

Writing Our Story:
Negotiating Agency and Authority Through Collaborative Authorship in First Year Writing

Overview of the Assignment Sequence

Project 1: Learning Narrative (Individual, “monomodal”)

For this project, you’ll write a story that attempts to answer our thematic question: Why am I here? The “here” of your story could mean many things. In telling this story, you’ll have the opportunity to reflect on what that experience has taught you about yourself and the world around you.

Project 2: Cultural Object (Individual, “monomodal”)

For this project you will choose an object that you brought with you to MSU that has significance to who you are, the community and culture you come from, and where you think you might be going. You will write a story about this object that illuminates for the reader all of the significance this object has for you, has in your culture, and might play in your future.

Project 3: Remix (Groups of 3, “multimodal”)

You will be paired with two other students. Together, you will use the papers you wrote for Project 1 and Project 2 to create a new, cohesive narrative that ties your stories together. *The catch?* The final product must be something other than a traditional paper.

Projects Completed

Podcast/ audio production
Video, interviews
Video, skit
Post series
Spotify playlist
Prezi “presentation”

Themes Explored

Family
Home/placeness
Transition
Key values
Mental health
Similarity/difference

Emerging Theory: Negotiation, Interpretation, and Self-Reflexivity

- **Comparative, contrastive, intercultural rhetorics**
- **Rhetorical negotiation** is about: “anchoring a way of meaning-making that promotes dialogism, thick description, and consciousness of one’s own claims and their limitations” that point to “our own historically privileged dispositions or predilections throughout the entire process of representation” (Mao and Wang “Manifesting a Future for Comparative Rhetoric” 2015, 242)
- **Hermeneutic interpretation:** “Dialogue requires difference. Or else people would have nothing to say to each other. Dialogue also requires similarity, or else people have no basis for understanding what others say. Hermeneutic interpretation is a process in which *initial understandings shift in response* to the story and the storyteller” (Frank *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-narratology*, 2010, 94)
- **Self-reflexivity:** As students have presented their own agency through the telling of their stories (Projects 1 and 2) they have had to recognize the authority of others’ agency and, therefore, the limitations of their own (Project 3). In this, they’ve begun to see their habitus (Bourdieu), or the “unconsciously internalized ways of being in the body, emotional responses, values, perspectives, ways of speaking and ways of thinking” that are the products of the particular context(s) in which they were raised (Garrett, “Tied to a Tree” 2013, 254).