Writing as Commodity: How Neoliberalism Renders the Postsecondary Online Writing Classroom Transactional and Ways Faculty Can Regain Agency

Erica M. Stone and Sarah E. Austin

An online course designer and adjunct instructor use autoethnography and case study methodologies to examine how neoliberalism has rendered the postsecondary online writing classroom transactional. Using a public, open-enrollment, two-year institution, we explore the ways online writing courses are impacted by institutional structures that mechanize programmatic standards, student expectations, and faculty behaviors.

In *Composition in the Age of Austerity*, Nancy Welch and Tony Scott argue that there is a new emphasis on product over process in the composition classroom within the neoliberal university (10). Godrej characterizes neoliberalism in higher education as a "disinvestment in the concept of education as a public good by the very people charged with protection and disbursement of this public good" (126). Shifting the role of a first-year composition course away from curricula and pedagogy that values the uses of rhetorical devices to communicate and analyze the world critically and toward a view of written work as a transaction between teacher and student mechanizes the learning process, automates the role of faculty, and undermines the university as a place for democratic, critical thought. The text-based nature of online writing courses in particular heightens the transactional properties of the writing process. It is ironic that such instrumentalization appears so blatantly in a composition course, wherein students are often introduced for the first time to the tenets of critical thinking and rhetorical strategy. Specifically, we argue asynchronous environments, like those often found in online programs, amplify the prevalence of product focus via informal discussion forums and summative writing assessments by essentializing writing so that it is no longer a conversation, but a commodity.

This essay uses autoethnography and case study methodologies to examine how neoliberalism has rendered the postsecondary online writing classroom transactional. Using a public, open-enrollment, two-year institution as a case study under Yin's 2014 case study framework, we explore the ways in which online writing courses are impacted by the institutional structures that mechanize programmatic standards, student expectations, and faculty behaviors. Our case study institution utilizes instructional texts and programmatic frames to constitute the commodification of student writing. Scripted courses use standardized assignments with click-and-go rubrics, asynchronous weekly forums that emphasize the number of posts rather than the quality of content, and rely on Turnitin to establish an automated, standardized assessment feedback. These structures lessen the need for faculty training, increase the percentage of contingent faculty, and decrease the ability for faculty autonomy—to say nothing of the infringement on professionalism and academic freedom.

In our case study, we discuss our own roles as contingent course designer and adjunct faculty member under the aforementioned institutional structures to provide two specific perspectives on the impact commodification has had on the designing of curricula, the implementation of online courses, and their effect on student writing and learning. After describing our case study site, we illustrate these impacts in three sections:

- First, we outline the experience of a contingent course designer, including the institutional requirements for designers, fixed pedagogical frameworks, specified program curricula, and standardized assessment procedures.

- Second, we outline the online adjunct teaching experience within a fixed institutional, programmatic, and pedagogical structure that automates the role of instructor and commodifies student writing.

● Last, we offer tangible solutions for unbundling the neoliberal structures that prevent faculty from engaging in authentic course development, teaching, and assessment in the hopes that as purveyors and participants this system, we can regain agency and advocate for authentic student learning with a focus on process rather than product.

Description of Case Study Institution

The site of our case study is a 140-year old public, two-year, open enrollment institution located in the Southeastern U.S. This institution has 14 campuses, one of which is dedicated to serving students who wish to enroll in 100% online, asynchronous courses. As of 2014, the college enrollment consisted of 61% women and 39% men on a full-time basis. The voluntarily reported student ethnicity and race demographics were 44% Black/African American, 44% White/Caucasian, 6% Hispanic/Latino, and 6% Asian American, Indian, or Alaskan Native (see Table 1).

Table 1. Demographics of Case Study Institution

Demographic Classification	% of students that voluntarily reported
Black/African American	44%
White/Caucasian	44%
Hispanic/Latino	6%
Asian American, Indian, or Alaskan Native	6%

Administration, faculty, and staff work together in a cross-functional team environment at our case study school. Most of the administration is housed at the oldest campus, what is commonly referred to as the main campus, which itself works against local and faculty agency.

The college employs a standard corporate model: president, executive vice president/chief operating officer, chief financial officer, and a chief academic officer/dean of faculty. Each academic department is organized under a division chair, who is elected with no term limit from one of the fourteen campuses. Then, each campus has one department chair per discipline that reports to the division chair. Larger campuses employ from two to seven full-time faculty members in each discipline, depending on enrollment; however, the online campus does not have any full-time faculty outside of the department chairs in each discipline. Like most colleges and universities, the majority of the classes are taught by part-time, contingent faculty. Twice each year, all full-time faculty meet at the main campus for professional development and community building. Adjunct faculty are not included in this practice; however, online spaces for adjunct faculty professional development are provided within the learning management system. Student-centered staff is organized differently based on campus size and need, but typically each campus has an advising center with two to four full-time academic advisors to guide students through their degree programs and two to three student success coaches to help students enroll and apply for financial aid. Each campus also has a librarian and several part-time tutors.

The academic year is organized into five eight-week terms with two weeks in between each term; one week is considered a break week and the other is used for preparing courses for the next session. For online faculty, course preparation checklists are distributed via email and within the online faculty spaces to provide a structure that attempts to (but does not) replace online faculty training and mentorship. Just as students' writing products have become subject to a neoliberal framework that prioritizes product over process, faculty have also been relegated to facilitators who follow predetermined checklists to set up pre-designed courses. Online faculty have very little autonomy. As course facilitators, they are hired on a term-by-term basis to

engage with students within asynchronous course environments, assess coursework using pre-designed rubrics and assignments, and discourage attrition through student encouragement and mentorship.

In our online English Department, there is no formal, online faculty training; however, there is an online space where English faculty are encouraged to share best practices and ideas for student engagement and retention. In this context, best practices are often equated with "what I do" rather than "what is best" according to research. Typically, courses are designed on a contract-basis by part-time adjuncts serving as subject matter experts. In addition to paying workers drastically less than a corporate consulting model would for contracted intellectual work, this process further complicates the neoliberal structure of the postmodern university. By asking a part-time faculty member to perpetuate the power abuse cycle through the instrumentalizing role of faculty, contracted instructional designers inflict violence upon their peers, and in some ways, contribute to the deprofessionalization of higher education.

How are the courses designed and managed?
—The Contingent Course Designer Experience
Erica M. Stone

As one of the longest standing online English composition adjuncts at our case study institution, I have been asked to serve as a contracted, subject matter expert and course designer for the last few years. Initially, my responsibilities included selecting course textbooks, updating course prompts, and designing supplementary course learning materials. After a few years of serving in this role, I was asked to redesign the online composition sequence and create a corresponding training for online writing faculty. This section details the constraints and

weightiness I felt as a contingent worker who was being asked to reduce the agency of my fellow adjuncts through fixed pedagogical frameworks, specified program curricula, and standardized assessment procedures.

The pedagogical frameworks for course designers at our case study institution are very specific. By instrumentalizing the faculty role to a part and parcel, mechanized set of task-based instructions for course facilitation, the neoliberal trends in higher education have limited faculty ethos and power. At our particular case study institution, subject matter experts are expected to design each week of an eight-week course with a five-part lesson plan including: (1) weekly learning objectives, (2) weekly reading preparation, (3) one formative discussion forum, (4) one discussion forum that prepares students for the weekly summative assessment, and (5) one summative assessment, typically a paper or exam. Due to Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accreditation requirements and SACS' Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) engagement expectations, every online course at our case study site, regardless of subject, is required to be structured in this manner. In addition to the design constraints, each assignment in the composition sequence needs to fit within the predetermined parameters of the college's click-and-go rubrics and asynchronous weekly forums that emphasize the number of posts rather than the quality of the content.

In addition to the strict pedagogical frameworks, specified program curricula dictate the assignment parameters that are required for course designers. As a contingent faculty member, I had to be mindful of my limited power within the institution, which often meant waiting weeks to hear back from division and department chairs about assignment word counts and assessment procedures. But more than anything, it meant that I did not have the freedom to design based on best practices; instead, I furthered the unbundling and deprofessionalization of higher education

that often results in a permanent lack of academic freedom. I was required to design the composition sequence to meet the institutional and programmatic requirements first, leaving my own expertise and desire to engage my fellow adjuncts in the design process as a secondary concern. I was not oblivious to the kinds of constraints I was creating for my colleagues; however, the shift toward valuing the extrinsic (degree, class status, expertise, professionalization, earning power) outcomes of higher education instead of the intrinsic rewards (critical thinking skills, soft skills, self-satisfaction, societal standard) of the learning process left me with little choice (Astin). By choosing to sell my subject matter expertise to the institution for a nominal, one-time fee of $2500, I contributed to this value system, which left me feeling less than proud. As an intentional act of resistance to the instrumentalization and automation of course design, I made sure that the corresponding training and professional development space was a place where instructor agency and autonomy was valued and encouraged. Despite the fact that much of the course design and assessment procedures were standardized, I ensured that online adjuncts could add supplementary materials in order to humanize and de-materialize the online learning experience.

But, with every victory, there is often a concession. While I was able to encourage the administration to allow faculty to add supplementary teaching materials to the scripted online courses, standardized assessment procedures from the institutional assessment administrators further complicated the design process. As a contingent course designer, I had little power to change the course structure, and I was asked to help set up Turnitin to establish an automated, standardized assessment practice to lessen the need for faculty training, increase the percentage of contingent faculty, and decrease faculty autonomy. For example, faculty are prohibited from altering the pre-designed assignment directions and their corresponding rubrics. Even when a

faculty member notices a mistake, several administrative processes must be followed in order for the mistake in the assignment directions or rubric to be fixed. A mechanized course development process and mechanized teaching and learning processes all contribute to framing students' written work as a transaction between teacher and student, further heightening the neoliberal structures of the case study site.

How are the courses taught? — The Online Adjunct Teaching Experience

Sarah E. Austin

My argument here is that an increased focus on writing as commodity coupled with the rise in the number of students taking asynchronous, text-based online classes has caused more students to view writing as a product-based transaction rather than as a process-based skill requiring feedback, discussion, revision, and compromise. Many online instructors in a myriad of disciplines at the postsecondary level are off the tenure-track for "financial and competitive reasons" (Kramer 255)—they did not earn a necessary degree from a competitive enough program, were not a "good fit" when they went on the job market, could not enter the job market because of time constraints or familial obligations, or did not choose to obtain a PhD in their field because of its time, familial, professional, and financial costs. Certainly, there are other reasons: these are just a few of the most common ones. As a result, there is an increase in viewing teachers-as-commodity. This is not a new phenomenon for English departments by any means, and is more and more apparent across university departments, but a concerning one painfully punctuated by Southern Illinois University's very recent call for volunteer (albeit face-to-face) instructors (Gluckman).

The increasing dependence on contingent, non-tenurable faculty is a challenge that has gained a foothold as a national, higher education phenomenon across disciplines. Where once the

issue of a majority of contingent, untenurable workers was largely a composition issue, and especially a First Year Composition issue, over a matter of about three decades, it has become an issue prevalent across postsecondary institutions. As business models flourish, percentages have reversed: In 1975 75% of U.S. faculty were tenure-line and 25% were non-tenure-line; today 75% of U.S. faculty teach off the tenure-track (Coalition on the Academic Workforce). Add the possibility that a teacher doesn't have to travel to multiple sites to grade and/or teach, and the cost savings increases exponentially, making the online adjunct worker-as-commodity even more attractive.

While highly qualified to teach their subject matter, contingent faculty have fewer roles and responsibilities at the university. Whereas tenure-track faculty conduct research, teach classes, and engage in service, contingent faculty generally only teach, although there are some instances where their sole responsibility is to grade, write curricula, develop online course shells, or provide writing feedback (similar to the services offered in a writing center) (Future of American Faculty 28). This "unbundling" indicates a significant trend toward outsourcing off the tenure-track (32) as discussed by Carolyn Calhoon-Dillahunt (of Western Governors University) during her CCCC 2018 address (Transcript: 35:00-38:30 minutes). This trend has also been discussed by participants in a recent WPA-L conversation surrounding the upslope in non-tenure track job postings. And the increase in online undergraduate courses being offered further attests to this trend. Postsecondary education in the United States has become what Robert Connors observed in Harvard's English Department in the early 1900s: "an academic sweatshop, which wears its people out like ball bearings, which then have to be replaced" (111). My voluntary entrance into a system that I know exploits labor until it fades highlights my privilege at being

able to dabble here and also my complicity in perpetuating what I see as injustices for faculty and students alike.

Having spent the last 16 years in education at the secondary and postsecondary levels, it was obvious to me that online education was only going to get more popular as programs like BlueJeans and Zoom, and LMS's like D2L, Canvas, and Blackboard get better at allowing more seamless virtual interactions. I knew that I needed to get online teaching experience, and since I'm not eligible to teach online courses for my online PhD program because of a now defunct Texas state law, I decided I needed to get the experience another way. Lucky for me, I know several people who work at various institutions that offer online undergraduate courses, all of which need adjunct instructors. I asked around and found one that was hiring, called my friend for a recommendation, and put in my application. I was hired for the very next quarter to teach developmental writing. And while my work as an online adjunct began as a professional development move, it has since morphed into a social justice mission: to improve student education and enable adjunct faculty agency. This piece is one way I know to do that work publicly.

From personal experience as an online student in undergrad, and in two different graduate settings (one asynchronous, the other synchronous), I knew what to expect from the student's end: weekly threaded discussions, uploading documents to a grading/tracking system (in this case, Turnitin), the use of an LMS (Moodle), a text-based reader that could be rented, bought in hard copy, or downloaded as a pdf, and print-heavy assignment sheets. I had no idea what to expect from the teacher's side.

Like most online undergraduate courses, the one I was contracted to teach would be completely asynchronous. That meant that none of my face-to-face pedagogical strategies would

work—there would be no group activities during class, no board work where we could walk through paragraphing or thesis revisions, no musical chairs games where they got to move around and rate one another's definitions or thesis statements based on set criteria with stickers; there would be no explanations and Q&A time about the rubric or the prompt's content, no writing process or paragraph construction conversations, no off the cuff inquiries about topic choices. Even the introductions would be typed, statically, into an ungraded forum.

If I wanted any content-delivery to occur at all aside from the bi-weekly forums, the assigned reading, or the assignment sheets, I would have to type them out and send them to students via email or the Moodle course Announcement function. If I wanted to officially post them to the course, I would have to get permission. To do that I would have to either write out the information or make a video about it—flipped classroom-style—ensure it followed ADA guidelines and was closed-captioned correctly, apply for course change approval (whether textual or visual), and then post to the Moodle page under the appropriate week and hope my students read or watched it.

Though I have only been teaching online for 24 months, I already know that while students read the essay prompts (essays are 60% of their overall course grade), the reading of these prompts does not translate into high grades. Videos fare less well, despite the perception by both teachers and students that students are more likely to watch a video than read instructions. Figure 1 illustrates the percentage of students who have read the instruction sheet versus the percentage of students who watched the corresponding video for each of four assignments taught in the online developmental English course. Moodle's viewing function allows me to track how many students read and watch total, how many of those views are unique (per student instead of one student watching/reading multiple times) and how long they spend reading/watching. The

graph shows that students have learned that prompts are the most important aspect of preparing

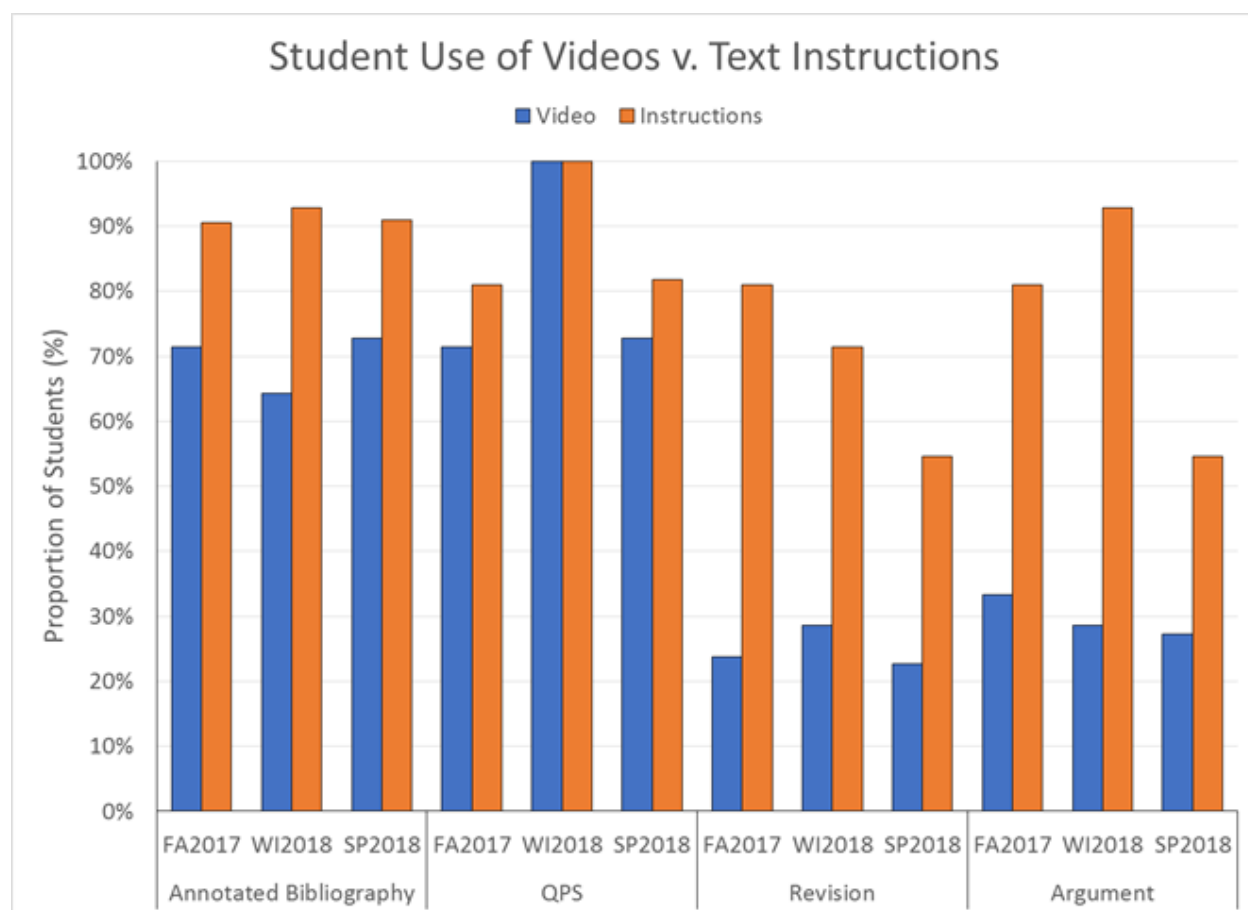for an assignment, as evidenced by the number of views.

Figure 1. Percentage of Students Watching Instructional Video Compared to Percentage of Students Reading the Text-Based Prompt

Unfortunately, even though students are clearly reading the assignment sheets, this

reading practice is not translating into high level work, regardless of whether that assignment is a

Quote, Paraphrase, Summary (QPS) activity, an Annotated Bibliography, or an Essay. In fact, a

two-sample median test (conducted by using Statistical Analysis Software version 9.4) showed

that for the Annotated Bibliography assignment there is no association between (1) either reading

the directions or watching the video and (2) the student's assignment grade. Furthermore, my

students' pass rate for this overall course for the last three quarters is below 70%, not including those students who withdraw prior to the course's end. I suspect that both the low pass rate and the lack of correlation between reading/watching instructions and earned grades is related to the reading expertise of students enrolled in developmental writing courses. College students who are developing as writers are often also developing readers. This hypothesis is supported by some of Dolores Perin's findings in her review of multiple studies of college students' literacy skills published between 2000 and 2012. For example, Perin identifies studies that found that writing facilitates reading comprehension and reading well-written texts can improve writing skills (120).

The correlation between reading ability and writing ability has been well-documented over the past forty years; as early as 1977, Grobe and Grobe conducted a study showing that good writers had significantly higher reading scores than average writers in a study of college freshmen; Sandra Stotsky synthesized a large bulk of these studies in 1983, showing multiple studies that had come to the same conclusion. In 1998, Cynthia Chamblee, a developmental reading teacher and researcher, described reading and writing as similar processes, both requiring the construction and synthesis of meaning, as well as planning, drafting and revising stages and the use of students' prior knowledge (533). These aspects of both reading and writing are learned processes.

Since the institution where I teach online is an open enrollment campus, the reality of readers with lower reading proficiencies in courses is exacerbated by the students' educational backgrounds. According to the National Center on Education and the Economy, students who generally attend open enrollment institutions (and by this we do not mean HarvardX or MITx type courses but two-year colleges, community colleges, for profit institutions like AIU or

Capella University, or institutions that do not have entrance criteria; those that are 'pay-to-play')
are the very students who do not have the literacy foundation to excel in institutional
environments that lack scaffolding (Fain). In *The Literacy of America's College Students*, Baer et
al. report that "The average prose, document, and quantitative literacy of students in 4-year
institutions was significantly higher than the literacy of students enrolled in 2-year colleges"
(28). Certainly, this finding that a great many two-year college students struggle with reading
and writing has been our experience at our case study institution. The 2014 book, *Community
Colleges and the Access Effect*, by Juliet Lilledahl Scherer, a professor at St. Louis Community
College, and Mirra Leigh Anson, director of the University of Iowa's Upward Bound program,
argue that the combination of commodifying open enrollment campuses and the push for all
students to go to college causes a reduced ability for faculty to meet students' academic needs.

A substantial portion of incoming students are placed into developmental classes. Sixty-
eight percent of students who began coursework at a community college in 2003–2004 "took one
or more remedial courses by 2009" (Developmental Education FAQs). In many online
environments, like the one in which I teach, the pedagogical scaffolds they need to be successful
are not embedded in the course structure, so they often fail courses, which accrues debt or usurps
financial aid dollars. Students struggle to earn the degree they need to improve their economic
station (the reason they came back to school in the first place) and now have extra debt that
needs to be paid. Students at my institution often end up dropping the course when they realize
they won't pass it. I don't have access to my students' high school GPAs, class ranks or
SAT/ACT scores, but my observations suggest that the students are not performing as well as
one might expect because they are not prepared with the skills they need to write and read at the
college level. Neither am I as well prepared as I could be to assist them.

Since the scaffolds my students require to be successful are not embedded in the course itself, it falls on the instructors to provide them. Without data about our students' previous skill sets and background knowledge, this becomes increasingly difficult. Instructors wait until after students have completed an assignment before witnessing gaps in their academic repertoires. Once these are apparent, we address them specifically via comments. Rarely do I get asked questions about the assignment prompts themselves. Instead, students ask for clarification on the comments I provide in Turnitin after they've received a grade. They wonder about what MLA formatting should look like, how to change Calibri 11 into Times New Roman 12, what "rhetorical appeal" means, or they want to know how they could have earned an F for an argument when they clearly agreed with the author despite the fact that they were asked to argue a policy. All of these term and formatting explanations and prompt nuances are clearly explained on the assignment sheets and in the videos that they are reading and watching. They are also things I explicitly teach in my face-to-face courses.

My face-to-face students (also developmental students in 9-week courses) often want to be walked through how to change fonts or spacing in Word, request to be shown what the Purdue OWL site looks like, and ask for examples for how to phrase a policy argument's thesis statement. These are things I do regularly in face-to-face environments because I know they are useful pedagogical scaffolds for developmental students. I do not do them in my online courses. I skip them when I teach online because I don't have a synchronous time to meet and "teach" my students, and, at $2000/course (which is considered decent pay for an 8-week humanities course), it's not realistic. The amount of time and energy it would take me to create the video, closed caption it, get it approved, and post it for the small number of students who will actually watch it, is untenable given what I'm paid and the number of other things I have to do in my life.

After my full-time job, spending time with my husband and two children, and earning my PhD (online, of course!), it's little surprise that my online students don't get all of their pedagogical needs met. In reality, the values of a neoliberal, open enrollment college, elide learning and undermine faculty competence, by permeating pedagogical structures and hindering individual professors' abilities to exercise their academic freedom, show their concern for students' learning, and support the historical mission of higher education.

Instead, what I provide for my online students is typed comments on their Turnitin documents, both in-text specific comments and overall comments regarding their attendance to the prompt, their writing style and grammatical skill, and the MLA guidelines. These will be the very things they ask questions about later, and when they do, I will answer carefully via email or the Moodle message forum. I spend time on commenting and emailing because I know my students need the clarification and support. Both are important for the students' abilities to write and for their ability to pass my class, something I am overtly aware of given the number of them who are paying out of pocket and/or have limited financial aid that is predicated on earned grades. Unfortunately, even with sufficient comments (and, of course, that's debatable), the turnaround is short, and students don't get as much time to read and clarify comments as they need.

Students produce drafts of their assignment by Friday night. They post these to the LMS forum and provide and receive peer feedback via these weekly forums by that Sunday night. They also must turn in their essays on Sunday night. The peer reviews in this case are simply a checklist item, they are rarely useful even if they're thoughtful because of the miniscule turnaround time for revising and submitting. Likewise, once the students submit their essays on Sunday evening before midnight, I have to have them graded by Thursday at midnight. The next

essay is due that Sunday, giving the students two full days to read and digest my comments, ask for clarification, get it, and write their next essay (or their revision, depending on the week). Even for diligent students who write fairly well (and I definitely have those students) this timeframe is hectic. I try to grade as fast as I can and rotate who gets graded first each week to give students more time to read, clarify, revise and write, but it's a tricky balancing act. Larger class sizes can make it impossible.

In addition to my essay comments, students get bi-weekly click-and-go rubric grades on their forums. These criteria are focused on their ability to post on time and to respond to a specific number of people across a specific number of days. I give comments on the forum posts too, but they almost always pertain to the criteria met or not met rather than the content. Like the essays, which are 60% of the overall grade, students see the forums (20% of the grade) as products, not processes, as ends not means. Though forums are supposed to be conversations, and the essays are intended to be parts of a learning process, the reality is contrary to those understandings of writing and rhetoric. These courses are about rewarding the students who can produce enough content and a good enough product in the set timeframe to pass a course and move on. Such are the outcomes of a neoliberal postsecondary education and its commodification: teachers as ball-bearings and students as customers.

What can we do about it?

— Regaining Agency and Advocating for Authentic Student Learning

Our intent here is to be realistic about the current state of postsecondary online education and our roles in it as administrators, adjuncts, students and (we hope) future tenure-track professors. But, it is also our intent not to dwell in the negative. Below, we provide specific strategies we use and are currently implementing to try and negate the negative effects we've

outlined as they pertain to our own lived realities and the needs and realities of our students. Though "higher education is increasingly suffused with corporate involvement at every level" (Murphy 74), and we feel keenly our complicity in these systems, that doesn't mean we have to succumb to it. We can maintain personal agency, advocate for authentic, process-based student learning and keep our highly tenuous positions.

Scaffolding Strategies for Developmental Online Learners

- Increase the number of Announcements that students receive via email through the LMS system or the institution's email system. Use these to "teach" writing structures and to prompt students to review assignment comments, turn things in on time, provide peer feedback, and maintain contact. We use a Duke University paragraphing structure called [MEAL](#) to show students how body paragraphs within an argument can be structured and how to figure out what the Ms are from their thesis statements ("Paragraphing the MEAL Plan"). While a video would be ideal, just linking to the Duke page and explaining it textually does help some of our more structured learners, especially those who want to be math majors, statisticians and engineers and those who like the plug-and-play format.

    Tip: Set up these emails and reminders ahead of time; automate them. Then, reuse them when you reteach a course (or have multiple sections).

- Take twenty minutes and create an "About Your Instructor" video to humanize interactions with students you'll likely never meet. This video can be reused across courses and semesters/years and serves as a reminder to your students that you're a person too, with interests and a life. This is risky! We know that, and for some it is definitely not worth the risk. But, for students who don't fit the typical student

demographic, having (and seeing) a professor that looks like them is a form of activism and encouragement, and it breaks down barriers surrounding educational cultures, which bell hooks outlines in her book *Belonging: A Culture of Place*. Part of our role as educators is to create spaces for belonging.

- Utilize the website Remind.com to send your students texts and conduct phone-based office hours. This move encourages mentoring relationships and breaks down false power barriers between students and their instructors. It also provides an extra medium from which students can gain information if they don't access their course shell often, or have intermittent access to a computer.

- Develop weekly videos with corresponding transcripts that give an overview of each week and review the details of each assignment. Not only does this extra resource humanize the professor, it also provides scaffolding for developmental readers. Asynchronous, text-based courses privilege those who are comfortable reading complicated texts and directions, and weekly videos break down some of those instructional barriers.

- Provide step-by-step writing checklists that encourage students to engage in a writing process rather than writing a paper the night before a due date. While some of the assignment sheets at our case study site are structured this way, professors can provide further advocacy for students by deconstructing, and in some ways demystifying, the writing process for them.

- Supplement scripted discussion board questions with follow-up questions that don't deviate from the main prompt, but encourage a deeper thought process. This encourages

students to focus on the conversation within the forums, not just getting the right number

of posts.

As Daniel Saunders notes in "Neoliberal Ideology and Public Higher Education in the United

States," it isn't enough to just talk and write about the neoliberal structures of the higher

education system. We must also "be aware of and critically engage with the institutions,

practices, behaviors, and beliefs that together create and promulgate neoliberalism" (66). In this

essay, we have sought to illustrate how we have been confined by the neoliberal structures of the

university as contingent course designer and online adjunct faculty member. But, instead of

remaining complicit in our institutional roles, we increased our agency by engaging in some of

the practices mentioned above, and hopefully, advocated for a more authentic learning

environment for our developmental online writing students.

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Erica Stone is a doctoral candidate in the Technical Communication and Rhetoric program at
Texas Tech University. Erica works at the intersection of writing, teaching, and community

organizing, and her research centers on public engagement in writing classrooms as well as academics' role in their surrounding communities. Her most recent work on community writing has been published in *Community Literacy Journal.* As a researcher, Erica is passionate about making academic scholarship free and accessible. In her 2016 <u>TED talk</u>, she critiques the academic publishing industry, urging academics to engage with popular media and include communities in their research. Contact her at <u>erica@ericamstone.com</u>.

Sarah E. Austin is the Director of Student Affairs and Registrar at the United States Air Force Academy and Preparatory School where she also teaches writing. Sarah coedits the journal *Academic Labor Research and Artistry* and is the Book Review Editor for the *Journal of Veterans Studies*. She has published work in *Feminist Teacher, Kairos*, *Present Tense*, *Forum: Issues about Part-Time and Contingent Faculty* and in the collection *Rhetorics of Whiteness*. Sarah is currently a PhD candidate at Texas Tech University in the Technical Communication and Rhetoric Program. Contact her at <u>sarah.austin@usafa.edu</u>.