

Research Agenda

As a researcher at the intersections of writing studies, digital media studies, and professional communication, my projects ask: How do people teach, learn, and write in social systems? I refer to the social systems in which teaching and learning occur as “communities of pedagogy.” Traditional communities of pedagogy are social experiences in settings typically understood as educational such as higher education institutions and writing classrooms. In addition to these more traditional sites, I also study non-traditional communities of pedagogy, or social systems that exist outside of institutionalized educational locations but nevertheless feature teaching, learning, and writing. These include non-traditional forms of education like massive open online courses (MOOCs) and pedagogical experiences such as online comments and fitness wearables. I am especially interested in examining how non-traditional communities of pedagogy may help writing instructors develop new strategies that can inform pedagogical practices in traditional communities of pedagogy. When studying communities of pedagogy, I pay careful attention to structures and practices in social systems that facilitate learning, especially considering how identities, bodies, technology, and power interact in communities of pedagogy. My research draw on individuals’ experiences in traditional and non-traditional communities of pedagogy to help writing practitioners develop pedagogical practices for the writing classroom that can create more effective learning experiences to meet diverse students’ learning needs.

In the following sections, I identify several communities of pedagogy in which I am currently pursuing research projects and outline my future research plans.

Research on Traditional Communities of Pedagogy

My current major research project stems from my dissertation, “Moving from ‘Community as Teaching’ to ‘Community as Learning’: A New Framework for Community in Higher Education and Writing Classrooms.” In this project, I examine how higher education stakeholders (including higher education institutions, writing studies scholars, and writing instructors) share a commitment to community that shapes the histories, theories, and practices of higher education and writing instruction. The commitment to community manifests in several ways, such as mission statements that describe institutions as communities, institutional high-impact practices such as learning communities, community-based research in writing studies, and writing classroom pedagogical materials focused on creating classroom community. These institutional initiatives often use community-building strategies and pedagogical practices from traditional, educational communities of pedagogy to foster campus and classroom community without incorporating strategies from non-traditional communities, especially digital community-building strategies, that may be more accessible and effective for students. I suggest that although community is pervasive in higher education and writing studies, further research is needed to identify the underlying assumptions about community present in institutional initiatives and classroom pedagogical practices. Such research would examine the students’ experience community on campus and in writing classrooms and the impact of this community experience on students’ learning and writing. I have presented on my dissertation research at several national conferences, and I have completed an article manuscript from the dissertation.

In the next five years, I plan to develop and complete a book project related to my dissertation research on community in higher education and writing studies. The book project will combine institutional analysis with classroom practices and assessment of student work to present a more nuanced understanding of how community impacts student learning in higher education and writing classes. For the project, I will conduct a longitudinal study of students in general education and online writing courses to solicit students’ perceptions of classroom community and identify the effect of classroom community on their learning and writing practices. This project will also draw from my research on non-traditional digital communities of pedagogy to present additional ways that higher education institutions and writing instructors can leverage technology to facilitate community experiences. Ultimately the book project will offer institutions, writing studies, and writing instructors more informed strategies to use community to increase student learning and writing.

My dissertation research and my experience as a Writing Program Administrator has prompted me to examine the ways writing programs function as communities of pedagogy for students and instructors. In this research project, I examine how writing programs administrators can act as institutional diversity practitioners to advocate for institutional transformation. As a community of pedagogy, writing programs can advocate for social justice in individual classrooms and the larger institution through typical program work such as assessment, curriculum

development, and training writing instructors. I am currently working on an article manuscript based on my experience as a WPA responsible for assessing a “social diversity” general education outcome in a second-level writing course.

In addition to studying institutional engagements with community, I am also interested in how digital media and technologies shape communities of pedagogy such as online writing classes. Scholars have identified classroom community as an important factor for student success in online courses, yet more research is needed to measure the impact of community on students’ learning and writing. Such research could then offer suggestions for creating online community to benefit student learning and success in online writing courses, especially for multilingual or non-traditional students. As part of this project, I have published individually and collaboratively on creating learning communities in online and hybrid writing courses with diverse student populations. One article, “Redefining the MOOC: Examining the Multilingual and Community Potential of Massive Online Courses” draws on a collaborative teaching experience to offer a second-year writing Massive Open Online Course. This article considers how multilingual students from across the globe created a classroom community through the course discussion forums and peer review platform. I also have three forthcoming book chapters that address how hybrid classes can form programmatic community through collaborative teaching and classroom community through substantial peer review across course sections.

Research on Non-Traditional Communities of Pedagogy

My research also examines non-traditional digital communities of pedagogy to identify how individuals teach, learn, and write in spaces outside of traditional educational structures. My research agenda combines digital rhetorics and medical rhetorics with professional communication and writing pedagogy. For example, in a collaboratively authored multimodal book, *Building a Body: Intersections of Technology, Literacy, and Bodies*, I examine fitness wearable devices like FitBits. Fitness wearables function as communities of pedagogy because users learn to monitor and regulate their health through interactions with the device interface and other users. I use a biopolitical framework to examine how the design and functions of fitness wearable devices disciplines and regulates users’ bodies. This book project is currently under review at the Computers and Composition Digital Press. Additionally, I have proposed an article for a special issue of *Communication Design Quarterly* on the design of wearable devices. This proposed article considers how incorporating alternative health discourses such as Health at Every Size would change the design and function of fitness wearables to be more accessible and usable for users’ diverse health needs.

I also study online comment sections as communities of pedagogy where users learn, teach, and write about topics in the public sphere. Studies have found that the uncivil discourse and harassment in online comment sections negatively influences the audience’s understanding of online content. However, I suggest that comment sections are spaces where the audience can practice rhetorical citizenship by engaging with diverse perspectives and articulating a personal position on public issues. I argue that writing studies scholars can reform the online comment sections as a productive pedagogical space by using our rhetorical, technological, and pedagogical expertise to identify problematic discourse and teach alternative rhetorical engagement strategies. As part of this research, I am collaborating with a colleague on an article project that presents a case study of a first-year writing class research project that incorporates online comments. We have submitted a proposal for a special issue of *College Composition and Communication* on the public work of composition studies.

In my future research, I plan to continue examining digital communities of pedagogy with a particular focus on fitness wearables and other medical technologies related to health and weight management. I am specifically interested in examining how users resist, modify, and retrofit fitness wearables to meet their own health, medical, and personal needs. I intend to extend my current research in this area into a study of users’ interactions with fitness wearable devices as well as interviews with fitness wearable industry members and health advocates.