khan’s original version is centered around the notion of a woman who is willing to do anything or go ‘through the fire’ in order to be with someone she loves. It’s an emotional appeal to someone who may have been hurt in the past and reluctant to open their heart of to love anyone again. The context of West’s song, “Through the Wire” comes from a near fatal car accident; the aftermath of which required his jaw to be wired shut after reconstructive surgery (MTV News). In the music video for the song, it says that just two weeks after the incident West recorded the song with his jaw still wired shut.

The ideas expressed in Kanye’s remake represent the dedication and determination he has to pursue and be successful with his music. The lyrics in West’s verses begins with a description of some of the struggles he has to endure because of his

sustained injuries, “I drink a Boost for breakfast, and Ensure for dessert/ Somebody ordered pancakes, I just sip the sizzurp/ That right there could drive a sane man bizzerk,” (Metro Lyrics). The song goes on to talk about his accident, and his own fortitude to keep going forward, “But I’m a champion, so I turned tragedy to triumph/ Make music that’s fire, spit my soul through the wire.” Thus when the chorus repeats with the lines of Khan’s song, it now represents an altogether new meaning. West is now making the rhetorical appeal that ‘through whatever, come way may’ he is willing to ‘risk it all’ to do what he loves to do, which is rap and make music.

West’s sampled reimagining of Chaka Khan’s song is an example of a ‘transformer’ because he is able to borrow from the original to create a new composition that represents a fresh idea and perspective. By changing the pitch frequency of Khan’s sampled voice, the loop is transformed to the point where it almost sounds as if Khan is singing “Through the wire” rather than “Through the fire.” Furthermore, West gives proper citation to Khan at the end of the music video by displaying an image of himself tapping a wall sized image of Kahn with the words, “thank you” displayed on the left corner of the screen.

Moving the conversation back to the composition classroom, practices like this particular song are representative of what Craig identifies as ‘transforming’ becoming, “an evolution of the text, an evolution that students should strive towards in their journey between citing various resources and finding their own voice,” (26). By presenting research and intertextual composing as an opportunity to transform a text or group of texts into new ideas that are representative of their respective cultural knowledges, students may locate themselves where they feel more engaged with writing

instruction. Furthermore, it would enhance their ability to find their respective voices in the classroom.

The application of sampling in the composition classroom is something that has been tossed around a great deal in recent years. Kyle Stedman provides a considerable amount of definitive work with regard to the literacy of mixing and digital sampling, as well as justification for practical use within composition classrooms in his article, “Remix Literacy and Fan Composition.” Much of the article focuses on the practice of remixing among fans within different mediums of music, videos, and fan-fiction. However, Stedman spells out an expansive list of skills that a “remix literate composer” would have. Of the seven skills he mentions, skills 1, 2, and 4 are most important for our purposes.

1. Insists (defiantly, at times) on the creativity and inherent worth of her work, sometimes using conservative reactions to remixed work as an impetus to push boundaries.
2. Attends meticulously to the details needed to achieve compositional goals, refusing to be satisfied with anything but the most effective delivery possible for a given audience.
4. Searches widely for inspiration, integrating remixing into his everyday life to such an extent that it seems natural to find new artistic and rhetorical possibilities in any area of life. (119)

The calls for mixers and samplers to “insist (defiantly)” for the worth of and creativity of their work is seemingly a direct call to push the envelope towards a reimagining of plagiarism. While the cultural practice of sampling still dances too

closely along the lines of stealing or plagiarism within some academic and legal circles (Keller 2008), if understood as intertextual rhetoric, (sampling) authors don't claim originality necessarily but rather discoverers and retrievers of existent knowledge (Plett 326). This understanding does not necessarily undermine the argument of a sampler's creativity, because that creativity is displayed merely in the ability to create something new through the use of recycled or old materials. It simply serves as an acknowledgement of what has already come before.

Appealing for samplers to 'search widely for inspiration' is a clear call for a just rigor for research. In the context of mixing and sampling as a musical and cultural practice, this idea is identified by DJ'ing practices such as crate-digging as a metaphor for thorough research practices. The integration of remixing into one's everyday life is a call for students, or any researcher, to embrace the process and rigor of research in whatever or wherever possible avenues that they may encounter. By doing this, students are now opened up to a wealth of potential new knowledge, new ideas, new tracks of which to sample from, thus making their compositions richer.

### **Methodology**

I would like to state before proceeding any further that the ideas expressed and outlined in this research paper are largely theoretical. At the present time, I have not had the privilege of teaching in a composition classroom. Thus the pedagogical approaches being explored in this research paper are samples from a variety of different approaches and ideas that have been theorized in the field or practiced in composition classrooms. With that said, the idea of incorporating mixing and sampling into writing instruction are not altogether new or unheard of. There has been a significant number of scholars that have published work regarding this matter (Craig, Stedman, Zoffel).

With regard to research methods crucial to any successful argument, what distinguishes sampling as a viable method for use is its seemingly limitless potential for discovery. Jeff Rice identifies this idea through the use of the term 'whatever'. Rice argues that through sampling, "the whatever offers an alternative research methodology for composition -- the accumulation of appropriation of citations recontextualized into a new work," (458). In addition, it's important not to limit Rice's use of the terms 'whatever' or 'alternative' as a limitation on the academic validity of sampling as a research method. Sampling is a complex method that requires composers to embrace the practice of research, composing, and perfecting as a process that is to be highly valued. The purpose of this research is to argue that this notion of process is ultimately more valuable than the conventional artifact of the standard argumentative essay because the desired grasp of research and composition are better displayed through the practice of sampling.

The general framework used to determine the desired skills acquired by writing students is based upon the desired course outcomes of the freshmen research writing course at Eastern Michigan University. Eastern Michigan's First Year Writing Program (FYWP) outlines five key goals and principles, as outcomes of the course WRTG 121 (Researching the College Experience) that they feel would best equip college first-year students with the research tools and practices necessary to communicate successfully across any discipline. Please refer to Figure 1 below.

**Course Outcomes**

<b>Rhetorical performance</b>	You will have <b>enacted</b> rhetoric by consciously constructing persuasive texts.
<b>Research process</b>	You will have <b>practiced</b> different research methods, which includes analyzing and using sources and developing primary research.
<b>Style conventions</b>	You will have <b>developed</b> awareness of conventions of academic research processes, including documentation systems and their purposes.
<b>Multimodal design</b>	You will have <b>composed</b> using digital technologies, gaining awareness of the possibilities and constraints of electronic environments.
<b>Reflective interaction</b>	You will have <b>shared</b> your work with your instructor, peers, and/or the university community and accounted for the impact of such interaction on composition.

(FYWP Docs)

The table above is a list of course goals that is included in the syllabus for the first year writing comp class, “Researching the Public Experience.” The overview of the course is designed to give students the opportunity to learn “how effective writers write in all variety of situations, in and beyond,” and, “how specific practices, strategies, and concepts will aid [...] in becoming a more flexible, adaptive, and skillful communicator,” (WRTG 121 Course Syllabus,1). The design of the class is to not only for students to gain valuable experience with traditional research practices, but also for them to gain knowledge of a variety of different research methods, engage with different style conventions, and acquire hands on experience working with digital technologies and other multimodal design practice that may become vital to their success across

disciplines. These goals align with the core principles for FYWP students which are, Rhetoric, Process, Conventions, Multimodality, and Reflection.

Much of the work discussed by scholars like Rice and Stedman have done excellent work with illustrating how sampling based composition methods can be used to produce artifacts like the research paper or argumentative essay. My work looks to build upon that foundation, along with models like those expressed in Eastern Michigan's First Year Writing program while highlighting the processual culmination of researching and citing sources, crafting them into an argument. My declaration that 'The Show was Yesterday' looks to interrogate the finality of the essay as appropriate material for student evaluation. It argues against the mastery of linear systems of writing processes that are customary to the college writing experience. Furthermore, it combats the propensity for composition classrooms to champion the skill of traditional academic writing above research and analytical skills unique to the cultural backgrounds students bring with them into the classroom.

With that said, I do understand the necessity for some type of artifact to be evaluated. Theoretical utopias aside, students still need grades at the end of each semester and teachers need work from their students in order to evaluate performance. With regard to the practice of mixing and sampling, there has been some research that looks to find out what that type of artifact could look like. Nicholas Alexis Zoffel offers up manifestations of possible deliverables through assignments that asks groups of students to produce a mix-tape album. The purpose being to produce "an album that conveys a communication theory, method, or phenomenon," (Zoffel 193). Zoffel's model uses the mix-tape album as a way for students to learn how to

convey, recognize, and analyze rhetorical arguments. The deliverable album that he outlines includes:

- Cover art should be developed that conveys the album's argument in a meaningful and intentional way.
- Track listing
- References as album liner notes
- A functioning album in CD, mp3, mp4, or DVD format.
- Each group member's own written perception of the album's argument as part of the album's liner notes. (194)

This particular assignment structure does a lot of interesting things, specifically with regard to citation of references and cover art. These type of non-traditional composing practices are illustrative of potentially innovative ways to engage students with both the importance of appropriate context and citation of sources toward their own organic arguments. However, where Zoffel's deliverable model asks students to produce a complete album with multiple songs, liner notes, etc., I would like to focus the attention all the way down to a single track or song. Essentially, by viewing the essay or research paper as one track, it opens up the possibility for more in-depth analysis and production. Such practices would be a good representation of knowing for students; the ability to analyze a rhetorical process, and the ability to reproduce a rhetorical performance utilizing that process.

Ideas for what that type of assignment would look like is derived from a curriculum model designed and used by the First Year Writing program at Eastern Michigan university. Their curriculum map outline is based upon three major projects for the semester that include: "worknets," a researched project or argument, and a

transformation and presentation element (WRTG-121, 1 ). Each of these are meant to give students the opportunity to analyze research methods, practice with research and present their research. In terms of a clearer breakdown, the worknet tries to get students to dissect the research of a single source, mapping through an “exploded view.” These worknets ask students to analyze a single source for the following aspects,

- 1) semantic worknet (focuses on key words and phrases,
- 2) bibliographic worknet (focuses on references),
- 3) affinity worknet (focuses on authorship influences, career, and collaborators), and
- 4) choral worknet (focuses on time-place happenings coinciding with the place and time the article was produced; also keys on juxtaposition and uncanny pop culture associations).

Taking this type of structure and applying to principles of sampling and mixing, a similar assignment structure would come in the form of a Sampling Analysis project. This project would ask students to dissect and analyze a track using the same exploded view concept of worknets. Students would be asked to ‘explode’ a single song for aspects like,

- 1) Key Themes of the song
- 2) Samples used within the song
- 3) Possible Assumptions gathered about artist influences.
- 4) Context (or lack thereof) to original song that was sampled.

Obviously such an assignment would require that each of the songs being analyzed having been sampled from other sources. Understanding that some students within the class may not have an easily recallable knowledge of artists or songs that frequently use samples. For that cause, the instructor would be able to provide examples for students of which this is the case. Doing this for a single song would ensure that students will gain valuable experience with analyzing rhetorical performances, understanding bibliographic work and the ability to both recognize sampled pieces and crate dig (or reverse research) multiple sources of an argument, and the importance of proper citation work.

Eastern Michigan's curriculum map also lays out a group of heuristic questions that could help spark dialogue with students about how to navigate a lot of these processes. These questions ask students to begin some of the definitive work of what research is, as well of may of the different methods that researchers use. Within an iteration that would ask students to use unconventional methods like sampling, it's important to stress that answers of what research is should be geared toward an openness that doesn't pin down the process and practice of research to ONE way of doing things. Other important questions that would require students to think critically about the research is how rhetorical concepts like audience, purpose or timing impact one's research.

The second major assignment used by EMU's writing program is the "researched project or argument" that requires students to produce an essay of about 8-10 pages wherein they demonstrate a, "sustained inquiry into a topic, question, problem, or controversy" (WRTG-121, 2). It also asks students to produce papers that include evidence from methods of research like, "memory work, word work, interview, site

work, source work, or data work.” The idea is for students to frame the project as making an argumentative case for or against some form of question or controversy that’s not necessarily claim based.

In an effort to remain true to the concept of championing process over product, the sampling iteration of this project would not look for a large chunk or a research paper from students. Instead it would ask students to map out their process for how they would present a rhetorical audience. This means that students would essentially be conducting research for a particular topic of interest, then articulating and arguing for how that research supports the rhetorical moves they are trying to make. They’d be encouraged to pull from any non-conventional source which would include, songs, sound bites, YouTube clips, visual art, etc. Source material like audio and visual means should not be a substantial part of an argument (just as scholarly quoted sources should dominate a standard research paper).

As they compile a list of source material to sample from, students would be articulating the relevance and context that their source brings to their argument. It would be extremely helpful to include as possible readings, Dr. Todd Craig’s article, or at the very least the section relating to “biters, jackers, and transformers.” The reason for this would be to impress upon students the reality that the use of sources that provide insignificant context outside of aesthetics, does little for the credibility of their rhetorical arguments. Thus students would be encouraged to do more than just copy and paste information from a source, but rather take the source and try to transform it into something new and altogether their own.

The third and final project of the first year research writing course is understood as a “Transformation and Presentation” assignment. Students are given the option to

make decisions based upon audience, medium and circulation to create something to be presented. Example of these transformations include: research posters, public service announcement (audio), diorama or model, and infographics. The second part of the project is an Ignite Presentation wherein students mix together visual textual and aural extensions of their research project. Ignites are presentations that consist of 20 slides set to automatically rotate every 15 seconds, creating a 5 minute presentation.

The iteration that I would propose for a sampling based pedagogy would call for the creation of some type of artifact that displays the skills acquired throughout the process of sampling based research. The model that I propose calls for a few possible iterations for an artifact to be produced. Students would have the ability to either write a traditional argumentative essay, create an academic digital poster, or (for the brave at heart) create an audio (or visual) track that samples and mixes all relevant sources into a coherent argument. While acknowledging that recognizable elements of traditional academic writing would help make this pedagogical approach a bit more digestible, students should be encouraged to try their hand at some of the newer concepts like the digital posters or the audio track. This is especially true considering the shift of writing towards multi-modality and its ability to circulate in places that are simply limited to traditional essays. Students would still be asked to present their research via Ignite presentations.

## **Application**

### **Key Themes**

To produce an example of the worknet or Sampling Analysis project, I would like to work with the song “The People” by rapper, Common, on his 2007 LP *Finding Forever*. The expanded or “exploded” view of the song would begin with analyzing the

themes within the song first. “The People” is a rap song that sheds light on the rich culture, environmental struggles, and Common’s motivation to grind for people who come from traditionally lower socioeconomic backgrounds; most specifically inner-city African Americans. The opening hook immediately proclaims exactly who the song is for, and where Common’s loyalties lie.

This is street radio, for unsung heroes  
Riding in they regal, trying to stay legal  
My daughter found Nemo, I found the new primo  
Ye you know how we do, we do it for the people

In these opening lines, the idea of unsung heroes likely refers to people within the African American communities who would otherwise never have their stories told. The mention of the regal, is a call out to the popularity of Buick Regals in African American ghettos, according to community shared lyric analyzing sites like genius.com (<http://genius.com/Common-the-people-lyrics/>). He is also giving a shout out to people in these communities who are doing everything they can to stay on the safe side of legality, as to avoid run-ins with the law.

The song’s first verse sheds some light on the lives of ‘the people’; the joys and pains that accompany being black in America.

From the bounce to the ounce, its all our culture  
Everyday we hustling, tryna get them custom rims  
Law we ain't trusting them, thick broads we lust in them  
Sick and tired of punchin in, I look on the bus at them

When I see them struggling, I think how I'm touching them

The People                      ("The People," Common)

Within those few lines, Common provides a microcosm of black history and current black life in American culture. He draws upon shared cultural experience and intertextuality by mentioning 'bounce to the ounce' which comes from Zapp and Rogers' 1980 funk classic, "More Bounce to the Ounce." He also gives voice to then-current realities within black culture that included: materialism as illustration of upward mobility, lack of faith in the American justice system, sexual objectification of black female bodies, and harsh struggles of working class citizens without the hope of economic progression.

The song goes on to express themes of Common's feelings of responsibility to be a voice and advocate for people who wouldn't otherwise have a voice, on account of his success in hip hop, "Can't leave rap alone the streets need me / Hunger in they eyes, is what seems to feed me...I'm keeping my eyes on the people, that's the prize." This theme is further explored in the third verse of the song, where Common expands the idea of 'The people' to include the total population of the African diaspora in its entirety. In addition to this, Common draws upon ideas of the collective "we" or the African tradition of collective cultural sensibility by arguing that he identifies with black struggle in any permutation. "From Englewood to a single hood in Botswana / I see the I in We my nigga, yours is my drama." Thus what Common is ultimately arguing in this song is that no matter what successes he may have, or where his career may take him, it's important that he never loses focus on both the community where he comes from, and the larger community of which he speaks for.

### **Samples Used and Artistic Influences**

The samples used in this song are wide ranging, and serve different rhetorical purposes. Kanye West is credited for producing the track and doing much of the sampling work on the song. There are two songs sampled in “The People.” The first song sampled was “Long Red” by American rock band, Mountain. The second was a sample from rap and spoken word revolutionary, Gil Scott-Heron and Brian Jackson’s song, “We Almost Lost Detroit.” The beginning of the song includes a sampled vocal loop from “Long Red,” which Kanye West attributed as an inspired tribute to the then recently departed, Detroit-born producing icon, J. Dilla ([thefader.com](http://thefader.com)). The sampled use of the words “Louder!” and “Yeah!” are said to be a direct shoutout to the same producing method that J. Dilla used in his sampling practices. This example of intertextuality is a direct nod to people in the discourse community of both fellow hip-hop producers as well as fans who share that rich cultural knowledge.

The second sample from Gil Scott-Heron’s “We Almost Lost Detroit” has a rich and complex rhetorical link to Common’s “The People.” Originally, Heron’s 1977 song is a musical history of the partial meltdown of the Fermi 1 nuclear reactor in 1966 in Monroe County, Michigan ([nrc.gov](http://nrc.gov)). This choice of sample is especially significant for a few reasons. First, Gil Scott-Heron is considered by many to be a pioneer of hip-hop, and a major voice of the Black power. He is best known for the poem/song, “The Revolution Will Not Be Televised.” His voice and influence has left an extremely recognizable fingerprint on hip-hop music and culture.

### **Rhetorical Context of the Sample**

What also makes this choice of sample significant is the choice of snippets used to compose the track itself. Along with the looped riff of Brian Jackson’s TONTO

synthesizer, Kanye transforms a small and very faint snippet of Heron's voicing of the words "about the peep" (people). In the original line that this was taken from, Gil Scott-Heron is saying, "But no one stopped to think about the people / Or how they would survive / And we almost lost Detroit," (genius.com). In Heron's song, this is referring to how the meltdown could've had catastrophic results, but how even after the the 1966 meltdown which released abnormal radiation into the environment, the nuclear reactor was still in use until being officially decommissioned in 1975 (nrc.gov).

Kanye's use of that sample is essentially implying that when powerful structures like the government are not concerned with the health and welfare of the people, rappers like Common are always 'about the people', "Ye' you know how we do, we do it for the people." This greatly enhances the rhetorical ethos of the song because Common's intended audience are the people from these socio-economic backgrounds that are likely almost looked over and disregarded when it comes to situations of their environmental safety.

There are very clear artistic influences in play here. The use of J. Dilla's sampling practice along with Gil Scott-Heron's voice and music suggests that both Common and Kanye West are well read on their hip-hop history and black culture. Also, West's use of Mountain's song "Long Red" illustrates his aptitude for classical DJ practices of crate digging, as the heavy metal rock band probably wouldn't have been a part of the average hip-hop intaker's musical catalog. West's sample expertise in this song, is another example of 'transforming' at it's very best. Kanye is able to transform the sample from Gil Scott-Heron's original track by juxtaposing it's original context to Common's context, then ultimately creating a new rhetorical argument altogether.

### **Conclusion and Lingering Questions**

The two most important things to take away from this research is a reinvigorated appreciation for writing as a process driven practice, and the viability of the sample as a method to teach the process of research and writing. By arguing for and embracing the idea that the “Show” was yesterday, I believe that it locates both students and teachers in the most relevant place to facilitate, interrogate, and advise the process of learning and writing. I also believe that removing the pressure of perfection in production, students will be able to hone in on perfecting and appreciating the processes that will eventually result in a finished product. Hence, as the old saying goes, “you play like you practice.”

The pedagogical theories and ideas expressed in this research paper are admittedly still a work in progress. Although I’ve provided an outline and description of potential assignments for students, more time would need to be taken to rightfully form assignments with the appropriate amounts of rigor and expectation for a freshman composition classroom. The work of identification and analysis of sampled material is sound enough to give students experience with in depth rhetorical analysis. The practice and production work of performing and presenting research will still need some reworking before being placed in front of a class.

For example, the second major project outlined in the methodology section is supposed to serve as a replacement for the conventional research essay. The purpose of this is to ensure that the process, and not the product, is being emphasized most. At this time, there is still much to be read, contemplated and interrogated about this concept to produce a viable assignment alternative. How many sources should students be required to use? Should topics be provided to them or should students have their own autonomy with this? How much time should be spent working with traditional research

practices such as searching through academic journals? Is it possible to teach adequate academic research rigor without the use of scholarly articles? These are questions that I hope to answer in future research.

Also, I think there's room to have many more conversations concerning ideas about plagiarism and knowledge as a shared phenomenon. There is certainly much more to be interrogated about Dr. Todd Craig's notions of 'biters', 'jackers', and 'transformers'. In hopes of continuing this research, I would like to parse through this idea to find more examples and iterations of these tiered citation practices in action. How would a composition teacher be able to call out a biter when they see one? What level of transformation would we really be expecting from, say freshman composition students? In addition, the idea of intertextuality in practice is particularly fascinating. For example, music lyric sites like [www.genius.com](http://www.genius.com) place autonomy in the hands of the internet community to annotate lyrics for their meanings. Because these annotations aren't necessarily provided directly from artists, it opens up possibilities for questions regarding authorship, authority, correctness, and shared knowledge and cultural context that validates correctness.

In his 2015 CCCC Chair's Address, Dr. Adam Banks argued for the idea of promoting the traditional essay as we know it, to "dominant genre emeritus" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=1231&v=EYt3swrnvwU>). Although the tone and tenor of Banks promotion was jovial and tongue-in-cheek, he was acknowledging the the current climate of multimodal and other writing methods. "And yet, we also acknowledge the rise and promotion of many other activities around which writing and communication can be organized," (Banks 2015). This research is an attempt to at foregrounding what these different activities might look like. It is also through this

work, that I acknowledge the difficulty in putting these ideas to practice. Insightful or revolutionary ideas almost always sound great in research papers and speeches alike. However, the challenging part comes with the implementation to the classroom. I also acknowledge that this difficulty is compounded in situations where one has never taught within a classroom.

As I sit on the precipice of graduate studies, I look forward to continuing this work. I also look forward to opportunities to practice sampling research methods within the classroom. I'm beginning to understand that scholarly work in any field, and especially rhetoric and composition, is never truly finished. Thus I acknowledge that these ideas are not concrete, but rather fluid; and hopefully conducive to change, transformation, and flexibility to fit into developing context as they arise.

Works Cited

- Baker-Bell, April. "I Never Really Knew the History behind African American Language": Critical Language Pedagogy in an Advanced Placement English Language Arts Class." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 46.3 (2013): 355-370. Print
- Banks, Adam. "Funk, Flight, and Freedom" - 2015 CCCC Chair Adam Banks' Address Perf. Adam Banks. Conference on College Composition and Communication, 2015. Film.
- Bartlett, Andrew. "Airshafts, Loudspeakers, and the Hip Hop Sample: Contexts and African American Musical Aesthetics." *African American Review* 28.4 (1994): 639-52. Print.
- Kastman Breuch, Lee-Ann M. "Post-Process "Pedagogy": A Philosophical Exercise." *Journal of Rhetoric, Culture, and Politics* 22.1 (2002): 119-50. Print.
- Common. "The People." *Finding Forever*. Good Music, 2007.
- Craig, Todd. "Jackin' for Beats: DJing for Citation Critique." *Radical Teacher* 97 (2013): 20-29. Print.
- Eastern Michigan University FYP Docs. *ENGL/WRTG 121 Course Syllabus: Composition II: Researching the Public Experience*. Print. 3 Feb 2015.
- Eastern Michigan University FYP Docs. *ENGL/WRTG 121 Curriculum Map*. Print. 3 March 2015.
- Fader, The. "Track by Track: Common's Finding Forever." Thefader.com. April 2007. Web, March 2015.
- Genius. "The People: Lyrics." Genius.com. Web. March 2015.
- Genius. "We Almost Lost Detroit: Lyrics." Genius.com. Web. March 2015.

Kirkland, David E. ““The Rose That Grew from Concrete”: Postmodern Blackness and New English Education.” *The English Journal* 97.5 (2008): 69-75. Print.

Metro Lyrics. “*Through the Wire Lyrics*.” Metrolyrics.com. Web. March 2015.

MTV News. “*Kanye West Injured In L.A. Accident: Roc producer hospitalized; manager says jaw was fractured*.” Mtv.com/news. October 2002. Web. March 2015.

Murray, Don. “Teach Writing as a Process.” *The Essential Don Murray: Lessons from America’s Greatest Writing Teacher*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 2009. Print.

NRC. NRC Fermi, Unit 1. Nrc.gov. Web. March 2015.

Plett, Heinrich. “Rhetoric and Intertextuality.” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 17.3 (1999): 313-29. Print.

Rice, Jeff. “The 1963 Hip Hop Machine: Hip-Hop Pedagogy as Composition.” *College Composition and Communication* 54: 453-471. Print.

Richardson, Elaine. ““Identities on the Ground and All Around”: African American Female Literacies, Critical Black Discourse Studies, Rap, and Rhetoric and Composition.” *College Composition and Communication* 61.2 (2009): 456-63. Print.

Smitherman, Geneva. *Talkin That Talk: Language, Culture and Education in African America*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

Stedman, Kyle D. “Remix Literacy and Fan Compositions.” *Computers and Composition* 29.2 (2012): 107-23. Print.

West, Kanye. “Through the Wire.” *The College Dropout*. Roc-a-Fella Records. 2004.

Zoffel, Nicholas Alexis. "Producing a Mix-Tape: An Activity for Contextualizing Course Content." *Communication Teacher* 24.4 (2010): 192-96. Print.