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Many, perhaps most, of the university scientists who designed the architecture of the Internet did so with the explicit intent to create an open egalitarian communication environment. They had a vision of a noncommercial sharing community of scholars and, eventually, all citizens of the world. It was to be a public utility.

—Robert McChesney

Whether or not the Internet will facilitate the emergence of a “sharing community” comprised of “all citizens of the world” remains to be seen. Equally uncertain are the limits to the possible forms that participation in this new community might take. What new types of discourses might citizens produce? What new roles might they assume? The answers to these questions are dependent, in part, on our conceptions of public rhetoric. As many have noted, the Internet and other digital technologies allow us to communicate not just through words, but also through sounds, colors, photographs, and other semiotic resources. What uses will public rhetoric find for these new affordances? What corresponding transformations will rhetorical education need to undergo?

Some of the possibilities and challenges that the Internet and other digital technologies offer public rhetoric are suggested by a short documentary film produced by Jim Ridolfo in response to the 2003 Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) protests in Miami. In Jim’s experience as an activist, mainstream media representations of protests were often

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characterized by a pattern of distortion resulting in part from the distanced perspective of the camera. Aerial shots from helicopters do not adequately capture the experience of facing police in riot gear. While Jim might have elected to send written critiques to mainstream media institutions, his experience with new media suggested a more independent and multimodal alternative. Wanting to place into circulation not just a comment on existing images but new images, Jim turned to video as a medium uniquely suited to making visible the experiences of the FTAA protestors. Using video footage that he had shot and digitized himself, Jim produced a short film and distributed it via the Internet. Within months, over 3,000 people had downloaded the film, and at least one independent bookstore began distributing it on CD, alongside more traditional leaflets and tracts.

Jim’s FTAA digital video documentary can be partially understood in terms of a number of recent discussions within composition and rhetoric and related fields. The decision to adopt a multimodal approach reflects claims by various scholars that rhetorical education can be productively broadened to include semiotic resources other than the written word (see George; Kress and Van Leeuwen; Shipka; and Stroupe). The decision to seek out an effective method of distribution is consistent with recent calls by other scholars for increased attention to the circulation (not just production) of compositions (see Trimbur; Shipka; Finnegan; and Welch, for example). The act of making the film public in the first place resonates with the field’s re-awakened concern with public rhetoric (Weisser). The use of the Internet as a forum for addressing public issues can be understood in terms of recent work that explores the potential of the Internet to embody and extend our notion of the public sphere (see Ward and Hands). Finally, the decision to introduce into circulation images that counter those proliferated by dominant media resonates with a growing body of scholarship on the way marginalized groups appropriate multimodality to, as Anthony Ellerton says, “speak back to the popular culture surrounding them” (see, for instance, DeVoss; Goodman; Hawisher and Sullivan; Sheridan). This last group of scholars has been particularly helpful in theorizing the cultural work that can be accomplished when historically disenfranchised groups avail themselves of the opportunities afforded by new media.
Jim’s deployment of multimodal public rhetoric lies, then, at the point where some of the most fertile discussions within the field of composition and rhetoric converge. And yet, both the civic and the multimodal continue to be integrated into our classrooms in reductive, limiting ways. As Douglas Hesse observes, “We often have tended to distill civic writing into a school genre. That is, we have students write about the civic sphere, not in it. In like fashion, our new [...] fondness for visual rhetoric manifests itself considerably more in the analysis of, rather than in the production of images” (350). We submit that if multimodal public rhetoric has not yet been fully and richly integrated into our pedagogies and curricula, it is because we do not yet have a coherent plan for confronting “semiotic resources” as, in the words of Maureen Goggin, “multiple complexes of technological conditions and sociocultural landscapes that overlap like Venn diagrams” (89). Nor do we have a plan for confronting key shifts in the way rhetorical labor is divided—shifts that result in a new kind of rhetor who not only speaks and writes, but also designs and publishes.

In our admittedly utopian vision, the public sphere becomes a space where nonspecialists self-reflexively engage in an extended “conversation” characterized by the rhetorically effective integration of words, images, sounds, and other semiotic elements—a space, in other words, where rhetorical interventions like Jim’s protest film are commonplace. What is needed, we contend, is a conceptual apparatus—a map—that better enables rhetorical educators to confront a host of fundamental and concurrent shifts in rhetoric as a simultaneously symbolic, cultural, and material practice that occurs within local and extended contexts that are themselves simultaneously discursive, cultural, and material.

Our map begins with the complex issue of access, which can be productively explored by looking at the case of an old media technology: the still camera. Our discussion of access as a material and cultural issue ultimately leads us to suggest several key points of critical engagement that rhetorical education might take up, including a critique of writing as a privileged mode. We find in the ancient rhetorical concept of kairos—the “opportune moment”—a theoretically coherent entry point for expanding a rhetor’s assessment of “the available means of persuasion” to include assessments of the material and discursive conditions that shape
the production, distribution, and reception of the rhetor's argument. In Jim's case, for instance, a successful rhetorical intervention required him to assess the affordances of digital video relative to other media and modes (a written essay, a tri-fold brochure, a website) in terms of both its appropriateness for his intended audience and the resources to which he had access.

In exploring this more expansive response to the "opportune moment" in the age of new media, we find ourselves compelled to remap one of the key tensions embedded within the rhetorical tradition: the tension between a deliberative rhetoric—characterized variously as civil, rational, and conciliatory—and a confrontational or agonistic rhetoric. Addressing the way multimodality implicates deliberative rhetoric leads us to current dialogues in visual ethics, visual anthropology, and critical semiotics. As a case in point, we focus on the photograph and its tendency to resist inspections of its own rhetoricity—a tendency, we argue, that is at odds with the goals of deliberative rhetoric. We explore the possibility that critical self-reflexiveness provides a way of recovering deliberative goals for multimodal rhetoric.

Wanting to preserve for public rhetors the ability to make strategic choices in response to a variety of rhetorical situations, we do not foreclose the possibility of deploying a more confrontational multimodal rhetoric. Indeed, post-Habermasian models of the public sphere (Chantal Mouffe's, for example) reveal the need for confrontation. We see Umberto Eco's trope of "semiotic guerilla warfare" as suggestive of an important kind of cultural work that multimodal rhetoric can perform—a kind of cultural work recently acknowledged by public-sphere theorists such as Scott Welsh and Kevin DeLuca. Welsh observes that "an effective democratic challenge must be geared to affect and effect prevailing cultural vocabularies" (685). Jim's deployment of filmic rhetoric can be understood as this kind of challenge: the visual vocabulary and syntax deployed by the mass media—often characterized by "objective" images of demonstrations captured from the distanced perspective of a helicopter—are countered in his film with eye-level footage taken from the perspective of the demonstrators themselves. This is consistent with DeLuca's observation that the "unorthodox rhetoric" of what he calls "image events" "reconstitutes the identity of the dominant culture by
challenging and transforming mainstream society’s key discourses and ideographs” (16).

Finally, we address the institutional and disciplinary constraints that rhetorical education must engage if it is to take up the project of multimodal public rhetoric. We explore the possibility that by taking advantage of what Rolf Norgaard calls “disciplinary contact zones,” rhetorical education can foster a praxis-based approach to interdisciplinarity. Embracing such contact zones, however, means substantially reconfiguring key institutional structures and practices as well as attitudes toward disciplinarity itself.

In contradistinction to skeptics like Neil Postman, John Phelan, and others who fault visual media for their tendency to “erode political space and reduce participation in democratic processes” and to “numb our minds,” Bruce McComiskey asks us to imagine a new public sphere that exploits the “countless positive and, indeed, liberating uses of images in communication” (“Viusual” 193–94, 200). The following discussion is an attempt to sketch out what this public sphere might look like and what reconfigurations of rhetorical education might make it possible.

Rethinking Access and the Public Sphere
The kind of multimodal public sphere we imagine is contingent upon nonspecialist citizens having access to an array of cultural and material resources, including technologies, knowledge bases, and skill sets. To understand the complex issue of access at the present moment, it is useful to examine analogous cases in history, such as the case of the still camera, made widely accessible to nonspecialists in the late nineteenth century when George Eastman invented “snapshot” photography by combining roll film with his small, portable “Kodak.” The case of the still camera provides important insights into how cultural and material logics circumscribe the adoption of emergent technologies and rhetorics.

In his 1909 talk “Social Photography, How the Camera May Help in the Social Uplift,” reform photographer Lewis Hine implores his audience to use photography as a political tool. Iconic rhetoric, Hine claims, “brings one immediately into close touch with reality,” and the photograph in particular “has an added realism of its own,” an “inherent attraction not found in other forms of illustration” (111). Hine remarks
that although his own era belongs to the “specialist,” there is much to be gained “by the popularizing of camera work” (112).

Contemporary theorists such as John Tagg and Don Slater have acknowledged the potential power of the camera, as a technology available to nonspecialists, to effect social change. In Slater’s words,

The camera as an active mass tool of representation is a vehicle for documenting one’s conditions (of living, working and sociality); for creating alternative representations of oneself and one’s sex, class, age-group, race, etc.; of gaining power [. . .] over one’s image; of presenting arguments and demands; of stimulating action [. . .]. (290)

Slater and Tagg, however, agree that a tradition of radical mass photography has not developed on a large scale. Tagg explains that relevant technologies “only passed into popular hands in the crudest sense of the term” (17). Amateurs have remained dependent on large corporations for many aspects of the photographic process. Additionally, important “technical and cultural knowledge” continues to reside in the hands of professionals and corporations (18). Finally, amateur photography has been situated within a cultural hierarchy that privileges professionals and artists while it relegates amateurs to the lower registers of “kitsch” (19). Slater adds that consumers have been conditioned through “high pressure mass marketing of photographic equipment” that restricts the use of cameras to nonpolitical purposes (290). The “Kodak moment” is not a moment of civic intervention but of individual sentimentality. For all of these reasons, nonspecialists have tended to see cameras as technologies of leisure rather than technologies of civic engagement. The “enormous productive power” of the camera “is effectively contained as a conventionalized, passive, privatized and harmless leisure activity” (Slater 289). The case of the camera suggests that access to the public sphere is not a simple issue of making material resources available, but involves a complex set of relationships between material, cultural, and economic factors.

The issue of access can be more fully understood by locating it within ongoing conversations about the nature of the public sphere. In popular discourse “public sphere” sometimes refers in a general way to mass
media and mass culture. In this sense, of course, the public sphere has been characterized by multimodal rhetoric for some time, dominated as it is by television, film, and radio. This is not, however, what we mean by "public sphere." Following an established—if conflicted—line of social theorists that include Hannah Arendt, Jürgen Habermas, Seyla Benhabib, and Nancy Fraser, we mean, instead, a rhetorical space in which "the citizens of a pluralistic polity speak from and across their differences productively" (Ivie 278).

Key to the public sphere in this more limited sense is the issue of inclusiveness. Even Habermas, often criticized for his narrow focus on white affluent men, prescribes what Benhabib calls a "symmetry condition," which includes the related tenets that "each participant must have an equal chance to initiate and to continue communication," and "each must have an equal chance to make assertions, recommendations, explanations, and to challenge justifications" (87). Likewise, Craig Calhoun writes that "[i]n a nutshell, a public sphere adequate to a democratic polity depends upon both quality of discourse and quantity of participation" (2). While mass media like television, radio, and film might be public in the sense of addressing a wide audience, they have not historically offered symmetrical opportunities to participate. Until recently, most citizens have not had access to the means of production and distribution associated with film, television, or radio, nor has the primary purpose of these media been to extend a conversation among concerned citizens (see Habermas 183–85).

The issue of media access has become even more complex with the emergence of digital technologies. In her recent interrogation of the so-called "digital divide," Barbara Monroe argues that asymmetrical conditions of access to technology need to be understood in the context of broader cultural and material realities. Reminding us that class inequality "is at once economic, racial, discursive, and epistemological in character," Monroe suggests that "[r]esituating the [digital] divide within the landscape of larger social and political formations should allow for a richer, more complicated discussion of a host of issues that attach themselves to Internet access per se but are actually constituted by these larger formations" (5). Monroe's analysis of access to digital technologies echoes the analysis of the still camera by Tagg and Slater in its
emphasis on the need to move beyond material conditions to larger cultural structures. Monroe concludes that a pedagogy of critical engagement is both necessary and possible (29–30).

Before turning to the issue of critical engagement, however, we would like to explore more fully the complex and shifting nature of material access. For if material access is not a sufficient precondition for the development a multimodal public sphere, it is certainly a necessary one. As Nicholas Garnham observes, contemporary models of the public sphere must include provisions for “the problem raised by all forms of mediated communication, namely, how are the material resources necessary for that communication made available and to whom?” (361). Even in this more narrow sense, access is not a simple matter. Ready access to handheld cameras, as Tagg points out, belied a lack of access to other key technologies related to photographic communication. Likewise, Monroe reminds us that there is no such thing as generic access to computers: access at home is not the same as access at work or at school (19–20, 26–27).

Historically, mediated communication—and the multimodal rhetoric associated with it—has been a one-way street, relegating nonspecialists to the role of consumers. If technologies associated with the still camera have historically been withheld from nonspecialists, the technology gap has been even more pronounced in the case of film, television, radio, and print. The expensive and arcane technologies of media production have required professionalized and elaborately divided labor. Producing content for these media has historically necessitated an ensemble of specialists (graphic designers, photographers, cinematographers, script writers, producers, directors, editors) funded by large corporations. Additionally, technologies of distribution have been designed to facilitate communication of the few to the many rather than from the many to the many. Echoing Bertolt Brecht’s observations about radio, Hans Enzensberger contends that “[i]n its present form, equipment like television or film does not serve communication but prevents it. It allows no reciprocal action between transmitter and receiver” (97).

As writers such as Richard Lanham have noted, however, emergent technologies are altering this media asymmetry by providing nonspecialists the resources necessary to create rhetorically effective multimodal
compositions. The personal computer allows nonspecialists to manipulate visual and aural semiotic elements in ways historically reserved for highly trained specialists. Communicators who hope to make use of photographs, for instance, can turn to a host of free or inexpensive applications that allow them to crop and zoom, adjust color saturation, lightness, opacity, contrast, sharpness and so on. Likewise, many of the editing operations crucial to rhetorically effective uses of film—the ability to sequence footage, to cut between shots, to add music—are now easy to perform using a standard computer and free or inexpensive software. Nonspecialists increasingly have access to applications that allow us to draw, paint, compose music, and create animations.

Just as important as technologies of production are technologies of reproduction and distribution. Historically, individuals and small groups who have managed to secure the resources to produce television content, for instance, have been left with the problem of how to deliver that content to target audiences. Airtime is costly, and even those who can afford it are usually limited to short “spots” that run only a few times. Likewise, resources available to corporate print media (color inks, photographs, bindings) add exponentially to the cost of reproduction. Problems related to reproduction and distribution, however, are increasingly addressed by the Internet and other digital technologies. Communicators can distribute a wide range of multimodal content via the Internet for a tiny fraction of what it would have cost in the past. Colors, images, and other semiotic elements do not add to the cost of reproducing digital compositions. A standard personal computer can distribute millions of copies of a web page without incurring additional cost. In contrast to television, film, or radio, content on the Internet can be made available twenty-four hours a day without adding costs and without displacing other content. Further, the Internet is a many-to-many, not one-to-many, technology. The predominant metaphor for new media is not a pipeline distributing content from a central location to dispersed individuals, but a web or network in which media elements are joined through hyperlinks.

In short, nonspecialists, including historically disenfranchised groups, can potentially own or access the means of production, reproduction, and distribution of media content on a much larger scale than in the past. The division of media labor, as John Trimbur notes, is “collapsing” ("Deliv-
tering" 269); the same individual can produce and distribute multimodal compositions to a mass audience. It is as if when George Eastman began putting Kodak cameras into the hands of consumers in 1888, he also provided them with easy-to-use darkrooms and printing presses as well as access to an elaborate system of delivery trucks and retail outlets.

But, of course, access is not just a function of material resources. As both Tagg and Monroe demonstrate, citizens will not be able to exploit available material resources unless they have access to related knowledge and skill sets. As we discuss later, fostering the kind of knowledge and skills necessary for nonspecialist appropriation of multimodal rhetoric requires a critical praxis of interdisciplinarity. Even more fundamental, however, are several new points of critical engagement that rhetorical education (among other disciplines) might integrate. First, rhetorical education needs to open up for critique the inevitability and privilege of written rhetoric and associated media and technologies within the academy. The historical insistence of official education in general and rhetorical education in particular on the written word as the only legitimate rhetorical practice habituates citizens to a kind of learned helplessness; sustained insistence on the written word renders invisible to citizens the possibility of deploying multimodal rhetoric and, therefore, withholds from them a potentially transformative set of rhetorical assets.

Secondly, citizens need to critique the logics of profit and consumerism that enforce an overly narrow understanding of multimodality and technologies associated with it. As Tagg, Slater, and Monroe demonstrate, the logic of capitalism circumscribes our perceptions of how modes, media, and technologies can be used. Like the still camera, digital technologies continue to be constructed as tools for professional and personal—not civic—spheres. Computers and the WWW are often marketed as commodities that allow us to work efficiently, play games, chat with family and friends, and engage in more consumption. Rhetorical education needs to provide opportunities for public rhetors to re-imagine multimodal rhetoric as a tool for addressing public concerns.

Finally, a critically reflective approach needs to open up intellectual spaces for students to critique the division of labor in rhetorical production. In the case of the still camera, most nonspecialists never questioned the practice of taking rolls of film to the local one-hour photo processor.
The separation of the labor of shooting a picture from the labor of processing it has become naturalized. But as Tagg’s analysis shows, this division curtailed the development of radical photography because it removed from nonspecialists the tools necessary for effective visual communication. Speaking more generally, the division of labor in rhetorical production is often viewed as a given, when in fact it is a function of cultural, material, and historical forces. It used to be the case, in certain contexts, that communicators handwrote or dictated compositions; someone other than the writer (often someone in a subordinate role) was responsible for the labor of typing. Word processing technologies have rendered this practice largely obsolete. In the case of mediated communication, this division of labor has been elaborate, involving highly trained specialists. But the material conditions that necessitated this have shifted in important ways, and this division of labor needs to be fundamentally reimagined.

In the transformation of rhetorical education that we envision, these fundamental dynamics—the academy’s privileging of the written word; the cultural logics that circumscribe the use of certain modes, media, and technologies; and the division of rhetorical labor—would be exposed for scrutiny. These dynamics would be reconceived in terms of the needs and goals of public rhetorics. In the following section we begin this reconception by turning to the ancient concept of kairos, which offers a coherent way of integrating decisions about mode, medium, and associated technologies into rhetorical theory and practice.

**Mode, Kairos, and Materiality**

In the age of digitization, the different modes have technically become the same at some level of representation, and they can be operated by one multi-skilled person, using one interface [...] so that he or she can ask, at every point: “Shall I express this with sound or music,” “Shall I say this visually or verbally?”, and so on.

——Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen

The points of critical engagement that we outline above have in common the goal of expanding the rhetorical agency of public rhetors, of making
visible options that have historically been foreclosed by various cultural-material logics. The concept of kairos—defined by James Kinneavy as "the appropriateness of the discourse to the particular circumstances of the time, place, speaker, and audience involved," offers a coherent way for rhetors to assess these new options (84). By *materializing* kairos, we can render visible a variety of options that have historically been elided. That is, kairos can be productively expanded to include assessments of modes, media, and the technologies of production, reproduction, and distribution associated with them.

In order to understand this expansion, we need to bear in mind the essentially performative nature of rhetoric. Rhetoric, Lloyd Bitzer famously reminds us, "functions ultimately to produce action or change in the world; it performs some task. In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality [...]" (3-4). In the case of civic rhetoric, an intervention is invited by an exigency of public concern. Some social condition—poverty, intolerance, inequality—needs to be changed and rhetoric is a means of accomplishing this change.

Key sites of rhetorical education within the academy, such as first-year composition, have often begun with the hegemonic assumption that paper-based alphabetic rhetoric was the appropriate—or even the only possible—response. But public rhetors cannot afford to begin with that assumption. A grass-roots organization, in approaching a particular social exigency, does not begin with the question "What kind of paper should we write?" Instead, it assesses the available means of persuasion much more broadly and strategically in terms of the materials necessary for the production and distribution of appropriate rhetorical compositions within a particular set of circumstances: What resources are available to us at this moment? What modes and media are both within our means and are best suited to our audience and purpose? Nor can a grass-roots organization afford the luxury of focusing narrowly on composing. A composition, in itself, does not address an exigency; to effect change, it needs to be delivered to its intended audience. Organizations, therefore, must ask, What medium of distribution (direct mail, television, radio, and so on) will allow us to get our message to our audience most effectively?

Jim Ridolfo’s decision to employ digital video points to the utility of making kairotic assessments related to the production of multimodal
compositions. Confronted with a particular exigency (the potential harm caused by representations of protests produced and distributed by the mass media), Jim had to decide what form of rhetorical intervention would be most effective. This intervention might conceivably have been a white paper, a website, a brochure, a poster, or a leaflet. Digital video, however, was suited to his particular subject and purpose because he sought to participate in discourses—mainstream media representations—that employed visual and aural elements. To frame the mass media representations as representations, Jim opted for the strategy of providing alternative representations aimed at making visible a different perspective, video footage that would allow him to partially capture the visceral experience of demonstrating. The exigency itself, in this case, related to particular practices of video mediation. Digital video was also appropriate for Jim’s intended audience, a diverse (mostly young) group of alternate globalization activists spread across the hemisphere.

If rhetoric’s aim, as Aristotle says, is discovering the best available means of persuasion, processes of production need to be expanded to include assessments of semiotic resources (modes) as well as material resources (technologies, raw materials, media, time). Assignments that begin with the directive “write a paper” curtail the rhetorical and ultimately the civic agency of student-citizens because they elide an important set of decisions that public rhetors must face in a digital age. Rather than allowing students to assess modes, media, and the material constraints associated with them, framing assignments in this way imposes on students the mode (writing), the medium (paper), and the technologies involved (pens, pencils, word processing applications).

Here we are following Jody Shipka’s recent attempt to create a framework “geared toward increasing students’ rhetorical, material, and methodological flexibility” (285–86). As Shipka observes, “assignments that predetermine goals and narrowly limit the materials, methodologies, and technologies that students employ in service of those goals [. . . ] perpetuate arhetorical, mechanical, one-sided views of production” (285). Our emphasis, however, differs from Shipka’s in important ways that reflect our aim of connecting multimodal rhetoric with public-sphere participation. Despite Shipka’s emphasis on a “task-based” approach, her framework does not foreground assessments of mode that are informed
by exigency, purpose, and audience. Shipka adopts an essentially expressivist approach in which students select modes and media in order to communicate their feelings and experiences. For instance, assigned the task of creating a composition based on the *OED*, one of Shipka's students experiences "physical and intellectual punishment [ . . . ] while sitting in front of the computer looking for usable OED data online" (297). To express this frustration, he produces a video tailored to "bore the socks off" his audience (297). Likewise, another student, confessing "that she was extremely frustrated for the first part of the semester," sees the *OED* assignment as "her opportunity to articulate that frustration through a piece that was intentionally designed" to instill frustration in her audience. The framework that Shipka offers is limited by her expressivist approach. Public rhetoric depends on the rhetor's ability to move beyond herself, to negotiate through a complex set of relationships between audiences, purposes, material circumstances, and exigencies. In short, public rhetoric demands a kairotic approach.

In addition to concerns of production, kairotic assessments of modes and media—like assessments of when to appeal to pathos, ethos, or logos—require that public rhetors confront issues of both the reproduction and distribution of rhetorical compositions. As he considered the possibility of producing a film, for instance, Jim needed to assess the complex relationship between production and distribution. In a pre-Internet era, video might not have been a suitable medium for Jim's response, not because video was inappropriate for a particular audience and purpose, but because it was impractical to distribute. The affordances of digital networks, which make digital video relatively easy to distribute, encouraged the use of this medium. Moreover, the specific mechanism of delivery—the file-sharing application LimeWire—supported his rhetorical goals. LimeWire's peer-to-peer file-sharing approach allows for more precise searches by those seeking a particular media format. Peer-to-peer file sharing allows direct access to content in ways that the web itself does not; media elements are not embedded within larger structures as they are on webpages, but are directly accessible through a search restricted to keyword and media format. Finally, Jim knew that if he made his footage available in a high-quality format, other media producers would be able to appropriate his footage for their own projects—a
prospect that itself could potentially further his activist-minded rhetorical goals. Before composing, Jim had to anticipate the ways in which his film might be appropriated and to decide whether or not and how to facilitate these processes of sub-composing.

Opportunities for making decisions about reproduction and distribution in the traditional writing classroom are even more limited than opportunities for assessing modes and media. As John Trimbur observes, “By privileging composing as the main site of instruction, the teaching of writing has taken up what Karl Marx calls a ‘one-sided’ view of production, and thereby has largely erased the cycle that links the production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of writing” (“Composition” 190). Indeed, the shift in focus from speech to writing that has defined contemporary rhetorical education for most citizens has made the elision of production and distribution even more pronounced than in classical times. Mindful that the effectiveness of a piece of oratory was dependent upon an embodied performance—including such elements as tone, volume, facial expression, and gesture—ancient rhetoricians studied the canon of delivery. In the traditional writing classroom, as Trimbur points out, delivery is reduced to “an afterthought at best” (190). “Reproduction” typically means printing out a paper and “distribution” means handing it to the teacher. In contrast to this reduction, Trimbur links delivery to public-sphere participation, arguing that delivery must be seen as “ethical and political—a democratic aspiration to devise delivery systems that circulate ideas, information, opinions, and knowledge and thereby expand the public forums in which people can deliberate on the issues of the day” (190).

Considerations of production and distribution and the technologies associated with them point to the material nature of rhetoric, a concern to which rhetoric and adjacent fields have recently turned their attention (see, for instance, Ellertson and Graham; Kress and Van Leeuwen; Selzer and Crowley; and Wysocki). This recent interest in materiality can be seen as a corrective to rhetorical studies’ historically narrow focus on rhetoric’s “most ephemeral quality: symbolicity” (Blair 18). Our goal here is to foreground the implications of materiality for multimodal rhetoric as a civic tool. This means preparing citizens to confront materiality as *producers* of rhetoric. McComiskey alludes to this concern
in his review of *Rhetorical Bodies*, lamenting that “there is little attention paid” in the collection
to the actual composition of material rhetoric. [. . .] Rhetoric and composition is primarily a productive art, an art aimed at the invention, arrangement, and delivery of cultural meaning—whether through voice, text, or image. Critical knowledge is “good” only insofar as it is “useful,” and it is useful only insofar as it leads to positive rhetorical interventions into the material and discursive processes of oppressive political formations. (703)

It might have been possible for rhetorical education to overlook materiality in a writing-centered culture in which multimodal rhetoric was beyond the reach of nonspecialists and the tasks of distribution belonged to individuals other than composers. But our options and resources in a digital age have broadened significantly (see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2; Lanham; Wysocki 10). Educational sites designed to prepare students to produce multimodal public rhetoric need to help students negotiate the material processes associated with effective rhetorical intervention.

To sum up, in order to make kairotic assessments of mode, media, and the technologies of production, reproduction, and distribution associated with them, students need to confront such questions as, What modes and media are best suited to the kinds of change I am trying to effect and to my intended audience and purpose? How can I deliver my proposed rhetorical composition to my target audience? What material resources—technologies, knowledge, people, time—are available to me? What material limitations and affordances must I take into account?

**Open Deliberative Rhetoric and Multimodality**
We have been arguing that rhetorical education can help prepare nonspecialists to deploy multimodal rhetoric effectively within the public sphere by adopting a more capacious understanding of kairos to include material considerations related to modes, media, technologies, and other resources. We do not mean to imply, however, that claiming multimodality for rhetoric is a matter of simple addition, as if public rhetors merely need to make a few extra decisions about images, computers and networks over
and above traditional decisions about rhetorical strategy. Indeed, the material and cultural specificities of multimodal rhetoric force us to reinterrogate ongoing debates surrounding the nature of public rhetoric itself. One of the chief tensions within these debates is between models that emphasize a more deliberative approach (characterized variously as civil, rational, and conciliatory) and those that emphasize a more confrontational or “rowdy” one (Ivie 277). Arguing for the former are theorists as diverse as Deborah Tannen, Jürgen Habermas, Iris Marion Young, Richard Fulkerson, and Edward Corbett, while those who reserve a place for a more confrontational approach to public debate include Susan Jarratt, Gerald Graff, Kevin DeLuca, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and even Ken Macrorie.

Lynch, George, and Cooper argue for an inclusive model of rhetoric that balances conciliatory and combative moments: “What we are seeking is a way of reconceiving argument that includes both confrontational and cooperative perspectives, a multifaceted process that includes moments of conflict and agonistic positioning as well as moments of understanding and communication” (63). Likewise, we hope to preserve for public rhetors the possibility of kairotically assessing their position on a continuum between deliberative and confrontational approaches. In this section we explore the way multimodality implicates deliberative rhetoric, turning in the following section to what Umberto Eco has called “semiotic guerilla warfare” (qtd. in Hebdige 105).

Evoking a tradition of deliberation, Corbett famously advocates an “open-handed” rhetoric characterized by “the kind of persuasive discourse that seeks to carry its point by reasoned, sustained, conciliatory discussion of the issues” in contrast to closed-fisted rhetoric which “seeks to carry its point by non-rational, nonsequential, often nonverbal, frequently provocative means” (288). Recalling Corbett’s open hand, Richard Fulkerson notes that argumentation is the “chief cognitive activity” by which a democracy functions, and he attempts to outline a pedagogy in which argument is seen

in a larger, less militant [...] context—one in which the goal is not victory but a good decision, one in which all arguers are at risk of needing to alter their views, one in which a participant takes seriously and fairly the views
different from his or her own [. . .] . It is crucial that students learn to participate effectively in argumentation as a cooperative, dialectical exchange and a search for mutually acceptable (and contingent) answers. (16–17)

Fulkerson and Corbett point to a rhetorical tradition in which deliberators are open to change, to opposing views, to the critical scrutiny of others, in contrast to an agonistic tradition in which opponents seek to defeat each other, even if that means deploying rhetorical strategies that tend to resist, rather than invite critical scrutiny.

In order to illustrate the way multimodality changes the dynamics of deliberation, we return to our discussion of the photograph. In the tradition of critical semiotics stemming from Roland Barthes, photographs and other forms of iconic rhetoric are understood to be especially deceptive in their tendency to masquerade as transparent and authoritative representations of reality. Photography theorist Victor Burgin alludes to this tendency in a famous passage:

More than any other textual system, the photograph presents itself as “an offer you can’t refuse.” The characteristics of the photographic apparatus position the subject in such a way that the object photographed serves to conceal the textuality of the photograph itself—substituting passive receptivity for active (critical) reading. (146)

Rather than reveal itself as a rhetorical artifact, a photograph tends to assert itself as a given, a transparent window on reality, as natural, objective, neutral, authoritative, true, and real. Virtually every inquiry into how photographs mean is forced to confront this tendency at some point. Barthes’ own observation is that “the denoted image naturalizes the symbolic message, it innocents the semantic artifice of connotation [. . .]” (45).

As Paul Messaris points out, a photograph’s pretense of objectivity stems from its status as both an “index” and an “icon” (xii–xvii). As an index, in the Piercean sense, a photograph derives authority from the fact that it seems to be caused by the thing it represents. Light reflects off an object, enters the lens, and causes a photochemical reaction with the film
that results in what Susan Sontag calls a “trace” of the real (154). As an icon, a photograph derives authority because our process of decoding it seems to be coequal with our process of decoding the world itself. Even Umberto Eco, who denies that a photograph is in any way an “analogue” of reality, concedes that “we perceive the image as a message referred to a given code, but this is the normal perceptive code which presides over our every act of cognition” (33, 32).

Film—especially documentary film—shares the iconicity and indexicality of the still photograph. Visual Anthropologist Jay Ruby observes that

the filmic illusion of reality is an extremely dangerous one, for it gives the people who control the image industry too much power. The majority of Americans [. . .] receive information about the outside world from the images produced by film, television, and photography. If the lie that pictures always tell the truth is perpetuated [. . .], then an industry that has the potential to symbolically recreate the world in its own image continues to wield far too much power. (149)

Photographs and film as media and modes are not neutral; some rhetorical goals are more easily achieved than others as a result of the material realities of iconic media and the way they are constructed within Western cultures. Whereas deliberative rhetoric reveals its strategies in order to facilitate cooperative dialogue, photographs and films conceal their rhetorical nature, pretend, in fact, not to be rhetorical objects at all. Whereas open deliberative rhetoric reveals the status of any authorities it cites so that participants in the dialogue can critically assess them, photographs and film tend to assert themselves as authoritative, as mechanical reproductions of reality that cannot lie. As “offers you can’t refuse,” the photograph and film are the opposite of cooperative rhetoric.

But photographic authority is a tendency, not an inevitability. Michael Shapiro observes that “photography plays a politically radical role when it opens up forms of questions about power and authority which are closed or silenced within the most frequently circulated and authoritative discursive practices” (130).
Self-reflexivity is one strategy for achieving this alternate possibility in which photographs denaturalize reality, revealing rather than masking hidden assumptions. "To be reflexive, in terms of a work of anthropology," Jay Ruby explains, "is to insist that anthropologists systematically and rigorously reveal their methods and themselves as the instrument of data generation and reflect upon how the medium through which they transmit their work predisposes readers/viewers to construct the meaning of the work in certain ways" (152). Reflexivity, for Ruby, is essential: "the maker of images has the moral obligation to reveal the covert—never to appear to produce an objective mirror by which the world can see its 'true' image" (140). Ruby outlines a variety of rhetorical strategies for achieving reflexivity, including filmic techniques that remind audiences of the camera's operation. Film makers can eschew the "voice of god" narrator and instead foreground uncertainty (for example, by including discussions in which those involved in the production of the film argue about what has happened). They can include multiple retellings of a single event so that audiences realize that meaning is dependent upon the way an event is depicted (115–35).^5^ The website 360degrees: Perspectives on the Criminal Justice Systems illustrates the way multimodal compositions can adopt a self-reflexive approach. The self-announced purpose of this site is to "challenge your perceptions about who is in prison today and why" (Cornyn et al.). The title of the site, alluding to a circle, foregrounds the importance of taking a holistic view, one that encompasses a variety of perspectives. The trope of the circle is visually reinforced by a number of design elements. The site’s menu, for instance, is a series of floating circles labeled “Timeline,” “Stories,” “Dialogue,” and so on. The section of the site labeled “Stories” includes seven cases of incarceration. These cases are not represented by a single authoritative voice, but by a collection of voices, including the individual who was incarcerated, representatives of the criminal justice system (judges, prosecutors, guards, juvenile program workers), victims, and relatives of victims and convicts. These individuals are represented visually by still photos. Each photo (itself framed as a circle) is positioned around a larger circle, providing an image of round-table dialogue. Clicking on one of the circles calls up an audio recording of a monologue in which the individual voices his or her
understanding of the case. These audio recordings are accompanied by a video in which a camera films a 360 degree circuit of a physical space relevant to the person talking (a prison cell, an office, a bedroom).

The 360degrees website uses the figure of the circle to foreground the idea of perspective, to communicate that these issues and cases cannot be reduced to a single authoritative view. Moreover, by adopting a prominent metaphor that is iterated in words, design elements, and video, the website foregrounds the act of representation itself. By making its key metaphors explicit and by continually drawing attention to them, the website points to its own rhetoricity.

Rhetorical education can facilitate the project of a multimodal public sphere by making citizen communicators aware of the naturalizing tendencies associated with certain kinds of multimodal rhetoric and can prepare them to use strategies like reflexivity in order to achieve the goals of public deliberation. Confronting the ethical implications of iconic rhetoric, however, is only one example of the new challenges rhetorical education faces as it confronts multimodality. Emotion, for instance, is differently operationalized by multimodal rhetoric (Hill 30–38), calling for a better understanding of the roles that pathos plays in deliberation. And technical communication theorists like Sam Dragga, Nancy Allen, and Donna Kienzler demonstrate that rhetorical choices related to the visual presentation of information have ethical implications.

We imagine an approach to rhetorical education in which the public sphere is characterized by nonspecialists making strategic decisions about the kind of multimodal rhetoric they will deploy. In situations that call for rhetors to build consensus and facilitate cooperation, they will need to confront the way multimodality changes the nature of deliberation. They will need to ask questions like, How do the particular meaning-making processes associated with this mode and medium aid or resist critical reflection? What is naturalized by this particular confluence of semiotic elements? How can I integrate semiotic elements in such a way that their rhetorical nature is foregrounded rather than hidden?
Semiotic Guerilla Warfare: The Cultural Work of Multimodality

Ethnic minorities, women, gays, third- and fourth-world people, the very rich, and the very poor are telling the middle-class, middle-aged straight white males who dominate the industry that the mass-mediated pictures of the Other are false. Many wish to control [...] the ways in which they are imaged by others.

—Jay Ruby

The potential power that you possess as a writer is based on this ability to put images of the world you see, and ideas about these images, into other people's heads.

—Wayne Booth and Marshall Gregory

Like Lynch, George, and Cooper, we hope to preserve an understanding of public rhetoric that "includes both confrontational and cooperative perspectives, a multifaceted process that includes moments of conflict and agonistic positioning as well as moments of understanding and communication" (63). In keeping with the kairotic approach we outline, we argue that to participate in effective rhetorical interventions, public rhetors should strategically position themselves in relation to their audience and subject matter based on assessments of contextual factors such as exigency and purpose. Although Habermas and others have emphasized the "rational" and the "civil" as governing tropes for public rhetoric, other scholars have pointed out the need for confrontation. In this section we borrow Umberto Eco's figure of "semiotic guerilla warfare" to theorize the cultural work that multimodal rhetoric can perform when a more confrontational approach is adopted.

Our exploration of confrontational multimodal rhetoric begins with a particular understanding of the relationship between multimodal signifying practices and consciousness. Cultural theorists from Edward Sapir to Michele Foucault have emphasized the ways in which discourse, broadly conceived, is productive of thought, ideology, and culture itself. Hans Enzensberger observes that while all of us "like to think that we reign supreme in our own consciousness, that we are masters of what our minds accept or reject," our consciousness is actually the product
of a "consciousness industry" in which mass media play a privileged role (3, 95).

Jennifer González, for instance, helps us understand the way racial encoding is accomplished by the consciousness industry’s deployment of particular modes and media. In “Morphologies: Race as a Visual Technology,” González writes, “Skin color, hair color, and eye color become marking devices for those who seek to situate the genetic history of humans within the narrow confines of phenotype. Race has always been a profoundly visual rhetoric [...].” (380). According to González, photographic technologies have been particularly implicated because “a conceptual parallel exists between the ‘truth effects’ of photography and what might be called the ‘truth effects’ of race. Both kinds of ‘truth effects’ naturalize ideological systems by making them visible and, apparently, self-evident” (379–80).

Rhetorical education and the humanities more generally have historically emphasized critique as the appropriate response to the practices of the consciousness industry. For instance, McComiskey draws on cultural studies to provide students a heuristic for uncovering the values embedded in both visual and verbal semiotic resources deployed by magazine advertisements. Importantly, however, McComiskey asks his students to go beyond what might be called academic critique—the production of critical discourse in the classroom—to critique as rhetorical action in the world beyond the academy. Mindful that social change is “less likely to occur if students end their composing processes with critical essays,” McComiskey has students make a “rhetorical intervention” in the form of a “practical letter” targeted at one or more relevant audiences: the company that commissioned the ad, the editors of the magazine that distributes it, or the target audience for the ad (391). In selecting their audience, the students assess the “potential impact” of their rhetorical intervention (394).

McComiskey’s emphasis on written rhetorical intervention can be usefully synthesized with his later emphasis on students as producers of multimodal discourse. If, as McComiskey notes, Calvin Klein ads promote the restrictive ideal of “sexy women wear[ing] close fitting jeans,” one powerful rhetorical response would be the creation and distribution of alternative images (393). The women in the class might, for instance,
produce images of womanhood that are aligned with their own critical understandings and lived experiences and might publish these images on the web. Indeed, this response is consistent with the Birmingham School tradition that McComiskey invokes. Raymond Williams, for instance, insists that critique is an incomplete response; "critical demystification can take us only part of the way" and should proceed "always in association with practice: regular practice, as part of a normal education [. . .]: practice in the production of alternative images of the 'same event'; practice in processes of basic editing and the making of sequences" (62).

Williams suggests a model of the public sphere in which rhetors appropriate the modes and media of the dominant culture to counter the practices of the consciousness industry. This model is consistent with recent discussions of the public sphere that emphasize the need for citizens to engage not just in dialogue, but in rhetorical practices whose aim is transforming the underlying cultural codes themselves. Scott Welsh, for instance, draws attention to "background culture," claiming that "cultural vocabularies" that naturalize key cultural concepts such as race and gender need to be changed (685). Drawing on the sophistic tradition, Welsh provides an alternative to deliberative exchanges that is characterized by

political actors creatively interpreting and modifying commonly referenced or understood ways of speaking. The aim is seen not as attempting to change interlocutors' minds, one by one [. . .] but to effect a shift in prevailing relationships between and meanings of key cultural-political terms, events, or narratives. [. . .] [B]ackground culture becomes the "source" and "goal" of effective political speech governing meanings of a political collectivity. (690)

But, as González demonstrates, the cultural vocabularies that contextualize public discourse are multimodal vocabularies, comprised not just of words but of images as well as image-sound-word compounds. Key markers of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are visual, as are markers of cultural locations, such as "inner city" and "suburb." Film and television contribute to the formation of cultural vocabularies by placing into circulation specific images that naturalize cultural constructions.
Welsh's emphasis on altering the signifying practices of the dominant culture parallels what Eco has usefully called "semiotic guerilla warfare" (qtd. in Hebdige 105). Eco refers to the ability of individuals and groups to appropriate existing semiotic materials and bend them to their own needs and purposes. Dick Hebdige deploys Eco's concept in *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, observing that different subcultural groups use style rhetorically, bending the straight meaning of everyday objects to serve as tools of resistance:

The limits of acceptable linguistic expression are prescribed by a number of apparently universal taboos. These taboos guarantee the continuing "transparency" (the taken-for-grantedness) of meaning. Predictably then, violations of the authorized codes through which the social world is organized and experienced have considerable power to provoke and disturb. (91)

Whereas traditional academic critique is about making visible "authorized codes" and the cultural work that they perform, semiotic guerilla warfare is about directly changing the semiotic fabric itself and thereby changing the consciousness that is shaped by this fabric.

Semiotic guerilla warfare accurately characterizes the multimodal practices in which many activist and community groups engage, and there is an emerging awareness within the field of composition, especially among feminists, that preparing students to represent their lived experiences multimodally should be a fundamental goal of rhetorical education. Gail Hawisher and Patricia Sullivan observe that "as women have more control over writing their own visualizations online, we see some women representing themselves complexly in creative, rhetorically effective ways" (288). They warn that "as inhabitants of this [visually saturated] world—as women, as English professionals, and as teachers—we cannot afford to ignore the visual. We do so at our own peril" (289). DeVoss and Selfe conclude,

We are witnessing the emergence of new spaces for identity formation and display, spaces where women are rewriting conventional narratives of the public-private divide, the unified subject, and cyberspace as a male
domain. New media and new realms have invited new rhetorical positionings for the creative souls working in these spaces, and as teachers of composition, we need to help students explore, develop, and communicate more effectively in them. (46)

The *Semiotics and the Media* website, produced collaboratively by Thomas Streeter and his students, offers an interesting example of semiotic warfare aimed at destabilizing gender codes. In their web essay "This is Not Sex," Streeter and his students restage a series of magazine advertisements, substituting men where women are depicted in the originals. The men mimic the poses and facial expressions of the original women models. The result is visually jarring, precisely because visual codes associated with specific cultural constructions of women—codes we normally take for granted—are graphically brought to our attention in the re-stagings. As the web essay proclaims, "Most viewers find the images of the men odd or laughable. But the images of the women seem charming and attractive." The visual re-stagings found in "This Is Not Sex" differ from traditional critique in that they act directly on the cultural codes themselves, disrupting them by applying to men visual conventions associated (in the dominant culture) with women.

Cultural locations like "inner city" can be reframed through appropriations of multimodal rhetoric as well. In *Teaching Youth Media*, for instance, Stephen Goodman writes about his work with urban teenagers at the Educational Video Center (EVC) in New York City. Goodman adopts an approach to media that "links media analysis to production; learning about the world is directly linked to the possibility of changing it" (3). Mindful that the "print and visual language that is used to name these kids and the worlds they inhabit can build public consent" for media practices that "frame" urban teens as "criminals and consumers," Goodman and the EVC create a learning environment in which teens produce and find public venues for showing documentary films that recode, reframe, and rename their identities and lived experiences in their own terms: "In the end, the young documentary makers constructed a powerful collection of words, music, and images that represented their own framing of reality" (29, 45). Likewise, David Sheridan explores the way grass-roots organizations in Detroit are using the Internet to place into circulation
representations that more accurately reflect their lived experiences than those found in mainstream media.

These practices are suggestive of a public sphere that is consistent with Scott Welsh’s notion of a space for revising and resisting practices of multimodal rhetoric associated with the dominant culture. The kinds of operations that can be performed on cultural codes have been described variously as “defamiliarizing,” “disrupting,” “interrupting,” “subverting,” “inverting,” “bending,” “signifying,” and “jamming.” While we do not wish to homogenize concepts that have been introduced by different individuals writing from within diverse contexts, all of these operations share the goal of undermining the “normal” operation of semiosis in the service of dominant ideology.

Rhetorical education has an important role to play in fostering this kind of public sphere participation. In order to take advantage of the special cultural work that multimodal rhetoric can perform, students, as public rhetors, need to be given opportunities to produce and repurpose multimodal compositions that counter existing hegemonic vocabularies. Doing this means confronting such questions as, What is the nature of the exigency that calls for an intervention? What rhetorical practices contribute to this problem? How is it reinforced and reproduced by the circulation of images, metaphors, stories, and representations? What kinds of counter-practices can effectively intervene? What new images, metaphors, stories, and representations need to be placed into circulation if consciousness is to be altered? How can hegemonic naming and framing practices be destabilized? How can new naming and framing practices be introduced?

Nonspecialist Media Producers and the Challenge of Interdisciplinarity

Ultimately, when we consider the conditions that gave rise to Jim Ridolfo’s creation of the FTAA film, we find ourselves returning to fundamental questions that present significant challenges for the contemporary academy: What curricular, structural, and infrastructural reconfigurations would enable people like Jim to “dive in” with new media technologies as they simultaneously develop an understanding of critical rhetoric? How should rhetorical education position itself in relation to other disciplines and fields that confront multimodality?
We have been encouraged by the increasing numbers of individuals who, like Jim, combine academically sanctioned learning with self-sponsored learning in order to produce effective multimodal compositions. These rhetors do not necessarily undergo the traditional credentialing processes of professional photographers, video editors, or graphic designers, but instead adopt a “learn-as-you-go” approach to multimodality. Embracing this practice, however, forces us to rethink the focus on disciplinary specialization that characterizes the contemporary academy. The current schema associates different forms of expression with different institutional sites, so that writing, graphic design, and music, are addressed in English, Art, and Music departments respectively, and redundancy is considered a form of inefficiency. In place of disciplinary structures that limit the use of new media technologies to specialists—structures that privilege “mastery” of technologies over social action—we envision a critical-praxis-based approach in which public rhetors appropriate all available means of rhetorical production. At times this may necessitate a kind of disciplinary trespass in which public rhetors and rhetorical educators cross into turf that has long been claimed by others in fields like studio art, television and video production, film studies, and music studies. We imagine a shrewdly pragmatic approach in which due respect is paid to disciplinary knowledge as long as it enables—not forestalls—activist appropriations of multimodality.

One can imagine, for instance, making introductory graphic design courses available to all undergraduates, giving them the opportunity to explore rich design principles like balance, rhythm, emphasis, and contrast. At the same time, critical praxis might demand a more expedient approach. An activist rhetor who has not taken a course in graphic design might make use, in response to a given exigency, of whatever is at hand, including approaches that professional designers would find reductive. She might turn to one of the many lists of “design tips” available on the web that offer formulas like “never use more than six words per line or six lines per slide.” This strategic compromise is not ideal, but public rhetors do not operate in the realm of the ideal.

Those responsible for higher education, however, can design educational experiences so that the need for such compromises is limited by creating richer opportunities for interdisciplinary praxis. This means, in
part, confronting the reality that higher education, as it is currently configured, suffers from a lack of sustained, formal opportunities for students to synthesize their discipline-specific learning experiences. We have distribution requirements, but few places where students are able to make connections between the discrete experiences that result from those requirements. Rhetorical education can function as a key site for interdisciplinary synthesis and critique, providing student citizens opportunities to interrogate the various disciplinary frameworks made available to them through discipline-specific experiences, to ask what practices those frameworks make possible and what practices they foreclose.

To accomplish this, rhetorical education needs to exploit what Rolf Norgaard calls “disciplinary contact zones”—institutional and intellectual sites “that place students at the margins of their own fields or that have them straddle organizational boundaries” (48). Synthesizing Pratt’s notion of “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other” with Bazerman and Russell’s “interface discourse” and Journet’s “boundary rhetoric,” Norgaard theorizes “educational experiences that foreground the negotiation of expertise” (49, 51). Disciplinary contact zones include learning structures located beyond and between individual courses: alternative learning spaces, multi-course portfolios, multidisciplinary teams, project- or problem-based learning, service learning, and residential and nonresidential learning communities.

A first-year engineering student, for instance, might enroll in a cluster of courses in writing, in graphic design, and in her major. In an approach that combines project-based learning with multi-course portfolios, she might be asked to identify a public exigency engineering might meaningfully address and then create a set of materials that will help a lay audience understand this problem and that will advocate for specific solutions. Over the course of a semester, she might produce a flyer, a tri-fold brochure, and a website—a coordinated series of deliverables that are linked by a coherent visual approach, that provide varying levels of detail, and that reflect kairotic assessments of modes and media. The student might be asked to document her learning in a holistic portfolio that includes these print materials in addition to a variety of developmental
and reflective compositions (for example, analyses of target audiences and publication venues, plans for reproduction and distribution, analyses of what particular rhetorical strategies were used, estimates of effectiveness). In this scenario, the practices of rhetoric, design, and engineering are synthesized in a single project that foregrounds public goals. Meaningful interdisciplinarity is achieved by linking a set of discipline-specific experiences in ways that encourage critical reflection and integrated practice.

A different kind of contact zone is suggested by what Trimbur calls a “multiliteracy center”: sites of collaborative learning in which student consultants support peers as they work on multimodal compositions (“Multiliteracies”). Multiliteracy centers go beyond computer labs staffed by technicians, offering support through consultants who have a sophisticated understanding of how rhetoric and technology are related and who have developed specialized skill sets through formal coursework, professional experience, and self-directed learning. The community institution that corresponds to the multiliteracy center is the community media center (CMC). As the Alliance for Community Media website explains, “For democracy to flourish, people must be active participants in their government [. . .]. Communications networks which use the public rights-of-way and public spectrum must provide the means and support for that participation through community uses of media.” CMCs across the country are providing access to both the technologies and education necessary to engage in media production.

A critical praxis of multimodality ultimately requires a rethinking of rhetorical education that runs counter to the bottom-up tendency in the contemporary academy. This tendency assumes that it is only after students gain some exposure to ideas through “breadth” requirements will they be given access to the specialized knowledges necessary for them to do their job as professionals in the field. While this approach may make sense in terms of a vocational education designed to produce students with the technical skills (techne) necessary to run a camera, design photo layouts, or even produce a film, we are concerned that this approach reinforces the gap between technical expertise in new media technologies and social action.
Beyond Snap, Crackle, and Pop Rhetoric

Observing that "mass media leads a public to expect and to act on snappy one-liners," Arabella Lyon outlines several possible responses:

We can theorize the effects of snap, crackle, and pop culture; we can produce more snap crackle and pop; we can theorize alternative public spaces; or we can develop and promote alternative public spheres and voices. [T]raditional theories [...] can only provide a starting point to any of these actions because the culture of late capitalism includes more voices, technologies, suspicions, and opportunities than the prior cultures where rhetoric has been theorized. (13)

In referring to mass media rhetoric as "snap crackle and pop," Lyon echoes a host of popular and academic critiques of mass media rhetoric that focus on its sound-bite nature and its preference for glitz and melodrama over substance. We have tried to acknowledge the power of mass media to shape the culture and the need to critique that power. But we have tried to go further, to imagine a culture that values a particular kind of rhetorical education aimed at preparing public rhetors to appropriate multimodal rhetoric for their own ends. We have examined the nature of this appropriation critically, however, viewing it as a complex endeavor characterized by both challenges and opportunities. Key to this project is the ability of multimodal rhetors to be critically reflective about the multimodal rhetorical strategies that will function most effectively within a given context. This means having access to the full range of the rhetorical tradition, including both confrontational and cooperative "moments." By mapping this tradition onto multimodality, we hope to sketch out a pedagogy that prepares students not to imitate, unreflectively, the rhetorical practices of mass media, but to go beyond snap, crackle, and pop rhetoric, transforming mass media practices strategically in ways that help facilitate social change.

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Notes

1. Following The New London Group, we use the term “multimodal” to refer to different “modes of meaning” that are combined in a single composition (25): a speech that combines gesture and spoken words; a digital slide show that combines graphs, written words, and spoken narration; a television show that combines moving images and a performed script. Although the distinction is not essential to our argument, we differentiate in this article between “mode” and “medium.” The distinction is a slippery one, and a consensus about the precise meaning of these words has not yet developed. We use “media” to refer to mechanisms for delivering content to audiences. “Modes” refer to categories of semiotic content (which are based, in some scholarship, on the five senses). (See Kress and Van Leeuwen 21–22, Maybury and Wahlster 4–6, and Wyard and Churcher for discussions of mode and media).

2. A number of scholars have critiqued the narrow focus on the written word. George, Shipka, and Wysocki expose the artificial limits imposed by rhetorical approaches that dictate to students the mode, medium, and genre they must adopt. A different critique is implied by the work of Dyson, and Wade and Moje, who discuss the importance of the multiple literacies—including visual and multimodal literacies—that students bring with them when they enter the academy.

3. Apple Computer, for instance, has recently developed a suite of media production applications that are both cheap and easy to use. These applications are marketed, however, via images of leisure-time consumption that strongly echo the Kodak marketing Slater discusses: “What if you could command an entire world of music, photos, movies and DVDs—all from your sofa? Now you can share the good life with friends and family on a [. . . ] new iMac G5” (“Mac Expo”).

4. Shipka, drawing on Trimbur, rightly points out the importance of integrating delivery into our pedagogies, but again her framework needs to be transformed and extended if it is to effectively serve public rhetoric. One student, for instance, produces an intricate composition comprised in part by a set of specialized mirrors. Although this is clearly a provocative approach to the problem of delivery, it does not seem to be informed by a broader understanding of circulation as a process that extends beyond the classroom, eliding such questions as, How could this intricate composition be effectively reproduced so that a sufficient number of copies could be made to address the exigency? How could they be distributed to their intended audience? What are the costs involved
in reproduction and distribution? How do the benefits of this approach weigh against competing approaches that might be easier to distribute?

5. Anne Wysocki has suggested redefining "new media" in terms that can be described as "self reflexive" in the sense we adopt for the term here: "I think we should call 'new media texts' those that have been made by composers who are aware of the range of materialities of texts and who then highlight the materiality: such composers design texts that help readers/consumers/viewers stay alert to how any text—like its composers and readers—doesn’t function independently of how it is made and in what contexts. Such composers design texts that make as overtly visible as possible the values they embody" (15).

6. Technology-rich spaces that approach the kind of multiliteracy center Trimbur imagines are exemplified in Michigan State University’s Writing Center, Michigan Tech’s Center for Computer-Assisted Language Instruction, and Clemson University’s Class of 1941 Studio.

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