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What is Writing & Rhetoric MKE?

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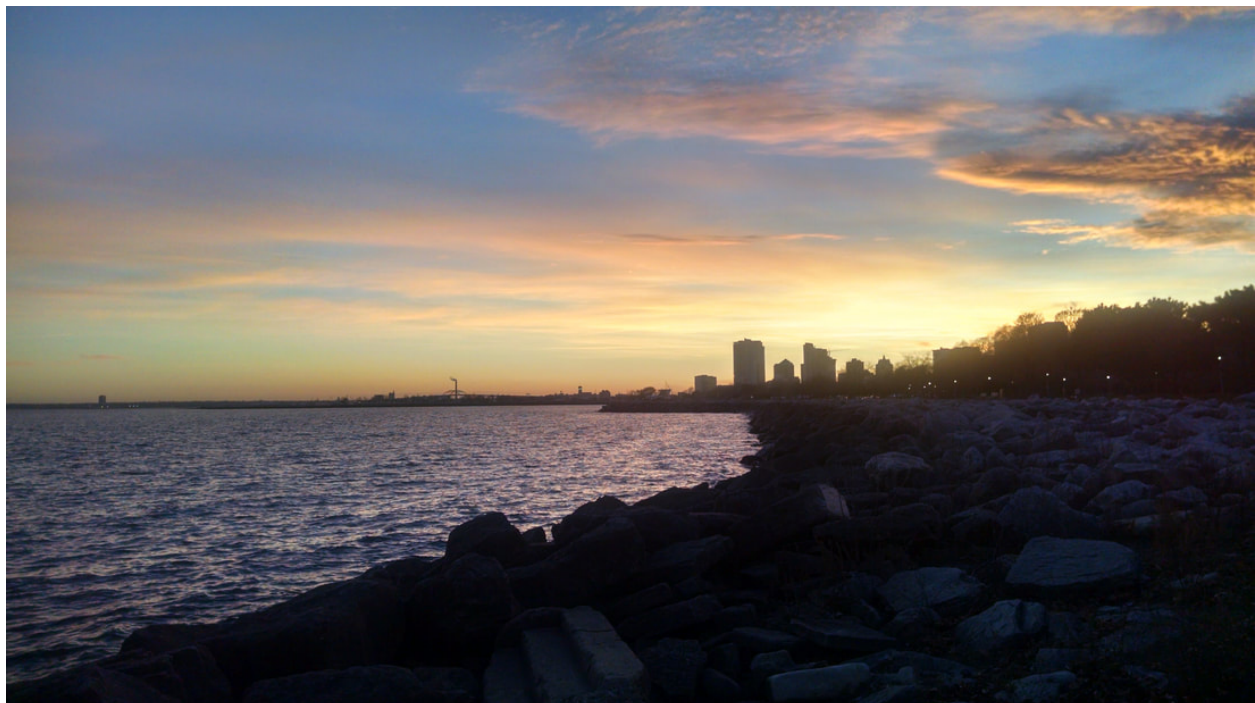
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Happy New Year, readers!

As Writing & Rhetoric MKE comes up on its one year anniversary, I thought it would be a good time to reflect on what we've done and where we hope to go. I'm Rachel Bloom-Pojar, the professor who has asked her students to write for this blog, but who hasn't written a post, herself, until now.

I've been more behind the scenes with this whole project--helping give feedback on content, designing assignments that lead to the posts, and thinking big about where we're going in the future. As we were wrapping up the fall semester, my students asked why I hadn't written for the blog yet and argued that I should. They made a great point that resonates with an important piece of writing pedagogy--don't ask your students to do something that you haven't done (or wouldn't do). So, here I am, taking on the task to write more for the blog in 2019, starting with a little explanation of what I hope we're doing here.



At the heart of this project is a simple idea: I wanted to create a space to highlight and amplify the excellent work that communities around Milwaukee are already doing with writing, rhetoric, and literacy.

In learning about this work and connecting it to what we're studying at UWM, I've been asking students to recognize the ways rhetoric and writing are used for social justice and community-building around Milwaukee. I've placed community expertise next to academic expertise and have asked my students (most of whom are also teachers) to think critically about the knowledge-building and writing practices we value in schools. We study the historical and contemporary oppression and biases that are linked to the designation of certain types of writing

and speaking as "better" than others. And they ask great questions about how to challenge the racism, sexism, and classism that are deeply embedded in people's ideologies about language in and outside of school settings. Through finding concrete practices and local connections to what we study about language, race, culture, and power, they are able to better understand theory as something that is alive and open to change.

I think these writers have done an excellent job highlighting a variety of spaces, events, organizations, and ideas that take up writing and rhetoric in innovative ways around our city. While the website needs some work with categorization and navigation, I'm happy with how far we've come in one year with two classes of smart, emerging scholars who have taken on my challenge to write something a bit different for their graduate seminars.

As we look forward to fully launching our new [PhD program in Public Rhetorics and Community Engagement](#), I hope that Writing & Rhetoric MKE can develop into something more than a space for public writing with graduate classes. I want it to become something dynamic that is run by our graduate students and I hope they will help shape the vision for what this could be. I hope it will be a space that invites contributions from writers outside of our program and UWM. I hope it can provide content that supports and engages with diverse voices and perspectives of everyday writing and rhetoric around Milwaukee. In the coming weeks and months, I plan to write more posts as this vision develops, and these will feature conversations with the individuals who will help build the future of Writing & Rhetoric MKE. For now, I'll leave you with a quote that has inspired my vision for how the blog and our program can actively participate in sustaining social movements, resisting violence, and doing the work of social justice: "What literacy, composition, and rhetoric might do is further explore the language and literacy practices of...activists, organizations, and everyday resisters historically and contemporarily, and apply them as models to construct radically intersectional methodologies, theories, and pedagogies that **emerge from or grow the coalitions that build and sustain these movements**. Language is a crucial element in resisting this violence, and as scholars of literacy, composition, and rhetoric we are especially skilled and thus **charged with developing new and affirming existing practices that do the work of social justice.**" -Eric Darnell Pritchard ([251-252](#))