

Intersecting Ways: Introduction

My research interests are rooted in two topics that have garnered significant critical attention in the past decade: embodiment and non-Western rhetorics. What excites me about this scholarship the most, however, is the way they coalesce in the interdisciplinary field of martial arts studies. Not only do these research avenues represent thrilling opportunities for cross-cultural and international collaboration, they offer ample opportunities for publication. Specifically, scholarly audiences interested in teaching technical and professional communication will find my exploration of bodily learning habits and critically reflexive classroom design practices useful pedagogically. Audiences interested in contemporary rhetorical theory and the performance of non-western rhetorics may be more drawn to my elaboration of how martial arts operate as rhetorical institutions with political or ideological aims embedded in physical training practices

Embodiment

The moment I read Debra Hahwee's *Bodily Arts* (2004) was when I started to find my own way as a scholar of rhetoric. Finally, concepts that I understood intuitively, that rhetoric, past or present, can never be fully understood strictly through discourse, was spelled out in plain text. From that point on, I began to focus my attention more critically on the rhetorical body, specifically the "docile" bodies Foucault describes, and the way such bodies can transform. While they are volumes of research describing how different bodies are (mis)understood, marginalized, or disciplined, I find myself drawn more to studies of individuals using physical training to improve their rhetorical efficacy and/or inter/intrapersonal skills. At the 2019 Association of Teachers of Technical Writing (ATTW) Conference, I discussed how programmatic materials like lesson plan templates or assignment descriptions attuned to the physical reality of teaching can help train instructors to develop effective pedagogical habit-practices. I plan to continue pursuing this research for publication in *Technical Communication Quarterly* or *Innovative Higher Education*, specifically to aid in the professional development of contingent faculty teaching service courses in technical communication, often those with the least time to devote to such training.

Non-Western Rhetorics

While learning more about rhetorical embodiment was an important first step in carving out my niche as a researcher, what was more important to my development was when I realized that so much of the scholarship in our field is heavily skewed toward the Greco-Roman tradition. Lipson and Binkley's (2004, 2009) edited collections opened my eyes to new worlds of rhetorical theory extending from different cultures, and Xing Lu's (1998) monograph made me ask the question that led to my dissertation work--if ancient Greek rhetoric can be understood as embodied and physically trained, why can't ancient Chinese rhetoric? Specifically, my dissertation focuses on how Daoist rhetorical commonplaces are represented in martial arts technical manuals and then embodied through Tae Kwon Do practice. This research has implications for the field of Technical and Professional Communication by uncovering new ways to think about instruction

sets and embodied experience, both in workplace contexts and in distance-learning for higher education. For example, martial arts manuals routinely describe ineffable concepts like *wuwei*, or “non-action,” by showing ways they are made corporeal in practice. These techniques provide analogues for how technical communicators might write innovative instruction sets to help students better understand the ways their own learned skills (collaboration, adaptability, invention) are made manifest and how they can transfer to other tasks. Currently I have a manuscript in progress for *Rhetoric Review* which describes the concept I call *embodied topoi*, the physical uptake of rhetorical concepts occurring in martial arts training, and how this process can help educators think differently about knowledge transference.

Martial Arts Studies

I find it difficult to parse out my research interests into tidy compartments, in some ways, because of how at home I feel in the international community of Martial Arts Studies scholars. I was lucky enough to be able to present research on Tae Kwon Do as a political institution at the 5th Annual Martial Arts Studies conference, the first to be held in North America. It was here that I felt like I finally *fit*, without restriction, and I aim to continue forging relationships with these researchers to develop large-scale, collaborative studies of the connections between martial arts and rhetorics of violence. I currently have a manuscript in progress for the *Martial Arts Studies Journal* detailing the ways in which a martial art like Tae Kwon Do operates as a type of Foucauldian institution, one that disciplines practitioners on an ideological level. My future research will continue to develop from an understanding of martial arts as rhetorical institutions, ones that produce any number of technical documents to achieve their ideological goals, but I hope to broaden my scope by theorizing the “martial” and the “violent” as distinctly different commonplaces from which arguments can be made. The purpose of this research is to develop a better understanding of the moments when rhetorical violence transitions to physical violence and how to help prevent it. I plan to pursue this topic as a book length study as it seems to be currently understudied in our field.

Researching Transformation: Conclusion

The throughline in my research interests is a firm belief that people can transform. My research investigates the way such metamorphoses begin on a bodily level and extend to the mental, rhetorical, and inter/intrapersonal. I’m interested in how this kind of rhetorical shapeshifting impacts pedagogical practice (especially pertaining to contingent faculty), as well as how martial institutions shape practitioners toward political ideologies. Currently I am working to publish articles detailing embodied non-western rhetorical commonplaces in *Rhetoric Review*, pedagogical uses of critically reflexive tasks in writing courses in *Technical Communication Quarterly*, and the turn from “martial” to “violent” rhetoric in the *Martial Arts Studies Journal*.

My pursuance of this research agenda is a way to not only offer diverse perspectives to scholars of rhetoric, but a way to invite researchers from a variety of academic backgrounds to cooperate toward a renewed sense of the ways our disciplines can learn from one another--and the ways they can *change*.