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Deborah Minter

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, dminter1@unl.edu

Amy M. Goodburn

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, agoodburn1@unl.edu

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A Critical Reading and Revision Strategy: Glossing Arguments As Cultural Work

Deborah Minter and Amy M. Goodburn

Recently compositionists have focused on how writing functions both rhetorically and culturally in the public sphere. Amy Lee (2000), for example, frames her booklength discussion of college composition in an understanding that “writing serves as the means by which we actively construct a self and a world that are, in turn, determined by the very language we have access to” (pp. 45-46; see also Berlin, 1996; Ervin, 1999; Wells, 1996). Such a view places pressure on writing teachers to develop generative activities that extend students’ existing capacities to summarize and analyze arguments. One activity that we’ve found useful is *glossing*. In this chapter, we focus on glossing as a means of helping students to engage more critically with the texts they read as well as the texts they write. In doing so, we are not claiming to have discovered glossing. Rather we share our adaptation of a strategy that previously has been extolled by compositionists such as Ann Berthoff (1982) and Donald Murray (2000). More specifically, we describe several different glossing activities through which, in our experience, students have discovered the power of this kind of critical engagement with writing.

Glossing Defined

Essentially, glossing focuses attention on a piece of writing in a way that supports students’ discovery and articulation of the logic and assumptions underpinning the organization of a text. Glossing asks students to work through a single paragraph or section of text at a time, noting not only what that paragraph or section says but also how it functions within the larger piece of writing. Although we use this activity in nearly all of our courses, adapting it to our specific pedagogical goals within various courses, as well as our students’ goals for reading and writing, in this chapter we focus on our use of glossing within an advanced composition course at our institution.

Glossing in Advanced Composition

In keeping with most of the composition courses at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Advanced Composition is a portfolio-based writing course emphasizing revision, response, and reflection. Teachers use common practices (such as response groups and multiple drafts), but there is no common text or syllabus. With a maximum class size of 24, Advanced Composition typically enrolls undergraduates who have taken at least two lower level writing courses. Although some students take this course to fulfill program requirements (e.g., Criminal Justice, Broadcast Journalism, and Communication Studies majors), most students take the course as an elective. Most sections are taught in computer-supported classrooms.

Glossing Goals

Many of our students enter this course with the goal of writing better academic arguments. As teachers in the course, our goals for one semester (spring 1999) included broadening students' definitions of argument and collectively examining the kinds of larger cultural work that argument performs in the public sphere. Our use of glossing in this course, then, had several goals beyond simply helping students to produce better texts. We hoped that it would do the following:

1. Sponsor students' development of new sets of questions and vocabularies for analyzing argument
2. Provide a common term for writers to use in reading and responding to peers' work
3. Become a metacognitive strategy for making visible how arguments perform cultural work. The examples we provide of our students' work from this particular semester illustrate how glossing worked in support of these ends.

The course description for Advanced Composition outlined several goals for the four formal writing projects in which students engaged. Specifically, we hoped to invite students into an exploration of "how writers . . . participate in larger contexts and how our personal perspectives and experiences can join, contribute to (and sometimes change) wider dialogues of public concern . . . helping us to be better readers and writers of argument broadly conceived." Project 1 asked students to explore an existing argument in the public sphere; project 2 involved examining how controversial topics are influenced by public discourse; project 3 asked students to examine their identities as socially and culturally framed by public arguments; and project 4 was a self-directed one about argument in the public sphere that drew on primary and secondary sources. Although we used many different forms of revision and response activities throughout the semester, glossing was the one activity that we used systematically and repeatedly as a thread to help students build connections both within and across this sequence of project assignments.

Glossing As an Interpretive Reading Practice

In the first week of classes, we introduced students to glossing as an interpretive strategy by engaging the class in a collective gloss of a short, recently published text (a "My Turn" column from *Newsweek*). In conjunction with this class analysis, we distributed the following handout, which gives a rationale for using glossing as a reading and revision strategy:

Glossing a text can help you read by "slowing down" your reading process and by providing opportunities to interact with the text. Unlike merely highlighting a text, glossing requires you to engage actively with what you're reading as you attempt to summarize and analyze the text. Beyond simply recording your responses to a text, glossing helps you to become more conscious of the strategies a writer is using within a text (strategies that you can try out in your own writing). Moreover, once you've finished reading and glossing a chapter or an essay, the glosses in the margins of the text are useful in helping you return to important passages at a later date (e.g., during a class discussion, when you are writing a response journal, when you are studying for a test).

Offering students a rationale like this and introducing the concept of glossing in a short, common text that can be glossed within a single class meeting engaged students very early in the semester with the experience of glossing as an interactive dialogue, represented in the margins of a text. Moreover, doing this work together allowed the class to develop a shared vocabulary for describing their reading processes. We then built on this collective work by having students work individually, glossing published texts that they chose in conjunction with their first writing projects.

For the first formal project within this particular class ("Analyzing How a Particular Argument Functions in the Public Realm"), students located an argument in the public realm that interested them and then glossed the argument paragraph by paragraph (or, in the case of longer arguments, section by section) both for what the paragraph said and how that paragraph functioned with respect to the whole text. Because the course focused on analyzing argument, we also provided questions to help students engage critically with the text. In addition to questions directing students to the usual rhetorical considerations of purpose, audience, style, and so forth, we provided questions that focused attention on the cultural contexts that seemed significant to the argument as it developed. Examples of questions are as follows:

1. What can we learn about this argument by examining the context in which it occurs?
2. Where and when was this argument made public?
3. How might this context influence what gets said (or goes unsaid)?
4. What knowledge is assumed?
5. What are some important features of the world this argument imagines, assumes, or hopes to create?

How Glossing Works for Students

In the example we offer below, one student, Rachel, chose to analyze an opinion piece from *Newsweek* on recent advances in genetic research (Begley, 1999). Faced with an analytical strategy that was new to her (glossing) and a writing assignment that was unlike other assignments she had encountered, Rachel struggled with the task of selecting an argument to analyze and did not have time to gloss the article before her first draft was due. Thus, Rachel's first draft (mis)characterized the purpose of Begley's article as taking a position on cloning, despite the article's subtitle ("recent advances in genetic research are changing the way we view ourselves") and the author's emphasis on genetic research including (but not limited to) cloning. Rachel described some rhetorical features of the article (such as Begley's use of common, everyday images that "all readers may have had some experience with"), but she did not view the article as making a more specific argument about how genetic research has become an interpretive frame for understanding the world.

Two concurrent experiences with glossing, however, prompted Rachel to see Begley's article as a commentary about the impact of advances in genetic research rather than simply a summary of research advances. In a conference with her teacher (Deborah), during which the two glossed Begley's article together, and through peer responses to her first draft, Rachel began to think differently about Begley's article. During the conference, Rachel and Deborah moved paragraph by paragraph, asking how each one functioned relative to the larger piece and the ideas that drove the piece as a whole. Rachel began to get a sense of some larger organizing idea (beyond simply reporting on genetic advances) about halfway through glossing the article. The conversation in which they engaged (drawn from Deborah's notes) is reproduced in Table 23-1.

Table 23-1. Sample Glossing

<p>(Paragraphs 5-7 from Begley)</p> <p>How can we think other than genetically when genetics proves its power—even its omniscience—again and again? It was another banner year for the explorers of the double helix. Nineteen ninety-eight saw suggestions that personality traits once deemed quirky, eccentric or charming are instead “shadow” forms of genetically based mental illness. It saw, too, the first claim that a gene for general intelligence had been discovered; no word on whether the College Board plans to license it. Scientists funded by private industry established, for the first</p>	<p>What do these paragraphs say? Rachel: That genetics proves its power ... and a list of examples ... of “successes” But are these successes, really?</p> <p>How do these paragraphs function? Rachel: It opens with a question. It lists of successes, though I'm not sure where the author stands. She seems sarcastic, like the reference to the College Board. I don't think that personality traits ought to become markers of mental illness. So does this list represent real successes or not?</p>
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cont.

time, a colony of cells derived from embryonic stem cells....

The year also saw the first replications of mammalian cloning. A year after Dolly the sheep, scientists repeated the feat with Hawaiian mice in July and with Japanese cows in December. And a week before the holiday that celebrates a virgin birth, researchers in South Korea announced steps toward only the second one in 2,000 years: they had begun to clone a woman. Taking one of her cells and slipping its DNA into one of her eggs, they got the beginnings of an embryo, they claimed..... Then, beset with ethics qualms, they stopped the experiment....

Thinking genetically convinces us that the genome—the complete, 80,000-or-so genes twisting around on the double helixes in our cells—is our deck of tarot cards, foretelling our personality and our health, how we will live and how we will die. What we become, what our children become, is less a product of the society we have built and of how we live our lives than it is the product of our genes. Could “The Nurture Assumption” by Judith Rich Harris, with its arguments that parents affect how their child turns out only through the DNA in the egg or sperm they contributed, have been such a phenomenon if we didn't think genetically? The genetic mind-set reached its apotheosis (so far) with the publication, last spring, of “Consilience,” the best seller in which Harvard University biologist E. O. Wilson argued that religion and moral values can be inferred from genetics. We are no longer free, moral agents, in Wilson's view. We are but automatons, acting out our genes' instructions to believe in God, to act altruistically, to seek justice. The concept of an inner person, an individual with (one risks sounding like a dinosaur by using the words) a soul and free will vanishes in the overpowering glare of the genome.

Deborah: So let's test your idea. Let's say you're right. Begley's being a little sarcastic. Look at the opening question again. If we hear about all this research as “successful” what happens?

Rachel: We think genetically—like she says.

Deborah: OK, but what does that really mean? Let's move on and see.

What does this paragraph say?

Rachel: It talks about genes and how they determine our personality, our health, how we live, how we die.

Deborah: Does this paragraph say that “science proves that genes determine” or does it say that “thinking genetically convinces us ...”? What's the difference between those two phrases?

Rachel: Well the last one... in a sense ... we tell ourselves that genes are the explanation for this stuff.

Deborah: Right! So, then,, how does this paragraph function?

Rachel: It provides examples of what it means to think genetically—just like how thinking genetically maybe keeps us from thinking about things like “soul” and “free will.”

Because Rachel's first reading of Begley's text failed to make distinctions between reporting on advances and speculating about the impact of those advances, she had difficulty articulating the difference between what Begley's text was saying and doing. In her conference with Deborah, Rachel began to see the difference between the reading she was developing and her initial sense that "the purpose of Begley's article is to tell the everyday reader about the advances in genetic science and to tell whether it is right or wrong to make genetic changes within an embryo." We offer Rachel's first experience with glossing as typical of why students need sustained and repeated exposure to the activity in order to discover its analytical power. Rachel gains a deeper understanding of Begley's article through glossing (and wrote, at the end of the semester, that this initial experience of glossing prompted her realization that "no writers write something just to write it"). A part of what happened during the conference (and what happens for students across repeated experiences with glossing during the semester) is that students are guided in what Rachel calls (again in her end of semester reflection) a "diving into" the text.

Glossing for Revision

After introducing glossing as an analytical tool for use with published texts, we have students gloss drafts in progress—both their own and their peers'. Table 23-2 provides an example of how we prepare students to do this type of work:

Table 23-2. Glossing

Goal:

This activity focuses on glossing, a revision activity that helps writers to read and analyze texts (their own or others') for development and organization. Glossing requires you to read carefully and to make a detailed summary of the important ideas you see. This process will help you to see the choices you make as a writer and/or will help you become more conscious of the rhetorical choices other writers have made.

Rationale:

Many writers find it difficult to analyze how ideas in their texts are connected and organized. Glossing helps writers to articulate the connections between ideas that are already implicit in their texts. Glossing also helps writers to outline ideas after they have generated material through invention activities. Oftentimes, writers who are told to outline their ideas before writing have difficulty when it comes to generating a text. Glossing helps writers to see that outlines can be used at all stages of the drafting process, not just in the beginning. Glossing is also useful in peer group response because writers can get a sense of how others read and understand the organization and development of their texts.

Steps for Glossing:

1. Read the text paragraph by paragraph. After each paragraph, ask two questions: What does this paragraph say (what's the gist or basic idea)? What does this paragraph do (how does it function)? Write your responses to these two questions in just a brief sentence or two (either in the margins or, if reading on screen, as an intertext between the paragraphs). Do this for all paragraphs in the text or, if it's a very long text, for just two or three pages.
2. Copy the sentences or phrases you've written on a new page (if you are working on a computer, make a page break at the end of the writer's file). The result is an outline of the entire text.
3. Looking at this outline, ask the following questions and make notes:
 - Do any of these paragraphs seem to belong together?
 - Do any of these paragraphs seem to be repeating the same idea? What idea?
 - Do any of these paragraphs seem to have more than one gist, and if yes, should each gist be given its own paragraph?
 - Is anything missing from this text, and where should the missing part go?
 - Is another order possible for this draft? What other possible directions can you imagine for this text?
 - How does this paragraph follow from the one before? How can these paragraphs be reworked, added to, or revised to make this connection clearer?
 - Are there places where the text isn't accomplishing what you had hoped (or, if you are not the writer, for what you expected as a reader)?
 - What does your outline reveal about the hierarchy of ideas in the text? About controlling metaphors or principal arguments?
4. Using this outline and the notes you've made as a guide, write a plan for how you or the original writer of the text might revise the text.

Like glossing published texts, glossing drafts in progress in order to revise (or help a peer revise) can initially be challenging for students. In Rachel's case, two classmates responded to her first draft during a 50-minute session. Peer responder 1 (PR1, in Table 23-3) used the above handout as a guide, whereas responder 2 (PR2, in Table 23-3) perhaps uncertain about or resistant to the assignment, chose to offer an unstructured response. We offer these examples because they illustrate the different forms of attention to drafts that glossing sponsors. We see important differences in the kinds of questions responders pose to the writer.

Table 23-3. First-Draft Gloss

<p>Rachel's First Draft</p> <p><u>Author's Note: This is the first draft of my paper. I am not really sure where I am going with this subject I'm not even sure I understand the assignment right. Please give me advice on how I might be able to present the subject more effectively and if what I have written even makes sense. I am worried that I have just rambled on with no direction.</u></p> <p>The chemistry that makes up the inside of a person changes drastically from person to person. Our genes are the building blocks that make us different from each other. So, if our genes make us individuals, how does it affect us if we change those genes? Are we any less special or maybe more? Are we our own person if we get a part of us genetically altered, even if it is in the womb? Imagine that you are a woman who is four weeks pregnant and after going in for your checkup, you discover that your baby has a disease that will handicap him for life. You have a chance to change this before he is born by surgically having his genes replaced by different ones. While they are in there you decide to have the doctors give him a gene so he will positively have blue eyes, instead of the brown gene he has. Is he the same baby as before, even if he doesn't have his original gene makeup? Is it moral and right for you to tamper with such a natural thing because you can? Some of these topics are being explored in an article in December's Newsweek called "Into the Gene Pool," by Sharon Begley. The purpose of Begley's article is to tell the everyday reader about the advances in genetic science and to tell whether it is right or wrong to make genetic changes within an embryo. With her information, Begley is trying to teach and inform us about what is happening in the science world around us. To bring the reader into her frame of mind Begley presents us with a situation that</p>	<p>Peers' Responses</p> <p>Responses from Peer Responder 1 (PR1) and Peer Responder 2 (PR2)</p> <p>PR1: Says: What genes are and what they do. Does: Makes people think about the genes inside us.</p> <p>PR2: Interesting questions!</p> <p>PR1: Says: What can happen when pregnant. Does: Puts a more personal aspect/ common appeal to moral questions. (Maybe let this extended example be its own paragraph? Maybe pull questions out as another separate paragraph?)</p> <p>PR2: You could start with this story. Draw in readers.</p> <p>PR1: Says: Who wrote the article, where it was pub'd. Does: Introduces readers to the argument being analyzed.</p> <p>PR1: Says: Tells the purpose of Begley's article. Analyzes aspects of Begley's article. Does: ??</p> <p>PR2: Are you quoting her here? Maybe you should put this in quotations?</p>
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<p>all readers may have had some experience with. Finding a spider in our cup (as she puts it) or a piece of hair in our food changes our view of that substance a great deal. We will no longer think that it is appetizing or that the place of the encounter is worth us coming back to because we will always have a tainted view of it. Begley uses the different way we look at the beverage or food, after discovering something new about it, the same as we look at our genes when scientists make a new breakthrough concerning genetic research.</p> <p>"Into the Gene Pool" is focused on an audience of virtually any person, except for maybe young children who don't understand what most of the content says. Genetic research and discoveries affects potential parents, scientists, and doctors and anyone with a genetic disease or the risk of cancer. Having the possibility to change something within you to make your life better or different is very auspicious to most people..</p>	<p>PR2: Careful not to simply regurgitate the article.</p> <p>PR1: Says: Tells who the audience is and who would be affected by the research Begley explores. Does: ??</p> <p>PR2: What was effective about her article/ argument? Also, I wonder about the use of words, here— your choice to use <i>fetus</i> (vs. <i>baby</i>) or <i>blue</i> eyes (vs. <i>brown</i> eyes).</p>
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Although PR2 most often provided suggestions that continually directed Rachel to refine the language in her first draft ("Start with this story"; "Do you need quotes here?"), the first PR1 noticed almost immediately that Rachel's first paragraph was unwieldy. More important, though, is the way that the glossing activity helped PR1 to make visible for the writer her struggle with the draft's organizing idea, leading the responder to end her response with question marks. At this point, she turned to Rachel and they began to talk about the draft, discussing Rachel's purposes for writing and focusing on her interest in the topic. As this complicated example suggests, glossing drafts in progress challenges students differently than glossing published texts (although, essentially, the activity is the same). These students' difficulties in articulating how Rachel's text was functioning were connected to Rachel's struggle to identify an organizing idea for her draft. These difficulties were productive, however, because they sponsored a more substantive discussion with Rachel about her larger purpose.

We find that as students gain experience with glossing, they become more adept at describing how sections of text are functioning within the larger whole and how to imagine from that information new lines of inquiry or possibilities for revision. Another example, this time from Amy's class, illustrates how gloss-

ing one's own writing sharpened a student's sense of her organizing idea. Katrin's glossing (Table 23-4) of her own draft (also developed for Writing Project 1) helped her to see that she was focusing too heavily on the arguments that a columnist in the campus newspaper was making rather than analyzing how the columnist's arguments were structured and functioning. She also learned that the current organization of her text buried her thesis on the second page. Katrin typed the gloss for each paragraph of her first draft during a 75-minute class period.

Table 23-4. Katrin's Gloss of Draft 1

Paragraph 1: In this section I focused on issues that actually should be brought up later in the paper. Terms such as *rhetoric* and *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* are some examples. The importance of these is great, but the need for my main thesis statement is more necessary. I also focused on the way that society views appeals and how they differ in reference to their individual selves.

Paragraph 2: The first thing I noticed is that this paragraph runs for two pages! I need to break down what it is that I am saying. The section introduces the reader to Todd Munson [the columnist whose editorial she is analyzing], the main character in my story. I added some quotes from the article he wrote that began to cause the stir about sarcasm and its "proper use!" Basically this part focuses on the way that Burr Hall reacted to the articles published and the reason, though difficult to find, as to why he wrote it.

Paragraph 3: This section probably could be shortened into smaller comments scattered throughout the paper. Mainly it is trying to show how the sarcastic approach appeals to the college student and why. I discussed the style and tone but needed to give more specific examples of how they are exemplified in the article and his text.

Paragraph 4: This section focuses on some terms that really need to be explained in more detail. For example, the authority that Todd expresses is important, but I only wrote of how he did or didn't have that authority instead of what examples in the texts prove that he does or doesn't have that authority. The section also showed how credibility fits in with the authority presented.

Paragraph 5: This concluding section mainly shows the relationship, in a broad manner, among the speaker, audience, and purpose of the text (rhetorical triangle). This needs to broaden out and include the other examples of terms that we discussed in class and their contexts in reference to the paper.

cont.

Overall Analysis:

I don't think that the introductory paragraph should lie where it is. This exercise showed me that the main purpose of my argument doesn't fall where it would be most effective. By waiting until the second page, I lose the reader and allow his mind to wander away from the point I am trying to make. The second and first paragraphs need to be somehow flipped, and by separating that second section into more detailed and specific paragraphs, I can make the point much clearer. Also, by adding my "new" thesis, with a little work I can restructure the whole paper by allowing it to focus more on the terms and how they relate instead of stories on Todd Munson. *He should list be used as the driving example and not the main focus of the argument.* The third section needs to be slimmed down to relate to specific terms and examples in Todd's text. The paragraph now seems to just provide semi-important information on why students like or don't like Todd's work. The fourth paragraph, while important, also needs to be redone. As stated in my gloss, these terms just need to be more clearly related to the argument I am making and not directly to Todd and his writing style. I actually like the basic order, excluding the first and second paragraphs, but just need to change a lot of the internal structure in the paragraphs. *Each is a little too focused on Munson and not on the real intent of the paper.*

Future Goals: This paper is supposed to analyze and argue a text in the public realm. I mainly focused on Todd Munson and his problems with using sarcasm. This example is a good one, but I believe that I should try and relate his example with more vocabulary within the text and its purpose. Although I bring up good points and words, I need to broaden my meaning and explain what it is that I am trying to accomplish, exactly. I think that with this revision, I should be able to restructure the argument and provide a better analysis of what the argument is and how it can be analyzed.

As her "Overall Analysis" suggests, Katrin's detailed attention to the structure of her draft led her to distinguish her argument from Munson's, making clear the distinction between what an argument says and how it functions. Thus, in the process of glossing her draft, Katrin (like Rachel) began to articulate more compellingly what was at stake in the argument at hand.

Katrin notes in her end-of-semester course narrative that glossing has been a valuable revision tool: "The glossing exercise was beneficial and is a practice that I had not employed very much in the past. I like it, and I think I just found out about a very valuable tool when revising a paper. It really points to problems not only in structure, but in the message of the paragraph itself."

Beyond helping individual writers focus on texts, we've found that the repeated use of glossing fosters a shared vocabulary within the classroom both for naming this kind of analysis and for guiding peer response to writing. As evi-

dence of this vocabulary, one student, Margaret, prefaced the goals of her third project by asking peers to gloss her draft with attention to organization and its rhetorical effect on the reader.

I haven't had enough time to give this paper as much attention as it needs. However, I think that I have a specific thesis to work with and a little organization so that, when glossed, this paper should represent my thoughts well. Therefore, I'm asking you to gloss my paper—looking at any part that needs to be moved around or ideas that need to be defined a little better. I would like any comments you have about the paper's effect on you. I am mainly trying to show that even though this is a great movie to see and deals with some very important issues, it does not do an adequate job of depicting the importance of "keeping a family together." There are a lot of holes in my argument and many issues that may need to be left out. If you find anything that fits into either of these two categories, please write me a little note on the side. Specifically, I know that there isn't a whole lot written about the individual relationships yet. I will be supporting these sections with examples mainly from the movie, but need to view it one more time. I know that there is no ending or conclusion yet. I plan to add more information about the way our society places so much pressure on mothers and now specifically fathers to be "super" parents.

This author's note shows that Margaret has clearly made glossing part of her writing process. She knows that some sections lack examples and that there is no formal conclusion or introduction. This note also suggests that she finds peers' glosses useful. Margaret asks readers to attend to her text rhetorically—noting the effect that particular moves have on the reader. Finally, when read as an artifact of a specific classroom culture, this author's note suggests that *glossing* is a shared term in the vocabulary of the class. Margaret assumes her peer responders know what glossing is and how to do it, and signals the value she finds in it.

Reflections

As we've suggested, glossing doesn't come easily for students. It is often difficult for students to "see" and articulate what a paragraph "does" relative to the text at hand. Although our students often come to the advanced composition course with strategies for summarizing or paraphrasing the content of a piece of writing, we find that they have much less experience with thinking about argument as influencing (and influenced by) larger cultural narratives within the public sphere. Although the activity of glossing is basically the same process each time, the language that students generate within their glosses is not easily transportable to subsequent writing projects. In Rachel's case, for instance, the language that she generated to name how paragraphs were functioning in Begley's text was not immediately applicable as she analyzed published arguments about the cost of higher education for her next project. Ultimately, though, we believe our students' hard work with glossing pays off in the form of the texts they pro-

duce, the questions they ask, and the responses they provide to peers' texts. Indeed, our students' course evaluations frequently cite glossing—and the larger goals of the class in terms of analyzing argument—as valuable to their writing processes. In responding to the question "What aspects of the course helped you to learn?" one student wrote, "It's hard to choose just a few, as they were all fairly helpful. I guess the four essays and their development (peer response, glossing exercises, and teacher response) were most helpful. The responses from various peers with different interests and strengths really broadens your awareness of your writing." Another student suggested that glossing helped him with "how to make a persuasive argument and how to find an argument being made within a text. I am a more thoughtful writer now—I look at the bigger picture of my writing." A third student wrote: "I've become more aware of implicit arguments in things, and how to evaluate them from a rhetorical standpoint."

For these reasons, we have come to rely on glossing in the writing courses we teach. Glossing creates opportunities for students to confront the underlying assumptions of the arguments they analyze, in part because it disrupts students' usual reading practices. The activity has proven useful to us in moving students beyond their initial understanding of arguments as vehicles for the transmission of information to understanding arguments as moments of cultural participation—places for taking up, contending with, or intervening in existing ways of describing or discussing issues of importance to particular communities. Ultimately, one of our goals for our own courses is that students come (or continue) to see their arguments in these terms—as opportunities for cultural participation—and we've found glossing successful in our efforts to support students' developing sense of themselves as active participants in the making and remaking of culture.

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