Mary Glavan
PhD Candidate, Rhetoric
English Dept., CMU

Jessica Harrell
PhD Candidate, Rhetoric
English Dept., CMU

TEACHING & LEARNING

SUMMIT 2016

Carnegie Mellon University

# Using Google Drive to Create a Collaborative Writing Community

Implemented Google Drive in a First-Year Writing course to facilitate:

Collaboration between writers
Transferable skills and digital literacy
First-hand experience with the dynamic nature of writing

Classroom Implementation

We employed Google drive for commenting procedures in 3 Fall 2015 sections of "Reading and Writing in an Academic Context" (76-100), a first-year writing course designed for second language learners. This course is designed to support students' abilities to meet the "rhetorical and linguistic demands for academic reading and writing in an American university" (cmu.edu/english).

Procedures: Instructors uploaded students' papers to shared peer review folders in Google drive. Students accessed these folders using single sign-on (Drive folders are part of CMU ecosystem). All students could access papers in the peer reviews folder and each student was responsible for reviewing 2 assigned peers' work.
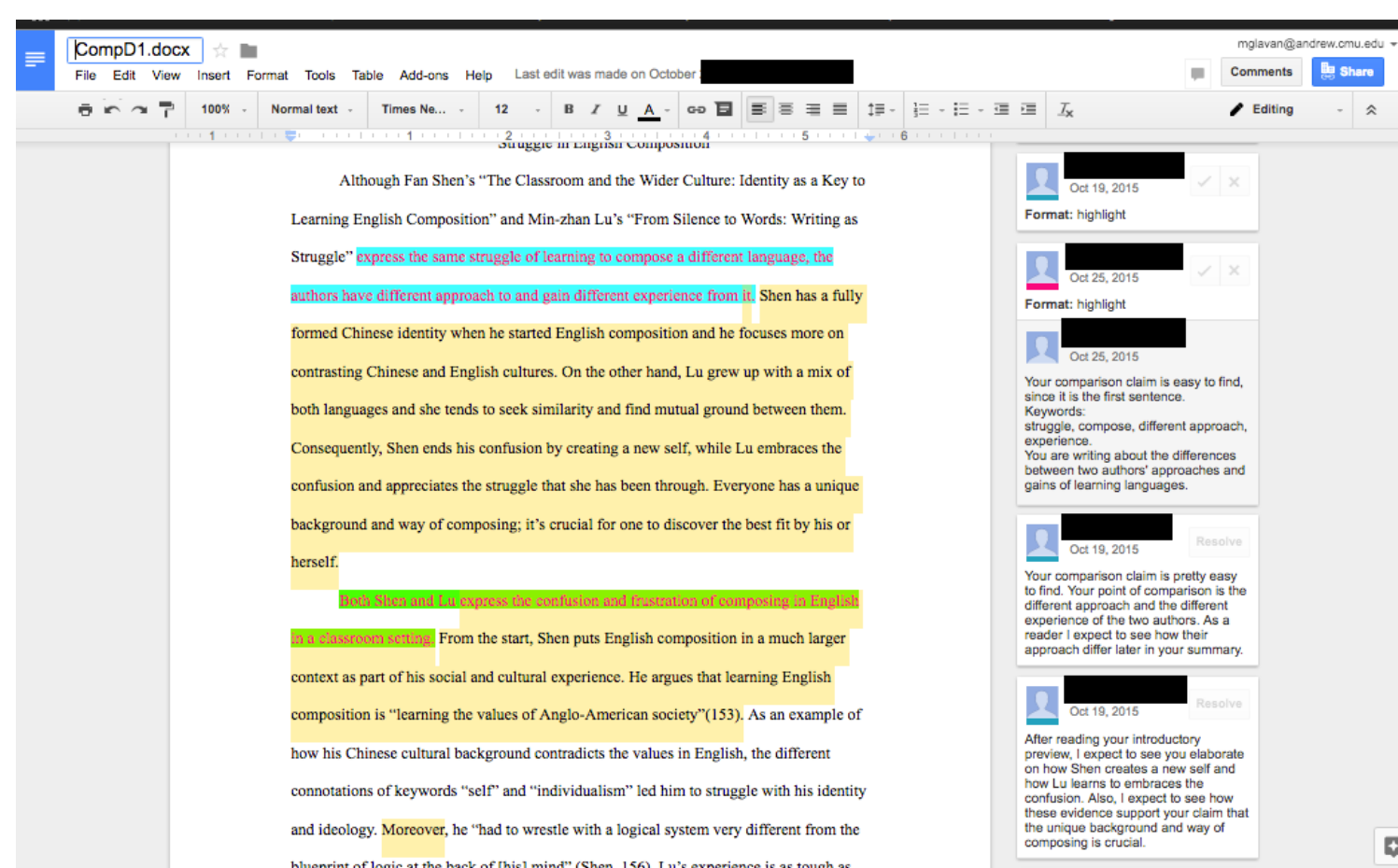
Separate folders were shared by instructors and each individual student. Instructor comments were added through this "privately" shared folder with papers from the course.
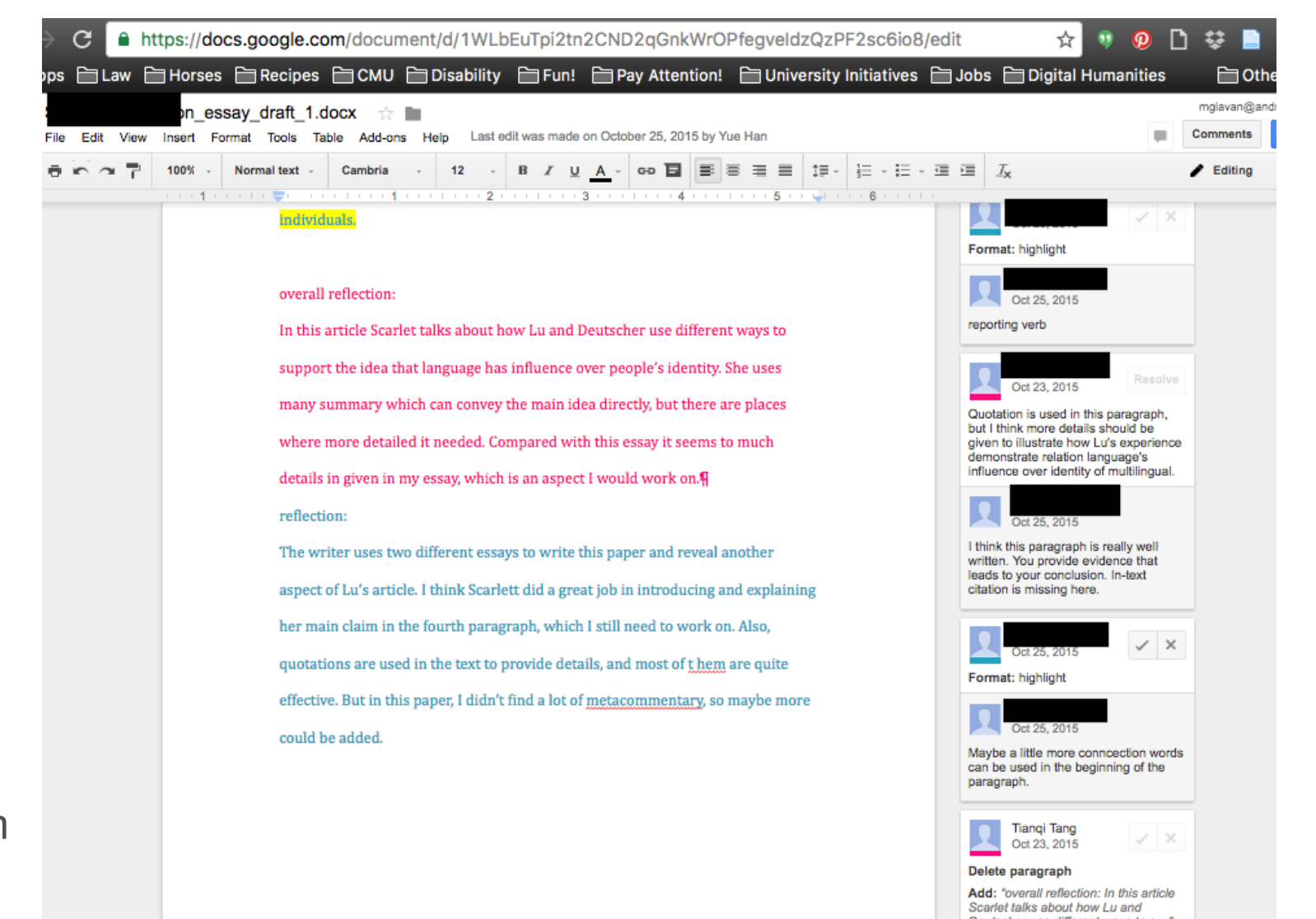
Relevant Learning Objectives

• Students should see the value of peer review supported by a dynamic and open reading environment.
• Students should have opportunities to learn about their own writing process by interacting with peer texts.
• Students will recognize the synchronous process of drafting and revising through ready access to collaborative comments

Observed Learning/Teaching Benefits

For Students
• More attention on task
• Motivated to use familiar and accessible framework
• Engaged and sustained peer collaboration
• Ready access for revision and portfolio building

For Instructors
• Real-time commenting to support face-to-face interaction
• Facilitates immediate and interactive feedback to improve students performance on task
• Ready access for looking at students' revision processes, including comparing drafts
• Supported consistency between instructor and TA feedback

Other Important Factors

• Available through single sign-on; part of university technology ecosystem
• Procedure designed for small class (15 students per section in our pilot)
• Course concerns emphasized content and prose over formatting and document design.

What students have to say about using Google Drive in the Writing Classroom:

It made work sharing and commenting really easy because writings are accessible on any device and also encourage students to look at each other's work.

"It made work sharing and commenting … accessible."

"It helped me get familiar with … how to collaborate."

It's easy to mark and comment and everyone can see them. Really convenient.

It was Interactive!
"I can see comments … at the same time."

I can easily see the different types of comments by different highlighting, so it helps me know exactly how should I deal with each comments and how to revise them.

Google docs allowed me to give comments on a certain sentence or phrase, besides an overall reflection on an essay.

In my architecture studio, students tend to use google drive to share work and keep everyone updated with drawings and models.

Since I can see comments from several peers as well as the instructor at the same time, I could get a comprehensive reader reflection.

What's good about google docs is that they are always accessible. Even though a new semester started, I could still go over previous comments on my papers for reference.

Prepared students for transfer!
"I can … look back to how I progressed."

I was able to keep track on my progress more since all the comments and suggestions are in the drive, I can easily look back to how I progressed.

I am currently using Google Docs to submit my assignments for another course.

Students develop digital literacy!
"It helped me get familiar with Google docs."

I like to read the comments one by one and then revise my paper one paragraph by one paragraph, deleting the comments locally. So I can make sure I have revised for every comments and advice.