Perceptions of English Class

Gail: Well, it has been a pleasure talking with you um, any final words?

Kris: Just to follow up on the sort-of shift in the technologies… I think it is our responsibility as not just computers and writing specialists but as English teachers to really look for ways to bridge the gap between what students are doing with these technologies and what we're doing. You know the idea that here's a card I made when I was um you know five or six for my mom..um… or a poem another one (holds up poem) and um you know the idea that now you can do that electronically so that we've completely made this cultural and academic shift to digital literacy yet it's sad to me that within the English curriculum we seem to have a number of factions that hold out…

Gail: Resist…yeah

Kris: I sometimes worry that in these roles we end up talking to ourselves and we need to talk to our colleagues and we need to let our students know that we embrace these technologies…I think that's why I have a Facebook account…and…

Gail: And that we accept their work in embracing this technology too and I mean and they can …yeah…so I try to do that in such a way that students can do their final projects I mean on Facebook …while it's easier in doing a language course you know to do something like that and also that they can do flash productions and so forth so you know it doesn't have to fall in a writing format.

Kris: No, you know and the thing is that can be so liberating, at the same time I think our students have very traditional expectations of what an English classroom is supposed to be. I was sort-of giving some advice to one of our graduate students who taught an intermediate writing course in a lab where she had them doing iMovies and some students very much resisted that, saying "I thought this was a writing course" because of course as you introduce these technologies the labors associated with them are so invisible…

Gail: And intense…

Kris: So how do you get towards that final product?...whether it be a course syllabus online or um a video of yourself introducing the course to students I think that that's…

Gail: And that's exactly what happened out at Stanford; we've got that new second writing course that they introduced that is heavily into new media; the students rebelled and I think primarily because of the time and the expectations…yeah.

Kris: Yeah…how do we change the expectations? How do we get students to see all of this in their own generation because it's not paper anymore, it's electronic…how do we get them to see all of this as writing…you know the photos that they have on Flickr, the Facebooking and the Myspacing that they do…um the um research that they might do online, the reading that they do online …you know um to see all of that as contributing to what happens in the classroom so that by the time they get to a writing

course where they are asked to do additional video they don't go "what do you mean, this is a writing course, where's the grammar instruction?" It's like good lord (laughs)

Gail: And that's so interesting they just did …and here we keep getting the final word…but in a new Pew Internet survey that they've done students say just that, that they don't regard the things that they do on the computers, the things that they do on the cell phone the communication that they do as actually being writing.

Kris: See and we do…and so how do we sort-of have that conversation with students to not have this level of resistance because I think the students could be powerful allies in helping us educate colleagues.

Gail: Yes.