

Spring 2014 Interview—Dr. James Porter

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JCirio: All right, do you want to get started?

EW: Yes!

JCirio: So, I think I have the first question.

EW: You do.

JCirio: So, the first question that we have is how did you get involved with literacy studies? Like, what's your origin story?

PORTER: So, I did my Masters in literature at the University of Michigan, and I wanted to go on for the Ph.D., but I really wasn't sure. So, my uncle happened to be the dean at the—of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Detroit. And he said, "well, you know we've got a Ph.D., and we also have composition. You could specialize in Composition. And hardly anybody in the country has that. In fact, we have one of the best scholars in the country in composition: Janice Lauer who is the director of the program."

So, you know, I kicked that around and went and did visits at Indiana University, University of Cincinnati and long story short, I ended up in Detroit. And oh, my God, what a tremendous, sort of, half-accidental choice that turned out to be because I worked with Janice Lauer. And she had—as I mentioned in the talk—she had a new rhetoric-based composition pedagogy that I learned, you know, in the first week, the week before classes began; I was into it; I learned it. I took her seminar. We had one graduate course in Rhetoric them days: it was called Rhetoric, and it covered everything from Aristotle up to James Kinneavy.

And then I did—she directed my dissertation. And so, that's where I got into Composition. And it was also a great graduate program in general because the literature side of things was very much a cultural studies department. And they, they were very strong on—they were very anti-new criticism and very much into cultural contexts. So everything we looked at we're looking at cultural context, and that became part of my thinking, too, as I did 19th—I didn't do 19th—I did 20th century British and American literature, so, and a composition, rhetoric and composition dissertation. So, that was how I got into the field.

And then, I got a full time position teaching composition and—at Indiana Purdue at Fort Wayne—and they were not going to assign tenure track positions to composition specialists but they had tenure track positions for technical communication people. So my first year there, I, I did a seminar in tech communication. And taught the course and ramped myself up and moved right into technical communication, and which I taught there for 7 years.

So, I went from composition to professional technical communication pretty quickly. And that, you know—at that point, that became a really hot area. So, that's why I've done a lot of work in that area, less so than composition—I'd say overall.

JCirio: Thank you.

AW: So, this has come up a little bit in your talk, but which scholars in the field would you say have been most influential to you?

PORTER: You mean, like, early-on, graduate school, starting-out, kind of thing?

AW: All, all of the above.

EW: Forever

[Laughter]

PORTER: Well, I think those early influences were huge. Janice Lauer, for sure, probably number one. James Kinneavy's work, Richard Young's work, Ed Corbett. I did an NEH summer seminar with Ed Corbett, and that's kind of where I did the classical rhetoric course—which was with Ed at Ohio State in 1985, I think it was. So, those people were huge. And then later it was Jim Berlin, for sure; I worked with him at Purdue, and, sort of cultural studies approach to rhetoric was really important. And then Pat Sullivan who I mentioned—I think I mentioned at the talk; I worked with her in empirical research projects, and we did some research methods projects together.

And so, it's almost as if the people I worked with along the way were also the most influential people in my thinking. And so, um, and I'd say in terms of early learning, those people in the field were huge. But then there're just so many. Gosh. My good friend Martha Woodmansee at Case Western Reserve helped me see intellectual property as kind of a humanistic rhetorical lens, and in our conversations with each other just that was an immense influence that shaped my thinking—got me into intellectual property/copyright conversations, so, yeah.

AW: Thank you.

AH: So, you mentioned during the first question that your experience with literature, sort of, shaped the way that you thought about issues in Rhetoric and Composition. Do you have any other life experiences that may have shaped your thinking in some way? Or if you want to elaborate on the literature aspect of it?

PORTER: Well the literature part of it was sort of what not to do.

[Laughter]

PORTER: I didn't want to fetishize the text as a sacred object. I saw a lot of my friends doing that, and I just wasn't—I was, like, "why? Why would you do that?" I was much more interested in production. How it got—how to produce it, and what's a good strategy for producing a text. And what's a good text? And I also kind of liked all different kinds of text. It wasn't just literary texts. You know, I mean, I loved arguments: I read philosophy; I read history. I loved all kinds of academic scholarly stuff in all sorts of areas, so didn't see why one set of texts should be treated as a sacred object and others not. So, I didn't buy into that kind of value system.

So, when I realized there was a field of Rhetoric and Comp which was about production and what—how you make effective texts and, you know, I glommed onto that. It seemed like a better approach. I was always—I always loved writing. So, I think that was the difference. I didn't love literature—Many of my colleagues, peers in the graduate program, loved literature. I never loved literature; I loved writing. I loved the act of writing, producing writing, and working on writing which puts me in like, the, you know, 0.5% of the world that loves to write. And I've always loved it; its been fun, and so teaching it made sense to me.

AH: So did you find yourself being a writer early on in your life, then?

PORTER: Well, that was one career path that I considered among several. I did write some poetry—I published some poetry in graduate school. I wrote some short stories that never got published.

[Laughter]

PORTER: So, I was doing—I was dabbling in that so what happens? You write short stories that don't get published. You write an article that does—you figure, I better go this way. I'm clearly not going to cut it over here. So that's kind of where I ended up.

But I looked at—I remember looking at journalism schools at one point, coming out of undergrad. So, you know. So, kind of slowly found writing—teaching writing.

JCuster: Thanks, okay, so, umm, over at Miami University, what courses do you teach, which are your favorite, and why?

PORTER: Okay, um, I've got four courses I've been teaching the last couple years, and I like them all for different reasons, but the graduate seminar I've been teaching is Rhetoric, Theory, and History. And it's—I just love doing history because there's so much there, and every time I do the course—I've done it like eight times now at three different places—but every time I do the course I get something really valuable out of it. And teaching, working with the students on it, I get stuff from them, and then I read the stuff. It might be the same stuff I've read ten times, but I say, "Wow, I didn't see that before." So, that's a great, that's a fun course to do. But I also teach in Interactive Media Studies and Professional Communication, so right now I'm doing— and almost all the other courses I teach, by the

way, are online, fully online courses. I'm doing a lot of work on online teaching. So, I'm doing Digital Media Ethics right now, and working with mostly undergraduates, a few graduate students on just ethical issues in digital media, and how do you approach cases and issues, some of which we talked about today. And that's a fun course, because these are students, most of them are professional writing majors, marketing or business majors, graphic designers, interactive media designers, and they know this stuff is out there, and they've run into some of it already, but they don't have a systematic way of thinking about it, so what I try to do in the course: here's a systematic way to think about an ethical problem, here's what it looks like, and here's how you have to sort of sort through your options. It's not just close your eyes and decide something. I do Interactive Business Communication, which is kind of a new media business communication course. And then the fourth course is one I'm ramping up to teach for the first time in the fall; I'm very excited about: The Rhetoric of Information and Data Visualization, so it's going to be more— not visual rhetoric because we have, that's a different course, but this is more the design of quantitative displays, a Tuftee kind of thing— charts and graphs, and also using those to make arguments, infographics, so more the quantitative side of the visual. And I like all of those courses. I think I'm always most interested in whatever is the newest one I'm working on, because that's usually the most exciting. So, probably data visualization.

[Laughter]

JCirio: So that's your great—

PORTER: It's not going to excite everybody in the room in the same way.

JCuster: Just out of my own curiosity, you mentioned Interactive Media as one of the courses and topics that you guys cover. What sort of stuff fits under that umbrella? Since I do a lot of stuff with game studies stuff, so I'm just sort of curious if that falls under that umbrella— and what else actually does fall under “interactive media”?

PORTER: Well, the department I'm in is Interactive Media Studies.

JCuster: Mmhmm.

PORTER: And the big emphases there are four I would say. One is the business people do social media marketing, digital branding, and, usability studies. And then there's the games people—games is huge. And we're building, yeah—

JCuster makes a triumphant gesture.

[Laughter]

PORTER: We're building a— we're building, we're hiring, we're doing a lot of hiring in games.

JCuster: Awesome.

PORTER: The third area is art; it's more the art and design people, that's more the graphic stuff, 3D worlds. That kind of thing. And then the fourth group is the professional digital writing people who—they don't see what we do as interaction so much, which, you know, I think it is very much so, but we're, we tend to be more theoretical than those other three groups, tend to be much more practically oriented. But that's it; those are the four parts of it. And then we have other people, we have people in engineering doing robotics, interactive robotics too, so they're part of it. I don't have much to do with them.

[Laughter]

PORTER: I don't know. They don't seek my help on their projects.

[Laughter]

JCuster: Well, that all sounds really interesting.

PORTER: It's a really interesting group, it's really sort of chaotic, because we're all over the university and map in different paradigms coming together. But the conversations are fascinating and very productive, and at no other place in the university does that degree of difference come together.

JCuster: Right, there's got to be a lot of ways for those conversations and differences to inform each other in some really helpful ways for the most part, so that's got to be really cool.

PORTER: Yeah, and, and it keeps me hooked into, to developments that I wouldn't pay attention to so much, I wouldn't have the time to. Digital branding, you know, who has time to keep up with that? But it's very much tied to rhetoric.

JCuster: Oh yeah, absolutely. Thank you.

EW: So, I guess shifting gears a little bit...

[Laughter]

EW: We would like to know: what's on your nightstand, in terms of reading?

[Laughter]

PORTER: Feels like a personal question.

EW: Just wanted to make that clear.

PORTER: [Sigh] Well, I really didn't want this to be part of the record, but you know, I'll be honest with it. I've been reading civil war books and studying the civil war period. Not

so— not the war, battle part of it, that doesn't interest me so much as the politics and the cultural issues. Like how the emancipation proclamation happened. That's an interesting story. How the country went from not caring at all, you know, in 1859, to passing this legislation in 1863. Huge shift—how does that happen? That's kind of a Foucauldian question: How could—how could they change that quickly, and what happened and you know? And the answer is that there's a bunch of micro things that happened that all add up and change peoples' minds and this wave happens. So it's kind of interesting from a rhetorical standpoint, but, so, I'm reading that kind of stuff. I've always liked mysteries, and of the Raymond Chandler variety. And I've got some Irish books on my nightstand because I study Irish culture, and *Paddy's Lament* is on my nightstand, and some Irish history book, and a book on the druids. [Pause] I'm Irish—

JCirio: That's a big nightstand!

[Laughter]

PORTER: What's that?

JCirio: It's a big nightstand!

[Laughter]

EW: It sounds like my nightstand.

PORTER: I gotta clear it off. I've got too much stuff.

EW: Thank you.

PORTER: Okay.

AW: So, taking us back into the [inaudible].

[Laughter]

AW: So, what would you say are some of the most important questions that students in rhetoric and composition should be considering?

PORTER: Wow.

AW: Currently.

PORTER: Mhmm. Well, I think that there's a whole bunch of promising areas that the field needs to be addressing. You know, what draws people to the area, I think, often I think, is working with students, teaching, and often writing center work. Just the value that that has, working one-on-one with students, seeing students learn, I think a lot of people in our program are coming from writing graduate, MA writing experiences, I don't know if

that's true here. So the teaching and composition side and the one-on-one interaction with students is what draws people into the field.

And yet there's so many places in professions—I'm thinking of professional realms especially where we're not doing enough work—public rhetorics and digital media rhetoric. And rhetoric in business. You know, I teach in business communication, and my wife works in the business school at Miami. She's the writing center director of business school, and we're working on a book on rhetoric in business communication. There's just no book on rhetoric and business communication. It's never been done. That seems like a huge hole to me. Seemed like a natural fit and a lot of this book is going to be about interactive digital business communication and a lot of it on ethics. So, strikes me that there's one area where I'm going to be working on in the next couple of years, but there's a bunch of areas like that and public rhetoric, professional writing—so it seems to me that the major professional writing is a huge area for the field, and it goes by different names in different places like here, but that undergraduate major is hugely important to build a professional area for writers and writing. And often that isn't what starts people in the field, but I'd like to see more people moving toward that. I think it's a place where we can have huge effect, and I worry about what's going to happen to FYC in the new economy and when the new economics hits the university. We farm that out to MOOCs and dual enrollment programs. If our field is defined by that, then we're not going to be around long. So, I think we've got to sort of move up the curriculum and move outside the university and think about how we're shaping things there too.

AW: So you say move outside the university—how do you see that happening?

PORTER: Work in business, work in the public realm, work with local communities and non-profits, do more research outside of the composition classroom. But if people aren't interested in that, they're not going to do it, right? But it seems to me that it's a fascinating and interesting and open area—people need help. So, why not do it? That's kind of my bias in the field; of course that has to do with my history. I came—you know, I did technical business communication. I was the business writing director at Purdue for 10 years, and so I just tend to have that orientation, which is very different. It just doesn't seem that's here at all business or technical communication—at least not in this program.

[General muttering of consensus]

PORTER: That was my identity. I was the director of technical communication at Case West Missouri. I worked for the engineering school. I got a different take.

AW: So it seems like for you one important question is how are we expanding beyond our focus on composition?

PORTER: That's not a question for me. I don't think we're doing it. I need, we need—I think the question is why aren't we doing more of it? It seems like it should be a logical place for people in the field to move. And people are moving to digital media, and then there are some programs like Clemson that, you know, I have a strong emphasis in this area, but it seems to me and the field overall. Does that make sense to y'all?

[General consensus]

PORTER: I mean when I started in the field I thought it was first year comp. And then you know I had that moment where to keep a job I had to change that perspective. And I did and so it took me in a different direction.

EW: That seems like—thinking back to your article on institutional critique—that seemed like a part of motivation for that as well. Is that fair to say?

PORTER: Very much connected, yeah. Because, you know, I've got a lot of different interests. At one time, I can be interested in 10 different things, but what am I going to choose to do this week? Or this month? Or this year? Well, where can I make the most difference? What's going to have the most positive effect, or where's it going to be the most value? Not just for others but for me too. It's mutual, I mean. So that's why after a year or two of kind of spinning my wheels, Heidi and I have decided to do this book on rhetoric and business communication. You know, we had like three or four other ideas we kicked around, but this seemed like the place to go. 'Cause it looks like there needs to be something done there. There's a hole there that needs to be filled in some way, so I don't know. That's where institutional critique comes in. It's like where can we look at an institution, and where can you make the change? Where's my work going to have some value, make a difference? 'Cause there are six places I could go. There's lots of things I could be interested in. Not all of them are going to be equally productive. A lot of people in the field have spent a lot of their lives trying to change the English department, and I was one of them. But not anymore. It's just non-productive. It's not going to change, and nothing I can do is going to change it. I'm just not wasting my time trying to change it, you know, I'm going to do other stuff. But that's, you know, what I'm talking about. I could bang my head against this wall for another 10 years, but I'm not going to.

AH: So where, then, do you see the field of rhetoric and composition going? I mean, I know you have more of a tech writing background, but what does our future look like from the outside?

PORTER: Yeah, wow. Well, I think that's where we've gotta embrace digital media and digital writing and figure out what it is that means. How do we embrace it because...are we going to become videographers? Is that what writing means, or are we going to stick with text predominantly? What is it that defines what we do? Is it process and production? I asked this question to my graduate class last semester—I mentioned this earlier. Is a YouTube video writing? People have different answers to that question. How you answer it tells the world where you stand and the question of writing and media, and that's an important question to have an answer to, I think. So I think we've gotta figure out what it is we're doing in the digital media realm. Where can we make the contribution, and what is it that we can do, and what is it that we can't? I think that's huge. I think we've gotta deal with the question of online teaching. The MOOC is not dead. The MOOC is going to morph into something else, but it's going to be online. But we've gotta figure out...and we cannot say no. We can't say we're not going into online writing instruction. We have to figure out, how do we do it well? What's a responsible way to do it? That's why I've been really trying to figure out how to do online teaching, trying to sort of build my skill set in that area, which has taken a while. I was not somebody who was skilled at making videos. I had to learn

how to—well, I'm still learning—how to make videos. [laughs] So I've been working on that. And just kind of online delivery.

AH: Maybe this is a very loaded question, but how do we get to that future? As instructors, on maybe an administrative level, on any level, really. And it is a very, very loaded question, so...

PORTER: Well, you see an opportunity and you just raise your hand. I mean, “Anybody want to teach online?” You raise your hand. Or you get a job as a comp director, you go in, and you know what they want you to do is maintain the comp program with minimal fuss and don't rock the boat and just make sure everything works, and what you want to do is you want to go in and say “I'm going to try this new course; I'm going to do this new design; we're going to teach online in the summer.” You do three new projects, and we're going to push out and see what works and what doesn't. And it's—just find out what works and what doesn't! [laughs] And try to make things better. So I just think you just jump into it. That was my approach to online instruction, which was, just jump into it and figure it out as I go. That is not what they want you to do. They want you to learn how to do it before you do it, and my view was no, just start doing it. See what works.

EW: Is there anything in particular that you have discovered through the process of learning online instruction that you could share?

PORTER: It's hard, it's really hard. It takes way more prep than I've ever prepped before. You have to have everything laid out and systematized, which is sort of against the principles of teaching writing, where you want to be very responsive to what the students are doing, so it's very hard to do a good online course. And working with some instructors a couple years ago, we worked up some ideas for how to do it, how to do—you know, you do have some sort of pre-prepared material, the kind of material you give to everybody. We have a fifteen-minute video on “What is rhetorical analysis?” Fine. Everybody gets that. But then we have the stuff that's tailored for this specific class: online interactive, asynchronous interaction, synchronous interaction, what we called “ad hoc videos”—just the instructors reading papers, you know, on a Thursday morning, and talking to the camera about papers and just going through some papers and talking—or, they read through some papers, take some notes, and then do a quick video. And then, boom, they shoot that video to the students. The students are actually getting quicker response than they're used to, and they're seeing the student live, talking to their papers. Try to keep, you know, keep the language clean and all that.

[Laughter]

PORTER: But that's a very interesting—there's a way in which online teaching can be *better*. And the students are fascinated. And when we survey the students—we did a research study on this—and when we surveyed the students, without prompting, they said that was one of the best features of the course, the “ad hoc videos.” The teacher was really

responsive to *them*. And that was actually saving the teacher time, so that was a win-win situation. I think I got off on a side tangent, there, but...yeah, that's some of what I learned.

JCirio: I have one question. So we've been reading two of your pieces in our digital delivery reading group, that, you know, that we're doing.

[Laughter]

JCirio: So the one question—I think that maybe there's two questions here. One question was, we were interested to think about since you're interested in affect...So we realized that you published—it was essentially the same kind of piece in...I think in *Genre* was the journal and then it was *Computers and Composition*. So what was the reason behind the choice to publish two different versions of the same project?

PORTER: I didn't [laughs].

[Laughter]

PORTER: I wrote the piece by invitation of the...it was a special issue of *Genre* on digital something. And I wrote the piece for that special issue. And the special issue never came out, never came out, never came out. I mean, it went on for two years. I wrote that piece in like 2005, okay, and it was the longer manuscript—you got the longer manuscript? Wow, I thought that was... I'd hidden that.

[Laughter]

PORTER: There must be an illegitimate version out there. But there was a longer, it was like 45 pages, longer version... And it never got published. So at some point I just, I gave up. I said "You guys aren't publishing," so I pulled it. And I took it to *Computers and Composition*, and they said "This is great; we want to take it; you have to cut it in half." So I argued with them, argued with Gail and Cynthia, and I got it to sixty percent or something. So the piece that was published in *Computers and Composition* is about sixty percent or so of the original. So. But it was only published once.

JCirio: Fleckenstein I think predicted that, when she noticed the kind of date discrepancy going on. So I'm just curious.

[Laughter]

PORTER: But that thing is old. That thing is ten years old.

JCirio: I guess the other question I had, too, not really connected, but do you think the heuristic that you offer for digital delivery is it—how applicable is that to non-digital delivery? Is it strictly something for digital kinds of delivery, or can it be applied to other things?

PORTER: Well, I think the historical stories I was telling today? I think a lot of it is. Most of it, maybe. There's still circulation, of the message. It may take different forms. It may be word of mouth circulation. And maybe it's...I think the classical rhetoricians, who had—Quintillian had a real robust theory of delivery, but it was only speaking on a podium, you know. So once rhetoric moved into other venues, “Oh, well, delivery's about speaking at a podium, we don't need to do it.” And missing the point about what the canon was really supposed to be doing, I think. Because there's certainly print delivery and distribution. And you know, anybody in the field twenty years ago would have said “Of course there is, but it's not part of the art. You can't teach it.” Well, some of that might be true, not true, but what we've got now with digital media is the re-suturing of production and distribution in the same machine, which we're sitting at. So in a sense, that printing press delivery is now in our hands. So we have to think about it, think about those issues. But I think there's lots of media in history where I think those heuristics still apply. Economics, certainly. Good question. All good questions.

EW: Any other questions?

AW: I have one. So during the research methods roundtable, you mentioned sort of needing like an optimism, almost, in your approach? That you come to things because they interest you, but also because you think it matters. Or you have to develop that sense of why it matters—

PORTER: And I think there's a potential for impact, or improvement or something.

AW: So how do you see that in the future of rhetoric and composition? We were talking about if there's a corporate—that was the impression I got, that we're heading in a corporate direction with online classes and efficiency and reducing costs. How do you see those two...

[Laughter]

AW: ...balancing out?

PORTER: Isn't that an interesting problem? I think, yeah. What if they won't let us teach—it's not cost effective. What if they won't let us teach courses with twenty or twenty-five students anymore? You *must* teach fifty, and you must do it online. There's your constraint. What are you gonna do? How are you gonna teach writing within that constraint? Either you've gotta be really—either you're going to kill yourself teaching it well [laughs], or you're gonna have to come up with a different method of teaching that works in that constraint, or you're gonna have to be a WPA who can work the system in order to get the resources you need to teach it in a different way. So those are your options, and I think we're kinda looking at that; it's coming at us, as I see it. The university economic model is collapsing, and so what's the new model gonna look like? And what's it gonna mean for the teaching of writing? See we've always thought that we were the cash cow at the university and so we've never—well we're making money so we don't have to worry about money.

Well, they don't think that anymore [laughs]. They think, "hey, we could be teaching a composition MOOC. Why aren't you teaching a hundred students, or two hundred? And we do automated essay scoring. And your job is just to make six videos. Put them up there, and check the students—you know, we can have automatic checking of student participation, and you're just kind of a curator of the materials." That's a grim scene...

[General consensus and laughter]

PORTER: Well I think, you know, I think we have to get sort of out in front of the question and say, "hey, here we've got a method of teaching composition which works and which does engage the students and keeps us interacting with them because the key is interacting with the students' writing and thinking at a deep level." If you don't have that, you don't really have writing instruction. You can have writing grading if that's what you want, but we can't have writing instruction.

JCirio: Is that it for our questions?

EW: I think so...I feel like we ended on a really bleak note.

[Laughter]

PORTER: No! Go teach online! That's the...

[Laughter]

PORTER: Really! It's exciting! And there's so much—there are so many advantages to it. I just learned something over the last couple of weeks. I learned that—I had been doing video synchronous class discussion, and the students would sit there, in front of their video cameras doing nothing. And so, you know, class discussion wasn't very lively. So I went back to an old technology. I went back to old text chat—synchronous chat—and the text discussions have been wonderful! Students are just chatting up a storm. Now, why is that? What's different? You know, it's got something to do—same teacher, same kind of students—it's got something to do with the dynamic of the medium that encourages discussion, and I think it was because the video room, you know, it made me a bigger authority in some way, and even in the face to face classroom, the video was killing the discussion. Pulled the video out, and students were much more [inaudible] and the interactions have been great.

EW: It seems like that could also be—there could be a transfer question involved there, in terms of the students' current and prior experiences with chatting or with texting. I would say...that's like a more comfortable realm for them, in some cases, I think. So I wonder if that could be—if that could influence the fact that it's been going better with chat.

PORTER: I think that's a great hypothesis, and I think that you're likely right about that. And the other think I'm seeing is the speed of the commenting too—not velocity—the speed of the commenting—

[Laughter]

PORTER: —there's a lot lot going on. It's hard to follow the stream, and I think students, people are just very comfortable with that particular kind of interaction. So, you know, I accidentally just said to myself, "you know A isn't working; I'm gonna try B" and just stumbled into this and it's working rather well. You know, in the old, old days of Megabyte University in the early days of computers and composition, we were doing synchronous chat—Lester Faigley talks about that in *Fragments of Rationality*—in labs; we were teaching face to face in labs but having the students do synchronous chat. And there were these synchronous chat advocates who were like "this is the best form of class discussion." This is going back to 1985, 1990. "This is how you do class discussion. Forget that other stuff—it's a waste of time. Just do it here because more students interact; you get more different kinds of interaction; it's more fluid; the instructor is decentered. You know, there's all sorts of reasons to do it."

JCuster: seems like it also takes some of that pressure away for people to raise their hands where I know I tend to not like to interrupt people or if the conversation goes in a particular direction, I'm just like "I'll let the conversation go that way..." I know for myself that would be one of those things that would probably encourage me to say more just because I know that even if someone else hits enter at the same time as me, my text doesn't just disappear; they both still appear there...

PORTER: mhmm

JCuster: I'm sure a lot of people probably have the same kind of thing where they're afraid to say something in class but it's just text. It sort of—it probably feels a little bit disembodied from them where they can just go, "ok, that's not *me*—there's my name and there's some text but I don't have to have this presence with it that might intimidate some of them." So I know, even just for me as a student, especially when I was an undergraduate, that would be something that would really welcome me to participate I think.

PORTER: Yeah, that's a good point. Coming back to speed, there's different discussions going on. There's this discussion that's happening very fast—

JCuster: Right.

PORTER: —and there's other discussion that's kind of tapering off in the background and maybe a third over here on the side—

JCuster: Right.

PORTER: —and all three are in the same stream, and so you can go back and pick up and so people can discuss at different paces. So I saw that going on, too.

JCuster: Plus there's a record of everything as well that's really clear so it's not just like that one thing that somebody said that one day; there's a clear transcript of everything, so if somebody says something really noteworthy, it's sort of saved there, in some ways as well, which is really cool.

PORTER: And you know the other part of it might have been the pressure of the video—the YouTube experience—like you've gotta worry about how you like, how you come

across, what's the lighting? You've gotta worry about all that stuff. With the text chat it's off the board.