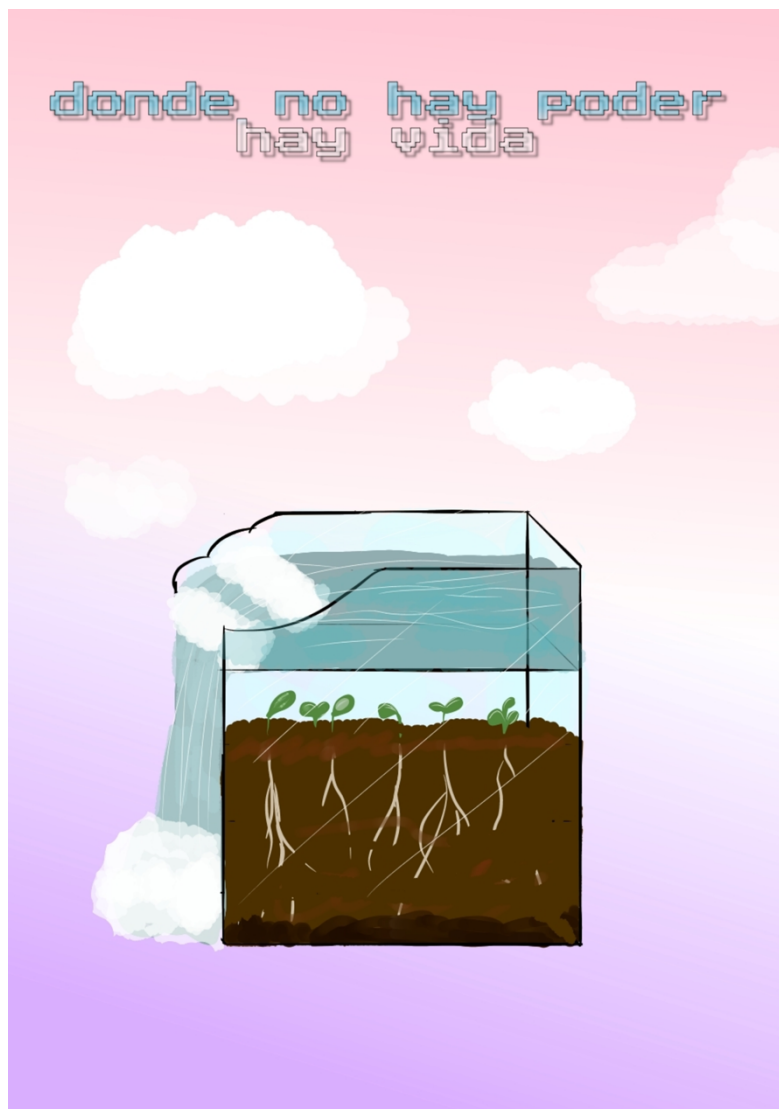


# RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

## Recurring Rhetorics and Cultivating Connections: The Transversals of Rhetoric, Sex, Freedom

by Wendy Hayden



"DONDE NO HAY PODER HAY VIDA" BY SARA HEBE VIA JUST SEEDS OPEN ACCESS GRAPHICS COLLECTION

In spring 2022, I was teaching a class on Rhetoric, Sex, Freedom when the Dobbs decision leaked, giving new urgency to our semester-long inquiry on the connections between the rhetoric of freedom and the curtailing of reproductive rights and imposing of censorship. I designed this elective English course in rhetoric, offered both undergraduate and graduate two different semesters, one semester online and one semester in person, to explore these connections and the recurring rhetorics in reproductive justice.

*Course description: Are trigger warnings censorship? Is a cake speech? How much is the rhetoric of freedom in the US connected to sex, gender, sexuality? These are a few of the questions this course will explore. This class begins as the Supreme Court will rule on abortion laws, a ruling expected to restrict women's rights to control their own bodies. Many of those opposed to abortion are also opposed to birth control. The Supreme Court has already ruled that companies can prevent their employees' health insurance from covering some birth control devices and medications. We are also at a time when books are being pulled from library bookshelves and school curricula, especially on LGBT issues. At this kairotic moment—a rhetorical concept about the timeliness or urgency of speech—we will be analyzing several other points in history where rhetoric, sex, and freedom have been intertwined in similar ways.*

We began with the most salient contemporary debate—reproductive rights—and traced how this same rhetoric connects to specific moments in the past, including the late nineteenth century when the Comstock law—recently invoked in the Supreme Court questions about mifepristone—limited writing about sex by making it a crime to send “obscenity” in the mail; the early twentieth century when advocacy for sex education and birth control tested the limits of both obscenity laws and feminism; and the 1970s when editors of feminist and LGBT+ periodicals and of *Our Bodies, Ourselves (OBOS)* emphasized personal experience and the value of marginalized voices in the fight for reproductive justice. The main methodology of the

course—digital archival research and exploration of primary texts—enabled us to examine how we understand sex through rhetoric, freedom through sex, and rhetoric through sex and freedom.

## Social Circulation and Archival Research

My design of the class mirrors my own research and applies current approaches and conversations in the field of rhetoric and composition, particularly two conversations: the circulation of rhetoric across time and space and archival research pedagogies. Since Royster and Kirsch examined *social circulation* as a method of feminist research in rhetoric, scholarship has moved beyond the recovery of marginalized individual rhetors to focus on the context and circles in which these individuals wrote or interacted. Using social circulation to understand rhetoric means analyzing how rhetoric travels, both within and across particular kairotic moments.

Circulation studies in rhetoric emphasizes writers and readers as part of networks and analyzes the spaces in which they interact, whether using a feminist-materialist approach (Hallenbeck) or an ecological framework that “recognizes publics as the result of the interactions between multiple texts and actors over time and that attends to the ways in which power relations alternately shape, constrain, and enable those texts and actors” (Gruwell). The editors of the recent volumes *Feminist Connections: Rhetoric and Activism Across Time, Space, and Place* and *Feminist Circulations: Rhetorical Explorations Across Space and Time* complicate temporal barriers in their approach to rhetorical historiography. The contributors to *Feminist Connections* theorize and employ a Rhetorical Transversal Methodology (RTM), in which transversals, or points of intersection, cross the sub-fields of feminist rhetorical studies, the methods of digital and historical research in rhetoric, and the topics, methods, and exigencies of feminist rhetoric within and across time periods, genres, and technologies (4). Meanwhile the contributors to *Feminist Circulations* concentrate on “tracking rhetorics that circulate and recirculate due to



exigencies and situations.” These volumes use a rhetorical framework that reveals both how rhetoric is tied to situation and context *and* how it moves or circulates beyond that situation and context. The study of what Logan calls recurrences of rhetoric appear in reproductive justice arguments, where recurring rhetorics respond to other recurring rhetorics, or to similar circumstances and constraints. Carmen Kynard, examining conservative rhetorics that reemerge regarding DEI and censorship, calls it a “rebooting” of past arguments. We see such recurrences and reboots of the rhetoric Comstock employed beginning in the 1870s to ban obscene material in the 2022 “Don’t Say Gay” law in Florida banning LGBT+ issues in education, for example. Using a framework of RTM and social circulation facilitates looking beyond apparent barriers, whether those barriers relate to our research methods and academic disciplines or to the rhetorical practices we study (Fredlund et al. 4). My methodology in my research project on rhetoric, sex, and freedom, for example, has allowed me to cross barriers of different points in time, and different debates or exigencies within those time periods. Teaching this course also created points of contact between my feminist historiography research and my pedagogical research.

Using archives to identify transversals was a natural fit, because of RTM’s similarity to archival research methodologies and pedagogies, which enable students to take active roles in the research of the field by handling archival documents; recovering forgotten rhetors or rhetorical practices that challenge the gendered nature of rhetorical traditions; recovering the history of their geographic communities, whether within their universities or beyond; reading the archives themselves as rhetorical; and creating archives themselves, often in partnerships with community organizations. The pedagogical uses of archives follow the same trajectory as the sub-field of feminist archival studies in rhetoric, illustrated by its edited collections, whose titles tell its story, starting with the need for archives to document the history of the field in *Local Histories: Reading the Archives of Composition* and *In the Archives of Composition: Writing and Rhetoric in High Schools and Normal Schools* (Donahue and Moon; Ostergaard and Wood), the establishment of field-specific archival research methods in *Beyond the Archives: Research as a Lived Process* and *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition* (Kirsh and Rohan; Ramsey et al.), the development of archival pedagogies in *Pedagogies of Public Memory: Teaching Writing and Rhetoric at Museums, Archives, and Memorials*, and *The Archive as Classroom: Pedagogical Approaches to the Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives*, as well as *Teaching through the Archives: Text, Collaboration, Activism* (Greer and Grobman; Comer et al.; Graban and Hayden), and finally an “unsettling” of these practices in *Provocations: Reconstructing the Archive* and *Unsettling Archival Research: Engaging Critical, Communal, and Digital Archives* (Berry et al.; Kirsch et al). Similarly, pedagogical uses of archives include assignments situated in both creating and questioning the history of our field (Beasley; Kirsch et al.), assignments that teach information literacy skills (Hayden; Gaillet and Eble) and the production of public memory (Enoch and Jack;

VanHaitsma), assignments that impart digital literacies (Rivard; Purdy; Comer et al.), and the development of what Enoch and VanHaitsma call archival literacy, which focuses less on using archives and more on analyzing their rhetorical characteristics. In all of these archival pedagogies, students confront the role of the archives in the dissemination and production of knowledge. Examining these issues, as well as the rhetorical characteristics of archives, leads to what Gesa Kirsch, Romeo Garcia, Caitlin Burns Allen, and Walker P. Smith propose as an ethos and praxis of bearing witness, recognizing that archives and the communities and institutions they belong to can uphold “epistemic racism, social injustices/inequalities/inequities, and settler colonialism” (1). Scholars in archival studies point out that archives “serve as tools for both oppression and liberation, ...in bringing about or impeding social justice, in understanding and coming to terms with past wrongs or permitting continued silences, or in empowering historically or contemporarily marginalized and displaced communities” (Caswell et al. 1). Though “the archive” is sometimes used as a metaphor in the humanities (Manoff 17-18), especially in scholarship on the archives and power structures, archival pedagogies in rhetoric and composition engage what Cvetkovich distinguishes as “actually existing archives” (268), both physical and digital. Archival pedagogies are thus another transversal crossing academic disciplines, as well as the theoretical or metaphorical archives and the “actually existing archives.” Archival pedagogies also transverse scholarship on feminist historiography and digital humanities (Enoch and Bessette), revealing that these two lines of inquiry in rhetorical study are no longer parallel.

*Prompt: We often don't think about the databases where we search for secondary sources and their selectivity. They contain journals and books that the library has purchased access to. We could think of databases as rhetorical in terms of what work is included—what was important enough for the library to purchase?—as well as their organization: how are they searchable? These questions are even more important when we look at digital archives. How is the digital archive organized? How does that organization tell a story? These questions show that it is not only the texts themselves but where the texts are stored that is rhetorical.*

*Pick out one rhetorical characteristic—structure, audience, date ranges, search functions, for example—to analyze one of the digital archives listed. How would that characteristic affect your research methods in or on that archive?*

## My archival pedagogy

I have explored the benefits of archival pedagogies, such as students learning information literacy, stepping out of their comfort zone as researchers, understanding the history of their institution, constructing alternative rhetorical traditions, and creating opportunities for genuine undergraduate research (see Hayden, “Gifts,” “The Archival Turn’s” and Graban and Hayden). This essay



applies RTM and social circulation to archival pedagogies to reveal the transversals of rhetoric, sex, and freedom and the angles, or perspectives, they create. In Geometry, transversals are lines that intersect or cross two or more lines that are usually parallel, but not always. My archival pedagogy aims to cultivate connections, analyzing the recurring rhetorics across time as either transversals, where the line crosses two parallel lines, or intersections where those lines are not parallel but converge.

Hunter College is a four-year public institution, part of the City University of New York. Our English department offers an undergraduate major with a concentration in linguistics and rhetoric as well as in literature, an MA in Literature, Language and Theory, and an MA in English Adolescent Education. Almost all of the undergraduate and graduate students who took my course had no background in rhetoric so it was their first exposure to both rhetorical study and archival research. I included readings on theory and methods for archival studies in rhetoric to contextualize our approach and show how archival research can be both daunting and rewarding for researchers at any level. I have assigned students to work in physical archives in other courses, and students find that the inability to do keyword searches and lack of detailed description of documents in finding aids can make research in physical archives more time-consuming but ultimately rewarding. The abundance of digital archives can make this type of research overwhelming, but more convenient, especially for the mostly commuter population at Hunter. Assigning archival research changes their understanding of what research is and can do, since primary documents they find and interpret as well as the research methods they use can offer a contribution to an academic field (see Hayden, "Gifts of the Archive"). In addition, being participants in the kairotic moment we were archiving reoriented students' relationship to their research.

For my courses, I define archives as physical or digital spaces preserving primary sources and ephemera. I also like Enoch and VanHaitsma's definition of the digital archive as "any digital resource that collects and makes accessible materials for the purposes of research, knowledge building, or memory making" (219). The web itself has been called "the most important archive ever created" (Miller and Bowdon 594), resulting in "archival abundance" (Enoch and Bessette 639). Digital archives may also become active writing spaces (Purdy; VanHaitsma). The contributors to the special issue of *Radical Teacher* in 2016 on archival pedagogies also defined archives as participatory spaces, with both archivists and users taking active roles in the shaping and understanding of archives, both actual and metaphoric (Dittmar and Entin 3-4). I made one goal or method of the class to construct a digital archive which was also a writing space for students to present their primary research from digital archives or contemporary examples. Creating their own archive of materials emphasizes how archives not only store but also produce knowledge.

I made the course archive private, for several reasons. I wanted to share some of my research from physical archives with students, but do not have permissions to display those sources publicly. I am also conscious of the ways that assigning students public writing can be problematic, as internet spaces are not the democratic platform some scholars envisioned (Gruwell). Finally, as participants in the current events we were archiving, students often related the material to their own lives. However, this choice to keep it private leads to the question of whether what we produced could be called an archive. Most definitions of archive include its use by future audiences and researchers. However, the class itself could be that future audience, even if that future is only two months, between when we study the nineteenth century and the twentieth century for example.

Viewing archival pedagogies as a transversal eliminates distinctions between researching in archives and creating archives as well between current and historical rhetorics. Linking social circulation and archival research pedagogies fits the definition offered by Tarez Graban, Alexis Ramsey-Tobienne, and Whitney Myers of “the archive as a critical rhetorical space that demands equally of its creators and users and a site for testing theories about how texts migrate among discourse communities and new practices come into being” (233). Students participated in the space of our archive as researchers, as archivists, and even as subjects.

## Transversal Pedagogy

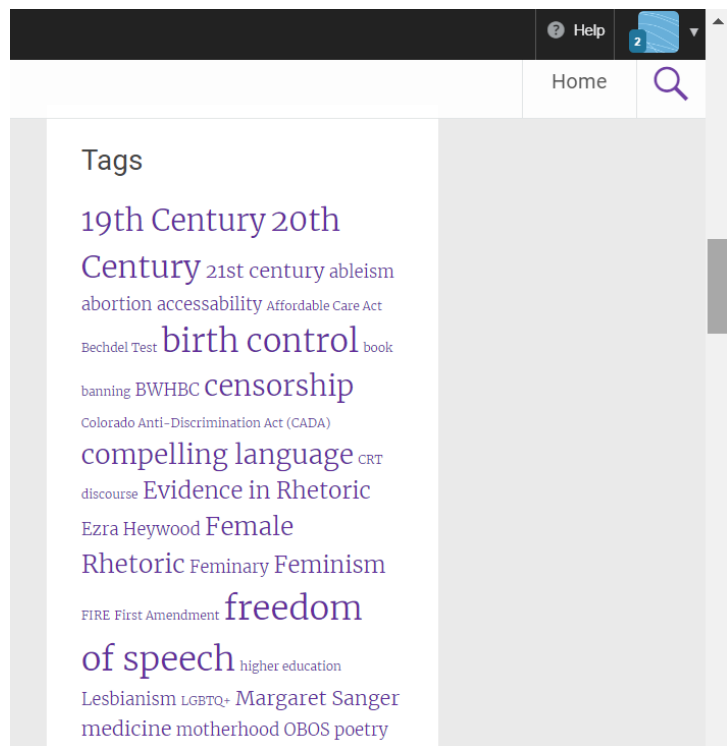
*Prompt: Primary Source Exploration posts should include:*

- *Full citation information for your artifact: Include links, the name of the text, and digital collection.*
- *Your methodology: Detail how and why you chose this artifact. What interests you about it? Did you start with a specific research question in mind? Browse until you found something you either liked or hated or responded to in some way?*
- *Description of text: Provide a short summary of the text, what arguments it makes, what you know about the author or context of the text.*
- *Ideas for further discussion: Write a set of discussion questions based on your reading of the text.*
- *Connection to previous post: Provide a sentence or two in your post that connects your artifact to the one in the post before it. The texts may be very different, so you can be creative in connecting them.*
- *Categorization: Include a category (which is the collection # or name), tags (as many as you like), and at least one image/video/media.*

I designed the course assignments to build on each other. Each week students completed a reading response on a secondary source or posted a primary source exploration (PSE) on our course website. The formal papers analyzed a single text or trend in the PSEs, framed by questions about rhetoric posed in reading responses on secondary sources. Near the end of the semester, students developed a digital presentation of trends in rhetoric and composition scholarship relevant to our inquiries and then wrote a short literature review based on those presentations. Their final paper incorporated that literature review as a starting point for their own analysis, which revised and expanded two papers or PSEs on texts from different historical moments.

The template prompt for PSEs incorporated ideas from feminist rhetorical study such as the attention to research methods and consideration of the researcher’s positionality in relation to the texts they study. The prompt cultivated connections by requiring that they relate their current post to the post before theirs.

We housed the PSEs on a course website. The design of the online platform used for an archive can encourage students to consider their documents from different angles and place them within different contexts by determining its organization and metadata, what archivists use to describe and categorize artifacts. In the first semester, I used Padlet, but found the scrolling to read posts excessive. I have used Wordpress for other courses and find it more dynamic, so the second semester, I used the CUNY Academic Commons, a Wordpress site licensed for CUNY. I designed the sites to be researchable. For the Padlet, I created columns for each time period. The Wordpress site proved more researchable, with categories for each primary source collection and tags which acted as metadata for the artifacts. For example, “birth control” or “obscenity” could be applied to posts from different points in time, fitting the methodology of the course. One semester, I had students practice doing a kind of literature review or synthesis based on a single tag, such as “obscenity.” The use of tags forecasted the final project to analyze texts from two different kairotic moments we had studied.



Each historical moment under consideration included two PSEs: one on a primary source from a collection curated by me and one from a digital archive, such as the [National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection](#) from the Library of Congress. Students could choose a single text or group of texts, an article, an issue of a periodical, or a periodical itself. For example, they could

post a specific article in [Lesbian Voices](#), a specific issue of *Lesbian Voices*, or the periodical *Lesbian Voices* as a whole. Or they could write about a single tweet under a hashtag like #MeToo, a group of tweets under the same hashtag, or the hashtag itself.

Some of the archives were born digital; others featured digitized facsimiles of physical archives. Students stated how they typically use a research method of entering keywords in a library database or Google to find precise secondary sources. They often encounter sources divorced from their context or even their publications, since a keyword search in a database brings us directly to an article. The archival literacy lessons illustrated the need to learn more about how a database or archive is organized and searchable. Both undergraduate and graduate students had to step outside their research comfort zone to work with archives.

*Discussion Prompt: In analyzing our work in digital archives, think about what was considered important enough to preserve. What was then important enough to digitize (from the physical library collection)? Who is included and who is excluded? What does that silence say about the archive?*

Some students remarked that reading theory of the archives, such as on queering the archives (Morris; Bessette), before their first exposure to digital archival research lessened their enthusiasm for the task. These readings taught them to think about archival absences and the choices behind those absences.

*Prompt: Morris and Bessette consider a queer approach to the archives, while Mattingly shows what happens when we broaden our definition of rhetorical activities. She also notes our tendency to research women and men whose ideas of feminism are similar to our own, which can lead to ignoring other feminist activists, such as temperance activists. In the documents you found, what definition of feminism or freedom might be applied? Does it match what we envision as "freedom." Whose voices are included? Are there queer voices for example? What is the connection or disconnection between the story the archive tells you about these documents and the story you want to tell about them?*

## Our Kairotic Archive

The artifacts we collected for the digital archive bearing the name of the course—Rhetoric, Sex, Freedom—were significant on their own but also gained significance when placed among other artifacts and their recurring exigencies. We began with two PSEs on twenty-first century primary sources, then traveled back in history, and ended by returning to contemporary sources.

From the nineteenth century I first provided primary sources such as speeches by free-love feminist Victoria Woodhull during the 1870s, columns written by Angela Heywood from *The Word: A Monthly Journal of Reform* in the 1870s to 1890s and treatises by her husband Ezra Heywood during the same time period about sexual

freedom for women and how the new obscenity laws restricted women from learning about their own bodies, and thus from controlling their own bodies. Students used digital archives such as the Gale Primary Resource Collections, nineteenth-century periodical collections, and the LOC collection to add works by suffragists, texts on women's virtue, advice to married women from both doctors and reformers, and arguments on motherhood, marriage, and birth control. Students were especially interested in my collection of Angela Heywood columns because of her insistence on plain and what some called "obscene" or "vulgar" language, some still considered obscene today. We contemplated how her language choices contributed to her exclusion from most women's histories. Certainly most suffragists were not writing the word "cock" or using the word "penis" to describe sexism, such as in her articles on "penis literature." Students were also interested in men's rhetoric on these topics, and included in our archive men writing both for and against suffrage or women's sexual freedom.

Next, we worked with the archives on Margaret Sanger available in [HathiTrust](#), which included speeches by Sanger such as "The Morality of Birth Control" and books and pamphlets such as *Woman and the New Race*, *What Every Girl Should Know*, and *What Every Mother Should Know*. The periodicals *The Birth Control Review* and *The Woman Rebel* also contained articles by doctors and letters from women discussing their pregnancies or need for birth control. We examined arguments about birth control framed in economics, women's health, and morality. We confronted the eugenic rhetoric of Sanger, and connected it to arguments by nineteenth-century feminists such as Woodhull. I shared a story about my own archival research and why I linked to Sanger's works through *HathiTrust*: A search for the *Birth Control Review* through our library once brought me to the full text of the journal on an anti-choice site (it no longer does). This story highlighted archival literacy, leading to analysis of how Sanger's rhetoric has been put to other uses in current discourse.

We then looked to the 1970s, using the open-access [Independent Voices Archive](#), which includes alternative periodicals from feminists, underground campus groups, and LGBT groups. I also provided links to the [Queer Zine Archive Project](#) and my own collection of articles from *Feminary*, a periodical published from 1969 to 1972 by a southern feminist lesbian collective. Students chose texts from periodicals such as *Come Out!*, *The Lavender Woman*, and *Gay Flames*. Since I shared my research on *Feminary*, some students used a geographic lens for their research, recovering queer and feminist voices in places they did not expect to find such a proliferation of texts, or zines from their own neighborhoods. They were particularly interested in the coming out stories shared in these texts.

For the second week of primary research from the 1970s, students chose either letters to the editors of *OBOS* from my research at the [Schlesinger Library](#) or editions of *OBOS* from the archives on [Our Bodies, Ourselves Today](#), which includes the first edition of *Women and Their Bodies* in 1970 and other editions until 2011, their [Archived Global](#)

Projects, such as a 2011 Arabic edition for an audience of Palestinian women, and editions from Germany, the Netherlands, Taiwan, and Thailand, among others. The website included full-text of some editions, excerpts from others, or even only the Table of Contents of an edition. Students wrote about the different translations or compared the inclusion or exclusion of a topic from different editions, such as on orgasm or pregnancy. These primary sources demonstrated the circulation of information and texts for different audiences.

We began and ended our archive with texts from our current kairotic moment. For the first PSE, I started by offering texts such as videos of Wendy Davis's filibuster, Sandra Fluke's testimony, or Paxton Smith's valedictory address, statements by Nancy Pelosi and Kamala Harris after the Dobbs ruling, as well as the Dobbs ruling itself, which we read as a class. I also included Supreme Court decisions on reproductive rights including Hobby Lobby and Dobbs; LGBT+ discrimination cases such as the Masterpiece Cakeshop v Colorado Civil Rights Commission and the 303 Creative LLC et al. v Elenis et al.; and a stalking versus freedom of speech case of Counterman v Colorado, which decided what constitutes a "true threat" when a man sent a woman hundreds of threatening social media messages. Finally, I included the so-called "Stop Woke" and "Don't Say Gay" acts from Florida and the American Library Association's report on banned and challenged books. These primary sources revealed similar rhetoric that determined which "freedoms" are protected and which are not. In their second and final PSE posts, students added the judge's statement in the Brock Turner sexual assault case, speeches by Congresswomen Elizabeth Warren, Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, and Cori Bush on abortion bans and the defunding of Planned Parenthood, tweets from celebrities such as Alyssa Milano, Evan Rachel Wood, and Taylor Swift on sexual assault, videos of Viola Davis's women's march speech, and social media posts sharing abortion stories. The first two PSEs on contemporary primary sources in the beginning of the semester were used as a lens to understand the rhetorics we encountered in the past, whereas the final PSEs, also on contemporary sources, made connections across texts and time periods with the purpose of understanding the rhetoric of our current kairotic moment through the lens of past texts.

## Cultivated Connections

*Final paper prompt: This paper will integrate your work this semester in rhetorical analysis, primary research, research methodologies, secondary source research, review of a conversation in the field, connections between different time periods, and rhetorical theory in order to examine the rhetoric of sex, reproductive rights, and freedoms. You will choose primary texts from two different time periods and expand your work on those texts. You could look at paper topic 1 and 2 for example, or PSE 2 and 5, or paper 1 and PSE 6...you get the idea. You should be extending and revising your work rather than developing a whole new topic, though of course you can use a new approach to your topic*

*and should have new insight, especially as you look at two time periods.*

*You should focus your topic around a question about rhetorical practices and situate it within a current conversation in the field of rhetoric and composition, identified in your literature review. For example, you might explore the role of storytelling in chapters on abortion in Our Bodies, Ourselves or hashtag #YouKnowMe, or how rhetors fought censorship of speech about sex in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century through analysis of Heywood and Sanger, or how censorship of LGBT texts was justified in the 1970s and today.*

Our Rhetoric, Sex, Freedom archive gave insight into how rhetoric responded to constraints on sexuality for separate kairotic moments, how rhetoric and rhetorical tactics cross textual and temporal boundaries, and how we could understand our current rhetorical situation through texts from the past. Our inquiries highlighted intersectional analysis of race, class, religion, and geography. Topics we kept returning to included the role of values and religion, silence and censorship, and logic versus emotion in sexual rhetoric. The final paper asked students to perform analysis of primary texts from two different historical eras, drawing on topics or questions that emerged in the primary or secondary source posts. The tags as metadata on the Wordpress site facilitated connections between texts, spaces, and time periods, and I found the papers much more successful because of this functionality.

Jonathan Alexander's explanation of "What's Sexual about Rhetoric, What's Rhetorical about Sex?" promotes "understanding of the ways in which sexuality is constructed in language and the ways in which our language and meaning-making systems are always already sexualized" (Alexander 18; Alexander and Rhodes 6). The same is true about the third transversal of freedom. It is also "always already sexualized." For example, we analyzed appeals to "freedom" and personal choice when banning books. We traced how a rhetoric of responsibility travels: nineteenth-century feminists and Sanger used a rhetoric of responsibility to urge people to use birth control but so do birth control opponents in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. We saw how the rhetoric of virtue and innocence was once used to support arguments for more sex education whereas now it is used to limit such education. We observed the root of current rhetoric limiting reproductive rights in feminist arguments from the nineteenth and early twentieth-century, whether because these women were more conservative in upholding gender roles or systemic racism in their rhetoric or because conservative rhetors have always found ways to flip liberal arguments to serve their own agendas. For example, we noted rhetoric to oppose reproductive rights was framed as helping women, a trend that continues in anti-trans rhetoric and fearmongering. We bore witness to rhetoric upholding racist structures as in the problematic and often horrifying eugenic rhetoric of Margaret Sanger and its outcomes of birth control and sex education.

*Prompt: In this week's discussion, we will more closely examine the rhetoric of freedom. How is the rhetoric of freedom employed for anti-choice and anti-trans arguments? In arguments about reproductive justice, which freedoms are more important? Is there a hierarchy of freedoms?*

The rhetorics circulating in our archive allowed us to apply our findings to current issues. We connected how nineteenth-century rhetors challenged or circumvented obscenity laws in their rhetoric, tracing the choice of ambiguous language or "plain speech," and how rhetors who made that choice risked imprisonment, either to make a point about the laws or out of a genuine desire to spread knowledge. One letter to the editors of *OBOS* on the abortion of a pregnancy the author wanted echoes the horror stories we've seen in the news often since Dobbs. We were also conscious of RTM's overuse, risking erasure of differences or diminishing the impact of specific events texts responded to. In this way, the application of transversals follows the application of intersectionality.

Students related their findings to their personal lives. They shared what sex education they had experienced and situated it in the history of the battles to provide sex education. They shared their own stories of experiences with doctors which they compared to the stories told to and by *OBOS* editors. One semester it seemed that every woman in the class had a story where she was misdiagnosed, condescended to, ignored, or even physically harmed by medical professionals, and every man had an example from the women in their lives. They related their own coming out stories or experiences in childbirth. I did not require them to make such personal identifications with their own lives. Rather I encouraged them to evaluate the relevance of their historical artifacts to rhetoric they encounter every day. However, the material, such as the personal stories in the texts of the 1970s, prompted students to share their own experiences and recognize in them methods of transversality.

## Archival Abundance

Success of the project came with students' enthusiasm and understanding of primary source research and the connections they made to contemporary discourses or with their own lives. Challenges came from archival abundance and from the definitions of primary sources in rhetorical study, particularly when applied to our own kairotic moment. For the archives of our current moment, anything could be a primary source if used to document firsthand accounts of reactions to Dobbs, for example. While I gave students the freedom to define what counts as a contemporary primary source, I also provided models such as speeches, Supreme Court decisions, or the laws passed in Florida and the reactions to them. If, as Miller and Bowdon explain, the Internet is an archive, then archival abundance takes on a new meaning. We thus defined primary sources as firsthand sources for us to analyze rather than firsthand sources that provide analysis, though a rhetorical focus also complicates that distinction.

In earlier posts, students attempted very specific research questions or keyword searches when researching in archives. They had to broaden their approaches, but then narrowed them again to look at similar texts across time periods. Since they quickly learned how archival research was more about browsing than searching, they were more comfortable with smaller collections, such as the *OBOS* texts, but empowered by recovering sources from a larger archive, such as the Library of Congress or Gale selections. They learned and enacted the power and responsibility of the archivist to determine what is remembered through their choices of texts and examination of archival absences. In response to the methodology prompts, students focused more on why the source interested them than on their process finding the source, a methodology that emphasizes reactions to texts, which fits what Kirsch and Rohan call "research as a lived process." Having a shared goal and shared challenges as archivists also contributed to a sense of community in the class, regardless of gender or political viewpoint. Sharing their research online helped provide community for an online class.

Digital archives as texts promoted critical research and digital and archival literacies. However, there was confusion for some students caused starting by beginning with students collecting primary texts from contemporary sources. This structure led them to employ the same methodology for historical sources, even when I provided links to specific collections of primary sources, such as Google searches that produced secondary rather than primary historical sources. I learned to focus more on defining primary versus secondary sources for different purposes and will include more archival literacy lessons that contextualize locations of online sources.

Few students were taking the class for the rhetoric and linguistics focus, and those who were introduced to this area of study found both the historical and rhetorical approaches valuable lenses. They pointed to the value of considering whose voices are included and whose are excluded in an area of study. Starting with the contemporary, then going back to points in history, then ending with a reorienting of their original focus is an approach they can take with them beyond courses that require archival research. I take a similar approach to teaching research in composition and literature courses, showing how rhetorical study can be a useful lens for analyzing literature whether students consider the impact of kairotic moments or reorient their positions in research and analysis. The transtemporal approach is especially important to show the recurring rhetorics in reproductive justice.

I applied similar methods in my first-year writing course, (FYC), where none of the students were English majors, by assigning some of the same primary and secondary research to fit my FYC theme of freedom of speech. When not using a curated archive, I assign students to collect primary sources to analyze, such as free speech policies at universities or on social media platforms. Students at all levels are both empowered and challenged by exploring primary sources to draw their own conclusions and connections rather than relying only on



secondary source support. I think bringing more of the work of RTM and digital archival research into first-year writing will encourage the multiple literacies of academic writing. I plan to use the same CUNY Commons site in future classes, where students can compare and connect their research on reproductive justice with previous students' efforts, hopefully responding to a different kairotic moment with more positive recurrences, reboots, and transversals to address.

## Conclusion

Our archive prompted transtemporal connections but also provided insight into archiving itself. These insights match Judith Halberstam's definition:

The notion of an archive has to extend beyond the image of a place to collect material or hold documents, and it has to become a floating signifier for the kind of lives implied by the paper remnants of shows, clubs, events, and meetings. The archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory, and a complex record of queer activity. (169-170)

Cvetkovich shows the emotional significance of such archives which "represent far more than the literal value of the objects themselves" and "challenge traditional conceptions of history and understand the quest for history as a psychic need rather than a science" (268). Cvetkovich's and Halberstam's archival theories fit the emphasis in the fields of rhetoric and composition and critical archival studies on archival research both recovering a past and preserving a future. These insights on archives mirror our course content, eliminating temporal boundaries and defining archival research as a purpose, an idea, a metaphor, and a process. Our transversal and transtemporal approach explained texts "not as isolated rhetorical moments but as representative rhetorical resistance to networks of power that enable and constrain feminist action" (Blair 247), which fits the practice of bearing witness theorized by Kirsch, Garcia, Allen, and Smith. The result was a participatory archive, rather than a collection of texts.

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