WHITE OR WRONG: APPLICATION OF WHITENESS THEORY IN FIRST-YEAR
COMPOSITION CLASSES

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of
Texas State University-San Marcos
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of ARTS

by

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San Marcos, Texas
August 2011
WHITE OR WRONG: APPLICATION OF WHITENESS THEORY IN FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION CLASSES

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Cristina, Ivan, Hector, and the other adult English students of *El Buen Samaritano* who inspired this thesis.

This thesis is dedicated to James Charles Muntz and Earle V. Brown for keeping an eye on me.

This thesis is also dedicated to my strong and beautiful sisters: Cristina Michelle and Cayla Danielle.

This thesis is dedicated to my mother who showed me the way.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Dr. Jaime Mejia. It is difficult to articulate the amount of gratitude his direction deserves. This thesis and my writing have greatly benefited from Dr. Mejia's diligence, level of professionalism, knowledge of the field, and attention to detail. Because of him, I have accomplished more in this thesis and in my education than I ever thought possible.

I would also like to thank the all of the members of my thesis committee. Thanks to Rebecca Jackson who has encouraged and mentored me throughout the program. I would also like to thank Octavio Pimentel for instructing in a way that allowed me to grow into my research interests.

This thesis would not have been possible without my family and friends. Mom, you are my rock; I am so proud to be your daughter. Crissy and Cayla, thanks for giving me a reason to do bigger and better. Chad, thanks for never failing to make me laugh. Zach and Michael—you faith in me has led me to where I am today. Meaghan, I cherish your unconditional friendship. Thanks to Danielle for her tokens of encouragement. I would also like to thank Alyssa for honest and generous feedback. Vernon, I cannot thank you enough. You came along just in time—your support, silly jokes, patience, and understanding have become such an important part of my writing and living processes.

This manuscript was submitted on June 27, 2011.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As a student who is not yet a scholar and not quite a teacher of composition, how do I and other graduate students of Rhetoric and Composition Studies negotiate our place in Rhetoric and Composition Studies? Where are we situated? As a graduate student in a Rhetoric and Composition Studies program within an English Department with limited Teaching Assistant positions, I have thus far gotten no experience teaching first-year college composition, so how will I develop the experience needed to teach something as complex as first-year composition? As a student advised by my thesis director about what my purpose should be and what I should walk away with from the program—since the main goal of completing my thesis should be to become a better thinker, reader, and writer—how do I situate myself in Rhetoric and Composition Studies? The best thing I can do as an outsider under these circumscribed circumstances is to do what I am advised. So my purpose and goal are to read, write, and think more critically. I need to be more critical of what I read, what I write, how I write it, what I think, and more importantly, why I think it. To situate myself in the field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies more adequately, I shall need as my goal to take the experience gained in the program and the knowledge of others and apply both to what is at best only hypothetical
studies in Rhetoric and Composition Studies, since I will not gain any hands-on experience teaching first-year composition.

However, as an outsider without experience teaching first-year college composition, I am nonetheless currently situated in the field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies because of my studies. My awareness of how I am situated in the field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies, as far as my race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are concerned are important aspects of teaching writing, but are not the only aspects that will necessarily help me become a better teacher of writing. Throughout my college education, I have become more aware of how I am situated in the university. I know I am a white female graduate student from a lower socioeconomic background. So in one respect, as a white student, I am therefore ironically a part of the dominant group that relies on dominant discourses and ideologies to measure and evaluate knowledge in American society and academic institutions. In another respect, I am not a member of dominant culture as a female member of a patriarchal society. Although I understand the importance of how my gender affects my locatedness in society and the University, I choose to focus on my own “whiteness” throughout this thesis because in my opinion my gender falls under the umbrella of whiteness as a white female.

Still, my knowledge of how to teach the composing process will not improve merely on the basis of my having the knowledge alone of how to teach college composition. Practice, however, may provide me with more of a possibility of my becoming a better teacher, but understanding my own subjectivity—largely based on my previously described economic location in society—will allow me to understand both the rhetorical devices I use and my audience’s understanding of my situated rhetoric. It is this
understanding of my rhetorical devices which can work to improve my teaching. An understanding of my rhetorical approaches will allow me to understand, in theoretical terms, not only how to teach writing, but also how I, in practical terms, will instruct a first-year composition class. My thesis therefore theorizes the latter—how to teach composition, in practical terms—based on the former—theoretical terms—so I can be effective in helping students understand their own rhetorical approaches so they can become better critical thinkers, readers, and writers.

**Whiteness Theory in Application**

Moreover, throughout my thesis, I investigate my subjectivity in relation to how I am situated in the university through a Whiteness theoretical lens because by doing so, I will gain a deeper understanding of my place in the composition class where issues relating to race will surely arise. Whiteness Theory is a branch of Critical Race Theory, and I will use Whiteness Theory instead of Critical Race Theory or any other lens because I want to know how I and other members of society socially construct the idea of whiteness as privilege. To explain further how “whiteness” affects all members of society, in *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*, for instance, Ruth Frankenberg explains how race constructs the lives of all females in the United States. She writes that

> If race shapes women’s lives, the cumulative name that I have given to that shape is “whiteness.” Whiteness I will argue . . . has a set of linked dimensions. First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a “standpoint,” a place from which white people
look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, “whiteness” refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked or unnamed. (1)

It is important that I, as a white female, reflect on my ideologies, based on Whiteness, which represent “a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and society” (Frankenberg 1). Throughout her book, Frankenberg emphasizes that a reflection and response to “whiteness” is necessary by members for society. If I am aware of how I view society and myself within it from the whiteness perspective, I can help my future composition students do the same. My hope is that I can prove how understanding my subjectivity using a Whiteness theoretical lens can improve how I teach writing. Moreover, applying Whiteness Theory to instruct a composition class will allow students to understand their subjectivity, and this understanding may in turn improve their writing by allowing them to see how they are situated in the rhetorical situations encompassed by their writing assignments.

Because Whiteness Theory will be the foundation for how I will reflect on my pedagogical approaches in a first-year composition class, more elaboration is necessary. In “Projects of Whiteness in a Critical Pedagogy,” Nelson M. Rodriguez explains how “the discourse of whiteness might intersect with the field of critical pedagogy” (3). Rodriguez explains that Whiteness has historically been appropriated in unmarked ways by strategically maintaining as colorless its color (and hence its values, belief systems, privileges, histories, experiences and modes of operation) behind its constant constructions of otherness. In other words, everyone or everything else is “marked”; “whereas white is not anything really, not an
identity, not a particularizing quality, because it is everything—white is no colour because it is all colours.” (1)

The principles of whiteness outlined by Rodriguez are one main reason that I choose to use Whiteness Theory as a tool to analyze teaching practices that I will incorporate into my first-year composition classes. If I will be assessing student writing, I cannot assess it by the socially-constructed idea that “everything” is white.

Rodriguez also states that “… whiteness is hardly normal and natural. Instead, it is a social construction” (4). Whiteness is a socially constructed idea and is reproduced through actions Rodriguez calls “performing whiteness” (7). When assessing student writing and creating prompts for students, I must try to avoid “performing whiteness” or having my students do the same because how “white” a student is or how “white” the concepts of their writing are does not determine the legitimacy of student writing. Instead of “performing whiteness,” my students and I will instead be critical of white structures, privilege, rhetoric, and ideologies. I will be critical in my pedagogy, and students will be critical as shown through their writing.

My use of Whiteness Theory throughout my thesis will therefore have many dimensions, some critical of the theory, all revolving around the idea of whiteness as structural privilege. Keith Miller is critical of some Whiteness theorists and their disregard in their theories for people of color that play a large role in the history of Whiteness Theory, which, in fact, reproduces the privilege of whiteness. In “Plymouth Rock Landed on Us: Malcolm X’s Whiteness Theory as a Basis for Alternative Literacy,” Miller elaborates on Whiteness Theory in regards to Frankenberg and other whiteness theorists: Miller states that “I contend that whiteness is ‘relatively unchartered territory’
for these theorists as well as others only because they ignore Malcolm X” (200). So a critical look at Whiteness Theory, such as Miller’s, is necessary to see all aspects of how to use this theory to improve student writing.

In regards to identifying one’s subjectivity, currently in college composition, there are ongoing discussions about how instruction that recognizes multicultural and multiethnic students can be useful to improving students’ writing. In “Literacy Crisis and Color-Blindness: The Problematic Racial Dynamic of Mid-1970’s Language and Literacy Instruction for ‘High-Risk’ Minority Students,” Steve Lamos explains the importance of antiracist writing instruction. He writes that language and literacy instruction must be geared toward recognizing and cultivating nonwhite and nonmainstream students’ existing strengths, not simply toward forcing students to utilize typical white mainstream standards in writing and speech. The SRTOL [Students’ Right to Their Own Language] insists quite vehemently that instruction ought to focus on “improving [students’] command of the reading process”; it insists that writing instruction should not aim toward stressing “finicky correctness in ‘school standard,’” at least not “while vigorous and thoughtful statements in less prestigious dialects are condemned”; finally, it insists that testing programs, non-English disciplinary environments, work environments, and teacher training programs all be reconsidered so as to acknowledge and cultivate students’ existing strengths rather than dwell exclusively upon their perceived weaknesses. In each of these ways, the SRTOL itself insists that race-conscious thinking about student literacy needs and the
institutional contexts in which these needs are addressed must occur if students are going to be successfully educated for the future. (129)

So when instructing a first-year composition class, I should practice pedagogies that allow students to use their language and culture as a part of what they write about.

Moreover, in “The Racialization of Composition Studies: Scholarly Rhetoric of Race since 1990,” Jennifer Clary-Lemon discusses how much emphasis composition instructors, scholars, and researchers have put on the term “race” and what that means when the terms “marginalized,” “different,” “culture,” and “races” have lost and changed meaning in recent years. Not understanding these terms reproduces the ideas most composition instructors, scholars, and researchers have tried to discredit. Clary-Lemon therefore suggests that “We need to know when we’re encoding race and why, and we need to realize just how much we depend on racialized ideology—and racism—to bend attitudes and to get things done (or to prevent things from getting done)” (14). College composition instruction can bring up points about “difference” in ethnic cultures as topics about which students of all cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds can write, and they can also come to understand why they write the way they do about other ethnic cultures.

My point here is that some of the current conversations in Rhetoric and Composition Studies address the necessity of incorporating reflexivity in society and a multicultural understanding into pedagogical approaches. Instructors can practice the previously discussed ideas about the importance of recognizing cultural and ethnic backgrounds in composition classes. And despite these conversations, I have not gained a significant enough understanding of “how” to instruct with a cross-cultural approach that allows students of all different cultures to understand how they write about these cultures.
This information is either hard to obtain, or the ideas are not widely practiced. I understand that in a composition class, the instructor wants to understand the students while the students want to understand how their papers are graded. Ultimately, in this instance, students' compositions will be the medium that links the two.

The understanding between instructors and students is important because instructors will assess students' writing based on how well the students display their knowledge of the assigned material and demonstrate an increased awareness of what they are writing. The improvement in students' writing is an understood common goal of composition instructors. I argue that before this improvement can happen, instructors need to better understand what methods of instruction aid in their acknowledging their own cultural ideologies and how these ideologies are situated in relation to White privilege. This realization on the instructor's part may allow a pedagogical approach that will produce better student writing in the composition class because their writing will hopefully operate with less racial bias.

Lisa Ede's Strategies as Reflective Paradigm

It is nevertheless difficult to know how applying Whiteness Theory will affect pedagogical approaches in a composition class, because I have only theorized about the possibilities. For this reason, I use an approach to theory that will allow for two pedagogical approaches to account for how I will situate my chosen theory of choice into my hypothetical composition class. In Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location, Lisa Ede works her way through her own situatedness in Rhetoric and Composition Studies, criticizing her own practices as well as those of others that do not allow for a multiplicity of theories, practices when researching, and
pedagogical approaches in Rhetoric and Composition Studies and classes. In Ede’s work as well as those of others, I find that ideally, as professionals, a compositionist’s and rhetorician’s goal is to produce better writers and thinkers. Before compositionists or rhetoricians can help improve students’ writing, they must become familiar with multiple aspects of Rhetoric and Composition studies and how their own ideologies and subjectivities affect their pedagogical and scholarly approaches. Just as I have found that identifying my subjectivity helps my composing processes to write more critically within different rhetorical situations, it is possible that college student writers can produce better work with an awareness of their personal experiences within the structurally privileged “white” culture in society, with “better work” measured by their writing’s acknowledgements of its biases.

To this end, I want to know what discussions in Rhetoric and Composition Studies influence the way unbiased content can be incorporated in writing instruction as well as in students’ writing. What conversations value cross-cultural experiences as a means of persuasion? In Rhetoric and Composition Studies, what assignments can I use to facilitate rhetorical arguments that reflect the students’ varied cultural experiences within the surrounding and pervasive power structures? What will work to open up essay writing to include more unbiased content? So if the composition instructor aims to teach students rhetoric based on what is accepted in society, even if society is culturally diverse, are the rhetorical approaches taught in said classroom reflecting the multiple aspects of a diverse society? These questions are what my thesis seeks to answer by using Whiteness Theory.
An overarching idea of Whiteness Theory is that ideologies that treat “white” culture as the dominant culture fail to recognize the importance of other cultures, therefore leaving out the diverse population of the United States. For instance, in “Antiracist Education in Theory and Practice: A Critical Assessment,” Jack Niemonen writes that “Colorblindness ‘relieves’ whites from having to recognize and take responsibility for racial injustice” (163). There are socioeconomic, racial, and class barriers that are avoided in discussions in public and which can cause people to be “raceless,” as Victor Villanueva explains in Bootstraps (113). Niemonen further writes that “Racism is an epistemology that privileges Eurocentric values, beliefs, and practices . . . . It is the normative framework that defines ‘whiteness’ as the standard by which to evaluate others” (161). This statement is important for college composition classes because instructors may be using a “white” standard to “evaluate” all students’ writing. Niemonen says, “In antiracist education, whiteness has multiple meanings . . . .” (162). One of those “meanings” is that Whiteness is “both a structural location and a strategy that allow[s] whites to monopolize material and cultural resources . . . .” (162). The meaning of “whiteness” is important when creating assignments because it means that I need to be aware of how I will be at a “structural privilege” to enforce white ideologies that I hope to avoid.

I use Whiteness Theory because I want to investigate my own upbringing. My education in the public schools was a product of the dominant culture, and the media’s function to establish a hierarchy for citizens would come to affect my subjectivity and ideologies. In Undoing Whiteness in the Classroom, for instance, Virginia Lea and Erma Jean Sims support my reasons for investigating my background and explain the problems
with the dominant culture being reproduced in society at large. They say that “Many whites embrace a superior racial identity, reinforced by the corporate media and public school culture . . . [;] economic interests lie in defending the largely white capitalist power structure instead of becoming allies with low-income people of color in the struggle for social justice” (10). So, as a white female, I have been led to believe that I cannot speak for anyone but myself. But this is not always so, as I must always reflect on how society has shaped my ideologies and my relations to marginalized people and cultures other than my own white culture.

This chapter introduces the teaching philosophy I use to base the research for developing assignments for a first-year composition course that uses Whiteness Theory. To do this, I use several strategies of Ede’s philosophy, as set forth in *Situating Composition*, strategies compositionists can use to situate Rhetoric and Composition Studies in their research and in the classroom. She explains her 8th strategy for researching composition by stating, “Try to resist the agonism and zero-sum thinking that have played a key role in some of the most prominent scholarly work in composition in recent years” (196). Using the understanding Ede’s 8th strategy affords in Rhetoric and Composition Studies while creating the two assignments, I will account for the fact that each composition class will be different, as each student has “myriad discourse situations” that confront them.

Winifred Bryan Horner explains the idea that students historically have had different writing backgrounds based on multiple influences. According to Horner, during the 18th and 19th centuries, students flocked to Scotland to receive a more “democratic and less religious based education” (35). Horner states that “While the English
universities restricted higher education to a small percentage of the population, Scotland still opened its doors to all able students who sought an education. Consequently, university courses were designed to supplement their preparatory training and to fill the deficiencies” (47). The same is true in higher education today. My assignments, therefore, need to account for the wide range of students and their different educational and societal experiences.

In this thesis, I create two assignments that allow students to locate and evaluate their subjectivities so they may use their knowledge of their situatedness in society to improve their rhetoric when writing. The basis of the assignments will not be from my teaching experience teaching composition, since I have none, but because of my location in composition studies, the basis of the assignments will be taken from current conversations in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. I create two different writing assignments by using Whiteness Theory so as to reflect on my own ideologies and Lisa Ede’s teaching philosophy as found in *Situating Composition*. Throughout my discussion of these assignments, I hope to situate myself in Rhetoric and Composition Studies, as Ede writes, “[t]o demonstrate that theorizing about practice is one of the most powerful ways to inquire into one’s teaching” (11). But because I do not yet have experience teaching, this project of analyzing two essay assignments will allow me to theorize about practice in composition classes and to prepare me for my eventual teaching on the basis of this knowledge of how to teach composition. Before I begin my analysis of the assignments that incorporate multicultural content, I must reiterate the fact that I am aware that I am a white female from a low socioeconomic background who is ideologically a part of what is known as the “dominant” culture in society. I am aware
that I cannot always speak for members of other cultures. I can, however, evaluate my ideologies along with current conversations in Rhetoric and Composition Studies to create hypothetical essay assignments.

Currently, I do not have the credentials to cause vast changes in pedagogical approaches pertaining to Rhetoric and Composition Studies. I nevertheless wish to create something applicable to composition, for as Patricia Bizzell states in "Cognition, Convention, and Certainty," "such revolutions can only occur if research on writing is divorced in essential ways from the 'community context' of the messy, impure world of teaching" (89). My thesis represents work of a researcher of Rhetoric and Composition Studies who is not yet a teacher.

My thesis calls for the creation of two assignments to use in a first-year composition class. The first assignment I propose uses textbook readers currently in use in many composition classes. Because as an instructor of first-year composition I will most likely be required to use a textbook reader adopted by an English Department, I need to be prepared to create a prompt using an anthologized reading that will most likely be in any textbook reader I am required to use. The second assignment suggests creating an essay assignment that asks students to critically analyze popular music lyrics.

Both of the writing assignments I create in this thesis incorporate the writing process. Ede's 13th strategy for situating and researching composition scholarship states, "Draw upon your own experiences to interrogate your scholarly assumptions and practices" (203). I am an advocate of writing as a process, and this position makes me wonder if I am holding the writing process in so high a regard that I am not being critical of the process. I recognize the importance of the current-traditional and post-process
paradigms for teaching composition. In order to better recognize the importance of
different paradigms for teaching composition, I incorporate Ede’s 6th strategy for
researching composition which is to “recognize the importance of claiming what
Jacqueline Jones Royster refers to as scholars’ ‘passionate attachments’” (195). Ede
explains, “Royster is in effect arguing for a small but critical change in scholarly work. If
scholars were to follow her advice, the result would hardly constitute a revolutionary
change in scholarly practice—but it might help contextualize and ground our efforts and
remind us of the situatedness of our own scholarly interests” (196). By acknowledging
my “passionate attachments” to what I believe is important when researching and
instructing first-year composition, I can use that knowledge as a foundation for
developing well-rounded assignments for my class.

Ede’s 12th strategy for composition research says that one should “Experiment
with ways of expanding scholarly genres and of resisting the conventional ways that
knowledge circulates in composition—but recognize the potential difficulty and
complexity of such efforts” (200). I believe this means that I should be open to deviating
from “conventional” ideas while teaching and researching and that being aware that
making the decision to do so may be hard, because “there is an economics as well as a
politics, ethics, and rhetoric of scholarship in the field” (201). Ede is referring to the
dangers of not following accepted and legitimized publications and the sustainability of
credentials when teaching. In my case, for example, on a fundamental level, avoiding the
subject of assessing writing based on grammar in a composition class would be avoiding
an important, traditional “convention” of effective teaching. So, if in a college
composition class, instructors did not hold grammar at a certain level of importance when
assessing student work or researching composition, I need to reflect on Ede’s statement that “Scholars who wish to resist these and other conventions of the academy need to be realistic about the power these conventions hold. Thus while I would encourage such resistance, I do not hold it out as a model that others should follow” (201).

I use grammar as an example of a powerful convention because of the opposing perspectives found in the “Students’ Right to Their Own Language Resolution.” How will faculty and employers view my work as a teacher and as a scholar if I do not follow such “conventions” of Standard American English (SAE), which represents a current conversation in Rhetoric and Composition Studies? Lamos argues “that mid-1970s discourses of literacy crisis prompted a problematic shift toward color-blind ideologies of language and literacy... [And] this shift has continuing import for contemporary antiracist writing instruction” (125). To apply Ede’s 12th strategy to the creation of the assignments I propose, while keeping in mind current discussions of SAE, grammar will play a part in the final grade of a paper so students will understand the importance of written communication to more fully address multiple audiences. But SAE will not be the only kind of English allowed in students’ writing when students can identify the conventions of the language or dialect they are using.

With the two assignments I create in my thesis, I utilize current conversations and their relation to Rhetoric and Composition Studies throughout the course of its history. Rhetoric and Composition Studies in America evolved from the English. In “Where Do English Departments Come From?” William Riley Parker writes, “English was born about 100 years ago. Its mother, the eldest daughter of Rhetoric, was Oratory—or what we now prefer to call public speaking or, simply, speech. Its father was Philology or what
we now call linguistics” (4). Historically, Parker states that a “pedagogical shift that began in the eighteenth century and continued through the nineteenth is the shift from the spoken to the written, the oral to the literate. Rhetoric had been the study of oratory, and university examinations had been oral until almost the middle of the eighteenth century” (35). By using this historical approach to Rhetoric and Composition Studies, I propose assignments that reference multiple changes in Rhetoric and Composition Studies.

For example, I have found one example of where peer revision may have evolved. In “The Roots of Modern Writing Instruction: Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain,” Horner writes that Professor of Logic in Rhetoric at Glasgow University from 1774-1827, George Jardine “... urged peer evaluation and discussion, and promoted writing as a way of learning and frequent and sequenced writing assignments” (41). Peer evaluation is important in composition classes because students can/may notice errors in others’ papers more quickly than in their own. Peer review is also an important step in the writing process. When referring to how peer review was used for grammar drills, Horner cites Ian Michael:

Students were expected to correct sentences that had errors of spelling, syntax, or punctuation and give the rule that had been broken. The master then corrected the exercises orally and returned them to the students who, with the help of their classmates, made their own corrections...[;] students often wrote their first version on a slate and then copied the corrected version into their notebook. (Michael 327) (47)

The history of Rhetoric and Composition Studies will be part of the foundation for the proposed assignments I intend to create; I will therefore make constant reference
to historical aspects that are currently important to Rhetoric and Composition studies. To this end, Chapter II specifically analyzes the history of essay assignments in textbooks and their relation to Rhetoric and Composition Studies. While discussing the first proposed assignment in the second chapter of my thesis, I reflect on how readings are chosen for a composition course. Chapter II of my thesis also introduces my first proposed assignment for a first-year composition class. The writing assignment will incorporate the use of textbook readers that are readily adopted by departments for students to use in first-year composition courses. Although these textbook readers do not contain a large amount of readings that incorporate authors who deviate from the dominant “white” culture, I propose an assignment that utilizes a reading currently used in composition classes in a way that reflects multiple cultures in society. After I introduce the essay prompt, I write an example essay to answer the prompt. I then discuss how to assess the writing based on the prompt.

In Chapter III of my thesis, I reflect on and revise the essay prompt I created in Chapter II. Using “Politics and the English Language” and Whiteness Theory, I show how my own subjectivity in relation to society can be used to gain a better understanding of my rhetorical approaches when writing and communicating. I also use this knowledge to revise the original essay assignment. For the assignment, I chose a commonly anthologized essay that appears in multiple textbook readers. In Lynn Bloom’s “The Essay Canon,” she includes a list compiled by Valerie M. Smith and Lori Corsini-Nelson of “50 essayists whose works have been most frequently reprinted” (967). The first essay on the list is George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language.” By the year 1998, “Politics and the English Language” had 357 reprints in 45 anthologies. I want the
prompt for my students to be very specific as to how to use “Politics and the English Language” as a way for students to analyze societal issues. The revised assignment will better allow students to reflect on the diversity in society because Whiteness Theory exposes how all members of society socially construct dominant “white” culture.

In Chapter IV of my thesis, I outline the history of rhetorical theory in relation to Rhetoric and Composition Studies to gain a better understanding of how I will use rhetoric in my first-year composition class. In this chapter, I create the second proposed assignment using Whiteness Theory. In Rhetoric and Composition Studies, some argue that alternative approaches to traditional rhetoric recognize differences in experience. Understanding alternative approaches to traditional rhetoric would ultimately make different rhetorical approaches known and would allow students to write in a more subjective way. The rhetorical approaches taken by students would give students a better foundation for their efforts at persuasion.

For this reason, in the second assignment students will be asked to analyze the rhetoric in two songs to identify how the songs create meaning on the basis of the rhetoric from the dominant “white” culture. The songs I chose are Alan Jackson’s “Good Time” and Dolly Parton’s “9 to 5.” In this essay assignment, I hope to emphasize that writing is a way to convey ideas from the writer to the audience and that the two should understand each other. To explain further, in essay writing, it is normal for writers to include an introduction to establish their situatedness in order for the audience to understand the work better. The author establishes ethos or credibility in order for the audience to be persuaded by the work. The author of the essay invents a thesis, which is usually the basis of their ideologies. These ideologies are a reflection of his or her understanding of a
certain subject. The author wants the audience to believe the "truth" about whatever is being discussed. These "truths" are reflections of society, and in composition today, it is important for the writer to reflect on their ideologies. This awareness will allow students to be more critical of ideas presented in their writing and to their audience, which could aid in the successful reception of their papers. Towards the end of the chapter, I analyze the music lyrics so I will be able to assess how well the prompt I created achieves its intended objectives of having students understand their audience and their own writing better, based on socially constructed ideas of whiteness.

Chapter V of my thesis will reflect on the two proposed assignments that use Whiteness Theory as a basis for their creation and their relation to improving students' writing. The conclusion of my thesis will discuss how, after the process, I situate myself and how I will constantly evaluate and analyze my own practices and assumptions in regard to my students, society, and my own expectations of myself as an instructor of a first-year composition course.
CHAPTER II

FIRST ASSIGNMENT: TEXTBOOK READERS AND WHITENESS THEORY

In *The Norton Book of Composition Studies*, editor Susan Miller’s first inclusion is William Riley Parker’s “Where Do English Departments Come From?” There, Parker writes, “But no one needs to persuade the American public that freshman composition is essential, despite the fact that it rarely accomplishes any of its announced objectives” (12). Miller’s choice of including this piece as the first in her edited collection is an interesting one that calls for contemplation. If “composition rarely accomplishes any of its announced objectives,” what will offset this statement so “composition” does execute its intended objectives? Miller includes Parker’s piece (written and published in the 1960s) to show the many views of composition in the 60s and how this view still exists in academia. As a graduate student, soon to be an instructor of first-year composition, it is my goal to identify what I can do in a first-year composition class so it does execute its “intended objectives.” In this chapter, I introduce my first proposed assignment for a first-year composition class with the hope of fulfilling those objectives. The history of assignments found in textbooks as they relate to Rhetoric and Composition Studies provides the background for my assignment because the assignment will use a particular, widely anthologized reading from a textbook reader readily adopted by English
Departments for use in first-year college composition classes. I then use Whiteness Theory to analyze the anthologized reading in order to create the assignment.

Some instructors of composition believe there is no place for textbook readers that include literature in composition classes. I believe, however, that when I begin instructing first-year composition, there is a very high possibility that it will be my job to incorporate a textbook reader adopted by the department. A publishing company that often prints textbooks based on socially constructed ideas of whiteness will provide the textbook reader. In a sense, my decision to use a textbook reader is to face reality and not delude myself into believing that I will not be required by the English Department, at whichever school I instruct composition, to use a textbook reader. For instance, in Albert Kitzhaber’s “The Present State of Freshmen Composition,” published in 1963, completed earlier as his Ph. D. dissertation in 1953 at the University of Washington, he discusses the quality of textbooks for first-year composition courses of that time. From his analysis of a survey of course descriptions conducted in the U.S. by Dartmouth College in the early 1960s, Kitzhaber also found that “at seventy-six colleges and universities fifty-seven different freshmen anthologies are being used . . .” (263). Yet, what this number fails to show is that the textbooks readers used at that time were “so nearly alike that it matters little which one is used” (263). Few would argue that textbook readers have changed much since then. Although these textbook readers still do not contain many readings that incorporate authors who deviate from the dominant “white” culture, I propose developing an assignment that utilizes a current widely anthologized reading in a way that reflects the multiple cultures in society.
Some argue that there are problems with using textbook readers because some instructors use textbook readers in ways that do not require students to conduct critical analyses. In “Composition Readers and the Construction of Identity,” Sandra Jamieson explains some of the problems posed by using “multicultural” textbook readers. Jamieson says that some “texts ask students about tone or style but do not give them space to discuss the institutional racism at the heart of the piece or the anger just below the surface of many multicultural classes” (161). Because few composition instructors are aware that most textbook readers contain similar material, the content of one textbook reader compared to another is unimportant to most. Kitzhaber describes earlier instructors’ choices by saying, “Fads and novelties affect the choice of these books [textbook readers] as much as they do the choice of women’s hats” (263). Since choices in textbook readers are either made by departments for their instructors or without much regard to their content, the previously laid out discussions in part represents the reasons for how I constructed this specific essay assignment. These reasons also explain in part why I have chosen the most commonly anthologized essay that appears and that has ever appeared, up to 1998, in multiple textbook readers—George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language.” In “Politics and the English Language,” Orwell discusses how political speechwriters use language to mask deeper issues of whatever is being discussed. At the end of the essay, Orwell gives 6 “rules” as suggestions for readers to avoid making similar mistakes when writing. I create my first assignment using “Politics and the English Language” and Whiteness Theory in a way that students can reflect on the diversity of cultures in society with regards to writing with a dialect other that Standard American English (SAE).
When creating my assignment, I have also used Whiteness Theory because Whiteness Theory offers a way to analyze how personal, social, and cultural knowledge and experience are all intertwined in American society. In “The Souls of White Folk: W.E.B. Du Bois’s Critique of White Supremacy and Contributions to Critical White Studies,” Reiland Rabaka explains how Du Bois, an often overlooked founder of Whiteness Theory, documents how “white” culture shapes American society. The abstract of the article that appeared in the *Journal of African American Studies* explains that Rabaka demonstrates the dialectical nature of Du Bois’s philosophy of race and critical race theory by comparing and contrasting his groundbreaking critiques of racism in *The Souls of Black Folk* with his reconstructed and decidedly more radical critique of the political economy of race, racism, whiteness and white supremacy in “The Souls of White Folk.” (1)

By looking to the work of Du Bois, Rabaka shows that the many social constructs of American society are deeply rooted in racism. Students of a first-year composition course can use this knowledge of racism in society to aid in their essays’ rhetorical arguments. Rabaka writes that “With regard to Du Bois’s critiques of white supremacy, it is not simply a global or social phenomenon, but a personal and political one as well” (3). Whiteness Theory offers a way for me to teach composition while acknowledging that my ideologies must be confronted in order for me not to reproduce dominant “white” culture’s ideologies. And part of the construct of “white” culture is the acceptance and standardized use of English. The assignment I propose in this chapter intends for students to analyze the ideological underpinnings of Standard American English in the United
States. Students can in turn use this knowledge of language to communicate to their audience through writing that doesn’t use SAE.

As stated before, while creating this first assignment, I decided to utilize the idea that “whiteness” is socially constructed, and further reflected on how assigned readings are used in a composition course. As part of my knowledge gained as a student, I know that the readings selected for a composition course are often used “for analysis and imitation” (Kitzhaber 263). Part of my understanding of textbook readers is derived from Jean Ferguson Carr, Stephen L. Carr, and Lucille M. Shultz as they discuss the history and the differences in composition textbook readers, handbooks, and rhetorics. In “Archives of Instruction: Nineteenth-Century Rhetorics, Readers, and Composition Books in the United States,” they say that “Every textbook is an archive of instruction—it holds traces of past books and traditions, sometimes literally in silent borrowings or explicit citations, and sometimes in more deeply embedded ways” (117). Although the readings selected for composition classes often do not reflect multiple cultures, readings can nevertheless be used to do just that because “Virtually every literate person encounters these books, yet their significance as cultural texts is often ignored and devalued” (109). The text I chose to use as the basis for my first essay assignment, then, is one commonly anthologized in textbook readers for college composition classes.

As for the kinds of textbooks often chosen by instructors for composition classes, there are important differences among them. Carr et al. explain, for instance, that a rhetoric can propose “theoretical ways of mapping the instructional field and articulate systematic principles about language, style, invention and discourse” (112). Composition handbooks, with some exceptions, “organize and invigorate activities of writing that
earlier operated primarily to support instruction in reading and grammar” (113). And textbook readers “emerge from centuries-old compilations of classical or religious texts and from an eighteenth century elocutionary tradition focused on oral performance of written texts . . . [;] readers instruct students in the analysis of texts and provide a storehouse of cultural materials on which to practice the art of reading” (113). My knowledge of the principles and uses of these three commonly used composition textbooks allows me to utilize a textbook, and more specifically a textbook reader, that will most likely be in use at whichever college I will instruct composition.

It would be best if instructors were constantly aware of the textbooks they use and are critical of them and their purposes for instruction in the class because of historical perspectives and shifts in theoretical pedagogical approaches. Lisa Ede’s 10th strategy for researching composition states that one should “Be realistic about what any scholarly project can accomplish given the diverse locations in which the work of composition takes place” (198). This strategy focuses on the fact that “change or ‘progress’ in the practice of theory often proceeds in different ways and takes different forms than it does in the practice of teaching” (199). So, as the instructor of composition, I will have the responsibility of using readings in a way that allow students to understand the multiplicity of rhetorical devices that are in opposition to mainstream norms. Students will then be able to theoretically understand how to appeal to multiple audiences in different rhetorical situations as the students will, in practice, show in their writing.

The previous idea present in current conversations in Rhetoric and Composition Studies about the importance of incorporating multicultural content will aid in my application of a Whiteness theoretical lens to shape the proposed writing assignment. In
“Ideology and Freshman Textbook Production: The Place of Theory in Writing Pedagogy,” for instance, Kathleen Ethel Welch writes that, as instructors, “We can use theory to persuade students to become critics of their own discourse and therefore of their own culture” (769). The pedagogical approach which includes revisions and peer responses is intended to “persuade students” to become critical of their relationship to dominant culture in order to understand their subjectivity. Welch suggests “Teaching writing means enabling writers to compose out of lived experience. If we use the students’ own writing as course texts, then we present written discourse as a language action that derives from and is a part of a world” (763). In order to focus on the “students’ own writing as the [primary] course texts,” I use Whiteness Theory as a means to allow students to address diversity in society, even if what students read is not “multicultural.” Whiteness Theory will allow my class to be what Welch regards as “A course dependent on students’ writing, rather than on the unspoken ideology presented in most textbooks . . .” (764). While students’ drafts will be the primary course texts, students will also analyze anthologized readings as part of their assignments.

As much as I understand the importance of using rhetorics, textbook readers, and handbooks, I cannot help but question the content and “unspoken ideology” of the readings found in textbook readers. James Moffett’s Storm in the Mountains: A Case Study of Censorship, Conflict, and Consciousness explains multiple reasons for why I question the value of the content of textbook readers and also why publishers are wary of publishing K-12 textbook readers saturated with multicultural readings that contain different dialects and discourses different from the mainstream social norm. Although
Moffett’s research is specific to K-12 textbook readers, the people that censored those books have also influenced the content of college-level textbooks.

In 1974, Houghton Mifflin introduced K-12 multicultural language arts textbooks in Kanawha County, West Virginia. Many conservative parents, students, and conservative members of the community were so outraged with the diverse content that there were riots, violence, and boycotts until the textbooks were removed from the schools. Even though the textbooks were not completely eliminated and the Supreme Court did not side with the outraged protestors, Moffett writes, “The protesters lost the battle and won the war” (26). Publishers and teachers alike were so affected by the opposition to multicultural and progressive teaching methods that for over a decade, they were afraid to reproduce any of the practices published in the banned books.

Incorporating multiple genres of reading material written to reflect the multiplicity of society would have caused too much turmoil. Eight years after the protests, Moffett interviews Elmer Fike, one of the protest leaders, who discusses an objection he had to the inclusion of the text and audiotape of the short story “The Eye” by J. F. Powers in Interactions, from an advanced senior level book Monologue and Dialogue 1. The short story by Powers describes a story of a black man in the South who is lynched by white men for presumably impregnating a white woman. Fike explains that he played the audiotape of this short story for a black Human Rights Commissioner. Fike then quotes the man as saying, “‘It should be in there to make the white people ashamed of what they’ve done’” (78). Fike’s interpretation of the Human Rights Commissioner’s quote ironically relates directly to Whiteness Theory and how college composition textbook readers can operate today.
Fike’s belief that the inclusion of “The Eye” will “make the white people ashamed” represents his own misconception of the importance of pedagogies that create a societal awareness of racism. To explain how Fike’s misconception relates to content chosen for textbook readers and the situation in Kanawha County, West Virginia, I use “Redneck and Hillbilly Discourse in the Writing Classroom: Classifying Critical Pedagogies of Whiteness.” In this article, Jennifer Beech describes that a misconception of Whiteness Theory happens when incorporated as a part of a pedagogical approach. Beech explains that in “Critical Pedagogy’s ‘Other’: Constructions of Whiteness in Education for Social Change,” Jennifer Seibel Trainor identified the tendency for scholarship on critical race studies to position white students along one of two false binaries: narratives of critical classrooms tend to demonize white middle-class students . . . while other texts “create a portrait of whiteness that foregrounds its innocence by showing how working class whites trade class-consciousness for race privilege.” (173)

Fike’s ideologies and the ideologies of those in the community supporting the banning of the textbooks do not recognize the importance of including multiple genres of discourse and a multiplicity of authors to empower students’ command of language. This approach would be a way to work towards ending institutional and societal racism by having first-year college composition students analyze these forms of racism in their assigned essays.

By choosing to create an essay assignment based on a reading that is not necessarily multicultural to receive multiple responses from different students’ own cultures, I also draw from Ede’s 3rd strategy: “Be cautious about speaking for others, whether those others are students, classroom teachers, or other scholars” (193). I will not
assume every student will be interested in the same readings, nor will I assume they will be affected in the same way the readings affect me. I will also not act as the “expert” about the personal experiences of my students in their responses in their writing, as long as the essays they create respond to the prompt and use the reading to analyze dominant “white” culture in relation to their own experiences.

Understanding how students may benefit from using their personal experiences as sources for effective rhetoric was not always important during Classical Rhetoric. Although classical rhetoric did not include essay writing, the rhetorical principles used today for writing were previously used in speeches. In Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy, Robert Connors writes, “To understand the assignment tradition that American composition-rhetoric sets itself up against [during the 19th century], we have to go back a bit farther in history (296). Connors explains this idea at length, “The Aristotelian topics, which were the point of entry to classical invention, were all based in logos (the nature of the subject) and much less in questions of ethos (the nature of the speaker) or pathos (the emotions of the audience)” (297). This line of thinking caused students to present a “full topical analysis of all the arguments that could be made” (297). Here, Connors gives an example of an assignment requiring a “full topical analysis”: “The Superiority of Trade over Agriculture.” This prompt does require the student think critically to an extent, but does not require the student to use any personal experiences as a means to persuade an audience. All the students would need to do is develop a speech based on their previous knowledge of “Trade” and “Agriculture.”

Then, during the Renaissance period, the creation of new knowledge by students was not yet held in high regard as Connors explains that “Although the most famous
speakers could take socially held concepts and make them their own though brilliant speech, the animus against ‘merely personal’ display in rhetoric was part of the set of attitudes that were passed down from 500 B.C. through the seventeenth century” (299). Commonplace books that were developed in the Renaissance period contained what were known as intellectual commons. Connors writes that commonplace books contained “material that made up the world of an educated man” (299). Commonplace books correlate with today’s textbook readers. When compiled, textbook readers contain what seems to be regarded as the same “material that made up the world of an educated man” (299). One reason I chose to create an assignment using a textbook reader is not because I believe the statement to be true, but because I want students to understand that they are capable of creating material that will exemplify how there is no book or text that is all-encompassing of “the world of an educated man” (299). This is my way of viewing my ideologies and position as an instructor and of not imposing ideas rooted in my education. My hope is that the assignment will be an example of how students can step back and reflect on their education prior to college, which was so easily put onto the shoulders of textbooks and the ideologies within those textbooks’ readings. The assignment is a way for students to use an essay as a jumping off point to explain something from their point of view.

In the 19th century there was a change in language especially important in regards to the proposed assignment. Connors explains this change and writes that “The language that was recommended to students gradually changes from the Ciceroian ‘high style’ to something closer to the Wordsworthian ‘language really used by men’” (302). This change is important to the proposed assignment because in America there is a multiplicity
of dialects and languages used that are in some way associated with the intelligence or socioeconomic status of an individual. In some regards, the improper use of Standard American English is not socially acceptable. The title of the assigned article by Orwell for my assignment, “Politics and the English Language,” shows that when this essay was published in 1946, there was a social disconnect between “high style” and the common use of language. Orwell’s essay means to uncover how political language is used to mask the true meaning of ideas when addressing the whole of society. Orwell, a politically aware author, uses the essay to inform the public of the power of language—and also to inform politicians that he is not amused by their façade. Also, the fact that the article was reproduced in college textbook readers 357 times by 1998 speaks to the level of importance placed on the discussion of Standard American English usage in America. My hope is that the assignment will allow students to uncover the social underpinnings in the way language is viewed in society by using their own subjectivity.

To elaborate more on different essay assignments found in composition textbooks throughout history and to which students have been asked to respond, Connors explains that in the 1870s, “Textbook authors still believed in abstract subjects, but they were seeking ways to make the subjects personal, to get students to avoid the bland, padded fakeries that older topic-based invention systems increasingly created” (311). Making “subjects personal” will have students understand their subjectivity, which is what my assignment intends to do. In John M. Hart’s *Manual of Composition and Rhetoric*, published in 1870, he “put new emphasis on personal narratives—essays that asked students to privilege the pronoun in a new way (‘How I Spent My Summer Vacation,’ ‘What We Did At Our Picnic,’ ‘Ascent of Mt. Washington’)” (311). These sorts of
assignments could be regarded as the first to open the door to personal experience as a means of persuasion and to show how rhetoric is subjective.

The assignments listed above do, however, make me question how assignments such as “How I Spent My Vacation” account for analysis, to create knowledge on behalf of the student writer. My proposed assignment is not topical, but rather addresses the use of language as it connects and/or disconnects students to society. My goal is that the assignment will allow students to address their audience in a way that exposes the subjectivity of both the writer and reader of the essay. Academic writing should be reflexive and create knowledge between the writer and audience. Reflexivity is possible when a student has made a well-grounded argument about the assigned prompt. In no way is the assignment supposed to expose what I believe is a skewed version of reality through the eyes of a dominant “white” culture that shapes and forms beliefs. My hope is that students use the essay prompt in the proposed assignment to write in a way that allows them to critically think about their use of language so they may use language to communicate better.

For the created essay assignment, I use The Norton Reader: An Anthology of Nonfiction, which contains Orwell’s essay. Some textbook readers do not focus on nonfiction and include literature. According to Connors, using literature for essay prompts in textbook readers was not popular until after the 1900s. The use of literature in composition classes is still present today, which makes me wonder that if the use of literature caused disagreements in how to improve student writing, what was the source of this controversy? Welch approaches this controversy and writes that
An important aspect of ideological faith in the theory-unconscious textbooks lies in this attitude, which regards certain pieces of discourse as perfect objects to be studied. This reverence, the major inheritance of writing instruction from literature instruction, still dominates writing classes and prevents learning language as a medium always filled with possibility. In many traditional literature and writing courses, faith, other-worldliness, and reverence for the unattainable dominated the presentation of language. (764)

With the first essay assignment, then, I am not reverting back to a "traditional" approach to literature, as the reading I am using for my proposed assignment is instead a well-known essay by Orwell, but at some point I may use literature for students to analyze, so it is important for me to know what not to do with literature in a composition class. Connors explains that before the 1900s, "students might have been given a literary topic like 'John Milton'" (323). An analysis of society by using an essay—such as in my proposed assignment—seems to me to be a much more credible assignment rather than a topical analysis of John Milton or, in this case, of Orwell. Also, regardless of how controversial the incorporation of different literary works in composition classes may have been, textbook readers with literary works are still widely used today. Connors explains how and why textbook readers with literary works evolved:

Literary assignments provided a way out of the world of personal writing that many found uncomfortable and were uncertain about the purpose of . . .

. . . The question still rages today about the amount of belletristic literature that should be "allowed" in a composition course, although issues that
began the use of literary works in composition have been almost completely forgotten. (325)

I, as a future instructor of composition, have the job of creating assignments using textbook readers that ask students to think beyond the text and utilize the assigned texts to develop their writing skills. The controversy pertaining to textbook readers has never proven itself so prevalent as to disregard the use of literature in composition classes altogether primarily because of white privilege. In Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies, James A. Berlin explains how using literature in a composition class may improve student writing and analytical skills. Berlin says that “In considering literary texts, they [students] can study firsthand the intersections of aesthetic codes—certain formal and thematic elements, for example—with the economic and political” (114). Literature can be used in ways that will improve student writing, as long as the literature is used in order to analyze certain aspects of civility and culture.

After creating my assignment and investigating the transitions in the history of textbook readers commonly used in composition classes, I realize that there is much debate over the use of different approaches to teaching writing, especially in regards to the textbooks that are used to aid in that instruction. Connors ends the chapter “Invention and Assignments in Composition Studies” by saying, “The question persists as to what place telling personal stories and citing personal observations should have in the process of teaching students to write” (327). In regards to my own writing process, personal observations are important because the things I see and recognize can help me become more critical of the way I write and of my audience. Personal observations are important to student writing because their observations may allow students to understand the
differences in their audiences' personal subjectivity—and this may allow students to adjust their rhetorical strategies to be more befitting of themselves and of their audience.

I also want my assignment to align literary criticism with personal experience. Berlin explains how

Disagreements about literary and rhetorical genres are often the result of ideological disputes. Differences about what exists, what is good, what is possible, and the power arrangements among the three are frequently at issue in conflicting conceptions of the most appropriate rhetorical strategies or the best poetic forms and devices. (115)

In a sense, I want to make students “uncomfortable”—to provoke thought, knowledge, and improve persuasive techniques. My assignment may cause discomfort to students that identify with the dominant “white” culture, because to them, the English language used correctly is the right language, even if they do not speak or write proper English. I also believe that practicing alternate forms of English by using English in a non-standard way may make students “uncomfortable” because to deviate from the cultural norm is seen by many as inappropriate.

My assignment's goal is for students to improve their rhetoric based on their own subjectivities as members of “white” culture. The assignment reads as follows:

For this assignment, read George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language.” Your assignment is to compose an essay in which you analyze the reading by using your own experience regarding the English language. Identify how society supports or does not allow for your use of English. How do you think language is regarded in society? Why do you think
society regards language this way? How does this view of how language is used affect you?

In regards to creating assignments for a first-year composition class, I pose a question Connors asks in the beginning of the chapter “Invention and Assignments in Composition”: “One of the continuing questions informing rhetorical theory and teaching has been: What are students of discourse supposed to know, to be able to speak and write about?” (296). This question is one a graduate student in a Rhetoric and Composition graduate program should ask regularly. Apparently, the same question as to what students should know can be asked of members in the field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies. Connors explains, “Whenever we organize a course and make writing assignments, we answer it [the question of what students should know], at least in a de facto sense” (296). The assignment I propose seeks, in a “de facto sense,” to answer the question Connors poses as well as to refute Parker’s statement that a composition class “rarely accomplishes any of its announced objectives” (12). A problem facing composition classes is that many assignments often fail to inform students of their responsibility as creators of rhetoric. That is why, in my assignment, students will base their rhetorical arguments on their own experiences and “will analyze the piece [Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language”] using your own experiences regarding the English language.”

I decided to use Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language” so I would not use a reading that qualified as a fad. I thought I would instead pick an essay anthologized in most textbook readers and have assumed that any textbook reader I choose would probably contain the essay. This choice is one I will likely have as a soon-to-be instructor of composition. My assignment not only helps students become familiar with an
academic essay, but also how the essay is situated socially and culturally. It will also help students to become familiar with how social and cultural knowledge can help them establish their ethos while writing.

In my assignment I ask students to analyze the anthologized Orwell reading, “Politics and the English Language,” by using a “personal” approach. In this way, my pedagogical approach will not disregard what has historically been thought to improve students’ writing, but it will also answer the call of recent conversations in Rhetoric and Composition Studies that ask instructors to approach student writing in a way to expose students’ own personal experiences with language and writing.

The following is a sample essay I wrote responding to the prompt I created.

Language and Society

It is thought by some that Mark Twain, a US novelist known for his dark humor and social criticism once said, “I have never let my schooling interfere with my education” (Quotation). This particular quotation is especially pertinent to education, and in this case, my education. Throughout my “schooling,” I have struggled with my writing, and writing is the way in which most professors and instructors assess my accumulation of knowledge throughout a course. How well I communicate my knowledge of subject material is based on my use of the English language—this is my “schooling.” My “education” allows me to understand that knowledge is based on meeting requirements and standards that are based on societal and institutional norms—the better I know English, the better I am perceived by the person evaluating me.
The way American society and institutions adopt standards for the use of “English” is largely based on politicians and politics. In “Politics and the English Language,” George Orwell addresses the ways politicians use language when writing and speaking to manipulate their audiences. He then criticizes the societal acceptance of what he calls “modern” or “bad” English which makes up political language and then gives suggestions of “rules” for writers so they may avoid miscommunication with audiences in “most cases” (590). Using examples from Orwell’s essay, I will identify how society or my “schooling” does not allow for my use of English, why I think this is the case, and why I think this view of language is not pertinent to my “education” as far as my writing is concerned.

Although Orwell’s essay was originally published in 1946, some of his concepts of the abuses of the English language are still present politically and societally today. Although I may use rhetorical devices that are commonly used in the community I live in, this use of language is not accepted in my academic writing. For example in East Texas, where I was born and raised, a common way to communicate that someone is “going to” do something is to say “I’m fixing” to do something. This use of language is unacceptable in academic writing, yet a politician may use a metaphor in a speech to avoid stating the truth purposefully. Orwell’s essay gives examples of how and why I think the “standards” of language relies heavily on politicians who are in control of the country and set examples for the ways we live in society. In his essay, Orwell writes
When one watches some tired hack on the platform mechanically repeating the familiar phrases—*bestial atrocities, iron hell, blood-stained tyranny, free peoples of the world, stand shoulder to shoulder*—one often has a curious feeling that one is not watching a live human being but some kind of dummy . . . . A speaker who uses this kind of phraseology has gone some distance towards turning himself into a machine. (587)

I use this quotation by Orwell to exemplify how the political speech and writing are still as “bad” today. This year, three days after the January 8, 2011 mass shooting during an open political meeting near Tucson, Arizona, Sarah Palin, the previous governor and vice presidential candidate for the Republican Party aired a pre-recorded speech on national television. According to a video of the speech on abcnews.com, roughly three minutes into the seven-minute speech, Palin said:

> If you don’t like a person’s vision for the country, you’re free to debate that vision. If you don’t like their ideas, you’re free to propose better ideas. But, especially within hours of a tragedy unfolding, journalists and pundits should not manufacture a blood libel that serves only to incite the very hatred and violence they purport to condemn.

(Berman)
This quotation is pertinent to the way language is viewed and used in society based on societal norms. Orwell would call Palin’s language an example of how “political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible” (587). In Palin’s speech, she is referring to how the media blame political parties for violence at political functions; she is trying to say that the media are only reproducing violence. However, when Palin used certain language to describe her opinion to others, she was setting standards to which Orwell would say, “A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation, even among people who should and do know better” (588).

The vague language in Palin’s speech is an example of a standard that is set by society based on the ethos of the person speaking. Palin has political credibility; therefore, she can use vague language. The message I receive from this is that I am a student, and I therefore need to imitate this language. This standard does not allow the majority of society to write in a way that allows for their own personal and familiar use of the English language. The neglect of using what Orwell calls “plain” English can cause miscommunication by an over-compensation of what is societally regarded as the improper use of the “English” language, which leads me to believe that society—my “schooling”—does not allow for my use of the English language.

In conclusion, my “schooling” leads me to believe that the more academic my use of the English language, the better chances I have at
success in the university and in my future career. My "education" tells me
that the clearer my use of the language is, the more chances I will have at
success.

To assess how the previous essay prompt I created and used to write the sample
eyessay will help students improve their writing, I use concepts from Brian Huot's
(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning. In regard to how
language creates meaning, Huot writes that "Michael Halliday (1978) . . . holds in his
germinal work, Language as Social Semiotic, that context is a key factor in the human
ability to use language to communicate . . . Without a certain context, it is impossible
for a teacher to make sense of what a student has written" (122-3). This is particularly
important in regards to this essay assignment, because students in my future first-year
composition classes will be asked to explain language and its function in meaning
making. I will also assess students' writing based on the "context" of each individual
student through my knowledge of students and as they show their understanding of the
essay prompt in their writing.

In the next chapter, I reintroduce the assignment I have included in this chapter
and will revise the essay prompt. I do so because the prompt I originally created is not
contextually specific enough to Orwell's "Politics and the English Language." Because
the prompt is not specific enough and needs revision, I use the next chapter to show how
they expose or analyze the dominant "white" culture in an analysis of my own use of
language as it relates to concepts in society as well as to "Politics and the English
Language." A revision of the prompt is necessary in order for the created essay prompt to
achieve its intended purpose of improving student writing.
CHAPTER III

REFLECTION AND REVISION: REVISITING WHITENESS THEORY IN GEORGE ORWELL’S “POLITICS AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE”

In the previous chapter, I created an essay assignment using the history of speech and essay prompts as found in composition textbooks to provide foundations for pedagogical choices that relate to Rhetoric and Composition Studies. I then wrote a sample essay using my first essay assignment. After reviewing the assignment and my written response to that assignment, it is clear that the prompt I created needs to be more specific in a number of ways. In this chapter, I reflect on my subjectivity and the rhetorical devices I use when writing an essay based on ideologies found in dominant “white” culture as well as on ideas from George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language.” This reflection and analysis will allow me to confront the complications of the original essay prompt and develop a more specific prompt that will enhance the potential responses from students that in turn will reflect their critical thinking skills and which should ultimately improve their writing skills.

My hope is that throughout this process of analyzing my first essay prompt and my sample essay responding to it, I will come to understand how I reflect my oral use of language in my writing because to some extent this is what I will be asking of students. To explain this further, I should say that I do not speak the way I write, and the things I
write for oral presentations read differently than how I write for an essay. All aspects of
my communicative tools require translation, and this acknowledgement allows me to
communicate more effectively. I have a broad understanding of this now, but have never
analyzed how the way I speak may affect my writing. I reflect on these things so that
when I revise the original essay prompt, I will know how my use of language can be
analyzed using issues related to Whiteness Theory and Orwell’s work.

The original essay assignment I proposed, reprinted below, vaguely addresses
some of these issues:

For this assignment, read George Orwell’s “Politics and the English
Language.” Your assignment is to compose an essay in which you analyze
the reading by using your own experience regarding the English language.
Identify how society supports or does not allow for your use of English.
How do you think language is regarded in society? Why do you think
society regards language this way? How does this view of how language is
used affect you?

However, this prompt does not allow for the myriad of possible answers—especially not
with the outcome I had originally hoped for. The prompt also fails to ask students
anything specific about their own writing. For this reason, I will expand on the prompt
using Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language” while reflecting on my own writing
as it relates to dominant society by using concepts of Whiteness Theory. Towards the end
of this chapter, after I complete an expansion of how Whiteness Theory in conjunction
with “Politics and the English Language” can be used in order to create an essay
assignment, I will introduce a revised version of the original essay prompt.
During my undergraduate college years, before becoming an English major, I wanted nothing more than to be a journalist. My plan was to be one journalist that did not lie or change the “truth.” I later found out that journalism was not objective and that it was nearly impossible to report news objectively. I then changed my major to something that would fulfill my need to write in a way that was understood as subjective. But before this change, I worked at the campus radio station, for over a year, as a DJ. As soon as I found out I had the position, I wondered how I could talk on air and whether people would listen to me if I sounded the way I do? It was and sometimes still is my understanding that my country “twang” or southern dialect makes me sound uneducated. One example of what I mean by southern dialect is that my I’s are drawn out and last longer than necessary. For example, when I say right, it sounds more like riyght. Before I went on the air as a DJ, I wanted to rid my voice of this particular imperfection as well as any other marked signs that may sound ignert’, as my maw-maw would say. I came to the conclusion that if people can dye their hair, I can dye my voice. My “I’s” were the biggest problem. They were my gray hair. I could fix them, so I created a sentence that contained lots of “I” words: I like white rice on the right side. And I practiced religiously until I felt confident that my I’s were better.

But what had made me feel that the way I spoke was wrong or unacceptable? Well, it would not be the small community in East Texas where I grew up because for the most part we all sounded the same. It wouldn’t be the people I worked with—none of us used perfect, shiny English. At the community college I attended back home, no one really made me feel inadequate because of my language. But I knew that the way I talked was different compared to those outside of my community. Every once in a while, I
would meet someone who would laugh at how I talked and/or who would repeat
everything I said, just in order to mimic the way I spoke. Once I gained entry into the
University, not many people there spoke like me. I also noticed that the papers I wrote
were marked red with grammatical and organizational errors—I never really had these
problems before. A few months after starting at the University that had a bigger
population than the town I lived and grew up in, I began to despise my family, my friends
back home, and myself because of the way we spoke. I believed that their (my) accent
was a mark of my lacking a proper education and training. No one in my family had ever
graduated from college at that time, so I did not feel unprecedented in my belief that if I
talked the way I did, people would think that I was not smart enough and might discredit
what I had to say altogether.

So I practiced saying “I like white rice on the right side,” and it helped because by
changing my accent, I lost part of my history and a part of me. I had become ashamed of
my intelligence and family based on the way we talked. What was it that made me feel
ashamed? How did this affect my communication with others and my writing? How will
this affect the way I teach? These are questions I seek to answer. Using aspects from
Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language” and Whiteness Theory as an analytical lens
for analyzing my use of language when writing, I reflect on my use of language and
writing so I can acknowledge how I write when I write.

My decision to use Whiteness Theory to develop this particular assignment and to
examine my own academic writing and teaching is one that I hold in high regard. In “As
If Bereav’d of Light”: Decoding Whiteness in My Academia,” San Juanita Garza
elaborates on a point I believe very important—especially when writing and teaching
academic writing in academia. In this essay, Garza describes herself as a Latina teacher, and she explains her journey to understanding whiteness as a student and eventually as a college level teacher. She immediately begins the essay with an explanation of why understanding whiteness is important:

How much more productive the last three years would have been if I had begun my excursion into academia with a more cognitive understanding of whiteness. I would have been better equipped to negotiate with professors, classmates, students. I would have known not to cringe when the postal worker greeted me with a bold, blazing ‘Hey Senorita!’ my first week on this predominately white campus. (61)

I use this passage because it is my understanding that negotiating whiteness is the first step to dismantling whiteness as structural privilege. Understanding whiteness is what I seek to do, and I hope that my students will also do the same so we may chip away at dismantling the constructs of whiteness in society as shown in our writing. All students can benefit from looking through a Whiteness theoretical lens because all members of society construct whiteness. For instance, Garza writes, “Naturally, I don’t mean to dismiss the tendency toward whiteness in ‘white’ people, I mean only that the tendency is one available to all peoples in our society. Because whiteness garners much of its potency from power, and from existing power structures . . .” (61). The “power” she describes can be said to have its roots in politics, which is why it will be important to analyze political realms when using Whiteness Theory, and politics is a topic of discussion in Orwell’s essay.
In “Politics and the English Language,” Orwell describes the decay of the English language, especially as it pertains to how politicians use the language. In the essay, Orwell describes how language is abused with vagueness in metaphors, and the incorrect and/or unnecessary use of words that do not add clarity to whatever message the author is trying to relay to an audience. Orwell was a politically aware author and understood how language was abused to mask real issues over the masses in society as a way to manipulate audiences. However, the way he suggests using language is standardized and therefore leaves out members of society, much like what he is saying politicians do.

The ideas Orwell lays out in his essay “Politics and the English Language,” published in 1946, are similar to ideas in other works of his. In Animal Farm (1956), he uses farm animals in a way to uncover and criticize totalitarianism—Orwell was a believer of individual freedoms. In Down and Out in Paris and London (1933), Orwell writes about his experiences as a tramp and of poverty. He shows how societal hierarchies are established and are hard to break because of government rule. In one of his more famous works, 1984 (1949), Orwell shows how government rule in the future has increased as the dominant structures take freedoms away from citizens in extreme ways by controlling every aspect of human life. The way Orwell discusses societal and governmental politics in all of his works is representative of how politics operate today.

Although Orwell published his essay decades ago, throughout my education, I have come to realize that in society everything is political. Politics are shaped by preferences and principles. Certain people hold certain standards based on preferences and principles and therefore want politicians in office that are making decisions to have the same standards and principles as themselves. These political affiliations and
principles are what drive the media, advertising, consumerism, business, education, and most all aspects of how people live in the United States. I argue that the politicians, political writers, and media outlets for politicians place themselves in realms that separate themselves from members of society. It is my belief that they do this in order to seem more aware, active, knowledgeable, and educated than others in America so they may attract more of a following.

When growing up, as I explained earlier, the people in my community that spoke the same as I did not recognize how we sounded differently when we spoke, but we knew it was different. We knew we spoke differently when we turned on the TV, listened to the radio, and had interaction with people outside of our small communities. When people see the standards set by the media, they try to reproduce what is mainstream, what is the “norm.” Anything that falls outside of this norm is therefore inadequate and needs taming. In this case, the norm is acquiring language use that replicates that of the political leaders, which trickles down to the media, which trickles down to academics, which trickles down to my writing.

In his essay, Orwell discusses the necessity of clear communication in writing for the purpose of communicating with audiences, which is especially important when it comes to political affairs. The clear communication he suggests however is a standardized use of English. When a writer over-compensates because of a lack of understanding—or to sound more knowledgeable—or to blind the audience—unclear writing is usually the result. In “Politics and the English Language,” Orwell lays out some common problems with writing and some suggested “rules” to follow when writing in order to achieve clear communication with an audience. What follows is a discussion
of Orwell's prescriptions for improving one's use of English. First, I will discuss
Orwell's idea of the difference between "modern" or "bad English" and "clear" English. I
will then use the six suggested rules Orwell offers to explain how my own writing was
and is reflected in these guidelines. My problems with using unclear English, which are
in part a result of society and the dominant "white" culture, need reflection so I can
improve my writing and see how this knowledge can improve student writing.

Early on in "Politics and the English Language," Orwell explains that "Most
people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad
way" (581). When I first read this, I will "admit" that I thought Orwell was referring to
slang or dialects other than Standard English—I thought I could be considered as
someone who has put the English language in a "bad way." However, throughout the
essay, Orwell discusses exactly what he is referring to by specifying what is "modern" or
"bad English." He then differentiates "bad English" from "clear English." He writes that
"Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by
imitation . . . If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly, and to think
clearly is a necessary first step towards political regeneration: so that the fight against bad
English is not frivolous and is not the exclusive concern of professional writers" (581).
He then writes, "modern writing at its worst does not consist in picking out words for the
sake of their meaning and inventing images in order to make the meaning clearer" (586).

Orwell emphasizes that "clear" English is more appropriate when writing, and
contrary to what I had thought earlier in my education, he writes that, "It [clear English]
has nothing to do with correct grammar and syntax, which are of no importance so long
as one makes one's meaning clear" (589). This understanding of the difference in "bad"
and “clear” English is important to point out because these ideas that Orwell states, such as the unimportance of proper grammar and syntax, are not supported by the institutions in which I was educated. Those institutions are supported by dominant “white” culture ideologies. Using the idea that these “white” ideologies are socially constructed in society and in academic institutions is precisely what provokes my interest in this subject. Using Orwell’s six suggested “rules” for avoiding “bad” English, I examine language as it affects society and how both consequently affect my writing.

The first “rule” Orwell offers is to “Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print” (590). My understanding of this rule is that one should not use metaphors when writing, but my knowledge of avoiding metaphors when writing took time to learn. Orwell gives examples of the metaphors he refers to as “worn-out” metaphors: “Ring the changes on . . . toe the line . . . play into the hands of” (583). Where I come from, using metaphors to communicate was common. People use the following figurative language: “Knee high to a grasshopper” or “It’s cold enough outside to freeze the horns of a billy goat.” People in my community understood these metaphorical sayings as a comfortable way to speak—and knowledge of sayings such as these allowed you access to the community and allowed you to talk to the adults at the dinner table. When I first learned that the author should avoid metaphors when writing—what I use synonymously with metaphors in academic writing—I was surprised to say the least. So I had to learn how to write by explaining what these metaphors meant instead of writing metaphorically. I tried to incorporate my own discourse, but I was not an expert, and saying that someone was “smiling like a possum” did not settle well in regards to how I wrote in college. My books, instructors, and institution where I was
working on a degree were the experts, so I listened, and my writing became the voice of what I thought my instructor wanted to hear because I wanted to fit in and also wanted good grades. These reasons lead me to believe that although Orwell is suggesting “clear” language with the avoidance of metaphors when writing, he is also suggesting the standardization of English. People from multiple cultures are accustomed to speaking in cultural codes be it metaphors, mixing dialects or languages, or slang terms. Avoiding aspects such as these when writing will unify and standardize all writing, which reflects the idea the idea of whiteness. Whiteness neglects to take into account anything that is not part of the dominant “white” culture, standard, and English.

The second “rule” of Orwell’s is to “Never use a long word where a short one will do” (590). This “rule” is simple enough, but I believe that what I see on TV, hear on the radio, and what society marks as an educated and, more importantly, a well-spoken person, leads writers—especially young writers—to believe that larger words will make for a better argument because who wouldn’t believe someone who can use long words? Orwell refers to these words in a section titled “PRETENTIOUS DICTION.” Some of the words he calls pretentious are “Foreign words and expressions such as cul de sac . . .

status quo . . . . Except for the useful abbreviation i.e., e.g., and etc., there is no real need for any of the hundreds of foreign phrases now current in English” (584). Because some students are more familiar with words and phrases that are not common in Standard English, some “foreign phrases” are found in student writing and can at times be found in my writing. If the institution founded on white ideologies—one of which I believe is the standardization of English in America—would respect other languages in conjunction with English, there may be less difficulty when students begin writing academically.
In “Inventing the University,” David Bartholomae addresses this issue by explaining how students entering the academy try to enter into a discourse community without understanding how to do so. I quote at length a very important point Bartholomae makes at the beginning of his essay. This idea sticks with me and helps me remember what I am doing when I am writing academic essays in college. Bartholomae writes

The student has to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and he has to do this as though he were easily and comfortably one with his audience, as though he were a member of the academy or an historian or an anthropologist or an economist; he has to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language while finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, on the one hand, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline, on the other. He must learn to speak our language. Or he must dare to speak it or to carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is “learned.” And this, understandably, causes problems. (606)

Throughout the rest of the essay, Bartholomae points out how students work to achieve acceptance and “invent” their own “rite of passage” by using examples from student essays. I find myself in the same predicament when I write. I especially found using academic language difficult in the university setting during my first experiences within it. I also believe Bartholomae’s idea will be important for me when I assess student writing and when creating essay assignments.
The next "rule" of Orwell's is "If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out" (590). Orwell gives the example that some may use many words to describe just a few and write, "In my opinion it is a not unjustifiable assumption that [rather] than to say I think" (586). My understanding is that readability is improved with clarity and relevance to audience members. Orwell explains at length why he thinks it is important to "cut" words out when possible. He writes that "modern writing at its worst does not consist in picking out words for the sake of their meaning and inventing images in order to make meaning clearer. It consists in gumming together long strips of words which have already been set in order by someone else" (586). I believed for a long time that the longer my sentences were, the better they were. There is a reason that I and other students believe this. This can be traced back to imitation of all things, such as what is appropriate in society, what is acceptable, and what constitutes power. Ideologies of all sorts are reproduced in first-year composition classes through the students' writing assignments. I relate these ideologies that are found in writing instruction to whiteness in society.

In "Racial Politics and the Pedagogy of Whiteness," Henry A. Giroux addresses the importance of using whiteness to analyze ideological constructs of what is socially acceptable. It can be argued that the way language is used in writing is a social construct that is founded on whiteness. An analysis of how Orwell constructs the use of English should allow students "to address how their 'whiteness' functions in society as a marker of privilege and power and also how it can be used to expand the ideological and material realities of democratic public life" (295). Giroux explains why using whiteness as pedagogy is important as he writes, "Analyzing 'whiteness' as a central element of racial
politics becomes useful in exploring how ‘whiteness’ as a cultural practice promotes race-based hierarchies” (Giroux 295).

Consider what Orwell says when he writes that “But if thought corruptions language, language can also corrupt thought. A bad usage can spread by tradition and imitation, even among people who should and do know better” (588). I was made to believe by society that the way I spoke, which was reflected in my writing, was not acceptable. Here is what I did not understand, and no one explained that the way I talk does not necessarily have anything to do with the way I write. Also, faulty speech patterns and writing patterns are mostly different and should be addressed differently. I thought that “smart” people wrote a certain way because they talked a certain way. When I entered the University, I began to believe that if you did not use English correctly, you were not smart enough for the institution.

In his next rule, Orwell also suggests that writers “Never use the passive where you can use the active” (590). How would politics affect or be affected by this rule? How would this rule affect my writing and my students’ writing? Passive voice places the blame elsewhere as there is not an identified agent. If politicians and members of the media use the passive voice, they are not responsible for whatever reaction comes from the action taken, because there is not an agent responsible for said action. Orwell addresses another problem with political speeches. Orwell writes that, “In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible” (587). It can be argued that this sort of speech writing still exists today.

Recently, President Barack Obama made a speech to announce the death of Osama Bin Laden, the leader of a terrorist regime responsible for the attacks on America
on September 11, 2001. Obama spoke briefly about the death of Bin Laden. He then talked about the victims of terrorism in the United States and how our country will continue to fight the war on terror. He said all of this without simply saying that we had killed people—precisely what our war is trying to prove isn’t right. Orwell gives an example of political writing that reminds me of Obama’s speech: “Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called pacification” (587-88). In this example, Orwell maintains that instead of speaking plainly and honestly about what the government is actually doing, the political speechwriter may use a single word to sum up important issues. Also, there is no agent causing the action in the example. This example is why using the active voice makes writing clearer and holds the author credible for expressing whodunit. My job as an instructor of first-year composition will be to have my students understand the standards, such as using an active voice, but not conforming to whiteness ideologies that construct standardization.

The fifth rule Orwell suggests is to “Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent” (590). This rule also suggests that everyone should speak the same way. I use the words I know, and when I don’t, my writing becomes unclear. Bartholomae gives an example of how student writers use jargon in ways that show they are not familiar or knowledgeable enough to do so. He writes that in this particular student essay the student is trying on the discourse even though he doesn’t have the knowledge that would make the discourse more than a routine. . . . And he is doing this, I think, even though he knows he doesn’t have the knowledge that would
make the discourse more than a routine. . . . He moves quickly into a
specialized language (his approximation of our jargon) and draws both a
general, textbook-like conclusion. (606-7)

At what point did I realize that my voice sans jargon would be the best fit for my writing? At what point will my students do the same? It was not until recently that I became comfortable with using a language that was fit for me, because it was mine. I am still unsure of some things I say and who I say them to, but I have come to understand that my rhetoric is situational. My goal is to have students do the same thing. If they are in a situation where jargon is appropriate, they should use it.

The last rule of Orwell’s is to “Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous” (590). It seems curious to me that Orwell uses this word, and suggests avoiding barbarisms although those using the language in that way may feel the same about plain, colloquial writing. How does one know what is barbarous or unacceptable or not approved in the academy or society? Standards are set by those in power, and persons without power work to meet and reproduce those standards to gain power. If someone had not corrected my writing, how would I know it was unacceptable? In my hometown our spoken language is not barbarous to us, but it surely isn’t correct and pure in regards to SAE. Before entering college, my understanding was that I talked funny, but I was doin’ just fine. Whiteness Theory allows me to look deeper into this issue. It was Whiteness Theory that enabled me to see a different perspective that allowed me to understand how I viewed myself in regards to how society constructed whiteness. In “Challenging the Hegemony of Whiteness by Addressing the Adaptive Unconscious,” Ann Berlak writes
Each of us develops regular or habitual ways of construing the world that are rooted in early childhood, generated from thousands of micro-messages our families and communities send us nonverbally as well as verbally, the books we have read, the media we have encountered, and what we have learned at school. . . . In the United States these cultural forces reinforce and naturalize white supremacy and blindness to the hegemony of whiteness. (52)

All of my life my writing and spoken discourse was acceptable because of the construction of whiteness as privilege. But at some point, the ideas that led me to believe that my spoken English was not “white” or “right” English. I decided that if I could learn to speak and write Standard English, I would be that much farther ahead. My family, the way they talk, is not appropriate. It got to the point that every time I went home to visit, I spent most of my time correcting my family’s use of double negatives and vague pronoun references. I didn’t listen to what anyone was saying anymore: I was so embarrassed. And now I am embarrassed to say all of this. It is hard to reflect and realize that I knew I had power. Not because I was smarter than anyone back home: Lord knows that I didn’t know half the stuff my paw-paw did about farmin’ or anything about weldin’ or raisin’ livestock like my friends. I knew proper English, or I thought I did anyhow. But now, I know that I’m not smarter. I know some of the rules. I know how to “sound” smart by measure of academic terms. This knowledge does not make what I say any more or less important than what my kinfolk have to say. It means that I have been under the radar of the institution and to some extent know how to use my resources to apply to my writing.
Using Orwell’s "Politics and the English Language," I have been able to reflect and explain how politics in society shapes and forms my use of language. I have also made the argument that the way I talk is not the same as the way I write, but it took time for me to understand that. I am still trying to reassure myself of that and not overcompensate in my writing for what I lack when speaking. I have also been critical of the dominant "white" culture that supports and constructs privileges through written and spoken language. Understanding the constructs of whiteness and the power of words to shape society, I will be able to navigate whiteness in society and begin to dismantle the powers that produce racist and sexist ideologies.

After reflecting on Whiteness Theory and "Politics and the English Language" and exploring how students may use both to explain how and why they write the way they do, I realize that I need to revise my original essay prompt. I will do so in a way that asks more specific questions of students so they may have a better possibility of explaining themselves and Orwell’s essay. But before doing so, I will explain certain important aspects of the essay assignment. In "Assignment Prompt," Edward A. Kearns describes an assignment that asks students to read a publication and write an essay about that publication. One important part of the assignment is that students "establish a unifying theme or perspective" (151). For my prompt I will make sure to ask students to do the same so they will not simply summarize or write in a way that does not create new knowledge that the reader does not already know. If students were simply to quote Orwell without establishing a theme, the essay would be pointless as Kearns writes that "raw data of any kind is meaningless without a point of view or underlying structure that establishes relationships and meaning" (151). Using Kearns' suggestions, I can create an
assignment that will allow students to apply their own subjectivity to current issues and Orwell’s work, for as Kearns writes, “The assignment provides a bridge from personal narratives to formal exposition, to research, and to writing with sources—while retaining the motivational value of personal writing” (151).

And because I also use Whiteness Theory to create the essay assignment, I also look to constructs such as whiteness as pedagogy. In “Projects of Whiteness in Critical Pedagogy,” Nelson M. Rodriguez explains the importance of how to implement whiteness as pedagogy. He writes that

the discourse of critical pedagogy offers insight into the overall purpose of a pedagogy of whiteness. That is, it is imperative that such a pedagogy invite (white) students to critically engage with inequality and asymmetrical relations of power so as to challenge and transform them. However, to do so they must encounter, be challenged by, and negotiate with the discourse of races as a social, historical, and political construction. (15)

The revised essay prompt will maintain these principles, as I ask students to write an essay that critiques politics in their own writing.

My hope is that the revised prompt will evoke social awareness, critical thought, and an analysis of subjectivity in a way that students can improve their analytical writing. My understanding is that the more specific the prompt is, the better the student essays will be. I will now introduce the revised version of my original essay prompt:

Using ideas from George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language,” write a three to five page essay in which you explain how politics and
society affect your use of language when writing for the University. As part of your explanation, you will need to explain Orwell’s essay with specific regard to the terms “modern English” and “clear English.” You will also be required to use at least two of the six suggested “rules” Orwell offers at the end of the essay to answer the following questions: How do you believe politicians and the majority of society may separate members of society based on the way they write? What in society reinforces the ideas of how members of society write? What is your personal experience with (complications, tribulations, weaknesses, strengths) writing academic essays? How is the way you view your academic writing affected by society and politics?

This prompt will allow students to understand how to read the works of others critically in order to analyze the work and apply it to their own writing. In this essay, students will also be allowed to write in narrative form so they can begin using their own subjectivity as a rhetorical device. By understanding their own subjectivity in relation to the dominant “white” power structure, students will be able to negotiate and dismantle whiteness through their writing.

In the next chapter, I outline the history of rhetorical theory in relation to Rhetoric and Composition Studies and create the second assignment by using Whiteness Theory. I will analyze the lyrics of two popular country music songs that will be the object of analysis for the second essay assignment.
CHAPTER IV

SECOND ASSIGNMENT: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AND WHITENESS THEORY

In Rhetoric and Composition Studies, many argue that alternative approaches to traditional—what I term standard “white”—rhetoric would allow students to write in a way that more closely resembles their cultural experiences. It is important for students to understand the diversity of cultural experiences in society because not understanding different cultures may account for the racism, marginalization, and discrimination found throughout American society. People from different cultural backgrounds must understand each other’s perspectives in order to write or communicate in a productive way. In “Alternative Rhetoric and Morality: Writing from the Margins,” David L. Wallace states that “we must take up the task of educating ourselves about how to bring voices and concepts from the margins into substantive interaction with the discourses of power, not with the goal to simply add some ethnic spice to the multicultural stew but to transform existing values and rhetorical practices” (23). It is therefore important for instructors to teach the importance of understanding alternative rhetorical approaches. This understanding would give students a better foundation for conducting rhetorical exercises in their writing. Wallace elaborates on his understanding of alternative rhetorics when he writes that
"alternative"... rhetorical theory and practice must move beyond the recognition that no utterance is ever neutral to a substantive accounting of the operation of privilege and marginalization inherent in any rhetorical act. Put simply, in alternative rhetoric, a rhetor cannot simply seek out the most effective means of persuasion available but must also consider the implications of engaging in those means for others. (24)

The author of a piece, thought, cannot assume that the audience will be familiar with "white" rhetoric or that the audience will understand alternative rhetorics. For this reason, alternative rhetorical approaches must to some extent account for approaches to rhetoric as they have been previously established in first-year college composition classes.

One of the previously established approaches to rhetoric is that the writer should write in a way that focuses on the audience. While remaining audience-focused within writing is a construct of traditional rhetoric, having knowledge of and using alternative rhetorics allow students a more culturally aware approach to their rhetorical agencies when writing. Other previously established approaches to rhetoric currently in use in first-year composition classes, as I understand them, are that no "truth" can ever be permanent. The history of the canons of rhetoric shows how concepts of traditional rhetoric are mirrored in practices found in society and in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. The history’s foundations, deeply rooted in Western civilization’s concepts of "truth," are still embedded in most writing, regardless of whether the author notices them or not. If students were to study different approaches to Western civilization’s concepts of rhetoric, they could apply them in their writing, based on the situation at hand.

Because I am still negotiating my positionality as a future instructor of Rhetoric and
Composition and do not yet have extensive experience instructing composition, my goal in this chapter is to look for ways of incorporating alternative rhetorics which I argue will improve students’ writing.

In *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies*, James Berlin identifies an essay assignment that includes some key factors that I will use to create an assignment that incorporates alternative approaches to traditional rhetoric. As Berlin says,

> Our main concern [for this assignment] is the relation of current signifying practices to the structuring of subjectivities—of race, class, sexual orientation, age, ethnic, and gender formations, for example—in our students and in ourselves. The effort is to make students aware of cultural codes. . . . Our larger purpose is to encourage students to negotiate and resist these codes—these hegemonic discourses. . . . We thus guide students to locate in their experience the points at which they are now engaging in negotiation and resistance with the cultural codes they daily encounter. (124)

Berlin goes on to discuss an assignment in which students analyze popular television programs. In this assignment students are “encouraged to discuss the manner in which they negotiate and resist the cultural codes . . . . Here they can explore their reason for preferring the version of work and family found in one or the other program, investigating the class, gender, race, religious, and ethnic codes that they have been encouraged to enact” (132). The reason I quote from Berlin’s work so extensively is because much in his work exemplifies the assignment I propose in this chapter. My goal
is to create an assignment that students can relate to in their daily practice outside of the classroom and which will also improve the rhetoric within their writing.

To create the assignment in this chapter, I use Whiteness Theory and discussions in Rhetoric and Composition Studies pertaining to alternative rhetorics. Students will be asked to write an analysis of two songs written and performed by two prominent white country music singers. Students will be required to identify how the rhetorical devices in the song lyrics align with or deviate from dominant “white” culture. Because I will have a limited time with the students and will not be able to extensively explain many alternative rhetorics, this assignment will allow students to analyze and identify approaches to rhetoric that are different from the dominant “white” ideologies of traditional rhetoric. An understanding of alternative rhetorics will allow students to situate themselves and their rhetorical approaches in their writing, thus creating better writing. The essay assignment will also allow me to assess a student’s ability to analyze rhetorical approaches, both mainstream and alternative.

Before I explain the assignment at length, I identify the pedagogical and rhetorical underpinnings of alternative rhetorics in relation to first-year composition courses. Within this chapter, I examine the current-traditional, writing-process, and post-process paradigms within Rhetoric and Composition Studies and their relation to Classical, Renaissance, Enlightenment, Modern, and Postmodern rhetorical theories. It is important to recognize how alternative forms of rhetoric have evolved to become a prominent part of rhetorical theory and Rhetoric and Composition Studies so instructors can utilize these approaches in practice.
The first main paradigm in Rhetoric and Composition Studies, the current-traditional paradigm, is reflected in and evolves from changes in rhetorical theory. Aristotle, one of the founders of traditional rhetoric as it is known in Western civilization, stands prominently in the way current-traditional instruction is practiced in first-year composition classes. It can be argued that the principles that pertain to Current-Traditional instruction are founded in Western or “white” rhetoric. Kathleen Ethel Welch explains in “What Made Aristotle White?” that “Aristotle was made white by many different receptions of his work” (373). Welch goes on to explain that Toni Morrison has made a connection between the terms “American” and “white.” Welch writes that Morrison has written that “The term American signifies ‘white’” (374). Welch ends the article by suggesting that “Aristotle is still white. If we acknowledge it and historicize it, we can change it” (376). This “acknowledgement” is important to me because in my second assignment, I ask students to understand and recognize the difference between traditional Aristotelian rhetoric and “alternative” rhetorics in order to change the way students view and use rhetoric.

In Book I of Rhetoric, Aristotle states, “Rhetoric may be defined as the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (181). Traditional Western rhetoric would use the same rhetorical argument for “any given case” that would rely on the five established canons of rhetoric that are sometimes attributed to Cicero, but which can also be found within Aristotle’s Rhetoric. The five canons of rhetoric are invention, style, memory, delivery, and arrangement (175). Because the canons originally referred more specifically to oratory, the lines that parallel these canons to writing in Rhetoric and Composition Studies are not concrete. But in “Where Do English
Departments Come From?" published in 1967, William Riley Parker writes that "English was born about 100 years ago. Its mother, the eldest daughter of Rhetoric, was Oratory—or what we now prefer to call public speaking or, simply, speech. Its father was Philology or what we now call linguistics" (4). Historically, as Riley states, the "pedagogical shift that began in the eighteenth century and continued through the nineteenth is the shift from the spoken to the written, the oral to the literate. Rhetoric had been the study of oratory, and university examinations had been oral until almost the middle of the eighteenth century" (35).

Before the 18th and 19th centuries, there is evidence of a lack of understanding of and no allowance for different rhetorical approaches in oral and written communication. In the "Introduction" to Desiderius Erasmus in The Rhetorical Tradition, for instance, Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg write that "Erasmus was deeply interested in education. For the common good, he hoped that peace would come if humanity were united in one political state (as in ancient Rome), with one religion (Roman Catholicism) and one language (Latin)" (582). Alternative rhetorics would clearly deviate from these ideas that are so deeply rooted in the Western rhetorical tradition (Erasmus lived between 1469 and 1536). Even though Erasmus discusses fixed rhetorical standards during the 15th and 16th centuries, they still exist today.

Once the change from spoken to written discourse made its way into classrooms in the 18th and 19th centuries, the current-traditional approach to instructing rhetoric and writing held firm with prescriptions and rules for students that did not allow for the incorporation of cultural differences or differences from the prescribed norm in rhetoric and writing. The current-traditional approach was very prescriptive and did not allow
students to make mistakes or revision, as current-traditional approaches to teaching writing focus on the “product” rather than the “process” of writing. Students were required to sit down and write to their best ability without the use of revision, peer review, and without a complete rhetorical understanding of an audience. The emphasis during the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries was on grammar and standard writing and did not strongly emphasize the audience. Evidence of these methods is visible in John Locke’s work from the 17\textsuperscript{th} century. Locke’s view of rhetoric is strongly based on his idea of the connection between knowledge and language and that language can alter truths.

In an excerpt from \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding} (1690), Locke discusses at length the ambiguity of words and their relation to truth. Locke writes that “He that applies the words of any language to ideas different from those to which the common use of that country applies them, however his own understanding may be filled with truth and light, will not by such words be able to convey much of it to others, without defining his terms” (826). So if there is cohesion in a statement, regardless of the language variation used, the author can be successful in proving a point. This view of language is important in the creation of my proposed assignment. I want students to articulate the alternative rhetorical nature of music lyrics. Students can critically analyze the lyrics to make sense of and find the deeper meaning in the songs. Hopefully, students will learn how to use their own language and rhetoric to convey ideas to an audience, even if their language is not SAE and their rhetorical approaches are different from the approaches used by dominant “white” culture.

Bizzell and Herzberg state that George Campbell’s \textit{The Philosophy of Rhetoric} (1776) “has been justly praised as the turning point in the development of rhetoric in the
eighteenth century, as the first modern rhetoric, and even as the first real advance in rhetorical theory since Aristotle” (901). Campbell emphasizes the importance of moral evidence and reasoning when trying to obtain the truth and develop a persuasive argument. I am particularly interested in Campbell’s discussion of three “Subdivisions of Moral Reasoning” which are “experience, analogy, and testimony” (916). The use of “testimony” eventually becomes used during the writing-process movement in the 1980s. I also attribute testimony to the popular use of narratives when writing. However, the use of “testimony” is eventually discredited in the post-process movement because of possible discrepancies of legitimacy. Testimony or testimonies of groups or individuals other than the dominant “white” culture is a form of alternative rhetoric, which has roots in 18th and 19th century rhetorical theory.

During the 19th century there were also other changes made to traditional rhetoric. Bazzell and Herzberg write that during the 19th century, Maria W. Stewart “denounced white racism and exhorted African Americans to fight against slavery and for civil rights for free African Americans” (988). At this time, as Bazzell and Herzberg state, “People of color, previously largely excluded from a rhetorical tradition defined as white as well as male, would not simply imitate white rhetoric but would develop their own ways of using language” (988). During the 19th century there was an increase of working-class people attending college. In order to aid in their instruction, Alexander Bain would outline prescriptions that make up a good amount of what is today known as current-traditional approaches to composition instruction.

In English Composition and Rhetoric, Bain defines five modes of composition: description, narration, exposition, oratory, and poetry. Some of his main points about
composition instruction are that “The command of language is a grand total, resulting from the practice of a life [experience]. . . . The teacher is here a trainer, and can impart a short compass, what, without him, would be acquired slowly, if at all . . . . The fulfillment of this design [of teacher as facilitator] has ended in a treatise more closely allied to Campbell’s . . . than to the majority of recent works on English Composition” (1145). The “recent works” Bain may have been referring to were more progressive and included more than just working with the idea that rhetoric is solely available to white males. During this same time, education was changing, and with it came changes in rhetoric. Frederick Douglass and Maria Stewart spoke publicly and advocated for the legitimacy of alternative rhetorics. Although Douglass and Stewart are today published in The Rhetorical Tradition (a canon of rhetoric texts), the uses of alternative rhetorics—the application of them—are not commonly implemented in first-year composition classes today. This may be because instructors are unsure of how to point out the defining characteristics of alternative rhetorics.

Toward the end of the 20th century, there was a major shift in rhetorical theory that caused a change in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. The shift was from using the current-traditional paradigm to working under the writing-as-a-process paradigm. This was a major shift because the focus of rhetoric and writing became audience-focused. This rhetorical approach to writing was very objective but was nonetheless important in regards to rhetoric because an argument does not mean anything unless the audience understands and accepts the ideas put forth. In Rhetoric and Composition Studies, as Bizzell and Herzberg state, the “writing as a process movement” in composition classrooms in the 1980s, “uses a psychological approach reminiscent of the
communication theory movement—it observes writers at work and attempts to identify those activities that produce good writing” (1185). Those “activities” included an acknowledgement of the audience, peer revisions, and collaboration. Peer revisions allow writers to understand a more collective way of how different audiences receive what is written. Because there was still a very specific idea of what “good” writing looked like, “The process model has clear affinities with the traditional rhetorical model of invention, arrangement, and style” (1185).

In regards to specific canons in Western rhetorical theory, it is also during the 20th century that philosophers of language began to look closely at language and how discourse is constructed. Some philosophers began to look at how the idea of what is “truth” is socially constructed in language, signs, and other modes of discourse. In “Marxism and the Philosophy of Language,” Mikhail Bakhtin writes about the construction of ideologies within signs and symbols, which make up language. He states, “This ideological chain stretches from individual consciousness to individual consciousness, connecting them together. Signs emerge, after all, only in the process of interaction between one individual consciousness and another” (1212). In first-year composition classes, peer revision represents the “interaction between one individual consciousness and another.”

However, assignments in first-year composition classes throughout the 20th century did not account for an audience or writer that utilized different cultures in society or languages or discourses that are different to the dominant “white” cultures. Socially constructed ideologies account for the idea of what “good” or “acceptable” discourse will look like, and one principle of Whiteness Theory is that “whiteness” is socially
constructed. At this point, alternative rhetorics were still disregarded because they did not reflect the dominant “white” culture.

Once postmodern rhetoric became popular, Rhetoric and Composition Studies evolved to a post-process paradigm of writing. The difference between writing-as-a-process and post-process writing is that, because objectivity is not valid, acknowledgement of subjectivity in writing is now the author’s responsibility to the audience. In composition classes, the emphasis is still on writing but to a greater extent than before. Revisions based on peer feedback are still valued so as to negotiate the author’s arguments in relation to the audience’s. Once the change occurred to postmodern rhetoric, and currently in Rhetoric and Composition Studies, the idea is that ultimate “truth” cannot be found because everything is subjective, including traditional rhetorical approaches. This postmodern perspective opens up the door to alternative rhetorics.

In one form of alternative rhetoric, Gloria Anzaldúa’s *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), Anzaldúa uses one form of an alternative rhetoric, a mestiza rhetoric. In first-year composition classes, the alternative rhetorical approach Anzaldúa suggests in her writing could be used in multiple ways. Anzaldúa writes in “Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan” that “Culture forms our beliefs. We perceive the version of reality it creates” (38). Members of multiple cultures make up the members of an audience for any text. So at this point, it is important to notice how Anzaldúa introduces a rhetorical approach different from traditional forms, and yet there is still a discussion today about how to implement alternative rhetorics in composition pedagogy. Wallace discusses alternative rhetorics and uses Anzaldúa’s “mestiza rhetoric” as an example of how to combat traditional Western rhetoric. But it is apparent that in
Rhetoric and Composition Studies, there is still not an understanding of how to use alternative rhetorics.

Concerning Rhetoric and Composition Studies, I have come to the conclusion that there is not one correct rhetorical approach for writing. Rhetoric is situational, fragmented, depends on the audience and on the subjectivity of the author—rhetoric is always changing. For this reason, it is important for first-year composition classes to incorporate and learn multiple rhetorical approaches. This may allow for a better understanding of the diverse population in the United States. By using alternative rhetorics, the assignment I create seeks to allow students to understand a form of rhetoric that deviates from the traditional norm.

Because I am still learning how to create essay assignment prompts, for this assignment, I rely heavily on an essay assignment Berlin explains in *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures*. The assignment he describes is for a lower level English course titled “Codes and Critiques,” in which he has students analyze popular television shows as part of the curriculum. I use Berlin’s assignment as a shaping tool for my assignment, which has students rhetorically analyze music lyrics. Whiteness Theory, the history of Rhetoric and Composition Studies, and alternative rhetorics also inform the essay prompt. For this assignment, students will:

Write an essay in which you analyze the following country songs in relation to one another: Alan Jackson’s “Good Time” and Dolly Parton’s “9 to 5.” To do this, you will first need to identify what you believe the artists’ main ideas for the songs are. Then, you will use what you believe to be the function of dominant mainstream culture in these songs while
analyzing how the songs align with or deviate from the social construction of what it means to be “white” in American society. Analyze how the lyrics of these songs rhetorically shape the meaning for the audience by using specific examples. For this assignment, also analyze the class, gender, religious, racial, and ethnic codes to choose which song better reflects the US.

**Analysis of “Good Time” and “9 to 5”**

Some may wonder why I chose songs by white country singers as subjects for analysis while trying to incorporate alternative rhetorics. I chose these songs for multiple reasons. In *Not Quite White*, for instance, Matt Wray explains how whiteness studies of the 1990s “focus on the historical development of race-based social domination in the United States and would explore what the legacies of what white supremacy had meant not just for people of color, but whites as well” (4). So, in this assignment, students can use the essay to rhetorically analyze “Good Time” and “9 to 5” in opposition to one another and show how whiteness affects poor southern communities. In a sense, I want students to show how the ideologies produced through media outlets are reproduced in southern “white” as well as in non-white communities. This way, the assignment will be beneficial to all students. Students will be able to analyze songs by white singers, specifically in country music, and identify how the rhetoric in the songs is “alternative” to the traditional norm, while at the same time utilizing white privilege that is socially constructed and granted to white members of society.

The first song I discuss, “Good Time” (2008), is a country music song written and performed by Alan Jackson. I choose to discuss his song first because it is the song that
has come out most recently, and it is my hope that because it is more recent, some students may be more familiar with the lyrics. “Good Time” is fast-paced and has qualities of a line-dancing song because of the upbeat rhythm and repetition of lyrics. In a line dance, all participants face the same direction in a line and execute repeated, pre-choreographed steps. In the song “Good Time,” Jackson’s lyrics emphasize how he makes use of his weekends to have a “good time” after a week of work. Jackson was born and raised in Georgia, and has produced 25 number one-hits. According to a biography written by Steve Huey, before Jackson’s music career he had a job as a car salesman and construction worker.

The second song for the assignment is Dolly Parton’s “9 to 5.” This song encompasses the exhaustion and misgivings of working a nine-to-five job. The song was originally written and performed by Parton in 1980 for the movie Nine to Five. The movie is about three white women who try to get even with their white sexist male boss in a big city. The song is upbeat and fast-paced, so much so that the movie was converted into what is now a traveling musical. Parton, originally from Tennessee, was one of twelve children in a family from a low socioeconomic background.

In order to understand how I will assess students’ writing based on the essay assignment, I analyze the two songs in opposition to one another. I will also identify the various possibilities that may emerge in student responses to the created prompt. Both the songs are similar in that they address some issues of working-class persons. As much as the songs are similar, they are also different. First of all, Parton is a female, which has its own implications. Also, Parton’s song discusses more specific problems on the job that
Jackson seems to avoid. In other words, Parton discusses work-related issues that Jackson masks when he sings about a “good time.”

In the first lines of Jackson’s “Good Time,” he writes, “Work, work all week long/ Punchin’ that clock dusk till dawn” (1-2). In these first two lines, Jackson rhetorically separates himself from the dominant culture when he identifies that he works Monday through Friday from “dusk till dawn,” whereas the majority of society works from morning to evening. Portions of Jackson’s audience can relate to these lyrics, especially those with working-class jobs, such as security guards, night stockers, truck drivers, or roughnecks in oil fields who all work these hours. In the next lines, Jackson sings that he is “Counting the days ‘til Friday night/ That’s when all the conditions are right/ For a good time/ I need a good time” (3-6). He is looking forward to the weekend when “conditions are right.” Here, I believe he is rhetorically setting up the audience to understand that he will not talk about the hardships of work. Rather, he will talk about the “good time” weekend.

By contrast, the first lines of Parton’s “9 to 5” immediately show that she will use a different rhetorical approach than Jackson’s to address life as a female in an urban society. In the first lines, Parton writes “Tumble outta bed and I stumble to the kitchen/ Pour myself a cup of ambition/ Yawnin’, stretchin’, try to come to life” (1-3). Parton opens the song with lyrics that emphasize how she has to find “ambition” and needs to “come to life” before going to work. This is different than Jackson’s initial lyrics that discuss being tired after work, while Parton rhetorically appeals to her audience by introducing that she is going to sing about how work is tiring, even before it happens.
The next four lines of Jackson’s “Good Time” are the chorus of the song. Jackson sings, “Yeah I’ve been working all week/ And I’m tired and I don’t wanna sleep/ I wanna have fun/ It’s time for a good time” (7-10). These lyrics are especially important because Jackson repeats this chorus eight times throughout the song to emphasize how tired he is from working all week. Although Jackson repeats these lines, he doesn’t discuss the implications of what the lyrics mean, as he just wants to have a “good time.” It seems as though Jackson is unaware of how his work and socioeconomic standing are reflected in his disregard of how he should work to change his societal standing—it is as though he has accepted his place in the social hierarchy.

The chorus of Parton’s song is substantially different from the chorus of Jackson’s song. Parton specifically addresses problems facing women like her of society in the United States, as she sings, “Workin’ nine to five/ What a way to make a livin’/ Barely getting’ by/ It’s all takin’ and no givin’/ They just use your mind/ And they never give you credit/ It’s enough to drive you/ Crazy if you let it” (7-14). In line 7 Parton writes, “Workin’ nine to five,” which explains that she is speaking from the perspective of a member of exploited labor in society. She then says in line 8 “What a way to make a livin’,” which can be construed as sarcasm, as she explains in the next lines. Parton writes that she is “Barely getting’ by/ It’s all takin’ and no givin’” (9-10). At this point, I understand these lyrics are meant to appeal to poorly paid and/or marginalized persons. Parton points out how certain members of society, those working 9 to 5, are marginalized.

But when poor whites, like Parton, neglect to see how their privilege works in society—how their “whiteness” is their only tie to the dominant “white” culture—they
neglect seeing and understanding the problems of other marginalized people in society. In "What Is ‘White Trash'? Stereotypes and Economic Conditions of Poor Whites in the United States," Annalee Newitz and Matthew Wray write that "Images of the poor are used in mainstream culture as repositories for displaced middle-class rage, excess, and fear. These images and representations are then sold to the public as the real poor whites, thus effectively hiding who the actual poor people are and what their struggles might be" (183). It is necessary for whites to know how their construction of whiteness produces ideologies and discourses in their communities which in turn are reproduced in society.

In the next lines of the chorus, Parton explains this idea further as she writes “And they never give you credit/ It’s enough to drive you/ Crazy if you let it” (12-14). These lines are important because they emphasize that just because she is white, she is still struggling to make a way for herself. Even though people of poor white communities in the South live in poverty, without a proper education to make them knowledgeable about other cultures, they are unaware of how they relate to other marginalized populations. In *Undoing Whiteness in the Classroom*, Virginia Lea and Erma Jean Sims discuss cultural ideologies in poor white communities; they say that “Whiteness . . . gives privilege to poor white people in relation to people of color” (10). They explain the problems related with this: “Many whites embrace a superior racial identity, reinforced by the corporate media and public school culture...[;] economic interests lie in defending the largely white capitalist power structure instead of becoming allies with low-income people of color in the struggle for social justice” (10). Many poor whites are unaware of their social standing in relation to the dominant culture, and their communities are so isolated in a racially segregated way they do not know how whiteness affects them personally.
It is also important to point out that Parton is a woman singing about the struggles of women in mainstream society, which differs from the white-male (though not entirely dominant) rhetoric of Jackson’s song. The movie that Parton’s “9 to 5” was originally written for is about three women struggling to be recognized by their white male boss. In the lyrics, Parton explains that these circumstances of struggling as a marginalized woman are “enough to drive you/ Crazy if you let it” (13-14). Parton is pointing out that she may go “Crazy,” but she won’t “let it.” In Jackson’s song, “Good Time,” he repeats and emphasizes how to offset going “Crazy.” Jackson, unlike Parton, however, does not discuss in depth why he needs to have a “good time.” As a woman, Parton may also address these struggles as a form of alternative rhetoric set up in opposition to the rhetorical appeals in Jackson’s song, which does not address issues of class, race, sex, or gender in the workplace.

To further explain how the lyrics of Jackson’s song reflect the lives of members of rural “white” communities, a further analysis is necessary. He writes that “I cashed my check, cleaned my truck/ Put on my hat, forgot about work” (11-12). Jackson’s statements reiterating that he is not thinking about work emphasize the personal problems he has with work. Jackson also says that he “cleaned” his “truck” and put on his hat. I want to look further at the truck and hat in relation to one another because one common stereotype for poor southern people is that they wear cowboy hats, drive trucks, and listen to country music. People that do so are often regarded as rednecks. Jackson, however, is not a redneck. He is a wealthy country music star. Accordingly, in the next lines of “9 to 5,” Parton writes “Jump in the shower and the blood starts pumpin’/ Out on the streets the traffic starts jumpin’/ And folks like me on the job from nine to five” (4-6). She is
relaying the message that she is one with her intended audience when she says “folks like me” (6).

You might be a redneck, if you are white, live in the South, attend poorly funded schools, and grow up in communities that embrace dominant “white” culture ideologies. Not long ago, redneck jokes were popularized by Jeff Foxworthy and the Blue Collar Comedy Tour featured on Comedy Central. The jokes are about rural southern life. The problem with the humor is that it contains truth about some of the problems in poor white communities. Poor whites relate to the comedy, so they laugh. Socially and economically, poor whites are not part of the dominant “white” community, but still reproduce whiteness while using the power of white privilege. Many dominant culture ideologies neglect marginalized people and force members of those communities to “play the game,” as Luis Urrieta writes in *Working from Within* (10). When people “play the game,” they neglect positive changes in education and society. Playing an active role in white ideologies, a cultural analysis shows that poor whites are at a disadvantage socially and academically and are unaware of these things. Media portrayals of “rednecks,” the stigma attached to “redneck,” poor whites’ connection to “whiteness,” and low funding in schools are factors that explain what should be concerns for these southern communities.

These factors are important to understand because Jackson’s lyrics side-step the real issues in poor white communities. Jeff Foxworthy writes in his book *No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problem....No Problem!* that “you might be a redneck if you’ve ever painted a car with house paint” (324). He goes on to explain that his friend wanted to paint his car, and they “weren’t kids with a lot of money, so we went to the drugstore and bought house paint” (324). The situation is enough to make an audience laugh, but people neglect the
truth behind this statement when they laugh at it. The majority of “redneck” jokes by Jeff Foxworthy are true. Many families in the rural South do not have money. The lack of money is reflected in the school systems in America. Foxworthy explains this poverty further when he writes about the first time he heard the term “redneck.” He was at a high school baseball game, and white kids (from the “money side”) began to call Jeff and his white friends “a bunch of rednecks” (35). The “money side” was a group of white kids from a different school that had money. Differences in funding and education in schools set socioeconomic boundaries and reproduce dominant “white” culture ideologies. However, many poor whites do not realize that other than the color of their skin, they are not much different than other marginalized groups. These poor whites utilize their privilege and continue to racially discriminate against people that are not white. Country music is one way poor whites express how they relate to dominant culture.

To further explain the lyrics of “Good Time,” Jackson writes “Sun going down, head across town/ Pick up my baby and turn it around/ Good time, Oh, I need a good time” (14-16). I simply want to emphasize here that Jackson is getting ready for the weekend, which apparently is not a regular occurrence during a week of work, so one can conclude that his job is not rewarding. At this point in the song, Jackson repeats the chorus, once again emphasizing that he is ready for a “good time.” Now that the “conditions are right,” Jackson explains what a “good time” is and sings “Pig in the ground/ beer on ice/ Just like ole Hank taught us about/ Singing along, Bocephus songs” (21-3). In the South, a common way to cook pigs is in the ground on special occasions. Jackson points out that there is “beer on ice.” If Jackson is trying to relate to members of society that are lower-to middle-class, there is a good possibility that they will spend their
money on beer and a luau-style pig. However, it is my understanding that working-class people don’t have extra money because they need to pay their bills and save money. Because Jackson is not working class, he can use his white privilege to sing about spending money without considering how misleading the lyrics are to real circumstances in working-class communities.

When Jackson sings about “Ole Hank” and “Bocephus,” he is making reference to Hank Williams, Jr. and Hank Williams, Sr., both of whom are popular country music singers (22-3). Hank Williams, Jr. was nicknamed Bocephus by his father Hank Williams, Sr. Later in life, Hank, Jr. went on to write a song titled “My Name is Bocephus” in which he sings that he is “whiskey bent and hellbound” (9). Jackson’s next lines emphasize this idea when he writes “Rowdy friends all night long/ Good time/ Lord, we’re having a good time” (24-6). This is interesting to me because the reference to Bocephus includes being “whiskey bent and hellbound,” yet Jackson then writes as if to repent and address a higher power when he says “Lord, we’re having a good time” (26). To me it seems as though whatever bad, immoral, or degrading things he does will be forgiven because he deserves to have a “good time.” Members of the audience may relate to this reference because many whites are associated with Christianity, which is associated with the dominant “white” culture.

After Jackson sings the chorus again, in a single line stanza he writes, “Whew” (31). “Whew” may mean he is exhaling after a long week of work or that he is tired of being tired. Neither of which he emphasizes. Unlike Jackson, in lines 15-17 of Parton’s “9 to 5,” she gives the reasons for why someone may be exhausted and may need to exhale after a week of work. She writes “Nine to five, for that service and devotion/ You
would think that I/ Would deserve a fair promotion" (15-17). These lines explain that she works a “service” job that she is devoted to. She also uses “You” and “I” to make the audience see her relating to us—or people from the same background. In this instance, it can be concluded that since Parton is white, she is really only appealing to a white audience, but I want to point out that her struggles reflect other marginalized people—including women—as well. Parton writes that she “Want[s] to move ahead/ But the boss won’t seem to let me/ I swear sometimes that man is out to get me/Mmmmm . . .” (18-21). Why won’t the “boss” let Parton “move ahead?” There are multiple reasons why this may be, but it is important to point out that in society the “man” is sometimes known as Big Brother or as the government. This may be Parton’s way of saying that “the man” or the government or the confines of the dominant society are out to get her and people like her. She separates herself from the dominant “white” male culture with these lyrics. Parton is also advocating the resistance to dominant “white” male culture. Another possible way to analyze these lyrics is to conclude that Parton may be saying that because she is a white female, she deserves more than the “other” persons of different colors, ages, or sexual orientations.

In “Good Time,” Jackson is still describing ways to have a “good time” rather than making changes in society, as he writes “Heel to toe do-si-do/ Scootin’ our boots, swingin’ doors/ B & D Kix and Dunn” (32-4). These lines are a direct reference to line dancing. “B & D Kix and Dunn” are country singers with a song titled “Boot Scootin’ Boogie” which was released in 1992 and was a number one hit on the Country Billboard charts. In these lines, Jackson validates his association with country music and with his audiences by referencing a widely known band and song that is known for its line dance.
In the next line Jackson writes “Honkin’ tonk heaven, Double shotgun” (35). Here, Jackson is making a biblical reference, as he describes “heaven” as “Honkin’ tonk.” So, one can gather from this that Jackson believes dancing at the Honky tonk (a term for a dance hall) is heavenly.

It is interesting that after the biblical reference of “heaven,” Jackson writes “Double shotgun” (35). There are two things “Double shotgun” references. Either a double barrel shotgun or two people shot-gunning beer (a beer shot gun is when you punch a hole in the side of a beer can. You then pop the top. You then drink the beer out of the hole. The beer comes out very quickly, like that of a shotgun). Either ideas of a double barrel shotgun or two people shot-gunning beers do not relate to biblical references. Jackson then writes “Good time/ Lord, we’re having a good time” (36-7). A repeat of the chorus then follows.

Keep in mind that at this point, Jackson has not discussed the problems he faces with work, his pay, or long hours at work. He consistently suggests ways to forget about those things. He writes “Shot of Tequila, beer on tap/ Sweet southern woman set on my lap/ G with an O, O with a D/ T with an I, M and an E/ Good time/ Good time” (42-7). By now, the audience is well aware that they are expected to have as good of a time as Jackson has. Jackson is masking his problems with a “Shot of Tequila” and “beer on tap.” This masking resembles how society masks the importance of understanding alternative rhetorics that reflect multiple cultures when writing. It is nonetheless important to reform writing in first-year composition classes to reflect different forms of rhetoric. Many students do not realize the truth about how their education has masked the diversity of society until they go to college. In Race, Ethnicity and Education, E. Wayne Ross and
Valerie Ooka Pang describe that when students are exposed to knowledge of other cultures, “some students feel that their education manipulated information and used propaganda, mis-education, lies, and denial…leaving them ignorant of what is true about their community and society” (167).

Parton, on the other hand, recognizes some of these issues when she separates herself from the dominant culture in lines from “9 to 5.” She writes “They let your dream/ Just a’ watch ‘em shatter” (22-3). She references “They” which is not her and not “you,” which would be her audience. She then separates herself from her audience by calling them “you” and singing, “You’re just a step/ On the boss man’s ladder” (24-5). In the next lines she gives hope to her audience when she says, “But you got dreams he’ll never take away” (26). By “dreams,” some may conclude that she is making reference to the popular term that constitutes what is great about America—the American “dream.”

Newitz and Wray write that there are conceptions about the American dream that are not so great. They write that, “Capital and new production technologies have proved to be far more mobile than the auto and steel workers for whom the ‘American dream’ of a middle-class lifestyle has quickly turned into a living nightmare” (183).

While Parton is explaining how her dreams are shattered, Jackson is still enjoying his time not thinking about the reality of his audiences’ social and economic status. In lines from “Good Time,” Jackson repeats the chorus and paraphrases the previous stanza “A shot of Tequila./ Beer on tap./ A good looking woman./ To sit on my lap” (52-5). Jackson’s Friday night comes to a close in the next lyrics, as Jackson writes “Closin’ the door, shuttin’ em down/ Head for that Waffle House way across town/ A good time” (56-8). The Waffle House, a 24-hour diner similar to IHOP, originated in Georgia, which is
where Jackson was born and raised. Also, the Waffle House is cheaper than IHOP and is found in all 50 states in the United States, and may be a socioeconomic representation of the restaurant’s patrons.

Jackson ends “Good Time” by repeating the chorus three times and the lines “Oh we need a good time /I need a good time/ Yeah a good time” (71-3). Jackson includes the audience when he says “we,” which adds to his ethos as a workingman that needs a good time (although he is a famous and wealthy country music singer). The way Jackson ends the song is also questionable because he is still saying that “I need a good time.” So, apparently, the dancing and “beer on ice” he describes in the song did not bring resolution for him. He is still seeking out a “good time.” Throughout the song, Jackson did not discuss why a “good time” is so important. An analysis shows how Jackson has ignored that there are parts of what is known as “white” culture that do not constitute privilege. Poor whites need to be aware of this to better understand how they are marginalized members of society and not a part of the dominant culture. The analysis also shows that poor whites should be aware of how they are reproducing negative dominant “white” culture ideologies when they neglect to reflect on how many members of American society are marginalized.

In a stanza of Parton’s song, she uses metaphors to give her audience hope about how they can have hope in their future. She writes, “In the same boat with a lot of your friends [people of the same class]/ Waitin’ for the day your ship’ll come in/ And the tide’s gonna turn/ And it’s all gonna roll your way” (27-30). As part of the essay assignment I created, one goal of the assignment is to “guide students to locate in their experience the points at which they are now engaging in negotiation and resistance with
the cultural codes they daily encounter” (Berlin 124). In “Real Niggaz’s Don’t Die”: African American Students Speaking Themselves into Their Writing,” Kermit E. Campbell quotes Grace Holt when she argued that “‘whites ‘progress’ from literal language to metaphorical language’ but ‘Blacks progress from metaphorical statement to literal statement’” (76). The statement by Holt leads me to believe that explaining how the metaphors that operate within Parton’s music lyrics do not deviate from the “white” mainstream norm and are not a kind of alternative rhetoric.

Further in the song “9 to 5,” Parton repeats the chorus and then explains how class issues are part of the reason she is frustrated with her working experiences. She writes “Nine to five, yeah/ They got you where the want you” (39-40). I believe Parton is identifying how she feels trapped by dominant culture as she references “They.” In the next lines I believe she is identifying the goal for the American dream again, as she says, “There’s a better life/ And you think about it, don’t you?” (41-2). It is important to point out here that Parton is stating that “you think about it, don’t you?” yet Jackson’s entire song “Good Time” is about how he “forgot about work.” This is just another example of how Jackson fails to see the bigger picture of the hierarchies as part of the dominant “white” culture ideologies. Parton explains the hierarchies when she says, “It’s a rich man’s game/ No matter what they call it/ And you spend your life/ Puttin’ money in his wallet” (43-6). I find this very interesting because on the one hand, Parton is pointing out the problems with how society functions—especially as the problems pertain to women—and yet on the other hand, her song is about achieving this goal of being “rich” and climbing the corporate “ladder.” Parton ends the song by repeating the chorus and then repeating lines 39-46.
Because this essay assignment analyzing two songs relied heavily on an essay assignment Berlin lays out in *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Culture*, I use concepts also laid out by Berlin to assess students’ writing. In this assignment, I ask students to analyze the music lyrics and “explore their reason for preferring the version of work [of one song more than another] . . . investigating the class, gender, race, religious, and ethnic codes . . .” (132). So, students should be able to write a critical analysis of both songs explaining to me how one song achieves its intended meaning more than another. Berlin says that the purpose of the assignment I use as a model for my own is to have students “become reflective agents actively involved in shaping their own consciousness as well as the democratic society of which they are an integral part” (132). I find that assessing this assignment will be difficult for me, and I must be aware of this. Country music, rural white “folks,” and the issues that blind those in rural white communities as well as in other marginalized communities are all a part of the way I grew up and represent where my ideologies are rooted. So to assess this assignment, I must be aware that students are likely not to hold the same point of view that I do and may respond to the prompt in ways that I do not understand. When creating this essay assignment, I tried to envelop ideas important to helping students develop their rhetorical skills. By incorporating the ideas of “alternative rhetorics” as they are displayed in popular music lyrics, I believe students will be able to develop essays that improve their thinking skills and their writing.

In the next chapter, I conclude my thesis with a reflection on how well I believe using Whiteness Theory to create essay assignments will improve student writing. I will also reflect on what I have learned while creating the assignments—and how I will use what I’ve learned to instruct first-year composition.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I created two assignments that answer the call in current conversations in Rhetoric and Composition Studies for improvement in student writing. I argue that using Whiteness Theory—which I define as the social construction of whiteness as privilege—will help me better understand my rhetoric and subjectivity for the purposes of theorizing how to teach and eventually putting into practice what I have theorized in this thesis. I drew from current and historical conversations in Rhetoric and Composition Studies to better understand how I situate myself in the field and in a first-year writing class. The creation of the assignments was largely based on reflections on my own experiences at the University. By creating assignments based on readings from textbook readers (something I am familiar with) and country music (also something I am familiar with), I have been able to create assignments for first-year composition classes that allow me to reflect on my own subjectivity in relation to writing instruction. Not only do the assignments allow me to understand the way I will teach, but my hope is that the assignments will also allow students to better understand their personal subjectivities. This new understanding will improve their rhetoric and in turn improve their writing. This research began as my answer to the call to improve student writing. I now understand that to improve student writing, instructors must reflect on their
subjectivities, rhetorics, and pedagogical approaches.

In this concluding chapter, I will discuss what I have learned about my responsibilities as an instructor of first-year composition. Not only must I create assignments that aid in the improvement of student writing, but I must also teach students to identify and utilize multiple rhetorical approaches to strengthen their arguments. And regardless of what materials I use in class as objects of analysis for students to write about, I must reflect on my subjectivity and pedagogical choices. Because I am white and do have privilege, I must constantly reflect so as to not impose dominant “white” culture ideologies onto students. To discuss how the creation of these two assignments brought me to this conclusion, I use a recently published article that, among other things, discusses the importance of writing in higher education.

In “Live and Learn: Why We Have College,” Louis Menand explains how instruction in higher education is not teaching students as much as society would like to believe. Menand writes that “It’s possible . . . that the higher education system only looks as if it’s working. The process may be sorting, students may be getting access, and the employers may be rewarding, but are people actually learning anything?” (“Live and Learn”). Menand uses research presented in Academically Adrift to argue that the more students read and write, the more valuable their education. He describes how “students who take courses requiring them to write more than twenty pages a semester and to read more than forty pages a week show greater improvement [in college]” (Menand). To expand on this argument, the two assignments I created will not only have students write, but write in ways that increase the knowledge of their own subjectivities and rhetorical devices which will improve their writing.
Menand describes three theories present in higher education through which instructors use today. According to Menand, if you are a “Theory 1 person,” you may believe that “Increasing public investment in higher education with the goal of college for everyone—in effect, taxpayer-subsidized social promotion—is thwarting the operation of the sorting mechanism. Education is about selection, not inclusion” (“Live and Learn”). A Theory 2 person “might consider grades a useful instrument of positive or negative reinforcement, but the only thing that matters is what students actually learn” (“Live and Learn”). And if you are a Theory 3 person, you believe that “college is basically a supplier of vocational preparation and a credentialling service” (“Live and Learn”). In regards to Theory 1 and Theory 3, my belief is that when instructors fail to see the importance of teaching students how to think critically and invoke solely “selection” or “credentialing,” they can be reproducing whiteness and creating a situation that makes any student unable to live up to standards set by ideologies which marginalize students.

In “Embracing a Multicultural Rhetoric,” Bonnie Lisle and Sandra Mano describe how these “white” constructs can make it more difficult for students to learn. Lisle and Mano write that “While the imbalance of power in the classroom can make it risky for any student to open up, the potential danger is compounded when students see the teacher as representing an unjust or hostile social order” (15). As shown in both assignments, creating prompts that allow students to “open up” in their writing leads to Menand’s description of “Theory 2.” The second theory, which Menand supports, explains that “Education is about personal and intellectual growth, not winning some race to the top” (“Live and Learn”). Both assignments allowed me to teach in a way that will allow my students to write in a way that will increase “personal and intellectual growth.”
The first assignment I created uses George Orwell’s “Politics and the English Language,” which in 1998 was the most highly anthologized essay in textbook readers. My belief is that this essay was widely anthologized because it discusses the standardized use of English. The assignment has students use this anthologized essay in a way that will allow them to better understand their own use of language when writing. By analyzing how the ideas in “Politics and the English Language” have been socially constructed and privileged as acceptable mainstream language use when writing, the students will be able to grow intellectually within their writing. This assignment is intended so students think about not only how to produce work that meets academic standards, but at the same time that has the students discuss the problems with those standards.

The second assignment is based on a current conversation in Rhetoric and Composition Studies that informs writing instruction through the use of rhetorics that are different from traditional Western rhetoric. Using alternative rhetorics as a jumping off point, my second assignment will help improve students’ understanding of multiple approaches to rhetoric, which will improve their writing. My understanding is that, as Menand articulates, some may regard “the academic field of composition and rhetoric . . . as low on rigor and high on consciousness-raising” (“Live and Learn”). This assignment will raise consciousness but, in doing so, will also be rigorous for students. Through an analysis of music lyrics, students will gain a deeper understanding of how society produces ideologies, reflected in the rhetoric of country music lyrics and a product of and deviation from traditional “white” rhetoric. When creating this assignment, I wanted students to engage in something that has the possibility of being an alternative rhetoric, but which fails to separate completely from the dominant.
This assignment allowed me to understand that instructors should accept the validity of multiple rhetorics instead of discounting a deviation as deficiency. This is because in higher education there is a possibility that instructors will regard deviations to traditional “white” rhetoric as “wrong”. Lisle and Mano say not to “imply that students’ cultural backgrounds determine their linguistic habits and rhetorical patterns . . . . Given the complexity of such influences, it would be foolhardy to make hasty assumptions about any students’ rhetorical knowledge” (20). If instructors understand and accept multiple forms of rhetoric in writing, they can avoid reproducing ideologies through their pedagogies that may marginalize.

The research I have conducted here made me realize that I have one goal, one goal that must remain consistent throughout my career, regardless of what my own interests are. It is my responsibility to facilitate instruction to improve student writing rhetorically. If students’ writing has improved, it is possible that their thinking has improved through alternative rhetorical approaches, and I will have increased the value of my students’ education as Menand suggests. Improving student writing will need, on my part, a constant reflection of the history of our field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies, a constant reflection of my pedagogical approaches. Improving student writing will also require my constant recognition of my subjectivities and my situatedness in relation to the dominant culture, and a constant desire and interest in improving student writing. The ideas and assignments I worked to create will not be the end-all, be-all of how I will instruct writing; writing instruction is a constant process of change.

When I began creating these assignments, I started with the goal of using Whiteness Theory. I have found, however, that instructors of writing should always start
with the goal of improving student writing. I hold firm that using Whiteness Theory can improve the writing of first-year composition students. But, I have also come to understand that the biggest, most important, most vital part of my job will be to improve student writing, regardless of what theory I choose. I have the responsibility of getting students to become more reflexive as thinkers, readers, and writers, as Menand emphasizes throughout his article. What the students think and how the students read will affect their writing. I want students to think critically about their writing and their rhetoric so they may use that knowledge to appeal to more diverse audiences. Not only has creating assignments using Whiteness Theory allowed me to theorize about ways to improve student writing, but it has also allowed me to reflect on my subjectivities and about how I will approach instructing a first-year composition class.

As the title of this thesis suggests, I have tried throughout my research to show that when it comes to using writing as a communicative tool in American society, common standards suggest that an author can either be “White” or “Wrong.” My hope is that the assignments I have created will aid in helping students understand that there is no “White” or “Wrong.” There is “white,” there is non-white and understanding the difference will improve the way students write for all audiences—regardless of the color of their skin, sex, socioeconomic background, or sexual preference.
APPENDIX A

"Good Time" WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY ALAN JACKSON

Work, work all week long
Punchin' that clock dusk till dawn.
Counting the days 'til Friday night
That's when all the conditions are right.
For a good time
I need a good time.

Yeah I've been working all week
And I'm tired and I don't wanna sleep
I wanna have fun
It's time for a good time

I cashed my check, cleaned my truck
Put on my hat, forgot about work
Sun going down, head across town
Pick up my baby and turn it around
Good time,
Oh, I need a good time

Yeah I've been working all week
And I'm tired and I don't wanna sleep
I wanna have fun
It's time for a good time

Pig in the ground, beer on ice
Just like ole Hank taught us about
Singing along, Bocephus songs
Rowdy friends all night long
Good time
Lord, we're having a good time,

Yeah I've been working all week
And I'm tired and I don't wanna sleep
I wanna have fun
It’s time for a good time

Whew

Heel to toe do-si-do
Scootin’ our boots, swingin’ doors
B & D Kix and Dunn
Honkin’ tonk heaven, Double shotgun
Good time,
Lord, we’re having a good time

Yeah I’ve been working all week
And I’m tired and I don’t wanna sleep
I wanna have fun
It’s time for a good time

Shot of Tequila, beer on tap
Sweet southern woman set on my lap
G with an O, O with a D
T with an I, M and an E
Good time
Good time

Yeah I’ve been working all week
And I’m tired and I don’t wanna sleep
I wanna have fun
It’s time for a good time

A Shot of Tequila.
Beer on tap.
A good looking woman.
To set on my lap.

A G with an O, an O with a D
A T with an I an M with an E
That spells good time
A good time

Yeah I’ve been working all week
And I’m tired and I don’t wanna sleep
I wanna have fun
It’s time for a good time

Twelve o’clock, two o’clock three o’clock four
Five o’clock we know were that’s gonna go
Closin' the door, shuttin' em down
Head for that Waffle House way across town
A Good time

Yeah I've been working all week
And I'm tired and I don't wanna sleep
I wanna have fun
It's time for a good time

Yeah I've been working all week
And I'm tired and I don't wanna sleep
I wanna have fun
It's time for a good time

Yeah I've been working all week
And I'm tired and I don't wanna sleep
I wanna have fun
It's time for a good time

Oh we need a good time
I need a good time
Yeah a good time. (1-73)
APPENDIX B

“9 to 5” WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY DOLLY PARTON

Tumble outta bed and I stumble to the kitchen
Pour myself a cup of ambition
Yawnin', stretchin', try to come to life
Jump in the shower and the blood starts pumpin'
Out on the streets the traffic starts jumpin'
And folks like me on the job from nine to five

Workin' nine to five
What a way to make a livin'
Barely gettin' by
It's all takin' and no givin'
They just use your mind
And they never give you credit
It's enough to drive you
Crazy if you let it

Nine to five, for service and devotion
You would think that I
Would deserve a fair promotion
Want to move ahead
But the boss won't seem to let me
I swear sometimes that man is out to get me
Mmmmm...

They let your dream
Just a' watch 'em shatter
You're just a step
On the boss man's ladder
But you got dreams he'll never take away

In the same boat with a lot of your friends
Waitin' for the day your ship'll come in
And the tide's gonna turn
And it's all gonna roll your way

Workin' nine to five
What a way to make a livin'
Barely gettin' by
It's all takin' and no givin'
They just use your mind
And you never get the credit
It's enough to drive you
Crazy if you let it

Nine to five, yeah
They got you where they want you
There's a better life
And you think about it, don't you?
It's a rich man's game
No matter what they call it
And you spend your life
Puttin' money in his wallet

Nine to five
What a way to make a livin'
Barely gettin' by
It's all takin' and no givin'
They just use you mind
And they never give you credit
It's enough to drive you
Crazy if you let it

Nine to five, yeah
They got you where they want you
There's a better life
And you dream about it, don't you?
It's a rich man's game
No matter what they call it
And you spend your life
Puttin' money in his wallet. (1-62)
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VITA

Casie Moreland was born in Longview, Texas, on September 19, 1983, the daughter of Catherine Janelle Branch. After graduation from Mineola High School in Mineola, Texas in 2002 she attended Tyler Junior College for two years. Casie then moved to San Marcos to begin her studies at Texas State University-San Marcos. In 2009, she had earned a Bachelor of Arts in English with a Professional Writing emphasis and minor in Mass Communication. In August of 2009, Casie became a graduate student in the Texas State University-San Marcos Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Composition program. During her graduate studies, Casie began volunteering at El Buen Samaritano in Austin as an Adult English Instructor.

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