

Jeff Rice

The 1963 Hip-Hop Machine: Hip-Hop Pedagogy As Composition

This essay proposes an alternative invention strategy for research-based argumentative writing. By investigating the coincidental usage of the term “whatever” in hip-hop, theory, and composition studies, the essay proposes a whatever-pedagogy identified as “hip-hop pedagogy,” a writing practice that models itself after digital sampling’s rhetorical strategy of juxtaposition.

I begin with an analogy: teaching research-based argumentation and critique in composition studies is like learning how to perform hip-hop music. My analogy’s focus on argumentation does not exclude traditional methods of argumentative pedagogy based on models like Stephen Toulmin’s complex hierarchies or the Aristotelian triad of deliberative (offering advice), forensic (taking a side in a debate, often a legal or controversial matter), and epideictic (a speech of praise or blame appealing to an already won-over audience) discourse. Instead, I pose the analogy as a first step towards developing alternative or additional ways to engage composition students with the argumentative essay. In choosing hip-hop as a model for the composition essay, I attempt to draw upon a dominant form of contemporary culture familiar to the majority of students I encounter in my classrooms. Does a relationship between hip-hop and com-

position pedagogy exist as my analogy proposes? Can there be such a thing as “hip-hop pedagogy” for the composition classroom?

My question begins with Houston Baker’s work. In “Hybridity, the Rap Race, and Pedagogy for the 1990s,” Baker proposes an English studies-based pedagogy centered around hip-hop. Describing his teaching experience at the college level, Baker finds hip-hop helpful in teaching the canon of literary studies to disinterested students. Baker shares an anecdote about teaching one such course, which involved showing students “how Henry V was a rapper—a cold dissing, def con man, tougher than leather and smoother than ice, an artisan of words” (227). The principle behind Baker’s pedagogy is to provide students with familiar situations and language that allow for complex textual readings, situations that allow students to identify with the figures of American and European literature.

Baker’s lesson compels me to explore my initial interest in hip-hop as a composition pedagogy. What I want to add to Baker’s pedagogy, however, is an examination of the way hip-hop constructs discourse, the way it produces rhetorical meaning through its complex method of digital sampling, and how such a rhetoric functions within the scope of argumentation. Baker defines sampling as

taking a portion (phrase, riff, percussive vamp, etc.) of a known or unknown record (or a video game squawk, a touch-tone telephone medley, a verbal tag from Malcolm X or Martin Luther King) and combining it in the overall mix (The “sample” was called a “cut” in the earliest days). (221)

Sampling is the hip-hop process of saving snippets of prerecorded music and sound into a computer memory. These sounds become cut from their original source and pasted into a new composition. In hip-hop, the “take *whatever* you find and use it” principle acts as the dominant force in sampling. Whatever is available to composers (samplers) often includes TV shows, political speeches, past musical recordings of a variety of genres, or any sound at all. Through the complex juxtaposition of these isolated sounds, samplers construct new forms of meaning. Some of the most complex and intriguing examples of the “whatever process” in digital sampling can be found in Public Enemy’s *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*, Dignable Planets’ *Reachin’ (A New Refutation of Time and Space)*, Grandmaster Flash’s “The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel,” and the Beastie Boys’ *Paul’s Boutique*. “High Plains Drifter” from *Paul’s Boutique*, for instance, juxtaposes the unlikely samples of The Eagle’s “Those Shoes,” The Fatback Band’s “Put Your

Love in My Tender Care,” and The Ramones’s “Suzie Is a Headbanger” with scattered cultural references to Hunter S. Thompson’s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, Steve McQueen, *The Andy Griffith Show*, and off-track betting. What emerges from this mix is a writing both provocative and compelling. A song like “High Plains Drifter” reveals that ideas take shape out of the restless culture surrounding writings; in other words, discourse emerges from the cultural odds and ends we assemble. Hip-hop teaches that cultural research and awareness produce composite forms of writing.

The “whatever” principle of sampling extends into general discourse. *Whatever* is best understood as a popular, everyday term used heavily by youth culture when an experience or reaction can’t be named.

The response, “whatever,” evokes not so much a lack of response but either a sense that something has eluded the meaning of the response or of defiance, dismissal, and opposition. The term carries over into hip-hop culture in methodology (sampling) and attitude, where *whatever* informs lyrical composition. As in rap star Redman’s “Whateva Man,” *whatever* means something indefinable, obscure, out of reach:

You ready to get down?
Whateva man.

“Whatever” as motivating principle within the sampling composition process overlaps Roland Barthes’s efforts to understand alternative meanings in photographs. In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes settles on a dichotomy of image meanings—the informational content of the image and the elusive meaning, the detail that draws a viewer into the image on a personal level. Labeling these reading practices *studium* and *punctum* respectively, Barthes constructs an alternative reading practice in which an isolated detail of the image drives its reading. One image Barthes directs attention to is a 1963 Richard Avedon photograph, *William Casby, Born a Slave*. For Barthes, this image shocks; it strikes him with a sense of defiance. Barthes writes, “the essence of slavery is here laid bare: the mask is the meaning, insofar as it is absolutely pure” (34). Barthes’s choice of Avedon’s photograph stems from an unnamed detail within the image that provokes his interest. Working with this image, Barthes claims that the logic of photography as we currently know it, the referent of the image relating back to a real-life thing, no longer aids critical analysis. In electronic

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culture, something else remains after we have deducted and named an image's referent, something beyond initial meaning, something elusive. This something is the punctum. By shifting attention to the punctum, Barthes constructs an alternative critique of photography and its relationship to personal experience. Barthes's rationale involves finding the punctum, an isolation of "that accident which pricks me" (27) and which is "the anything *whatever*, the sophisticated acme of value" (34, emphasis added). In its English translation, Barthes' punctum transforms into whatever.

For Barthes, the whatever offers more than just indefinable reaction. Barthes's punctum (or whatever) initiates an attempt to develop an alternative critical practice. The whatever challenges conventional reading practices by cutting a detail from its original source and recontextualizing it within a

The whatever challenges conventional reading practices by cutting a detail from its original source and recontextualizing it within a different setting.

different setting. Barthes's purpose is to use the detail as a way to critique cultural practices. The detail he extracts from *William Casby, Born a Slave* leads to a general critique of photography. "[The detail] would tell me what constituted that thread which drew me toward Photography" (73). The juxtaposition of Barthes's isolation of the detail with hip-hop's isolation of disparate sounds returns me to my earlier proposition for writing pedagogy. In contemporary digital culture, elusive meanings abound as the emerging, electronic tools of expression rapidly alter discourse in general. Print culture's linear, nonassociative methods of reasoning break down in an electronic realm where cutting and pasting guide communication. Gregory Ulmer makes a similar point in his definition of an emerging post-criticism, a collagist writing practice that models itself after poststructuralist writings and the avant-garde.

In criticism, as in literature, collage takes the form of citation, but citation carried to an extreme (in post-criticism), collage being the "limit-case" of citation, and grammatology being the theory of writing as citation. (Ulmer 89)

For critique, Ulmer proposes a sampling practice of cut-and-paste citation. Ulmer samples Jacques Derrida, Michel Serres, and John Cage to construct his theory of critique as collage. In composition, Geoffrey Sirc extends such thinking as he considers the relationship between popular music (the punks) and composition studies in the mid-1970s. Sirc's project revolves around the idea of the temporal moment as heuristic. "Contemporary scholars of com-

position studies,” Sirc writes, “might have a difficult time believing that CCC 1977–1979 happened at the same time as the Sex Pistols” (“Never Mind” 13). Sirc demonstrates the meaning of this overlap through a temporal juxtaposition of the Sex Pistols with composition studies; he utilizes punk music to reread composition’s history and contemporary status.

I’d like now to replay sounds from that silenced era; reread the almost erased palimpsest of Punk, on which our field’s official history has been overwritten; poke around in a cultural parallelism—popular music and composition theory. (“Never Mind” 10)

Following Sirc’s work with punk music and Ulmer’s definition of critique as sample, I introduce the model of digital sampling and hip-hop in order to rethink the argumentative essay. This model asks: how does one account for the ways isolated details prompt analytical gestures? Can one construct critique from a series of unrelated details? Can there be such a thing as a “whatever writing practice?”

The “whatever classroom”

In the university classroom, the phrase “whatever” often marks an indifferent or oppositional student reaction to course demand. Patricia Harkin notes that when a student is confronted with a contradiction, “she is less likely to contemplate the cognitive dissonance as a spur to invention and more likely simply to say ‘whatever’” (Harkin 496). For Harkin, *whatever* creates “a problem for invention” within the student-research paper (Harkin 497). The typical student reply to instructor demand for analytical expansion, “whatever,” challenges instructors to push students for more detailed responses. The university classroom often expects such responses to come in the form of the college essay, a paper-based interface inherited from the Ciceronian breakdown of invention (exposition, narrative, evidence, refutation of opposing opinions, and conclusion). Harkin rejects the whatever response as antithetical to any heuristic basis for student work. Instead of motivating students, Harkin argues, to take a word from their everyday language (whatever) and convert it into an invention strategy, a way to write, instructors should confront the whatever in order to overcome its classroom presence. Missing, then, from Harkin’s reading of student responses is how the whatever can become a guide for contemporary student research. In his exploration of a nonbinary discourse (the third sophistic), Victor Vitanza challenges Harkin to consider *whatever* as heuristic.

Harkin has her greatest insight in her blindness: reinventing by way of “whatever.” Yes! Whatever beings intuit that the principles of identity, non-contradiction, and excluded-middle (all the principles of negation informing re/invention) are the very principles that exclude, that disallow the thing with all its properties, that disallow radical singularities, themselves as such, in community. (“Seeing in Third” 173)

Vitanza directs Harkin to his essay “From Heuristic to Aleatory Procedures; or, Toward ‘Writing the Accident,’” which outlines a whatever-based invention strategy for rhetoric. This strategy allows chance and randomness a prominent role in discursive constructions. My interest is in expanding Vitanza’s critique by generating such a practice for the writing classroom and

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by using sampling as the model for such a practice. The coincidental overlap of Barthes’s and hip-hop’s usage of the whatever leads me to look to both for instructions on how to create this unnamed way of writing. For Barthes, the whatever (or punctum) is the isolated detail recontextualized. In digital sampling, the whatever offers an alternative research methodology for composition—the accumulation and appropriation of citations recontextualized into a new work. While not all applications of sampling are the same, overall, sampling allows me to expand Baker’s interest in hip-hop by offering it as a model for a whatever-centered pedagogy. Such a pedagogy, I propose, might redefine student relationships to the various genres and demands of academic writing: the argumentative essay, the research paper, and the critical analysis paper. In order to explain what such a pedagogy entails, I want to demonstrate a whatever method of writing that students can use for engaging in these areas. Because both hip-hop and Barthes isolate moments from their original context, to create my demonstration of this method, I will use their work as a justification for proceeding. I, likewise, will isolate several moments, and I will do so by specifically drawing upon the date 1963.

The rationale for choosing 1963 as an organizing principle stems from Barthes’s temporal choice of the Avedon photograph. In addition, the year 1963 maintains importance to writing and cultural study for a number of reasons. Eric Havelock’s observation that 1963 produced an increased awareness in grammatology (the science and history of writing)¹ found the year to be a turning point in the study of how writing shapes culture. In composition studies, the 1963 Los Angeles meeting of the field’s most important yearly event, the

Conference of College Composition and Communication (CCCC), led to what several composition theorists have labeled the beginning of contemporary writing instruction.² Cultural studies can also be traced to the time period surrounding 1963: the 1964 founding of the Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham, England (the origin of contemporary cultural studies), as well as Raymond Williams's 1962 *Communications*, in which he argued that the analysis of mass media include "the institutions and forms in which ideas, information, and attitudes are transmitted and received" (17). Hip-hop belongs to one such popular cultural institution of mass media, popular music. Following Williams's advice, I ask if this particular institution can serve the interests of writing and, more specifically, cultural study.

I also focus on 1963 by way of Cecil Williams and Allan Stevenson's 1963 composition handbook, *A Research Manual*. The authors suggest that, when doing research, students examining a text for the first time "sample some passages to see what experience, penetration, and logic the writer seems to be endowed with. Sampling will also help you determine whether a work is more on the periphery of a particular study than at the center" (Williams and Stevenson 30). The isolation of Williams and Stevenson's text, juxtaposed with these other 1963 temporal moments, instructs me to sample in order to do research. Therefore, my explanation of hip-hop pedagogy emerges from a series of sampled 1963 moments.³ My purpose, then, is to demonstrate how composition students can research and form arguments through sampling.

Borrowing from the language of hip-hop, throughout the rest of this essay these samples are interspersed with cuts and breaks, mixes, and playbacks. The fragmented sections I work from follow a whatever logic; read in isolation, their meanings are elusive, possibly evoking the student-inspired response, "whatever." Moreover, they come from *whatever* I have discovered occurring in 1963. When viewed together, they offer the model for hip-hop pedagogy; in other words, I perform hip-hop pedagogy as a way of explaining how it functions. As I cut and paste these moments together, I hope to begin the process of hip-hop pedagogy as argumentation and cultural critique.⁴

Hip-hop pedagogy

The cut: Gordon Parks

Gordon Parks's 1963 photograph of Malcolm X, entitled *Malcolm X, Harlem*, exhibits the civil rights leader holding up a newspaper whose bold headline

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reads: “Seven Unarmed Negroes Shot in Cold Blood by Los Angeles Police.” The photograph draws attention to two important issues for the post-World War II era: civil rights and information technology. In Parks’s photograph, the two items juxtapose, revealing the subtle ways both inform one another. Parks’s photo is a reminder of Gwendolyn Brooks’s 1963 poem “Negro Hero”: “But let us speak only of my success and the pictures in the Caucasian dailies” (Brooks 19). In 1963, print media, for the most part, belongs to a mostly white, dominant discourse. Directed by white boards of directors, major newspapers, for the most part, tended to treat civil rights issues from the perspective of white, not black, America. Unequal levels of production ownership tainted any reporting regarding key civil rights issues. Familiar today in the long-standing debate of the digital divide, access to information production and distribution proved elusive to an African American populace attempting to voice its opinions and frustrations. Writing in 1963, African American journalist Simeon Booker questioned overall African American access to the communication industry.

For too long, Negroes have known and grown to accept news managing of their affairs, attitudes and selection of leaders by most of the communications industry. And for too long, the industry has not recognized Negroes as even a part of the community, locally or nationally, except as an undesirable part. (143)

Booker’s complaint rewrites the Parks image. The degree of being “unarmed” as the headline indicates means more than gun power. The weapon power implicit here resides in information production. To be “shot” in cold blood means to be struck with both a weapon and to be captured within the boundaries of photography; one “shoots” an image. In this case, an African American photographer (Parks) attempts to capture the complexity of Malcolm X’s action. In 1963 newspaper photography, the photograph seems to ask, who shoots whom? Who controls the power of the image and its display? Does Malcolm X remain in power by holding the image? Is this a black-owned or white-owned paper? What is the relationship between information technology and how such technology is controlled?

Paste: Leonard Freed

In Leonard Freed’s 1963 photograph *New York City*, an African American man also holds up a newspaper; the headline reads, “We Must Have Justice.” Behind him, New York’s commercial district comes alive with billboards advertising soda fountains and hot dogs. Around him, people make their way in and out of shops. The demand for justice ties racism to economics. The insertion of one

African American man in a crowd of white shoppers is an effort to foreground these connections. The task, though, defies simplicity. Like Charles Mingus's "Freedom," a track not included on his 1963 record *Mingus, Mingus, Mingus* but later added to subsequent printings, African American representations in the arts sustain a continued discourse of social justice that often yields to frustration.

Freedom for your daddy
Freedom for your mamma
Freedom for your brothers and sisters
But no freedom for me. (Mingus)

Mingus's recording, like Parks's photograph, exhibits a disenchantment with the NAACP's slogan "Free by '63," whose purpose was to mark "the Centennial celebration of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation" (Booker 29). Pasted together, both moments offer a joint critique of an early '60s civil rights rhetoric that centralizes the elusive meanings of freedom in American democracy. Who is free? Who receives justice? these works ask. Lacking a name for a culture whose attention fixates more on commercial consumption than on social justice, moments like Freed's photo and Mingus's music suggest an elusive "whatever" as response.

Cut: Romare Bearden

African American artist Romare Bearden's 1963 *Prevalence of Ritual Series* approaches such elusiveness through collage and nostalgia. In the works comprising the series, Bearden, the one-time realist painter, "had come back to the subject matter he started out with—Black American life as he remembered it in the South of his childhood in North Carolina, and in the North of his coming of age in Pittsburgh and Harlem and later in life the Caribbean island of St. Martin" (Conwill 8). For Bearden, the rituals of religion and popular culture provided iconic markers of African American practices, practices that could be nostalgically represented within collage. Notably, Bearden's nostalgia for 1920s and 1930s black culture drew inspiration from the Civil Rights movement of 1963, particularly Martin Luther King, Jr.'s March on Washington and "I Have a Dream" speech. Works like *Cotton*, *The Dove*, and *Jazz* are cut and pasted displays of an African American presence no longer in existence; the nostalgia for the past (and all of its racial struggles) contrasts with the fight against contemporary, institutionalized racism and the exertion to join the developing information-driven economy.

Bearden's collages of the Old South, the Cotton Club, and inner city poverty of the 1920s and 30s appear out of place in contrast to the works' temporal civil rights movement. And yet, this sense of nostalgia marks a moment of temporal cultural critique defined by nostalgia. Bearden's lesson for a hip-hop pedagogy involves utilizing the past in new ways. *The Dove* (1964), for instance, pastes an assortment of cut-up African American faces and bodies over a Harlem stoop. They seem to be nowhere, yet everywhere at once. The markers of African American presence are felt in the images of cigarettes dangling out of empty spaces, masked faces, and solitary hands leaning idly out of windows. While *The Dove* treats African American inner-city life nostalgically (the communal feeling of living in a close area), it also offers the beginnings of a critical gesture intent on questioning the elusive meaning (Where do these people go? What do they do? Why are they idle? What has caused this?). Bearden's collage argues that an impoverished black underclass can search for meaning in carefully composed, visual juxtapositions when no other resolution seems apparent.

Paste: Mo Greens Please

The usage of juxtaposition for critical purposes also appears via the 1963 cover art of Blue Note Records. Blue Note, one of the most prolific producers of jazz in the post-war period, produced a number of record covers in 1963, distinct in their style: Freddie Roach's *Mo Greens Please*, Donald Byrd's *A New Perspective*, Jackie McLean's *One Step Beyond*, Hank Mobley's *No Room for Squares*, Blue Mitchell's *Step Lightly*, and Horace Silver's *Silver's Serenade*. Marked by geometric shapes and patterns, tilted angles, and sharp recolorations and shadings, these record covers, all designed by Reid Miles, revealed a new aesthetic for jazz and marketing, what Felix Cromey calls "an abstract design hinting at innovations, cool strides for cool notes, the symbolic implications of typeface and tones" (Marsh, Cromey, Callingham 7).

In particular, cover art like that of Roach's *Mo Greens Please* used information technology (the record) to emphasize African American pride, even if in somewhat stereotypical ways. *Mo Greens Please* features an African American man purchasing soul food at either a roadside cart or take-out window of a small restaurant. Soul food serves as a prominent iconic display of African American eating habits. Covers like Roach's stressed black pride and power (choices in what African Americans eat as opposed to what white-dominated advertising tells its audience to eat), topics that would eventually govern the themes of hip-hop albums recorded in the '80s and '90s by such groups as Public Enemy, A Tribe Called Quest, Dignable Planets, and The Roots.

The design innovations Reid brought to Blue Note's record covers also situate the innovative move within African American musical production to sample themes related to both the immediate African American experience as well as generalized issues of self-reliance, civil rights, and equality. Blue Note's designs and sound fused with the emerging 1960s soul music produced in Detroit and Memphis, fashioning a new level of self-expression as critique. In jazz, this merger led to the formation of "soul jazz" or hard-bop, a movement critic Amiri Baraka felt relevant to the formation of a new African American identity in which political and social detachment (what Baraka called "cool") give way to a new system of value (soul). In his 1963 definition of the move from cool to soul, Baraka claims

The step from cool to soul is a form of social aggression. It is an attempt to place upon a meaningless social order, an order which would give value to terms of existence that were once considered not only valueless but shameful. Cool meant nonparticipation; soul means a "new" establishment. It is an attempt to reverse the social roles within the society by redefining the canons of value. (*Blues People* 219)

The inclusion of soul into the composition process redirects canonical understandings of not only reading (or listening) practices but writing itself. A new sound demands a new writing form. The most sampled of all soul artists is James Brown, who as Mark Anthony Neal comments, introduced rhythms to "a younger, politically motivated, culturally assured audience raised on the music and production techniques of the Motown and Stax recording companies" (33). This political audience, Baraka's new establishment, forms the basis of contemporary hip-hop culture.

Paste: James Brown

In 1963, James Brown released *Live at the Apollo Vol. I*. Recorded the previous year at the famous Apollo theater in Harlem, Brown's album became the first soul record to significantly chart on the white-dominated Billboard sales charts. Brown's entrance into the segregated music divisions of popular music (rhythm and blues for African Americans, pop music for whites) marked the new establishment Baraka describes, the entrance of black music into the homes of white America. *Live at the Apollo* also created an iconic identification of African American cultural production through the crossover celebrity, one that would quickly identify black musical production with social concerns and values. Baraka writes:

James Brown's form and content identify an entire group of people in America. However these may be transmuted and reused, reappear in other areas, in other musics for different purposes in the society, the initial energy and image are about a specific grouping of people, Black People. (*Black Music* 185)

With Brown, cultural transformation manifests by way of song writing. The early love songs on *Live at The Apollo* eventually become manifestos for black empowerment when juxtaposed with Brown's late-'60s work. *Live at The Apollo's* "Please, Please, Please" and "Try Me" read in the light of '60s Black Power become entreaties for equal rights and self-awareness. They become the building blocks of later hits like "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud Pt. 1," "Soul Power," and "I Don't Want Nobody to Give Me Nothing (Open Up the Door I'll Get It Myself)." Brown's concerns with social power echo James Baldwin's 1963 *The Fire Next Time* in which he writes, "The only thing white people have that black people need, or should want, is power—and one holds power forever" (Baldwin 95–96). Brown's music is an early reminder of hip-

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hop's political beginnings, its attempts to decode power relations and ideology through an aggressive back beat configured by cut-and-pasted sound selections. Brown's interest in Black Power re-emerges in Ice-T's "Power," Salt N Pepa's "Solo Power (Syncopated Soul)," and Public Enemy's "Fight the Power." Public Enemy's song remains one of the best examples of hip-hop's interest in unequal power relations. Sampling Brown's "Funky President" and "Funky Drummer," the "I" of Bob Marley's "I Shot the Sheriff," and numerous other sources, Public Enemy shifts musical power from mainstream studio production to the compact digital sampler.

Brown, like many of the artists of Blue Note records, appealed to DJs experimenting with sampling practices in the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. Both Brown and Blue Note's artists addressed conflicts confronting various levels of social class. In addition, they provided a means for a future confrontation with discourse itself, supplying contemporary hip-hop with the basis of a new method of composition: empowerment through sampling.

Playback: the writing machine

In order to convert this material into a composition, I sample these cut-and-pasted moments into a hypothetical writing machine, a pedagogical digital

sampler. The model for a pedagogical digital sampler comes from Suzanne McElfresh's definition of the electronic version:

A recording device that captures sound as digital information, which is then saved in computer memory instead of on magnetic tape, the sampler made it possible to create intricate soundscapes with virtually any source material, including already recorded music and live instruments. (170)

The pedagogical sampler, with a computer or without a computer, allows cultural criticism to save isolated moments and then juxtapose them as a final product. The student writer looks at the various distinct moments she has collected and figures out how these moments together produce knowledge. Just as DJs often search for breaks and cuts in the music that reveal patterns, so, too, does the student writer look for a pattern as a way to unite these moments into a new alternative argument and critique.

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My sampler shifts back and forth through the selections I have fed into it. The pattern I hear includes the ways information technology informs power relations at the levels of race and class. This issue is raised through image (Parks and Freed), sound (Blue Note and James Brown), and method (Bearden). The argument I perform here, therefore, emerges from the juxtaposition of all three areas.

Print literacy advocates the linear argument as the most appropriate way to establish critique. In the contemporary classroom, critique often follows Toulmin's model of argumentation as outlined in the widely adopted *Uses of Argument*. Toulmin's breakdown of the structure of the argument can be summed up as follows:

There must be an initial stage at which the charge or claim is clearly stated, a subsequent phase in which evidence is set out or testimony given in support of the charge or claim, leading on to the final stage at which a verdict is given, and the sentence or other judicial act issuing from the verdict is pronounced. (Toulmin 16)

In the mix of the hip-hop pedagogy, sampling finds Toulmin's work in need of an update. Toulmin's dependence on the "charge" or "claim" as the principal force of argumentation appears out of place within the mix, in which the claim

emerges as the result of whatever is played back in juxtaposition. In order to update argumentation for the electronic sphere, hip-hop pedagogy takes its cue from Leronne Bennett's 1963 reading of King's civil rights plan entitled "Project 'C.'" Bennett writes:

Project "C" was the code name for a proposed series of demonstrations in Birmingham. And what did the "C" stand for? It was a shorthand symbol for a chillingly blunt concept: CONFRONTATION. A confrontation between Negroes and whites—not in the courts but on the steps of city hall, not at the conference table but in the streets, not by ones and twos but by hundreds and thousands. (4)

Within my mix, the sampled passage from Bennett involves confronting the ways argumentation is formed in writing. Transformed from its 1960s racial purpose, Project "C" becomes a question of confronting the nature of Toulmin's "claim" in the mix. The desire to compose through confrontation appears as well in King's canonized 1963 "Letter from Birmingham Jail": "The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation" (King 767). King asked that his methods of confronting the dominant order be considered extremist. "The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be" (King 773). In its conception of argumentation as confrontation, hip-hop pedagogy borrows King's extremism and joins it to another temporal extremist, William S. Burroughs, whose cut-up method proposed an extreme way of challenging institutionalized discourse: cutting up texts, speeches, slogans, etc., and pasting them back together in provocative ways. Burroughs argued for a confrontation with so-called "reality," the dominant ideology propagated in media formations and often taken for granted as natural. Writing in the time period surrounding 1963, Burroughs wrote that submission to reality without question was analogous to drug addiction:

The scanning pattern we accept as "reality" has been imposed by the controlling power on this planet, a power primarily oriented towards total control—In order to retain control they have moved to monopolize and deactivate the hallucinogen drugs by effecting noxious alternations on a molecular level. (53)

If hip-hop pedagogy seeks to confront these types of power relations, it must alter the ways discourse is formed by student writers (and, hopefully, instructors as well). In this way, hip-hop pedagogy performs an extremist act by arguing that the "reality" of academic writing (the linear structure of thesis, support, conclusion) is in fact an ideological formation that can and should be

challenged through the sample. Hip-hop pedagogy, therefore, borrows the student confrontational response to the traditional writing assignment by saying out loud, “whatever.”

The mix

In the mix (the writing I am performing), Allen Kaprow’s 1962 Happening *Words* (originally performed at the Simolin Gallery in New York) is the space where my composition finally takes place. Falling within my 1963 series of samples, *Words* collected quotations from a variety of sources (comic books, political slogans, published writings) and hung them from the ceiling and the walls of an enclosed room. Viewers were encouraged to either add to the hanging and posted collections or rearrange the display. In the background, turntables played recordings of Kaprow’s voice. The various selections and participant input created a collective-based space in which discourse surrounds viewers/readers rather than being concentrated on a single page. *Words* brought together the output of various media forms as collection. In this sense, communicating means collecting. *Words* also maintains a link to hip-hop; the expression “word” functions as a be-all answer to whatever-type questions, a way to deal with allusive meanings when no answer is forthcoming.

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Words, then, serves as an early form of hip-hop pedagogy. Kaprow’s collage of text, sound, and image set up a confrontation with the dominant art institution’s preference for gallery space and museum shows. The “word” confrontation acts to motivate the sampling process, to push writers to engage with not only the language they use to construct discourse but also the mediums in which the discourse is conveyed. To think of the classroom and the academic essay as two mediums in need of confrontation is to create an analogy with Tricia Rose’s definition of rap music. “Rap music is a contemporary stage for the theater of the powerless” (Rose 101). In this sense, students who are powerless (powerless to choose their own forms for writing, powerless to adapt the discourses they are most familiar with such as music, television, or film) become empowered at some level to reshape their relationship to literature, sports, music, politics, art, etc., through the sample. “Powerful, alternative formal possibilities are now key genres of public discourse,” Geoffrey Sirc claims, “and kids understand them, and Composition Studies could care less”

(“Virtual Urbanism” 14). Or to sample Public Enemy as a voice for the contemporary writing student: “Power and equality / and we’re out to get it.” (“Party”).

Teaching the whatever: hip-hop pedagogy

I leave this composition as a mix to be played back by different students of contemporary culture, through different isolated moments, through a different whatever. My choice of 1963 acts merely as a model for further exploration; samples do not have to be temporal; they may come from specific spaces of public discourse, contemporary issues, or even physical spaces. And while many of the samples in my composition independently maintain a connection to African American culture, their thematic similarities don’t override the disparate concerns of each piece (Mingus and Bearden work in distinctive, separate ways, for instance). For this demonstration, the commonality serves the specific purpose to identify the practice’s potential. Student writing benefits from choosing contrasting samples and allowing the dissimilarities of the material to function as heuristic.

However the composition course poses the assignment (as temporal, spatial, or some other form), students gain insight into the writing process at levels they had not yet considered. Taking my performance of 1963 as one such example, the student engaged with a similar temporal project researches the year’s moments in a variety of disciplines (film, politics, science, music, television, sports, etc.) and thus gains insight into the process of research. The student finds a common pattern or element that binds these moments and then understands how to form a claim out of research and investigation. The student juxtaposes these moments in one of a variety of ways and thus learns about organization. And through the process of juxtaposing the samples, the student locates her own position within the various cultural, ideological, economic, racial, gendered, etc., discussions consistently taking place around her. The student as sampler creates an argument.⁵

The ultimate test for such a project is to recognize that this process doesn’t have to be done only with hip-hop music. The lesson of sampling can be extrapolated from this example in order to form various alternative methods of critique drawing from a variety of isolated details in order to allow pedagogy room for further development. The writing classroom, then, would shift critique from the standardized methodology inherited from figures like Toulmin and, instead, adopt the logic of hip-hop’s composition innovators, figures like Grand Master Flash or the group Public Enemy. Doing so allows students to

resist the imposed linear methods of critique in favor of practices already working within digital culture. Doing so repeats Digable Planets' message of whatever as resistance, repositioning the student writer's resistance (whatever) to the writing assignment in a productive manner:

For this is the season of our self savior
Like Ché Guevara, the guerilla
Sparks the revolution black tactics, *whatever*. ("Agent 7")

One can speculate as to what extent this type of writing promotes not only a critical practice for how it synthesizes unlike material in order to construct an argument but also for how it registers our specific involvements in consumer culture. Because this practice models itself after a consumer product (popular music), we must also recognize that the cultural awareness sampling as critical practice brings to light is not a given in itself. The potential for critical understanding always contrasts with the potential for student cynicism (we know how the practice resists dominant thinking, but we still accept the dominant anyway), what Victor Vitanza has called a "false coconsciousness" often prevalent in cultural-studies-influenced classrooms ("The Wasteland Grows" 700). Hip-hop pedagogy is not meant as a given substitute for dominant thinking but, rather, as an alternative practice whose own application must be problematized even while students engage with it. Thus, I propose hip-hop pedagogy as the place to begin such questioning regarding our ability to resist dominant modes of thinking, to engage with consumerism while working against it, to spark the resistance, whatever.

I propose hip-hop pedagogy as the place to begin such questioning regarding our ability to resist dominant modes of thinking, to engage with consumerism while working against it, to spark the resistance, whatever.

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Notes

1. Because of space limitations, I mark these two observations with footnotes. See *The Muse Learns to Write* for Eric Havelock's observation of the near simultaneous publications on writing by Marshall McLuhan, Jack Goody and Ian Watt, and Claude Levi Strauss.

2. See Stephen North *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*, Lester Faigley *Fragments of Rationality*, and Geoffrey Sirc's "English Composition As a Happening II, Part One."

3. Geoffrey Sirc has pointed out to me that Fluxus founder George Maciunas engaged with temporal dates for composing in the mid-1970s. His Biography Boxes contained "objects relating to the year of one's birth, perhaps a newspaper from the day one was born, things that were invented that year, etc" (Hendricks 322). See also Larry Miller's "Interview with George Maciunas" in *The Fluxus Reader*, edited by Ken Friedman. Maciunas states that 1963 was the first year he began making related boxes.

4. In addition to Victor Vitanza's response to Patricia Harkin, he also treats the whatever as the focus of an emerging identity. His work on this version of the whatever can be viewed online at <<http://www.uta.edu/english/V/test/interface/v.1x.html>> and <<http://www.uta.edu/english/V/test/agamben/>>. While there exist distinct differences in the way we both use the term, Vitanza's work has greatly influenced my use of *whatever*.

5. Examples of student work that have performed temporal juxtapositions can be viewed online at <<http://web.nwe.ufl.edu/~jrjce/1629/2>> and <<http://web.nwe.ufl.edu/~jrjce/1685/2>>.

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Jeff Rice

Jeff Rice is an instructor of composition and media studies in the University of Florida's Networked Writing Environment. He is currently working on a book-length project entitled *The Rhetoric of Cool: Computers, Cultural Studies, and Composition*.