

Fall 2015 Interview – Dr. Michael NEAL

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MK: Okay, I'll start us off. How did you get into literacy studies/rhetoric and composition?

NEAL: Uh, so I was attending a, um, small undergraduate school in Indiana--1800 students total--so our English department was really only literature. It, um, prepared primarily teachers for...it wasn't an English Ed. program per se, but it was as close to that as it could have been. But I started, uh, working as an undergraduate tutor in the writing center, and, um, we started reading a few articles to prep for that. My mother was a, uh, high school English teacher, so I was kind of drilled with certain kinds of, uh, expectations and so forth, um, you know, growing up. So I was a decent writer – I didn't know what I was doing, but I could produce okay texts in a pretty quick, uh, amount of time. And so, uh, through the writing center work, I became aware of a graduate program at Ball State University, which was just 45 minutes away from there. And, um, I enjoyed reading literature and taking the literature courses, but I wanted something that, I guess, in my language, that I would have thought as something maybe more practical, something, um, useful, uh, something applied. I still today am an applied thinker for the most part, and so I saw writing as a place that I could pursue, um, something that I could help others with, that, uh, I guess – I think like many of you guys, I thought of it initially primarily as a field of teachers. I didn't want to become a teacher, uh, on some level because of seeing what it was like to be a secondary school teacher, and I thought the stuff that my mother had to go through with administration and parents and all that seemed awful, but I thought being a college teacher I could avoid, you know, that kind of stuff and I knew that I was, uh, a decent writer. So um, so I discovered it I guess my senior year of college, did a rhet/comp, um, Master's Degree. Took three years and I was an adjunct, um, professor...adjunct instructor at Tennessee State University down in, um, Nashville Tennessee, an HBCU down there. Uh, and that's when I started understanding it more as what a faculty member looked like. I was on committees, um, I looked at what the...what the work looked like; I really enjoyed it. Um, I probably don't have as much of a social justice bent as some in our program, but at that point – and I still am – interested. It hasn't been my scholarly interest, but I did see writing as a place where people could improve their lives and have an opportunity. I was especially interested in working with first-generation college students, um, African-American college students. Um, you know, Nashville, it's pretty much...uh, it's still pretty much a black/white city and so forth. Uh, and so I was very interested in that dynamic, which is what led me to want to go back and study assessment. Um, so it was primarily the social justice piece of trying to develop assessments that were more fair and equitable to students who traditionally did not achieve high scores on standardized tests. And I thought I was someone who didn't work that hard in high school and scored off the charts on standardized tests, and so I...I knew there was a fairness issue involved with that and that people shouldn't be given access or, um prevented access to educational opportunities through those kinds of standardized tests which I knew were bunk. So I, um, found a good program up at Louisville and, uh, went to Louisville and did my PhD. So both of my graduate degrees are in rhetoric and composition. I was pretty aware, I guess, of the field and, um, what that meant going into it.

MB: Can I ask a follow-up before we move on to the next one?

NEAL: Please, yes.

MB: To what extent is that true, um, what you said about, like, college teaching being different than secondary education teaching?

NEAL: Oh, totally different. Yeah. My wife's a middle school teacher. She has to deal with the politics of parents, and um, and lots of administrative oversight. Uh, we're the opposite extreme. Um, I sometimes wish we had a little more oversight, but it's great not to. I mean, obviously there's a lot of academic freedom, but...I was a comp director at Clemson for a short time. Any parent who would ever call I would just say, "Is your son or daughter 18 years old? Oh, I can't talk to you." [Laughter] You know, and so I never had to deal with those things. There, at Clemson...I should say there was a lot more um, administrative kind of hoops to jump through. The college was always trying to do certain things, and so we were trying to figure out, you know, how to do it, uh, how to get \$800,000 cut from your budget and have a stronger program and so forth. But for the most part, um, when you teach at the university level, um, you have accountability, but it's not someone looking over your shoulder and making you fill out 27 reports every week and match up every class activity to the Sunshine State Standard and all of these kinds of stuff I see with middle school and high school teachers that I know. So I'm glad not to have...I'm not a super administrivia kind of person, and that's not my strength. Um, I don't think I would thrive in that environment, and so kind of knowing what you're good at and what you're not helps you find the right niche for you.

MB: Thanks.

MK: How did you end up at FSU?

NEAL: So, my first job out of, um, Louisville's program was at Clemson. I was hired in there to be the FYC director, but, um, I was also told that I'd have a few years to prepare for it. Uh, and so I went in, and um, Donna Winchell was directing the program at the time...fantastic human being. She just, uh, retired this past year. Uh, just a great mentor and friend; she was very good there. At the same time, when I came in, the second year I think, they cut the comp program in half. They cut sophomore literature in half, and by the time I was done, they took away most if not all of the 3000 level writing. So there was a year there that we had 1.2 million dollars cut in the college, and eight hundred thousand came to English. So we were just being decimated. At the same time they put someone in the position there, um...I was not tenured yet, and so they put her in a year before I took over, to try to revamp the program. And that wasn't a good fit for whatever reason. So I only directed the program...I was kind of semi-directing it kind of from...I was teaching the course that was the teacher training course during the fall semester. I was almost like an assistant director in some ways because I was helping out a lot. Um, but when I started directing the program, it was just in shambles, and there was no money. There was no interest in it. It was all being pushed toward the majors. And at Clemson, I didn't realize...the institutional type...the kind of stuff...the feedback that you guys get a lot from Kathi and Kris here...I didn't understand what a tech college really was, and I didn't understand what the priorities of like being a real, like a true engineering school would mean, and what that meant for the resources in English. I had never seen that lack of prioritization given to writing, communication, any of the arts or humanities or anything like that. So I was a little bit disillusioned. I still wanted to be a comp director, but I was less committed to that career track per se. Um, so when, um, Kathi and I worked at Clemson together – this is a long way to get to your answer – um, and she left the year before me. And I knew she was going to hire two people in her first two years. And I asked her if I would be qualified for the position, or she might have asked me. I don't remember how that exactly turned out, but I didn't full-fledged go on the job market. I think I

applied to a job up at Charlotte, uh, at the time, um, I looked at this job, and, um, and so I wasn't necessarily looking to leave per se, but I wanted to see what my options were because I just sensed that everything was crumbling around me. And it was a shame. We had such a great group of people at Clemson, and people were just leaving in droves. I mean, anyone who could get out of town at that point...now what I understand now is that schools kind of go through these kinds of, uh, expansions and contractions, so we were in a major contraction, and as a, um, junior faculty member it just felt like the world was...you know, every mentor/friend was just trying to find their way out of there. And so, um, so when I heard about this job, I didn't know...I knew I couldn't be comp director here because, um, Deborah was here. And uh, and yet, I met her; she was fabulous. I could envision teaching in a place like this. But they didn't have any undergraduate classes to teach really, um, because they don't let faculty really teach freshman comp. And so um, I asked about what my undergraduate teaching would look like. And that's when they started to say well, we don't really have anything now. I was put in like, Article & Essay workshops for creative writing because they didn't have anything else for us, but there...that was the initial seed of a vision for the EWM program. And I love building new things, and so I liked... Kathi and Kris were really spearheaded that effort, but I got to be kind of behind the scenes developing syllabi, um, meeting with them, talking about what kind of courses we'd need, talking about what kind of spaces we would need, like this, and that to me was really exciting. And so, thinking about teaching and working with, uh, graduate students, and having a major that looked...we didn't know this is what it was going to look like per se, but that seemed exciting to me. And so I thought well, I knew that FSU's tenure requirements were higher than Clemson's. When I talked to the dean at Clemson about leaving, she said, you know, "You'd be a fool to leave. You're gonna get tenure next year. Why would you go to a place that you don't know if you're gonna get tenure or not?" And I had to kind of restart my tenure clock, even though I was there for five years. I brought in uh, two years of credit here, and I knew I had to get a book out in a short amount of time and so there was a lot of pressure. But I thought well if I don't have that pressure, I don't know if I'll ever do it or not, and I'd love to take the chance. And so it felt...I'm not a risk taker by nature, but I felt like that was a risk worth taking. My wife was really on board with me. I was surprised that she was so excited about it, and so we thought let's give it a shot and uh, see how it works. So we ended up down here. It's been ten years now that I've been here.

MB: Um, so next question, uh, what scholars in the field have most influenced your thinking?

NEAL: Well I read in a couple different areas. Uh, my assessment work was very much influenced by my dissertation director, Brian Huot, um, his kind of local contextual, you know, work. Um, I had a great...I do have a good relationship with him, and I still continue to read his work. Um, one of my introductions into the field was that I got to be an assistant editor for *Assessing Writing*, when Kathi and Brian were the editors of it, and so I got to know Kathi before the job at Clemson in part because I was an assistant editor. But I had always read Kathi's work and uh...you know, I love reading both Kathi and Brian side by side because they're kind...they're not of one mind on certain things, but they fight for the same kinds of values, and so I really like to see um, how their work played in relationship with one another. Um, I liked Kathi's kind of technology angle and perspective. Um, Bob Broad is someone I really respect...his work, uh, in assessment and so I've always been interested in, uh, in following his work. But then there's the kind of technology side of things that I read too, and uh, like Dennis Baron's work, and of course, um, Cindy and Gail's work, and I read lots of *Computers and Composition*. Um, there's just a lot of people that I admire. Todd Taylor was someone I was reading a lot at the time, uh, Johndan, um, Cheryl Ball.

Uh, so I read, you know, I try to read broadly. One of the things that I did as a graduate student is I didn't specialize as much as my faculty wanted me to. They wanted me to be very narrow, and I wanted to be able to do a couple things and even in my dissertation I was really interested...I was taking Pam Takayoshi's um, computers and writing class, and she's someone whose work I respect enormously as well, uh so I was reading a lot of her and other feminist, uh, technology folks, and I was taking assessment with Huot and I thought I've gotta bring these together somehow. Well I remember the grad director at the time saying "You can't...you can't be that broad. You have to decide are you gonna be a technical person, are you gonna be an assessment person, are you gonna be this or that?" And I said "Well I imagine myself more in like a comp job that would allow me to try to spread my interests a little wider." And she said "That's not, you know, that's not recommended." And I don't think I'm too broad, but I do try to read kind of across fields on some level. One of the things that I enjoy most about this program is the one-hour reading group and the fact that I've been able to just continue to read interesting things that my own research wouldn't lead me to, necessarily, or my own courses that I'm working on. Um, it's gonna come up in a second here, but another area that I read a lot into now, primarily because the visual, uh the digital, is visual rhetoric. And that kind of, um, design and so forth, and I like to read a lot in the viz-comp and viz-rhet kind of areas.

BA: So, what, um, life experiences have kind of shaped your thinking and how?

NEAL: Life experiences - I didn't read that question. Um, life experiences. So, I mean I mentioned I guess already I grew up uh,...my mother was an English teacher. My dad was an English major. He went into business. Um, neither of them had really a vision for academic kind of work. I grew up in the Midwest, um, so I think for me, um...I don't know if this is a good answer or not. I grew up with a worker's mentality. I started delivering papers when I was nine years old, ten years old, in the mornings up in Wisconsin when it was, you know, thirty below zero or whatever. Um, I've worked every...I've worked in factories. I've loaded boxes on to the backs of trucks in the Tennessee summers, you know, when it's a hundred and ten degrees in these trucks, and so I just, uh, construction I've worked. I've worked accounting. Uh, I've worked a lot of jobs. And I just, um, I think one of the things that attracted me to rhet/comp is that I saw it as a little bit of the blue-collar side of, um, of English studies. And I...I'm kind of embarrassed on some level that I'm an English teacher, because it seems like that's not a job where you work. Um, and I feel privileged on some level to be able to earn a paycheck through the kind of work that we do, but uh, I think one of the reasons why I fit here and I work here is because I think of myself more as kind of like a role-player and a worker. And so when there's work that needs to be done, I don't mind doing that kind of rolling up my sleeves and doing it. I'm not the most intellectual. I'm not the most well-read. I don't have the best memory, and, you know I wish I had that kind of photographic recall that other faculty have at times on things, but I don't mind just kind of rolling up my sleeves and doing some hard work and sticking with it. And um, so I think those life experiences have just kind of...I don't think of myself as real tough or anything, but I'm...maybe I have a little bit of that Midwestern sensibility that I don't mind working hard. And um, and I don't need...um, I don't need a lot of attention for work that I do, or you know different kinds of things like that. I'm ok just kinda being in the trenches and doing good work and being happy with that work and...and moving forward. Then I, you know, my family is very important to me. So how my career has shaped up in part is shaped by, uh, wife and kids. Um, I like the fact here that I can come in at 8:30, and I'm the one who gets the kids ready in the morning and gets them to school and all that kind of stuff. I try to be home as many evenings as I can at dinnertime. And we still all--it's kind of a traditional family structure--try to eat dinner together, but

that means that after nine, ten o'clock everyone's going to bed, and I stay up and I finish my work and you know, do a lot of things. But I like the flexibility of that, um, that I can control my schedule. And my oldest kids are in high school now, and my youngest late elementary, so I'm imagining a window of about five or ten more years where they're a real high priority--they'll always be a high priority--where they take up a lot of my scheduling and time. And so my work has to kind of fit around some of their needs, and I'll look forward to having a little bit more structure and... even so, I try to be a pretty typical...like I get in at 8:30, I usually stay until 4, 4:30, 5 o'clock, uh, go home, spend family time for a couple hours and then work and then watch TV until I fall asleep. You know, it's kind of a, it's a very, I don't know, uh, not a very glamorous life.

MD: You kind of touched on this already when you were talking about the EWM major, but um, what classes do you teach and which are your favorites?

NEAL: Yeah. So, I love the classes that I teach here. Um, I just...I just...so I teach Visual Rhetoric on the undergraduate level. Um, I also teach Editing and Writing...Advanced Editing and Writing for, uh, EWM. I'm teaching What is a Text for the first time this semester, which was initially envisioned as our capstone course for the major, and I've tried to recapture it as a capstone course. Uh, then I teach, um, Research Methods. Here I've taught Composition. I got to teach Convergence Culture once which is a favorite, uh, just because it's so unique. Um, I've taught Visual Rhet at the grad level once. I think I taught that too early. I was okay with it, um, but now that I have been teaching undergraduate Viz Rhet for about ten years I feel like I really...it takes a certain amount of time to get really comfortable with the literature and really comfortable with the movements in the field, and so that would not have been an area...I read peripherally in it because of my computer and comp background but I..I really feel like I know that area more and I, uh, would look forward to teaching that again. But, our expertise overlaps a lot here and so...and again part of what I see is I feel like, um, I can be a role player. When there's opportunities to teach Viz Rhet, Comp, Convergence I'll take it but they need me to teach other things right now. I've taught a couple, uh, special topics here. I did one special topics early on that I was surprised at how popular it was but it was just about writing programs, uh, first year comp, writing centers, uh, and WAC programs. And that was back like when, uh, Scott Gage and Lianne and Kara and some of that cohort was around. I got to teach an assessment class. Um, you know, that's my area of expertise, and I've taught an assessment class exactly once in my career of twenty years. Uh, but I did teach a one hour reading group in assessment at one point. Um, and so...I think on the undergrad level I really love the projects that my students are doing. It's called Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World and that was the course that I probably had the most hand in shaping and so I kind of wanted that Digital World attached to the end, and, uh, and, you know, and Kris obviously with her expertise, I mean she was really the driver of that course. But I kind of wanted to digitize it on some level, and she let me do that. And so, I have students do three or four production projects in there. I love the readings. I think it's very relevant to where students are. I love to talk about design. I like to talk about, um, a little bit of...it's a pretty big shift in the class from analysis to production. So, uh, that's where we met obviously in that class, Brad. And uh, I have students redesign a monument or memorial. And I've also been able to connect it in recent years to the postcard archive project and so that was something that I never imagined doing when I come here ten years ago. And it just happened, uh, through expertise of other people, though, um, again trying to make something for the program, the collaboration, and so forth. So, I have students develop, um, a digital exhibit in the archive and that's a fun project and we talk about how these image shape and are shaped by culture around us. They tell our histories; we make

our histories through them. They're contested histories. Uh, I love the visual culture aspect of that, which is more like the power dynamics and whose story gets to be told through images and whose story gets erased and who gets to view and who gets viewed. And so, you have like a lot of, uh, sexism and different kinds of things that play into that part. So, I think that's the favorite...my favorite part of that particular course. But I like all the courses I teach, um, I feel privileged to teach them here. We have great students in EWM and really strong grad students, and so it makes teaching a lot more enjoyable when you're teaching courses that people want to take. I miss gen ed badly; I love teaching first year comp...loved teaching tech and business writing at Clemson. Um, but I don't miss...I...I don't miss having students not want to be in the classes, you know...and trying to...I don't have to...I know some students probably don't do their full work in my class but I kind of think that's their loss. I'm going to teach towards the people who want to be here. There's plenty of people who want to be here and they do really hard work, so I'm going to teach towards them, and that's my primary audience. I think that's bad to say on record. [Laughter]

BA: Oh this me. I'm sorry. I got...I got the fun one: what is on your night stand?

NEAL: On my night stand. I keep my phone there. Uh, I do read on my phone at night...I mean just different news apps and so forth. Um, I have a strong...I have strong religious, um, underpinnings. I have a bible on my nightstand, and I read with my kids and wife and so forth. Uh, that's on my nightstand...you know something that I'm reading through. I like...I'm...I would consider myself religiously conservative but socially liberal and so it is kind of conflicts there but I like those kinds of conflicts. And so, you know, I think that...that religion has been hijacked by the conservative political movement here and there's a lot of people who read the same things that I do who don't think that it should be hijacked by that particular movement and so, um, so I have that on my nightstand. I usually have a Bernard Cornwell book on my nightstand. He's my fun reading person. Uh, he does historical fiction...the Sharp series, um, Uhtred is the ones I am reading right now. He's a Viking Norse guy, um...and there's...I still read...uh, they guys at Clemson that I used to hang out with, um, we did a lot together and, uh, we read a lot of those books and, uh, we actually developed a board game based one of them at one point. So we do that. I like gaming and those kinds of things. So, I don't, uh, read work stuff in bed. In fact, I have a little side office and then I work at my dining room table but I try to separate spaces. I don't have a television in my bedroom. Um, so there are just certain kinds of things where I've managed I think what I do by maybe compartmentalizing things in my life and maybe that's healthy and maybe it's not but when I'm with the kids and my family for two or three hours at night I try to like fully be with them. The phone...the cell phone is probably the one thing that draws me, you know, after dinner I pull it out to see if something's happening but I really try to not engage in that part. I think when it's time for me to go to bed I try to...I don't mind working late into the night. Kris is an early riser. I go to probably about one to two o'clock, uh, in the morning, um, and so I don't mind working late. But when I'm...when it's time to go to bed, I want to go to bed. So, the nightstand to me is...you will never find an academic book on my nightstand at all. It will be, you know, something for myself, something for my own spiritual journey or something for my entertainment, um...I don't even like the read fun stuff as I go to sleep because I don't...I was told... my wife reads to fall asleep every night. I never want to train my body to fall asleep as I'm reading because reading is too fundamental to what I do. So, um, so even at night I read a chapter or something and then I always end at the end of the chapter and I always put it down before I start getting too sleepy to go on because, again, I don't want my body to think that "Oh I'm reading it's time to go to sleep." [Laughter]

AW: So, um, this question gets us back to rhetoric and composition: what do you think is the most important question that students should be considering today regarding rhetoric and comp?

NEAL: Graduate students or undergraduate students? Okay. [Laughter] What's the most important question? For my undergraduate students, I really focus primarily on...um, I'm not a rhetorician, but I would call it "the rhetoric of writing," ah, which is considering audiences and purposes and contexts and genres. I think so much of, uh...maybe this is a reaction in some ways that I feel to the department, but I think so much of what our undergraduate students feel is that writing is about *me*. It's about, you know, *my* self expression, it's about what *I* want, it's...and so one of the things that I work on with them all the time--and you guys kind of know I think my teaching philosophy--I have them reflect, constantly on the projects they're doing. "Why did you make these choices?" And if they're saying, "Because I like this," or, "Because it makes sense to me," I try to shift that conversation to "Who are the audiences?" In my What is a Text class right now, we're doing portfolios, and I'm begging them to develop the portfolio for an audience that has no idea what a Florida State EWM program even means or looks like. "Don't use WEPO or the—any of the acronyms or the...the names, you know, explain it to someone who just doesn't even get what this English major is." I'm always trying to get them to see outside of themselves. So the question I would have them ask is "What do other people need to know or to learn here?" rather than expressing, you know, "my true inner voice" or, um, you know, "this is a reflection of my identity." I think those things are important for writers—identities, and voice, and all that—but that's not...that's not my focus. Um, I suppose for graduate students the bigger question is, um, would be "How does your voice fit into conversations that are going on in the field?" Again, you guys come in with really smart ideas, very good writers, lots of, um, dedication. So I want your voices to get out beyond these walls and find spaces in digital communities or conferences or publications that you can be part of the conversations. It's probably the more...most intimidating part of being a graduate student and kind of making that shift to the professional world is that your stuff has to get out there. And then it can be judged and it can be rejected, and that's still the part that I have a hard time with. I love writing and developing ideas. Today when I give my talk? I don't like that. I don't like being this...I don't like having people...I don't know, watch me, or...eh...eh...I like to talk to people about ideas. Even when I send out my stuff, you know, just so nervous about it. Oh, is someone going to...you know, "How will I feel if they reject this?" or...and as a professional that's just what you have to learn to do. And so I'm saying this to you, and I'm also saying it to myself, that I just need to...I need to get more things in circulation quicker. Because what I do is I work and work and work and work and work and work, but that's...you can work harder...that's cliché, I need to work smarter, and not just do more of it. I have so much writing that I've never sent out anywhere. And that's a shame, because an editor or someone else could help me shape those into pieces that could be part of a larger discourse. But I get too content sometimes just with the joy of writing and discovery, and you know, I'm a writing to learn kind of person so I'm figuring out what I want to say as I write, and to me, that's the fun part of the process. Getting it critiqued and so forth isn't so...for you guys as grad students, my comment would be, "What venues can you get your work out into?" And I'm thinking about some are long term, like the book project is going to take me three to four years, but then you know you can have blog posts or you can have, um, conference papers or conference proceedings and those things can turn around in six months, and so you know having different levels of getting things out, and just kind of slowly getting a pipeline full. And again, I struggle with that myself. When I work on a project, I'm really dedicated to it for a long time, and then maybe I neglect sending out little pieces of it along the way. Um, but that's what I would...those are the questions I think I have, people can say.

MK: So where do you see the field of rhetoric and composition going?

NEAL: There's some things that concern me about the field. Um, there's some things that I'm excited about in the field. I think our natural tendency in academics is to continue to divide, to break down. So when I went to Clemson, honestly, I thought prof comm and rhet/comp were really allied, and a few people there agreed with me, but some of the hard core prof comm people were really adamant about rhet/comp not being a kind of a part of what they do, even though they all have rhet/comp backgrounds, some of them. A few of them didn't. The ones actually with prof comm backgrounds are maybe more friendly. Um, I'm concerned that our field will continue to fragment. I see, like, there's this maybe push or movement to, like, maybe separate rhetoric from composition...think of those two things as separate. I don't think we're stronger moving forward...in the kinds of institutions and the pressures on American education right now, I think we're stronger staying together as rhetoric and composition. I think that we sometimes see things differently and that we have different approaches, and I think that's healthy. Most of my friends want to be in a stand-alone writing program; they don't want to be in an English department. And FSU historically has had a reputation of not being friendly to rhetoric and composition, especially back with Wendy Bishop, and Rick Straub, and Carrie Leverenz, and things that happened back then that were really terrible to rhet/comp folks. Uh, but I think again that if we can figure out a way to make an English department work, we are much stronger within this institution, with the productivity and the ideas and so forth, that we have to compromise. And it's hard sometimes, when the other programs are bigger. And we don't get the resources that maybe could allow us to grow and thrive like we do, but clearly, uh, I think a movement within the field is to separate from English. And then within that, again, separating maybe tech comm or rhetoric from you know these different things. And on the one hand, you want to be together with people of like mind. We do have different visions on certain things. But I think when it works well...I think the marriage between the two or three or four--you know however you see the fragments of different potential programs--um, can be, um...can be stronger. And I like the strength in numbers and I've loved working with, uh, Kristie, and, um, and so if you get the right kind of personalities together I think you can make that...make that work. My own interest being in technology, I want to see a little bit more of a tech shift. And yet, uh, the part of the book that I'm working on right now, uh, acknowledges that it's not a fad, it's not a flash in the pan. But it's...technology is, um, I'm looking at the outcomes statement and the frameworks, uh, for postsecondary writing, and now since we did the threshold concept book, just this last year, I'm adding that to the mix. Uh, I don't think that people see technology as central to the work that we do in the field. And to me, I don't understand writing without understanding it as a technology and being excited over the different technological opportunities. I think people see that as tangential to what we're doing, and taking us away from some of our core values. I'd like to see some of our values shift a little bit more toward thinking about technology, thinking about materiality, thinking about...I think we're stronger if we move in this particular direction, but I don't know if I see the field moving that way, necessarily? Whenever there's pressure from out...without, you kinda go back to "Okay, what are your core things?" I—this is my doomsday part of it, I guess—I can't imagine that by the time that I retire, that first year composition will be the cash cow that it has been for English departments and rhet/comp programs for my whole lifetime. We have to imagine what rhetoric and composition looks like without a massive first year comp program. That will change *everything*. It'll change our job market prospects; it'll change our graduate programs, because you guys are...the rationale for upper administration giving us the TA lines is the cheap labor pool to teach mass gen-ed courses. So we can do things to slow that down. Developing a sophomore level writing class is really smart. Developing a major is even smarter. Uh... you

know, that kind of thing. So I think we're positioning ourselves well, but I think composition will largely be taken over...if you want to teach comp—I said this I think at the beginning of the year to the new TAs who came in—that, um, if your commitment is first year comp, you should get a Secondary-Ed degree because I think you'll be teaching comp in high school. Now, politically things could realign to make that change, but nothing in my broader view or in my specific view...as I see my own kids taking courses and everything. All of them...I mean, by the time they're done with their sophomore year into junior year they have no more courses to take at the high school. They're just going to start to take dual enrollment classes or AP classes. There's...there's nothing else to take at this point for kids. And it's not just like, "Oh, one percent of the population is doing this." It's getting larger and larger and larger and larger so it's going to be more mainstreamed that students are going to do their Gen-Ed work more and more in the high schools. And I think that's going to be a detriment to their learning, um, unless we really work on...I love...I've had a couple of opportunities in my life to work specifically with training and, uh, education in the kind of secondary realm doing workshops or partnerships and so forth, and I love working with high school teachers. I think they're smart, well...uh...well-rounded, but they don't have a lot of background in writing. And so what they bring to the table is primarily like literary writing or creative writing, and so how do we get our Secondary Ed programs to do more with...with rhetoric and writing the way that we might envision it? We've had a good partnership here; I'm sorry to lose Shelbie Witte. She was a great advocate for us. But George Boggs is over there and some other folks in our Ed program that I hope we can continue to collaborate with. Um, so I see the...going back to Kathi's CCCCs address, I think she laid out...I mean, she's...her strength is she's a visionary, and so, um, I think the future of rhet/comp is in majors. It's in writing within the disciplines and writing across curriculums. It's in, um, you know, just kind of figuring out what these kinds of new technologies and spaces might look like for us writing in a more, um, not just academic preparation, but for, um, writing in and out of school and those types of things.

MK: So what are you most excited about with your current project?

NEAL: Um, I'm most excited about, um...I don't like the word empowerment...I'm most excited about the information that I'm finding is...I'm really invested right now in the intellectual part, the intellectual property part. The book has...it's called *Digital Dilemmas*, and it has four major dilemmas that I think teachers of writing who use technology heavily have to face. And, they're real dilemmas. I mean they aren't just things that, um, I mean these are things you really have to wrestle with. Access is an issue; accessibility is one of those things. Another section I'm calling "composition creep." In other words, composition just gets bigger and bigger and bigger. Can we continue to take on everything including all the technology? Uh, there's a section on assessment expertise and outcomes and how those are shifting because of technology. I'm not sure that's a healthy thing for us; it might be. But the part that I'm working most on right now, I'm about to finish up, honestly. Finish. [Laughter] When do you ever finish? It's about to be fully drafted— is intellectual property. And, um, kind of shifting our conceptions of...of, um, documentation, citation, plagiarism under a more capacious umbrella, of, um, of intellectual property, copyright, authorship. You know that's what...You'll hear that...you'll hear part of the chapter today on that. Um, but everything that I have found is moving in the direction to affirm and confirm what we believe and have been practicing in the last 10-15 years in rhet/comp with fair use and, um, as aggressive as companies have been to work against that...um, just yesterday, I had students who contacted me and said we posted our video for a mapping project that I'm doing in *What is a Text*. And, we posted it on Sunday. By Monday morning--it was due Monday--it was, um, you know that little face

you get on YouTube that says it's been taken off. Well, we put in a fair use...so, we contested it. Checked the button after class yesterday, 5:00 right after class was over. We contested it, put in our fair use argument, and by 8:00 last night, it was back up. What they are doing is completely appropriate. We know it's appropriate. We've been affirmed, um, you know, through the powers that be it's appropriate as long as it meets certain kinds of criteria. We're meeting those criteria. We should have the right to do certain kinds of things with digital technology and composing spaces as educators, non-profits, students and so forth. We've been doing those things. And I think what happened was there's kind of a big push for it, and then there's kind of a contraction again. People got scared of it or what the implications were. Maybe we can't do this or maybe it's taking us too far afield. And so I see a lot of, um, hopefulness right now in doing... engaging, hard, thought-provoking projects for students where they can use some of these things. And, so, um, I'm most excited that the kind of digital pedagogies that we've been developing I think are going to play out to be great for students, but also legally and ethically possible. Um, and you know who doesn't know that? The people who need to know that. I've talked to our librarians. They still don't get it. The librarians are the ones who are kind of the overseers of intellectual property, and I'll say we can do these things and I don't think they believe me. I went over to TCC and did a workshop for them this summer. It was the librarians. I said, "You guys have your students do this," and they said, "No you can't do this." I'll show them YouTube videos that have been up for five years that are doing this. "Well, isn't that illegal?" "No! You guys are the ones who are supposed to know that it's not." And so we've taken this real conservative stance because of fear and high profile cases and so forth, but there's a lot of great, interesting things happening. And, I think the tide is turning in our favor for certain kinds of, uh, work that we want to see done in the digital realm with intellectual property, and so, it's kind of... that's where I'm writing right now, so that's probably why I'm most excited about it. But um, that's been a fun... I just discovered...even since my sabbatical, I discovered it's the Librarian of Congress who hears cases every three years for exceptions to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act. And, um, he's...and it's the most clear language that I've seen in any of my studies that I've haven't seen anyone in rhet/comp cite. In fact, I've never seen anyone cite it, generally. That says very specifically-- and, according to the law he's the one whose supposed to be able to make these rulings--that what we're doing with remixes and transformative writing is absolutely appropriate and no one is challenging that. And yet we post something online and they'll say, "Oh, you can't do that." Well, yes, yes we can. So let's figure out a way to, uh, make that kind of stuff work.

MK: Any other questions or follow-ups? Alright, well, thank you.

NEAL: Good thanks!