

Edited by Melissa Ryan, Kerry Kautzman

Beyond the Traditional Essay

Increasing Student Agency in a Diverse Classroom with Nondisposable Assignments

SERIES IN EDUCATION

Summary

This volume offers a range of responses to the problem of “disposable assignments,” essays written just for a grade and then thrown away. The scholars collected here explore how renewable assignments can contribute to public knowledge, eliciting student work that is shared across networks of learning, that does something, that transcends the teacher’s grade. Although there is significant interest in such innovative teaching practices, particularly in this year of pedagogical experimentation, there are few resources for teachers that collect in one place both scholarly context and practical advice for implementing renewable assignments in the classroom. The essays in this volume range widely, from demonstrating how digital tools engage and empower reluctant learners, to raising theoretical questions around intellectual property, to measuring the success of renewable assignments through outcomes assessment.

About the editor

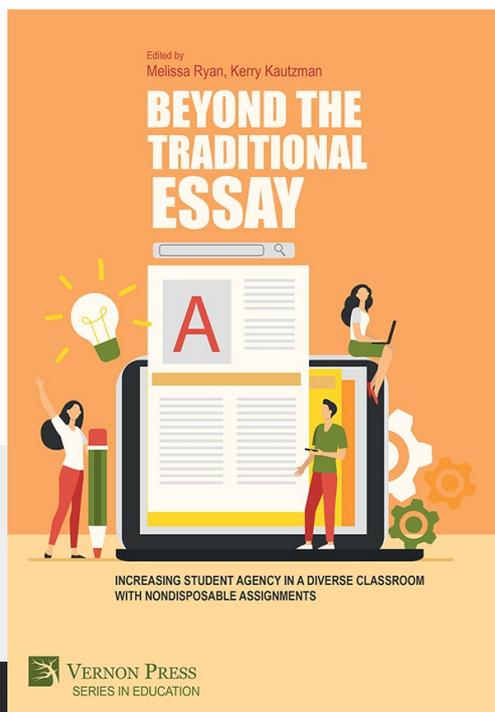
Dr. Melissa Ryan is a Professor of English at Alfred University, specializing in American literature and Social Justice Studies. Her work has appeared in ‘African American Review’, ‘ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment’, ‘Studies in the Novel’, ‘ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance’, ‘ATQ: American Transcendental Quarterly’, ‘Studies in American Fiction’, and ‘American Literature’.

Dr. Kerry Kautzman completed her undergraduate studies at Gannon University, majoring in International Studies before earning her Ph.D. at the University of Cincinnati in Spanish Literature. In her two decades at Alfred University, she has taught a wide range of courses in Spanish language and literatures, critical theory, Women’s and Gender Studies, and Social Justice Studies. Her current research and teaching interests focus on the literature of Equatorial Guinea.

Melissa Ryan and Kerry Kautzman’s book “Beyond the Traditional Essay: Increasing Student Agency and Engagement with Non Disposable Assignment” is a must-read for educators looking to join the movement towards making higher education more inclusive, accessible, meaningful and engaging. From community-engaged learning to open educational resources, these new pedagogies are seeking to break down the classroom walls. They aim to bridge many students’ experience between what they learn in their classes and “the real world.” Another important goal of these exciting pedagogies is to make higher education curricula more accessible to the public at large and non-traditional students, because decolonizing the classroom setting is a central part of their vision. The essays included in this volume focus on transforming traditional assessment tools (such as essays and exams) into inspiring projects using enhanced technologies of communication and expression. The contributors show how transformative assignments foster inclusive pedagogies that engage students with the liberal arts and make higher education accessible and meaningful beyond the classroom. The introduction teaches about key concepts from the open pedagogy movement, social justice pedagogy, and universal design learning that inform innovative non-disposable assignments. In the chapters that follow, the contributors discuss a variety of approaches, project designs and resources that involve podcasts, web resources, international collaborations, and assessment tools. The collaborative nature of the pedagogies described in this book fosters deep learning and promotes an ethics of interdependence. This book will inspire scholars, teachers, graduate students in education, literature, and other liberal arts disciplines, as well as administrators seeking to improve student engagement, agency, and pedagogical best practices.

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July 2022 | Hardback 236x160mm | 140 Pages | ISBN: 978-1-64889-408-4

SUBJECTS Education, Language and Literature, Cultural Studies

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