

September 18, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

I am an English professor at the University of St. Thomas, and I took Chris Friend's Critical Pedagogy course at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute (DHSI) in July 2016. I offered to write Chris a letter of recommendation—he did not ask me for one—because I humbly wanted to put on the record how talented, brilliant, and nurturing he is.

Chris and his co-teacher, Jesse Stommel, taught one of the most life-changing seminars I've ever had in my career. Through this experience, I learned that digital tools can be used to build classroom community and in fact resist the atomization so many cultural critics charge is the problem with digital environments. Chris taught me that a teacher could and should use the digital to enhance what our students already know: that learning happens in relationship (and therefore digital tools can build peer relationships in unique ways). Surveying my colleagues at the DHSI who had taken other seminars, I quickly realized that I was lucky enough to stumble upon one of the most exciting, well-organized, and productive seminars at the event.

The course was thoughtfully structured, with each day thematically building on each other; the week was thoughtfully structured as well, with a great balance between discussion of deep articles, and hands-on lab work; the readings were perfectly selected (they were theoretically sophisticated yet accessible to tech newbies like me). The labs were well-paced and understandable. The discussions were magnificent thanks to the artful facilitation of Chris and Jesse. As students, we were asked to constantly evaluate the "rhetorics" of the room—how discussion dynamics were unfolding, and what our own evolving purpose was at the seminar. Through it all, Chris was compassionate as we struggled to wrap our heads around all-new pedagogical paradigms, and gave us much individual attention. He was unfailingly tuned in to where we all were on our own trajectories, and what he could do to advance us along that trajectory. Because of how they both modeled teaching and talked about teaching, I learned as much about pedagogy from Chris and Jesse that week as I did taking teaching practicums during my PhD work. Every early and mid-career professor should be required to participate in a seminar like this so that we learn to constantly reassess everything.

As a final note, I want to laud Chris for his extraordinary work on *Hybrid Pedagogy*, a journal I have found invaluable to my nascent identity as a digital humanities practitioner.

I will be forever indebted to Chris for the caring, compassionate, rigorous, and career-changing instruction he offered me during one of the most intellectually memorable experiences in my career. I would be happy to talk to you more about Chris if you'd like to email me at [lucia.pawlowski@stthomas.edu](mailto:lucia.pawlowski@stthomas.edu).

Sincerely,

Lucia Pawlowski, PhD  
Assistant Professor  
English Department  
University of St. Thomas  
St. Paul, MN 55104