

First-Generation & Working Class Students in the English Classroom



Faculty Communities for Inclusive Teaching, 2018

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Project Overview

Comprised of graduate students and faculty from **English** and **Sweetland**, this FCIT aimed to:

- Identify general barriers, challenges, and needs of FGWC students, and the impact of this on classroom dynamics.
- Identify opportunities and strategies for creating a stronger sense of voice and membership in the classroom and the university community.

Participants

Our FCIT met during Winter and Fall 2018 to discuss a set of shared readings. Participants included:

- Annette Beauchamp
- George Bornstein
- Jeremiah Chamberlin
- Louis Ciciarelli
- Stacy Coyle
- Joey Gamble
- Bryan Kim-Butler
- Aida Levy-Hussen
- Alisse Portnoy
- Lindsey Wedow
- E.J. Westlake
- Melanie Yergeau

Key Insights / New Questions

Identifying FGWC Students and Their Needs

- FGWC students have distinctive factors that influence and shape their lives.
- FGWC students face numerous barriers to their success, including lack of economic and social capital.

Identifying Best Practices for Composition and Literature Pedagogy

- Writing classes present unique opportunities for addressing the needs of FGWC students, including more reflective teaching practices.
- Writing and literature classes, indeed any class, would benefit from more pragmatic approaches to addressing class.
- A multiliteracy pedagogy can benefit students from a variety of backgrounds.
- Examining texts by and about people who identify as working class can provide more opportunities to discuss social class and FGWC strengths.

Improving Campus Climate

- Transforming campus climate is not merely the work of gateway classes such as first-year writing; FGWC students have better experiences when campus offices coordinate and create FGWC-welcoming spaces.

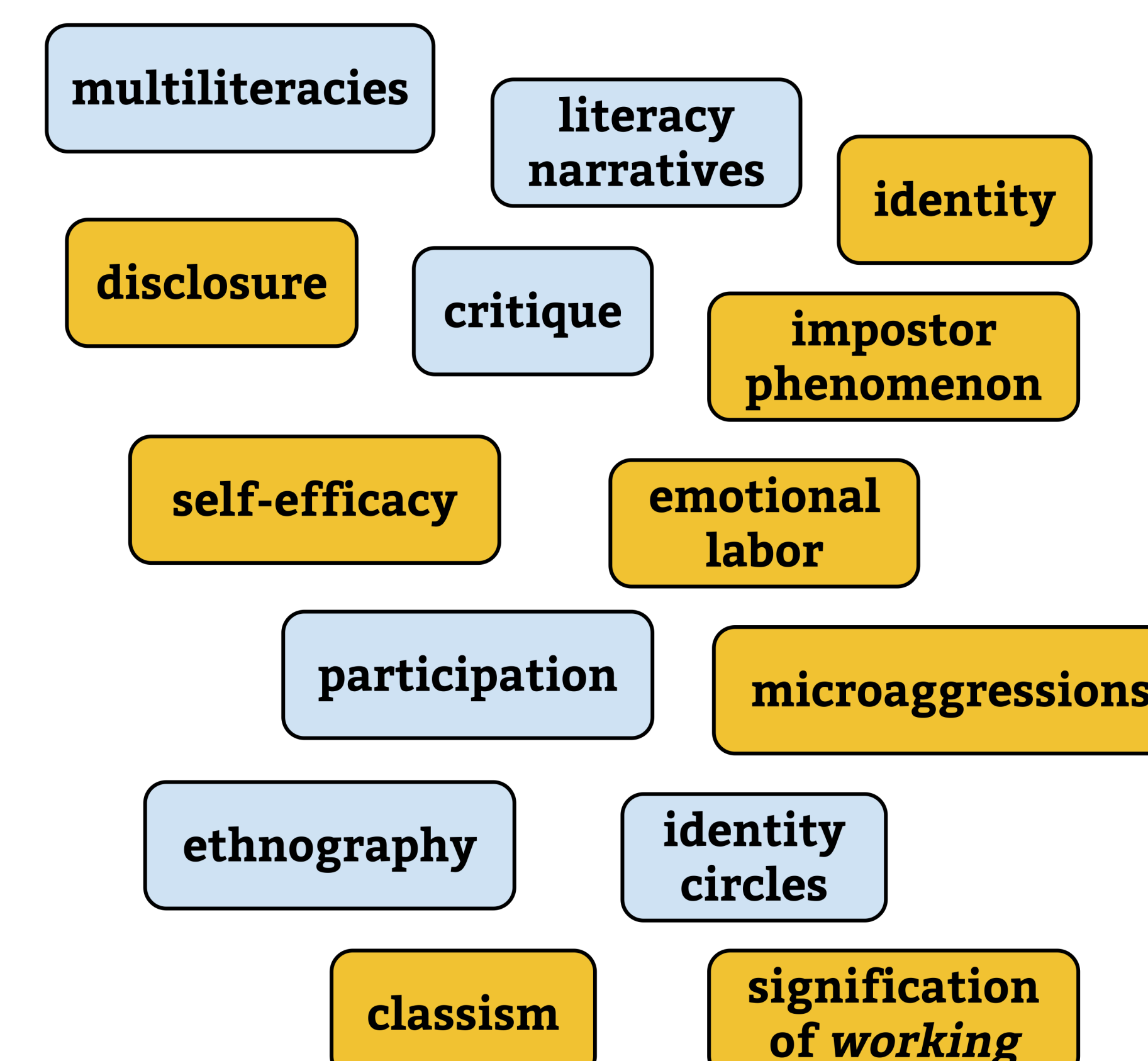
Remaining Challenges and Questions

- How ready are students to discuss class in the college classroom?
- How might we best enable students to understand the complex formations of class identity in relation to race, sexuality, nation, and disability?
- How can we best support FGWC students and do so in ways that do not reinforce a deficit model?
- How might faculty from non-FGWC backgrounds enter these conversations and best support their students across class backgrounds?

Resources

- Carter & Thelin, eds. *Class in the Composition Classroom*.
- Housel & Harvey, eds. *The Invisibility Factor: Administrators and Faculty Reach Out to First-Generation College Students*.

Concepts



Next Steps

- Develop a cross-departmental resource sharing site for sample assignments, course texts, and other pedagogical artifacts.
- Lead a departmental forum and/or provide a written report on strategies and best practices for FGWC issues in the classroom.
- Invite a guest speaker (an author from one of our shared readings) to deliver a lecture.
- Connect with First-Gen student group on campus.