

# Core Principle: Multimodality

## Abbreviated Course-specific Principle

ENGL 1105: Multimodal transformation-----> ENGL 1106: Multimodal Design

- **ENGL 1105 outcome:** You will have **adapted** your writing to distinct rhetorical contexts, drawing attention to the way composition transforms across contexts and forms.
- **ENGL 1106 outcome:** You will have **composed** written, oral, and digital texts, gaining awareness of the possibilities and constraints of oral presentations, visual literacy, and electronic environments.

*Multimodality* defined: Multimodality involves the complex interweaving of word, image, gesture and movement, and sound, including speech. These can be combined in different ways and presented through a range of media (*Bearne, E. And Wolstencroft, H. 2007*).

Multimodality can mean many things in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as our everyday lives are always *mediated* by the complex relationship between text and reader in multiple formats and environments. That said, understood in these basic definitional terms above, multimodality essentially relates to understanding how the mode (signs, sound, graphic material, print, text, etc.) and medium (the manner of the dissemination of the information) work to make meaning in a context, which relates to communication acts. As such, students increasingly have to learn how to develop compositions that engage with different materials and formats. This fact is both intensified and complicated by writing in digital and electronic environments that encourages an understanding of visual literacy.

- When considering multimodality in **1105**, think about the ways in which students will analyze different modes and mediums to understand how texts convey and transform meaning. How do students analyze television adverts and Instagram posts, for instance, in a particular context? How does the font size and placement of an image in a composition affect how the message is received rhetorically for an audience? These questions, and those like it, help the 1105 student understand how writing can be adapted for various rhetorical contexts across many formats.
- When considering multimodality in **1106**, consider how students will start to develop research materials and projects where they convey information using more than one genre and form. In students' research projects, as an example, students will not only need to understand the rhetorical dimensions of an issue, argument, or set of ideas within a discipline and more, but they will also need to effectively construct an oral presentation/research poster expressing the dimensions of this project. To do this effectively, students will need to consider what images are appropriate to use in the presentation with text. Furthermore, students may be required to include digital video or sound to influence rhetorical appeals in the act of persuasion. As such, students might use and learn about the C.R.A.P principles (Contrast, Repetition, Alignment, Proximity) to aid their projects and rhetorical arguments. All of these factors align and make students aware of the possibilities and constraints of oral presentations, visual literacy, and electronic environments.

## Introductory Activity about Processes (Group Discussion)

*How do you define multimodality in your own writing? Take a few minutes to consider the term and how multimodality has its place in your writing. Then, beyond your own writing, think about how you consider multimodality in your teaching: what are some tips you share with your students about writing, analyzing, or researching through multimodal forms? What has been successful in your own discussions and analysis of multimodal forms in the classroom and beyond? What has not been successful, and what would you do differently in the future?*

## Processes in Practice: What We Want Students to Learn

### ENGL 1105

- Students should understand how multimodality transforms writing and information across different forms and mediums.
- Students should be aware in how rhetorical contexts change when examining information across different forms and mediums and also in how the rhetor adapts to these changes in various digital, electronic, and analogue environments.

### ENGL 1106

- Students should cogently make design choices with multimodal principles in mind to influence the rhetorical effectiveness of a research project.
- Students should produce a project that uses images, digital artifacts, sound, and other textual forms under the constraints of convention and genre.

## Class Activity Ideas

1. Discuss multimodal forms students use in their everyday lives.
2. Look at the examples of paper-based multimodal texts in the classroom.
3. Analyze visual forms (adverts, websites, Instagram posts, etc.) in the classroom through various, contrasting contexts.
4. Other ideas?

## Selected Readings with Practical Advice/Tips

Bearne, E., and Wolstencroft, H. (2007) *Visual Approaches to Teaching Writing Multimodal Literacy 5-11*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing.

George, Diana. "From Analysis to Design: Visual Communication in the Teaching of Writing." *College Composition and Communication*. 54.1. 2002. 11-34.

"Planning an Effective Presentation."

<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/presentations/planning-presentation>

NCTE Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies:

<http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/multimodalliteracies>