Beyond the Frontier, Volume II

Beyond the Frontier, Volume II:

Innovations in First-Year Composition

Edited by

Jill Dahlman and Tammy Winner

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Jill's Dedication

To the missing pieces of my heart and for those who remain. Thank you for your faith and support. And for Moi-Moi. May you purr into infinity, my little buddy.

Tammy's Dedication

To the strong women in my life—those who choose to be fountains, not drains.

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Jill's Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my family. We've endured some serious losses in the past five years, and we're only closer because of it. I miss my sister, my nephew, Reid, and my beloved Honi—the kitty who saw me through my undergraduate and graduate studies and two bouts of cancer. I appreciate the strength and affection of my brothers, Tom and Bill, my nieces and nephews, my friends who have become my family.

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FOREWORD

MAUREEN MCBRIDE

I remember my first semester teaching. I had a Master's degree and no experience, but regardless, Miami-Dade College was thrilled to have me teaching sections of first-year composition. I relied on a few sample syllabi and the recollections of my personal experiences as a student so many years before. I prepped and prepped. I walked through the door on the first day to twenty-eight faces staring back. Over two-thirds of my class were L2 and most did not see themselves as students. I stumbled so many times during those first weeks, and really, to be honest, through the first few years of teaching first-year composition. But I also learned how much I loved the work because the students were in transition. Being witness and guide during this transition was an honor that I had not anticipated. A few decades later, I look at this text you are reading and wish it had been this book that I had been handed instead of the sample syllabi.

Some of my most interesting and influential conversations have been about the transitions required between high school and college from students and teachers. In fact, Jill Dahlman and I have had many conversations like this over cups of tea. We have laughed and almost cried over the complexities, the dynamics. We have also celebrated the ways in which these transitions create opportunities for creative responses. This is what you will find in this text—critical examinations, creative approaches, and calls for reflective practices. This text directly addresses these concerns and provides ways for instructors to consider how they can impact, positively and negatively, the transition students make into college.

As a former first-year writing director, I am perhaps all too familiar with the challenges that arise for students, instructors, and administrators from the misalignment of expectations and skills that is prevalent during this transition. As a current writing center director, I know that the influence of prior learning experiences will permeate students' learning approaches for their academic careers, especially with regard to writing. Instructors' ability to identify the challenges students are facing as they

enter college can feel like an overwhelming laundry list. Students during transitional moments need help engaging with writing and reading. As a National Writing Project site director, I am also fully aware of how much we have to learn about teaching writing and reading at all levels and how much we can learn from each other. And finally, as a parent, I know the anxiety I witness in my home with my children worrying about meeting the challenges of college.

What I love about the text that Dahlman and Winner have brought together is the range of discussions and the creative approaches to helping students and instructors with the high school to college transition. In this book, you will find theoretical discussions, examinations of pedagogical approaches, as well as practical classroom assignments with instructor reflections that will help the new first-year composition instructor or the seasoned veteran.

As instructors of students in transition, we are uniquely positioned to help them successfully navigate where they are coming from with where they want to go. This book will help you accomplish that. At times the book takes the perspective of the instructor and their role in the process, while at other times students are set as the focus of discussion. Ultimately, this means the book provides a range of experiences and perspectives.

The creative approaches to the age-old problems that arise as students move from prior experiences into their first-year composition classes makes this book unique. Addressing the thousands of students exiting AP exam cultures and testing overload that has not allowed time for developing their confidence and competence as communicators, this book provides the perspectives and experience of composition instructors who have navigated the complexities of this twisted bridge within education.

Many of the articles focus on creating access points into first-year composition by tapping into their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky). You will find articles about using fairy tales to setup the research process, analytical approaches to visual rhetoric such as movie posters, and blog writing that challenges students to navigate formal and informal writerly perspectives. There are conversations about dual-enrollment courses and how to navigate viability and effectiveness as instructors. There are reflections about privilege and discussions of the importance of punctuation instruction. In each case, you get a glimpse of approaching first-year composition to help students successfully navigate their new learning terrains. The candid explanations from instructors about what has worked and where they would adjust will help you reflect on your pedagogy and consider how your choices of texts, technologies, assignments, scaffolding, and classroom interactions converge to develop

classroom environments where students explore who they are, what they know, what they want to know, and where they want to go with their learning.

Explore the ideas presented in this text. Learn from others by being open to the stories of their challenges and celebrate along with their successes.

With gratitude to all of the instructors who have contributed and to all of the students who have participated,

—Maureen McBride

PREFACE

In 2015, the first volume of *Beyond the Frontier: Innovations in First-Year Composition* was published. There was a large learning curve involved with putting out that first volume, but Piper Selden and Jill adapted and learned. Today, editor Tammy Winner joins Jill, three years after the publication of that first volume.

Like the first volume, this second volume is divided into "panels." The High School to Basic Writing section has proven itself essential. With more students testing into developmental or remedial composition, the need for innovation in this area becomes vital. How do we move from handing out a syllabus (or posting it on a learning management system) to getting a group of students ready for college English in a few weeks? In this section you will find eye-opening critiques of the current methodology and some practical pedagogy for working with students who for whatever reason are sitting in the developmental classroom with a dream of a college education.

Praxis and Practicality, as the title suggests, provides not only innovation but also new ways of thinking of prior praxis. Style, Mechanics, and Pedagogy are all there, but with new research and new ways of thinking about how we approach student success in the classroom. How can we make something like the teaching of composition new and exciting when sometimes it feels like we continuously do the same things over and over? Teachers also need to feel excitement when they walk in the classroom, and each of the articles in this section promises to look at various pieces of composition in new light.

The genre section opens up new avenues for teaching using blogs, fairy tales, novels, and digital advertisements. Each article approaches these areas with a promise of shedding new light on what we previously thought we knew well and exciting students into new understandings—to re-see that which, like their instructors, they thought they knew so well. These new understandings, new views, help to keep the pedagogy fresh and alive even for those instructors who have many years of teaching experience.

Electronic realities offer new collaborations and new ideas on how best to approach the fastest growing fields in composition today: the online venue and the multimodal classroom. The multimodal classroom crosses genres and disciplines to see our commonality. Collaborations between a

composition specialist and TESOL specialist remind us to look outside of our own discipline to see within. After all, all disciplines are interconnected, and it's that interconnectedness that allows us to share and spark creativity in our own field.

Finally, the section on assessment offers critiques and insights that when the first volume was published were not even on the mainstream radar of many of our minds. This section asks us to critique ourselves to see what might be best for our own program, our own classroom, our own pedagogy.

We invite you to continue the journey that is *Beyond the Frontier*, to celebrate the ideas and insights that the contributors have to offer, and to remind ourselves once again, that without change, without innovation, we stagnate. No matter where you are in your own experience, your second semester teaching FYC or your second decade, our hope is that you find inspiration in this volume of *Beyond the Frontier: Innovations in First-Year Composition* and that you share that inspiration with others in our field!

—Jill Dahlman and Tammy Winner

INTRODUCTION

KIM HAIMES-KORN

Frederick Jackson Turner, a 20th century historian, talks about the transformational effects of the frontier. In his essay, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1935), he asserts that pioneers who moved into the frontier both influenced and were influenced by their encounters and identifies the "frontier zone" as the "outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (Turner). He argues that the frontier is not a destination but an ongoing process of exploration and goes beyond the physical zones to include affective and intellectual domains as well. Development exhibits itself not merely as advances on a single line, but a recursive return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line. Turner's theories go beyond the expansion and acquisition of land as they address the ways ideological thinking and survival tactics change in light of these shifting landscapes.

When people talk about frontiers, they think of the pioneers forging into previously undiscovered lands. While venturing and exploring, these courageous souls left the land of the familiar and took only what they knew would help them survive when they crossed the borders. Once they moved beyond the boundaries, although they could still draw upon those reliable skills and successful experiences, the landscape changed. For the early expansion pioneers, this meant changes in climate, wildlife, cultures and resources. Pioneers needed tools and fortitude to survive in the wilderness. As a group, they exhibited many common traits, such as "independence, resourcefulness, individualism and belief in the future" (Havighurst). Pioneering is a courageous effort that requires flexibility, ingenuity and the ability to find adventure in the unknown. In order to survive on the frontier, pioneers needed skills, tools and a particular "determination to succeed no matter the hardship" (National Geographic). They continually had to navigate and orient themselves in new places and develop strong tracking skills to map trails and establish communities. Survival was dependent upon collaboration and innovation to make new things that did not exist or combine familiar things in new ways. Most of

all, they shared their stories and lessons with others to pass on what they learned.

As teachers of writing, we find ourselves, like these pioneers, navigating the uncharted frontiers of our field and the expansive ways new landscapes provide roles for teachers and students in unexplored virtual spaces. Writing teachers must venture to the "outer edge of the wave" to explore and shape these new landscapes. They take knowledge and tools from prior experiences and realize that new contexts change our processes, pedagogies, assignments and assessments in significant ways. These teachers of writing must reinvent discourse, curricula to include solid rhetorical communication theories along with a heightened critical awareness of new forms of composition. Teachers of multimodal writing must shape new communities and get to know their inhabitants (student writers), their language and ways to engage them through critical digital pedagogies. As modern pioneers in this digital landscape, compositionists embody this spirit that involves courage, a willingness to change, innovate, explore and experiment.

As a long-time teacher of writing, I have learned many valuable lessons in the "frontier zone" and know that I will remain in this place of change and transformation on this continually advancing frontier line. It is this place, where theory meets practice, where old meets new, where rhetoric meets technology and where teacher meets students that I have come to embrace the joy of chaos – or where "savagery meets civilization." It is my experience that collaborating with others encourages the spirit necessary to innovate, take risks, and try new things. We are at a place in our discipline where we need pioneers – teachers with courage to cross these lines and travel unpredictable terrains and territories. We need to critically examine the institutional structures that are rooted in the past and actively engage in interdisciplinary conversations and innovative pedagogical practices. Through this kind of work, we reshape our field to fit our new landscape and come to realize the challenges and rewards of trailblazing in the frontier zone.

LEAVING THE STATION:
FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO BASIC WRITING

CONFORMITY, CONFLATION, AND COERCION: STUDENT SUBJECTIVITIES IN WRITING CLASSROOM SYLLABI

LESLIE ANGLESEY

Several semesters ago on the last day of class, I had a student linger a little longer than her peers as she slowly packed up her bag. Anxious to move along with my day, I asked her if she had any questions, to which she responded that she didn't. Then she blurted out what was on her mind: "this course was nothing like I thought it would be on the first day." Curious, I asked her to explain what she meant, to which she responded that on the first day of class as we discussed the syllabus, her first impression was that I would be stern and difficult. "I was going to drop, but now I'm glad I didn't. You were nothing like I thought you were going to be."

To some extent, my student had picked up what I had intended; knowing that I'm a young female instructor, I used to begin the semester with my best bad cop routine, only to ease into my casual and friendly teaching persona after the first two weeks when students who weren't serious needed to drop classes. Until that moment I had never given much thought about my bait and switch, but my student's comment about me and about that syllabus in particular stuck with me. Slowly, I began to wonder what effect my syllabus had on how she prepared for class and what it made her think about her role in the class, my role, and what kind of interactions she anticipated for the course. While no one would contend that instructors need to make students aware of the course policies and expectations, I began to wonder about two distinct lines of thinking: (1) what first impressions syllabi give students, and more importantly, how those first impressions socialize students into subject positions and (2) what was I saying about my own desires and identity as the writer of syllabi? The result was a random sampling of twenty syllabi garnered from Term Lecturers, GAs, and full-time faculty at the University of Nevada, Reno in order to discover the social relationships and identities that are created for instructors and students.

Literature Review

While research in designing course syllabi may not be the most exciting area of study, there is nonetheless a rich body of practical research about how to construct syllabi. These practical pieces, such as *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*, focus on what should be presented in a course syllabus given that "the syllabus for a [first-year] writing course states the responsibilities of the teacher and the students as well as the standards for the course" (11). For many[1], however, the syllabus is not just a record of responsibilities, but also serves as the "first written expression of [the teacher's] personality that [s/he] will present to [his/her] students" (Glenn and Goldwaithe 11). Heuristics such as the one contained in *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*, however, typically give recommendations for what should be contained but not the ways in which they might be phrased and how the wording might be influential to students.

This point, however, has been discussed at some length by later scholars. In 2002, for example, Jay Parkes and Mary B. Harris published an article in *College Teaching* titled "The Purposes of Syllabi," in which they argue that, while the purposes of writing, presenting, and maintaining syllabi are "almost as varied as the possible content," syllabi purposes can be categorized within three main groups: permanent record, contract, and learning tool (55).

Parkes and Harris argue that the ways in which an instructor creates syllabi (including his/her use of the three purposes) "reflects the instructor's feelings, attitudes, and beliefs about the subject matter as well as about the students in the class," and conclude by stating that "by making those opinions salient, a syllabus can serve as a guide to the instructor as much as a guide to the class (59). Syllabi serve the purpose of permanent record much like a reference text; students can refer back to the syllabus to look up important information as needed (55). By providing a list for students, information, such as the instructor's contact information, descriptions of content to be covered, grading procedures, required texts, and prerequisites and co-requisites (57), in theory, something can happen**.** Much like the permanent record function, syllabi also serve as a contract between students and teachers. When a syllabus functions as a contract, it is to articulate what performance requirements are expected of both parties (56). When syllabi function as learning tools, they "provide information that assists students to become more effective learners in areas that go beyond the scope of our own courses," and they also give students additional information on how to be successful in the course at hand (57).

Instructors can gain a better sense of what an instructor's attitudes, feelings, and beliefs about students are by a close examination of their specific language use. Diann Baeker argued in 1998 that the pronouns chosen by instructors indicate their sense of the social relationships occurring within the classroom (58). Baeker builds on the prior research from linguistics to argue that pronouns in syllabi "a particular person located in a particular place and time, but a person located within a social structure in relationship to other persons with whom and for whom I have certain moral responsibilities" (59).

Baeker's work to uncover underlying social relationships are some of the building blocks that would influence Anis Bawarshi, who later studied the purpose and role of the syllabus from the perspective of genre analysis. For Bawarshi, the syllabus serves as the "master classroom genre" (119). Citing John M. Swales, Bawarshi argues that while the syllabus is the master genre from which all other texts within the classroom flow, it is an 'occluded genre,' one that is "out of more public sight" (119). According to Bawarshi, the syllabus is especially important in that it:

> plays a major role in establishing the ideological and discursive environment of the course, generating and enforcing the subsequent relations, subject positions, and practices teachers and students will perform during the course … Immediately, the syllabus begins to transform the physical setting of the classroom into the discursive and ideological site of action in which students, teacher, and their work will assume certain significance and value. (119)

In other words, while a course syllabus is a genre that many students and teachers look at in the beginning of the semester and then quickly disregard until an issue arises, they are important in that they lay the foundation for what actions and identities teachers, students, and students' work can assume for the duration of the semester. As an occluded genre, the syllabus is even more powerful when instructors are not aware of what influence the syllabus may be having in socializing and professionalizing students within their specific course, and how that socialization could potentially impact students in subsequent writing courses.

Methods

For this project, I reviewed twenty syllabi from three different writing courses: two from a two-semester first-year writing sequence, and another from a developmental writing course during the Fall 2014 semester. Each syllabus was analyzed for the following content:

a. Purposes served. Syllabi were analyzed to determine which of Parkes and Harris' syllabus functions were present: permanent record, contract, and/or learning tool.
b. Pronoun use. In order to determine what subject positions were made available to teachers and students, the subject pronouns "I," "you," and "we" were examined.
c. Topoi. Syllabi were analyzed to determine what topics were presented and to determine what teacher or university desires those topics might represent.

Findings

Syllabus Purposes

Of the twenty syllabi read, all twenty contained elements of the permanent record and contract syllabus. Only six of the twenty (thirty percent), however, contained any element of a learning tool syllabus. Of those that did, there was never more than one element of the syllabus that was indicative of a learning tool. For example, in one syllabus the instructor chose to include information on how students could challenge their placement scores, stating that,

> Placement scores do not always reflect appropriate Core Writing course placement. If a student believes his or her test scores do not accurately reflect his or her writing skill level, s/he may request an alternative placement evaluation.

Following this passage is a detailed description of the challenge process. Another instructor created a learning tool moment in his/her syllabus by including a place for students to keep track of their own grades alongside the total points possible for each individual assignment.

Among the syllabi sampled, most of the syllabi showed little to no evidence of utilizing the text as a learning tool, while the predominant purpose the syllabi served was contractual. This appears to construct a "business only" relationship. However, most of the acts articulated in the syllabus are to be performed by students, while instructors have chosen to not articulate their own performances. Given the discrepancy between the amount of actions and agency students take on within the syllabi and the amount of articulated responsibilities of the instructors, the contract is skewed in favor of the instructor. This has the potential to perpetuate the notion that students are subjects to the unilateral authority of the instructor without a clear sense of what obligations the instructor owes to them.

The danger of this slanted contract is that, as an occluded genre, students acquire an understanding of this relationship through a process much like osmosis; nobody need tell them the instructor “owes” them little--students come to discover this naturally. If Bawarshi is correct in asserting that the syllabus is a master genre for the classroom, then it is likely that this felt sense of students' relationship to their instructors is reinforced within and among other classroom genres (and was not accounted for in this study).

Given the lack of learning tool components within the syllabi sampled, one may wonder what instructors and students may be missing out on. Roxanne Cullen and Michael Harris have argued that a course syllabus can reveal to what extent an instructor embraces student-centered learning. For Cullen and Harris, the syllabus "represents...the professor’s philosophy of teaching and learning as well as his or her attitude towards students, and [conceptualization] of the course" by revealing "who is in control of everything, from which and when materials will be mastered to policies for student [behaviors] and every logistical parameter of assignment submission" (117). By serving as a contract that dictates the acceptable and desired performances on the part of the students, and because it does not likewise inform students about the ways in which they can dictate for themselves the success of their own performance (by not including any or minimal forms of learning tools), course syllabi reflect teacher-centered classrooms rather than a student-centered ones.

Subject Positions

The analysis of subject pronoun use revealed that the most dominant pronoun used among the syllabi analyzed was "You" (66.5%). “You” was used more than twice as frequently as the second most common pronoun—I (27.4%). In other words, for each iteration of the instructor as an agent within the syllabus, students were articulated as agents at least twice. The remaining pronoun used—we--only occurred 6.1% of the time, and the common subject noun for students utilized in syllabi (the generic "student" or "students") was not accounted for, but appeared to be present in many syllabi sampled.

Just as focusing a syllabus on a contractual purpose, the pronouns utilized in the sampled syllabi construct a sanitized transactional relationship between instructors and students. Social psychologists offer us an insight into the significance of these ratios. According to James W. Pennebaker, author of *The Secret Life of Pronouns*, an individual's use of pronouns tell a great deal about his or her sense of status and power. It

might seem logical for a person in a position of power to utilize the singular first-person pronoun frequently, but Pennebaker's research has proven just the opposite. According to Pennebaker, "people higher in the social hierarchy use first-person singular pronouns such as I, me, and my at much lower rates than people lower in status " and will also use "you-words" at a higher rate than a personal in a lower status (Pennebaker, ch. 7). Pennebaker explains that this is the case, in the sense of "you" representing "the equivalent of pointing your finger at the other person while talking," while high frequencies of using "I" represent a person focusing on him/herself (Pennebaker, ch. 7).

Responses to this analysis might emphasize the basic fact of classroom management: instructors are the authorities in the classroom, but it is not their right to be an authority that is in question here. Rather, what is in dispute is how instructors construct that authority through the syllabus. Thanks to Pennebaker, we can see that instructors within the sample set unnecessarily strengthen the instructor's power as unilateral and all-encompassing. This power and authority over students and their performance is accompanied only by minimal explications of what instructor performances are owed to the students. For example, in many syllabi an email policy similar to the following:

- "Check your email address every single day. Contact me via my unr.edu address ONLY. Any email sent to another email address will be treated as if it doesn't exist. You must indicate to me your course in the SUBJECT line of the email. This means that every single email you send me needs to have the subject header: “ENG 101: (Insert Reason for Emailing).” If it doesn't have this message, it's as if the email was never received. Also, every single email must contain your full name somewhere in the body.”
- "I have a 24-hour rule when it comes to answering email, meaning that if you send me an email and do not hear back within 24 hours, you may send another email, but you must give me 24 hours to answer. On the weekends, this is a 48-hour rule. What this means is that panicked email you send me at 11 PM the night before your essay is due is not going to be answered."

Here the instructor attempts to convey a simple policy about how to send emails, but the instructor also includes his/her own responsibility to the emails in the form of his/her "contractual" window of time to respond in a timely manner. However, Pennebaker might point out that while there are plenty of first-person pronouns in this passage, the majority of them

appear as the first-person object pronoun ("me"). This instructor goes into explicit detail in communicating what performances are required in order for an email to be considered sent, yet only constructs his/her responsibility once: "I have a 24-hour rule." As the recipient of the students' actions, the instructor still maintains power by dictating every nuance of the students' performances, while only glazing over his/her own performance requirements. This dynamic is only exasperated by the instructor's insinuation that last-minute emails are only the result of students poor preparation for an assignment, which again casts students' behavior in the light of failure.

This instructor is not a unique case of this kind of construction within something as innocuous as an email policy. Another instructor states that, "I communicate by means of mass email a lot. If you don't get the email, it's not my fault." The policy is not a quid pro quo policy; there is no reciprocal policy that students who attempt to email an instructor and it doesn't go through are counted as received. Nonetheless, while student performances are highly prescriptive in their expectations, the instructor's performances are given an exaggerated amount of leeway, thus reinforcing the chasm between the power and authority of the instructor and the student's status.

Topoi and Desires

A predominant force in all syllabi analyzed were the desires of the university. Each syllabus had a minimum of five required University policy statements. These statements range from policies against audio and visual recordings by students to required notifications about student success services on campus, from course objectives to statements about opportunities to evaluate the course.

The desires of the instructor typically fall within the category of rules and order. The overwhelming majority of the syllabus contained additional policy statements whose content dictates appropriate, acceptable, and unacceptable behavior, such as policies on using electronic devices, attendance, and late work.

If syllabi can serve as insight into the instructor's attitudes towards his/her students, then the dominance of rule and order policies suggests a great deal of mistrust on the part of the instructor. And while no one would suggest that syllabi should not contain statements that speak to appropriate and inappropriate behavior, what is up for debate here is how these desires are communicated to students, and how that communicative act locates students within subjectivities.

The following excerpt for a course syllabus highlights this principle. In the statement, the instructor conveys his/her desire to have students prepare for class through a specific reading strategy:

> It should go without saying that you will need to look up (prior to class) in a dictionary and/or online many of the words, terms, phrases the texts contain. Note definitions either the margins of the text or in a notebook of some kind for quick (and future) reference. Persistent lack of preparation and engagement (I will see it, no doubt) will lower your final grade by one whole number/letter.

This statement poses several problems with the ways in which it locates students within the context of the instructor's desires. The instructor's attitude towards students is immediately revealed when s/he chooses to open with the phrase "it should go without saying." Here, the instructor attempts to induce the cooperation of students by conflating his/her own desire with the students. By arguing that the policy is old information for students, students are only given one subject position to inhabit: one of agreement and understanding. And while the instructor may feel that the practice of looking up unfamiliar words should be second nature to students, the reality of students' preparation may not speak to that as a commonplace for them.

In addition to coercion by conflating instructor and student desires, this syllabus also exhibits panoptic statements in order to wield power over students and coerce them into certain behaviors. For Foucault, life in a panopticon is subject to "inspection … ceaselessly" (195). It is a power structure in which the subject “inscribes in himself the power relation in which he … becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Foucault 202-203). This instructor creates a similar dynamic by warning or threatening that should students fail to complete this required (though not graded or collected) assignment, the failure will be apparent and penalized. The instructor has, as Foucault said, turned students into the principles of their own surveillance, which implies before the course has even gotten underway that students taking this particular course need surveillance, that their own credibility and ability to enact agency that is appropriate for participation in a college course is suspect. The potential ramifications of this subject position are not difficult to perceive. Students who believe their instructors believe them to be unreliable and untrustworthy may very well behave according to implied expectations.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In order for instructors to create classroom environments that construct students as agents with their own desires, and environments where instructor responsibilities to students are clear, substantial changes to ways in which instructors think about syllabi need enacted.

Today there are many heuristics at hand for instructors to guide them toward creating more effective syllabi. However, none of them address the issues of identity and power with enough sophistication to assist instructors in creating syllabi that can act as a true master genre for a student-centered classroom. Cullen and Harris's rubric for evaluating syllabi is attached hereto as Appendix A, and represents a good starting point for thinking about heuristics which satisfactorily work towards the goals discussed in this paper. However, their rubric, which is helpful for looking at many factors of student-centeredness, falls short in that it does not address issues of power within syllabi. As a call to action, the following questions should be considered by faculty when creating their syllabi. These questions focus on areas of syllabus construction not currently included in available heuristics:

1. Does this syllabus function as a permanent record and contract only?
2. What additional support can I offer students in my syllabus so that they can be more successful in this course?
3. Do I make my responsibilities to students explicit? Do I frame those statements clearly (do I use "I"?)?
4. Where can I include statements about my obligations to students so that they understand what they can expect from me?
5. How do I construct students in my syllabus? What do I think their desires are, and are those based on my experience, worst-case scenarios, or teacher lore?

As instructors of FYC, close examination of these questions can lead to additional conversations on student subjectivities in writing classroom syllabi.

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Appendix A

Rubric for determining degree of learning-centredness in course syllabi

	1	2	3	4
Community Accessibility of teacher	Available for prescribed number of office hours only; discourages interaction except in class or for emergency	Available for Prescribed number of office hours; provides phone and email but discourages contact	Available for more than prescribed number of office hours; offers phone, email, fax, home phone; encourages interaction	Available for multiple office hours, multiple means of access including phone(s), email, fax; holds open hours in locations other