Spring 2014 Interview—Dr. Kathleen Blake Yancey
Interview Team: Molly Daniel, Ashley Humphries, Megan Keaton, Sarah Marshall

MD: Welcome! We are so glad to sit down with you, Dr. Yancey, so that we can hear you answer some of the questions that you set forth to our other visiting scholars--through the interview team. So, I'm excited to hear what you have to say. It's going to be pretty informal. We'll go around with the set of questions that we have, and if there are any follow up questions that anyone would like to ask, feel free to do so. Okay?

MK: How did you get into literacy studies?

Dr. Yancey: So, you probably know that Molly sent me the questions ahead of time, so I did look at them last night. But, I've also looked at them because--a number of your colleagues and I are working on some other prior interviews, as you may know. I think you know 'cause I sent out an announcement, inviting everybody to participate and these are people who said yes. So, so I looked at them, and I read them all. And this is my long-winded way--ever long-winded--of saying--I don't think I was getting into literacy studies, so that's kinda what I'm keying on. When I was in college, well, I'll back up. When I was in high school, I wanted to be a lawyer, and both my father--this is very sad--and my guidance counselor told me I didn't want to be a lawyer, I wanted to be a teacher. Because, the reason you would be a teacher is so that you would have a career to fall back on should something happen to your husband, whom you no doubt would have, I guess, and who would be supporting you apparently. And, it was a really good career to fall back on because you would have yourself as a boss. Now, I will say that I have four sisters, two of--I'm the oldest--and two of them are attorneys, okay? And the good thing is that my dad gave them the same advice, they just didn't listen. One of them is considerably younger than I am. The other one actually didn't finish her law degree until she was 40, so it took her a while to get there. So, I went to college thinking that I was going to be a teacher, and I started as a history major, actually. And I discovered very quickly that if you want to be a teacher in high school--if you take a look at it, many, not all, but many, many history teachers in high school are coaches. I can't coach a ping pong table, so there's no help there. And also, English has always been easier for me, I mean, it was just intuitively easier for me. It's like breathing. History, I liked very much but it didn't come as naturally. I had to work at it a little differently, I guess I'd say. So, I flipped to majoring in English, and then I--my sophomore year--this probably tells another story, I had a couple of professors who were ABD, that is not finished. So, they were not adjuncts, they weren't visiting. They're with no security of employment, then or promised. They left but I identified with them really strongly. I looked at them and I thought this would be much funner than teaching high school. Why? Because it's more intellectually engaging 'cause the older people are, the more advanced work you can do with them. You have more control over your time, which is really important to me. I would trade off money for time in a heart beat, (laughs) which is maybe why I'm a faculty member. (everyone laughs) I took that to the Nth degree. And, so then I decided that I really, really wanted to be a faculty member, okay, in English. And starting graduate school, actually right after--at least one of you have has done, two I think--right after college and did a straight forward english degree with a thesis on William Dreiser and but in between the first year and the second year of my Master's degree, I was out. My husband and I

wanted to get married; it's a long story, not terribly interesting. We didn't have enough money basically was what it amounted to. WE wanted to finish at the same time, so during that time I--among other things--sold trailers and taught eight grade, not during the same year which believe me that was a good thing. And I had what I think, without sounding too pretentious, was something that approximated an existential crisis. And that occurred when I was selling trailers. And I'm a child of the suburbs, for good or ill, and I was not in the suburbs any longer. I was on a sales team at the trailer park facility [indistinct]. It was very clear that people were living perfectly fine lives who were not terribly literate, you know? I mean they didn't read very well. They certainly didn't spend any time writing. It was a very gendered environment as you might imagine. And, even though we were in the midst of a recession, when the sales team managed to get --we used to call them box cars--box cars sold, you know, there were days they just didn't come to work. Like for instance, the first day of hunting, you're kidding me? I mean we had something--you have to build a trailer here, I mean it's sold, and I've told—anyway so, that was a very interesting experience. Actually, we put off going to graduate school because I had to figure out…because my assumption was that everybody needed literacy all the time. And clearly I was wrong, and I had to figure out a new theory. And until I did I really couldn't go back. So, spent some time doing that, we did go back, and it became pretty clear to me that when we went back that as much as I love literature, and I do, that I really wanted to go forward in Rhetoric and Comp. And at the time hardly anybody knew what that meant because though there had been a couple—the Iowa program had been around for a while, which had a particular focus on non-fiction, it was a little unusual—but programs were just getting underway. We actually ended up going to Purdue as a compromise choice. My husband wanted to stay at Virginia Tech. I wanted to go to the city of Buffalo and study with Lee Odell. So, we went to Purdue, and Purdue—no, it's true—and Purdue turned out to be a really good choice. Janice Lauer was not there, so to do a PhD in Rhetoric and Comp you had to do it in the teaching of English. And I had to do prelims in the other areas and pass those before I could do my prelim in Rhetoric and Comp. But you know, honestly, it was fine. I think it was a really good program. I learned a lot. I had a lot of opportunity in terms of different kinds of teaching experiences and administrative experiences. So, it worked out just fine. I think it wasn't until literacy became, you know, sort of the third rail, if you will—rhetoric, comp, and literacy. It—I think the work of people like Deborah Brandt, let's say, it became more of a term that was part of the collocation of Rhetoric and Comp. And, so I don't think I thought of myself as going into literacy studies so much. And another reason is that for the general public, if you say literacy, they think reading. And as much as I like reading I really see myself as a writing person. Is that responsive?
(General agreement)

Dr. Yancey: Okay good. More than you needed to know, sorry.

AH: I actually have a question: what made you return to grad school—what was the theory you developed that led you back?

Dr. Yancey: Oh…
(Laughter)

Dr. Yancey: Well, one theory was that—was actually a very practical theory—you know you can only stay out so long and have the credits count. So, part of it was, you know, do I actually want a Masters? And the answer was yes. I think part of it was really worked out in terms of teaching eight graders, which again, something that I really wasn't prepared for—I was certified to teach grades sixth through twelve, so that was fine. I had to pick up a reading course because the state of Maryland required it. I did that. But, basically, my teacher ed program—I had a minor in education—prepared me to teach seventeen year old, white males going to Harvard, okay? It's a very thin slice of the population, let's say. And I taught in Clearspring, Maryland, which may, on a good day, when people are visiting, have a population of about 500. It was—and they were 8th graders. They were not 17 year olds. And 15—that's one five—percent of the population go on to anything post-secondary and that's including going to truck driving school. Okay? It's a very, very different environment. That, that prompted some other kinds of reflections. But—what I usually say is that I should still be paying those children for teaching me how to teach because—this is classic, you'll appreciate this—I quit my job selling trailers, so I could teach—took a huge pay cut, by the way. Glad to do it. And lots of stories about how I actually got this job. If we had time, I'd tell you that. So, I've got my classrooms all set up, which is what high school teachers tend to do. They spend a lot of time—bulletin board and so on. And I, of course, have all my, the kid's chairs, you know, in a circle, and I can tell you by the end of the week, they were in rows. I mean they just, and I thought... Oh, I had one set of textbooks, and half the kids could not read at the level that the textbooks assumed they could. I mean, this was a walking disaster. And I'm all of 24 years old, living in a place that I really don't want to live. We're in Acrestown because that's where my husband has a job and to this day, Acrestown is the one place where we've lived that I would choose not to live. You can put me on a raft in the Atlantic, I'd be happier. But it was really worth working with the kids. It was really worth it working with those kids and figuring out how to teach them, though I'd been a TA my first year, whoever I am as a teacher, I learned during those couple of years. And it became abundantly clear to me that literacy was important. It may not be fundamental to every single human being on Earth, but the good news is that I'm not responsible for that. I'm only responsible for the people that I'm responsible for. And I could see how simply engaging in reading and writing at that level was beginning to transform lives of those kids. So once I figured that and I saw that it had value—it wasn't all or nothing. It wasn't everything, which is what I had assumed what I started selling trailers. And it wasn't nothing, which was the way it looked, really, given a lot of the people I had worked with. It was something, and it could be something better if I had a chance to work with people. That's how. Does that make sense?

AH: Yeah.

Dr. Yancey: That's a good question.

AH: Well, I actually have the second question as well.

Dr. Yancey: Do you?

(Laughter)

AH: Two questions in a row! Which scholars in the field have most influenced your thinking?

Dr. Yancey: That's a really good question. That is such a hard question just because of when I came up in the field. So one person who's influenced me is Lester Faigley, who's just retiring right now from the University of Texas at Austin. He's not that much older than I am. So it's not like an Ed Corbett, let's say, who is a rhetorician as you might already know and he's at Ohio State has influenced lots of people. Lester's more a second or third generation person, but he's so, so smart. He was an architecture major for a while, and you can see that in some of his writings and his in sense of visual design. So I think that it's partly his fragments of rationality—though I think it was published over 20 years now, or just about 20 years ago—still stands as a work one wants to read. That's phenomenal in this field, and he has a reach that most scholars don't have. Robert Conners is—he died in I want to say 2000 in a motorcycle accident—he also is a more contemporary of mine, and I didn't always agree with what he said, but I found what he said provocative, so helpful in that regard. And also, I think he forecast some of the changes that we've seen in the field, I think he saw some of those earlier than some other people. And I appreciate that. Anne Gere is someone who, again not that much older than I am, but is something of a model in the sense that she's someone who does a lot of things and does them well: teaching, scholarship, service to the field, service to her institution. So one of the things that I used to do when I was in graduate school was look at people around the field and say so—because if I could identify them I could say: do I want to be like that person? You know, yes or no. And that was very helpful. Toby Fulwiler—it's something of an odd choice. He's a writing-to-learn kinda guy. But what I liked about him, what I learned from him—he is retired—is a wonderful workshopper. I mean, almost second to none; he was fabulous. I often thought if you could take that workshop ability and if you could pair it with Gere's sense of scholarship and her work with both undergraduates and graduates that that would be a very compelling package. Erika Lindeman is somebody whose work I found very helpful but also in her service to the profession. She's been parliamentarian for the NCTE executive committee for over a decade. She was parliamentarian for CCCC's. She has served as an administrator for several levels at her own institution. I think that that is also, you know, instructive. And then I think there are other people that influenced people that are not people I know. That will sound ridiculous, probably, I never met Lloyd Bitzer, but when I encountered the idea of the rhetorical situation, it completely turned my head around, I mean it really did, and it was completely influential. So other people like that that I didn't actually know but whose work I read…Richard Larsen would be another one. He was an editor of CCCC, a bit on the crusty side I have to say. He was, anyone who knew him, but he was really smart. He was really, really smart. And he brought a whole new level of rigor, especially relative to scholarship, to the journal and it really made a colossal difference; it was a really important thing to do. You didn't really want to get on his bad side, but he wrote a couple of pieces that I just thought were really interesting. His one on the research paper, for instance that I thought was just fascinating. Allen Purvis is probably somebody's name you won't recognize did more work in English Education, did some work on international writing assessment. He was really hoping that there would be some commonalities between assessments

and he was colossally disappointed when he found that there are not, which actually doesn't seem so surprising but at the time seemed more likely, I guess. He was really, really smart and just before he died, he was beginning to do some work in digital environments that I thought was really interesting and was quite promising. Those would be some of the people, I'd say.

MD: What about any, like, recent scholars? Things that have been published now that you like to think with or find interesting that maybe compliment some of the people you've mentioned?

Dr. Yancey: You know, there's some concepts—I almost cannot overemphasize rhetorical situation—I think the notion of circulation—but there's not any one, I mean, John Trimbur has talked about it, Jim Porter has talked about delivery, Danielle DeVoss, Jim Ridolfo, some thinking around circulation. It doesn't quite get at what I'm interested in, but it's helpful. So I'm thinking around circulation. It doesn't quite get at what I'm interest in but it is helpful. Uh, I would say coming at everyday writing from very different vantage points, uh, Deb Brandt and Anne Gere. uh Deb thinking in terms of sponsorship and Anne Gere thinking in terms of extracurriculum and again I don't think that that does not capture at what I'm trying to get at in my thinking about the everyday but it's very helpful. Um, I, ya know, in in right now there's a lot of very interesting work on in assessment uh and I'm mean my friend and colleague, Brian Huot. has been always um good to think with also provocative sometimes we didn't always see things the same way so that was, that's been fun. Michael, uh I, ditto. I mean he was Brian's student so ya know we don't always see things the same way but it's always really useful and helpful to um to talk with him. Um uh and I, there's some interesting work around race and writing assessment that I think is interesting but I, I think Asao Inoue is a person um who comes to mind there. Uh I actually think there's something about culture there that's not been factored into that thinking. And actually, I'm editing a book um as we speak on reflection and Asao um and a colleague of his have a chapter in the book and uh this is the discussion we're having is about um uh uh the relationship between race, ethnicity and culture in terms of influencing people's approach to reflection. So, those would be, those would be some of the people. I would think. There was, . I published a piece in CCCCs uh that was in response to Deb Brandt's, in part in response, uh looking at sponsorship and the, and the writer talked about it in terms of stewardship. Yeah, I thought that was really interesting, just another way to sort of um to think about it. Yeah, Bill Condon's work on assessment is interesting. Uh he's had one or two piece come out just recently that I think have been really helpful. Yeah. So those are some of the people I would think.

SM: Alright. So, you kind of addressed this a little bit with your first question, but how about your life experiences. How have they shaped your thinking?

Dr. Yancey: (laughs) How long we got? [Group laughs] Uh, let's see. My life experiences. Um, well. Let's see if I can come up with a couple that I think were formative relative to um uh Rhetoric and Comp. One is that my dad worked for the Army and I lived in Germany as a kid from the time I was eight until I was almost twelve. And um you could watch German TV but nobody did so we didn't have a T, I mean we just didn't have a TV in the house. There was one

radio station which was the armed forces radio station and because there's a kind of broad audience they ran some of everything. They just. Ya know you ended up reading and writing and playing because you didn't have um distractions. And I'm persuaded that that really changed me um uh in, in ways that I think are very positive. Um through partly, I mean because I spent a lot of time reading and writing and I didn't do it because I was different. A lot of times people say oh ya know I was lonely or I didn't get along with my peers or I was sick or I mean there's some other exigence that accounts for it. This was what the norm was given where we lived which was anything but normal okay. And I think that that's the second thing okay um same experience but a different kind of lesson. Um, which is that uh so I moved over there in 1958 and if ya know you do the, some quick math here you'll understand that that's only 13 yeas after the end of World War II. And you can be certain that there were even now in some places there's you can still see some damage, but there was a lot of damage back then, okay. And so you knew something terrible had happened and there were just a couple of little incidents in that context that cast a light on (a) how cultures are different and (b) um what a privileged life we live over here. So how cultures are different ya know (laugh) for fall we're there and I simply observed that none of the Germans are celebrating Thanksgiving. Why not? (Group laughs) Not their holiday! (Group laughs) I mean that's how, oh yeah, I mean ya know and that beings to make sense but it really relativized culture for me right away ya know because I mean at the time I actually spo- I don't speak German now really but I didn't speak some German then and I could pass for a German. Even now, ya know I could pass for a German if I could my mouth shut. Uh and so it's in- cause you think you're so much alike and yet you're really very different, right. So that was, that was real interesting. We uh there was a, a German woman who worked for us ya know basically did some housekeeping for us. And uh ya know we were extraordinarily fond of her. She had um some patches of white on her cheeks and um I I my manners were good enough I knew not to ask *her* why they were there, but I certainly asked my parents. And I didn't see a lot of that, I saw some but it was mostly that I really cared about her. I wanted to make sure she was okay. And it basically was a response to um a diet that was um weak nutritionally. Um and, and one time there was this little store. We lived in a, in a subdivision basically. It was an American subdivision and it was, it was out of town so we were five miles or so from Frankfurt, the outer regions of Frankfurt and um, in a little place called Bad Vilbel. And um and when you drove out of the subdivision there was this little store that we used to go to to buy candy. They had um little gummy bears that we would buy. And they also sold, it was like uh not exactly like a general store or market but sort of like that. They had some food stuffs. And I remember one day she had a can of tomato paste the kind you would use to make spaghetti with. And uh and, and she must have had other things too I just remember the tomato paste. And, and I asked her oh ya know are, is that, are you making, are you using that to make dinner. And she said yes. And I said ya know as a curious child would ya know do you have everything in there that you need in the, in the bag that she had. And she said yes. And I said where's the meat. And she said oh we don't usually have meat for dinner. It just ya know it's not because she was a vegetarian okay. It's that ya know that wasn't what they could afford so, so it was a really um useful experience. That's not, that's not why I was there but it was very useful and I I think maybe I'll say one more thing and then I'll quit. No, it was, I should write about this. (Group laughs) There was a, so the subdivision um oh gosh I could go on and on about this. Maybe two things. Uh the subdivision

was because it was all organized by the Army, it was all organized by rank. So when you, and it was upper ranks I have to say. So you drove in and the Lieutenant Colonels were in the first houses and then you drove a little further and the Colonels were in better houses and then you got to the very end and the Generals were in the best houses okay. And and I had never well I mean I was too young. I don't think I would have understood rank um but I certainly understood it when we lived over there because it organized everything. And then there would be a, an interesting complicating factor. If um when, not if, but *when* the soldiers married one of the German woman and that really complicated things for the kids. Uh because the relationship in those days between the Americans and the Germans was not precisely what I would call kumbuya. So that was interesting in terms of its complexity and even as a kid I was aware of it. I had a really good friend whose mother was German, her father was American and her name was Cora. And life just seemed to be a whole lot more complicated for her than it was for me. And it was partly that tension. Um last thing I'll say is that beh- if you, on the back side of the Generals' houses um they sort of dropped off, not like a cliff precisely, more like a bluff. They dropped off and then there was this um it was just farming area. There were farms, huge corn and so on. And I'm sure we should not have been allowed to do this okay. Quite certain we should not have been. But in fact we weren't, weren't supposed to be there at all but I remember several times just wandering, wander, wander, wander and feeling so free and so unencumbered. And by the same token on the street where we lived there was one house next to us on the, on the left and then there was a huge apple orchard and that was the other place that we played. And they were really really wonderful places to play. There were almost no constraints. Uh we didn't do any damage I mean we were just playing. And your imagination could just really run free and it was, it was a very very happy childhood at the moment, I'll say. A lot to learn and a lot to learn.

MK: Well, switching gears. (Group laughs) What classes do you teach, which are your favorites and why?

Dr. Yancey: Oh gosh. What classes do I teach? I teach principally classes in the uh um Rhetoric and Comp program. So I've taught all of them. Uh so Rhetorical Theory, Comp Theory, uh Visual Rhetoric, Methods – Research Methods, uh and Digital Revolution and Convergence Culture. I'm gonna get to teach a special topics in um the Fall, Everyday Writing. I'm really excited about this. I now have three semesters worth of work (exhales) um so I have to figure out some way to distill it because that's too much. Um and I de- I think I have decided actually coming in this morning that I am gonna use uh sponsorship and the extracurriculum as sort of conceptual poles as a way of framing about it i-in search of a new vocabulary actually. That's what I'm, I think that will be fun. I think that's, anyway. So, um what's my favorite (exhales). Ya know that's a really hard question to answer. I like all of them. Um I would probably have to s- I like Digital Revolution and Convergence Culture partly because I created it, I don't think there's a class like it anywhere else in the country. Uh at least in terms of Rhetoric and Comp programs, I think I'll limit my claim there. (Group laughs). Uh and it's always changing. It-I mean you really have to change to keep up with it because um uh not, not so much because the devices change they do but the vocabulary changes, what possible changes, and I also think that we become more critical over time and I think that that's useful. Um and I was really surprised in

that course because not all of you were in it but three of you were in it, and I didn't fully appreciate until the student evaluations came in how much resistance there was. That was really interesting. So that's just my way, because the other times I've taught it I don't think there's been that resistance. So this time there was and that was, that was really interesting and it's really made me think about the class in some interesting ways. Ya know, um I I I wasn't unhappy with the evals but I, more than one student, many more than one student said um I came into the class thinking this isn't ya know. I think, thinking that, that I was gonna require people to sign off on ya know Twitter or something. And that's not the nature of the class so maybe I misrepresented it. I mean that ya know that could be part of it. But also I think there's a kind of this is where Rhetoric and Comp is going so we all have to sign off on it sort of thing. And um, so that's been fun to think with. The other course honestly that that in some ways, ya know, I said as as an English major it was like breathing as opposed to being a History major, um in some ways the course for me that's like breathing is the Comp course because a lot of what we read I knew those people or I know those people or what we're talking about I was around when it happened. Uh and so I, that's another class I, I like a lot. I like all of them. I mean they, they ya know they do different things but. And I've, I've only taught Comp Theory twice in nine years, which isn't very much. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. (Group laughs). So no I like 'em all. I just like to teach. Honestly I think you could give me a class in plumbing and ya know I'd (Group laughs) have to learn a lot about plumbing first but yeah no I do so.

MD: I think it's interesting to hear you talk about it 'cause I, I've been to sev- at several interviews and they're talking about classes that we don't know (Dr. Yancey: Yeah) but to listen to you talk about the classes that we are all or have recently taken (Dr. Yancey: Sure) is a, is very different than listening to someone talk about the courses they love to teach that's sort of off in this far off land.

Dr. Yancey: Yeah. No. That makes sense.

MD: Yeah. (Laugh) Oh, it's my turn, isn't it? (Group laughs). Alright. So, the fun question that I never get to ask (Dr. Yancey: Okay) cause Bruce always asks it (Dr. Yancey: Oh. Okay.). But so what's on your nightstand?

Dr. Yancey: I know. That was the one I saw, what's on my nightstand? Um, in fact I was looking at the questions uh my husband and I had something to do last night and we were in the car, and I read it and I said oh I could give them a rude answer for that, but I won't. (Group laughs). Um, it's embarrassing what's on my nightstand because it's a pile of magazines and uh books. So I have one book on oral history, uh I have one book that I got for Christmas I haven't actually started reading yet called *The Black Haired Girl*, uh which got pretty good reviews and my husband read it actually and, and, it was my gift but I let him read it first. I have a l- several *New Yorkers* uh in the pile, several *New Yorkers* that I sort of ya know allowed to stack up. I have a *Harpers*, a new *Harpers* came in, I stuck that in the pile. Um and I have a book on visual rhetoric in the pile. It's embarrassing because it ya know it looks like it's gonna topple over. And now and again, like when I'm out of town my husband will take the books and he'll put them on a

bookshelf and then it's my job to stack them right back up again. So ya know sort of that's where we are. That's what's on my nightstand.

AH: Ok. Uh, what do you think is the most important question that students in Rhet/Comp should be considering today?

Dr. Yancey: Oh, man. Um the most important question. Boy. Why do we ask that question? (Group laughs) Um, uh, I guess I really think um that um what um. So let's dial back. The um as my husband is one to say work really cuts into your free time. Okay. If that's true and I think for um white collars types it is. I think for blue collar types it is. Uh um then um you I think it would be smarter, wiser to do something that if you're very very lucky, both you find, you find affirming but that also serves the needs of others. So, I see it as a kind of interaction or exchange. Um within the framework of Rhetoric and Comp then I think the question would be what's the activity that you want to take up that allows you to make a contribution that is worthy and at the same time makes you feel like you are making a contribution that is worthy. The reason I say that um is that how you feel about it really does make a difference. Ya know when I got my first job, especially when I got my first job teaching, honestly I felt like I'd died and gone to Heaven and I could hardly believe someone was pay- teaching – paying me, not very much actually. We were the lowest paid county in um uh Washington County Maryland, we were the lowest paid county in the state. Nonetheless, I felt, you know, completely, um, overjoyed that they were paying me. This, I have to tell you, wears off, okay. That is, that is to say, well, one thing is that, um, when you really enter a middle class life you end up paying many more taxes than you currently do, uh, you find that you really cannot live without a washing machine. I mean, it's a little silly, but you would really rather have one in your house than go to a laundry mat – I say that as somebody who has gone, who has done her time at laundry mats, thank you. In other words, you have more ways to spend your money. Maybe you have a family, and then you have even more ways to spend your money. Um, and so long term, if you're going to stay with something long term, I think that intrinsic motivation is really what enables you to stay with it. I think intrinsic motivation, i.e. this is something that's important to you and you think is valuable, and I think the other element that is (there are others obviously) the one that really comes to mind that is in some ways equally important is that you have, you have a brain trust. You have colleagues and friends who care about you who will call you on the carpet when you need to be called on the carpet who you can go to for help and advice. Um, I think if you can, if you can - and so when you have these, whatever the question is for you, um, you have people who can think about it with you, so that it's a social activity. And then, you are less likely to see yourself as the heroine of your own narrative, which, I think, is something to be avoided, if one can manage that. So I think it's really important to figure out what that question is for each one. So for me, you know, um – and the questions can shift, um, I don't think they – interestingly, it's a good question as to how widely they can shift, but there's a lot of questions about how portfolio grades can support student learning - and reflection, for that matter, okay, you know, and the book that I wrote on reflection was published in 1998, and so it was fifteen years ago and I'm doing an edited collection on reflection, so apparently that is an interest that hasn't gone away. Everyday Writing is relatively new. But if I had to, I could lay out for you what I see as the connections between

those two topics. Um, so, the question really I think is one that has to be devised by each student but inside that framework and meeting those criteria. Ta-da!

SM: Alright, so the last question is, where do you see the field of literacy studies/rhetoric and composition going?

Dr. Yancey: Forward, I hope! You know? Uh, where do I see it going? Well, um, that's a really different question. So, uh, you know historically certainly one master narrative of the field, uh, and it's only that, it's only a master narrative, uh, has focused on, um, the role of first-year composition. And my expectation is that as we go forward that will, um, continue to be an area of focus for the field. Um, it's clear that it's not the only area of focus, uh, and I think that, um, that that will continue for sure. Uh, a secondary area of focus, as one way of saying it, will be graduate programming. I don't think that's going away, and that's also changing. Um, you know, within the last twelve years or so, people who, especially people who work at, in graduate programs where there are master's degrees as the terminal degree, that is without the PhD, have gotten really more um, serious, not that they weren't serious before, but more organized at least, in terms of thinking about what that degree wants to do. Which I – and I could point you to, you know, some work that was published in *Rhetoric Review*, there is now a consortium of MA programs in Rhetoric and Comp, so, a lot of activity around that, and I think that's really healthy for the field, I think we'll see more of that. Um, I think there is some concern about um, the proliferation of PhD programs, uh, and it may be that there will be some attention to that. I think there is increasing, um, interest in research, um, uh, of various kinds, and seeing ourselves as - actually with some different kinds of research than we have had. So more interest in historical research, I'll just say, just as an example which is not really what people did early on in the field. There's clearly a lot of interest in the major. I don't think that's going away. I mean, I think there will be more and more in the major, and the question will be, will the major continue to be housed in English departments? Um, because, if you, you know, a full program, then, might have, um, first-year comp, the major, a Writing Across the Curriculum program, um, a Graduate program, and if you had that full program, now all of a sudden you look a lot like a discipline in the academy. You look a lot like a department. And so there are really interesting questions about whether writing studies, you know, as a field finds itself continuing mostly in English departments, which is the case now, or continuing mostly in programs and departments of their own. And, um, you know, when initially, um when the book *Field of Dreams* was published, uh, which looks at independent writing programs and departments, uh, and this was around 2002, um, I really thought uh, that really we weren't going to see so many of them. And clearly that's wrong, um, we are seeing more of them. Um, they take different forms. But that's a really interesting question to me. What I wish we would do - and we're going to season through some of it – what I wish we would do, is, um, collect our own data, so that when somebody asks us – someone at an institution, um, someone in the public domain, asks us, how many teachers do you have doing x, how many students do you have doing y, how many programs do you have doing

z, that we would have an answer. MLA and ADE (Modern Language Association and Association of Departments of English which is a subset of MLA, basically) um, do a very good job of collecting data. They do. They do a great job of collecting data and sharing it. It's not a cheap proposition. But, um, but I think what's interesting is, as valuable as that is, they don't always collect the data that we want to collect and it's always within a frame that is not necessarily the frame that we would choose to use. And as we know, the framework has everything to do with the interpretation you produce. So, I hope as we go forward we will pay attention to that. I think we'll pay, I think we'll pay more attention to everyday writing in ways that we haven't even conceived yet, that's still sort of a one-off. I think it's going to become more central to the field, and I think that's a very good thing. I think there will be, there will continue to be a tension between those who want the field to be more disciplinary, and those who see it more inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary. I think that tension will not go away, but I think at the end of the day that's actually in some ways a pretty healthy tension. So I think that's an okay thing. So, that is some of what I think the field might look like.

MK: Do we have time for an extra question?

MD: Sure.

MK: Okay. I know you've filled a lot of roles in and out of the academy, so, for those of us who want to pursue something similar, um, teaching, doing service, doing research, having some sort of life outside of academia, how do you recommend how to hold the balance between all of those?

Dr. Yancey: Yeah, that, that's not always easy. Uh, so, I think obviously what I can do is speak to my own experience and think about the experiences some of my friends and colleagues have had. So, one thing I would say is that, um, you have different – setting a balance, or establishing a balance, requires a different skill set at different moments in one's life. So, for instance, when my – I mean, I think it's uh, well known, I've certainly talked about it, when I had small children, you know, I was an adjunct and I was a part-time staffer, and that's how I achieved balance, because I – well clearly people do have children and do tenure-line and they do both well, I just didn't think I could. And for me, that was, that was a great decision, I'd make that decision in a heartbeat. I was pretty certain I would pay some kind of professional penalty for it, and if I had, if I have, you'd have a pretty hard time proving it, okay, so you know, but it was the right call for me, and, truly I would do that again. It was not an easy thing to do. Uh, I will say that the faculty in my program were pretty supportive, and that helped. I thought that I was disappointing them, you know, I have a very good friend I keep in touch with from graduate school, and, I'm still not sure if she's forgiven me for that. She just thought that was a terrible thing to do. But I'm fairly independent-minded, and I had decided that it was right for me and my family. So, if you looked at it, it wasn't very balanced, but it was the balance that I could manage at the time. I did, I did work as an adjunct, and I did work as a half-time staffer and I taught on top of it, so it was basically full-time. Um, there were other times, when, I'd say, in the last um, uh decade really,

when my children have been in college and med school and graduate school, and now, finally out of school, thank god! And, where by fortune I have a very supportive husband, but I can manage a whole lot more, because I'm not running them to soccer practice, okay, I don't have to go to PTA meetings. And I did all that. I mean, I was a room mother, I was a soccer ref, oh yes, oh yes I have stories to beat the band.

MD: I can still see your coaching position…

Dr. Yancey: Yeah, there you go that's it exactly. So, my second point is that you really do have to look at what's your moment in life, and what can it afford you, and be reasonable about it. I think a third thing is, for me, there are a lot of things that I don't do, okay, that normal people do. I don't have hobbies, okay. I play bridge, uh, we don't know very many people who play bridge, so I don't play very often. So the people that I know that do play bridge, we play non-stop with them for a weekend, because we're binging, you know. Um, I used to have a garden, a garden where I actually grew cantaloupe in Indiana, which is not easy to do – they were small, I have to say. Uh, I don't garden – I help plan, well, actually my thumb is really green, um, but I don't, you know – I have a wonderful daughter-in-law married to my son, and um, you know we were just getting to know each other they were visiting one weekend and I remember Kelly looking at me and saying, so you know, "Do you garden, what are you hobbies?" and I just thought, pfft, you know, "Hobbies, I don't have any hobbies, I work all the time!" but you know, my priorities are clear, okay. I work in something I put a lot of energy in, um, and my family. And those are the priorities, and everything else is, you know, third, fourth, and fifth place. It helps – this is really terrible, because I'm sure it's pathological, uh, my daughter's a psychologist and can tell you about that, but, um, not everyone I collaborate with is a friend. You know, I collaborate with people that I am not particularly close with. But it is true, that I work again and again and again with people I like. I do. And if you look at, you know, where I've been and what I've done it tends to be people that I like and probably they like me if they do, which is nice. So that's a really nice thing to do, because it means that the work you think is important has a social quality for you as well, which is really nice, and I think that's part of it. The fourth thing I'd say is that what I try to do, um, is - and I can't always make this work and I think this is hard, is I like, because of my particular profile you know, where I sort of fit in the larger scheme of things, I like to be contributing in the local level. I like to play a role at my institution. It doesn't have to be a leading role, it doesn't have to be one that anybody even knows very much about, but I like to make some contribution there. I think it's really unhealthy not to do that. I do. I - the program that I came out of was very clear in pointing us to the national scene. Now, the good news was, that we got a very good sense of what the national scene was. The bad news was, I think, that there were activities happening in our backyard that we didn't pay attention to. And I think that's a mistake, and I think – I understand that it's hard – but I think it's important to pay attention to those, and the first place you have a backyard is your institution, so I think it's important to do that. And then I think it's important to do something in the bigger picture. The bigger picture might be state level. There's some state level organizations that are pretty robust, and pretty

active. It might be national. It might be connected to a particular organization, it might be connected to a particular journal, but it's something that enables you to get outside of the local. Now we talk a lot, especially in assessment, about the value of the local, and it's all local all the time. First of all, I think that's wrong. I do, I do think that's wrong. I think you take a lot of locals and you get something that's general, okay, and I think it's important to get to that general, um, but the other thing is, the difficulty with staying local all the time, is that you become insular and in-bred, and you don't – and the other thing is, that sometimes there are just default contexts that function like the local. When I went to UNC Charlotte, um, whenever comparisons came up, the default comparison was the system, the UNC system, or you know, Chapel-Hill, or North Carolina State, usually said with some grumbling, okay. And I found myself often wanting to say, "Can we look outside the UNC system?" Guess what, there are forty-nine other states, okay, not to mention, you know, a planet that has, you know, a circumference of 26,000 miles, there's a lot going on here, we might pay attention. So I like participating in both spheres, because each of them teaches me something, and each of them has a kind of corrective by the other sphere. Does that make sense? So, that's what I aim to do. I think I'm better at establishing that balance, you know, sometimes than others. But that really is – and also it functions as a kind of, um, heuristic to say - so I have a practice where at the end of every academic year, so that would for us be in May, um, basically I do what a lot of people do – "How did this year go?" okay, in general, how did your teaching go, you know, where did you hit the mark, where was it not working in the way it should, what can you learn from that, ditto scholarship, ditto service. And this functions as a heuristic to me – how are you dividing your time? Are you giving priority to what needs to get priority? And if it's not, how do you reset? So you're always in a process of reset, and I think that's normal, um, so that's some of what, um, some of what my thinking is. Is that helpful?

MK: Mmhmm.

Dr. Yancey: Okay, overtime. I think, I really do think the brain trust matters. I do. Because - because when you start getting off track, or you're making a decision about doing something, they really can help you. And, and that's something that I, I think I understood intuitively, but I have come to appreciate quite explicitly. And I talk about it quite explicitly. And, and, I think it's fundamental in the way that priorities are fundamental. And I do - and I think priorities are. And I – yeah, that's all.

MD: Alright, well thank you very much.

Dr. Yancey: Thank you very much. This was fun.