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## **Adapting Editorial Peer Review of Webtexts for Classroom Use**

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### **Abstract**

This article picks up, literally, where another one leaves off: “Assessing Scholarly Multimedia: A Rhetorical Genre-Studies Approach” in *Technical Communication Quarterly* (Ball, 2012a). In that article, I describe how I have brought my editorial-mentoring work with *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*, which exclusively publishes “born digital” media-rich scholarship, into undergraduate and graduate writing classes. This article describes how the process of editorial peer-review translates into students’ peer-review workshops in those same writing classes.

Keywords: peer review, webtexts, digital media, editorial pedagogy, assessment

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## **Introduction**

For several years, I have been teaching an undergraduate (junior/senior-level) Multimodal Composition course using a genre studies approach. I have redesigned this course many times (Ball, Scoffield, and Fenn, 2013), with the most recent instantiation bringing my work as editor of *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* into the classroom. *Kairos* is a digital writing studies journal that exclusively publishes digital media-based scholarship, and in my class, I ask students to compose *webtexts* (digital media-based articles) that they can potentially submit to an online journal like *Kairos*. Rather than asking students to reproduce “mutt genres” (Wardle, 2009) that only exist in the setting of academic, teacher-centered classrooms and never in the world outside of that 15- or 25-person writing class, I ask students to analyze the entire ecology in which webtexts exist and, then, to produce a set of texts that are used in that ecology. It’s academic writing writ scholarly and multimodal *and* potentially publishable: writing that actually *goes* somewhere for students.

However, one of the things I discovered when I began using a genre studies approach (Ball, 2012a; Bawarshi and Reiff, 2009) to this course was that I needed to create a method of assessing students’ webtexts that equally valued the constantly shifting genre conventions of webtexts, my expertise (and time) as a teacher–editor, students’ everyday interests in digital media, the audiences (e.g. editorial boards and scholars) that students’ work might actually reach, and students’ in-class peer reviews of each others’ webtexts. It is this last item – peer review – that I will focus on in this article. I won’t detail here strategies for assessing webtexts in and out of the classroom (see Ball, 2012a; Kuhn, Johnson, and Lopez, 2010). I focus on how I ask students to take on the role of editorial board and to peer-review their classmates’ projects. This assignment pulls directly from a rhetorical genre studies approach in which students are asked to produce writing assignments for audiences and publications that have an existence outside the writing classroom itself.

## **The Contingency of Webtexts and Assessment Criteria**

In a typical semester, students have seven weeks to learn what webtexts are (as a form of media-rich academic writing), how to read them, what journals<sup>1</sup> they are published in,

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who the audience for each sample journal is, and how the editorial boards of those journals evaluate webtext submissions (based on any criteria they list on their websites or through analysis of what the journals actually publish). Then students have another seven weeks to produce a collaborative webtext for potential submission to one of the journals we study. A week or two follows in which we discuss revision strategies and submission practices. It's a packed 17-week semester that culminates in a webtext that may actually be in good enough shape to submit to a scholarly journal that publishes digital media. I have written elsewhere about the contingent nature of these submissions (Ball, 2010; The Normal Group, 2012), and I ask authors and editorial board members to consider these contingencies as well. Webtexts, unlike print scholarship, tend to be less polished in their initial submission state because authors often need significant editorial guidance to transform a text composed primarily through writing to a webtext that is designed to *enact* its argument through multimedia. This process of transforming one's scholarly (writing) content into a scholarly form (design) is still relatively new for most digital writing scholars (despite *Kairos*'s now 16-year history publishing this kind of work). Digital media scholarship is (still) a new form of scholarly writing that allows for it to be less stable (sometimes) upon submission than editors and editorial boards might expect, so that authors have the room to revise the piece based on feedback. And anyone who's ever composed a webtext knows that revising scholarly multimedia is much more complicated than revising print scholarship.

In teaching, understanding the contingent nature of webtexts means that I had to change the standard by which I was assessing student work. It isn't feasible to judge students based on "excellence" or any other revise-until-perfect set of criteria for a finished webtext when authors for the journal can't produce perfect work in 17 weeks, either. If my expectation for both student writers and first-time *Kairos* authors was a semi-finished webtext, why not have Revise and Resubmit<sup>2</sup> (R&R) be the standard by which I assess the students' projects?<sup>3</sup> Grading projects by expecting the *best* examples to be R&Rs is not lowering standards; it's a practical reality of how the genre of a webtext exists in the world. Still, students in my multimodal classes for the first time can produce work that is on par with much of what first-time *Kairos* authors produce (and that's after we debunk the myth of the so-called "digital native" who already knows

how to do everything with a computer). That students often produce work on par with scholars is, in my editorial and pedagogical experience, a bar-raising standard for both students and authors.

Of course, in the academic world of scholarly multimedia produced for a journal like *Kairos*, I am not responsible for grading work. Instead, I am responsible for deciding whether a webtext is ready for peer review (with the help of my staff), compiling the board's reviews of a webtext, making a judgement call if reviews are competing, and writing revision letters to the authors. Until a webtext is accepted for publication, I only guide the evaluation process. Translated into the classroom, student-authors also function as the editorial board for their classmates' work. This isn't a new concept; it's a peer workshop with scholarly multimedia texts instead of papers (in a writing class). Other universities have taken up students-as-peer-reviewers in university-wide journals (e.g. OSU's *Commonplace*, University of North Carolina's *PIT Journal*, and University of Texas at Austin's *TheJUMP*), each with their own criteria for their (mostly linear, except *TheJUMP*) students' work published in student-run online journals. In my classes, students learn the genre(s) of scholarly multimedia in enough depth and expertise (just as editorial boards do) to judge the quality of their own and their classmates' work.

### **Peer Groups as Editorial Boards**

On the one hand, peer review in a writing classroom has had a long, troubled history (DePardo and Freedman, 1988), with teachers often sharing anecdotes such as "it's a chit-chat session," "it doesn't work," "only the students who already know how to write do well," and "all they focus on is grammar issues." Anne DePardo and Sarah Warshauer Freedman remarked in their bibliographic essay on research into peer review that, often, too much teacher control over peer response (directing the class conversation, providing set rubrics for students to use on each others' work, etc.) will be reflected in students' attempts to mimic what they think teachers would say about a groupmate's paper, and not in students' more natural – and usually more expansive – responses in peer groups. As these authors observe: "The tendency has been to undermine [students'] potential by channeling peer dynamics toward teacher-mandated guidelines, thereby subtracting from the process the crucial element of student

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empowerment and denying group members authority to become decision-making writers and readers” (DePardo and Freedman, 1988: 144). On the other hand, in a class where the genre is totally new to writers *and* is constantly in flux, some teacher mandates for peer review may be necessary, at least to help students explore the ecology of this shifting terrain.

In the definitive introduction to genre studies, Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff reminded teachers to “construct useful guideposts for navigating academic culture” (Bawarshi and Reiff, 2009: 198) by “demystifying classroom genres, like the teacher’s end comments on student papers, the student–teacher conference, writing assignment prompts, and the syllabus” (*ibid.*). Peer review – in or outside of the classroom – is definitely a genre that needs demystifying for student-authors who are attempting to write for scholarly publication. Although *Kairos* uses an online, asynchronous discussion forum for its collaborative editorial board review, most editorial boards don’t work collaboratively. So – for many reasons<sup>4</sup> – I ask students to complete an individual peer review, providing students with instructions for writing a peer review since it’s not a genre that is easily researched or found on the Internet. Although this set of instructions on writing a peer-review letter is teacher-mandated (which DePardo and Freeman’s research indicated isn’t very useful in peer response groups), the criteria that I asked students to use to evaluate each others’ webtexts was completely open to them, based on a set of previous assignments we had conducted. (That assignment sequence and the assessment criteria students came up with is outlined in the precursor article to this one – Ball, 2012a.)

As an editor, it was odd to sit down and write explicit instructions on how to write a peer-review letter, for three reasons. First, *Kairos* doesn’t have such instructions because of our collaborative, interactive review process, which values informal as well as formal responses by any number of editorial board members in their area of expertise. For example, one reviewer might focus on the usability of the interface while another focuses on the literature review, and a third critiques the relationship between written content and design. I have relied on the board members to intuitively know how to review webtexts, given that they already sit on the board, and the invitations to sit on the board are based on expertise in digital media and/or digital writing studies.<sup>5</sup> Second,

in my years of reviewing for other journals, including print journals, I've only once received guidelines for reviewing a submission (and never for another online media-based journal, although my students have since discovered at least one set of review guidelines for an online journal). So it wasn't just *Kairos* that assumed the editorial board members would know how to review submissions to the journal, whether for webtextual or print scholarship. Third, the implicit conventions of peer-review letters are surprisingly specific, and the process that surrounds the writing of a peer-review letter is surprisingly complex.

It took a long time to document this process and to write the instructions because I had to keep reassessing my own reading and writing strategies when I evaluate webtext submissions. My reflection on this process would glide over details I had internalized, such as how to take notes that would be useful in a peer-review letter while reading the webtext the first time through, or how long the review needed to be and to whom it should be addressed.<sup>6</sup> Overall, the instructions, included below, provided typical genre conventions for the structure and organization, audience(s), purpose and goals, context, style and tone, length, delivery medium, and use of evaluative criteria within the letter.<sup>7</sup>

## **Peer-Review Assignment Sheet**

### **Description:**

A peer-review letter provides feedback to an author's in-progress (but hopefully nearly completed) work. The job of peer reviewers is (1) to read a text in relation to the values of a particular publication venue, the venue's audience, and the disciplinary conversations the audience/venue espouses; and (2) to provide constructive feedback to an author based on the text's effectiveness at reaching those values.

### **Goals:**

- To refine your analytical skills using the value-laden criteria for multimodal scholarship that we have discussed in class;
- To practice addressing your analysis to a specific audience (an editor, with a secondary audience of the authors);

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- To understand the peer-review process that your major projects will go through (for assessment by your peers and myself and for potential evaluation by the journals, if submitted).

### **Instructions:**

There are four parts to this assignment (for the Workshop version, skip #1), plus the annotation:

1. Pick a webtext that has been published in one of the journals you're most interested in. Two rules:
  - a. The webtext must have been published within the last two years. Why? Because disciplinary conversations can change rapidly in digital writing studies. (If you don't pick a recent webtext, I'll ask you to redo your letter with another choice that I approve. So make sure to follow this requirement.)
  - b. You cannot use a webtext that we've read in class or that you've discussed in previous assignments for this class — it has to be a new one for you. Why? Because I want to see where you stand in understanding how to transfer your genre and venue and audience analysis skills using the evaluation criteria to *\*new\** situations/texts.
2. Situate yourself within the venue. If you haven't already done so, perform a Values Analysis [an assignment from earlier in the semester] on the venue in which the webtext is (to be) published. You'll need to read the webtext in relation to those values. Your role here is to function as a reviewer/editorial board member of the publication in which this piece has been published.
3. Read/review the webtext. With the values from that journal context (venue, audience, disciplinary conversations, etc.) AND the evaluation criteria we discussed in class in mind, read the webtext "generously" (meaning, give yourself some time to figure out how it works, why it works the way it does, and, if there are places in the text where you're not sure — or don't like — what an author has done, try to figure out what their reasoning for doing it that way was). Take notes on how and why you react/respond to the piece as you

read. You should use the evaluation criteria as touchstones for explaining how/why you read the piece as you did. Does the piece, in other words, meet the values/expectations/criteria? Does it miss anywhere? For all questions such as this, the questions “Why” and “How” will probably need to be addressed in your review letter. From your notes, figure out the main points you want to address in regard to the peer-review criteria, and begin to summarize your thoughts in relation to those criteria.

4. Write the review letter. Write a 2(-ish) page, single-spaced letter (in a word-processing document) that will be given to the authors of the webtext. In this letter, you should discuss how the piece meets (or doesn't meet) the evaluation criteria we have been using all semester in class (you can use any formation of those criteria you'd like) as well as the values of the journal to which it's being submitted. The letter should be addressed to me (filling in as the “Editor” of the publication for which you are reviewing). The letter should be more formal than colloquial and should contain feedback for the author that is constructive and offers revision suggestions, if you have any (and you should have *some* revision suggestions). As a peer-reviewer, you are an expert in the field and are qualified to evaluate this piece of multimodal scholarship. Write from that voice/knowledge.

**Some basic suggestions for drafting the letter:**

- The beginning paragraph of the letter often summarizes the submission's purpose back to the editors/author, to ensure that you understood the piece and evaluated it with the criteria in mind.
- Remember that the editor of the publication is your audience but that the editor often sends your letter to the author, so the language should be helpful and respectful.
- How you use the criteria in your letter is up to you. Some reviewers address the criteria directly, and others do it implicitly. In any case, make sure that your revision suggestions are clear. **HOWEVER:** Using the criteria explicitly, as if writing a literary analysis where each paragraph starts by listing and

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defining one criterion and then points to examples of the text that (don't) exemplify that criterion is NOT very professional. A peer-review letter shouldn't look or sound like a literary (or rhetorical) analysis; that is not an appropriate genre for you to uptake/use for this assignment.

### **Annotation Instructions**

For this part of the assignment, I want you to reflect on your peer-review letter written to your classmates by annotating the specific places where you drew on the evaluation criteria you chose when reviewing their piece. Each time you use a criterion (or if you introduced a NEW criterion in your reading), say WHY you thought it was important to address for the particular piece you were reviewing and HOW it got at a specific critique (or good point) you wanted the authors to know about. In essence, this annotation is a meta-reflection of your peer-review letter that will show me that you understand how and why we came up with the sets of criteria we did (from earlier in the semester), how you can apply them to an actual webtext, and will help you think about how you would continue to create new criteria for evaluating different kinds of texts in future writing scenarios (either in or out of class). So, show me what you know ;).

As indicated in the above assignment description, students complete this peer-review assignment 2–3 times in a typical semester – first on an already-published or in-progress webtext (if I have one available with the author's permission), which they usually have to revise at least once. Then they do another peer-review on their classmates' webtexts at the end of the term, which also includes a self-assessment annotation of their letter (for me/teacher as audience). To prepare the students for the initial peer-review assignment, I try to take most of a three-hour class period to read a sample webtext as it looked upon initial submission. Then I ask students to review the actual peer-review letters from the journal's editorial board and ask students to write a resubmission letter to the journal editor – as if they were the authors of the webtext and had to follow the review advice. This process allowed them to see a model of a peer-review letter, which students could analyze for genre conventions from the kinds of

journals they would be submitting to. For instance, an online journal like *Kairos* tends to have peer-review letters that are more helpful or mentoring than critical or gatekeeping in tone and purpose, with the former, more supportive type of feedback being my teacherly goal for students in a writing class as well as my editorial goal for the field of writing at large. Using these samples, I also discuss with students how to interpret revision comments, as they would later have to do with their own work, and how to figure out which revisions, from the reviewer's point of view, were required and which were merely suggested.

After that analysis, we try to look at the published piece (if it has, in fact, been published) so that students can see the sometimes radical revision a webtext has undergone based on the editorial board's feedback. One semester, I asked students to read a piece I had coauthored in *Kairos* (Rice and Ball, 2006), which was provided for them with a set of "behind-the-scenes" scholarly process genres connected to the published version of the article, including the original submission, which the editor asked us to revise and resubmit; the two editorial review letters (one Accept, one Reject); and a hand-drawn prototype of the piece's redesign. Another semester, I asked students to assess a webtext being considered in a digital book collection which I was coediting. I knew the webtext needed revision, and it had already been revised twice by one of its authors in preparation for the book publication, but it still wasn't quite right. I was having trouble deciding what revision directions to recommend to the authors, in part because they were my students from a previous semester; and I was too close to their work, in which they proposed that teachers needed to pay better attention to using digital technologies in their classrooms. So I asked my current students to each write a peer-review letter for this video that would appear in a digital book collection, and they summarily pointed out that the authors needed to include more interviews and footage from teachers who could speak more clearly to the issue of teaching with technology, as well as to list on screen the names and affiliations of the people being interviewed. These revision suggestions were exactly what the piece needed to make it more effective in terms of its purpose and credibility. Afterwards, students were excited to learn that their revision suggestions would be implemented by the author, and the video came out publication-ready (see The Normal Group, 2012, for this video).

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I assessed these peer reviews based on their adherence to the genre conventions we covered in class as well as those outlined in the assignment. This process required students to get into the heads of their potential audience (the review board) and to use the criteria that the board would use to offer helpful feedback. What surprised me was how accurate, and expert, the peer-review letters were in relation to the revisions that I (or an editorial board member) would suggest based on our experience working with webtexts. After spending seven weeks discussing how and why webtexts work, what audiences expect from webtexts, and what the journals value based on examples of editorial review letters and published webtexts, the students were able to provide specific, thoughtful revisions that had depth. In effect, they had become experts in analyzing and evaluating multimodal scholarship.

Even when students didn't quite master the genre of the peer review letter the first time, their revision suggestions were usually quite good, and they revised this version of the letter before having to repeat the process later in the semester with their classmates' texts. I also asked students to consider as they wrote these letters how they would integrate the assessment criteria into the letters. We discussed at length how the editorial board of journals like *Kairos* have no set criteria, and that criteria (if stated at all) are often used implicitly in most professional peer-review letters, where the framework for assessment is more subtle than a rubric would suggest. Most of the students did a good job of discretely using in their letters whatever evaluative framework they created, although a few stumbled on this aspect of the genre, mistakenly drawing on inappropriate antecedent genres – or what Elizabeth Wardle called *mutt genres* (Wardle, 2009), in which students' revision letters sound more like “academic essays” defined by blunt naming of the criteria followed by an example from the text. In my experience, this is a common problem, but once I point out this incorrect uptake and ask them to revise their initial letter, they don't repeat the mistake for the second letter.

### **Peer Review Example**

For the webtext assignment, students have to choose which section in which journal they will submit their work to. Sometimes it's difficult for authors to recognize the subtle differences between different sections in the same journal, and student-authors are no

different. For instance, some *Kairos* submissions walk a fine line in their suitability for the Topoi section versus the Praxis section of the journal. The Topoi section, as the submission guidelines state, publishes “extended scholarly analyses of large-scale issues relating to rhetoric, technology, and pedagogy.” These guidelines are purposely a little vague, to invite scholarly experimentation, but, generally speaking, this section draws on *topoi* (i.e. main ideas or commonplaces) in digital writing studies for its content. The Praxis section, on the other hand, “publishes scholarly investigations into the intersections of rhetoric, technology, and pedagogy discovered through teaching and other professional practices” (see #sections in Kairos website Submissions, 2013). That is, the Praxis section focuses exclusively on pedagogy and reflective practice while the Topoi section may be pedagogical, but often doesn’t include praxis. Depending on how much classroom-situating authors do in their webtexts, they often question which section to submit to, and the editorial board has been known to suggest that an author revise out of one section and into another.

In the peer review example below, a student drew on a journal-specific definition of audience to critique the section placement of another student group’s webtext. That is, the project was intended to be submitted to one section of a journal, but the reviewer believed that it was more suitable to another section of the journal. At *Kairos*, this kind of critique usually happens earlier in the process, before the board reviews a piece, but occasionally the board suggests that a webtext be considered for a section different than the one it was submitted to. In completing the peer-review assignment’s instructions to take on the values of the journal to which a group was submitting, students had to learn what each journal (and each section in the journal) valued. In many cases, this meant that before students wrote the peer-review letters for another group’s project, they had to research how the assessment criteria we’d created in class aligned with a *different* section or journal than the one their own group was submitting to. Although several students made note of some projects’ incorrect placement in a particular section, one student elaborated on this issue in the peer-review letter:

Let me now return back to my comment on the audience of this video. I understand that the target audience/journal is going to be the “Inventio” section of *Kairos*. However, I do not think this video fits into that section of the journal.

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Inventio's mission is as follows: "As we envision it, Inventio authors will be able to include, alongside or integrated with their finished webtexts, materials that help them articulate how and why their work came into being." As it stands now, there is no existence of this [process stated] within this text, however, if the plan is to include something of that nature, then kudos. If not, then I think a better fit for this video would be the "Topoi" section of *Kairos* because the video is doing an analysis of a commercial....

This student reviewer was submitting neither to Inventio nor Topoi, so he had to learn the requirements for two sections (and two audiences) beyond his own. Half of the reviewers (2 out of 4) brought up the section-placement discrepancy, which surprised me because section placement can be one of the most difficult (and most often overlooked) criteria for evaluating an unstable/unfinished webtext. As editor, I know from experience that our sections can often seem overlapping. Sometimes we switch a webtext's section just days or weeks before publication. Given the subtleties of differentiating the sections of a journal, I was extremely pleased that students who had had to analyze the journal sections earlier in the semester and again as they wrote their reviews were able to transfer astutely their knowledge of a journal's audience and what readers would expect from webtexts in each of the journal's sections when students were evaluating each others' webtexts.

### **Contingency and Trajectory**

It's more important that students can assess each others' work, as demonstrated through the peer-review letters, than it is for me to assess their work, which is why I do not provide my own peer reviews of students' webtexts in class nor have I provided my own reading of students' webtexts in this article. Stepping out of the process requires students to be fully *in* the peer-review process, and allows them the flexibility (within the genre conventions) to say what needs to be said. Following this trajectory, and because I don't grade authors' submissions, I also don't grade students' individual or collaborative assignments throughout the semester. Instead of my grading the webtexts or individual assignments like the peer review, I can step back and offer guidance, not

judgment, in these risk-intensive assignments. So long as students meet the minimum webtext submission requirements that authors must also meet for whichever journal students choose for their submission, I feel that they've satisfied the project goals and requirements. However, students – just like authors – sometimes fail to meet those minimum requirements, which is then reflected in the student's course grade (or an author's rejection).

Until I thought through the valuation process for scholarly multimedia with students, I had some ad hoc ways for thinking about how my own and others' scholarly multimedia texts worked, much of which I have picked up from my experience as a writer and editor or intuited from I don't know where. Every time I encounter a new set of students or a new submission to *Kairos*, I have to add to, rethink, reorganize, and remix my personal, internal heuristic for evaluating scholarly multimedia. I've been wrestling with this evaluation process since I first became an editor for *Kairos* in 2001 (see Ball, 2004). Because my own evaluation criteria are constantly changing, I continue to ask students to assess, evaluate, and re/create their own evaluation criteria not only as they proceed through the semester but after they leave my class.

At the end of the semester, I ask students to take the peer-review letters they've written for others in class and annotate them. In other words, after telling them all semester to make their criteria implicit in their revision suggestions, I ask them to reverse engineer that process and make the criteria explicit again, through the Comment feature in their word-processing program. I ask them to annotate the specific criteria that they wanted to address, why they thought it was important to point out those criteria in their revision comment at that point in the letter, and how the criteria helped them articulate a specific critique of or revision strategy for the webtext. In essence, this annotation is a self-assessment of their peer-review letters.<sup>8</sup> It shows me that the students understand how and why we came up with the sets of criteria we did, how they apply to an actual webtext, and how students could continue to create new criteria for analyzing and evaluating different kinds of texts in future writing scenarios.

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### **Concluding Thoughts**

Teaching students to write effective peer reviews isn't easy – it takes all semester, alongside teaching students the grammars of multimodal design elements and composing processes of multimodal texts (see e.g. Cope and Kalantzis, 2000; Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2001; 2006) – but no one ever said teaching writing was easy. Still, just as I am excited every time an author submits a new webtext to *Kairos*, I am excited by the work students submit to me and their classmates throughout a semester, because then I can begin providing developmental, editorial feedback. I work developmentally with *Kairos* authors every day, building on what the editorial board has said about an author's text and helping an author shape the piece to be publication-ready (Ball, 2013). This feedback loop has become instrumental in my *editorial pedagogy* (Ball, 2012b), which in the classroom incorporates real-world publication venues (such as journals, newspapers, etc.) and the assessment practices built in to those venues, including editorial peer review. The key for me as a teacher-scholar-editor is to create as much overlap and reflexive practice as possible between my teaching, scholarship, and editorial work. Such an approach to my professional life – as outlined in one small way through the peer-review adaptation I've discussed in this article – provides student writers with a more realistic, real-world engagement with writing while also making my academic life more manageable.

### **About the Author**

Cheryl E. Ball is Associate Professor of New Media at Illinois State University and editor of *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy*. She received the 2012 Conference on College Composition and Communication Technology Innovator Award, the 2013 CCCC Award for Best Pedagogy Article in Technical Communication for "Assessing Scholarly Multimedia," which appeared in *Technical Communication Quarterly*, and the 2013 C&C Distinguished Book Award for her co-edited collection, *The New Work of Composing*. She has also published in *Computers and Composition*, *C&C Online*, *Fibreculture*, *Convergence*, *Programmatic Perspectives*, and *Kairos*. Her other books include *RAW New Media* and *Writer/Designer*.

## Notes

- 1 In the most recent semester, we studied *Kairos*, *TheJUMP*, *Computer & Composition Online*, *Enculturation*, *Harlot of the Arts*, and *X/changes*.
- 2 Since readers of this article are most likely encountering this piece in a closed-access (e.g. subscribers only), peer-reviewed journal, I'm going to assume that you are scholars – an audience that understands what a journal's editorial review process is – and that I can move on to the assignment itself without describing how peer review in a journal functions.
- 3 I am specifically avoiding using the word *grading* since I do not provide students with grades throughout the semester. For a full discussion of my “grading” scale, please see <http://239f11.ceball.com/about/>.
- 4 Some of the reasons I ask students to write individual reviews instead of collaborative reviews of each others' webtexts include the following:
  - It gives every student the opportunity to write a response, and, thus, students also receive several lengthy responses. (Undergraduate students always work in groups on their webtext projects.)
  - It helps me see how well individual students are learning their analysis and evaluative literacy practices (particularly with multimodal texts, which are the focus of my classes) and putting those into practice in writing.
  - Students can revise their peer review letters if I think they need more work, which also raises the stakes on providing useful, expert feedback for a successful letter.
  - Written responses provide exact revision suggestions for future reference by authors (and the teacher or editor).
- 5 One major (and unexpected) outcome of this peer-review assignment, after I bragged to some friends who happen to be editorial board members about how good students' peer-review letters were, resulted in them asking me for more explicit instructions on reviewing *Kairos* submissions. We brainstormed, and I sent the

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heuristic to the board's listserv shortly thereafter. Since then, the level and quality of participation by reviewers has increased enormously.

- 6 Some of these conventions change depending on the editorial mantle that is taken up – that is, a review from a board member of *Kairos* might have a totally different feel and conventions than a review letter from a board member of *Enculturation*. I primarily offered students *Kairos*-based letters written to or by me, so that I could discuss the implications of revision suggestions made by board members and editors, and how I dealt with those revisions as an author, since authoring was a major component of the class.
- 7 An example of the peer-review letter instructions for the Multimodal Composition class can be found at <http://239f11.ceball.com/major-assignments/peer-review/>.
- 8 In this respect, the meta-reflection on the peer-review letters is similar to Shipka's (2009) statement of goals and choices (SGOC), although the assignment that my students are reflecting on isn't highly mediated, which is the point of Shipka's use of the SGOCs. In other words, I don't discount the use of reflections; I just don't find them useful in direct application to the multimodal texts themselves.

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