

**2016 Northeast Modern Language Association Conference**  
**Session: 6.21 The Student as Writer: Embodiment, Mindfulness,**  
**and Disability in the Composition Classroom (March 18, 2016)**

**Audience Takeaway**

This packet includes short summaries and/or example activities from the following presentations:

- “In Body and Mind: Re-embodiment Reading in the Composition Classroom” by Carolyne King, University of Delaware.
- “Embodied Pedagogy: Silence, Energy, and Everything in Between” by Hilarie Ashton, Graduate Center-CUNY.
- “Ableism and Attendance: Making the Writing Classroom Accessible to all Students” by Catherine Prendergast, University of Illinois-Urbana-Champaign.

Electronic versions of these materials are available upon request (contact [drurbanski@icloud.com](mailto:drurbanski@icloud.com)).

## **In-Class Activity: “What Does a Good Reader Do?”**

### **Description of Facilitation of this Activity:**

This is an activity that I use on the second day of class. Usually homework due this day includes an assigned reading, Michael Bunn’s “How to Read like a Writer” (which can be found here: <http://writingspaces.org/bunn--how-to-read-like-a-writer>). This is a chapter from the open-access textbook *Writing Spaces*, Volume 2.

I have students work in small groups to brainstorm as many activities as they can think of, related to how they define the practices of a Good Reader. We then create a master list on the board. Each group must share both a practice and describe how they learned the practice, or why they think its what ‘a good reader does.’

This master list then becomes a discussion reference point, and we also use it to compare what is on the board against the perspective of “Reading Like a Writer” that Bunn shares.

### **Example of Class Writing Assignment:**

#### **Read-and-Think Aloud Protocol, Assignment Prompt:**

As you know by now, this class is focused upon two skill areas that are intrinsically linked together: reading and writing. We’ll start this semester by exploring our individual reading practices. As this course is focused upon learning about your own reading and composing practices—and evaluating those practices against scholarship in the field of writing studies—you’ll need to develop primary data to use in this first essay.

You’ll create this primary data by completing a digital project where you make your reading practices perceivable and understandable using technology (i.e. audio/video). These perceivable reading practices will take several forms and include examining notes/annotations made on or concurrent while reading, a reading journal/log, and an audio/video recording of your reading practices using a talk-aloud protocol.

Using your reading notes, reading journal, and/or Talk-Aloud Protocol as evidence, describe yourself as a reader drawing upon the scholarship of at least two peer-reviewed sources that discuss reading.

Some questions that might guide your essay are:

- What do you notice about your body as you read? How might your body influence your understanding of a text? Is what you notice about your body something that you count as a ‘reading practice’? Why or why not?
- How are you similar or different from the way scholars describe the typical reading practices of college students?
- Do you agree with their descriptions of the characteristics of college writers based upon your own reading practices? What areas of your own reading practices do you think you need to change, and in what ways, to become a more effective reader?
- How did you learn these reading practices and how might your background (and now your knowledge of this influence) affect your academic reading practices during your college experience?

### **Facilitating Students doing a Read-and-Think Aloud Protocol:**

With this assignment, I do recommend doing some scaffolding regarding the Read-and-Think Aloud protocol. When I teach this, I discuss what a Think Aloud protocol is, and why and how it has been used in research before. I also share with students a brief clip of myself performing the Read-And-Think Aloud protocol. In addition, I give a separate prompt for the Think Aloud protocol that has a number of resources for completing the Think Aloud; these resources are pertinent to my institution.

Sharing a clip of my own Think Aloud opens a space for discussing with students their choice in technology to use for the recording, and/or any limits they may foresee for themselves with the project. I’ve mostly found that students prefer to use their cell phones for an audio recording. However, I stress that there are many ways that they can create the data that they’ll need to analyze and that they should think both about collection *and* the intended use of the data. I always share my preference for “visual” markers as well as audio; my clip is composed using a free download called Jing where the screen is captured as I read and think aloud on a PDF file. Students are welcome to use Jing, or any other medium, to facilitate their own protocol.

#### *Example of Wording from Prompt for the Read-and-Talk-Aloud Protocol*

You will conduct a read-and-talk-aloud protocol during at least 20 total minutes of yourself reading, using two or more texts. Texts surround us—they are things like syllabi, textbooks, newspapers, text messages, emails, BuzzFeed articles, and Wikipedia. The goal of this activity is to learn something about how you process and understand a text by forcing yourself to account for your thought and comprehension processes while reading, by capturing them on the video.

Ashton, "Embodied Pedagogy: Silence, Energy, and Everything in Between"

## **Embodied Pedagogy: Silence, Energy, and Everything in Between**

Hilarie Ashton, CUNY Graduate Center

NeMLA

March 18, 2016

### **Samuel R. Delany**

"The Polymath"

<https://vimeo.com/13659249>

Raise your hand.

### **Betsy Burris**

"Heading into Emotion"

<https://aeplblog.wordpress.com/2015/02/22/heading-into-emotion/>



### **Power Poses**

[https://www.ted.com/talks/amy\\_cuddy\\_your\\_body\\_language\\_shapes\\_who\\_you\\_are](https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_shapes_who_you_are)

<https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/9547823/13-027.pdf?sequence=1>

### **Agni Pranasana (Breath of Fire)**

Inhale and exhale at even lengths with no break between. The navel will start to flex as though pumping. This is one of the many benefits. To end, inhale deeply and hold. Gently squeeze the body to expand the energy, focusing on bringing the energy to the third eye point. Exhale, and relax



Ashton, "Embodied Pedagogy: Silence, Energy, and Everything in Between"

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Stenberg, Shari. "Embodied Classrooms, Embodied Knowledges: Re-Thinking the Mind/Body Split." *Composition Studies* 30.2 (2002): 43-60.

## **Ableism and Attendance: Making the Writing Classroom Accessible to all Students NeMLA 2016, Hartford, CT**

If there were a policy that punished a significant portion of your students, you would change it, right?

Your attendance policy might be punishing a significant portion of your students.

We value attendance in writing classes for very good reasons. It is part of valuing process of student writing over the product. We value peer group review and need steady attendance for it to work. Studies have shown that for most students, steady attendance may increase student retention.

Typically, we have attendance policies that lower a student's grade when they are absent too often. We offer exceptions on a case-by-case basis for extraordinary circumstances, or if verified by a doctor's note, or a note from the athletic department or the dean.

We assume the need to miss class is either predictable (we can see it and excuse it in advance), or so unusual that authorizing identities such as a dean or doctor will willingly step in to validate it.

But what about people who have impairments that are chronic and fluctuating, and who can't easily foresee how/when their attendance might be affected? Such impairments include: Crohns disease; Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome; Bipolar disorder; Depression; Diabetes; Panic disorder.

These impairments—auto-immune and psychiatric for the most part—are not “curable.” Their symptoms are managed, and that is the best that medical science has to offer. These impairments also are in the class of “invisible disabilities” in that they are not readily apparent to the instructor. Students who have them might not have had histories of school accommodation in grade school, and may not even consider themselves as needing or being worthy of accommodation, even though according to the Americans with Disabilities Act, they are legally entitled to accommodations.

Students with these impairments in my classes have had good days and bad days. Some of these students are registered with the disability office on campus and some are not. The disability office doesn’t often know what to do with them in terms of providing accommodations.

For example: My student with Crohn’s disease cannot get a doctor’s note for each flare-up. There is nothing a doctor can do, and she is not medically expected to visit the doctor to manage her symptoms each time they arise. The disability office will not send a note for her variable attendance.

So I have “cripped” my attendance policy for these students by throwing it away. For them, there is no attendance policy.

To “crip” our attendance policy, we must recognize that there will be no conformity to a norm, whether a norm of disability or a norm of ability. We stop enabling a systemic erasure of their disabilities.