

## Complex Commonplaces and Bodily Composition: Martial Arts Approaches to Pedagogical Problems

This panel features scholar-teachers of rhetoric and composition who turn to their own practices of martial arts to address, question, and challenge fundamental commonplaces in the teaching of writing. By turning to bodily-material models from outside the discipline, the panel hopes to provide useful and interesting strategies to grapple with complex pedagogical problems. While the connection between martial arts and writing studies might seem strange, the connection between them as forms of training can be traced back to the ancient Greeks (Hawhee 2004) and more recently, the application of East Asian martial arts practices to writing pedagogy has produced potent evidence of its efficacy (Kroll 2013). This panel offers a range of practitioners from a variety of backgrounds, each grappling with a particular challenge: the tension between participants in collaborative writing, the problem of language difference and communicability, and the centrality of commonplaces within both bodily and writing education.

### For the Love of the Job: Necessary Vulnerability in Collaborative Writing and Sparring

In “Writing in the English Classroom: Professional Collaborative Writing,” Leah Zuidema and Jonathan Bush discuss how collaborative writing can become one homogenous voice. While this pedagogical approach to professional writing has its benefits, it doesn’t promote or even encourage an intimate connection between the co-authors. Becoming this in tune with other writers is not a process for the faint of heart. It takes a certain amount of vulnerability and intimacy to accomplish this feat, as well as keeping in mind diverse audiences’ and individuals’ own differences. Brene Brown takes a cultural approach to introducing the importance of radical vulnerability in writing: in order to connect to your audience, you have to allow them to truly see you. While it brings anxiety, fear, pain, and shame, this necessary vulnerability also brings forth joy, love and understanding of oneself and others.

Speaker 1 proposes this same vulnerability can be applied outside of the classroom. In the boxing community, sparring offers a similar feeling of intimacy between sparring partners, as much as students inside the classroom open themselves up to their peers in ways others may never understand. In the limited amount of time, the sparring round, a boxer must learn to understand their partner through body movements, eye contact, breathing, and yes getting hit really, really hard. Here is is the fear of pain, literally and metaphorically; the individual has a fraction of a second to act. They can take that hit, face the fear, and grow, or they can freeze up and lose that connection with their peers, prohibiting them from moving forward intellectually and emotionally; writing too is both intellectual and emotional. A certain amount of trust goes with writing with others and sparring with others. Whether it is through writing collaboratively with peers or sparring, if they’re even different things, there is a connection between individuals that goes beyond spoken language and can be expressed through writing or the body, or perhaps both?

## Kicking in Carnal Commonplaces: Embodied *Topoi* in Tae Kwon Do Practice

Rhetorical scholarship has long debated the meaning and application of Aristotle's *topoi*, often translated roughly as topics or commonplaces for argument (Dyck 2002). Cintron (2010) complicates this understanding, however, by suggesting that *topoi* operate as "storehouses of social energy" and are not just categories of argument ready at hand, but that they suggest something about how a society conceives of being and acting in the world. What might it look like, then, to fully embody these kinds of arguments and the socio-cultural "energy" that goes along with them?

Hawhee (2004) starts to investigate this notion in her discussion of Ancient Greek athletic culture and the embodied rhetorics therein. Speaker 2 will extend her argument by looking at other physical cultures, those grounded in East Asian martial arts practices, to investigate the ways these practices cultivate different rhetorical bodies.

Speaker 2 focuses primarily on the rhetorical traditions extending from Confucianism (Lu 1998) as well as Daoism (Lu 1998, Combs 2006) that have become integral to the understanding of East Asian martial arts traditions like Tae Kwon Do. They provide an overview of how these rhetorical traditions are preserved in training manuals as well as how the common place arguments from these traditions are taught to be embodied through martial practices like forms training, known as *pumsae* in Tae Kwon Do.

Speaker 2 concludes by suggesting ways this process of uptake can be imported into the writing classroom. Their theory of embodied *topoi* can encourage instructors to be more conscientious of physical pedagogy as well better elucidate the intersection of individual classroom habits, student learning outcomes, and course /programmatic goals for students.

## When Wood Beats Steel: Okinawan Kobudo as a Model of Writing Pedagogy

For many outside the discipline of writing studies, and especially outside academia, a major element of writing instruction is "correct grammar." However, within composition studies, we occupy a tension between investments in students' language and social justice, and the expectations outside composition for students to write correctly for future professors, employers, and clients. As Asao B. Inoue's 2019 CCCC Chair's address argued, both obeisance to this seemingly "natural" standard and treating it as necessary evil of writing are both ways of maintaining white language supremacy, a claim that evoked a wide range of responses across the field and beyond.

One response is that even though scholars and teachers may reject the notion of correctness as obvious, natural, and neutral as furthering white language supremacy, not only does some written language not work for/on some audiences, but some language choices don't work at all. To explore these limitations, Speaker 3 explores the complicated relationship between written and spoken language. Unlike spoken language, which benefits from the fluidity of its (im)materiality, training

students in written language and how to match it to the audience, purpose, and context, requires training students in the use of a tool, a thing very much like the “language” they acquired from their family and peer, but one very different as well.

To develop this model, Speaker 3 turns to a non-Western model in the art of kobudo and the tool-become-weapon *tonfa* as a way to conceive of the unique, but not relative, forms individual writing takes, coining the term *idiographolect*. These differences and the central challenge of effective writing requires a training approach, not so that students might become like the elites whose language exemplifies and creates correctness, but so that they might gain facility with the inter-subjective technology of writing. Put differently, students might become like the Okinawan farmers who defended their lands and crops from roving swordsman, armed with nothing but their tools. While the ecology of white language supremacy must be altered and dismantled to achieve landmarks of social justice, allowing for a more just pedagogy is a first step in a radical series of fundamental changes to the ways writing and language is performed, evaluated, and taught.