**Preamble to the lesson plans/activities**:

These lessons fall during the third unit of a thematic first year composition course with four units. The course focuses on genres of "fake news," which include satire/parody, hoax, mainstream media, and conspiracy for each unit, respectively. Ultimately, the course takes media literacy as seriously as it takes information literacy, asking students not merely to develop their acuity at differentiating trustworthy from problematic information, but also troubling this distinction by examining how media platforms and technologies shape our perceptions of truth and falsehood.

The activity I most want to highlight is the "telephone transformations" on "Day 20." In it, I ask students to play a traditional game (or two!) of telephone, before getting messier and messier by asking them to change their media for communicating the message. Subsequent rounds might include drawing an image and passing it along, drawing an image on a classmate's back, or even charades or running the message through different languages in Google Translate. The activity culminates with a multimodal telephone game in which they use different iterations (i.e. whispering, drawing, acting, etc.) to pass on the message within the same round, meaning a message might be translated from sound to image to writing to gesture before making it all the way back. The point here is to focus on the affordances and constraints of different modalities of communication and to think not only about what gets "lost in translation," but also about the new information that emerges when messages mutate across media.

**Primary texts for these lessons:**
Harris, Joseph. "Forwarding." Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts. Utah State University Press, 2006.

**Reflection on the lesson plans/activities:**

I had several goals in mind when I designed this course. First, I wanted students to engage critically with news - both its content and form. Further, I wanted this engagement to happen in the media ecosystems they surround themselves with rather than some arbitrary, narrower sense of traditional media outlets. In other words, one of the primary goals of the class was for students to ask questions and formulate ideas about *how* the specific media platforms and genres of communication shape the ways they perceive news content. Second, I also wanted students to gain some preliminary practice composing with the media they encountered. Thus, I designed the course assignments to offer opportunities for multimodal composition so students could experiment with the affordances and constraints of a variety of media beyond word processing. Finally, I wanted students to practice reflective analysis and composition. Throughout the course, and especially in the final unit, students drew connections between their personal beliefs, motivations, and interests and larger cultural patterns in media circulation, modal preferences, and conceptions of truth, falsehood, and many genres in between.

This activity is low investment, high reward. Setup is relatively minimal, though it can be more involved if instructors want to bring additional materials (e.g. whiteboards and dry erase markers for pictionary) for other potential telephone transformations. The most important setup involves keeping an eye on time and making sure students are able to move through various versions of this activity. Telephone is a fun game and this version makes it even more wild, so it tends to be one students don't need much persuading to learn from. But if they get hung up on conveying the "right" message (as is often the goal in traditional telephone), they can miss out on crucial observations about how remediation offers new possibilities for conveying messages beyond merely avoiding degradation. When students engage successfully with this activity, they will not only develop group strategies for encoding and decoding messages through different media, but they will also discuss what the inevitable message transformations reveal. They should, in other words, leave with new ideas about how a message's movement across media is dynamic, without necessarily meaning it is deteriorating; these transformations reflect the sensibilities and perspectival attunements of the various media through which

it passes. In adapting this, you may consider whether breaking into smaller groups or working as a whole class will be more beneficial. Also worth considering are social media versions of this activity, in which students pass messages in real time through, for example, email, text, TikTok, Twitter, or Snapchat, so that they get practice with some of the same media platforms they will examine for the major writing assignment of this unit (also submitted to the DRC Prompts Collection).

**Day 19 – March 21, 2023**

**5min**: Attendance and Agenda
- Welcome back! Any highlights from your spring breaks?
- Today, we'll…
    o Talk briefly about the library research scavenger hunt, library resource guides, and tips for developing inquiry questions
    o Try a quick activity meant to help develop complex, interesting questions
    o Discuss Harris's "Forwarding" and how it relates to research/question development
    o Examine the criteria for SCOOP 3 (which will be due in appx 3 weeks)

**10min**: Scavenger Hunt and Inquiry Questions (Finish by 1:30)
- Before break, y'all completed a multimodal library scavenger hunt. What aspects did you enjoy? What aspects were less enjoyable?
    o I hope most of you enjoyed, or at least learned something from, the scavenger hunt. Still, I want to acknowledge that some parts may have been challenging, even frustrating.
        ▪ Remember, our goal with the scavenger hunt wasn't necessarily to find answers, but to demonstrate the messiness, excitement, and sometimes even aggravation that comes with *asking good questions*.
        ▪ Too often, we turn to libraries – and other databases, like Wikipedia – for answers. Sometimes they do provide these, but they can also be spaces for exploration, for trying out new ideas or just letting your curiosity lead you down paths you didn't even know existed.
    o Research is rarely straightforward – in fact, it is often looping, circling back to places you thought you knew only to discover that you missed an important detail or pattern
- Library Research Guides – [Developing a Question](#)

**20min**: Wikipedia Random Activity (Finish by 1:50)
- Anyone watch Jeopardy?
    o [Clip](#)
- Questions meant to be answered with facts – something a quick search and a Wikipedia page might respond to.
- But what about questions that simply can't be answered with a single Wikipedia page?
    o The other day, my son asked "Papi, why do some people make more money than others?"
    o Hard to see how a single Wiki-page could answer that, though reading many pages might help us develop a theory about why.
- School often trains us to look for answers. That's important, but sometimes the emphasis on answers makes us distrustful of questions that don't have easy answers.
    o Today, we're going to practice reading for questions instead of answers.
- Go to [Wiki Random](#) and click the link "Special:Random"
- Whatever page you get, try developing a question not about its content necessarily, but about something its content makes you wonder about.
    o Then use that wonder to wander – through Wikipedia, at least. How does your question change as you click on links and find different resources that address some aspect of your question, but don't settle it?
    o In appx. 5 minutes, we'll share some of the questions you came up with.

**15min**: Harris's Forwarding Discussion (finish by 2:05)

- o   *What* are the 4 types of forwarding Harris outlines? (Note that this is not an open-ended question!)
- o   *How* does Harris characterize each (through use of examples, length of discussion, tone, etc.)? (Note that this is open-ended, but need not draw comparative let alone evaluative conclusions)
- o   *Why* does Harris seem to focus more on some of these types of forwarding than others? (Note, this question is impossible to answer in any definitive way, but that doesn't make it a bad question! We can make educated guesses as to why and assess the values and consequences implicit in our interpretations)

**20min**: SCOOP 3 (finish by 2:25)
- In groups of 2-3, take appx. 5 minutes to highlight and annotate the assignment sheet
  - o   Highlight/underline words or phrases that strike you as important.
  - o   Circle words or phrases you aren't sure about.
  - o   Note parts you think will be challenging and parts you're looking forward to.
- Take another 5 minutes to discuss
- Then, large class discussion about expectations for this project
  - o   This is about tracing iterations of a story across platforms, but crucial to note that each iteration should be "Forwarding" the work of previous iterations.
  - o   NEWS Assignment for this weekend covers first two bullets of "strategies for success."

  [*NB: Though this assignment is not included in this activity, I have made it available in the DRC Prompts.*]

**5min**: Work Time and Housekeeping (finish by 2:30)
- For Thursday, please play along with a "Wait Wait… Don't Tell Me!" episode from earlier this month
  - o   Your grade for this will be based on COMPLETION!! It is possible that Play Posit will give you an automatic score for your answers. I will make sure you receive full credit as long as you listen to the 45-minute segment (you can listen to it at a faster speed if you like!) and respond to all of the questions.
- We'll talk a bit more about your NEWS Assignment on Thursday, but you may want to start now so you have less to do over the weekend.

**Day 20 – March 23, 2023**

**5min**: Attendance and Agenda
- Happy Thursday!
- Today, we'll…
    o Do something of an experimental activity to get us thinking not only about how media transform or mutate messages, but also about how we can analyze those transformations
    o Draw connections between your "Wait Wait…Don't Tell Me!" assignment and these transformations
    o Work time for your NEWS Assignments

**40min**: Telephone Transformations (Finish by 2:00)
- Has everyone played telephone before?
- We're going to play an experimental version today that includes not only whispering, but also drawing, writing, and possibly even acting/charades and google translate.
- To prep, we'll do a few rounds of these different versions individually and then combine them later.
- Write a word, phrase, or sentence at the bottom of a piece of paper. Can be silly, or meaningful, but should not be inappropriate for sharing with the class.
    o Do this twice
- Fold these into quarters and put them in the center of a group of 5 people
- Pull a slip of paper to try each version
    o Whispering first, then drawing/writing, then back drawing/writing
    o Time permitting, we may also try charades and google translate
- In your groups, number off from 1-5; remember your number
    o Form a line: #1 will pick up a slip of paper from your pile, fold the writing under, and draw what is written
    o #2 will fold the picture under and transcribe what is drawn back into writing
    o #3 will look at the writing and draw or write the same message on the last person's back
    o #4 will whisper what they felt on their back into the fifth person's ear
    o #5 will share what they heard with the group and then grab the original piece of paper and track down how this message transformed by asking each group member what they thought they were communicating
- Repeat this multimedia telephone game a few times.
    o Pay close attention to the patterns that emerge. Which messages prove harder to sustain and which are easier to replicate? Which transitions lend themselves to closer copies of the message? Which transitions make interpretation trickier? Why do these patterns happen? In what ways might we think of messy transitions as problematic? In what ways might we think of messy transitions as informative?
- Time permitting, we'll try to compare these across groups as well to understand how we can analyze not the message itself, but the ways it moves across mediums

**10min**: "Wait Wait" Discussion (Finish by 2:10)
- "Wait wait" isn't a news program, exactly. How is it different?
- And yet, if you hadn't heard some of the stories mentioned in the episode, they might have been news to you, yes?
- So how does this format transform the news? Thinking back to the things we've talked about before in this class, what might we say about the way they've set up the show, and how it transforms the news?
- Why might these transformations matter?
  [*NB: I have not included this activity here because it requires an LMS application/extension. There are multiple available; I used Play Posit. Recreating the activity is relatively simple, however. I downloaded a recent episode of the NPR news quiz "Wait Wait… Don't Tell Me!" and used Play Posit to add pauses after the show's questions with text pop-ups that allow students to select their own answers before they can move on to the next segment/question.*]

**20min**: Work Time and Housekeeping (finish by 2:30)
- For the remainder of the class, gather into your groups for SCOOP 3 and begin working on your news story selections and your inquiry questions.
  - Remember, your news story *must* be "forwarded," in the way Harris uses the term. This means it can't be different reporters/media outlets taking on the same event. It should be a post, video, soundbite, or similarly sized unit of news that gets picked up by different platforms in succession. Often, each successive platform/outlet will comment not only on the original story, but on the previous outlets' coverage of that story.
- I'll walk around and check in on you/your inquiry questions, and story stages/transformations
- For Tuesday, please read Best's "Mutant Statistics" and bring printed copies to class!
  - Don't forget that your Hypothesis grade depends on your initial posts as well as responses to classmates! If you have a hard time remembering the responses, then please respond during the first round!