

# Cardinal Compositions

University of Louisville

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## Introduction: Multimodal Composition and Writing for Social Change

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From our first sip of morning coffee, we ingest a plethora of information poured into our cups by way of our favorite podcasts, live stream videos of the news received directly on our phones, and constant dings, pings, and rings notifying us of up-to-the-minute social media relationship status updates and must-see instant photos of our friends' still-steaming creatively crafted cups from around the world. We live in an increasingly digital world where our communication often relies on multiple forms of media, such as text, audio, video, and beyond. Each of the student authors in this section take advantage of the affordances of multimodal composing in order to effectively write in favor of social change.

Multimodality, as introduced by the New London Group in 1996, applies to "all meaning-making," and includes five modes of meaning: linguistic, audio, spatial, visual, and gestural (81-83). Multimodal composing and projects make use of more than one mode, opening up new possibilities in the composition classroom and beyond. In this section, authors make the most of multimodality and digital composing, through genres like podcasts, videos, and infographics. Broadly, multimodality has an impact on both how we learn and how we teach.

*How do we learn?* We all compose differently, so the affordances provided by multimodality are often welcomed by students who learn, create, and compose in a variety of ways. Multimodal composition assignments not only allow, but encourage, students to explore new modes, exercise their creativity, and experiment with new ways of presenting information, making arguments, and sharing their perspectives.

*How do we teach?* As we become a more integrated multimodal society, it is inevitable that we, as people of different races, genders, and cultures, become more socially integrated as well. Instructors and communicators must adapt their personal pedagogies in ways which not only allow for diversity but also promote a continuous expanse of the classroom where anyone, of any rhetorical persuasion, may come to learn.

In this section of *Cardinal Compositions*, four student authors use these different forms of media to argue for change in society. First, Will Doty's podcast essay, "Blissful Mornings: Introducing the Beauty of Coffee," encourages us to reevaluate our relationships with that first morning cup of coffee, teaches us about the Third Wave of coffee history, and gently nudges us to slow down and appreciate the small moments that make up our days. Next, Cassidy Witt's video essay, "Sex Education in Public Schools," argues for the inclusion of a more comprehensive sex ed curriculum in public schools, using a persuasive combination of academic sources and original survey data to demonstrate the issues with an abstinence-only approach.

The final two essays in this section include an infographic and an accompanying writer's memo that details the author's process and rhetorical decision-making process; these memos both provide context for the infographic and demonstrate thoughtful reflective writing. Kinsey Hattab's project, "Socially Just Pedagogy," effectively advocates for socially just pedagogy, which works to guarantee that all students have equal access, and provides pragmatic ways for teachers to adjust their teaching philosophies and practices to better attend to social justice. To close out the section, Katherine Settle's engaging project, "Autism by an Autistic," highlights the importance of moving from awareness of autism to acceptance and works to break down the stigmas associated with autism. All four essays in this section successfully make use of multimodality to write for social change, and we hope that their work encourages you to advocate for change as well.

Works Cited

New London Group. "A Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures." *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 66, no. 1, 1996, pp. 60-93.