Literacy Practices and Literacy Events,
Kara Poe Alexander

CHAPTER 9
More about Reading, Responding, and Revising

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The media, contexts, and purposes of multimodal compositions can range greatly and need not be limited to digital audio or video assignments like those outlined in Chapter 2. Indeed, multimodal work can take the form of comic strips or web pages, children's books or video essays, PowerPoint presentations or posters. In this chapter, we offer teachers another sample assignment (Fig. 9.1) that leaves open not only author's choice of medium (e.g., paper, computer, human voice), but also modality (e.g., words, images, sound, color), and genre of texts (e.g., pamphlet, advertisement, political speech, web site).

In fact, the great range of projects that can take advantage of multiple modalities presents a unique set of challenges when students bring in their projects to be reviewed by peers, as well as when they revise their projects based on the comments from studio reviews. This chapter sheds some additional light on the complex issues of *peer-review studio sessions* (formal review sessions in which student authors present their work to the class and receive feedback from their peers, as well as from the teacher) and *revision* (which entails students considering the feedback they received during peer-review studio sessions and revising their projects accordingly) within the context of a multimodal composition course.

Although both of these processes—peer review and revision—figure into the composing of conventional alphabetic texts, they may look and feel very different for multimodal essays. Partly because of the complex material nature of such texts, peer review may present new challenges to teachers, challenges that differ from those associated with more conventional essays. In addition, students may find that revising such texts—including the essays we describe in this chapter—may not be as quick or, in some ways, as simple as making changes to an alphabetic essay that requires only the use of a word-processing package. For example, the work involved in composing a *draft* of a photo essay, a collage, or a scrapbook essay, and in *revising* such a text in response to peer-review and revision suggestions, may require changes to words, still photographs, images, and color schemes; several software packages (e.g., a photo-manipulation, word-processing, page-layout); and several composing tools or pieces of equipment (e.g., a camera, computer, stamps, scrapbook). With multimodal texts, then, peer review and revision may be complicated by both the range of genres available to student authors and the materiality of texts. Because of this additional complexity, teachers and students will need to plan ahead about how both to present texts to others and then to revise texts after studio review sessions.

TECHNOLOGY AND LITERACY IN YOUR FUTURE

Literacy activities occur in more places than English class and the school environment, and these practices assume an increasing variety of forms. Although literacy and learning might be the focus in these environments, reading, writing, and communication activities occur in the majority of work environments, no matter where you are or what you're doing. From reading emails, memos, reports, and technical documents to writing prescriptions, screenplays, and journal articles; from composing music, designing web sites, and building a home, to writing an editorial, a sermon, or a dissenting opinion, literacy abounds in all walks of life. Because I want you to realize and learn what to expect when you are confronted with these activities in the future, I want you to learn now, as a first-year student, the predominant literacy activities that you will face as a future employee in your job of choice. I also want you to inform an audience of interested high school students about these literacy practices.

GOALS:

- To make you and your audience—a group of interested high school students who are considering various careers—aware of the different literacies you will face in your career
- To expose you to different modalities of reading and composing

CONTENT:

You are to compose an original essay that informs your audience of the reading, writing, and technological activities that you will participate in once you leave college and join the workforce. Consider all forms of communication that happens in the progression you choose: words, images, video, audio, art, etc.

RESEARCH COMPONENTS:

- **Personal Interview/primary research** (required)—you will need to interview a person who is working in your major field. He or she needs to be in a position that you would like to hold.
- **Secondary research** (required)—you may conduct secondary research to learn more about this career.
- **Field research** (optional)—you may also observe this person "at work." In other words, you can watch how he/she operates on the job to gain additional insight into the profession.

Using some of the interview and profile strategies we have discussed in class, as well as our discussions on literacy and technology, you should thoroughly and convincingly describe:

1. What type of reading, writing, and technological activities occur?
2. How often do they occur?
3. In what context do they occur?
4. What are the purposes of these activities?
5. How much you still need to learn before you can be an active participant in these literate activities?

FIGURE 9.1 Sample multimodal assignment that does not require digital tools or environments

This composition can take any shape or form—the only requirement is that it must be a *multimodal* essay, which is (in this assignment) one that combines two or more modalities of composing, such as audio texts, video texts, still photography, printed text, images, line art, web documents, animations, and so on.

Your essay should have the following characteristics:

- The essay should employ the affordances (capabilities) of the modalities you are using in effective rhetorical ways.
- The essay should help high school students think in informed ways about their choice of careers.
- The essay/project should be appropriate for an audience of high school students.
- The essay should add information value to our discussion of literacy issues/themes.
- The essay should be instructive, that is, inventive/creative/ insightful.
- The essay should do more than simply inform us about the literacy demands of your career; it should also help readers/viewers reflect on/gain insight into the subject/career.

IDEAS FOR FINDING A PERSON TO INTERVIEW:

You could visit businesses, schools, hospitals, courthouses, and so on, where you would like to work in the future. You could use connections provided by family and friends to set up an appointment and interviews. You could also talk to a professor in your major field and get some ideas from him/her about whom you can contact and who might be willing to help you. (Though professors have experience in fields related to their scholarly work, you should not use them as your interview resource, unless you want to be a college professor.) You need to interview someone who is *currently* working in a certain field. *If you have questions or concerns about finding a person/place on which to focus, please see me and we can brainstorm possibilities together.*

NOTE FOR UNDECIDED MAJORS:

Some of you have not yet selected a major field of study. In this case, I would advise you to think of a few different fields that interest you and then narrow that down to one. Even if you decide not to enter the particular field that you study here, your essay will still inform you and your readers about the options and literacy activities required.

REQUIREMENTS:

- The main requirement is that you *compose* some sort of multimodal essay that profiles literacy practices and values in your future career.
- Because of the freedom you have in this assignment, I'm not setting a required length. If you have questions about whether or not you think your project is sufficient lengthwise, ask me, and we can work something out together.

PEER REVIEW: Peer Review date: April 12.

After peer review, you will have one week to revise this essay. Because you are working in various modes, revising will take much longer than a traditional essay. Be prepared to work most

FIGURE 9.1 Sample multimodal assignment that does not require digital tools or environments (*continued*)

of the week revising this essay in accordance with the guidelines of this assignment and the suggestions you were given during the peer review.

DEADLINES:

Teacher Draft due date: April 19

EVALUATION:

I will be evaluating your project based on the following criteria:

- Evidence of carefully planning and completing all assignment requirements
- Value of the information
- Reflective focus
- Use of the affordances of the appropriate medium
- Creative/Insightful project

FIGURE 9.1 Sample multimodal assignment that does not require digital tools or environments (*continued*)

ENCOURAGING EFFECTIVE PEER-REVIEW STUDIO SESSIONS AND REVISION FOR MULTIMODAL COMPOSING

In the following section, teachers will find eleven tips for shaping peer-review studio sessions in multimodal composition classes. The goal is to provide some practical advice for teachers who are thinking about incorporating these sessions into their courses. The suggestions overlap and are recursive. They are not meant to be followed in a linear, step-by-step manner.

Because teachers and students in various situations may lack access to digital audio recorders and digital video cameras, this chapter also assumes that teachers might want to encourage and incorporate additional kinds of multimodal essays into their classrooms—essays that may be composed with the *help of computers* (e.g., word-processing packages, photo-manipulation programs, the web), *but are not necessarily composed entirely within digital environments*. Therefore, the assignment outlined in this chapter extends beyond the sample assignments provided in Chapter 2 of this text to include multimodal compositions in the form of collages, comic strips, scrapbooks, brochures, charts and graphs, PowerPoint presentations, and web pages, to name just a few alternative genres.

Tip #1: Provide students with examples of the kinds of projects called for by the assignment; discuss genre characteristics, modalities and affordances; purposes and audiences, strengths and shortcomings

As students begin work on their multimodal projects, teachers will need to spend time showing them sample projects in class. Teachers can present several projects on one day, or devote a smaller amount of class time on different days to displaying individual projects. If possible, these projects should include compositions authored by students and those that employ the modalities in which class members will be asked to compose. For instance, if an assignment offers students the chance to compose a comic strip as an option, several examples of comic strips with a range of purposes

and audiences should be shown to students; the rhetorical genre of comic strips and its social/cultural characteristics should be discussed; and reader expectations for comic strips should be analyzed. Although the sample projects may not follow the parameters of the upcoming assignment *exactly*, teachers can use these discussions to help students identify how the author has used the *affordances*, or special capabilities, of the text's modalities in effective or less effective ways. If an assignment leaves modality open, teachers will want to show a range of projects that feature those from which students will be choosing.

After each project is shown, teachers will want to model the elements of a productive peer review—focusing on how, where, and why each project succeeds and falls short; how and where each author uses the affordances of modalities effectively or misses doing so; and making productive and concrete suggestions for a possible revision. Importantly, this process of showing examples of completed projects and reviewing their successes and shortcomings not only provides students with new ideas for their own essays and suggests a range of possibilities for multimodal composing, but also acquaints students with the basic components and structures of formal studio-review sessions. During these early sessions, students become familiar with the vocabulary of multimodality and get a sense of how to respond to the efforts of their peers' compositions. Many students will lack experience composing in modalities other than words and will need to know what to look for and how to respond to their peer's work in constructive ways. This preliminary review of projects will also help alleviate some of students' apprehensions about multimodal assignments.

If teachers are showing sample projects by student authors in these preliminary sessions, they should be sure to have written release/consent forms on file, giving permission to use the essays in this manner and to clear this activity with their institutional review board (IRB).

Tip #2: Conduct both formal and informal peer-review studio sessions throughout the term to provide students with formative feedback

Informed feedback from both teachers and fellow students is essential in classrooms that ask students to produce multimodal compositions—especially because students may not have had extensive experience in authoring such pieces.

Conducting several peer-review studio sessions during the course of an assignment—especially sessions focused on rhetorically-based feedback (Chapter 8) is one useful way to help students shape their multimodal essays. These sessions also help ensure that potential problems are identified as early as possible and that students are following the assignment's guidelines. Several rounds days of peer-review feedback can also help provide students with a clear idea of what is expected in their final products.

We can provide three suggestions for integrating peer review into the multimodal classroom:

- Teachers should schedule class time for both informal peer reviews of projects and more formal peer-review sessions.
- Students should take the responsibility of seeking ongoing formative responses to works-in-progress throughout the course of an assignment, rather than limiting their responses solely to formal studio review sessions.
- For formal peer-review studio sessions, students should sign up to bring their projects into class. In these more formal sessions, the entire class focuses on one project at a time and provides rhetorically based responses both verbally and in writing to the student author. The teacher also participates in such sessions—modeling how to focus responses on rhetorically based criteria (Chapter 8). Students should take notes during these sessions and, from them, make plans for revising.

Tip #3: Explain peer-review expectations and project expectations to students.

In this chapter, we provide advice about how to focus formative responses (both from peers and from teachers) on rhetorically-based criteria: what works and what fails to work *for a particular audience*, what elements of a multimodal project helps or hinders it from achieving *its specific purpose*, and how the author uses the affordances (the capabilities) of various modalities and media effectively or ineffectively *to achieve a purpose* within a specific rhetorical context.

To help students focus on such rhetorically-based feedback, teachers need to make clear the goals of peer-review sessions, their structure and procedures, and the ways in which students are expected to use feedback in revising their projects.

One way to help students understand their responsibilities during peer-review sessions—in which they learn to provide formative feedback to others and consider such feedback in connection with their own texts—is to involve them in creating ***assessment criteria sheets*** for assignments. To assure that feedback is instructive—in terms of focusing on rhetorically-informed criteria—we suggest that teachers encourage a focus on such topics as *the purpose of the project* and how that is addressed in both modality and medium; the *audience for the composition*, their expectations and experiences with various modalities, and their needs; the information the composition is meant to convey; and *the effectiveness of arrangement, organization, and affordances in light of the rhetorical context* and the rhetorical demands of the systems of circulation within which multimodal texts will be distributed. Ideally, the criteria on these feedback sheets will be used in a revised form to serve the purposes of summative assessment when the assignment is completed.

Students will find such feedback sheets helpful both as they compose and revise their own texts, and as they participate in peer-review sessions focused on others' work. Figure 9.2 provides one example of a rhetorically focused feedback sheet for the sample assignment featured earlier in the chapter.

To prepare students for participating in productive peer-review studio sessions, teachers will want to emphasize the need to be prepared, professional, and constructive in terms of feedback. As extensions of these three behaviors, students should be encouraged to identify both those elements that are working well within the rhetorical context of the multimodal composition and those that are working less effectively.

It is also useful to remind students of how much time, energy, and creativity goes into multimodal projects. If audio- or video-recording and editing are involved, for instance, the ratio of finished product to work time is 1:200. That is, for every 1 minute of a finished audio or video essay, an author puts in 200 minutes of authoring and production time. And this is a conservative estimate. Given this context, teachers and peers alike must be sure to point out the wonderful, creative, and insightful parts of the texts that authors share in peer-review studio sessions.

Of course, the very best gift to authors is constructive feedback. In peer-review studio sessions, the students should be encouraged to

- Start with what works well in the essay (before going on to talk about what doesn't work so well).
- Focus feedback on *rhetorical* criteria (criteria based on a clear understanding of the audience, purpose, content, and form of the essay under consideration).
- Talk about personal understandings and responses to a piece, your response as an individual reader of—or listener to—a text (rather than making claims about how all audience members will respond to a piece).

PEER FEEDBACK ON RHETORICAL CRITERIA FOR MULTIMODAL ASSIGNMENT

1. **Evidence of careful planning for the rhetorical task and context. Project meets the audience's needs. Modality and medium fits well with audience's expectations and experiences. Student has shaped the project for a specific circulation/distribution context.**

1 2 3 4 5

|_____|_____|

Minimally Successful Of Average Success Successful in a Major Way

Comments about what works well and what does not:

2. **Completion of all assignment requirements: two or more genres, interview, literacy activities, contexts, purposes, diagnosis.**

1 2 3 4 5

|_____|_____|

Minimally Successful Of Average Success Successful in a Major Way

Comments about what works and what does not:

3. **Value of the information (about reading, writing, technology and chosen job) for the intended audience.**

1 2 3 4 5

|_____|_____|

Minimally Successful Of Average Success Successful in a Major Way

Comments about what works and what does not:

4. **Author achieves the assignment's purpose of creating a reflective focus that adds in significant and informed ways to classmates' conversation about literacy.**

1 2 3 4 5

|_____|_____|

Minimally Successful Of Average Success Successful in a Major Way

Comments about what works and what does not:

5. **Attention to needs of audience/readers.**

1 2 3 4 5

|_____|_____|

Minimally Successful Of Average Success Successful in a Major Way

Comments about what works and what does not:

FIGURE 9.2 Sample Feedback Sheet

6. Purposeful and careful composition (arrangement, organization, style), thematic selection, and aesthetic coherence within the rhetorical context.

1 2 3 4 5

|_____|_____|

Minimally Successful Of Average Success Successful in a Major Way

Comments about what works and what does not:

7. Appropriate attention to affordances of modalities and media within a rhetorical context.

1 2 3 4 5

|_____|_____|

Minimally Successful Of Average Success Successful in a Major Way

Comments about what works and what does not:

8. Appropriate documentation of images, audio, video, and other source material.

1 2 3 4 5

|_____|_____|

Minimally Successful Of Average Success Successful in a Major Way

Comments about what works well and what does not:

9. Creativity of project within constraints of the rhetorical context

1 2 3 4 5

|_____|_____|

Minimally Successful Of Average Success Successful in a Major Way

Comments about what works and what does not:

10. Appropriate attention to issues of clarity (style, grammar, and punctuation) for rhetorical context.

1 2 3 4 5

|_____|_____|

Minimally Successful Of Average Success Successful in a Major Way

Comments about what works and what does not:

Total Number of Points: _____ Project Grade: _____

FIGURE 9.2 Sample Feedback Sheet (*continued*)

- Focus on the project itself (rather than on the author/composer of the text).
- Offer help (contributing a piece of music that may be more appropriate, identifying a source of photographic images, pointing out a useful web site, offer to help teach someone an application)

Teachers might want to remind students of these points before beginning a peer-review studio session. These guidelines are outlined, along with other suggestions, in Table 9.1.

A key difficulty students can have during studio sessions is not knowing how to respond to drafts. Students have no difficulty *watching* a video, *viewing* a photography exhibit and *reading* curatorial comments, *browsing through* a creative scrapbook, or *hearing* a new audio project, but *they may not know what to say* in response to these multimodal texts—or how to help their peers make them better. One tip teachers can give students is to pretend they are the specified audience for that text, and then *read* the text from that perspective. From this position, students can talk about how the text works, or fails to work, for them personally. Teachers will also want to play most audio or video projects twice to ensure that class members get plenty of time to focus on the elements they contain. Of course, for some teachers time does not permit multiple studio reviews of every project by the whole class. In such cases, teachers can consider splitting students into smaller groups and having them conduct peer-review studio sessions of projects in their own groups. We talk more about this option later in the chapter.

TABLE 9.1
GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCT DURING STUDIO SESSIONS

BEHAVIOR	ACTIONS
Preparedness	• Talk to students about the processes of drafting—>review—>redrafting. • Work with students to identify rhetorically based criteria for peer-review. • Schedule enough time to show/air audio/video projects twice. • Help students think about ways to prepare drafts for peer reviews. • Help students become familiar with the affordances (Appendix 31) of various modalities so that they can offer more informed responses. • Remind students to have their assignment sheet with them as they review each other's essays, and take written notes, so that they can continually refer back to the rhetorical context (goals, purposes, content, genre, etc.) and guidelines for the assignment. • Help students use rhetorically based criteria to guide their responses to texts.
Professionalism	• Praise first; critique second. • Focus responses on the project, not the individual author. • Focus on personal response to the project and avoid generalizing to others.
Constructive Responses	• Offer concrete, specific suggestions. • Suggestions should be keyed to rhetorically based criteria. • Focus on concrete strategies for improving the project. • Respond from a *reader's* point of view. • Offer to help (contribute more appropriate music, suggest a source for still photographs, offer to teach an application).

During a peer-review studio session, it is useful to follow a few basic procedures. First, all students—except the authors—should take notes on some kind of feedback sheet (see Fig. 9.3), so that their important feedback will not be lost to the author. Authors should be encouraged to give a very short introduction to their project and then remain mostly silent while the rest of the class holds an oral discussion about the project's strengths and where it can be revised to make it even better. At the end of the session, authors should be encouraged to ask questions about how their projects are read by the audience and which elements seem to be working well. This approach keeps student authors from responding immediately and defensively to constructive observations made by others about their work.

Most teachers will also find it beneficial to give students a peer-response form that they can use as they review each project and write notes to the author. Such feedback sheets guide peer-response for students and provide authors with tangible suggestions for revising their multimodal composition. If a whole class participates in a peer-review studio session, authors will have a range of valuable responses. These forms will vary, of course, depending on the context and specific goals and purposes of an assignment. Figure 9.3 provides a second sample of a peer-response form. This form is simple and uses very broad, open-ended prompts for peer feedback: Strengths/What I Liked, Suggestions for Improvement, and Other Comments or Ideas. If the class can remain focused on the rhetorical context of individual assignments (e.g., their purpose, audience, content, and form), such open-ended peer-response forms can be effective for a wide range of different kinds of compositions. Such forms provide students the freedom to focus on the areas of individual compositions they find most interesting and provide feedback on whatever features of the project they consider most important. Some teachers find that the more complex peer-review sheets are, the less feedback students will give. In such cases, students have a tendency to focus on answering the questions identified on the sheet even when these are not immediately applicable rather than providing meaningful and constructive suggestions to the author. In contrast, broad, open-ended prompts can allow students freedom to respond to numerous and diverse areas of the project.

Providing students with a peer-review form also allows them to respond both *during* and *after* a presentation rather than having to remember all their comments until after a project has been fully read/shown/aired. Some projects can be quite lengthy, and although summary comments can be valuable to authors as a reflection of the piece's overall impact, more local and immediate comments that address a small element or part of a project can also be useful.

Explaining the expectations for peer-review studio sessions also means that teachers should reveal how much revision they expect to occur based on the feedback authors receive. Some teachers, for instance, expect students to incorporate most of the comments from peer-review studio sessions into their revised drafts. Other teachers may encourage students to be more selective about the suggestions to which they respond. In any case, faculty need to let students know their expectations so that authors can plan accordingly.

Tip #4: Help students think about how to present their projects in peer-review studio sessions.

Assignments that allow students a wide range of options sometimes present them with unusual challenges during peer-review studio sessions. In particular, students often have difficulties figuring out how best to present drafts of their projects to the class—particularly projects that might involve complexly constructed documents with many parts (e.g., scrapbooks, comic strips, and collages). In many cases, these difficulties have to do with three primary factors: *how finished* such a project can be in a draft stage, *what elements to fix permanently in place* before a studio review, and how best to present and circulate a multimodal project so that students and the teacher can provide useful and productive feedback.

Author: _____

Type of Project (audio, video, collage, etc.): _____

Date: _____

Strengths/What I Liked:

Suggestions for Improvement:

Other Comments or Ideas:

Your Name (responder): _____

FIGURE 9.3 Open-ended peer-review form

A comic strip, for example, might need to be fairly detailed and complete before readers can see and understand it as a draft text. Revisions of such a text can entail extensive work. Thus, teachers will need to help students prepare for the feedback and revision process: suggesting that the strip be completed in pencil, for instance, and that individual panels be rendered, photocopied, and circulated on separate pages so that the revision of one panel won't affect work already completed on others.

Scrapbooks and collages can present similar challenges. The individual pieces of ephemera and materials used within such projects—once they are affixed on a page—are difficult to move, change, or alter without making much larger changes. Students composing such texts face a difficult situation: they want to get the most accurate and complete feedback possible during peer review; however, knowing that changes will need to be made, they must keep their project in a semi-fluid state until the peer-review has been completed. Teachers can help in such situations by emphasizing the

recursive processes of drafting—>review—>redrafting that characterizes all projects, and reminding students early in the assignment cycle to remain flexible when creating drafts of their texts: for example, mounting photographs temporarily on draft-quality paper (so that these images can be removed and resequenced) and storing annotations in a word-processing program (so these can be revised). However students should also be encouraged to produce a draft that is as close as they can come, at that point in time, to a final text: for instance, using the same color scheme in the draft of a scrapbook as they will for the final text (in order to gauge the audience's response to color as a modality) or, for a collage, circulating color photocopies of all images that will be included in the final draft (so that readers can see details of each image's composition).

In some cases, teachers do not have the time or resources to teach their students how to use certain technologies, such as audio, video, or web pages. In such situations, teachers should consider being somewhat more open about the revision requirements due to the extensive time required—inside and outside of class—to revise in various modes. If a classroom does not provide access to software that students are using in their projects, it is important to think about how much revision we should really expect from our students.

Tip #5: Teachers should schedule peer-review studio sessions well ahead of time and participate actively in both formal and informal reviews of compositions.

To provide students with a strong sense of expectations for their final projects—and their revision efforts—teachers should participate in the peer-review process, both during formal and informal sessions. When teachers can provide students with shorter informal reviews, for instance, they help reassure authors that that they are on the right track with a particular project. When teachers participate in more formal peer-review studio sessions, they help the whole class to understand expectations for final projects.

Although many composition teachers now downplay final grades of assignments by foregrounding the learning that goes on at various points of the composing process, students still understand that, ultimately, teachers will assign a grade to their projects or their portfolio, and that these grades may figure significantly in an assessment of their performance within a course. The usual concerns that accrue to such an understanding may be exacerbated, moreover, by the fact that students may have little experience with teachers' expectations for projects involving audio, video, and other modalities beyond the alphabetic.

To address such concerns, teachers will want to offer students as many informal and formal occasions for reviews of their projects as possible within the constraints of a course schedule. To make peer-review sessions—formal or informal—as productive and successful as possible, teachers should schedule these sessions well ahead of time and let students know when they are coming.

Teachers will also want to take some of the considerations listed in Table 9.2 under advisement when planning more formal peer-review studio sessions.

Tip #6: The range of media and modalities used for an assignment may shape the structure of peer-review studio sessions.

As we compose this book, we know well that readers will vary widely in the media and support resources they have available at their institution, within their program or department, and for their particular classes. Some teachers may have access to enough computers, digital video cameras and audio recorders, software packages, and technical staff to support an entire class. Other teachers, with access to less equipment, may need to design assignments that allow students to work in small groups or in multiple media and modalities so that the demands on any one kind of equipment are minimized. In Table 9.3, we identify some of the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches.

TABLE 9.2
THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE SCHEDULING A PEER-REVIEW STUDIO SESSION

❖ Determine the primary purposes for each peer-review studio session.

- Do students need feedback early on in the process to help direct their projects from the beginning and help them glean ideas from the projects of their peers?
- Do students need a review of almost-completed projects? What expectations for revision should shape such peer-review sessions?
- Do students need feedback throughout their composing processes? What kind of review is most productive? When?

❖ How will whole-class peer-review studio sessions be structured?

- Will every peer reviewer be able to respond both verbally and in writing? Is there time? If so, how long does the class have to discuss each project?
- Is there time to air audio/video projects twice so that the class can attend to the important elements?
- Will every peer reviewer be able to respond both verbally and in writing? Is there time?
- What special equipment/rooms are needed to display/project/air projects? Can they be scheduled?
- Should students be scheduled by the teacher for a studio session, or should they be allowed to volunteer for a particular session themselves?
- What peer-feedback criteria will be used? Have students participated in identifying criteria?
- What comments should authors make? Should they be limited?
- Should additional audience members be invited for projects that have identified an audience outside of the teachers and/or the class? Should these audience members participate in writing feedback? Should students invite these people? Or should the teacher?
- How will the teacher participate in the peer-review studio sessions?
- How much time will students have to revise after they are provided with peer-review suggestions?
- What are the expectations for revision of projects after peer reviews?

❖ How will small-group studio sessions for peer reviews be structured?

- Which students are working in the same media and modalities? Are there natural groupings of students who can respond to each other's projects?
- Should peer-review studio sessions for small groups involve additional audience members who provide feedback?
- Should small-group studio sessions be held in class? Should class be cancelled so that studio sessions can be conducted in the teacher's office?
- Does it matter if small groups are evenly balanced in number? With regard to students' abilities? Personalities?
- How will the teacher participate in the peer-review studio sessions?
- How much time will students have to revise after they are provided with peer-review suggestions?
- What are the expectations for revision of projects *after* peer reviews are completed?

Teachers can also decide to combine small- and large-group approaches, scheduling several, less formal small-group feedback sessions before scheduling one, whole-class session in which students get to see each other's projects.

If students are working in a wide range of modalities, teachers may want to use small groups for peer-review studio sessions. Small groups often work best when students who are working on similar projects or in similar modalities can work together. Teachers may encounter a situation, for instance, in which two students want to create a video for a public service announcement, three want to compose a scrapbook of a famous alumnus, four others want to design comic strips that teach key concepts in a field of study, and several others want to create a photography exhibit with curatorial comments for a campus display space. In such a class, small group peer-review studio sessions may work best for providing formal and informal feedback on projects. In this situation, it is best to group all of those working on the video together in one group, those creating the scrapbook in another, and so on.

Small groups are particularly valuable if students are working on projects that are difficult to circulate and show to a large audience—for example, a comic strip, a children's book, or a scrapbook. In addition, smaller groups that are working within one medium and with similar modalities can be useful because students become increasingly familiar with the affordances of the modalities and the media with which they are working. Once they have thought about the issues of affordances, students can give increasingly constructive feedback to their peers. Smaller groups may also help some students gain confidence before they present their projects to a larger group of people. Teachers who use small groups for peer-feedback sessions may want to schedule work days for the rest of the class and, if possible, meet with small groups to review projects.

Small groups—especially when they are working on a wide range of projects—can be difficult for teachers to schedule, manage, and track, however. So teachers should schedule carefully and plan ahead. When forming smaller groups for peer-based collaborative work, some teachers may want to identify students who have more experience with specific technologies so that these individuals can help the members of their small group learn to make use of certain pieces of equipment.

Some teachers who read this book may have access to enough resources to allow all the students in a class to work on the same kind of project or assignment—and enough time to allow whole-class studio reviews of projects in various stages of being drafted. This arrangement is ideal, for example, when everyone in the class can work on an audio or video assignment such as the one we offer in Chapter 2 of this book. Studio sessions that involve the whole class in providing peer-review feedback provide authors with a wider range of feedback from more people. Large-group peer-review sessions also allow the entire class to hear the teacher's feedback and, thus, adjust their own expectations and responses to classmates' projects. Although these larger sessions take more time, they may also be easier for teachers to schedule.

For some students, however, whole-class studio sessions can be intimidating and frightening. In such sessions, feedback seems increasingly public. As a result, students who are shy or lack confidence may view them with an increased level of anxiety for which teachers can plan. To help ameliorate such feelings, teachers can prepare the class—providing examples of how to phrase and deliver feedback constructively, focus on suggestions that will improve a project, understand feedback within the context of a specific rhetorical situation, and select the comments that will provide a focus for productive revision efforts.

Tip #7: Take every opportunity to remind students of the assignment and encourage them to think in rhetorical ways.

This point is especially important when students are composing in media and modalities that are new to them as authors. In such situations, when students must learn new technologies as they

TABLE 9.3
GROUP SIZE FOR PEER-REVIEW STUDIO SESSIONS

SMALL GROUP PEER REVIEW	WHOLE CLASS PEER REVIEW
Use when resources are scare and must be carefully managed, when students are working in a wide range of media and modalities, or when projects cannot be shown to the whole class at once. Group students with similar projects together.	Use when sufficient resources are available for the entire class and when all students are working on similar kinds of projects.
Advantages: • Students are familiar with the media and modalities being used—and their affordances. • Projects that are hard to show/share can be seen by a small group. • On a smaller scale, students can get ideas from one another and from the teacher for use in revising. • Students can gain confidence in composing by receiving feedback in a small-group setting. • Teachers can focus on one group at a time and schedule work sessions for students who are not participating in a peer review.	***Advantages:*** • All students are familiar with the media and modalities being used—and their affordances. • Projects can be seen by the entire class using presentation or projection devices. • Students can get ideas from every member of the class and from the teacher for use in revising. • Students receive a broader range of feedback from all members of the class. • The teacher can schedule one series of peer-review studio sessions. • Students can observe as the teacher models studio feedback procedures and uses specialized vocabulary.
Disadvantages: • Peer reviews for smaller groups can be more difficult to schedule, manage, and track.	***Disadvantages:*** • Some students may find it difficult to show their work to so many people and to receive public feedback.

compose, it is easy to forget about the rhetorical situation that gives a text shape and substance—the purpose, audience, information, and genre of a composition. In addition, both teachers and students can get caught up in grappling with the new formats available to them within a multimodal composing assignment while forgetting about the project's purpose, audience, format, or context of circulation.

For teachers, the best remedy for such a situation is to give students *an authentic rhetorical context for composing that extends beyond the classroom*. This can be accomplished by designing assignments that ask students to compose for audiences other than the teacher, for purposes that are important outside the classroom (as well as inside), and in genres that convey information effectively within specified contexts of circulation.

Teachers will also want to think reflectively about the rhetorical issues that inform multimodal assignments—early and often—and encourage students to do so as they compose. Table 9.4 illustrates some questions that both teachers and students can consider to help maintain a focus on the rhetorical context of multimodal assignments.

Tip #8 During peer-review studio sessions, focus teacher feedback on three to five issues of primary rhetorical concern.

As students can attest, revising compositions after peer-review studio sessions can be challenging. This can be especially true with multimodal compositions, given the range of elements with which students are working. In revising a photographic exhibit with curatorial comments, for instance, students may have to retake some pictures with a camera to frame shots differently or to change their focus; use a photo-manipulation program to alter some of the pictures in the exhibit; use a web browser to conduct additional research; and use a word-processing program to rewrite some of the curatorial comments.

Although composing technologies will continue to change and revising multimodal compositions will become increasingly easy in some technical senses, some of the challenges of authoring effective compositions to achieve a given rhetorical purpose will, doubtless, remain. For this reason, the very best approach that both teachers and students can take, to multimodal composing is to engage in rhetorically-focused decision making so that all composing and revision efforts are undertaken with a specific goal in mind.

Within this framework, teachers can work to create assignments that open up authentic purposes for students to compose and realistic audiences for them to address, providing students the choice of interesting information to convey and contemporary genres to use. And students can be charged with paying attention to the purpose and audience for their text; the larger rhetorical context which shapes this purpose and audience; the genres best suited to this context; the organization, arrangement, and conventions that make a composition most effective within the context; and the systems within which their text will be circulated.

In Table 9.4, we identify some of the rhetorical considerations that teachers and students will want to think about.

Tip #9: During peer-review studio sessions, encourage *both* written and verbal feedback.

Students benefit a great deal from getting written feedback on their projects from peers and the teacher during studio-review sessions, These written comments—especially when they are grounded in the rhetorical context informing the composition, come from a range of class members with different perspectives, and provide multiple suggestions for revising a composition in specific ways—can be invaluable to an author.

A class will also benefit, however, from an *oral* discussion of each project. Authors, for example, often respond very differently to oral feedback than they do written suggestions because such feedback is both cumulative and public. And oral discussions of a project, given their public nature, often prove useful to teachers, as well, because they provide a sense of how different readers respond to a single project. Finally, such discussions are helpful to peer responders. A large group of students can often collaboratively *discover* a metadiscursive consensus about the strengths and shortcomings of a project—even when individual members of the class remain unsure of the audience's expectations for a specific genre, the conventions associated with a particular medium, or all the affordances of a modality. By listening to the comments of peers, student responders can learn

TABLE 9.4
QUESTIONS FOR RHETORICAL CONSIDERATION

PAYING ATTENTION TO RHETORICAL ISSUES

Teachers

- Does my assignment allow students to identify an authentic *purpose* for composing—one that extends beyond the classroom and is meaningful in students' lives?
- Does my assignment help students identify an authentic *audience*—one that they know and can predict in terms of expectations and responses?
- Does my assignment allow students to select a *topic* (*information*) about which they have some interest or expertise? Or one which they can develop expertise in a relatively short period.
- Does my assignment allow students to choose—or to learn about—a format and genre they know from some perspective?
- Does my assignment provide sufficient guidance for students in terms of helping them identify the conventions of organization, arrangement, and grammar that characterize the medium in which they are working? The affordances of the modalities with which they are working?
- Do the methods of formative and summative feedback I use for this assignment recognize students' efforts to shape compositions according to rhetorical criteria?

Students

- What is the *purpose* of this composition? What do I want it to accomplish? What difference do I hope it will make?
- What is the *audience* for my composition? How much do I really know about their needs? What can I predict about their expectations and responses? In what circumstances/contexts will the audience read/view this project? How can I find out more?
- Have I selected a composing task that allows me to communicate about a particular *topic* (*information*) with which I have some interest, understanding, or expertise? If not, can I develop this interest/understanding/expertise in a relatively short period?
- What do I know about the format and genre for this composition? As an audience? As an author? Do I have latitude in selecting the format and genre to meet my own areas of expertise/understanding? The needs and expectation of the audience I have identified?
- What guidance does the teacher provide me—and what understandings can I contribute—in identifying the conventions of organization, arrangement, and grammar that characterize the medium in which I am working? The affordances of the modalities with which I am working?
- Does my composition accomplish the purpose I have identified, meet the needs and expectations of the audience, focus on my selected topic, and make effective use of the genre? Where does it succeed in these takes? Where does it fall short? How do I know? How can I communicate the rhetorical decisions I have made to the teacher? To classmates?

where their own personal assessment of a project is congruent with the opinions of others and where it differs. Students also benefit from such discussions because they hear how teachers respond to projects—how their feedback is phrased, how responses are linked to the rhetorical context of a project, how critique is framed in terms of specific suggestions for revision.

Finally, the oral exchange of feedback, under the best of circumstances, becomes a productive two-way conversation, a dialogue, between authors and readers—one in which authors have the unusual opportunity to ask for clarification, seek the audience's response to a particular approach, ask for help with a technological problem, or test their thinking. Written comments, although they provide many of the same benefits for the author, do not provide for this same two-way exchange of information or for broad-based instruction.

Tip #10: After studio sessions, encourage students to complete a follow-up reflection on the revision suggestions they have been given.

One of the most valuable aspects of peer review is the opportunity it provides for reflection. For students who have little experience composing multimodal essays, reflecting on peer reviews after studio sessions can result in significant learning. Taking the time to reflect on their compositions in draft form allows students the time and focus they need to synthesize the suggestions they have received from others, formulate some effective plans for revising, and connect their experiences as readers of such compositions with their experiences as authors.

Such reflections can also serve teachers well. Some faculty ask that reflections be included in the logs that students keep during a project so that they can gauge the effectiveness of students' peer-review suggestions and authors' revision efforts. Still other teachers read reflections to identify what should be changed in future classes. Reflections also allow teachers a rare glimpse into students' thoughts about multimodal composition—what individuals are trying to accomplish, what components of the composition authors consider effective, what aspects they think continue to need work, and how authors interpreted the peer-review suggestions of others. In Figure 9.4, we provide some questions that students and teachers might find useful as prompts for a reflection on multimodal projects.

Tip #11: Leave sufficient time between peer reviews and project deadlines for effective revision

As we have discussed, multimodal assignments can be challenging both to design and undertake. Teachers may need to organize and manage new sets of resources, students may need to learn new genres, classes may need to practice with unfamiliar equipment or software, and both teachers and students may need to develop rhetorically-sound strategies for articulating revision suggestions.

REFLECTING ON MULTIMODAL ESSAYS

Reflect on the feedback you received in your recent studio session, and answer the following questions in your Progress Journal:

- What parts of your essay work well within rhetorical context? Which need the most work?
- What are the three most important suggestions you heard during the peer-review studio session on your composition?
- What are your plans for revision? Sketch a timeline for your revision efforts.

FIGURE 9.4 Example of a reflection prompt

Given these circumstances, teachers should be conservative in the time they schedule between peer-review studio sessions and subsequent project deadlines—allowing enough time for authors to respond to the feedback they receive and undertake thoughtful revision.

CONCLUSION

Multimodal compositions may be different than conventional essays in the media and the modalities they employ, but the authors of such texts—like any authors—can benefit from well structured peer-reviews provided in carefully designed studio sessions that focus on rhetorical issues.

Both teachers and students, however, must prepare for such sessions—scheduling the time for multiple readings, preparing and responding to the feedback, articulating productive suggestions, focusing on rhetorical responses, reflecting on others' readings of a project, and synthesizing contradictory responses. In Figure 9.5, we provide readers a summary of our suggestions for peer-review studio session.

- Provide examples of multimodal projects—preferably those composed by students. Practice analyzing, reading, and responding to them with productive suggestions for revision.
- Schedule and conduct both formal and informal peer-review sessions during an assignment sequence.
- Structure peer-review studio sessions carefully. Articulate expectations and procedures.
- Help students think about effective ways to present their projects in draft form.
- Schedule studio sessions well in advance and participate actively in both formal and informal review sessions.
- Understand that the range of media and modalities used for an assignment will shape peer-review studio sessions.
- Continually remind students of assignment and their requirements.
- Focus teacher feedback on rhetorically-informed issues.
- Encourage both written and verbal feedback during peer-review studio sessions.
- Leave sufficient time between peer-review studio sessions and subsequent due dates for a project.
- Encourage students to complete a follow-up reflection after a peer review and revision process.

FIGURE 9.5 Summary of tips for conducting peer-review studio sessions in multimodal classrooms