

## **Reading Popular Culture Narratives of Disease with Pre-Service Teachers**

**By Jeanine M. Staples**

### **A Media Literacy Course for Pre-Service Teachers in English Education**

I teach a mandatory course entitled LLED 480: Media Literacy in the Classroom. The course is designed for pre-service teachers in the secondary, English/Communications program in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction within Pennsylvania State University's College of Education. I designed the course to facilitate among secondary education pre-service teachers an awareness and relative mastery of various methods to conduct media text analysis, interpretation, and production. Specifically, undergraduate and masters students learn methods through which they can engage with media as cultural critics. These methods help us to understand deeply how media function as popular culture narratives (Staples, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011, 2012).

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Similar to the ways literary theories are incorporated into English education courses, I incorporate into LLED 480 New Literacy theories and analytic frameworks for media studies. For instance, through semiotic narrative frameworks, we grapple with the ways signs and codes found in media texts comprise archetypal formations recurrent in human stories. Through critical discourse frameworks, we work through iterations of language and its correspondent manufacturing of social constructs. Using rhetorical

frameworks, we speculate on the ways various audiences might respond to media texts' stories and the implications of those responses (Beach, 2006). Each of these methods for inquiry and approaches to text analysis help pre-service teachers understand more broadly and deeply the concepts of literacies, texts and, to a certain extent, composition.

### **How Media Literacy Learning Happens among Pre-Service Teachers and the Significance of Their Understandings**

Pre-service teachers' understandings are accomplished through discussions about methodological approaches and analytic frames, along with their subsequent applications. These discussions and applications offer several pedagogical benefits. First, working the frameworks noted above, in addition to several others, reveal some of the deeply entrenched socio-cultural, historical, and political systems that tend to govern humanity and are covertly and overtly illustrated through media. That is, reading media texts with these frames reveals how sociocultural systems such as racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and classism are storied and illustrated in media texts (Staples, 2012). These systems are significant. Attending to them is crucial because they are broadly considered endemic to a kind of general human consciousness and they yield various consequences (Staples, 2010b, 2010c). Teachers, as agents of intellectual work, must be able to recognize and negotiate these systems in order to support the evolutions of knowledge that occur among their future students (Staples, 2010b, 2010c).

Second, examining how the consequences of these systems show up in media generates ideas and questions about collective inclinations and personal opinions on multiple topics. The consequences of these systems (such as various abuses, poverty, murder, genocide, social inequities, greed, webs of deceit, and mongering) make headlines. These consequences prompt rash, broad, decisive and often immutable judgments about individuals and groups. In short, the narratives spun by media encourage public consciousness to think certain things about individuals and groups and, when such perceptions and imaginings take root, they can devolve to a semblance of fact and become very difficult to discredit or undo. The analytic frameworks we work with tend to complicate some of my pre-service teachers' occasionally over-simplified, intensely binary perceptions and imaginings of humanity (i.e., some people are "good," some people are "bad," some people are "right," some people are "wrong"). The frameworks also assist them in thinking through vantage points that their future adolescent students' might take up in relation to the stories they encounter in media. In effect, our literacy work in this course helps us to understand ourselves, and others, more fully and with important complexities. I understand this work as integral to pre-service teachers' knowledge development, meaning making, and empathies. The scope and sequence of the course focuses this work.

### **An Overview of the Course's Scope and Sequence**

The scope of my course includes attention to three factions of the meta-media landscape. We examine the ways *social networking* affects and is affected by communications and languages within and across digital spaces; the ways *films* parallel literature as popular culture narratives (Staples, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011, 2012); and the ways still and moving *advertisements* codify brands, lifestyles and ideals, and (re)present them as merchandise for consumption. Via the sequence of the course, we begin to understand the vast nature of literacies by thinking through some of the ways they can emerge as a collection of cyclical and intersecting modes through which we come to conceptualize and evaluate “others,” multiple worlds, and ourselves. For example, we have learned, as a community of teachers, that media texts can:

- Promote or quiet particular voices
- Story the identities of individuals, groups, societies, organizations, institutions and governments
- Intimate, subjective moralities and situational ethics in relation to selectively (re)presented narratives
- Spark and push forward inquiries into various ideas
- (D)evolve languages
- Merge and diverge signs and codes for particular purposes
- Stimulate and complicate new conceptions of community
- Manufacture audiences
- Build conceptual and virtual notions of play, work, reality and fictions
- Generate multiple his/herstories for public and private use over time

Pre-service teachers also learn that the literacies we invoke as we engage with media include print and visual readings (as they manifest while viewing and interpreting texts and texts' messages) and technical and digital writings (as they manifest before, during, and after the production of the artifacts of some course assignments [such as iMovies®, podcasts and VoiceThreads®]) (Staples, 2010a). Reading and writing in relation to popular culture narratives inevitably rouses entanglements with that which is personal for some, if not most, of the pre-service teachers in LLED 480.

### **Context of the Course and Participants**

This course is implemented at Penn State—a major, public, land-grant university in the United States. The university is set in a rural area, nestled within the central western part of the state. It has approximately 45,000 students. It has renowned and highly publicized academic and athletic programs. General, common rhetoric has described the university as insular and tight-knit. In Fall 2011, 24 pre-service teachers enrolled in LLED 480. Based on their admission surveys, all students self-identified as White and as working class, middle class or upper middle class. Nineteen students were young women. Five students were young men. All students

were between the ages of 20 and 22 at the time of this course implementation. A dozen students stated that they wanted to teach in a suburban or rural school district. Other students were unsure of where they wanted to teach. Twenty students wanted to teach secondary English education. Four students wanted to teach middle school. Twenty-one students said they were “enthusiastic” about including media literacy education in their future classrooms. Nineteen said they believed in maintaining a critical stance as new teachers, although all 24 students reported that they did not know how to do so, particularly in relation to media texts that present publically controversial and/or personally complicating content for analysis.

### **A Pedagogical Problem and Correlating Question**

Supporting pre-service teachers’ developments of critical inquiry stances and complex understandings of media as texts are primary goals of LLED 480. Since media (such as social networking sites, films and advertisements) are our central texts, our content is ripe for such stances. Pushing forward pre-service teachers’ engagements with media and cultivation of literacies is widely discussed in the literature (Jones & Clark, 2007; Staples, 2010a, 2010c; Mortari, 2011; Olsher & Itay-Danny, 2012). Jones and Clark (2007) explore the ways students move beyond noticing connecting concepts in texts toward identifying both the critical dimensions of those connections and the implications they have for language, culture and society. Mortari (2011) goes further and examines how not only noticing, but also “thoughtful reflection” in pre-service teaching can yield intimacy with texts, making them personally meaningful instead of only objective phenomena, devoid of personal significance. Olsher and Itay-Danny (2012) present new ideas about how teacher educators might assist pre-service teachers in their development of key questions as they engage with and relate to various texts. I explore how the products pre-service teachers develop and share demonstrate their command of technologies and the content and implications of various media texts (Staples, 2010a, 2010c).

Each of these contributions to the field aids the development of stances and understandings. Yet, they do not suggest ways teacher educators might facilitate pre-service teachers’ negotiation of media texts that present the consequences of negating sociocultural systems (racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and classism) when those consequences are personally significant to them as individuals or their community. As a teacher educator, my question then is: *How can pre-service teachers learn to critically engage with media texts that are personally significant to them and/or ones that yield particular (sometimes troubling) implications for the communities in which they live and teach?* This question arose in response to a recent scandal that rocked the university in which I teach. Specifically, narratives of the horrors and consequences of child sexual abuse associated with our university seriously adversely affected pre-service teachers. The local and national seriousness and prevalence of the narratives of abuse instigated a pressure among

pre-service teachers to make sense of what they were reading in various media, in order to understand deeply and gauge ways to respond. To begin to support this work, I spent time providing an orienting concept of media texts by defining them more specifically, as popular culture narratives.

### **Popular Culture Narratives**

My research into the ways the literate lives of marginalized people intersect and often traverse media, popular culture, and technologies has inspired me to name media stories particularly (Staples, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c). Popular culture narratives (PCNs) are media texts such as films, videos, television programs, Internet websites and blogs, urban or street fiction, and popular periodicals (Staples, 2008c, 2008d). These narratives are artistic tools of public and private discourses; they perform creatively and purposefully the languages, signs, social situations, political dilemmas and cultural contradictions particular to contemporary human beings and our lived experiences. They reflect and affect our sensibilities, meaning-making, and determinations. These narratives have five primary descriptors (Staples, 2008a). First, PCNs portray nuances of social constructs. Race, class, gender, language variations and sexuality are often at issue in them. Second, they depict, and sometimes distort, archetypes—representative human paradigms that embody “types” of identity. Third, these narratives often mingle standardized English and variations of English and other communicative sign systems. Such mingling allows characters, authors, or narrators the ability to texturize social situations and individuals in specific ways.

Fourth, they produce or describe visual representations that signify and complicate language. That is, compositions of rich, moving and still images are depicted and invoked to pictorially translate what is expressed verbally. Lastly, PCNs provoke readers to deeper revelations about predicaments of human conditions and the complexities of personhood, place, word and image. Print and visual popular culture narratives often initiate such provocations (Staples, 2005, 2008a, 2008b). When children, adolescents and adults engage these narratives, they often rely on methods of elaborate, collaborative discourse practices to deconstruct, comprehend, alter and/or share them (Staples, 2005, 2008a, 2008b). In addition, they use various technologies (such as web 2.0 sites, blogs, wiki spaces, email correspondences, instant messages, texts, tweets, podcasts, and digital compositions, etc.) as modes for sense making, reporting and connecting; these actions are often accomplished instantaneously and in highly transferable ways. As engagements with media and technologies increase and literate modalities multiply, literacy theorists, practitioners, teacher educators and researchers will continue to be faced with questions regarding these engagements and their intersections with notions of critical consciousness, social action, local cognizance, global justice, literacy work and research.

**“It Feels Like There’s a Place in My Heart Spinning  
Around and Around and Shredding”:**

**The Impetus for and Methods of the Inquiry**

During the fall 2011 semester, widespread media stories about allegations of dated abuse within Penn State’s athletics program proved to be deeply personal for pre-service teachers enrolled in LLED 480. Several pre-service teachers felt a strong sense of urgency to focus on the narratives and make earnest attempts to make sense of them, as a community of novice secondary, English/ Communication teachers. Their desires are in line with the tenor of the course. In LLED 480, pre-service teachers are encouraged to reflect on both their current and adolescent reading/writing lives. They are also asked to anticipate their future students’ reading/writing lives as they grapple with frameworks, assignments, assessments and activities.

As such, the desire to read dynamically, and in light of multiple levels of consumption and processing contributes to a reflexive and constructive method of practice. I understood my support of pre-service teachers’ desire to engage with narratives of abuse as a pedagogical move. Moyer (2012) suggests that, in order to inform deep and complex understandings of literate lives and literacy practices, pre-service teachers need to practice first locating their own impressions of the messages of popular culture narratives. Then, they need to imagine how adolescents and young adults might form engagements and questions in relation to such narratives. In addition to these reasons, as a member of our teaching/learning community, I shared pre-service teachers’ desire for sense making. I too felt affected by the narratives of abuse.

***Simple Methods for Selecting and Surveying  
Popular Culture Narratives of Abuse***

To prepare pre-service teachers to engage with troubling popular culture narratives, we implemented several methods: surveying, collecting, coding and organizing. First, we surveyed (by scanning and skimming) several PCNs chronicling the abuse that happened on our campus. While surveying the narratives found on [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com), [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com), [www.espn.com](http://www.espn.com), and [www.msnbc.com](http://www.msnbc.com), we scrolled stories, found photographs of key constituents advocating various positions and attitudes, and watched short videos of news coverage and commentary. With their peers, organized in small groups, pre-service teachers began choosing and collecting PCNs they felt drawn to. Primarily, the PCNS with the strongest draw had the most provocative headlines and sobering photographs.

For instance, one *Washington Post* article entitled, “Penn State: My final loss of faith”<sup>1</sup> was chosen. Several students said its title, bearing the words “faith” and “loss.” gave them pause. In addition, the article featured a picture of an ailing Joe Paterno—Former Head Coach of the acclaimed and beloved Penn State football team. In the picture, Coach Paterno, whom the pre-service teachers all lovingly

referred to as “JoePa,” seemed small and frail. They looked for pictures of the “characters” in these popular culture narratives of abuse: Jerry Sandusky (The Abuser), Graham Spanier (The President), Tim Curley (The Athletic Director), The Men (now-adult-victims of child sexual abuse) and The Mothers (parents of now-adult-victims). Some pre-service teachers printed and posted these images, along with their stories, on poster board. Others copied and pasted the digital images and corresponding print into new e-documents.

Pre-service teachers coded these stories by chronological dates, dominant or secondary characters, imagery, and language choices. As small groups organized their selections according to these codes, one young woman said, “Wow, this really hurts... it feels like there’s a place in my heart spinning around and around and shredding.” The stories we encountered provided for us a unique opportunity to explore how the analytic frameworks we employed could assist us in navigating the blurry line between popular culture narratives that publicly story privately known individuals as characters. Late in the 2011 fall semester, as the controversy exploded, we used an analytic framework called “The Gaze” to assist sense making and deep understanding.

### **Notes on “The Gaze”:**

#### **An Analytic Framework for Critical Media Literacy**

“Gazing” is a technical term originally used in film theory in the 1970s. It has to do with intentional looking, informed by relationships of power. “The Gaze Framework” is now more broadly used by media theorists to “refer both to the ways in which readers/viewers look at images of people in any visual medium and to the gazes of those depicted in visual texts” (see David Chandler’s “Notes on the Gaze,” available <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/gaze/gaze01.html>).

Chandler (2000) further describes The Gaze Framework:

In the case of recorded texts such as photographs and films (as opposed to those involving interpersonal communication such as video-conferences), a key feature of the gaze is that the object of the gaze is not aware of the current viewer (though they may originally have been aware of being filmed, photographed, painted etc. and may sometimes have been aware that strangers could subsequently gaze at their image). Viewing such recorded images gives the viewer’s gaze a voyeuristic dimension. As Jonathan Schroeder notes, ‘to gaze implies more than to look at—it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze.’ (Schroeder 1998, p. 208, available <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/gaze/gaze01.html>)

Chandler identifies four primary types of gazes. These gazes can be found in photographic, filmic or televisual texts, or in figurative graphic art. This typology is based on who is doing the looking. The four gazes follow:

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1. The *spectator's gaze* describes the gaze of the viewer at an image of a person (or animal, or object) in the text.
2. The *intra-diegetic gaze* describes a gaze of one depicted person at another (or at an animal or an object) within the world of the text.
3. The *extra-diegetic gaze* describes the gaze of a person (animal, or quasi-human being) depicted in the text looking out of the frame, as if at the viewer, with associated gestures and postures.
4. The *look of the camera* describes the way the camera itself appears to look at the people (or animals or objects) depicted; less metaphorically, this is the gaze of the filmmaker, journalist, or photographer.

Pre-service teachers searched for these gazes when engaging with the selected popular culture narratives of abuse and webs of deceit that permeated our community. While working with students, I pushed forward the technical and logistical nature of the gazes (i.e., who was looking at whom) and encouraged them to think about knowledge that could be gleaned from whatever *undergirded* the gazes—the inferences that bolstered the gazes and endowed them with effects and subjective meanings, in addition to power.

### **Reading a Disease: Pre-Service Teachers' Engagements with Difficult Gazes in Popular Culture Narratives of Abuse**

As pre-service teachers coded the content of the PCNs and made sense of various gazes they located over the course of several class sessions, I kept a record of their questions and my responses. The Gaze Framework governed our discussion. In the discussion, we applied each of the four gazes to the content of several PCNs. Three types of primary questions emerged from the discussion. Each question was organized by one of the first three gazes (*spectator*, *intra-diegetic*, and *extra-diegetic*). After reviewing pre-service questions about the content, I summarized their questions based on each vantage point afforded by respective gazes. I also summarized the formative statements of my responses to them. I did this in order to provide a succinct, data-informed look into how these pre-service teachers grappled with popular culture narratives of abuse that directly affected them as individuals, in addition to the community in which they live. During our exploration, I concluded that the sexual abuse scandal, in its entirety, revealed a web of deceit and duplicity that was fueled by the disease of deep-seated sexual perversion. Reading this disease meant making earnest attempts to interpret and comprehend some of its intersections with language, images, coordinated literal and figurative posturings, and sociocultural implications displayed in the narratives. A summary of the three questions, in addition to my responses as a teacher educator, follows:



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**Summary of Pre-Service Teachers' First Question**

I am holding a *spectator's gaze* on a person with authority, an icon in the community. I feel conflicted by my admiration for him and my uncertainty about his judgment. I don't know how to read this.

*Teacher Educator Response:* Uncertainty in deep reading is ok. I encourage you to accept it. It signifies the constant presence of critical inquiry, which I understand as a perpetual space of curiosity, creativity and criticality; it is a space in which teachers are affected by dynamic learning and discover new ways to advance it. An effect of this spectator's gaze may be twofold. First, it might incite us, as readers, to confront the malfunctioning assembly of celebrity. It can alert us to the idea that celebrity is designed to inspire adulation, despite the fact that it is built upon an unstable, quivering mix of human frailties and superhuman myths. It points to the notion that, in the souls of humanity, traces of naivety are intermingled with enormous strength. This intermingling happens, quite often, when an individual, who performs far-reaching, public greatness throughout their lifetime, is faced with a choice between doing their work and attending to a crisis that is mistakenly seen as outside of their work. Sometimes, the celebrity will do their work and slight the crisis. Reading this gaze means accepting the conflict as standard instead of an anomaly. It is a blow, to be sure. We want our celebrities to be atypical, special, and closer than us to perfection and idealized ways of being. However, deep-seated conflicts of celebrity, even if they happen in the name of service, are not at all *uncommon*. This particular case is just *uncovered*.

**Summary of Pre-Service Teachers' Second Question**

There is an *intra-diagetic gaze* between a primary witness of abuse and an athletics official. I feel enraged. How could anyone in such a position of power disengage from swift and decisive action that could defend the defenseless? This is a horrible person. If I were a witness of abuse, I would do something immediately to stop it. No question.

*Teacher Educator Response:* I am sure you believe that you would do something brave and decided in the face of terror (Staples, 2010b, 2012). I believe it is good that you believe good things about yourself. I also believe that, in light of what is known about human responses to extreme astonishment, what you *think* you might do in the presence of a heinous crime and what you would *actually* do are usually mutually exclusive. You have no way of knowing what you would do; yet, this not knowing does not reflect poorly on your character at all. It simply means that you do not know (Brooks, 2011). It is the same as saying you do not know how you would react to seeing someone, in relatively close proximity to you, being stabbed or beaten mercilessly. The cognitive dissonance invoked by such a bizarre and stunning event is not normal...it instantly and forcefully removes the reader/viewer from his or her center of gravity. Such a scene imposes an incredibly destabilizing

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reading. There is no point of reference for how to immediately, or even eventually, cope with such an event. To some, admitting this uncertainty is tantamount to an admission of criminal complicity. It is considered an unforgivable weakness, suggesting a marred consciousness, or an absence of human decency. However, it actually only reveals a sensitivity to the undeniable fact that human beings, in general, cringe and recoil and turn away from that which is monstrous (Staples, 2010b). The turning away is a coping mechanism. It staves off insanity and utter despair. Unfortunately, the *intra-diagetic gaze* you are reading is probably very old. It is not new. The gaze may have happened between these individuals several times before. If so, it is encumbered by a history of knowing and unknowing, of tuning in, and shutting out. It is shrouded, through and through, with remnants of the disease of sexual abuse.

#### **Summary of Pre-Service Teachers' Third Question**

There is an *extra-diagetic gaze* between the accused abuser and me, a reader/viewer. It makes me uncomfortable because I did not see this person as an abuser before this gaze and the story surrounding it. If this person is guilty of the major allegations against him, how could this person not have been found out, banished, and prosecuted? How could I/we not see this? How did this happen?

*Teacher Educator Response:* History tells us that a master abuser is not often seen as a monster in everyday life. Such individuals are not noticed in the ways we would imagine they “should” have been noticed, after the fact. Since, in these extreme cases, an abuser’s entire life is built around their disease—to the extent that every waking moment and life choice is meant to quietly and wickedly support and perpetuate their disease—their actions become to others like water to a fish. They are ubiquitous; they are everywhere and nowhere at once. In addition, master abusers manufacture continuous, extremely complicated, webs of deceit. Too often, the webs are relatively attractive. They may even seem noble, from an outsider’s perspective. The individuals closest to them, such as childhood friends and family members, typically support these webs over very long periods of time. These supports are often established and entrenched long before adulthood. And, these supports happen despite whatever signs of disease close relatives may sporadically intuit while in the presence of the abuser. The *extra-diagetic gaze* you are caught in is loaded with the weight of an awareness of these competing variables. The weight of them is repulsive. Yet, they hint at how the events of this narrative can be possible in any space. There are no exemptions. I imagine that, on some level, you understand this. This understanding can invoke fear and disgust. Perhaps the gaze you are reading incites a signifier of this shrill tension...the tension between your understanding, your shock, and the terrible presence of the narrative of the disease that encroached, quietly and pervasively, upon your space.

**How The Gaze Framework Helped Me, as a Teacher Educator,  
Notice and Reflect upon Pedagogical Moments  
in the Evolution of Pre-Service Teaching**

This record of pre-service teachers' work in employing The Gaze Framework reveals three important ideas. First, the seriousness and earnestness with which these novice teachers took up this work suggests a desire for practice in negotiating challenging popular culture narratives that have personal consequences. With so much content in the media landscape, attention to this type of analysis may become more and more important for teacher educator's to consider. The sheer amount of content makes the eventual possibility of deeply personal significance of some or several popular culture narratives nearly inevitable.

Second, pre-service teachers' summarized questions can be commonly characterized as worrisome, self-conscious and direction seeking. They wanted to be assuaged, avoid personal condemnation, and gather ideas about moving forward with deeper knowledge and integrity. This positioning and desire are important to note, since they suggest the initial formations of pedagogical care.

Third, pre-service teachers' use of The Gaze assisted them in systematizing their thoughts in the context of, what was to them, an overwhelming personal and communal crisis. It also helped them to capture what they were seeing so that they could begin to understand the proverbial nature of what they were looking at when ingesting popular culture narratives of the disease of sexual abuse. This record of pre-service teachers' work in employing The Gaze Framework serves multiple purposes. It assists me as I continue to inquire into the ways media inspire ideas for public consciousness and spark questions and emotions within individuals. It also helps to tease out some ways teachers can address complicated and difficult ideas in media and facilitate knowledge with adolescents and adults (Staples, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011, 2012).

***Reading (and Writing) Forward***

The gazes pre-service teachers identified and grappled with intensified their engagements with popular culture narratives and with themselves. I suspect that this increase in engagement was due to the expectations established within our group, the precise parameters of the analytic framework at hand, and their personal stake in the narratives. The idea that media literacy for secondary English/Communications students could (and often does) include intimate transactions with texts can feel unexpected. This is probably because it is often not anticipated that such transactions will traverse and confound such private emotions, established knowledge, and/or subjective conceptions of self and others. Frameworks that guide media literacy education, media studies, and New Literacy Studies for pre-service teachers (in addition to critical Black feminist frameworks for media text analysis not mentioned here, but discussed elsewhere, see: Staples, 2011, 2012) can include

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intersections with the personal. These intersections can afford new levels of consciousness and situatedness, which may lead to dynamic notions of learning. In the coming year, LLED 480 will attend more closely to the ways pre-service teachers' digital compositions may serve as useful and informative products of their evolving critical consciousness and, ultimately, their moves to action for social justice. This contribution to teacher education and English/Communications education can further ensure that the field is equipped with sensitive, perceptive and intelligent educators, individuals who can read and question disease deeply and strategically advance movements to prevention and cures for communities.

#### ***Pedagogical Suggestions for Teacher Preparation and Critical Media Literacy Education***

1. At the beginning of any term or semester, work toward developing a community of trust with pre-service teachers. Trust is important within seemingly mundane/predictable contexts and in highly emotionally charged contexts, such as those interfacing a painful story. Painful stories regularly traverse adolescent and adult reading/writing lives in local and national popular culture narratives. Some include student suicides, bullying incidents, or reports of abuse such as a rape, etc. Trust is built by making choices about ways to reasonably disclose personal experiences and opinions, as appropriate. In addition, inviting and valuing both similar and contrary views about topics that are personally relevant to the group build trust.
2. Allow pre-service teachers to choose popular culture narratives to engage. Vet them before centering them in a class discussion. Select two or three PCNs for use over three or four class periods.
3. Select one analytic framework to use in relation to the PCNs chosen. See chapters four and five of Beach's (2006) work for some examples of useful, clear frameworks.
4. Work with pre-service to collaboratively apply the framework to the characters depicted, argument presented, product crafted, intended audience(s), etc.
5. Interlace pre-service teachers' large and small group attempts at use with modeling practices, showing how the framework can be used and, when appropriate, expounding upon your understanding, stance or vantage point of engagement.
6. Reflect as a community. Design a digital writing assignment that provides a space for students to document their meaning making and conclusions. See ReadWriteThink's *Analyzing and Podcasting about Images of Oscar Wild*. An adaptation of this assignment may be useful.

7. Present these digital compositions in a forum (such as Voicethread®, a blog or wiki) and share them over time to mark the changes in awareness, questioning and understanding difficult, personal stories in PCNs.

### Note

<sup>1</sup> *Washington Post* article entitled, "Penn State: My final loss of faith." [http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/guest-voices/post/penn-state-my-final-loss-of-faith/2011/11/11/glQAwmIDN\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/guest-voices/post/penn-state-my-final-loss-of-faith/2011/11/11/glQAwmIDN_blog.html)

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### **More to Explore**

- Notes on the Gaze: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/gaze/gaze01.html>
- A Web Essay about Ways of Looking: <http://www.uvm.edu/~tstreete/powerpose/index.html>
- The Resource Racket: A Global Perspective on Resources and Consumption: [http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/secondary/ethics/resource4\\_racket.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/resources/educational/lessons/secondary/ethics/resource4_racket.cfm)
- Semiotics for Beginners: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html>
- Teachingmedialiteracy.com: <http://www.tc.umn.edu/~rbeach/linksteachingmedia/index.htm>