CHAPTER 3.

WHAT IS LABOR IN LABOR-BASED GRADING CONTRACTS?

Part of problematizing my own grading practices and moving to labor-based grading contracts was coming to a fuller understanding of labor in a classroom writing assessment ecology. This chapter theorizes labor as it pertains to writing classroom assessment ecologies.

Labor is the engine that runs all learning. You can't learn without laboring. Labor requires a body in motion, even if the motions are small or slight. We speak through our bodies. Our lungs inhale air, chest and belly expand and relax, mouth opens and closes, lips and tongue dance together. Each time we speak, our bodies move in amazingly elaborate and coordinated ways, like a synchronized dance group, each dancer moving their part, forming a larger organism that produces something more than the sum of the individuals dancing. Our brains also expend a lot of energy doing the work of thinking and processing. In fact, many magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS) studies have confirmed the heavy energy demands of the brain. The human brain uses 20% of the body's total energy expenditure, with two thirds of that energy going to cognitive processes of thinking, the electrical impulses that activate neurons (Swaminathan).

If labor is energy used, calories burned, then thinking is hard labor. When we write, a similar coordinated dance occurs, whether we put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, or dictate into a smartphone, our bodies move and our brains work to make and process language. When we read text or make sense of images or symbols, we similarly expend bodily energy, even if in subtle ways. When we manipulate a computer keyboard or mouse to scroll through pages on a screen, or lick our fingers to turn a page, our eyes move back and forth, our brains activate neurons. We sit in a chair, move our hips and adjust our position to get more comfortable, shifting ourselves every now and then. Perhaps we drink tea as we read, or walk around the room. Some of us may even move our lips, mouthing the words our eyes scan across the page, or speak those words in whispers to ourselves. These bodily movements, combined with our brain's firing and burning of energy, make the acts of languaging bodily labor, work, energy expended. Bodily labor is fundamental to all learning. No one learns without laboring, without doing in some way, without moving their body, even if only slightly. This is what my labor-based grading contract assumes at its most basic level: to learn is to labor.

If this is true, if labor is the most fundamental thing we are asking of students, then we should understand its dimensions theoretically, particularly if we are using it to calculate final course grades, as labor-based grading contracts do. Understanding labor in a variety of ways can help us design and use it more thoughtfully and carefully. Furthermore, as I hope much of my discussion in this chapter illustrates, theorizing labor more precisely can also reveal the problems and limitations of conventional classroom assessment ecologies that ignore or do not account explicitly for labor in grading. That is, understanding what exactly labor is and how it functions in ecologies reveals how conventional ecologies that do not use labor as a way to calculate grades may be harming students or treating them unfairly.[13]

Up to this point, I've used the term "labor" to mean roughly the work done in and for a course, that is, the bodily work of reading, writing, and other activities associated with what it takes to engage in a writing course. I reference this work in the labor-based grading contract and the course's labor instructions for all assignments in a couple of ways, by time spent on a task or activity, and by the amount of words produced when writing (if the activity is a writing task) or the number of pages or words read (if the task is a reading one). In this chapter, I pause to think carefully about the concept of labor, define it from two different directions, first from a Marxian theoretical perspective, and second from the theories of labor offered by Hannah Arendt. I also rearticulate these theories of value and labor into a simpler theory that may help students better understand labor in contract grading economies, which I call three-dimensional labor. Finally, I end the chapter on a short discussion of one consistent theme, seeing labor as a mindful practice that is important to students' learning. My central questions in this chapter are simple: What is labor exactly? How might we understand it in order to better design and use labor-based grading contracts?

ASSESSMENT ECOLOGIES ARE ALSO POLITICAL ECONOMIES

Marxian theory seems the most obvious place to begin theorizing and understanding labor. The concept of labor is important to Marxian theory, and it isn't hard to see how all assessment ecologies are also political economies since not only is one main element of assessment ecologies power relations but they are also complex systems similar to political economies. In many ways "ecology" and

13 I realize that I am neglecting those who are paralyzed or disabled in ways that keep them from moving their bodies, and I cannot account for this, except that even those disabled in these ways still have brains that expend enormous amounts of energy, hearts and lungs that beat and move, all in order to labor with language, or process language.

"economy" are interchangeable, at least in the way I refer to them in this chapter. Assessment ecologies, even ones that avoid giving grades, still are systems of exchange. In them, texts, ideas, judgments, and labor are exchanged. Riddell, Shackelford, Stamos, and Schneider offer a good definition of political economy that seems easily applicable to any classroom assessment ecology if we replace "economic events" and "economic systems" with classroom assessment events and systems:

> Political economy . . . is more concerned with the relationships of the economic system and its institutions to the rest of society and social development. It is sensitive to the influence of non-economic factors such as political and social institutions, morality, and ideology in determining economic events. It thus has a much broader focus than economics. (quot. in Sackrey et al. 3-4)

In writing classroom economies, the above "non-economic factors" also apply to the value and functioning of grades and what we might loosely call writing quality of drafts, or some judgment of a draft's quality based on a comparison to some dominant standard used by the reader-grader, who is typically a teacher. This means that classroom assessment economies are sensitive to influences by these non-draft-quality factors that circulate around a text. While these factors can be broad in scope and reach, they can also be understood in some unified sense as *habitus*, which I discussed in Chapter 1. In a general way, *habitus* identifies the sociocultural and structural elements that become internalized as individual habits and dispositions that readers bring to texts, see in them, and use to make meaning. Thus, reader's judgments of a text say more about their own biases and values than they do about so-called quality of the text in question. This is one way to account for how the same text can be judged by the same person very differently at different times, when the ecology has changed or the influences in the system have changed. This also reveals the unevenness in classroom assessment economies.

To talk about a political economy of the classroom, then, is to talk about relationships of things in the ecology, of *habitus* embodied in texts and embodied in readers judging, of grades or judgments themselves, and of writing and reading labors. These relationships are also between ecological elements across the entire ecology (i.e., grading practices and processes, material conditions and places, people, documents and assessment parts, values, expectations, learning products, etc.), which include outside influences (e.g. other classes, students' working conditions and family lives, their relations to certain kinds of labor and commodities, etc.). Tony Scott has discussed this second aspect in the political

economy of writing classrooms, looking closely at the way students' lives in fast-capitalism intersect with their lives in the classroom. Scott's pedagogy attempts to account better for the way working-class students tend to experience learning and college by focusing on the curricular theme of "work," giving students a chance to examine and interrogate work, labor, and their lives in relation to these things.

While outside-the-classroom capitalist structures' effects on students' labor in writing classrooms is important, it is not the focus of this chapter. My focus is on understanding the concept of labor in the classroom, considering how theories of political economy, among others, offer an explanation of the labor students do for our courses, which then tell us more about what happens when labor-based grading ecologies are functioning and perhaps how to design them better in the future. Additionally, in this chapter, I use political economy synonymously with assessment ecology. They refer to the same system, only political economy foregrounds the ecological element of power relationships among elements and in exchanges, while assessment ecology highlights the system's holistic and complex nature.

In his own defining of political economy, Scott emphases the way the concept calls attention to "the systemic/ideological and the particular/material" (15). His summing up of the concept is worth repeating:

> Broad trends and political policies— systems that organize and value human labor— have profound effects on individuals; in turn, individual decisions and actions are what embody and enact those broad trends, policies, and systems. "Economy" isn't the sum total of a set of formulas or quantified indicators: those are only attempts to understand and describe a dynamic, codependent, evolving material entity. (16)

While he's speaking of a political economy that is the fast-capitalist one often thought of as outside the writing classroom, it's easy to see how this could apply to a classroom's assessment ecology as a political economy. All assessment systems use student labor in exchanges with other things of value, such as grades, essays, feedback, or learning products or outcomes, but typically labor is not a commodity, not the thing exchanged directly. Below I'll say more about how this works and why it's important to make clear. In labor-based grading contract ecologies, however, labor is an explicit commodity that is exchanged, making it more valuable and present (not ignored) in the system—thus, making it more valuable and valued in the economy.

Scott's definition focuses attention on the consubstantial nature of the structural to the existential, the systemic to the material, the system to the labor that

constitutes much of it. And the value of labor is central to understanding the system and one's place in it, as well as the power relations that define one's movement and learning in the system. In fact, labor as a unit of exchange and value is the foundation of all classroom assessment economies, whether we pay attention to it or not. Thus, as I'll discuss later in this chapter, a labor-based assessment economy provides particularly fruitful ways to ask students to problematize their labor practices in order to understand the nature of their labor and its value, or what they learn from their labor.

If assessment ecologies are political economies, then it is not hard to see that one primary unit of exchange, one commodity, is grades, even when we construct assessment ecologies that may work against handing out a lot of them, as with portfolio pedagogies (Hamp-Lyons and Condon) and grading contracts. While as writing teachers we are interested primarily in what students learn and how they learn, we usually have to give grades, at least a course grade. And students cannot NOT care about their grades. The course grade will live on after the course is over, even long after the events and details blur from clear memory. Many outside our classrooms care about grades. Grades are valuable to these others, and are often exchanged for scholarships, degrees, certifications, awards, admission into graduate schools, jobs, etc. So much of the political economy of the writing classroom depends on and affects how grades are produced, distributed, exchanged, and consumed by students and those outside the classroom.

To say that the writing classroom is a political economy is not a new position. John Trimbur offers a compelling argument for writing teachers to pay closer attention to the circulation of writing as a kind of commodity in classroom economies, although he's speaking more about the production of readings of cultural texts, like books, ads, etc., that are often discussed in writing classrooms. Trimbur draws heavily on Marx's formulation of the process of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption found in *Grundrisse*. He concludes on two points. The first is that Marx's evaluation helps writing teachers see that in a classroom where student writing and readings of texts are circulated, "the question to begin with is not so much where the commodity goes as what it carries in its internal workings as it circulates." He continues, "the distribution of commodities [like cultural texts and student essays] cannot be understood apart from the distribution of the means of production" (209).

Let me put this in different terms. In labor-based grading contract economies, the labor of reading, drafting, feedback from peers and teacher, and all the activities that go into producing and reading a draft, are circulated in a cycle of production and can be considered part of the process of production as well as distribution, exchange, and consumption. What gets circulated in this recursive cycle are various activities and abilities of different agents in the classroom, what

I've referred to as *habitus*, all of which determine how the student essay is read and judged. When no grades are circulating in these cycles, only documents and judgments, then labor and its value become more prominent and important, and more obvious, assuming that everyone is willing to agree to give up having those grades on everything. Attention by people in the economy returns to the labor and what it produces. Trimbur concludes, "we cannot understand what is entailed when people encounter written texts without taking into account how the labor power embodied in the commodity form [like a commercial being analyzed by a class or peer feedback on an essay] articulates a mode of production and its prevailing social relations" (210).

To understand fully this conclusion, it's important to understand the distinction that Marx makes between labor and labor power that Trimbur invokes. As Marx explains in volume one of *Capital*, "[l]abour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature" (n. pag.).[14] In other words, everyone owns their own labor, the work they can do. However, in capitalist markets, one might sell one's labor for a time because one may only own their labor and not other commodities for exchange. One's own labor may be all one has to exchange in the marketplace. In chapter six of *Capital*, Marx explains that one's labor, when offered and exchanged in the market, becomes a commodity itself, which he calls, "labor power": "[b]y labour-power or capacity for labour is to be understood the aggregate of those mental and physical capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any description" (n. pag.). I'll say more about use-value below, but for now, it's important to see in Marx's words that one can exchange one's labor power for a time, but not one's labor, since the latter is connected to one's biological body and life. One may labor, but one has labor power to exchange in the marketplace. Hannah Arendt agrees with this notion of labor in her theorizing of labor as mainly biological, which I'll discuss later in this chapter.

At this point, according to classical Marxian theory, if you sell your labor, you sell yourself into slavery, which means you would cease to own your capacity to do labor for your own living. You become a commodity. In labor-based assessment ecologies, then, it is your labor power that you exchange, not your labor. Labor power is an abstract concept used to describe the commodity that people exchange in a political economic system who have no capital or material commodities. When all you have is your labor, you still have your labor power as a commodity for exchange in the marketplace. In *The Principles of Communism*,

14 I retain the sexist pronoun used in the original material quoted in this chapter for accuracy reasons, realizing its exclusionary nature. When I reference a generic plural, I use the plural pronoun that is more gender inclusive.

Engels too makes the point that in markets where commodities are exchanged labor power is exchanged as a commodity.

Trimbur's conclusion, then, speaks to the ways that labor power circulates in something like an essay and its associated feedback in a classroom by peers and the teacher. Thus, what is entailed in what students can learn or a reader can provide to a writer must be a result of the way the labor power embodied in the essay and its feedback articulate the mode of production of the essay and feedback, and of the prevailing social relations of the classroom. Our labors are never lost, because their residue, labor power, circulates. Put even more simply, a student's feedback on a colleague's draft accumulates value through the ways it is circulated in the assessment economy, through the labor done and encapsulated in the draft, its feedback, and other exchanges around the draft. Value is created and accumulated by that circulation. The engine of that circulation is the labor that students do. What is carried forward or exchanged in the system is labor power accumulated.

Thus when feedback is used in various ways, ways beyond the draft it discusses, say in problem-posing activities with the writer about the nature of judgment in feedback, that circulation creates more value because of the labor power accumulated in the system. Labor by people is the biological engine, the kinetic energy used in the system, that creates and circulates this value. Labor power, then, is the stockpile of materials that each person in the system offers in exchanges and that accumulates in the system. It is the potential energy to be used and exchanged, collected and accumulated.

The second conclusion Trimbur draws in his article is equally important to my present discussion. The "unity of opposites in the commodity form— exchange value and use value— enables not only tangential and impertinent readings. Its unity is a contradictory one" (210). I'll come back to the contradictions of use- and exchange-value below. They are important to learning in any assessment economy, but labor-based grading contract economies offer explicit ways to take advantage of these contradictions. For now, note that Trimbur has broken ground on thinking about the Marxian articulations of labor and value in cycles of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption in writing classrooms.[15]

We also should keep in mind that the term "economy" has an etymology that helps us see classroom writing assessment cycles of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption as ones that cultivate private practices and social customs, which helps make sense of where those "tangential and impertinent" judgments of texts originate and why contradictions exist in the first place. The

15 I wish to thank John Trimbur for his gracious time and good feedback on an earlier version of this chapter, in which he helped me think about labor power and nuance the concept of "worth" that I discuss later.

etymology of the terms also reveals another reason why writing classrooms blur the lines between public and private, the social and the individual.

The Oxford English Dictionary shows the etymology of the word "economy" coming from the ancient Greek οἰκονομικά (*oikonomia*), which derives from two familiar words to those who study rhetoric: *oikos* (household) and *nomos* (law). Several of OED's definitions (2a, 2b, 3, and 4) reveal this etymology by focusing on the management of the household or the body, while others focus on the management of society and community ("economy, n." n. pag.). In *The Political Economy of Communication*, Vincent Mosco also explains this etymology, concluding that "political economy therefore originated in the management of the family and political households" (23). So a classroom writing assessment economy calls attention to the various, diverse *habitus* of the people in the economy, and how we all are always situated in larger social systems, communities of diverse individuals who also fit into groups of people. The diverse *habitus* in the classroom are vital to the way the system functions to create and circulate value in labors. The value and nature of our labor as individuals is a function of our *habitus* in context, of who we are, where we come from, what dispositions we carry, where and how we work for the class, and so on. In some sense, this etymology reminds us of the interconnected domestic (personal) and social spheres that are managed simultaneously, that work together symbiotically, always by everyone.

This blurring of public and private, market and home, agrees with Bradley A. Ault's discussion of *oikos* and the larger market economies in ancient Hellenic societies, which he describes as "coexistive" with each other (262). Ault argues that "notions of domestic self-sufficiency" of archaic and Hellenic households are likely inaccurate. Household management wasn't based on providing for one's own family alone, rather "the orientation of the household would tend . . . towards market exchange, and hence local and regional economic development" (259). In various ways, Ault shows how the private household was a center of commercial exchange, or at least interconnected to the larger commercial exchanges in the *agora*. For instance, archeological findings in Megara Hyblaia reveal how houses contained more and more storage space from the eighth to the sixth century, likely for storing surplus commodities that the household produced for the market (Ault 260).

Labor-based grading contract economies highlight in a number of ways the interconnectedness of private and social practices (e.g., private labor and publicly circulated labor power) of students and teacher, of the private home and public market, of commodities' movement between these spheres, and of these spheres' relations to cycles of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. Furthermore, reading generously the ancient Hellenic society, we might see their conception of economy as one that not only blurs the line between home

and market, but the personal and the social. In the political economy of a labor-based grading contract classroom, one's personal learning is consubstantial, interconnected to, everyone else's. Learning is only social. There is no private learning, no private judgments. This gives extra reason to consider compassion and something like the Charter for Compassion (discussed in Chapter 5) as central to understanding the meaning and significance of labor and labor power in classrooms since it asks students to labor for one another in communal ways.

Finally, Mosco offers an equally compelling definition for political economy that reminds us of a needed emphasis when using it to understand the concept of labor. That emphasis is "the study of *the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources*" (24; emphasis in original). Two things that Mosco's definition highlights may not be clear in Riddell, Shackelford, Stamos, and Schneider's. The first is the political economy's focus on relationships that make up an assessment ecology. These relationships affect labor and how it is valued and circulated. The second is that those relationships develop power relations (and may be such relations) that "mutually constitute" cycles of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. As Mosco explains later in the chapter, power can be understood as relations that organize the "ability to control other people, processes, and things, even in the face of resistance" (24).

In labor-based grading contract economies, the cycles of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption that constitute writing assessments are inextricably threaded with power, which makes labor and its value threaded with power relations as well. One important aspect of these power relations are the *habitus* of the people involved and where those *habitus* are in relation to a dominant standard or to others in the classroom. When used as the standard, dominant white racial *habitus* determine the power relations in classroom assessment economies. But in labor-based economies, attention is called to these power relations (and *habitus*), allowing them to be more easily seen and interrogated. Additionally, one *habitus* is not privileged as the standard, instead amount or quantity of labor determines grades—labor power becomes more important. This means that much like Marx's critique of capitalist systems, the point in more liberatory political systems is to give as many people as possible control over the means of production. In this case, I'm referring to the means to produce value in and around writing and reading practices, or around students' labors of learning, which amount to the production of course grades. Liberation, then, comes from the ways students' labor power is circulated as a commodity. To do this, we must understand better how value is produced through student labor and exchanged through labor power in labor-based assessment economies, and how those economies provide for more critical learning than conventional assessment economies.

LABOR IS AT THE CENTER OF ALL THEORIES OF VALUE

The value of labor has been a central concern for economists, even before Marx. The eighteenth-century economist Adam Smith placed labor at the center of his economic theories that focused on alleviating poverty and reducing infant mortality rates, which he saw as connected to poverty (Sackrey et al. 30). Labor, Smith says in the introduction to *The Wealth of Nations*, is the "fund which originally supplies" a nation "with all the necessaries and conveniences of life" (Smith n. pag.; Sackrey et al. 43). Thus, labor is important to Smith's theorizing of value in economies, keeping in mind that his point of reference was a mercantile economy, not a capitalist one, and perhaps one closer to those of ancient Hellenic economies.[16] Still, we can see how Marx's ideas of labor follow in Smith's steps, and both theorize value of labor in markets.

Smith explains that value has two categories that help explain why things cost what they do and why those prices rise and fall. He says:

> The word value, it is to be observed, has two different meanings, and sometimes expresses the utility of some particular object, and sometimes the power of purchasing other goods which the possession of that object conveys. The one may be called "value in use"; the other, "value in exchange." The things which have the greatest value in use have frequently little or no value in exchange; and, on the contrary, those which have the greatest value in exchange have frequently little or no value in use. Nothing is more useful than water: but it will purchase scarce anything; scarce anything can be had in exchange for it. A diamond, on the contrary, has scarce any value in use; but a very great quantity of other goods may frequently be had in exchange for it. (Smith n. pag.)

So political economies work with and generate use-value and exchange-value, the former is determined by the uses the producer or others might make of the commodity in question, while the latter is the value that is produced through exchange by others desiring the commodity, or what someone can trade the commodity for on the market. Use- and exchange-values are easy to understand, and while distinct, are also related and create a contradiction that Trimbur, and

16 Laura LaHaye in the *Concise Encyclopedia of Economics* provides this definition of mercantilism: "Mercantilism is economic nationalism for the purpose of building a wealthy and powerful state. Adam Smith coined the term 'mercantile system' to describe the system of political economy that sought to enrich the country by restraining imports and encouraging exports." Book IV of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* offers an extensive treatment of his notion of the mercantile system.

Smith, have already mentioned. Later, political economists like Jean-Baptiste Say and David Ricardo will elaborate on what they saw is a linear causal relationship between use- and exchange-value.

In simple terms, we don't buy things we don't have a use for, most of the time. One can see the link between use- and exchange-value in the value of a theoretical home purchased in 2005 for $250,000 before the housing market collapsed in the US, which in 2008 reduced dramatically the prices of homes in most areas. This theoretical home in 2009, let's say, is valued at only $150K, or rather its exchange-value on the real estate market is valued at that price. However, to the family who lives in the home, cares for it, has meaningful familial experiences in it, and can afford their mortgage without hardship in 2009, the home has a use-value that is hard to put a price tag on. It's their home. It gives them more than what their money can buy. It is in this *more than* quality that we might see the contradiction in use- and exchange-values. One might see a similar gap in a student's hard work on a draft that receives a lower than expected grade. To the student, the labor and draft may have accumulated more value than the grade suggests.

This gap is not simply one created by equivocation in the term value. This would dislodge use-value from exchange-value, suggesting that they are not intimately connected to one another. Smith, Marx, Say, and Ricardo keep them wedded together, as do I. Grades, for instance, would not be very exchangeable if they were not indicators of use, of learning, and thus of what the student offers future employers or graduate programs, or is some predictor of future success. Grades, theoretically, are useful in these ways. However, in theory, GPAs have only as much exchange-value as they have use-value, in theory. Even in labor-based grading contract economies, where there are no grades on drafts, it is the judgments and feedback that have exchange- and use-value. Grades have no exchange-value because they are not used in a labor-based system. Theoretically, the use of my feedback on a draft to a student might be measured in the degree or extent that the student can use that feedback in future work on the draft or for the class. Its exchange-value is linked to those uses. If there are several other assignments in which the student must use my feedback in some way, say discuss them with me, create a revision plan, or pose problems about the judgments I make on their draft, then my feedback is highly exchangeable because it is highly useful, but not necessarily outside of the classroom, at least not directly.

However, in all economies, use- and exchange-value for a commodity rarely match up perfectly. Commodities often have different use- and exchange-values simultaneously. This simple distinction between use- and exchange-value in a classroom assessment economy helps us see why students might find a teacher's feedback or grade mostly useless (having little use-value) in the class, which might lead them to do nothing with that feedback, or see the grade as simply

the only thing that is important. However, they may also know that they need to accumulate high grades in the class because of the higher exchange-value those grades purchase after the course is over, through their translation into a higher course grade. The classroom's assessment economy sets up these different use- and exchange-values. My guess is that ideally most writing teachers would like to think that their feedback, and maybe even the grades they give students on their writing, have equally high use- and exchange-values. This begs the question: How exactly is the classroom's assessment economy constructing high use-values for all the commodities it circulates? The bottom line is that the two kinds of value are interconnected, so the gap is not an equivocation but a paradox created by the political economy in which that commodity and value circulate.

Part of the reason Smith can conceive of two categories of value in economies is because of the need to exchange commodities and a common unit of exchange, money. In capitalist markets such as today, the gap between use- and exchange-value appears more evident because value is usually measured in monetary ways, which is one level removed from the measurements of use, and more importantly from desire and aesthetic, emotional, and ethical considerations from which people actually operate, which I'll call a commodity's actual *worth*. Worth varies by person, and is measured in a multitude of ways, not just by possible use but also by aesthetic appreciation, how a commodity makes one feel, by our desire for the commodity, and by our moral or ethical associations around the commodity, all of which are not the same as need or use. This unaccounted for aspect of value, what I'm naming worth, helps name the contradiction that Trimbur points out in his discussion of use- and exchange-value.

Trimbur identifies the contradiction's source in the way that the capitalist mode of production "reproduces the prevailing and contradictory social and economic relations . . . where socialized production, with its promise of overcoming material scarcity, is at odds with the goal of private profit" (208). He offers a systematic way of understanding the gap, the contradiction. I argue that part of this contradiction in the capitalist mode of production is that it doesn't account for worth (or value produced by desire that is linked to ethical, emotional, and aesthetic dimensions), yet worth is a part of the judgments we make that lead to production, distribution, exchange, and consumption of all commodities. Note that worth accounts for embodied ways we encounter commodities in all systems that Marxian explanations of use- and exchange-value neglect. The bodily emotional responses we have to commodities, including the value we place on our labor power, affect our desires for them, or our feelings about them. This is an individualistic way to understand how these contradictions or gaps are created that is also systemic or structural. If worth involves the categories of aesthetic, emotion, ethics, and desire, then worth is key to the

circulation of commodities in the writing classroom. This suggests that worth may help us articulate the contradictions in the valuing of commodities and the place of labor power in such valuing.

Now, arguably desire is the larger category within those I've used to define worth. It often encompasses ethical, aesthetic, and emotional dimensions. To understand desire as systemic, one might look to how it is manufactured, or socially structured, in a number of ways that many, such as Lacan (i.e., the imaginary), Althusser (i.e., interpellation), and Freud (i.e., overdetermination) have discussed. The undervalued home above is a good example of this. Another example is the worth a luxury car gives someone who wants others to see them as successful and happy, attributes that some associate with the luxury car. The car owner could have bought a reasonably priced economy car, but the luxury car has more worth in particular social circles, which may make one feel good about oneself. The owner may also desire the luxury car for other private reasons that stem from what Lacan described as "the imaginary," a coherent system that congeals into an internal, whole, ideal image of the self that mediates the world and one's self (Lacan). The luxury car's use-value is the same as the economy car, but one's desire will regulate an individual's sense of its worth, which may lead to a decision to purchase regardless of its exchange-value. In this case, worth is not the same as exchange-value, since worth is measured in desire, not in money like exchange-value. And use-value is beside the point. Any car will be useful, but that is not the main criterion by which the buyer is making the decision to buy. In fact, such decisions in capitalist economies may tell us about the class-related *habitus* of individuals. The less money you have the more likely your purchases must be regulated by a commodity's exchange- and use-values. The more money you have, the more luxury and privilege you have to make buying decisions based on a commodity's worth to you, regardless of exchange- or use-values.

In some instances, the differences between use- and exchange-values may help create worth, or may contradict it. In some cases still, it could be argued that worth operates outside of both use- and exchange-value. No matter the worth an individual places on the luxury car, for example, that worth is determined in the Marxian sense that is both an individual set of decisions that are constrained by larger, social structures that pressure people to make particular kinds of decisions, or to have particular kinds of desires. Here we see at the micro level, the level of personal desire, the consubstantial nature of the circulation of value in economies that Scott identifies, the way individual desires reflect or react to broader trends.

The gaps between use- and exchange-value are also produced because of a common unit of measurement, money, which didn't exist uniformly in pre-cap-

italist economies where bartering was more common. If one is a pig farmer today, one doesn't exchange their pigs for produce or clothing. This would be an exchange based on a more direct measurement (e.g., one pig equals six bushels of corn or two pairs of wool trousers), and this measure would be contingent on many local factors— it's rhetorically and socially constructed (if you like), constructed in the physical exchange between farmer and merchant and the agreements they make or assume about the labor power encapsulated in what they offer and the degree of worth each sees in the commodities exchanged. Value in a barter system is out of contingency and necessity. Value is very idiosyncratic and uneven. It may depend on what one party needs, making the use-value more important. In other cases, it may be that one party wishes to exchange yet again to a third party for other goods or services, which makes the exchange-value more important in that particular exchange. This is a system that is messy and inconsistent, but very human.

In capitalist economies, we sell pigs for money, then we buy our produce and pants with that money. While this kind of exchange is unspoken today, it isn't natural, and needed explicit mention by Plutarch in his historical recording. In Chapter 16 of *Life of Perikles*, Plutarch writes of Pericles:

> As to his paternal estate, he was loth to lose it, and still more to be troubled with the management of it; consequently, he adopted what seemed to him the simplest and most exact method of dealing with it. Every year's produce was sold all together, and with the money thus obtained, he would buy what was necessary for his household in the market, and thus regulate his expenditure. (n. pag.)

Apparently, Plutarch reports that Pericles' family was not very happy about his practice of exchanging the surplus commodities of his household into money every year. As Plutarch explains in the same passage, the women and sons of his family found Pericles a poor manager of the household, and "blamed his exact regulation of his daily expenses, which allowed none of the superfluities common in great and wealthy households, but which made the debit and credit exactly balance each other." The tension in Pericles' household economy occurred because of his practice of translating the household's commodities into monetary exchange-value and managing only that value. Without making too much of this brief passage, could it have been that Pericles' family saw some of the worth of those commodities disappear once they were only understood in terms of their exchange-value? Did they wish to live with some contradictions, "superfluities," in the valuing of their commodities, which included their labor power captured in their surplus?

In conventional economic theory, the regulation of prices falls under the scarcity principle, in which the monetary price of a scarce commodity is said to be determined by the supply of that commodity and its demand in the market. The price will go up until an equilibrium is found, meaning until demand drops enough that there are just enough buyers for the supply of the commodity that exists in the market. What this explanation avoids is how even when prices go up, and often because they do, desire goes up, which can suggest worth. Scarcity does not fully account for the gap between use- and exchange-value because it doesn't account fully for demand, which can be a product of contingent and rhetorically influenced judgments. We trade in exchange-value. We live and experience use-value, but we are motivated by desire, by the worth of things, which is often communicated rhetorically.

This is why advertising is so important in capitalism. Fast-capitalism isn't that interested in communicating commodities' use-value, or even exchange-value, but it is very interested in manufacturing desire. Desire, the advertising industry knows, creates worth, which can operate outside of or in contradiction to use- or exchange-values. In fact, advertising is most successful when worth is more than exchange-value, and exchange-value is more than use-value—in other words, when it can produce lots of desire for a commodity, and charge inflated prices for the commodity, despite its much lower use-value. This illustrates the central importance of worth in all political economies, including assessment economies.

DESIRES CONFUSE WORTH IN ECONOMIES

In *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Thorstein Veblen offers a way to understand how worth is generated in political economies in his famous theory of conspicuous consumption. He argues that those classes of people who can afford to will buy the most expensive clothing, accoutrements, houses, food, etc., they can because "the consumption of these more excellent goods is an evidence to wealth, it becomes honorific . . . the failure to consume in due quantity and quality becomes a mark of inferiority and demerit" (64). So rich people buy expensive items conspicuously to show them off, not because they can but because doing so shows their wealth, their success, and so their merit. A person's conspicuous consumption is meant to equate to the quality of their person in some way, or their worth in society. By default, those who do not conspicuously consume such items with high exchange-value automatically reveal their inferiority, their lack of worth. Veblen's theory suggests one important aspect most applicable to the writing classroom. The commodities of value we exchange, like papers and feedback, which encapsulate our labor power, are associated with our own value and worth as individuals. Criticize my paper and you criticize me to some extent, or it feels like that.

But one might argue that grades are meant to equate to merit, and a student doesn't wear their grade on their body. Or do they?[17] Grades on writing equate to one judge's comparison to a white racial *habitus* embodied in a local dominant set of discursive standards understood by that judge. Haswell's categorization theory explains this well, which I discussed in Chapter 2. So grades have a difficult time being a reliable measure of quality or value, especially if the student in question comes to the classroom with a different *habitus* than the one embodied in the standard. This is often the case with working-class students, students of color, multilingual students, among others. Often times, grades do not equate to merit, or worth, at all, or merit and worth are equated falsely to only a dominant white racial *habitus*. In reality and experience, any valuing of student writing, then is a problematic, a set of problems that could (and likely should) be posed by and with the student, in order to understand the contradictions in how their writing is valued.

One could see conspicuous consumption as a necessary element in thriving capitalist economies, manufactured through advertisement, because without the desire for more consumption and lots of monetary exchange, the system doesn't work very well for those who stand to gain the most, i.e., those who control the most in the system. The urge is always to produce more, to buy more, to make more profit. But why do we work from a principle of more consumption, and consumption at the highest exchange-value? One possible reason is offered by Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*, written just a few years after Veblen's theory (1905). Weber argues that the Protestant work ethic was influential in the rise and dominance of capitalism in the US. Values like labor or work as a "calling" or as an "end in itself" came from Calvinist doctrine that then encouraged or agreed with capitalist modes of production (19). What happens, according to Weber, is that such a Protestant ethic turns into a "spirit" of capitalism that favors profit for profit's sake (21). The best calling for one's life is to labor in order to make money— or rather, one shows one's hard work, merit, and worth through the money one has made—but the focus is on the signs of election, of merit, the conspicuousness of making money. And this economic system favors those who control the means of production, capitalists, not the people laboring.

Again, we can see analogues to students who simply want high grades, the signs of merit, worth, and good labor, but who care little for what they learn or whether they learn. But even if we believe that most of our students do not simply want grades but want to learn to be critical citizens (as I do), they are still

17 Bourdieu's theory of *habitus* suggests that students might very well display dispositions that are read in determined ways. I've made a similar argument for "racial *habitus*" in assessment ecologies in Chapter 1 of *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies*.

circulating in assessment economies that determine desire in particular directions, that is, determine desire for accumulating high grades. These desires benefit those who control the means of academic production more than they benefit students (the academic laborers), like achieving high GPAs, or blindly reproducing the dominant white *habitus* despite the *habitus* of the students themselves.

You might ask, "how could these good students who desire to learn what I'm asking them to in my writing classroom, who do the work I'm asking them to do, be benefiting me (the teacher) or others in the institution more than themselves?" First, I'm not speaking of intentions, which have little to do with the circulation of value in political economies. Value is generated despite our intentions. I'm speaking of the value circulated in the assessment economy, which usually is linked to desires for high grades and desires to please the teacher (or receive favorable judgments of their writing by teachers). These desires raise the worth students place on grades as commodities. This conflates exchange-value of those grades with worth (learning and meaning), and this conflation of exchange-value and worth is central to how conspicuous consumption and the spirit of capitalism work.

These desires are manufactured in the system, likely before our students even entered our classrooms, but how do our classrooms call attention to these desires as manufactured? How do we call attention to the differences between use-value, exchange-value, and worth in the commodities that circulate in our assessment economies? How do our assessment economies allow for alternative desires to construct value and worth in labor power in drafts circulated? These questions become more problematic (in the Freirean meaning) when we consider the contradiction they present to many students of color, multilingual students, or students whose *habitus* do not easily fit into those *habitus* expected in the writing classroom, namely white, middle-class *habitus*. These dominant white racial *habitus* become what is desired because the assessment economies, who are controlled by teachers and school administrators, set them up as most exchangeable through curricula and learning outcomes. Dominant white racial *habitus* have a high use-value in the academy and other markets, but again, people often confuse exchange-value with worth. And forget that use-value is constantly evolving and only a product of the labors and exchanges of people in the economy. You cannot change what is useful until you introduce something else useful. The system doesn't change without actual differences, contradictions, disturbances, without circulating what was previously undesirable or unknown.

Veblen's conspicuous consumption theory fits well with Weber's ideas around the Protestant work ethic and its fueling of the spirit of capitalism in the US. One is not worthy unless one can show one's worth. And what signs of value and worth are offered in a capitalist society? Signs of the consumption of com-

modities, particularly ones with high exchange-values, like high grades. But this is only the story told to laborers and students in their respective political economies. Acquiring such signs of value and worth benefit most those with the most control and power in the economic system, capitalists and teachers, not those laboring for a wage or a grade.

Labor-based grading contract economies are set up and primarily controlled not by the teacher, but by students and teacher. In conventional grading economies, students are asked to labor in order to acquire, perhaps conspicuously, grades as signs of merit, worth, and election. Even if their intentions are altruistic, teachers benefit most in this system because they maintain their power to control students in most ways, such as the standard to be used, or the ways one should speak or write, or the power to determine a grade based on their sense of quality. They get what they want from students, whether that means the kind of writing they deem most helpful or educative for students or the kind of labor they want from them. Students' labor then is not for students but for the consumption of signs of merit that is supplied by the teacher. Yet not so ironically, the signs of merit and worth are mostly out of reach for many of our students whose *habitus* do not agree with the dominant white *habitus* of the academy. In these ways, teachers control students by controlling the signs of worth and value, which control students' labor without much regard for how much labor is expended in any individual case. This is because the signs of worth are controlled by the labor power perceived by the teacher that are encapsulated in documents and drafts and judged by comparing them to a single white, middle-class standard.

One might argue that teachers know more than students. They know what is good for students. This is why they are the teachers. Fair enough. We know more. But knowing more and even knowing what labors and things might be good for students, does not mean that control over students' labors and drafts is the best way for students to learn, whether that control comes from a teacher controlling what counts as quality or the labor directly. As I discussed in Chapter 5 under the question, "How can a teacher respond to students who put in minimal engagement in the labor, or try to game the system?" people learn exactly what they are able to at that moment in their lives. Forcing students to do otherwise is often futile, and may cause them to resist even more, turning them away from the very practices and ideas that we want for our students.

Beyond this good reason, political economies that control the desires of the many usually mostly benefit the few, which do not make for ethical or fair economies. No matter the alleged benefit of some kind of labor, the laborer-student must understand and accept that labor as beneficial. If they do not, then it will not matter what a teacher thinks is most beneficial to a student. Labor-based

grading contract assessment economies account directly for students' desires and their understandings of labor in the economy. This is vital to fairness and socially just classroom economies. Students and teacher are continually asked: Who does the labor power circulating in our assessment economy benefit most? How might that labor power be circulated in compassionate and fair ways? Students' participation and sharing in power is crucial. The labor they do may still be quite uneven, but because it is valued in negotiated ways and its worth is continually investigated, as I'll explain below (and in Chapter 7), it can be fairer and lead to critical understandings of reading and writing practices.

LABOR-BASED ECONOMIES CIRCULATE BOTH VALUE AND WORTH

If we really are motivated by worth—and I argue we are and should be— then even a utilitarian view of grades as high in use-value is not enough to circulate them in the political economy of the writing classroom if learning is our first priority. Grades do not account for worth. They do not account for contradictions in use- and exchange-value of labor. They do not account for the embodied ways humans learn. They do not account for the multiple dimensions in which we experience learning and being human. Like the sentiments of Pericles' family, if we focus on exchange-values, values that are incomplete translations of use-value, values that may hide embodied aspects of labor, we focus too much on exchange and lose the nuanced, contingent senses of worth in the commodities we circulate. Especially for learning environments like schools and classrooms, labor's worth is most vital, since it is how we might best capture what, why, how, and that we learn.

When a labor-based assessment economy distinguishes and articulates different values and worth of the labor power encapsulated in textual commodities, when it investigates the different exchange- and use-values to various people in the system, labor power can be uniformly measurable (by an agreed upon standard) and fairly, in at least three ways. That is, because we can separate use- and exchange-value from worth, it is easier to not attach a teacher's perceptions of labor's use-value or its worth to exchange-value (a student's course grade), yet still articulate and circulate all three in the economy.

The labor-based grading economy I'm arguing for defines and circulates exchange-value as the ways it determines when a student has done what they were asked to do. Did the student complete all the words asked of them and submitted in the manner asked? Simultaneously, use-value would be articulated and circulated through the material labor done in the present moment, and articulated in reflective documents and practices (e.g., journals, reflection

practices, labor tweets, and labor logs). Worth would be felt and understood through reflections and metacognitive work that articulates the meaning and significance of the labor power encapsulated in classroom commodities. It is realized and understood in periodic and focused reflective practices. In this way, a labor-based assessment economy can circulate use-value, exchange-value, and worth separately to students' advantages, while still maintaining their interconnection or relationships to one another. Figure 3.1 illustrates the various ways labor's values and worth can be understood and measured in labor-based grading contract economies.

While I'll discuss more precisely the ways that labor value can be measured in the next section, Figure 3.1 represents graphically the way worth is attached to both exchange- and use-value. It is derived from a close examination of and reflection on the exchange- and use-value of the labor power accumulated in a document or activity. The figure represents exchange- and use-value on the left side, activities that would happen chronologically first. Meanwhile worth is represented on the right side of the figure and produced after exchange- and use-values are circulated and understood by the student in numerical and discursive ways. Exchange- and use-value must first be measured before worth can be understood. Each are separate and measured in distinct ways. Each have an orientation in time. That is, exchange-value focuses students' and teacher's attention on past labor power accumulated in a document or activity and represented numerically. It can be understood by asking, what and how much labor power (in time or number of words) is accumulated or circulated?

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">experience of labor over time →→→</th></tr>
<tr><td>exchange-value, measured in labor power uniformly by a single, agreed-upon, standard, is past-oriented, and represented by a numerical value

What and how much labor power is accumulated or circulated?</td><td rowspan="2">worth, measured in metacognitive labor in diverse ways that reflect on exchange- and use-value of labor done, is future-oriented, and represented discursively in metacognitive and reflective documents

What is the meaning or significance of the labor or labor power already circulated or accumulated in the present document or activity?</td></tr>
<tr><td>use-value, measured in material labor done in diverse ways, is present-oriented, and represented discursively in metacognitive and reflective documents

How useful is the labor and what is its nature?</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 3.1. The three measurements of labor in labor-based grading contract economies.

Use-value focuses attention on the present labor in the moment. It is primarily measured discursively in reflective documents. It focuses attention on the work that is being done, and can be reflected upon either as one does it or immediately afterwards. It can be understood by asking, how useful is this labor and what is its nature? Finally, worth focuses attention on the value of past labor in order to consider future labor practices. It is measured discursively in reflective documents and activities, and can be understood by asking, what is the meaning or significance of the labor or labor power already circulated or accumulated in the present document or activity? Later in this chapter, I map these ideas to my concept of three-dimensional labor, showing how this three-part framework for measuring labor may also be a way to frame all labor and assessment activities, and can help teachers assess the effectiveness of their own labor-based assessment ecologies (discussed in detail in Chapter 7).

It should be obvious at this point that labor-based contract grading economies do not get rid of use- and exchange-values of commodities in and outside of the classroom. They make them more obvious and distinct, while revealing contradictions. At their core, labor-based grading contract economies provide for ways to value and measure labor and labor power, involve students in negotiating how labor is measured and valued, and offer ways to measure labor in nuanced ways. Understanding labor in the above ways keeps separate the ways a course grade is calculated (exchange-value) from how a student accomplishes labor and uses it to further their immediate needs in the classroom (use-value), from the lessons and practices learned through reflections on their labor (worth). Figuring out how to measure labor in such economies is therefore important to determine.

MEASURE THE VALUES OF LABOR SEPARATELY FROM ITS WORTH

If you cannot tell already, central to my conceiving of the political economy of the writing classroom is how texts, languages, and judgments themselves are valued. If as Trimbur argues about Marx's notions of capitalist modes of distribution are accurate, then value and worth are carried forth, accumulated, and transformed in the full cycle of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. And the fundamental thing carried forth in this cycle is labor power. In *The Wealth of Nations*, while not making the distinction between labor and labor power, Smith is thinking about labor in markets. This is why he says, "[l]abor, therefore, is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities." It is, in a sense, universal. Smith goes on:

> The real price of everything, what everything really costs to the man who wants to acquire it, is the toil and trouble of acquiring it. What everything is really worth to the man who has acquired it, and who wants to dispose of it or exchange it for something else, is the toil and trouble which it can save to himself, and which it can impose upon other people. What is bought with money or with goods is purchased by labour as much as what we acquire by the toil of our own body. That money or those goods indeed save us this toil. They contain the value of a certain quantity of labour which we exchange for what is supposed at the time to contain the value of an equal quantity. Labour was the first price, the original purchase-money that was paid for all things. It was not by gold or by silver, but by labour, that all the wealth of the world was originally purchased; and its value, to those who possess it, and who want to exchange it for some new productions, is precisely equal to the quantity of labour which it can enable them to purchase or command. (n. pag.)

So, according to Smith, labor is the common denominator of all value, no matter the kind. And value is determined in large part by the "quantity of labor" encapsulated in a commodity. This, I think, is intuitively true for learning in the writing classroom at all levels. But what does Smith mean by quantity? How do we measure the exchange-value of labor? It wasn't hours of labor put into the production of a commodity. Smith saw this as too abstract, since things like skill of laborers or the fertility of land vary too greatly. We can see this problem in the writing classroom, where one student's writing practices may produce more or a different quality of writing than another student's labor given the same constraints of time and information.

Thus measuring labor by time didn't make sense to Smith because in one instance one hour of labor may produce two units of something, while in another place it may produce four units, and in yet another place it may produce four units of a commodity that is of a different quality. Labor measured by time didn't consistently equate to the same amount or quality of a commodity. It is the units, the commodity, that is measurable, according to Smith. He says: "though equal quantities of labour are always of equal value *to the labourer*, yet *to the person* who employs him they appear sometimes to be of greater and sometimes of smaller value . . . In reality, however, it is the *goods* which are cheap in the one case, and dear in the other" (n. pag.; my emphasis). Thus, according to Smith's theory of value, measuring labor by time encapsulated in a commodity is diffi-

cult because it is always relative to the laborer's skill or other material conditions that may constrain or aid the laborer in their tasks. In other words, the amount of labor time put into any given commodity of a particular quality is separate from its exchange-value in the market. Labor's exchange-value is felt and used by the laborer, but the exchange-value of the commodity produced by that laborer is felt and used by the employer who contracted for the labor.

We have the same problem in writing classrooms. Time spent on literacy tasks, like reading a text or writing a draft, as a way to measure quality of those tasks' outcomes, is difficult to use as a consistent method for determining grades. Students are not the same, and given the same time parameters will not produce writing of the same quality, meaning their literacies produce drafts that are judged by readers to be different. They will also not produce the same amount of text. Furthermore, they each likely will explain what they learned through the activities of writing differently. These differences across various students and between the quality, quantity, and learning within a single student's experience are the gaps between use-value, exchange-value, and worth.

Often what many teachers say is that we cannot grade on effort because it is unfair.[18] If I grade based on whether all students produce a 2,500-word draft, I've set up a system in which not everyone has an equal or fair chance to achieve the same passing grade because some may need quite a bit more time to produce such a draft, or may produce a draft of that length in a reasonable amount of time but may not be able to do the kind of intellectual work asked for in the assignment. If I grade based on asking students to spend six-hours only on their drafts, then again I've set up a system in which some students' six hours do a lot more toward the goals of the class than others, or a system in which I'm asking everyone to find the same amount of time in their week, regardless of the other demands in their lives, such as family, jobs, other classes, etc. These factors in students' lives often intersect with gender, race, and other social dimensions not in the students' full control. If the products of labor are relative to mostly unknown factors in students' lives, then it appears unfair to use quantified labor to produce grades (exchange-value) in a course. This kind of assessment ecology, however, assumes as its central purpose to produce and circulate grade-commodities. How has the economy accounted for use-value and worth of labor? Without an attention to value and worth distinctly, the primary purpose of the writing classroom might too easily be to circulate external exchange-values.

18 I am using the term "effort" as synonymous with labor here because I think many would articulate this problem in this way, but as my discussion in this chapter should make clear, effort is not a precise term. I prefer "labor" since it is has these Marxian associations, and "effort" often refers in lay terms to the nature and quality of labor.

Note that Smith and even Marx assumed that the purpose of capitalist economies was to produce excess exchange value so that capital could be accumulated. This means it was important to figure out how to value commodities uniformly if the system was to be fair, or at least consistent. While labor was necessary to produce commodities, and labor power was a commodity itself, its measurement was not uniform. Each person's labor was valued differently, so some would do better than others in the economy. As a measure of value, labor-time was difficult to use as a consistent measure of any commodity's value. This unfairness in the economy, that one person's labor-time can produce more value than another's, is only unfair if the purpose of the economy is to accumulate and circulate exchange-value, such as money or grades, and if there is an agreed-upon standard by which to judge the products of labor. This is the case in capitalist economies and conventional, quality-based grading economies.

However, in the writing classroom, where our purposes are to accumulate learning, knowledge, practices, ideas, and literacy, it is reasonable to say that our primary purpose for our classroom assessment economies is the circulation and accumulation of labor's worth. And worth of student labors cannot have a uniform standard by which to measure it, even though we can have a uniform standard for measuring exchange-value (labor time or quantity), which is what Marx and Smith understood. This means that the value of labor measured by time on task or amount of text read or written, can be a fair measure of exchange-value, since exchange-value of labor is not connected to the circulation of worth, and worth is circulated more so in the economy. In short, the measures of exchange-value (i.e., grades) are circulated separately from the measures of worth (e.g., learning, focused reflections, feelings about the work, etc.). In the pursuit of accumulating worth in/through labor, students produce exchange-value by default, which is measured in uniform ways and separated from use-value and worth in the economy.

In an assessment economy that doesn't account for worth, but only for exchange- and use-value, and does not address the contradictions that are produced when these things are measured, the final grade, the exchange-value of the commodities circulated, is emphasized. This is especially true for writing assessment economies in which the commodities' used to determine the course grade are only valued by their so-called quality, i.e., grades on drafts that are used both to indicate a student's progress (exchange-value) and provide some measure of quality to the student (use-value). Quality of literacy practices should not be measured in such ways. It can too easily conflate use-value, exchange-value, and worth. It does not do a good enough job at addressing the gaps and contradictions that inevitably are produced among these measures of literacy labors.

David Ricardo, writing some thirty years later and responding to Smith's theories of value, offers a labor cost theory that centers on quantity of labor to determine relative prices of commodities, not wages paid to labor (as Smith had proposed). In his chapter "On Value" after summarizing Smith's ideas of use-value and exchange-value, Ricardo explains, "commodities derive their exchangeable value from two sources: from their scarcity, and from the quantity of labour required to obtain them." But he didn't mean all commodities. Much like Smith, he qualifies use-and exchange-value. There are some commodities that have exchange-value based on "scarcity alone," such as art, "scarce books and coins, wines of a particular quality, which can be made only from grapes grown on a particular soil" (n. pag.). While these kinds of commodities aren't prevalent, they do exist and "are procured by labour," meaning to buy them, one must have money, which means one must have captured labor in money to exchange for the commodity. However, because Ricardo is still trapped in a use- vs. exchange-value binary for commodities, and does not account for the dynamic, contingent, and unevenness of worth, he cannot escape a theory of value that doesn't ultimately equate to money. For the writing classroom, this is the same as saying that we need quality-based grades to measure the value of student labor. Any exchange is still one level removed from the labor power that is the foundation of political economies, and the contradictions of exchange- and use-value in the system.

Marx comments that Smith "sometimes confuses, and at other times substitutes, the determination of the value of *commodities* by the quantity of labour required for their production," making the exchange-value of labor the ultimate measure of value of a commodity. According to Marx, wages is the measure of the quantity of commodities (Marx, *Theories of Surplus-Value*; n. pag.; emphasis in original). The equation that one might form from Marx's reading of Smith is thus:

> Quantity of labor (labor-time) = quantity of commodities = wages

This equation, says Marx, is circular. Quantity of labor or labor-time is measured in wages. But the equation doesn't cause problems with Smith's theorizing of the nature of surplus-value since it "keeps firmly to the correct determination of the exchange-value of commodities—that is, its determination by the quantity of labour or the labour-time expended on them."

And so, Marx identifies Smith's theory of exchange-value as one based on the quantity of labor exchanged in the market and contained in a commodity. Value is labor-time. He illustrates it this way, which can easily be read as describing labor-based writing assessment economies, where workers are

students and commodities are the things, labor power, drafts, and judgments they circulate:

> Let us assume that all workers are producers of commodities, and not only produce their commodities but also sell them. The value of these commodities is determined by the necessary labour-time contained in them. If therefore the commodities are sold at their value, the labourer buys with one commodity, which is the product of twelve hours' labour-time, another twelve hours' labour-time in the form of another commodity, that is to say, twelve hours' labour-time which is embodied in another use-value. The value of his labour is therefore equal to the value of his commodity; that is, it is equal to the product of twelve hours' labour-time. The selling and buying again, in a word, the whole process of exchange, the metamorphosis of the commodity, alters nothing in this. It alters only the form of the use-value in which this twelve hours' labour-time appears. The value of labour is therefore equal to the value of the product of labour. In the first place, equal quantities of materialised labour are exchanged in the commodities—in so far as they are exchanged at their value. Secondly, however, a certain quantity of living labour is exchanged for an equal quantity of materialised labour, because, firstly, the living labour is materialised in a product, a commodity, which belongs to the labourer, and secondly, this commodity is in turn exchanged for another commodity which contains an equally large quantity of labour. In fact, therefore, a certain quantity of living labour is exchanged for an equal amount of materialised labour. Thus it is not only commodity exchanging for commodity in the proportion in which they represent an equal quantity of materialised labour-time, but a quantity of living labour exchanging for a commodity which represents the same quantity of labour materialised. (Marx, *Theories of Surplus-Value,* n. pag.)

In the above description, the value of a commodity equates to the labor-time materialized in it. If we're talking about the exchange-value of an essay, then I'm sure we'll find uneven amounts of labor in one classroom for the same essay produced by different students in that class. So quite literally, this theory of value based on labor-time is not a consistent system for exchange-values if the purpose of the economy is to exchange commodities fairly and acquire more labor power

fairly. Of course, those in capitalist systems of market exchange do not necessarily operate from an assumption that all labor will be measured fairly. It's about getting an advantage, getting labor cheaper and cheaper.

For capitalist markets, the purpose is to accumulate capital, but this purpose does not equate well to any writing assessment economy. Our purposes are to learn how to read and write in particular ways, or to do them more critically. What we accumulate, then, in labor-based grading contract economies is individual worth, since it embodies what one has learned and what one can transfer after the course is over. Since exchange-value is separated from worth, using labor-time as a measure of labor can be a fair method, if we don't place judgments of quality on that labor-time—that is, if we keep the exchange-value separated from use-value and worth. In short, for the purposes of course grading, everyone's time is of equal exchange-value in the assessment economy, even though that same labor's use-value or worth may not be measured the same.

But for Marx, there was a different problem with the above formulation of value. In a capitalist mode of production, says Marx about Smith's theory, where the "material conditions of labour belong to one or several classes" and "nothing but labour-power belongs to another class, the working class," labor-time no longer determines the measure of exchange-value of commodities. The equation above no longer works to explain the value of commodities because of the division of labor inherent in capitalist modes of production. In short, some only have their labor power to exchange as a commodity, but do not get to control the exchange-value of that labor power. Power relations, who controls more of the conditions of labor, matters and places an entire group of labors in a weaker position, thus they are more often taken advantage of or exploited. And commodities' exchange-values are based on the materialized labor embodied in them, no matter their use or worth. This is part of the contradiction that Trimbur discusses (208), one that promises profits and the distribution of commodities and contradictorily reproduces an uneven (unfair) relation of power between the laboring classes and the valuing of their own labor, which is to say that laborers don't completely dictate their wages.

The same kind of division of labor exists in classroom writing assessment economies, where students labor and teachers assign labor, where some students have more immediate access to the dominant English that is measured as more valuable than others. These uneven labor conditions create unfair, racist, and white supremacist outcomes. Students have varying degrees of limited to no control over the exchange-values (grades) of the commodities they produce by their labor, such as drafts they write, except to put more and more labor-time into documents, which may not amount to a better grade. For many multilingual and students of color, or students who come with different *habitus* than

those that inform the dominant discourse of the classroom, more time does not always equal more exchange-value in a draft. This unfairness in judgment is tied to a single agent's power to dictate value in the economy—that is, to dictate the value of students' labor. Agreeing with Ricardo, Marx explains this problem, "the expressions 'quantity of labour' and 'value of labour' are now no longer identical, and that therefore the relative value of commodities, although determined by the labour-time contained in them, is not determined by the value of labour, since that was only correct so long as the latter expression remained identical with the former" (Marx, *Theories of Surplus-Value* n. pag.). Marx understood that the value of labor, how one agent might judge it, is not the same as the quantity of labor, or labor-time.

Thus, one ethical problem with capitalist political economic systems is that laborers do not control the value of their labor, capitalists do, and this creates unfair gaps among exchange- and use-value of one's labor power accumulated in commodities, increases capital accumulation for capitalists and decreases them for laborers. These gaps are unfair and racist, given who typically controls the assessment economies of classrooms and the dominance of a white racial *habitus* in the standards of writing quality in most or all classrooms.

However, the gaps among worth, exchange-value, and use-value do not make an assessment economy unfair. They simply are. They reveal social difference and diversity, and individual significance and worth. The gaps are the problematizing of labor, judgment, and language that is the center of what is learned and accumulated. Yet Marx's criticism of capitalist economies reveals an important insight for us. If any labor-based grading contract economy is going to be fair and equitable, student-laborers must participate in determining the exchange-value of their labor.

To emphasize, Smith's confusion between labor's time and value that Marx identifies doesn't account for divisions of labor and the fact that laboring classes don't control exchange rates of commodities, just like our students. It would seem that a fairer economy would share this power with student-laborers equally. Near the end of the chapter, Marx comes to his critique. He says that Smith "confuses *the labour of other people* with *the produce of this labour*" (emphasis in original). Thus the exchange-value of a commodity is equal to the quantity of other people's labor materialized in that commodity, according to Marx. He explains:

> It [*sic*] emphasis here is on the change brought about by the *division of labour:* that is to say, that wealth no longer consists in the product of one's own labour, but in the quantity of the labour of others which this product commands,

> the social labour which it can buy, the quantity of which is determined by the quantity of labour it itself contains. In fact, only the concept of exchange-value is here involved —that my labour now counts only as social labour, and consequently its product determines my wealth by its command over an equal quantity of social labour . . . The emphasis here lies on the equalisation, brought about through the division of labour and exchange-value, of *my* labour with the labour of *others*, in other words, with social labour (the fact that *my* labour too, or the labour contained in my commodities, is already *socially* determined, and has fundamentally changed its character, escapes Adam), and not at all on the difference between *materialised* labour and *living* labour, and the specific laws of their exchange. (Marx, *Theories of Surplus-Value* n. pag.; emphasis in original)

Thus the exchange-value of commodities in a capitalist mode of production is socially determined by the labor materialized in any given commodity, not the living labor, the labor that it might take any give person to produce a commodity, the actual labor of human bodies. This means that actual, living labor, as Marx puts it, and the labor materialized in a particular commodity for exchange, or the product of labor, are rarely the same. Additionally, labor power is different from materialized and living labor, since labor power is what is accumulated and exchanged through a commodity in the market. It is accumulated through circulation. Consider the way a house gains in value between each sale.

This provides for a way to define how an assessment economy might measure the exchange-value of labor. It can be time on task and/or amount of text read or written. It is the textual document, say a letter that offers feedback to a peer on a draft, that circulates, and one way to measure the labor materialized in that document is the time the writer spent drafting it, another is the number of words that make up the letter. These values will never be the same or consistent in any collection of letters in a class. Yet it is a useful contradiction to investigate, which would reveal additional contradictions around the worth accumulated in the economy at that point.

So, living labor is what people do to live and produce, to learn and be human, which I associate to use-value of labor in Figure 3.1. While one might measure it numerically, such as engagement ratings of labor sessions (see Chapter 7), it should also be measured in discursive ways, such as reflections on one's laboring, since the uses we make or understand of our labors are not strictly empirical measures of quantity or number. Worth, then, becomes an intersec-

tion and outgrowth of exchange-value, use-value, and the embodied ways labor is experienced in and outside a classroom.

To sum up, measuring labor in a labor-based grading economy can be done in three separate ways, three different measures that are dictated by why we are measuring labor in those three ways. In other words, how and why we measure labor are determined by the purposes that the economy sets for that measuring. These three ways of measuring can intersect with one another, yet stay distinct and separate in how they operate and circulate in the economy. First, we measure to produce an institutionally demanded course grade, which requires a numerical number that is fair and whose standard of measurement is agreed upon by everyone in the classroom. This is the exchange-value of students' labor. Second, we measure labor by its usefulness to students in their learning and development in the course in order to know what we've done and what that labor offers us as learners. This can be done by some quantitative measures like engagement ratings on individual labor sessions, but primarily is done through frequent, even daily, personal reflections on labor. These reflections determine the use-value of labor and are separated or disconnected from determinations of exchange-value. Finally, we measure worth of labor by articulating the significance and meaning that we find in our present and past labors of the class. This is done by reflections on labor patterns and labor data that we keep throughout the quarter or semester. These reflections, which are done at crucial times in the quarter or semester (e.g., midpoint and final), determine or articulate worth of labor to the individual student.

Each value of labor can be measured separately, while maintaining their interconnected natures through articulations of worth. But to do this work, the standards of the measurement of exchange- and use-value must be negotiated and agreed upon with students, so that those who labor and have the most stake in the economy, those who are meant to benefit most from the purposes of the assessment economy, can have more control over the value of their labor, and the meaning of their labor's worth. These power relations make labor-based grading contract economies fairer and more socially just. They allow any classroom assessment economy to respond directly to the local diversity and contexts in any classroom.

LABOR CAN BE UNDERSTOOD AS THREE-DIMENSIONAL

I realize that the previous Marxian theory may be too much for many writing teachers, and certainly not a good way to explain to students how labor will be used to grade and understand their learning in a course. I offer it because central to my understanding of labor-based grading contracts is a Marxian critique of

the culture of classroom assessment, its relations to the labors involved in learning and to larger capitalist modes of production.

Now, allow me to recast the above into a form that may be more useful for writing teachers and students in classrooms. This section offers a way to explain the exchange- and use-value of labor and its worth to students. Labor-based grading contracts as I have described them in this book assume three dimensions of labor, each of which are measured differently for different purposes. Each dimension is enacted by students, meaning there are moments in the labor of the course that ask students to pay attention to particular dimensions of their working in order to have more control over the nature and products of their labor practices by being more self-aware and critical of their laboring as practices. In short, paying attention to these three dimensions of labor offer students direct ways to quantify and articulate their labor. This is also to say, these three dimensions provide direct ways to gather data on their labor in order to understand the exchange-value, use-value, and worth of those labors to the student and perhaps the class as a whole.

These dimensions of labor are a framework that takes care of grades (determines the exchange-value of labor), circulates separately frequent reflections on their labor (generates use-value of labor), and ends with more formalized reflections that problematize their existential labor situations at key moments in the term or semester, which aid in articulating what their labor means and how it is significant to them (articulates worth of labor). The three dimensions of labor are:

- *How students labor*, measured by explaining the step-by-step process of labor involved in any practice or assignment through labor instructions and student reflections on labor. It is most associated to the use-value of labor. This dimension answers the question: How am I laboring and what does it offer me?
- *That students labor*, measured by the quantity of student labor in time on tasks, number of words or pages, or duration of practices and activities most often recorded in labor logs and labor journals. It is most associated with the exchange-value of labor. This dimension answers: How much am I laboring?
- *What the labor means*, measured by reflections on noncognitive and metacognitive domains through engagement ratings and mindful practices that help students pay attention to their labor in order to make sense and meaning of it, done often in labor logs, labor journals, labor tweets, and midterm and final reflections on their labor as a practice. It is most associated to labor's worth. This dimension answers: What is the nature of my labor and what do I learn from it?

The above aspects of labor that my contract requires also illustrate the order in which I ask students to pay attention to their labor, which offers a slow, deepening, and cumulative sense of their labors in the process of any assignment and through the course of the semester or quarter. We begin with discussing and running through the process of the labor instructions (the *how* of labor) for an assignment. Each set of labor instructions emphasizes clearly what they are supposed to do, step by step, helping students see exactly how they might labor. As they do the actual labor, they keep track of the amount of time in the labor, with cues from me at each step that explain how much approximate time each step should take or how many words are expected of them to produce (if writing is the labor) or read (if reading is the labor) (the *that* of labor).

Breaking up an assignment into labor steps, even the most mundane of activities, focuses students' attention on the material and time dimensions of learning in a writing course. It is about the doing, the labor commodity (labor power), not about that labor's products, or the completed commodity, even though we care about that and spend time doing other labors with those documents. We are attempting to measure labor in our assessment economy, not its products. This means we understand how we should do something, then pay attention to how we do it in the acts of laboring. One doesn't learn to write by turning in a finished paper. One learns *in the labors* of researching, drafting, and revising—in the doing—and learns best if one pays attention to how one is doing those labors.

Finally, after they've completed a session of labor, or in the middle of a longer labor process, students pause and reflect briefly on their engagement, recording an engagement rating in their labor logs (the *what* of labor). Additionally, labor instructions often ask students to tweet a snapshot of something significant in their labor, such as an annotated page they read or a pre-writing document done before drafting.[19] These brief moments of assessing what they've done and recording either an engagement rating or a tweet about something they've learned offer ways to be mindful of what they are learning in their labors. It offers ways to pay attention to one's labor as they do it.

Once a week, we complete this reflecting on what their labor means by making entries into their labor journals. Finally, during midpoint and final times, students reflect upon all the data they've gathered up to that point, looking for patterns and other things they are learning about their labor as a set of practices. I prompt students with questions about patterns and the

19 Recently, I've moved to using private tweet-like technologies, such as Slack, which allow my students' messages to be accessible only to our class.

contradictions between apparent use- and exchange-values. This moves them toward problematizing their labor and learning. In this three-dimensional way, labor is more fully articulated and experienced. Labor becomes more than a means to complete a reading or a writing assignment. It is also the ends that we savor or try to understand better. Thus, through the processes of assigning, articulating, doing, and reflecting on our labors, students' learning is continually articulated and experienced as bodily labor in three dimensions.

Beyond these somewhat practical reasons for thinking of labor in three dimensions, labor is also a vital part of the material conditions of all life, making it important to pay attention to in educational processes, especially literacy education, which often is understood as learning to be a citizen or becoming critically aware of one's self and one's world.[20] The labors of learning languaging is the human condition. If we accept that languaging is labor, then labor as a fundamental part of the human condition agrees with Kenneth Burke's definition of humanity that I discussed in Chapter 2.

In her influential book, *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt discusses extensively the concept of labor as part of the human condition, along with two other related concepts, work and action. While I've been using these three concepts synonymously, these three terms form a hierarchy for Arendt. She explains that "[l]abor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor. The human condition of labor is life itself" (7). Work, then, is activity that is "unnatural" yet "provides an 'artificial' world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings . . . The human condition of work is worldliness" (7). Finally, action "goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on earth and inhabit the world" (7).[21] For Arendt, these three kinds of practices are connected and create ongoing, historical cycles, forming the human condition and history. Arendt explains further,

> Labor assures not only individual survival, but the life of the species. Work and its product, the human artifact, bestow a measure of permanence and durability upon the futility of

20 James Berlin identifies the purpose for writing instruction in the twentieth century as preparing citizens (189), while ancient Hellenic education was explicitly about preparing citizens for their duties as citizens (Marrou), something George Kennedy's history of classical rhetoric shows as well.

21 Arendt does not use an inclusive pronoun to identify humanity, but the archaic "man."

> mortal life and the fleeting character of human time. Action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition of remembrance, that is, for history. (8-9)

So in Arendt's conception of the human condition, labor is biological and preserves life at its most fundamental level. Work identifies the material, the artifacts we produce, and provides some permanence and durability to our temporary and limited life, while action pertains to the political and historical trends and movements that are bigger than the individual, allowing societies to have memory and a sense of history by allowing what individuals do to continue on, contribute to larger things, and extend beyond their limited time on earth.

I will not engage in a critique of Arendt's theory of the human condition, but I will voice my resistance to her hierarchy, which sets up an elitist, linear set of practices that devalue the biological (labor) and favor intellectual and political practices (action). It is reminiscent of Plato's hierarchy of souls or human types in *Phaedrus*, in which the very acts that Plato and Arendt are engaged in are the definition of the highest level in their respective hierarchies. Regardless of what one thinks of her hierarchy, Arendt offers some useful ways to consider labor, if we assume that labor references the biological and is always connected to both work and action. I do not want to separate the three concepts, but place them all under one category, labor.

When placed inside a writing assessment ecology, labor is the enactment of ecological processes that produce artifacts and other things, or ecological parts, what Arendt's identifies as "work." These parts and processes offer longer-standing lessons and take-aways, or ecological products, to the people in the ecology (Arendt's "action"). But as I've discussed elsewhere (*Antiracist* 93), writing assessment ecologies are complex systems in which these elements are consubstantial to each other. They inter-are. So the processes of labor are the parts of work are the products of action are the processes of labor, etc. It seems clear to me that Arendt understands the necessity of all three practices in the human condition, even if she holds them as a hierarchy. I do not. We cannot have history (action) without the biological necessity of laboring bodies (labor), or the tools and artifacts that make our world and action possible (work).

All these elements, which I call three-dimensional labor, are equally important and necessary for coming to critical consciousness about ourselves and our world, about meaningful and ethical language practices. Thus, I wish to use Arendt in a corrupted way. Instead of seeing labor-work-action as a hierarchical set of elements to the human condition, one can use Arendt's concepts as useful ways to flesh out three-dimensional labor, and understand a mindful, recursive

cycle of articulation and reflection that students can participate in so that they take more control over their labor as a set of practices and find more meaning and purpose in those practices.

In a lengthy footnote, Arendt provides a useful etymology for the term labor. She explains:

> All the European words for "labor," the Latin and English *labor*, the Greek *ponos*, the French *travail*, the German *Arbeit*, signify pain and effort and are also used for the pangs of birth. *Labor* has the same etymological root as *labore* ("to stumble under a burden"); *ponos* and *Arbeit* have the same etymological roots as "poverty" (*penia* in Greek and *Armut* in German). Even Hesiod, currently counted among the few defenders of labor in antiquity, put *ponon alginoenta* ("painful labor") as first of the evils plaguing man (*Theogany* 226). (48)

What is immediately useful here is to notice that labor is an embodied process, which suggests that if we can keep the embodied aspects of labor in the ways we explain and measure labor in the writing classroom it offers us a fuller explanation of student labor and its value and worth. Arendt uses this etymology to move toward seeing labor as always about the biological, the body in pain and misery, which results in "deformation of the human body" (48). For Arendt, not only does she find historical evidence that labor is associated with pain and suffering, but with bodily disfigurement. However, as Arendt does frequently in her discussion, I suggest we take a page from ancient Hellenic society. The ancient Hellenes saw life and the material world always in flux. This was part of the way they saw the biological and seasonal changes in people and the world around them. People and the world are always in cycles of change, which can be seen in Plato's ideas about the soul and reincarnation in his *Phaedrus*. It is also a good way to characterize our students in their educational processes. They are always changing, fluxing, becoming.

The Pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus may be the most known for his ideas of life as constant flux. In two fragments misquoted by Plato (*Cratylus*, 402a),[22] Heraclitus says: "[t]hose who step into the same river have different waters flowing ever upon them" (Freeman 25); and "[i]n the same river, we both step and do not step, we are and we are not" (Freeman 28). Daniel Graham explains the first fragment: "[t]he sentence says that *different* waters flow in rivers *staying the same*. In other words, though the waters are always changing, the riv-

22 In the dialogue, Plato has Socrates say: "Heracleitus is supposed to say that all things are in motion and nothing at rest; he compares them to the stream of a river, and says that you cannot go into the same water twice."

ers stay the same" (emphasis in original). The river is changing, and its changing is part of its essence, so rivers-as-change is constant. The river is and is not the same. Perhaps more precisely, the river as a human construct that we can refer to can always be the same, but the river as an experienced phenomenon in the world is never the same.

This doctrine of flux and unity of opposites should sound familiar. The Sophist Protagoras of Abdera's famous Humanity-measure uses it too. Protagoras' fragment says, "Of all things the measure is Man, of the things that are, that they are, and of the things that are not, that they are not" (Freeman 125).[23] If we accept the idea that life is flux, that change is essential to life, and that as Arendt says labor is a necessary part of the biological human condition, then labor does not deform bodies, it changes them in inevitable and necessary ways. Laboring is life. Suffering is part of laboring. And as the first of Buddhism's Four Noble Truths reminds us, life is suffering. Laboring is part of how change and flux happen. We cannot avoid the fact that what we do affects our bodies, marks them in visible ways. Like Heraclitus' rivers, we are change. We are flux. And yet, we have a sense of stability in who we are.

In Chapter 1, I reiterate my theorizing of the way our labors, languages, and material conditions mark our bodies in ways that become racialized, calling it racial *habitus,* drawing on Bourdieu's term. Thus there are historicized and racialized implications to particular kinds of labor and their effects on our bodies. These effects have intersectional implications to socioeconomic position and gender performance in classrooms as well. We might then say that we are always becoming gendered, raced, aged, and disabled bodies. If we accept the ancient Hellenic doctrine of flux and unity of opposites, then one's status as an abled, woman, man, Asian, Black, or white person, for instance, is always in flux, just as those categories themselves are constantly and historically changing, as Omi and Winant explain about racial formations. Seeing the biological aspects of laboring as pain and misery is not cause to avoid it or devalue it, as Arendt appears to do, it is simply recognizing a natural part of the flux of life that inter-is our bodies.

Now, if we take Arendt's theory of the human condition, her hierarchy of labor-work-action, and transform it into an interconnected and ever-recursive process—that is, if we do not favor one element but see them all as simultaneous and equally important—we get the three-dimensional articulation of labor that I began with, only now it is set as a framework for labor in the classroom. Figure 3.2 illustrates how Arendt's terms sync up with three-dimensional labor.

23 I reference Protagoras' fragment as "Humanity-measure" and not "Man-measure" for reasons of inclusion, since Protagoras doubtfully would exclude everyone but men in his theory of knowing and judgment. I retain the language of the fragment because it is the language of the original translation that Freeman inherits from the Diels translation.

Three-dimensional Labor	**Arendt's Theory**
1st – *How students labor*, measured by articulating the process of labor involved in any practice or assignment through labor instructions (i.e., by step-by-step, process instructions) and student reflections on labor. It is most associated to the use-value of labor. This dimension answers the question: How am I laboring and what does it offer me?	Labor – Necessary, bodily actions (the bodily processes of reading and writing)
2nd – *That students labor*, measured by the quantity of student labor in time on tasks, number of words or pages, or duration of practices and activities (i.e., through labor logs and labor journals). It is most associated with the exchange-value of labor. This dimension answers: How much am I laboring?	Work – Products and artifacts used purposefully (texts produced and time spent on tasks)
3rd – *What the labor means*, measured by reflections on noncognitive and metacognitive domains through engagement ratings and mindful practices that help students pay attention to their labor in order to make sense and meaning of it (e.g., in labor logs, labor journals, labor tweets, and midterm and final reflections on their labor as a practice). It is most associated to labor's worth. This dimension answers: What is the nature of my labor and what do I learn from it?	Action – Articulation and acts of agency and distinction (noncognitive and metacognitive awareness)

Figure 3.2. The three dimensions of labor and Arendt's three aspects of the human condition.

What may not be clear to this point is how the second and third dimensions of labor align with Arendt's terms (work and action), and what all three terms contribute to the three dimensions of labor in a writing classroom's assessment economy. What I hope to explain below is that if we can map Arendt's theory to the three dimensions of labor used in labor-based grading economies, the economy can help students engage more meaningfully in problematizing their own existential situations. Doing this offers students more potent and critical ways to language and approach future rhetorical situations. It also allows them to explore the ways their personal labor is connected to larger structures of labor in our class, the school, their own educational histories, and even larger social structures that contribute to *habitus*, such as gender, class, and race, among others.

Arendt describes labor as biological, unending, and cyclical (105). It is the way people reproduce themselves and things in the world (106). It is the physical doing

of things. This is the *how* of labor's first dimension. When teacher and students articulate this dimension in economies, we point out what literally will be done, in what order, and what quantities or amount of work is expected. Doing this in labor instructions can reveal how language is biological, how learning to read and write is never-ending and requires us to take time to move, to do things. A reading "assignment" is not simply a task to check off a list, not something done, a chapter swallowed or consumed, but it also designates a period of chronological time in which one's body is in laboring processes in particular material places. It is energy expended and time experienced that results in change. Reading a chapter, like writing a draft, is movement and flux. It is verbing, not a noun.

Conceiving and designing an assignment initially in this first dimension of labor can help teachers consider what they are actually asking students to do, how much time they are expecting students to spend, and how that doing leads to learning in some way. It should also prompt us to work with our students on labor processes, collaboratively work out with students what fair labor processes are, and continually check on students' abilities to do the ideal labor set forth in labor instructions. For instance, what do we expect students actually to do when we ask them to read a chapter of a book? Do we expect them to find a quiet location with no distractions or people working in the background? Do we expect them to read all thirty-five pages in one sitting? Do we expect them to be sitting in a hard chair, back erect and at a table, or lying on their bed in their room, or sitting in their car waiting to go to class? Do we expect them to spend two or three hours reading, or as much time as it takes to finish the entire chapter? Do we expect that they will be doing this reading after a long day of working a job? Do we expect them to have satisfied their bodily needs for food, water, and rest first, before they begin reading? Do we expect them to be mindful, to pause every so often and take an assessment of what they've just read, ask themselves a question about it, maybe take some notes somewhere? Do we want them to annotate the text in some specific way?

The point is, understanding and articulating the how of labor can help students not just do the kinds of labors that we (teacher and students) agree will most help them succeed, but pay attention to, and be mindful of, their bodies and the places those bodies are in when they do reading or writing for our courses. Our students may realize in the process that when such biological, chronological, and material processes of labor are made explicit, some of their habitual practices many not be very conducive to the ideal laboring envisioned for their learning. This doesn't address material, economic, and other constraints that are very real for many students, but avoiding what a teacher understands as ideal labor is just as detrimental to students' problematizing and learning as ignoring their material constraints and conditions. In other words, just because it is unrealistic to ask everyone to perform the same ideal labor in the same ways doesn't

mean we cannot articulate what we understand at the moment to be ideal labor as a kind of shore marker or buoy to help give reference to those in the ecology. Doing this also allows the class to self-consciously change what it expects as ideal labor over time. This can help us better understand and respond to the material constraints and bodily differences in students' varying labor practices.

Arendt makes an important distinction that often comes up in my classes when students begin paying closer attention to the first dimension of their labor. Because it is connected to the body, according to Arendt, labor is also private (111). Thus "every activity which is not necessary either for the life of the individual or for the life process of society is subsumed under playfulness" (127). Play is private. Occasionally in my classrooms, students wonder about whether certain stretches of time count as labor, since they must record their labor in labor logs. For example, does pausing in one's reading in order to "take a break" and just relax for an hour, while still thinking about the reading, count as reading labor? Does one's drive home after class in which one is brainstorming a draft or thinking through ideas from the book a part of the labor of the class to be recorded? Or would these times be in the realm of play and not recorded? What does that chill break or drive home produce for the student or their colleagues in the course? Must one's time always produce something measurable? Our bodies have needs, and some of those needs are rest and downtime from strenuous tasks. Can taking a break from intense reading be necessary for a student, just as necessary as getting home? Can we account for that labor-time too?

I've always left these questions up to the student to decide and reflect upon in labor journals. My sense is that if that student feels that the break from the labor somehow contributes to the labor, or helps them, then it may be counted. However, the larger question about the role of play in labor is important to have. Should we not strive to transform our "work" for the class into "play"? Shouldn't we find joy or playfulness in our labors? Is play really a private matter only? Why is play often seen as private while work is easily seen as public or even for others' benefit? Ultimately, while I realize that many people separate work and play, I'm not sure that this separation is always useful or meaningful in an educational context, since as I've suggested above, learning languaging is part of the lifelong human condition. I do not deny that there are many grey areas in how we labor and play. And I think most would agree that oftentimes, labors that begin as work or for school, end up being fun and play, and vise versa. The distinctions between work, rest, and play seem fuzzy at best and mostly contrived, likely for the purposes of controlling people. If you can devalue play and make work more important in a society, then you can get a lot of people to define themselves by their work, by their laboring for an elite group, or a corporation. They will sacrifice themselves for their work. This, in effect, gets people to consent to modes of living that mostly benefit large

corporations and their relatively few shareholders and CEOs. No matter how one feels about such idea(l)s, the distinctions between rest, work, and play seem good places to reflect upon together and problematize.

The second dimension of labor, *that* we labor, which calls attention to how much labor we produce, is mapped to Arendt's notion of "work." She explains that work "fabricates the sheer unending variety of things whose sum total constitutes the human artifice . . . objects for use" (136). Thus work is connected to material artifacts and instruments and so quantifiable. They have a definite beginning and end (143), are durable but wear out with use (137), and have usefulness for human ends. In fact, they are defined as means to human ends, making their usefulness the primary standard by which to measure them (154). Arendt, however, does not confine work to mere objects. Work, like labor, is connected to people and their uses or purposes. A tree in and of itself has no purpose for humans until we conceive of it as something to use for particular purposes, like fire wood or the materials for a house. Once a tree is lumber it has been transformed through labor into an instrument of human work.

Arendt connects work and its instrumentality to Protagoras' Humanity-measure doctrine through people's judgment and purposes for the things being judged. She does this by identifying a corruption in the way the fragment has been typically translated. According to Arendt, Protagoras' fragment does not say "man is the measure of all things." The phrase uses the Greek word, *chrēmata*, which does not mean "all things," instead it means "specifically things used or needed or possessed by men" (158). Therefore, Arendt explains,

> He [*homo faber* or working human] will judge every thing as though it belonged to the class of *chrēmata*, of use objects, so that, to follow Plato's own example, the wind will no longer be understood in its own right as a natural force but will be considered exclusively in accordance with human needs for warmth or refreshment (158)

The implication of this to the second dimension of labor is that the work in the second dimension of labor articulates and makes judgments on the products of our laboring, the artifacts students produce and the time spent in labor. Thus, part of our laboring is to make purposeful judgments on and about that laboring itself. When students pay attention to the fact that they labor in particular ways, then record measurements on those sessions of labor, they transform that labor into countable or quantifiable labor power that is exchangeable in our economy for a final course grade. Of course, the second dimension of labor offers more than just the calculation of course grades. Arendt's notion of work articulates the beginning and end of periods of labor and what those periods of laboring pro-

duce, and like Arendt's rendition of Protagoras' Humanity-measure fragment, as a dimension of labor they include judgments of usefulness and purpose, which can be accounted for quantitatively in engagement ratings in labor logs and number of words or pages produced or read, and in more qualitative measures in weekly reflections in labor journals. Thus students purposefully keep track of the fact that they labor and how much they produce or work through.

While there may be other small judgments that measure labor which we might ask students to do as they labor, it is the quantitative, instrumental, and purposeful aspects of the second dimension of labor that Arendt's concept of work reveals that I think is most useful to students. That is, finding small ways to judge and measure labor in quantifiable ways is vital to seeing instrumentality and purpose. Furthermore, if we are using labor as a way to calculate final course grades, and if our learning in the class is articulated as labor (through labor instructions), then quantifying our actual labor in some way is important to help students know their progress and determine final grades, even if many of us find quantifying things in humanities-based classes problematic. But the problem of quantifying things in literacy classrooms is mostly a problem when we try to quantify learning or quality of students' learning, reading, or writing practices, then use those measures to grade how good students are or how well they've done something. This is not what the second dimension of labor calls for. And because it is more easily separated from the other two dimensions of labor, it is less confusing to students as some judgment of quality. It is more easily seen as unconnected to judgments of quality.

In fact, it is not as problematic to quantify how much time a student spends writing a draft, or how many words they produced, or how much time they spent reading a book if that quantifying is only used to understand their practices, learn something from that quantifying, and make a simple binary judgment of fact (not value): did the student complete the labor task asked of them? Did they write five hundred words? How many words did they write? Did they read for two hours? How many hours did they read exactly? Did they tweet a picture of an annotated page from their reading? In these ways, the second dimension of labor can help students conceive of time on task and the amount of words produced or read in a given labor session as instrumental to their learning and to understanding what that learning actually consists of. Time and amount of words, for instance, become measurements for the purpose of understanding their learning as labor. This is how I try to explain those quantifiable things in labor instructions to students, and how we try to articulate them in each assignment's statement of goals. But as one might expect, it often requires students to have some initial faith in the labor-based system and experience it for a while before they realize and feel what benefits there are for them.

The third dimension of labor is *what* the labor means, which I connect to Arendt's notion of action (as seen in Figure 3.2). She associates closely action with human diversity, individual distinctiveness and distinction. Action, according to Arendt, defines being human. She explains:

> With word and deed we insert ourselves into the human world, and this insertion is like a second birth, in which we confirm and take upon ourselves the naked fact of our original physical appearance. This insertion is not forced upon us by necessity, like labor, and it is not prompted by utility, like work. It may be stimulated by the presence of others whose company we may wish to join, but it is never conditioned by them; its impulse springs from the beginning which came into the world when we were born and to which we respond by beginning something new on our own initiative. To act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, "to begin," "to lead," and eventually "to rule," indicates), to set something into motion (which is the original meaning of the Latin *agere*) . . . it is not the beginning of something but of somebody, who is a beginner himself . . . another way of saying that the principle of freedom was created when man was created but not before. (176-77)

Thus Arendt sees action as the way human plurality is inherent in the human condition (175), and to be an agent means to both act and speak, to engage in both words and deeds (178). We begin as single agents speaking and doing (189), and this feeds into a community who continues those actions after we leave or die (198). In a broad sense, Arendt sees action as the way to understand how humans make history, science, politics, and the most durable elements of society, ideas, by making themselves. She eventually moves her discussion to forgiveness, which is our unique power to undo or alleviate the problems of not knowing fully the consequences of previous acts (236-37).

Arendtian action offers several ways to elaborate the third dimension of labor, the reflective dimension that provides students with ways to make sense and meaning out of how and that they labor. While the habitual and iterative process of small acts of reflection condition students to pause and reflect upon how they are working or that they are, I still offer more formal moments in the semester or quarter to think more carefully about their labor. The weekly reflections offer a series of low-stakes moments, as do our midterm and final reflections on our labor log data and labor journal entries. One move Arendt's action asks us to consider in such reflections is how the student is an agent acting in their labor.

How does their labor make them? In what ways is that labor beginning some practice or bit of learning for them? Who are they just now beginning to become? What bit of meaning in their labor practices is worth sharing with their colleagues in class? What can be carried on, made larger than just some private insight for one student? These are hard, and arguably, abstract questions to pose to students, but asking students to think about themselves not only as individual students completing work for a class or teacher but as agents acting in purposeful ways that then begin the production of something else through their practices, something larger than themselves, can be a bit less abstract.

Such reflective activities or prompts might begin in the early weeks of a semester to focus on the student as an agent acting, deciding and doing things, in their labor, then gently push them to think about their words as deeds, and their deeds as words, push them to pose their own questions about what their labor means to their own development, to their own growth as a writer or reader. This making meaning of their labor may start with understanding the first dimension of labor: How did you do what you did? What happened first, second, etc.? Where were you? What was physically happening in your surroundings? It can then move to the second dimension: How long did you take to do key steps in the labor instructions? How much did you produce? At midpoint and final times, I ask them to reflect not on a single session of labor, but all their labor as a set of practices that stretch over the semester or quarter. To help them see patterns and their labor as practice, I ask them to fill in a table that I provide them (Table 3.1) from their information collected in their labor logs.[24]

Table 3.1. Sample reflection table that helps students see their labor as a set of practices that produce worth.

Average duration of most engaged sessions/ average Duration of all sessions (min)	**No. of sessions/total no. of all sessions**	**Average Engagement Rating (1-5)**	**Total duration of most engagement sessions/all sessions (min)**	**Main Location of Labor**
60/70	4/29	3.5	240/2030	Home
Average duration of W sessions	**Average duration of R sessions**	**Average engagement of W sessions**	**Average engagement of R sessions**	**Average minutes of labor per week**
62	45	4.5	3	600

24 In recent versions of the labor logs, which are Google Sheets that I give to my students, most of the data in the table, along with some graphs, are automatically filled in through formulas in the spreadsheet.

This table allows students to see their labor as practice in a few quantifiable ways. There are other ways to quantify and represent the labor data we gather, but this gives them some places to begin reflecting. They might compare key sessions. Are labor sessions from week 8 or 9 faster or slower than sessions done in weeks 1-2? Are they doing more or less labor? What slowed the student down or sped them up in the later weeks? How engaged was the student and what contributed to that engagement or lack of it? How much time did they spend drafting for class? Does this amount seem enough to get the learning the student was looking for? What keeps the student from spending more time? Finally, what lessons did they learn from seeing their labor in this way? What did they think might be worth sharing with their colleagues in class?

These final questions about sharing connects simple reflections to the larger, more communal properties of Arendtian action that make it more than an individual insight. Action participates and contributes to the larger community of people, so reflections that move students in that direction are shared with colleagues and fulfill the complete cycle of labor-work-action that Arendt articulates. In labor-based grading contract economies that use compassion as a key element in constructing the cultural space of judgment, sharing personal insights, making them communal theory about reading and writing, is compassionate behavior (I'll say more about this in Chapter 5), and opens up meaning and deeper learning by dramatizing the ways various students labor in diverse ways and share their theorizing from the dramas of their labors. It makes one's private reading labor, for example, also about helping others learn and do language acts too.

MINDFUL LABORING IS THE LARGER THEME

A fundamental aspect of labor-based grading contract economies is slowing down, experiencing labor and time differently, or mindfully. I believe students usually learn best when they can just be in the labor, when they can stop thinking so centrally about the end product or goal and center all of their energies and attention on the labor they are engaged in right now. What we do now is all we really have, so I remind them continually in my labor instructions and through our mindfulness practices each class session, to be mindful of the fact that they are laboring in particular ways, to savor that laboring. It is all you have. We are lucky to be able to do this work for each other. One might think of mindful laboring as the act of self-consciously laboring at something, doing something while simultaneously noticing that you are doing that work, that you are doing it in a particular way, that you feel a certain way as you do it, that that

laboring makes you feel, see, hear, understand, and experience other things that are wrapped up in the labor.

The institutional, historical, and pragmatic reasons for the fixation on the end-product are clear, and it's more than just about the writing classroom's heritage of product-based pedagogies, such as Berlin's Current-Traditional pedagogy. The focus on end-products in classrooms stems from the ways that classroom assessment economies function, how most are set up to produce a grade, an exchange-value, and pay little formal attention to the nuanced and contradictory meanings of the use-value and worth of labor. When most of the value and worth of students' labor is neglected, students themselves neglect it and are not in the practice of seeing it, or noticing that they labor, especially while they are in the act of laboring. Labor is usually something to get through, to be done with, not to savor. We try to do as little laboring as possible and produce the most product from that laboring. This is exactly the wrong way to learn literacies.

So getting to a place in which most students are mindfully laboring, that is, being in their labors for the class with less concern for what it produces and more concern for savoring the laboring experience, feeling and experiencing as fully as possible the doing of writing or reading, paying attention to what happens when they labor, can take all quarter or semester. Labor logs, labor journals, and labor tweets help make labor more present, more obvious, more there, so that students can begin to investigate it, and this allows the class to also use it as a fairer way to calculate course grades than judgments of so-called quality on products of their labors, commodities that inherently are valued in contradictory ways.

Labor-based grading contracts focus everyone's attention on time and tempo of practices and work, which automatically reconnects our intellectual labor to our bodies. Thus it is important to remember that labor-based grading contracts ask students and teacher to pay attention to the doing of things, to what and how we do our work, then articulate that labor as learning. This means that we pay attention to our bodies, what they are doing, how they feel as they move (or remain still), where they are in time and space, and what the experience of that timing and spacing is like. This is tapping into ourselves as whole humans doing language in self-consciously embodied ways, ways that are situated in our lives.

When discussing how to meditate and form contemplative practices, Arthur Zajoc, a physicist, argues that one cannot meditate fast. It always happens at the speed of breath and heartbeat. It cannot be rushed. He explains:

> Whether beholding a painting or listening to music, whether reading poetry or viewing a play, time must slow down in order for us to enter into the object of our attention with our heart as well as our head. If our thinking runs along with the

> worries of the day, or presses too forcefully, we remain outside the art of the painting, poetry, or performance. (51)

Zajoc is drawing on a set of contemplative practices, which have been used to help students learn in various disciplines (Barbezat and Bush). Contemplative practices help practitioners slow time down, or experience it as slower, enter objects of contemplation, such as our own breath, our bodies, an orange slice, a peanut, a picture or painting, a musical composition, the sensation of our feet in shoes or walking. Once entered, the practitioner explores the object of contemplation, feels as much as they can without judging themselves for not doing enough or experiencing something they think they should have.

I posit that our grading economies in classrooms should be more like the beholding activities Zajoc references. The OED's entries for "behold" all focus on spending time to view something in its beauty: "to hold or keep in view, to watch; to regard or contemplate with the eyes; to look upon, look at" ("behold"). Many of the early references to the word in English, which begins with Old English (*bihaldan*) refer to Biblical passages or God, thus it often is associated with looking upon or contemplating beauty or the divine, which takes time to do. One must pause and spend time to behold. It is respectful and reverent. Daniel Barbezat and Mirabai Bush tell us in their discussion of the practice for college classrooms that beholding has a recent tradition in art history (149). Beauty, as in art, requires that we keep that which is beautiful in our view, to hold it there. And if beauty can be found in everything, then writing assessment as a classroom practice, as an economy made up in part of people and their words, might incorporate practices of beholding, mindful practices that purposefully pause and pay attention to what is in front of us, what we are reading and how we are experiencing that reading, how we make judgments of the text and its author, what pressures those judgments place on others in the economy, and how those judgments circulate in the economy before, during, and after our reading.

Thus, one key aspect of all labor is time. As the contemplative practice of beholding illustrates, the most fundamental aspect of what I'm calling mindful laboring is taking the right amount of time and noticing that you are doing something in a particular way, in a particular place, under particular conditions. Mindful labor is experienced as labor while one is laboring. One notices that they are laboring, which opens up ways to notice the context, conditions, and nature of that laboring, and then what meanings might be understood. But it requires time.

I don't find that most students are practiced at paying close attention to the various dimensions of time in their laboring. Beyond understanding what time it is on a clock, we often do not pay attention to the multiple ways that we experience and frame time in our lives. Doing so can help students collect

data on their labor time and make sense of that data in reflections, producing a fuller, richer sense of their three-dimensional labor. Barbara Adam, a Sociologist who has done copious research on the concept of time, offers a theory of timescapes that may help explain time as a component or measure of labor. In turn, her work may help teachers consider various kinds of labor data to collect, and language and activities that move students toward mindful laboring. Adam's research on timescapes (*Timescapes of Modernity*; *Time*) theorizes that time is complex and multidimensional. Her purpose for such theorizing has been to develop better ways for sociological research to be conducted, but her conception of timescapes reveals how time is not a simple construct, and we conceive and manage it in a number of ways. She offers seven ways by which time is experienced, understood, and/or framed:

- *Time frame* – bounded, beginning and end of day, year, life time, generation, historical/geological epoch;
- *Temporality* – process world, internal to system, ageing, growing, irreversibility, directionality;
- *Timing* – synchronisation, co-ordination, right/wrong time;
- *Tempo* – speed, pace, rate of change, velocity, intensity: how much activity in given timeframe;
- *Duration* – extent, temporal distance, horizon: no duration = instantaneity, time point/moment;
- *Sequence* – order, succession, priority: no sequence = simultaneity, at same time;
- *Temporal modalities* – past, present and future—memory, perception/experience and anticipation. (*Timescapes Challenge* 7-8)

Each way of framing time offers very different observations and conclusions about time and people, about what might be recorded in labor logs, or what might be considered in labor journals. Adam's seven ways of time, as I'll call them, offer ways to consider time in labor-based assessment economies. I'll discuss just three that I find most useful.

Time as *duration*, *sequence*, and *temporal modalities* have been touched on already in my earlier discussions of labor logs, through the data I currently ask students to keep track of. For example, through labor logs, students know the amount of minutes they have spent on either reading or writing labors, when those labors took place, and the sequence or order in which they did any given labor assignment or the order they did various assignments in the quarter or semester. In labor journals, we consider past and future labor sessions, often comparing two past sessions, and always projecting forward toward future prac-

tices. However, Adam's *time frame*, *timing*, and *tempo* offer additional possible data and reflective prompting.

Adam explains that time frame is constructed by the researcher, and is a choice that creates boundaries and determines findings by determining where you "place subjects" (*Timescapes Challenge* 8). The time frame of clocks and calendars are stable, "externally located, [and] socially constructed," while "personal frames of life time and family time, or times of illness and stress" are more fluid, contingent, and relative. Thus the units of measure for more personal frames of time "expan[d] and contrac[t] as people move along in their life course" (8). For labor-based assessment economies, thinking about our labor from our own personal time frames generates a host of interesting and educative questions. What kind of time frame is the student working from? What are the boundaries in which labor for the class is forced to adhere to? Does the student work full time and go to school? Does she have family obligations each day? Does she take other courses? Let's say she works, goes to school full time, and is a mother who must share childcare duties with a partner. This might segment her typical weekday into three or four units of time in any day with boundaries like: time that she attends class; time that she takes care of her children and family; time that she has to do school work; and time that she works at a job. These will likely not be equal segments of time, but may be how she conceives of her time in a day. Meanwhile, her week may be broken up into two or three larger segments of time: school time and work time during the weekdays; and school-work time, family time, family care time, and sleep and relaxing time on the weekends. These are the boundaries that form the time frames in which the student might consider the labor required of her for the class.

Seeing one's labor in a personal time frame requires a student to first notice what time frame they work in or might work in. Then they might begin to see how much time (in minutes or hours) they actually have to do the labors of the course. This can help students notice particular kinds of data to be logged or reflected upon. For example, a class might keep track of the kinds of segments of time in their personal time frames they have, how much time each segment gets in any given day and during each week, and when those segments occur in the day or week. What time frames are students trying to fit the course's labor into? How many segments are there in their personal time frames? What is the biggest segment: work, school work, family obligations, something else? What should it be at this moment in their life? How many minutes or hours are they giving to each segment of their life's time frame? At what point in the day or week does the segment of time dedicated to the course's labor occur? Where did a particular labor session fall during that week and how productive or meaningful was that labor? How might its position in their daily or weekly time frame

help create that labor, make it productive, engaging, or meaningful (or not)? Are they consistent each week in where they fit the course labor in their life's time frame? What are the consequences of its position in the day or week? Is it at the end of other taxing or strenuous labors? Is it first in any given day or week? What segments in their personal time frames are being sacrificed each week?

Obviously, part of reflecting and learning from one's labor as situated in one's personal time frame is not just about reading and writing in more engaging and meaningful ways, but also about learning how one learns, managing one's time best, and understanding the boundaries and limits one has in one's life. Knowing one's labor in this way can alleviate some guilt and the sense that one is not good enough for college when one realizes that their life's personal time frame is not ideal or works against them in subtle ways, and other things are either more important at this time or can be reprioritized temporarily. Further, sharing these insights with colleagues in class can help students see that they are not alone in their struggles, that often personal time frames coalesce into patterns for reasons that are outside of the students in the room. Many students may be oppressed by larger societal structures that unfairly place boundaries and limits on their lives, making it nearly impossible to accomplish what is expected of them in college. But understanding this insight from their own labor data may offer ways to problematize their own existential situations.

Adam explains that timing, the third way of experiencing time in the list above, offers other kinds of measures and observations. This element concerns itself with synchronizing and "achieving good time" and it is relative to other events, contexts, that happen around or in conjunction with the events in question. For students, again, this provides different useful labor data, often comparative data. When are the good and bad times of each day or week for the labor of the class? That is, when during each day or week is the student most equipped, ready, and able to do the kinds of labor the course asks of them? Why are these times best? Could they change these timings during the semester or quarter? Does a student typically do the labor of the class during a good period, a bad one? Why? Was a particular labor session done at a good time in the day or week, one conducive to their learning or engagement? How many labor sessions in the semester or quarter fell into good time periods and how many into bad ones? Why? What kept all labor sessions from being done in only good periods? How did the timing affect the student's engagement and interest in the activity? What other activities or obligations synced up in the student's day or week that made it easier or harder to complete this labor session? Were multiple tasks or obligations coming at the student during certain periods in the labor? At what points? Why? How did the student respond? How did this syncing or timing affect what the student learned or how they engaged in the labor?

Finally, Adam says that tempo is about speed and pace, who must adapt to whose timing. How fast is an activity going? When must it begin or end? These factors make tempo a function of power arrangements (9). In other words, who or what dictates pace and speed of labor indicates who has more power in the arrangement. In labor-based assessment economies, students might use the concept of tempo to keep data on tempo of assignments in order to understand some of how power moves in the class, and perhaps to change it when that movement of power is not helpful to students' learning. How much time is given for an assignment of labor and who determined this? When does that labor begin and when must it end, and who decided these tempo limits? How well does the tempo of the labor match what the student feels they need before and after completing the work? Does this tempo fit within most students' personal time frames? Did the student adjust the tempo of the labor (e.g., exclude or skip steps) from what was given in the labor instructions? How often does the student adjust the tempo of the labor instructions over the course of the term or semester? What effect did this have on the total amount of time spent on reading and/or writing labors in the course?

The important thing to remember when attempting to make labor more mindful in an assessment ecology, one that uses labor to determine course grades, is to honor whatever labor is offered by students, while still pushing students to ask hard questions about that labor. What happened in your labor? How did you experience it? Did you do enough? What shortcuts did you take? Could you change some things in your habits or weekly routines that would allow you to do more or labor differently? Thus, mindful laboring is practicing reading and writing self-consciously by noticing and articulating where and how our labor fits into our own personal time frames, how it and other things sync with good and bad moments in our life, and what the speed, intensity, and engagement of that labor is.

There are no bad ways to labor if laboring is done in a compassionate spirit and with an attempt to learn and help others learn. We can only labor at the paces we can, the only pace anyone can learn, which always takes time, time not so ironically we should pay attention to itself. As Zajonc reminds us of meditation, I believe the labors of reading and writing too cannot be done fast, especially if it is connected to people, to their beauty, to their languaging, to their bodies, to their agency, to their becoming. Mindful laboring allows for such praxis, and connects it to the grading of a course, which makes grading not a method to measure students' writing competencies or development but a process of paying attention on purpose, a process of learning about one's whole self and the structures of language and judgment that make up and affect each of us.