

Rhetoric and Composition

Fall 2017 Program Newsletter



Evocative Objects, Productive Play, and a Dash of Leopard Print

Dr. Jody Shipka Visits FSU's Rhetoric and Composition Program

When Kathleen Blake Yancey announced that she had worn a little bit of “leopard print” in honor of Jody Shipka’s visit, it became clear that October 26th was an unusual day, and Dr. Yancey was introducing an unusual guest speaker. Dr. Shipka, associate professor at University of Maryland, Baltimore County, laughed as she looked down at her leopard print boots, setting the tone for her presentation, “Wild Things and Minor Gestures: Composing Not Knowing.”

Part of the Rhetoric and Composition’s guest speaker series, Dr. Shipka began her talk with the notion that, in the composing process, it is worthwhile to engage in a “postponement of knowing” and to stay “in the space of inquiry for as long as possible.” In both her own composing practices, and the practices of her students, Dr. Shipka focuses on risk, experimentation, and play. Her driving question has become: “What else?” What else might we use to compose? What else might we do in our composing practices? What else might a composition become?

To frame her conception of composing as “productive play,” Dr. Shipka drew on Erin Manning’s *The Minor Gesture*, Judy Attfield’s *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life*, and Gay Hawkins’s *The Ethics of Waste: How We Relate to Rubbish*. In response to the scholarship, she composed a multimodal text that allowed chance to determine the



**Jody Shipka, Associate Professor
University of Maryland, Baltimore County**

juxtapositions of words and images. The video essay, played during her presentation, combined Dr. Shipka’s reading of Kathleen Stewart’s *Ordinary Affects* with sound bites of everyday noises and a box of family photographs, acquired at a sale. To ensure that the juxtapositions were beyond her control, she and her partner independently determined the order of spoken word and visual image. She then compiled photographs, sound bites, and the recorded reading, honoring the chance of the juxtapositions. In doing so, she disrupted notions of authority over objects and materials within the composing process.

Despite her innovative approaches to composing, Dr. Shipka suggested that she “did not disrupt enough” with her work in *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, and she challenged the audience to further disrupt current notions of composing practices and composition in the discipline.

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Jody Shipka presents on “Wild Things and Minor Gestures.”

To push her own practices forward and to create a space for productive disruptions, she has begun asking, “How do I make the scholarly more like the hobbies?” which she claims has opened more generative possibilities than pursuing the reverse: making the hobbies more scholarly.

Dr. Shipka’s scholarship also informs her pedagogy, and her students have responded to her approach with puzzlement and confusion. She notes, “They lost their minds,” explaining that students initially resisted losing control over their work in moments of productive play and risk, until they eventually embraced both.

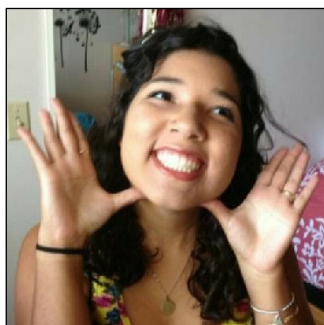
Dr. Shipka provided an opportunity for FSU students and faculty to also “lose their minds” through her “Evocative Objects Workshop.” In this three-hour workshop, Dr. Shipka invited 15 participants to let go of control over the

composition and re-imagine “the possibilities of material objects and multimodal composing.” The participants were tasked with “thinking with objects” as a way to (re)consider composing practices, texts, and materiality.

With Dr. Shipka orchestrating one station with glue guns and tape, another for extra objects and supplies, and a last “deconstruction station,” participants assembled their creations beginning with personal and household objects they brought with them, sometimes swapping a few items with other participants. As the “composing” wound down, participants circulated around the room in a “viewing” exercise to interact with and respond to the various texts. A necktie—woven together with pipe cleaners, ribbons, and trinkets—hung by the window; a telephone sported the question, “Who would you call?” inviting the viewer to pick it up, unwinding the cord; shards of a painted mug, smashed at the deconstruction station, floated across a canvas of newsprint. These evocative objects created the foundation for a conversation about the actions, affect, and agency attached to composing with material objects, which concluded the workshop.

Extending conversations from Dr. Yancey’s “New(er) Theories of Composing” reading group, the workshop pushed participants to put theory into practice. Throughout both presentation and workshop, Dr. Shipka challenged participants to enter a space, quoting Kathleen Stewart, “where nothing is and everything is happening.” She guided teacher-scholar-writers through a rethinking of composing practices, the potentials of “not knowing” where those practices and objects might lead, and “losing your mind” as a step toward generative and meaningful compositions.

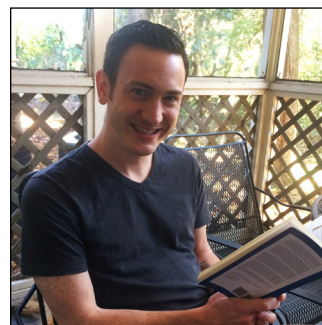
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



LIANA CLARKE

Liana graduated with her BA in English from FSU and a concentration in Editing, Writing, and Media. She is now a first-year MA student. Liana’s love

for language began at a young age. She has a purple journal filled with “snow” poems from when she was eight, and she remembers that the worst possible punishment was to have her books taken away. Now her academic interests include Black/Latina women in rhetoric, multimodality, and feminist rhetorics. She tutors in the Reading-Writing Center and looks forward to teaching ENC 2135 in the spring. Liana also cares for flowering plants and fat foster cats.



MICHAEL HEALY

Michael, now in his second year as a PhD student in Rhetoric and Composition, earned his MA in English from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and a BA in English from Creighton University. His research and

writing revolve around productive play in pedagogy as well as the rhetorical implications of play for meaning-making. He also has interests in digital composing, video essays, curriculum design, teacher education, and the impact of spaces on composition. He currently tutors in the Digital Studio and teaches ENC 2135. When he’s not teaching, tutoring, or writing, Michael brews his own beer, cooks a “mean” risotto, and goes for trail and road runs in preparation for the Tallahassee half marathon.