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Editors’ Note: Remembering Wendy Bishop

The news of Wendy Bishop’s death on November 21, 2003 of complications from leukemia came in the form of an email. I remember staring at my computer screen, feeling speechless with grief, unable to move, unable to think, yet knowing that I had to teach class in ten minutes. If ever I needed Wendy it was now: no one could bring someone from silence into words like Wendy could. A few minutes later, I found myself standing in front of my first-year composition class, trying to keep my mind on my students as I introduced the final assignment of the semester—a rhetorical revision—which required students to revise their traditional academic argument into a piece of public discourse: a website, billboard, pamphlet, television commercial. The assignment, I realized at that moment, owed a great debt to Wendy’s own radical revision assignment, where students would rewrite their narratives into poems written on paper skeletons, or turn their arguments into crushed glass mosaics or country-music songs. Sharing her assignments (and her students’ responses to them) was just one way Wendy shared her own incredible creative energy, an energy that suffused her teaching of writing at all levels, her own writing in multiple genres, and her many, many friendships. As a colleague of Wendy’s at Florida State for six years, I felt that energy radiate from her daily.

In preparation for Wendy’s memorial at the 2004 CCCCs in San Antonio, I reread several of the articles she published in CS in the 1990’s. What struck me was the range of her interests, the range of her writing voice. We all know that about Wendy, of course, but many of us tend to think of a journal as rather monovocal—addressing a limited subject matter to a limited audience. As the field of composition has matured, each journal has staked out its own territory. For the journal Composition Studies, that territory might be called “the theory and practice of writing instruction,” with an emphasis on the “and.” As many of you who visited the Composition Studies booth at CCCCs this year told us, you’re grateful for a place where you can still read about what people do in their classrooms, where you can still read thoughtful analyses of student texts.

In rereading Wendy’s contributions to the journal—from an ethnographic study of experienced teachers returning to graduate school, to a co-authored analysis of the journals she kept for a year as Florida State’s WPA, to an exploration of collaboratively authored poems, to an email interview with Winston Weathers on alternate style—I was reminded again of the expansive-
ness of that territory called “the theory and practice of writing instruction.” Wendy’s work certainly exemplified this expansiveness. And it is this legacy of expansiveness that we hope to carry on in CS, with pieces like Shelley Reid’s challenge to privilege inquiry over coverage in TA-training courses, with Kate Ryan’s revisioning of memory as important to students’ invention of ideas, with Mark Panek’s argument that structured reading groups can help culturally diverse students make their own place in the university, and with Lena Ampadu’s exploration of how her Creole/French/African American language heritage informs her use of oral texts to advance her students’ literacy practices.

When I was considering becoming co-author of Composition Studies, I sought Wendy’s advice. Of course she told me to do it, commenting on how much she liked that “funky little journal.” It pleases me to think she’d like this issue as well.

Carrie Leverenz
Fort Worth, Texas

WORKS CITED
Four years ago, as a new Writing Program Administrator scheduled to teach composition pedagogy the following term, I sat in a CCCC conference room watching Stephen Wilhoit place a series of transparencies on the overhead projector as he outlined how much there was to do in such a class. In seven categories, Wilhoit listed some 25 separate issues that new TAs needed to study. As it turns out, he was being mercifully conservative: in his recent book, The Allyn & Bacon Teaching Assistant’s Handbook, he includes 13 chapters with nearly a hundred separate topics and hundreds more subtopics. Seeing my future unfold in front of me that morning, I began to create intricate reading lists and marching plans for my pedagogy students. Weeks later, in my office, I found my course options increasing further. One new anthology dedicated to preparing new teachers of composition offered ten chapters of information on topics crucial for new TAs; another reprinted dozens of key articles from the field’s best journals; still others offered classroom scenarios, excerpts of representative student writing, model syllabi, historical and pedagogical overviews. And always there were more topics and tasks and articles, all waiting for me to cover them in my fifteen-week class.

It is axiomatic among writing program administrators generally, and more specifically among those of us responsible for preparing teachers of composition, that we have far too much to do and far too few resources. In addition, compositionists have begun to construct disciplinary narratives that depend upon revealing—even celebrating—just how much a writing teacher, a program administrator, and/or a teacher of teachers has to know, do, and cover to be a successful professional. These narratives make visible the work that we do, which benefits our professional reputations. Yet particularly in the...
case of composition pedagogy instruction, I worry that narratives emphasizing comprehensiveness and scope may come to overshadow equally important narratives about inquiry and process. A coverage-based pedagogy, in many ways so well suited to the institutional geography of introductory, certification-focused courses that a pedagogy seminar seems to occupy, can too easily become a default approach that limits rather than expands our options.

As we develop and improve courses for teachers of composition, then, I argue that we need—very deliberately, publicly, and collectively—to focus on uncoverage, to emphasize discoveries that lead to long-term learning over immediate competencies. That is, we need to conceive of the pedagogy course at its foundation in the way that we now conceive of first-year writing: as an intellectual engagement rather than an inoculation, as practice in a way of encountering the world rather than mastery of skills or facts, as preparation for a lifetime of thinking like a teacher (see Recchio, “Parallel” 57). The exploratory, inquiry-driven, reflective study that educators argue promotes high-quality, flexible, satisfying writing and teaching should be set out as a first priority in our curricula.

Certainly, many of us work toward such goals in our pedagogy courses now. In promoting uncoverage, we emphasize pedagogies that focus strongly on “constructive interrogation” of teaching strategies (Swyt 26), pedagogies that help teachers develop “a language for talking about teaching” rather than a collection of teaching activities (Latterell 15). We hope that encouraging new teachers to uncover root questions, contradictions, and unsolvable problems in composition will prepare them to be “conscious . . . and curious” so that they can become able to “critique and reform the profession rather than simply reproduce it” (Lindgren 294-5). However, facing both increasing opportunities and multiple pressures to use the pedagogy course to cover more and more material, without a concomitant increase in time and resources for pedagogy instruction, individual teachers may find that our intuitive resistance will no longer be enough. The time we spend covering “just a little more” theoretical or practical information may devour the time we intended to provide for reflection on and discovery of related questions. It is clear that the challenges posed by the default-nature of coverage pedagogy are not merely local or personal: they are disciplinary and institutional, and they thus need to be named, discussed, and deliberately resisted if we are to have a theory of composition pedagogy that reflects central values and best practices in composition/rhetoric and teacher education, one that features uncoverage as a primary goal.

Blending coverage and uncoverage is, to be sure, only one of the challenges facing teachers of composition pedagogy. As Catherine Latterell and others have noted, composition pedagogy seminars already struggle to balance teaching theories and teaching practices of writing instruction. Given

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institutional and financial constraints, pedagogy instructors also operate within a set of additional paradoxes. Writing-teacher instruction cannot be quick, although we often have very little time in which to provide it; it needs to be multifaceted and to encourage higher-order thinking even though we are usually working with novice students of both pedagogy and composition. It needs to allow for trial and error, resistance and internalization by the teachers whom we place, often at the very beginning of their pedagogy education, into a program charged with offering consistent, equitable writing education to hundreds or thousands of undergraduates. Faced with a course that apparently needs to be everything to everyone in 12 weeks (or 6, or 3), making uncoverage one’s top priority may seem impossible or even ill-advised. Yet aiming for coverage as a primary goal—deliberately, as I found myself doing while constructing my first syllabus, or unconsciously, as I have found myself doing more recently—can undermine all of our other goals, limit all other reforms we might make. And major reforms may be more necessary than it seems at first glance. Although full-credit graduate pedagogy seminars are relatively new to many institutions, they have often evolved from earlier, more limited “TA Orientation” formats, and thus their pedagogies may require reform in order simply to meet the needs of the composition courses into which we are sending TAs. As Judith Goleman explains:

Preparing literacy instructors to construe their classroom discourse as . . . an ongoing negotiation is sufficiently different from traditional practices to warrant the development of an explicit pedagogy. The predominant quick-start model of TA preparation is the residue of an earlier rhetoric that concerned itself mainly with arrangement and mechanical correctness. Preparing TAs in the old way for a new rhetoric constitutes a contradiction that will produce inadequately transformed writing instruction. (95)

In order for us to begin to transform the pedagogy of the pedagogy seminar, the coverage roots of the “old way” and the continuing pressures to stay true to those roots need first to be exposed and named and then to be directly countered. In the sections that follow, I name several of the strongest pressures moving us toward coverage and then discuss two uncoverage strategies—problem-based inquiry and discovery drafting—that might help pedagogy instructors plan their way out of the coverage trap.

COVERING COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY: “MORE BY DEFAULT THAN BY DESIGN”

As I noted, it’s not that compositionists are unaware of the pitfalls of coverage-based pedagogy, nor that we have ignored other approaches for teaching composition pedagogy. But coverage models are institutionally pervasive,
materials and rewards for coverage approaches are increasingly available, and the resources necessary to support transformed pedagogy curricula are scarce. As Richard Marback notes, the composition pedagogy course he taught—like those that many of us have inherited—had acquired its multiple roles in the English Department curriculum “more by default than by design” (101). In an institutional setting where coverage is the default approach, creating curricular alternatives for composition pedagogy education should begin with increased alertness to the many vectors of coverage pressures, if we are to instigate a carefully orchestrated resistance and (re)design.

To begin with, pedagogy instructors may benefit from directly acknowledging the various institutional pressures that we face to cover disciplinary material—pressures built into the systems in which we teach.

• The pressure of prevalence: Administrators, colleagues, and students are comfortable with courses that survey knowledge broadly.
• The pressure of introductory status: The pedagogy seminar is often a true introduction, offering ideas and approaches completely new to most students (a rare occurrence in graduate education), and coverage is often construed as an appropriate or even mandatory introductory pedagogy.⁴
• The pressure of certification: When constructed as a class that serves a first-year composition program—providing competent teachers for hundreds of students—the pedagogy seminar is expected by TAs and by administrators to cover what those teachers need to know, to guarantee a basic knowledge and competency in the field.⁵

In addition, those of us who design composition pedagogy syllabi may feel coverage pressures from within our own discipline and our local programs.

• The pressure of disciplinary breadth: Composition/rhetoric is historically broad and increasingly multidisciplinary; we continue to expand our reach with new technologies, literary and cultural theories, and pedagogies; and knowledge new and old is becoming more visible and available for easy coverage via textbooks and anthologies.
• The pressure of pedagogical and local breadth: Even without opening a single anthology, a pedagogy course can be overwhelmed by the task of covering the basics of teaching, of teaching writing, and of teaching writing classes in a particular program or curriculum, to the satisfaction of TAs and administrators.⁶

Finally, a related disciplinary pressure has emerged in recent years out of the growth and stability of composition/rhetoric as an academic field: the pressure

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of professionalization. Aiming for coverage in the required pedagogy course allows us to reassure ourselves and others of the field's solidity and professional status. Moreover, coverage—a common language in the institutions in which we seek status—helps us to professionalize the teaching of composition, so that it is not just something that "anybody can do," so that we can more forcefully demand resources and compensation for teachers and programs. 

Composition pedagogy instructors are thus likely to find ourselves caught between two powerful forces: a strong commitment, rooted firmly in the theory of composition/rhetoric and our daily pedagogical practices in first-year writing courses to inquiry-based education; and strong internal and external pressures to provide a definitive answer to Edward White’s recent question, "What is the minimum amount of theory and history necessary for responsible teaching of writing?" (emphasis added). I worry that familiarity with or even admiration of more reflective approaches (like the ones proposed by Latterell, Goleman, and Yancey [Reflection], among others) will not be enough to enable resistance to coverage—particularly for new instructors, for those in institutions with meager teacher-preparation resources, or for those who are recruited to the job of teacher-preparation without adequate preparation in the field themselves. Active resistance of coverage pressures that come from all directions and a determination to re-frame the choices entirely will be necessary to help those instructors, and such resistance needs to be overtly supported in disciplinary conversations. Composition studies has a long history of being successful at such re-framing: we may need all of our experience and resources to help teachers successfully (re)design one of the discipline's keystone courses.

**Foregrounding Problems and Difficulties: Strategies for Uncoverage**

Building uncoverage into a composition pedagogy syllabus in the face of multiple coverage pressures requires attention to both the goals and the structures of the individual course. Such revisions will more likely succeed when they are supported by clearly articulated disciplinary frameworks and pedagogical theories. We may thus need to remind ourselves, and deliberately advise our colleagues, that new or pre-service teachers of writing do not come into an orientation or seminar as blank slates nor exit it prepared to put into practice everything that has been read, discussed, or performed. As George Hillocks and Robert Parker, among others, explain, new teachers already have theories about teaching, rooted in contexts and experiences that may be obvious or long buried, and not all of those theories need to be corrected or converted. Moreover, we know from experience and can more publicly emphasize that a single course cannot "fix" new teachers. It can still be tempting to view the course primarily through an administrative lens—emphasizing what Christine Farris describes as our need for "consistency across hundreds of sections of
composition”—and thus to fall into coverage and fall away from encouraging the “confident, reflective teachers” whom Farris hopes we can watch “grow and change in interesting ways” (102). Deliberate uncoverage pedagogies help us resist by foregrounding Donald Schön’s reflection-in-action as a goal for new teachers that is equally as valuable as the goals of schema and repertoire that a coverage-based pedagogy seminar provides. Reflection-in-action can help us trust that new teachers will continue to strive for all three of these goals over many years in the field. This three-way balance is crucial: uncoverage pedagogies need not create “content-free” classrooms for new writing teachers any more than they have for students in composition classrooms. Indeed, it is vital that new and continuing composition teachers review provocative ideas and theories, histories and best practices in the discipline, as long as those theories and histories are clearly approached as results of and invitations to discovery, not ends in themselves. The more pedagogy instructors find themselves under pressure to cover material, the more they will need to (re)emphasize uncoverage as a primary goal.

The two uncoverage models I examine here seem the most common in composition studies, the most accepted by academic culture in general, and the hardiest. They require enough time and infrastructure and provide enough rich engagement that there is significantly less time or need to resort to coverage as a pedagogical strategy. Neither is in itself particularly new or innovative: the first, a problem-based strategy, could also be characterized as an inquiry-based or contact-zone pedagogy; the second, which I define later as a discovery draft strategy, uses a writing-workshop structure to draw on the familiar idea that writing is a mode of learning, one particularly useful for composition teachers. The two are not mutually exclusive, nor do they prevent an instructor from designing curricula that also plan to cover some important issues or texts. In fact, in the past four years I have used both of these modes together, increasingly relying on them to help me plan pedagogy courses that satisfy me as a teacher and as an administrator. As I have been adding new approaches, however, I still find in my course framework clear indications of its coverage origins. Indeed, because of the tentative and incomplete transformation of my own current pedagogies—and because, unlike many graduate pedagogy instructors, I am fortunate to teach a course that reaches TAs at least a semester before their first teaching experience—in the following pages I offer descriptions of my own assignments and strategies as theories-in-practice rather than as specific models for best practices in pedagogy curriculum design.

Problem-based uncoverage: We see examples of problem- or question-based learning in all kinds of “special” or “advanced” courses around us, courses deliberately constructed away from default settings. Such courses focus at a basic curricular level on “observation, interpretation, imagining, hypothesizing,
testing, evaluating, and so forth” (Hillocks 13). While it is possible to “add in” a case-study or individual research project to a coverage-based course, this approach can seem to merely require one more thing to cover. If inquiry into knotty, unsolvable problems is to unseat or more evenly balance coverage, it needs to be built into the fundamental design of the course.

One example of such a model, focusing primarily on an approach to reading disciplinary materials, is directly articulated by Wendy Swyt: “I propose that we bring [Patricia] Bizzell’s notion of a rhetorical ‘contact zone’ to our teacher training occasions…. [W]e might offer clusters of essays that depict some of the complex negotiations of difference in the writing classroom” (28). Swyt suggests developing one course unit, for instance, around an eight-essay cluster (including student writing) to help teachers examine classroom conflicts that focus on issues of identity or diversity in order to discuss “the rhetorical complexities of location and authority in writing” (29) and “see how a range of rhetorical positions politicizes the very stance that they adopt” (30). In doing so, she is hoping to unsettle her students, to allow them to gain what Nancy Welch calls “an awareness of [their] assumptions as assumptions … [and] an awareness that these assumptions [are] in tension with other constructions” (399). By choosing texts that deliberately contradict each other in multiple ways and scheduling ample time for inquiry and reflection, Swyt makes a significant, visible commitment to a pedagogy that can help current or future teachers develop tolerances for ambiguity and become comfortable investigating rather than solving problems.

By the end of her class description, coverage pressures seem to creep back in, as Swyt suggests four more essays that might more thoroughly complicate new teachers’ understanding of identity issues—here again, even measured multiplicity can seem to require coverage. Yet the act of scheduling adequate time for such readings and discussions to bear fruit makes it very difficult to slide fully into a coverage pedagogy. One could hardly manage a syllabus full of a dozen such topics, each with eight articles to read; a syllabus built around even one or two such units would thus need to relinquish a substantial amount of coverage in other areas. The new structure would not, by itself, smooth the way out of the coverage trap: the teacher of the course would still have to wrestle regularly with his or her coverage-conscience and with concerns about his or her role in preparing new teachers and certifying them as prepared. Trusting that questions about assignment design or collaborative learning would come up for investigation during a lengthy inquiry into diversity and identity would be difficult (for instructors and for new teachers); expecting that teachers who learn to investigate knotty diversity issues might well use the theories they uncover and develop to devise their own intelligent processes of assigning writing would require a leap of faith; allowing students
in a pedagogy class to raise and choose issues (not just how-to topics) for in-depth investigation seems like something one should reserve for one’s most experienced students/teachers. Yet some such trust or allowances are likely to move the pedagogy class out of coverage into more engaging pedagogies.

My own pedagogy syllabi have not yet reached such a level of trust; they are still built around units I design on responding, assigning, collaboration, teacher roles, and situations for writing classes, topics I feel compelled to cover overtly. As a result, I have had to construct an alternate inquiry-approach to unseating coverage, building each of our discussions on the “foundations” of unsolvable questions. As one example, for a peer-review workshop the second day of class, my seminar students write a short essay answering the question, “Do you think that first year composition classes best serve students if they focus primarily on encouraging students to develop their independent voices, or do they best serve students when they focus more strongly on helping the students master the conventions and meet the expectations of American academic prose?” I strongly suggest that my students not simply answer “both.” They don’t know enough to answer this question, they tell me, worried and sometimes angry; they’ve never taken composition before; they haven’t read anything about the discipline; it’s not even their field. Alicia sends an email to the group: “I interpreted ‘voice’ as a student’s own personal writing style. . . . [I]n class, I realized that everyone had a slightly different interpretation of ‘voice.’” Catching me in the hallway, she says she’s worried she did the assignment all wrong; I try to reassure her, delighted at the discovery she’s made and shared. (Maybe next year I’ll remember Alicia and be brave enough to take another Peter Elbow article off our must-read list.) Despite their concerns, I have not had any students who couldn’t write—and intelligently support—an answer, their own answer. They thus begin by taking stock of the “influences on [their] teaching that come from sources [they] can no longer identify: values, attitudes, beliefs” (Hillocks 37). Most importantly, we set up the course with a question at its heart, and students begin a long semester of uncovering answers and further questions.

As our peer reviews and discussions continue, students find themselves immersed in the fluidity of this issue (and others). Belinda notes in a reflective post-script, “I kept having revelations on what I [thought] was right . . . only to find that I contradicted myself as soon as I began to try to put the words on paper.” As it turns out, my classes have generally run about 3:1 in favor of conventions—despite Alicia’s “surprise . . . that I was the only one [in my peer group] to argue [for] conventions over voice”—but regardless of the individual arguments, we uncover the fact that there is a live question, a conflict, right there in the room with us, before many of us have read anything in the field. Sometimes the conflict comes even closer to home. Writing about
her revised essay, Charlotte explains her dilemma: “The writer in me wants to argue that personal voice is a key factor. . . . The teacher in me has decided that the primary goal . . . is to prepare students to write effectively . . . even if effective means somewhat dull and uninspired. . . . [In this essay,] I sold out my inner writer to my inner teacher. May she forgive me.” Wendy, facing a similar conflict, draws an alternate conclusion: “A focus on [conventions] did not ring true to my own core of truth,” so despite having previously focused primarily on teaching such conventions in her own classes, she remarks that “the strongest part of my essay is . . . where I offer clear reasons as to why I place the encouragement of voice over a focus on prose [conventions].” Finding out the exact places where individual students take (and wrestle with) their initial stands is intriguing; having them all take part in our early, lively focus on inquiry and discovery is invaluable; noting that we can begin the course with discovery rather than coverage is immensely encouraging.

Moreover, as we proceed through the topical groupings of texts, we can and do continually loop back to how the theories we’re reading feed into the question of “conventions vs. voice,” helping place other teachers and theorists into our own exploratory conversations rather than implying that they have the answers to all of our questions. Looking back, Evelyn explains, “I wish I had read [the assigned articles] before I wrote [the first] essay. . . . I changed my mind about the way I need to respond to student essays.” Despite Evelyn’s frustration at having presented what she now feels was an uninformed argument, I am pleased that her early draft exists to complicate what might have been a complete conversion to what she read. And I am excited to discover, a few lines later in her response, a paragraph that shows her selectively balancing ideas from assigned readings with her own convictions: “I still believe that it is our responsibility to. . . .” More recently, I have also begun deliberately opening the subtopics of discussion by brainstorming problems and questions with the students—upgrading the practicum discussion prompt of “What questions do you have (about your own teaching)?” to a more evocative starting point: “What are some of the unsolvable questions or tension-points concerning responding to student writing?” Having practiced discussing some basic tensions in their first essay, students are generally quick to see them in other contexts. My syllabus still looks like a list of topics and readings, but I’ve deliberately cut my topics from six to five and my reading list by 25%—and I’m finding that I worry just a little less about covering them all.

A second assignment I use also places the texts in a position secondary to discovery of questions. In Part 1 of their first major essay, the Exploration Essay, I ask students to write about how they write or teach (writing) or how they want to write or teach (writing) or how they learned to write or teach (writing). This is a personal essay, with stipulations that they not simply wax
romantic and that they dig for honest, complete answers. I very deliberately do not ask, at this point or later, for them to write a teaching philosophy statement; I want them to hold off on forming a cohesive, clearly articulated plan as long as possible. Because they’re exploring, they can go well beyond what they think a “good” teacher should want/learn/do. I’ve received essays that describe their authors as hybrids of film-noir detectives and displaced punk rockers or as blends of Virgil and James T. Kirk; one teacher recalls her teacher-grandmother whose students sent presents and candy at Christmas; one re-examines years of dejection at being an unsuccessful writer in English, her third language. All these writers discover how their own “contact zones” shape them in complicated ways as teachers or writers; such roots will likely affect them far more than anything I will ask them to read or discuss during our class, and being aware of one set of relationships between experience and teaching or writing helps them practice asking questions about others.

I see these discoveries as fundamental to preparing new teachers: more deadly to a teacher than Richard Fulkerson’s “modal confusion”—the assigning of an expressivist essay that is then graded formalistically—is an unknown, unresolved, covered-over conflict or link connecting the way a person wants to behave and be treated with the way she is acting or treating others. Once a student such as Naya explains that her formative experience was being asked to teach kindergarten for a year without any preparation, guidance, or knowledge of the expectations of the job, she can understand more about why it is “not only my interest in learning . . . but the constant fear [of looking] stupid in front of my students [that] motivates me to learn more and more in this area,” and she can consider ways to design assignments not based on the control of the five-paragraph-essay. “Coverage” can push all of us, teachers and students, to overlay new knowledge onto previous experiences, like frosting an uneven cake; in the highly unstable plate-tectonics of classroom teaching, though, things tend not to stay covered.

In a revision and expansion of these essays near the end of the semester, students are asked to incorporate the words and ideas of half a dozen authors we’ve read during the term. Sometimes the outside voices appear as they might have in a regular scholarly essay—though they still need to be matched to, not allowed to override, the writer’s own earlier discoveries. As Belinda notes, “I do not think that theory [alone] would accurately and adequately convey why I want to teach composition.” Other times, the outsiders are involved in almost literal dis-coverings: one writer becomes David Bartholomae commenting on sections of the writer’s earlier draft; one constructs a drama in which several famous theorists arrive, like Ghosts of Compositionists Past, to sit in his bedroom and converse about teaching. Even the more traditionally structured essays compile their own “clusters of essays” to investigate “complex negotia-
tions”; if they are not the exact clusters or questions I would have considered crucial to cover in a pedagogy class, they still provoke lively inquiry, promote “thinking like a teacher.” Former students sometimes say they’ve modeled teaching philosophy statements on these essays, but that was never the point. The point is in the process, a way of owning some ideas about teaching writing while leaving them open to further inquiry. I do not have data to be able to affirm that exploratory exercises such as these are more effective at covering the issues and “remediating” potential five-paragraph-essay teachers than lessons on specific composition theories supplemented by a slew of reading assignments. Yet prioritizing this approach in my pedagogy seminar has helped it feel more like a course of inquiry, more congruent with what I do—and what my students will do—in the profession.

Discovery-draft uncoverage: It’s not coincidental that my version of a “contact zone” pedagogy relies heavily on writing assignments. Although Swyt’s proposal demonstrates that there need be no direct equation of “reading” with “coverage,” emphasizing specific kinds of writing in the course helps me build a strong uncoverage pedagogy. The first benefit that I see from this approach is merely structural: I have found nothing so useful in levering myself out of a coverage mentality than scheduling significant chunks of class time to write, review, and revise. The second is a conceptual benefit: we are practicing a live, complex writing pedagogy, engaging authentically in the process we (plan to) teach. A third gain is more directly tied to inquiry: carefully designed writing assignments, workshops, and revision opportunities allow writers to discover new and/or important ideas, help them bring multiple viewpoints into the classroom on a regular basis, and encourage them to move toward change, reflection, and renewed inquiry. Whether or not one believes that graduate students need instruction in and practice with their writing, building the composition pedagogy course upon a foundation of exploratory writing assignments provides another way for students to begin to develop long-term habits of inquiry and reflection.

As with a problem-solving approach to uncoverage, an approach based on writing assignments and writing workshops needs to be deliberate, even exaggerated. One exaggeration might come in the form of “time on task”: in my most recent pedagogy course, for instance, I scheduled 40% of our class meeting days as writing workshops in a variety of formats. Moreover, individual writing assignments serve the inquiry-and-reflection goals of the composition pedagogy course best when they have two additional features. The first is what I think of as a “productive difficulty” component: a substantial amount of the writing assigned needs to lie outside the skills already mastered, or at least comfortably confronted, by the students. Otherwise the writing completed by a group of students most worried about their lack of disciplinary knowledge...
can become more a matter of covering the information than participating in a creative, rhetorical negotiation. Students may be writing but not discovering very much. Thus while teaching-journals, response papers, and essays that directly mirror the assignments given to first-year students can serve various constructive purposes in the class, they may not suffice to bring a workshop mentality into full bloom. Second, some if not all of the writing assignments need to be explicitly and extensively exploratory and/or reflective, focused on investigating possibilities rather than drawing conclusions or covering information. Given Parker’s explanation of the rich repertoire of “theories-in-use” that new teachers bring with them (413) and Ruth Ray’s suggestion that reading personal essays allows the pedagogy instructor and classroom peers to be “real reader[s]” rather than only judges of final products (151), some assignments in the pedagogy course ought to encourage writers to discover their own theories and assumptions. Research essays, critiques of articles, short or isolated freewrites, and even the ubiquitous teaching philosophy statement can move writers and teachers too quickly past reflection and/or emphasize a focus on end-products, coverage, and mastery; these also may need to be carefully redesigned to function as pedagogy course un cov erage assignments. In general, I link these two features under the familiar term “discovery draft”: a pedagogy class workshop should have an intense focus on authentic discovery drafting.

In my class at Oklahoma State, for example, the students’ work on our two-part exploration essay allows them to discover their own patterns of thinking and experience. They also have a chance to discover how they work as writers: both parts of the assignment ask for a kind of writing that is unfamiliar or at least defamiliarized. Personal essays “written for a grade” have not been a significant part of most of my students’ recent experience, even those who are studying creative writing, and the task of adding “theory” back into a personal essay requires a kind of genre-combining familiar to many compositionists and teachers but new to many of my students. Naya notes both kinds of challenges in composing her first draft: “I must confess that I was totally lost and found it very hard to venture into something out of the way of regular writing. . . . [Also] I have no answer to the question that I have to respond to.” For Naya, as for other students working on this assignment, “mastery” and “coverage” seem far enough out of reach (or relevance) that those goals almost entirely fade from the scene. Even later in the process, as the essay starts to become more academic, the defamiliarization and difficulty continue: “I had a more difficult time . . . adding in the theorists. I wasn’t sure what our balance should be between narrative and theory,” writes Kelley. Ray recommends that as instructors in graduate composition programs, we need to ask ourselves, “Did we acknowledge and encourage ambivalence, ambiguity, and multiplicity, or did we prematurely impose order and structure on our thinking?” (157); de-
liberately emphasizing a writing workshop featuring unfamiliar, exploratory approaches helps me answer “yes” to the first half of Ray’s question. A second assignment I use more closely resembles traditional academic analysis: students write a synthesized argument drawing on three articles we have read, a task that also mirrors an assignment required of composition students in our program. In the pedagogy course, however, we use this as an option to make maximum use of productive difficulties. Pedagogy students write and share what Anne Lamott calls “shitty first drafts” (sometimes for the first time in their adult lives). We also talk at length about the stresses of creating an “original” argument in a field they’re not expert in, writing about secondary material and abstract concepts rather than about literature or more concrete research data, and revising their processes and texts wholesale while under grade pressures. Again, encouraged to play with the three articles rather than conduct official research, students make discoveries on multiple levels; in addition, the difficulty of balancing four voices in a six-page essay helps prompt many students to focus more on problems or questions than on solutions. Marc, for instance, reading essays by Bartholomae, Robert Brooke, and Catherine Lamb, finds that carnival is an even more slippery metaphor than he had expected, and he explores to what degree students and teachers might return from a carnival experience but “never quite return to exactly who we were.” Writers like Kelley may also discover questions about their own writing processes:

When I have to turn in drafts of things, it really messes me up. . . . For this [synthesis] paper, I actually finished all my thoughts and even got to the conclusion, thinking I would go back later and “flesh” it out some. WRONG!!! I completely lost any kind of momentum I had with the paper. . . . [A]t least I have learned some valuable information about my composing process. . . .

Keith, facing revision challenges that are similarly unusual for him, connects his experience to those of his students:

After writing [an] essay, the only changes I usually make are grammatical/structural (that is, cosmetic). . . . Thankfully, the [peer] comments . . . pointed out some changes that I should make . . . Like many of [my students], I too tend to feel that once I’ve finished my essay, it is done and . . . it does not need any major changes. The reality is, though, that oftentimes it does, and we need to be able to work past those feelings in order to create better writing.

For Keith and Kelley, these are felt experiences, discoveries that something they have been told (or read) should be true is actually operating in their own practices as writers.

Watching these students move between formal and reflective writing helps us see how productive difficulty and reflective exploration are interlinked,
constructive activities for writers and for teachers. Further, their comments reveal how much we can uncover in carefully designed writing workshops in a pedagogy class. While it is not true that “anyone who can write can teach writing,” it may be closer to truth than a coverage-model lets us admit that writers taking time to share strategies and experiences with one another and to reflect on possible connections between their writing and their teaching can learn much of the material we would otherwise set forth in chapters and essays and handbooks.

The problem is not that somewhere out there whole legions of composition pedagogy students are being prevented from writing or reflecting or that pedagogy instructors set out, individually, to provide future teachers with a one-dimensional, static view of the profession to which we are all deeply committed. Indeed, the ubiquity of approaches such as the ones I have been outlining has probably been a significant factor in keeping composition pedagogy seminars from plunging headlong toward classes based on a Norton Anthology of Composition Theory. Yet the pressures to move the pedagogy seminar toward remediation and/or coverage continue to weigh on pedagogy instructors’ minds, to show up in conference presentations and department meetings and informal discussions, to tease us into contemplating questions (and designing books and syllabi) concerning the “minimum amount of theory and history” that writing teachers should know. Like the teacher-researchers Ray describes, we need “to determine what classroom conditions seem to encourage students to problematize their knowledge and what conditions limit or mitigate against this process” (156). Articulating problem-based instruction or discovery drafting—or some other uncoverage strategy I have not included here—as a foundational approach for a composition pedagogy course could be an important step toward publicly and collectively resisting these pressures, toward rebuilding the pedagogy course on our own terms.

THE PERILS AND POTENTIALS OF UNCERTAINTY

A final pressure toward coverage in composition pedagogy that I have not yet directly discussed comes from the pedagogy students themselves. Recchio’s analysis corroborates my own experiences as both a TA and a teacher of TAs:

The concept of uncertainty as an enabling condition for anything—much less for teaching and learning—is not exactly what new TAs expect or want to hear… . Most want to be shown… . what to teach and how to teach: what texts to use, what assignments to give… . how to grade, how to run workshops, how to establish one’s authority in class, how to address questions of rhetoric, of grammar, of style, and so on. (“Essaying” 255)
I am fortunate to have my uncoverage strategies enabled by a multi-level mentoring program that covers many of the “what . . . and how to teach” questions and by the fact that my pedagogy students are not concurrently teaching for the very first time. It is, therefore, “easy for me to say” that a pedagogy course need not focus on coverage or remediation; it is at least easier for me than if I had a more immediate need to prevent new TAs from leading their students into pedagogical quicksand. Beyond that, though, I need to emphasize that even without facing the panic of instructors needing immediate help with next Monday’s class, my students find an uncoverage approach surprising, discomfiting, and even disabling. An email post from Evelyn gives a fairly mild expression of their considerable discomfort: “[T]his week . . . contradicted everything that I have been taught about teaching writing and reading student writing. I even wrote about it in my Post Script . . . To all the students I’ve made writing-phobic in the past, I repent.” Moreover, TAs’ concerns aren’t limited to worries about trying to survive as a TA or difficulties adjusting to the overall demands of a graduate school schedule. Graduate school just seems, by definition, not to be a place for not-knowing, to be instead a place for covering—in one way or another—any exposed ignorance. And as all of our anxiety dreams tell us, almost no place feels as exposed as the front of a classroom. Uncoverage is difficult and risky, demands much from both students and professors, and is thus not particularly popular.

Uncoverage poses disciplinary questions as well. Should there be no canon of material that composition teachers are expected to know? If there isn’t, how will we know that someone in particular—as opposed to “anyone off the street”—is qualified to teach writing? Given the common situation in composition programs in which teaching writing has been relegated to our most novice teachers, what tool besides the pedagogy course do we have for ensuring that the intellectual work of teaching writing is made visible to both its practitioners and its critics? I find these questions both compelling and a bit disingenuous. Of course composition pedagogy seminars should have “standards” and clearly stated outcomes just as first-year composition classes and programs should. Indeed, we should have such standards even more available than we do now: as compositionists, we should be doing more than publishing isolated syllabi, creating long, unattainable wish-lists of things our teachers should know, and developing another wave of textbooks and anthologies offering up the whole field of composition on a large silver platter. As with first-year composition, any kind of discipline-wide understanding would need to be modified to fit local students and resources. Yet without some kind of broader guidance, the composition pedagogy course will remain at risk for the same kind of overdetermination that first-year composition faced (and still faces in many situations).
Latterell points out, solving a problem within a single set of classroom walls may not have much effect at all on the “centrifugal pressures that complicate . . . the safely enclosed world of the classroom” (17). Discussing composition pedagogy as an issue worthy of all compositionists’ attention and articulating clear strategies for improving that course beyond the safe worlds of our own classrooms may help us effect the larger changes we hope for in the teaching of writing.

Sociologist Susan Pitchford argues convincingly that “graduate students [should] stake out a teaching territory in their career. By this I mean that we should develop ‘teaching agendas’ in the same way that we develop research agendas” (qtd. in Hutchings 133). If we are to fully support composition instructors in developing a lively, inquiring teaching agenda parallel to the work they do as scholars, we need to begin preparing them for such a mindset from the beginning of their education. Building on a strong preparation in thinking like teachers, they can then help us continue to professionalize the teaching of writing without covering over the wonderfully energizing ambiguities, conflicts, and questions at the heart of the discipline.

Stillwater, Oklahoma

Notes

1 Contextual information, course information, pedagogical information, theory, technology, upper level courses, and student information.

2 See, for instance, the CCCC Position Statements on Scholarship in Composition and on the Preparation and Professional Development of Teachers of Writing.

3 The syllabi and pedagogical statements collected in Composition Studies’ 1995 special issue on composition pedagogy demonstrate some of the tensions between inquiry and coverage. Although a reading list is by no means an accurate measure of an instructor’s pedagogy, the variances in these lists (in the number and topic-range of the required texts) suggest that “what to cover” is as open and pressing a question as “how to teach.” Comments from individual instructors touch on the course’s need to be “an overview of knowledge” (Winslow 9) and/or a place for “questioning rather than telling” (Dunbar-Odom 18). Ruth Mirtz explains that she designs her course explicitly “for discovery and exploration” (25), though she also notes that the “organization and emphases” of her local program place limits on her pedagogy (26). Yet while many of these syllabi and commentaries reveal a conflict between covering local or disciplinary information and encouraging inquiry and discovery, discussion of that design challenge is surprisingly infrequent and brief.

4 An irony here, as Margaret Marshall points out, is that departments only infrequently offer an “intermediate” or “advanced” course in (composition) pedagogy (126), so a single seminar must operate at all three levels.
“What more could we do,” asks Clyde Moneyhun, regarding both first-year composition and graduate study in the field, “if we gave up the credentialing function as our main product?” (409).

As one of my reviewers points out, while experienced writing teachers and pedagogy instructors may be better able to resist external disciplinary pressures, we may experience more self-inflicted pressure to convey to our students all that we have come—over time—to know about the field and the local context.

Professionalizing teachers is a difficult business. Marshall discusses the history of such efforts at length and argues that when professionalization efforts are based primarily upon knowledge-mastery, they undercut their main goal by actually “reducing opportunities to help teachers make independent, informed judgments, an essential function of a professional” (10). Chris Clark concurs, noting that in some quarters “professional development” of teachers “implies a process done to teachers . . . [and implies] that teachers have deficits . . . that can be fixed by training” (qtd. in Swenson 306). Marcy Taylor and Jennifer Holberg argue further that the construction of graduate student teachers as a problem that needs fixing is another arm of professionalization: “It is not surprising . . . that one way the emerging discipline of composition would attempt to assert its status is through controlling (naming) insiders/outsiders” (612).

The pedagogy seminar at Oklahoma State comprises roughly equal numbers of students who have never taught and who are concurrently tutoring in the university writing center as well as shadowing first-year composition teachers, and students who enter the program with previous teaching experience who are concurrently teaching two sections of first-year composition. A strong, multifaceted peer-mentoring program, a resource-rich program website, and twice-yearly professional development sessions required of all continuing instructors supplement—and thus reduce local/practical coverage pressures on—the OSU pedagogy seminar.

Richard Gephardt suggests that similar enduring questions could come from any of composition’s “three overlapping frameworks . . . Classical/Existential, Thinking/Writing, and Product/Process” (136). All three are chicken-vs.-egg paradoxes: should teachers teach more as if writing leads to thinking or as if thinking leads to writing? “Obviously,” he notes, “neither [half of a framework] can be put aside without seriously oversimplifying the writing process. But differences in emphasis do result in different methodologies” (137).

All student names are pseudonyms.

As Ruth Ray explains, writing can serve all these purposes and more: when used as part of an “interpretive, process-oriented graduate program,” writing can serve “to generate and sustain a conversation with established scholars; to connect personal knowledge with theoretical knowledge; to reflect on experience; to test the consequences of following various theoretical perspectives; to articulate hypotheses, beliefs, assumptions, and personal theories; and to express doubts, anxieties, hopes, and fears about entering the scholarly community.” As she
concludes, “[G]raduate students write in order to construct the field for themselves . . .” (148).

12 Tori Haring-Smith asserts that writing workshop models “seem inappropriate for graduate teaching assistants within English . . . [who] have been writing regularly in their other seminars and, presumably, have been criticizing one another’s work” (34); Yancey counters that “many, perhaps most [TAs], have not [taken] a first-year composition class themselves” and raises concern about how “they understand writing as an activity foundational to a successful academic career” (“Professionalization” 66); and Sally Barr Ebest suggests that students in composition/rhetoric in particular need practice with the “reflection, the use of subjective evaluation, . . . the authority and exposure of the personal voice[, and] . . . the freedom and necessity of determining form and drawing conclusions based on their own findings” that are common in research in the field (79).

13 As Ray notes, we need to be wary of “a final-product orientation . . . [and] concerns harbored by students who have been evaluated exclusively on the basis of final papers submitted under the fiction that their research is complete” (107).

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---. “Re-Defining Graduate Teacher Training: Preparing TAs as Classroom Instructors.” Conference on College Composition and Communication, Minneapolis, MN, 13 April 2000.
A few years ago, a colleague of mine, Alison, and I learned we shared a belief in the potential for students to use memory to compose personal essays and to view themselves as meaning makers. We met a few times to talk informally about teaching writing and the canon of memory, and I observed class meetings where Alison tried to bring attention to memory in the context of a personal essay assignment. An example of what I identify as a problem of definition took place when I observed Alison’s students discuss the following prompt in response to Patricia Hampl’s essay “Memory and Imagination:” “For Patricia Hampl, ‘writing memoir is not a form of transcription.’ What does the author mean by that?” This classroom activity was intended to expand the ways students used memory to compose a personal essay. Listening in on the discussion, I heard students say “memoir is not word for word” and that the writer “adds what one wants to get what they want to have happen.” A student in a Detroit baseball cap added that she learned in psychology class that “there is no such thing as memory triggers” and a young man in a red shirt pointed out that “eyewitness memory is fallible. It is not just like a recording.” Comments like these developed a conversation about memoir writing as more than a matter of recording stored memories on paper. However, when composing their own essays, these students returned to more limited notions of memory. Alison’s students struggled with memory, invention, and genre because they tried to recapture exact memories and report them in chronological order.

Despite the students’ insights about the role of imagination and invention in response to Hampl’s essay on memoir, it became clear that they continued to equate memory with memorization and transcription when it came to their own writing in their composition class. They needed more sustained
discussion of the differences among memory, memorization, and memoir than we could offer at that time. To redefine memory as a strategic, contextualized process of interpretation requires a new version of classical rhetoric’s fourth canon, memoria. A contemporary canon of memory that I call rememoried knowing attends to the relationships among history, literacy, and invention to reconceive memory as a way to make knowledge.

History, Literacy, and Invention: Rethinking Treatments of the Canon of Memory

Edward P. J. Corbett’s deliberate neglect of rhetorical memory in his well-known text Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student exemplifies the typical response to rhetorical memory as uninteresting, particularly for a literate society:

of all the five parts of rhetoric, memoria was the one that received the least attention in the rhetoric books. The reason for the neglect of this aspect of rhetoric is probably that not much can be said, in a theoretical way, about the process of memory; and after rhetoric came to be concerned mainly with written discourse, there was no further need to deal with memorizing. (38)

Despite recent recovery work such as Frederick Reynolds’s collection Rhetorical Memory and Delivery, Corbett’s idea that “not much can be said” about the canon of memory still needs to be challenged. The assumption that using memory means memorizing remains common and reflects a narrow perspective on the canon’s history and outmoded beliefs about literacy and invention.

The description of the artificial art of memory in Rhetorica ad Herennium, the oldest surviving rhetoric manual, is one often used to define the art of memory.1 According to this text, the art of memory involves placing different images in standard backgrounds. An orator chooses images based on points of an argument or facts of a case that need to be remembered and relies on a stock set of architectural spaces, like a house or intercolumnar space, to serve as backgrounds. Speakers “imprint,” or mentally place, images in the backgrounds to “easily succeed in calling back to mind what we wish” (Rhetorica ad Herennium 3.20.34, 215). When a speaker needs to recall something, he simply moves through the background in his mind’s eye and mentally retrieves the image that stands for the thing or words to be remembered, recalling both what to say and the proper order in which to say it.2 Backgrounds then serve as an organizing principle for the speaker to store and retrieve representative images. This system for remembering, also described in Institutio Oratoria and in De Oratore, is the most familiar historical depiction of rhetorical memory.
and is clearly affiliated with contemporary impressions that rhetorical memory is oral memorization.

Instead of embracing this ancient description of memory, scholars might look to Italian humanist Giambattista Vico in the eighteenth century for an alternative. Vico’s tripartite concept of memory is important to examine for its emphasis on memory as inventive and imaginative. Vico writes that “memory thus has three different aspects: memory when it remembers things, imagination when it alters or imitates them, and invention when it gives them a new turn or puts them into proper arrangement and relationship” (New Science par. 810, 313-4). Reclaiming this moment in the history of rhetorical memory reintroduces memory as a process of imagination and invention.

However, because Vico describes this use of memory to imagine and invent as a preliterate or oral way of knowing, this approach to memory is presented to his literate readers as part of their past history rather than a potentially generative present or future practice. This alignment of memory with orality in opposition to literacy remains a contemporary problem that plagues rhetorical memory, as the emphasis on memorization implies. The Great Divide approach to literacy and orality links literacy with so-called higher order thinking and memory with supposedly less-developed oral cultures. This approach has been challenged, for instance, by Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole’s ethnographic research on the Vai culture, which notes that the “metaphor of a ‘great divide’ may not be appropriate for specifying differences among literates and nonliterates under contemporary conditions” (70). Ethnographic explorations of oral and literate practices that include attention to ideology and culture, like Scribner and Cole’s, rule out either/or representations of literacy and orality and, by extension, literacy and memory. When literacy and orality are not viewed within a dichotomous framework, then memory is no longer separate from literacy. A starting point for reconsidering the art of memory depends on the recognition that an obvious connection between orality and memory does not negate a relationship between memory and literacy.

Two contemporary composition textbooks that begin with the premise that the art of memory has something to offer a literate and oral society are Winifred Bryan Horner’s Rhetoric in the Classical Tradition (1988) and Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee’s Ancient Rhetoric for Contemporary Students (1999). Both texts focus on external sources of memory, particularly the storage and retrieval of information from print and electronic sources such as books, libraries, and computer databases. Horner’s work extends the classical focus on the individual’s memory as an internal “treasure-house of eloquence” (Quintilian xi.ii.1) to external sites:
Today’s treasure house has been enlarged to include our collective cultural memory—the information stored in libraries and computers. In this text, the section on memory treats the storage and retrieval of information—increasingly complex but important processes that every literate person must know. (Preface x)

Similarly, Crowley and Hawhee point out that “computer programs are now available that serve the heuristic functions of ancient memory” (273). Horner, Crowley, and Hawhee demonstrate how students can use the classical canon of memory to practice oral forms of remembering and to learn forms of electronic and textual memory to conduct research. Both textbooks make significant strides in introducing composition students to the classical canon of memory, particularly in response to developments in print and computer technologies.

The emphasis on external memory systems made possible by print and computer technologies leads to important discussions of memory as storage and retrieval in contexts like libraries and databases; however, this emphasis neglects ways people might use memory to make knowledge in the contexts of writing based on past experiences.

Furthermore, the ways these texts define invention affects the availability of rhetorical memory for contemporary uses. Given the notion that the rhetorical canons work “synergistically” (Horner, Introduction ix-x), how one defines rhetorical invention also shapes how one views rhetorical memory (and vice versa). An analysis of Horner’s and Crowley and Hawhee’s texts shows similar understandings of invention that draw on the classical sense of invention as discovery of material to create arguments and on the concept of invention as a heuristic. These renderings of rhetorical invention are appropriate to the texts’ aims, but they also support an identification of rhetorical memory as primarily a process of retrieving stored material from the mind, library shelf, or electronic database as a kind of topical inquiry.

Karen Burke LeFevre’s work on invention radically revises this focus on an individual who discovers or uncovers knowledge. According to LeFevre, invention is “the process of actively creating as well as finding what comes to be known and said in the discourse of any discipline” (emphasis added, 33). Considering those groups who have struggled historically to invent adds a revisionist dimension to invention. Women, for example, are among those who contend with traditions that have historically resisted or ignored their contributions—that have denied women a past and determined that they “can’t invent” (LeFevre 85). As a result, invention for many feminists is a creative and social act of making new knowledge often in direct challenge to hierarchical assumptions and oppressions. Invention viewed as social and creative has the potential to support new insights on rhetorical memory as social, creative, and revisionist.
Rethinking these three treatments related to the canon of memory creates a space in which to begin reimagining it. Redefining the canon of memory begins then by choosing a different historical legacy to identify with and recognizing how recent scholarship affects current views on rhetorical memory.

**Redefining the Canon of Memory**

History and life writing are two contexts that encourage a redefinition of rhetorical memory. As in life writing, writing history depends to some extent on the teller’s perspective and purpose in telling. Revisionist approaches, for example, have urged historians to acknowledge that the “facts” of history are better identified as evidence tied to specific, motivated arguments about the past, not unlike some kinds of fiction and autobiographical writing. While these are different kinds of writing with different agendas, I argue that history writing and life writing use related inventive and interpretive processes to explore past events and experiences. For example, my name for this redefined canon, rememoried knowing, comes from Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*. Morrison’s use of the word “rememory” reveals the social and contextual aspects of memory and the generative roles of invention and imagination so important to the process of remembering. My variation on this term not only honors Morrison’s use of memory to recover and reinvent forgotten and ignored African-Americans, but also recognizes the ways she inspires me to rethink rhetorical memory.

Rememoried knowing has four dimensions:

- memory material
- imagination and interpretation
- context and subjectivity
- transformation.

Remembering begins with memory material—memories made memorable because of thoughts and emotions attendant to images, scenes, or events that a member(s) of a community later calls to mind. Remembering may be a spontaneous or purposeful activity. Toni Morrison describes how her personal and cultural memories often take the form of emotions and questions tied to fragmented images. As a writer she seeks to explore and understand these memories; for example, in “The Site of Memory” and “Memory, Creation, and Writing,” Morrison talks about how the memory of a woman named Hannah Peace informed the writing of *Sula*. Remembering forgotten people and their experiences is also a concern in women’s history. According to feminist scholar Gerda Lerner, women’s history is the revisionist work of “reconstructing the missing half of history and of putting women as active agents into the center of events in order that recorded history might at last reflect the dual nature of humankind in its true balance, its female and its male aspects” (“Why History
Writing fiction, autobiography, or history means explicitly exploring memory material, even remembering “old” memories in new ways to gain new understandings of the past and present. A willingness to explore memory material, deliberately called to mind or not, is a mark of rememoried knowing.

Memory material is not a static storehouse; it is made up of fluid impressions, associations, and tentative recollections that gain meaning through the second dimension of rememoried knowing, imagination and interpretation. The way Lerner talks about imagination is pertinent to a redefinition of rhetorical memory: “The model created by the historian must not only conform to the evidence, it must also have the power to capture the imagination of contemporaries, so as to seem real to them” (“Necessity” 117). Remembering as a process includes the use of imagination as creativity to explore past lives and experiences in relation to present ones. More specifically, it includes the hermeneutic sense of imagination where making meaning depends on rendering the “strangeness” of one context familiar and understandable to another—using interpretation to make sense of the past from a present perspective. Authors Toni Morrison and Julia Alvarez both provide examples. Morrison uses imagination to reconstruct creatively the lives of former slaves: “on the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply” (“The Site of Memory” 192). In composing her novel In the Time of the Butterflies, Alvarez uses a similar process of imagination and interpretation. To learn about the Mirabel sisters, three women murdered in the Dominican Republic, Julia Alvarez did traditional archival research, collected oral histories, and let the stories she gathered and her experiences visiting places important to the Mirabels work on her imagination. Morrison’s and Alvarez’s efforts to understand and share the lives of slaves through Beloved and the lives of the Mirabels in In the Time of the Butterflies exhibit those interpretive and creative impulses Lerner values.

The historian seeks to interpret past events and moments, the texts of history, but always attempts this understanding through a mediation of the past and present. Lerner describes the function of this interpretive activity of studying history (or collective memory) as “demand[ing] imagination and empathy, so that we can fathom worlds unlike our own, contexts far from those we know, ways of thinking and feeling that are alien to us” (“Why History Matters” 201). In addition to the creativity of imagination involved in “fathoming” unfamiliar worlds, this activity also has a clearly hermeneutic function. Hermeneutic inquiry makes memory material understandable and usable based on how the rememberer makes the unfamiliar familiar in a given context. At the same time, memory material may seem so familiar that making
new meaning with it requires the rememberer to render the familiar strange, to practice a defamiliarization. The work of shaping memory material is to address gaps in understanding that arise when memories simply do not make sense, or when a new situation asks people to try to remember or even remember differently, in order to create understanding. The ways authors Toni Morrison and Julia Alvarez and women’s historian Gerda Lerner seek to engage “past worlds” through acts of imagination and interpretation reveal common ground between seemingly disparate disciplines (Lerner, “Why History Matters” 201). Rememoried knowing values imagination and interpretation as ways people shape memory material to understand and to communicate with themselves and others as they put another’s perspective in conversation with their own memories.

Rhetorical context, the third dimension of rememoried knowing, is significant to this process of remembering because of the ways context affects how a person or group imagines and interprets. Time, place, and urgency influence what and why people remember. The multiple subject positions a person negotiates within and across different communities also shape the rememberer and his or her choices about what, why, and how to remember. As a black woman writer, Morrison feels compelled to write about the parts of slaves’ lives glossed over in slave narratives, and she emphasizes how she must use memory and imagination to tell these otherwise untold stories (“The Site of Memory” 192). Much of the essay collection Why History Matters locates Lerner’s work as an historian in terms of her experiences as a woman and a Jew who fled Austria during World War II; the way Lerner shapes these past memories informs her study of history. Julia Alvarez’s essays in Something to Declare invoke childhood experiences, like leaving the Dominican Republic and moving to the United States, to identify influences on her writing. More specifically, Julia Alvarez’s discussion of the historical novel In the Time of the Butterflies demonstrates how context and subjectivity contribute to her “rememory” and composing process. In “Chasing the Butterflies,” Alvarez writes:

Years later, doing research for the novel I was writing, I dug up that Time article. I stared once again at the picture of the lovely, sad-eyed woman who stared back from the gloom of the black-and-white photo. As I read the article, I recovered a memory of myself as I sat in the dark living room of our New York apartment, secretly paging through this magazine I was forbidden to look at. (197)

Alvarez’s father was a member of the same underground as the women but had escaped with his family to the United States four months before their murder. I read Alvarez’s use of this remembered image of herself as a homesick child
sneaking a look at the forbidden article about the murders as an example of rememoried knowing. Alvarez composes a picture of herself as a researcher driven by an image of her younger self and the remembered feeling that the “three sisters and their husbands stood in stark contrast to the self-saving actions of my own family and other Dominican exiles” (“Chasing the Butterflies” 198). This memory situates Alvarez’s personal and political motivation to understand the sisters and to “bring acquaintance of these famous sisters to English-speaking readers” (Postscript 324). Here, remembering is a purposeful act of meaning making Alvarez shares with readers.

It is no coincidence that Morrison, Alvarez, and Lerner write out of non-patriarchal, non-dominant cultural contexts. Because of this emphasis on rhetorical context and subjectivity, rememoried knowing is a kind of knowledge making that less empowered groups or group members may take up to counter master narratives and to offer different perspectives. The reasons, motives, and choices (conscious or not) people have for remembering arise from and reveal the ways they live and think in the present and the ways they interpret the past and future.

The process of shaping memory material through interpretation, imagination, and rhetorical context leads to transformation, the fourth dimension of rememoried knowing. The art of memory defined as memorization and transcription is mere repetition or rote recording of information; it is a static and passive knowledge transfer. Redefining the art of memory as rememoried knowing means the potential to transform understanding. The notion of remembering as a process includes potential for change because movement from one site of understanding to another is implicit—process is about learning, and learning is change. The idea that a person interprets and imagines memory material within contexts emphasizes its power. For example, Gerda Lerner’s narration of why she is a historian shares with readers the importance of remembering the past and of attending to how that remembering takes place. This process of remembering can be used to explore new perspectives that lead, in turn, to the creation and sharing of new knowledge. Toni Morrison’s Beloved demonstrates this transformation because it recovers, rewrites, and empowers African-Americans by rewriting cultural history from the perspective of the former slave, Sethe. The book teaches readers about the legacies of slavery—that Beloved’s story, for example, is one to share precisely because “it is not a story to pass on” (Morrison 174). It also teaches readers about the political and epistemic functions of memory. This revision of rhetorical memory teaches people to recognize consciously how they make new knowledge through memory material and need to share this remembering with others to affect their own and others’ ways of participating in the world. Rememoried knowing intervenes in the ways people define and use the art of memory.
Using rememoried knowing can be seen as an “intervention into existing conditions and a means for the invention of new possibilities” (Atwill 189). The potential of this redefined art of memory is not only the power to compose using memory in new ways; it is the power to intervene in—to change or challenge—how people engage in acts of remembering and what they do with that activity. Those who practice this art of memory as a motivated activity rather than a passive retrieval can do so with purpose and commitment to create new understanding.

**Imagining Possibilities in the Composition Classroom**

This redefined canon of memory offers a theoretical approach that teachers can use to rethink tacit assumptions about memory and its place in the composition classroom. Teaching the art of memory as rememoried knowing has the potential to help students, as readers and writers, understand genres drawing on memory to be more than exercises in transcription. Students like Alison’s might learn to compose personal essays by shaping memory material rather than transcribing stored memory. Below, I offer ways to teach the four dimensions of rememoried knowing and encourage teachers to develop these brief, hypothetical suggestions into practices for using this redefined canon in the composition classroom.

In the context of a personal essay assignment, composition students can begin with invention activities aimed to facilitate their efforts to call to mind compelling emotions and images for further exploration. Making memory maps, like Thia Wolf’s example in The Subject is Writing; building clusters that start with a charged cultural memory as the central term, like September 11th or the Challenger disaster; or using “smell tests” to evoke individual memories through scent are three ways to help students generate memory material. While these invention activities may be familiar ones, the theoretical framework is new. The focus is on the uncertainty and pull of memory material as well as the social, creative dimension of remembering in affiliation with others. Students are not asked, implicitly or explicitly, to recover stored, exact memories. The teacher offers students opportunities to bring to mind memory fragments to shape through interpretation and imagination.

The imaginative, interpretive dimension of the art of memory helps students realize that composing a personal essay means shaping their memory material, not achieving perfect recall and transcribing it chronologically onto the page. To teach students to practice interpretation and invention as part of the art of memory, the focus is on activities to aid student efforts to make explicit meaning with their memories—to use them to some end that they determine through this process. Workshop activities that ask students to examine patterns in their clusters or maps, to explore the shaping that they do when they invent,
or to answer meaning-making questions as they compose a brainstorming draft each urge students to create meaning consciously. Guiding questions include: How do you want to represent this memory material on the page? What does this memory material mean to you now? What do you want to use it to say? Teaching students about context and subjectivity can encourage them to realize that historical time, place, social contexts (race, gender, religion, class), and individual interests influence the memory material they call to mind and the ways they interpret and imagine it. Students might begin to consider context by returning to their cultural memory clusters and comparing with peers their different memory material and the choices they made to shape it. While students may not be members of non-dominant cultures or seek to challenge oppressions, they can learn the importance of context to perspective, purpose, and content.

The transformative potential of rememoried knowing rests on students’ new understandings about the use of memory to compose, in this case, a personal essay. For students to learn to resee this genre as an exploration of “past worlds” for the sake of some present impulse is powerful. Evidence of transformation lies in the essay: do students move beyond reporting and transcribing in the final drafts of their personal essays? Asking students to reflect on their use of memory to compose and to write about what they learned from writing the assignment might reveal changes in how students use memory and define the personal essay. Rememoried knowing can transform the way a student uses memory to compose, and it can also help a student to actively engage with his or her memories to create some new understanding of him or herself in relationship to a past self and a present world. In addition to helping students write their worlds, rememoried knowing can help students as readers of genres related to the personal. This redefined art of memory helps students understand that life-writing and historical genres are crafted and purposeful visions of the past authors want to share with readers and that historical texts are informed versions of the past. Practicing this art of memory may not only change how a student approaches a writing or reading assignment; it may help students use their past experiences, identify their own perspectives and commitments, and actively contribute to constructing views of the world.

Rememoried knowing is one approach to teaching students to see themselves as engaged participants. As makers of memory, students can learn, like Lerner, Morrison, and Alvarez, the power and potential of using memory to make (and remake) themselves and their visions of the world. The idea that this art of memory is an active process is a powerful one. Redefining the art of memory as an imaginative, interpretive, contextual process of shaping memory material means the power and potential of telling one’s version of personal and public memory becomes available as a rhetorical practice. It
means individuals must have a stake in and make contributions to the world so that others do not speak for them or discount their perspectives. What would have been forgotten if Toni Morrison had not sought to explore the lost lives of slaves? What do we gain by reading a historical fiction about the Mirabel sisters? How do Lerner’s perspectives on history challenge others to write their own histories? What might be left unsaid or undone if students do not learn many ways to compose using memory? Practicing rememoried knowing in the composition classroom offers a possible avenue for encouraging students to become active rhetoricians—as makers and users of memory material—in the writing class and in the global community.

Morgantown, West Virginia

Notes

1 Frances Yates’s description of the Simonides story in The Art of Memory also helps illustrate this classical art. Simonides of Cleos, a lyric poet in the sixth century BCE, reportedly invented the artificial art of memory (27-30).

2 I use the pronoun “he” deliberately because public orators and students were typically male. Susan C. Jarratt’s article, “Sappho’s Memory,” offers an exploration of the relationship between gender and memory in pre-classical and classical Greece and Rome by exploring the spaces in which and about which Sappho wrote.


4 According to Kintgen et al., the Great Divide approach “suggests that literacy affects the ways that members of a society think: literate thought is conceptual, nonliterate thought, concrete” (xii). In other words, abstract, objective, and analytical thought reflects a literate society, and concrete, formulaic, and mnemonic thinking marks an oral culture.

5 It is disheartening that Horner’s book is out of print and that another text of this type, Frank D’Angelo’s Composition in the Classical Tradition (1999), gives only a brief description of the canon of memory as memorization based on images and backgrounds.

6 For example, in describing memorial composition, Crowley and Hawhee indicate that “a trained memory is always readily available as a source of invention” through the selection, combination, and amplification of appropriate topics for particular occasions (265-66).

7 Life-writing, or writing that “takes life as its subject,” can be biographical, novelistic, historical, or an explicit self-reference to the writer (Smith and Watson 3).

8 Traditionally, the study of history has relied on an empirical approach that has meant reporting facts from the past to make a truth claim about that past. Feminist theorists and rhetorical theorists are among those who have revised this traditional definition of history to expose objectivity, neutrality, and universality as illusionary (Gordon 1986; Smith-Rosenberg 1986; Turner 1998).
Toni Morrison offers two reasons for her use of memory in fiction: “One, because it ignites some process of invention, and two, because I cannot trust the literature and the sociology of other people to help me know the truth of my own cultural sources” (“Memory, Creation, and Writing” 386).

Works Cited


M.A. and Ph.D. in English

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The most productive and memorable semester of my career as a college student came not beneath the florescent glare surrounded by bored faces listening day after day to someone lecture day after day who would throw out the occasional question to keep the “discussion” going and to keep us awake. No, it came at the round table outside Manoa Gardens, the University of Hawai’i campus bar, where a group of students would gather before and after class to discuss the day’s reading. Most of the meetings were spontaneous, but occasionally we invited professors to join us to discuss particular works. For a while, we were meeting monthly with Dr. Joe Maltby, in his final semester before retiring, to discuss Shakespeare, twice complementing our “class” with field trips to local productions of the Bard’s work. We all felt like those smiling faces on the covers of college viewbooks: this is what college is meant to be like. It was a magical time. And it was effective: years later I remember line and verse of much of what we discussed, what we agreed upon, and what we argued about, and I can point to two reasons why: everyone who attended was interested and prepared, and everyone who attended contributed just about equally to the conversation.

Preparation and participation as keys to a successful learning experience—that’s certainly no great revelation. But what we found around that table at Manoa Gardens was the opposite of what we found in most of our classes, including some graduate seminars, where students would sit passively as the wisdom of some professor’s take on the reading washed over them. The
lucky teacher might wind up with a few students not only prepared but also willing to participate in the discussion. Most of the students, unfortunately, would either say nothing or wait to be “picked on,” and once the talkers emerged, the other students would sit back and rely on the dominating personalities to run the show. On the rare occasions it was issued, most students took the command, “Break into groups,” to mean “Sit back and wait until the last five minutes, when the teacher tells you the important points.” As a student I became frustrated with the overall lack of energy in such classes and with what appeared to be everyone’s reliance on me and a couple of other talkers to keep them off the hook. Looking back now as a teacher, I imagine that most students on the classroom’s fringes—although not all since some students arguably do get more out of careful, serious observation than active participation—got next to nothing from those classes. More troubling is the thought that the social dynamics of those classes conformed to cultural practices inconsistent with those of many of the students and, hence, effectively excluded them from getting as much as they could or should have out of the learning experience.

It might seem obvious that, at the university level, givens like active class participation should not be the problem of the teacher and, therefore, not worthy of much discussion. At this level students should understand that what they get out of the educational experience depends on what they put into it and that the equation goes beyond completing assignments and studying for tests. And if they don’t, it’s easy for us to think, then too bad—I did my job. If they don’t want to engage or if they’re uncomfortable testing their ideas in an open forum, that’s their choice.

Part of the reason my lecture/“discussion” courses failed to come close in either educational or social value to our Manoa Gardens “class”—which was as mixed ethnically and along gender lines as our UH classes, and even included two second-language speakers—was cultural. Certainly some students must have come unprepared to our courses back then because English 417 was just another box to cross off on their way to graduation and staying half-awake in a lecture/“discussion” was enough to get them the passing grades they were after—that is, they were of the consumer culture that has turned college into a degree-earning means to a “good job.” Others, however, came fully prepared and did well on quizzes and were active enough before and after class, but never said a word all semester during class—because, I have since learned, speaking out in a group was considered arrogant in their home cultures or because of other cultural sensitivities having to do with “getting it wrong” in front of twenty or more of their peers or because of some insecurity stemming from the huge gap between their home cultures’ languages (or other Englishes) and American Standard English. The Manoa Gardens “class” somehow eased those concerns.
Since terms like “students of diverse backgrounds” or “multicultural student populations” can lump together students of certain races and then direct assumptions about how such groups ought to be taught, my conception of these terms is worth clarifying. Of the twenty students in my recent English 100 section, four learned English as their second language, and two of those continue to speak languages other than English at home. Several others speak versions of Hawaiian Creole English outside of class. Seven attended top-tier college prep high schools—one in California, the others here in Honolulu. Two are what many scholars would call “mainstream”—from the “dominant culture” and from the Mainland—while another is Hispanic and from the Mainland. The rest are a cross-section of Hawai’i’s “local” (read, of color) population: Filipino, Japanese, Hawaiian, Chinese, and mixes of these ethnicities. All but five of the total entered my class underprepared, in my judgment, as readers as much as writers. According to their performance on the university’s placement essay test, five of my students—including one from the dominant culture—were designated basic writers and met with an outside tutor twice weekly. The class—a typical representation of all the classes I’ve taught here at UH, save for the absence of Korean, Vietnamese, Hawaii-born Caucasian, and Samoan students—fell clearly under various definitions of “multicultural” or “diverse,” but each student’s culture might be more precisely described according to De and Gregory’s notion of “a heteroglossic pastiche, a complex interplay of class; gender; geographic region; nationality; urban, suburban, or rural affiliation; and major socializing forces like popular culture, politics, and religion”(123)—a notion underscored equally by the presence of the high-achieving Hawaiian student from a neighbor island (read, rural) public high school who never failed to come to our class dressed for the club scene and of the student from the “dominant culture” in the basic writer’s group.

The point here is not that Hawaiian students are to be taught one way and Japanese another, but that nearly everyone in the class, each with her/his own heteroglossic pastiche, came from a space that did not blend easily with Western academic discourse or the primarily Western culture found on a university campus. Composition scholars will recognize this notion—that collaborative classrooms are particularly well-suited for diverse student populations—as part of a conversation stretching back to the work of Kenneth Bruffee, who details in “Collaboration, Conversation, and Reacculturation” and elsewhere his struggles upon being named Brooklyn College’s Director of Freshman English the year after the City University of New York adopted its open admissions policy. Bruffee and his colleagues discussed the work of Paulo Freire and John Dewey in settings very much like my own Manoa Gardens table and concluded that the success of their students depended upon “reacculturation” to university culture and that students could best “reacculturate themselves” to
the university community “by working together,” just as Bruffee and his colleagues were reacculturating themselves to a much different world of teaching than the one in which they had been trained. “Transition groups,” he explains, “provide us with understanding peers on whom we can rely as we go through the risky process of becoming new members of the knowledge communities we are trying to join.” Students are empowered, he says, “as they develop the ability and confidence to exercise the craft of interdependence” (68).

Scholars such as Greg Myers, John Trimbur, and Darin Payne (“Collaborative”) have gone on to point out the dangers of Bruffee’s classroom as a place that winds up ignoring and even trying to eliminate difference, becoming a site of cultural reproduction rather than a place where knowledge is socially constructed and different voices are valued equally. Trimbur, in particular, theorizes a “utopian” form of consensus—a let’s-agree-to-disagree first step towards what he sees as a more valuable “rhetoric of dissensus,” where students will base their collaborative conversations “not on consensus, but on the reciprocity and the mutual recognition of the participants and their differences” (614).

Carrie Shively Leverenz and Darin Payne (“Composition”) confirm the utopian nature of Trimbur’s “heterogeneity without hierarchy” collaborative classroom by showing how hard it is to have students enact his rhetoric of dissensus. Briefly, Payne shows how quickly and easily the fragile concept of knowledge as socially constructed can be crushed by a teacher’s “epistemological authority”—even when the teacher bends over backwards to empower the students towards dissensus. In two mid-nineties ethnographic studies, Leverenz shows us students unwilling to confront one another when sensitive issues arise (“Collaboration”) and how quickly a vocal already-assimilated student can silence the different voices that make up a group we might otherwise assume should perfectly accommodate dissensus (“Peer Response”). Leverenz’s example shows how quickly heteroglossia can become the same old institutional monoglossia.

Teachers of diverse student populations may always struggle with the “difference” Bruffee tried to accommodate and Trimbur wished to celebrate. I’m less interested here in a pedagogy that explicitly asks students to confront and exploit their differences than in one that allows a rhetoric of dissensus to emerge more readily than it can in lecture/“discussion” courses and in the kind of less successful group set-ups Leverenz examined. I am aiming for Trimbur’s “heterotopia of voices”—the admittedly utopian goal of eliminating the hierarchy among a diverse group of voices, of valuing them all equally.

Reaching these goals with diverse student populations depends, according to Au (3, 12), De and Gregory (120), Fishman and McCarthy (126), Bartholomae (qtd. in Fishman and McCarthy 137), and others, on our recogniz-
ing their home cultures either as starting points into the new academic culture or, as Powell puts it, as opportunities for us to “create campus environments that reflect the cultural heterogeneity within and create a learning community where all students are treated with respect and helped to succeed” (109). I want to leave open the question of how to interpret these notions of valuing student language and home culture since the pedagogical approach I offer can be used equally well by those who believe in more assimilative approaches (Bruffee, Hagemann, Kamusikiri), those who believe in encouraging students to resist being colonized by the university, and those who are more ambivalent about students’ adjustment to university culture(s). Still, it’s only fair to state my belief that an assimilative approach misses many important opportunities and that the model I illustrate below aims at the more complex and lasting goal of appropriation of university culture(s) in a way that resonates with Juan C. Guerra’s call “to find ways to help students develop ‘intercultural literacy,’ the ability to consciously and effectively move back and forth among as well as in and out of the discourse communities they belong to or will belong to” (258).

The productively noisy Peter Elbow writing group on which I roughly base my reading group concept can be one way of imagining this sort of student-owned discourse community. As detailed in Writing Without Teachers, Everyone Can Write, Sharing and Responding, and elsewhere, Elbow’s groups are by now an established method of writing instruction that works in several important ways. By drawing attention from the words on the page to the student/writer’s message, the groups emphasize a text’s rhetorical function. By casting the writing process as a social situation, they make writing enjoyable. They improve on less successful student-groups set-up by providing a detailed structure of responding that anyone can follow and by emphasizing the feedback process as a skill meant to improve across the semester. By requiring students to talk about someone else’s writing—an active process, even when it’s not “critical”—the groups make students better writers themselves since the conversations they generate allow students to voice such writerly concerns as the relationship between assertions and evidence. I’ve found Elbow’s method effective in my introductory composition classes mainly because it shows students the immediate value of the fifty minutes they spend in the classroom. Rather than sitting passively or taking turns answering the odd question in a “discussion” or rather than cruising through group work (or the opposite: being the person who always gets stuck doing everything), the students are all working, and the work translates into visible progress.

The Elbow groups also work in several ways that benefit UH’s multicultural student population: their set-up allows for diversity and the kind of “cultural heterogeneity” Powell discusses as a means of empowerment on the
social level, they resonate with certain local cultural practices, and they validate the often non-standard English of student spoken discourse as either an access point into academic discourse (Kamusikiri, Hagemann) or an academic discourse in itself (De and Gregory). The “bridge” that shows up in Hagemann’s title, “A Bridge from Home to School,” is a metaphor based on the experience many of us have with powerful spoken student rhetoric that fails to show up in their written discourse—the fact that students of diverse backgrounds often have little trouble telling us in conferences what they meant to write (Fishman and McCarthy [138] and Shaughnessy [172-177], among others). Laura Gray-Rosendale points to Elbovian writing groups as places to build on this kind of “oral dexterity” (4) for the basic writers she discusses since the groups cause the writing to become “part of the ongoing conversation” rather than some isolated three-page document lacking in real-life purpose (14). The point here is not whether the groups work to decolonize the classroom or to build a bridge, but that valuing student spoken discourse makes particular pedagogical sense for students raised in languages/Englishes other than American Standard English because doing so allows them to start from a position of competence, if not strength.

The Elbovian/Manoa Gardens kind of reading group I detail below addresses what I saw as the shortcomings of lecturing on or “discussing” a reading assignment with the handful of eager students among a much larger group and of the chancy nature of the student-centered classrooms in which I’ve studied. First, I want to get everyone to do the reading—not a given in the lecture class. I also want to get everyone to participate as much as possible—“everyone” including the shy student, the student less familiar with reading critically, the student from the cultural background where heated discussion may seem rude or otherwise inappropriate, and the student perhaps embarrassed by the fact that she speaks a language other than American Standard English. I want to make students more engaged readers by elevating the importance of student-produced rhetoric. Like Elbow, I want to encourage the discussion to deepen in complexity across the semester, to move from the specifics of a given essay into cultural criticism and/or conceptual areas where students can begin to make sense of their own lives. At some point I want them to depart from the discussion of a reading assignment’s content to critique the actions/choices of the writer. I want to give students of diverse backgrounds the confidence to begin to participate—on their own terms—in other academic discourse communities, including, perhaps, the lecture/“discussion” communities they encounter in other classrooms. And, of course, I want discussion to be an effective, high-retention learning tool and for students to see it as an effective learning tool that leaves them with more than three credits and a research paper.
Ultimately, I want students to be able to recognize the dialogic potential of their conversations as places where each of their distinct voices contributes to the creation of meaning—that the point is not to convince everyone to agree with you, but to exploit an argument’s potential to explore and to create. The goal resonates with Darin Payne’s notion of the collaborative classroom as a “heteroglossic environment” much different from the Bruffee classroom of consensus. Drawing from Myers’s and Trimbur’s critiques of Bruffee, Payne aims for a classroom “that sees students not just working together to solve and explore problems, but doing so within conditions that encourage dialogic interactions in a Bakhtinian sense” (“Collaborative Learning”). In her ethnographic study of an introductory composition class Peter Elbow taught when he was the visiting Citizen’s Chair here at UH, Kathy Cassity defines the Elbow classroom in similar terms, just as she argues for the appropriateness of Elbow’s “voice-centered” as opposed to “textually centered” pedagogy for the same student population I teach:

Elbow works toward authorizing more voices and more linguistic registers (such as Hawai’i Creole English), a move that challenges elitist notions of authorship. The space Elbow makes for students’ home languages, multiple linguistic registers, and discursive alternatives can be conceived in Bakhtinian terms as encouraging both centripetal, unifying forces of standard English and the centrifugal, disruptive forces of heteroglossia…. For writing students, encouraging the discovery of their voice(s) helps them develop the power to enter into society’s conversations, moving among the full range of multiple voices and linguistic registers available to them, “taking the word and making it [their] own.” (135, 139)

This idea of embracing the contraries of such “unifying” and “disruptive” forces is right in step with Trimbur’s heterotopia as well as Guerra’s notion of intercultural literacy: rather than assimilate or reacculturate, students are empowering themselves to operate in a variety of discourse communities, beginning with the one they take a hand in creating—their peer response group.

“Dialogic interactions in the Bakhtinian sense” are what happened around our table at Manoa Gardens—because we had made the table ours, because of the pub’s location on the margin of the land of academic discourse, and because of the extreme heteroglossic and temporal nature of any extended conversation where the beer is cheap. It also happened, admittedly, because we all showed up voluntarily—a difference between my own utopian vision and the reality of a required class for eighteen-year-olds. I am requiring my students to come to class, to have done the reading, to have prepared for the
discussion, and to actively participate—often in ways at odds with their home cultures. As I explain below, however, such requirements paradoxically aim at allowing freedom and student ownership over the discussion and at making spaces for the “multiple voices and linguistic registers” Cassity saw in Elbow’s UH classroom. For our purposes here, the relationship between the heteroglossic environment Payne and Elbow are after and what works best for students of diverse backgrounds is clear: it’s easier and more productive—not to mention fairer—to help them make this place theirs than struggle to make them this place’s (see also Halasek [9] on “challenging monologism”; Milanes [194] on “the potential of difference”).

The Model

When I hear teachers talk about “good” classes, the evaluation usually comes down to how willing the students are to speak up. A “good” class has a few interested students who keep the discussion moving; a “bad” class is one in which the teacher winds up lecturing the whole time. In many “discussion” classes, students sit silent either because they’re not prepared, they haven’t made an effort to take interest in the material, they are uncomfortable talking in front of large groups, or they simply don’t know how to participate actively—that is, they don’t talk because they don’t know what is appropriate to say. A student-centered model can address all of these problems, first by creating a comfortable space for discussion, then by offering some direction as to how to behave in the discussion, and finally, by piquing interest in the material and encouraging adequate preparation through the presence of an interested and prepared audience.

While “the practice of breaking into groups” addresses the first of these concerns and is nothing new, it fails to adequately address the rest of these problems since the “good” students usually wind up dominating the small-group discussions and the uninterested/unprepared and uncertain students rely on the inevitable large-group follow-up to get the important points needed for the test from the teacher. Further, as Wendy Hesford points out, the small-group setting is not necessarily a “safe space” for students of diverse backgrounds since cultural differences between the group members themselves can silence such students (32), a point Trimbur acknowledges with the term “heterotopia” (614) and which Kay Halasek echoes in her reminder that the peer group is never composed of equals but is, in fact, “an ideologically driven, hierarchically structured entity” (39). So it is vital to set up the groups in a way that, as much as possible, ensures equal participation.

For a small-group reading discussion to work to its maximum potential, students need to see it as a rhetorical situation, one in which they are fully aware of both the presence of a real, informed audience and of their responsibility to
The best way to show them that they’re in a real live rhetorical situation is to give each of them a specific role prior to assigning the reading, instruct them as to how their audience will expect them to behave in that role, show them how to prepare for the discussion, and then raise the stakes by giving the group full responsibility to run the entire discussion—that is, do not invite anyone to cruise through the discussion by giving them a large-group summary of the important points during the last fifteen minutes of class. This idea of assigning roles does not simply solve Hesford’s or Halasek’s concerns, but it does even things out by ensuring that the loud guy lets everyone else in, by holding the slacker responsible to produce, and by making the shy person’s contribution invaluable. I finesse the dynamic further with large-group discussion on the self-assessments students periodically turn in evaluating their performance as group members (see appended examples).

Introducing students to the Reading Group takes an entire class period. First I try to sell the students on the merits of these small groups, and then I instruct them on exactly how to prepare and participate. I begin with a five-minute story on my Manoa Gardens reading group, underscoring the fact that it was as fun as it was instructive, admittedly in part because we met in a bar instead of a classroom but mostly because we had a diverse group of interested, prepared people. We then practice the whole process as follows:

1. Go over each group member’s role in detail.
2. Break into groups and give group members ten minutes to get to know each other. (See Elbow on the social dynamics of writing groups in Sharing and Responding.)
3. Assign roles.
4. Have students read a short essay from the perspective of their assigned role.
5. Give students ten minutes to prepare silently for the discussion according to their role’s requirement.
6. Set them free on their discussion, emphasizing the fact that they are not just taking turns, but that the discussion should be conversational. That is, in addition to your own role’s requirements, you are welcome to act outside of your role in responding to others as the discussion unfolds.
7. Evaluate the experience (NOT the text) as a large group.

Students are to keep their assigned roles to prepare for the first real reading assignment and then rotate for succeeding assignments. It’s important here
to underscore for the students the fact that the first in-class experience was a simulation, not the real thing and that they are to read the assigned reading far more carefully and spend far more than ten minutes preparing for the discussion.

Whenever I talk about this classroom set-up, the first two questions that arise are about how I form the groups and whether or not I change them at any point. The answer to the first question is that I tell the students to get into groups of four and that these will be their reading groups until further notice, perhaps until the end of the semester. To this point the diverse demographic in which I teach has meant that the groups always end up as well integrated along racial and gender lines as I would have made them myself. In other demographics, though, I’d probably go about it the same way since I’m wary of essentializing racial and gender identities and also because allowing the students to choose gives them at least a little bit of the kind of ownership and responsibility with which I hope they end up. As far as changing the groups, there is no right answer. You want students to develop a commitment to each other, but then some people are more compelled to bring their best to a group of strangers than to what become forgiving friends.

During the group role instruction class, I give students the following as a handout with roles based on Literature Circles by Harvey Daniels, two of which—the Discussion Director and the Passage Master—I’ve borrowed directly from Daniels (107-22). The point is that each person has a particular job that values him/her and a responsibility s/he cannot pass on to stronger or more eager group members.

**Reading Group Roles: ENG 100/101**

**DISCUSSION DIRECTOR**
You are the leader of your group, so it is your responsibility to begin the discussion and to keep it moving and focused on the reading for the entire class period. Begin by assigning the roles for next time. Then elicit a brief summary of the assigned reading. Be prepared with a list of questions to get the most out of your discussion. Most of your questions should get into deeper issues than “what happened,” such as issues relating to place or time period, culture, politics, and other influences on the events/people being written about. It might help if you break your list into categories: one for questions that discuss the work on a concrete “what happened” level and one for more complex questions dealing with the social and cultural implications of the
piece(s). You must turn in your list of questions at the end of class. If the conversation falls flat, you are responsible.

PASSAGE MASTER
It’s okay to enjoy reading. In fact, in this class, it’s encouraged. Your job is to pick two passages from the assigned reading, explain why you chose these particular passages, and then read them aloud to your group. Were they funny? Sad? Did they present particularly vivid images? Did they echo particularly well what the writer was getting at in the rest of the work? Did they remind you of some other image/person/issue/message from something else we’ve read? Be specific. You must also turn in the page and line numbers of your passages and your reasons for choosing them.

PARAGRAPH EXPERT
Your job is to identify certain paragraphs in the assigned reading as being particularly “good” paragraphs. Your definition of “good” must be very specific. For instance, is the paragraph particularly well focused on a single point? Can you identify a clear topic sentence that acts as the paragraph’s thesis statement? What kind of paragraph is it? A narrative? A definition? An argument? A description? A comparison? etc. (See pp. 23-37 in your handbook on “paragraphs.”) You must turn in a paper with the page and line numbers of at least two paragraphs along with explanations as to why you chose those particular paragraphs.

WRITER
Your job is to imagine yourself as the writer of the assigned reading and identify at least four “writerly” choices you made in writing the piece. The choices you imagine can deal with paragraph structure, length, image choices in the intro and elsewhere throughout the piece, use of quoted speech and other placement of evidence, word choice, transitional phrases, and so on. At least one of the choices you identify must deal with a research choice (such as whether or not the writer interviewed someone or used some other outside source or went someplace to make direct observations and, if so, why?). You must turn in line numbers of the writer’s choices you’ve decided to discuss and a brief explanation as to WHY you feel the writer made these choices in each of the FOUR cases.
While these relatively non-critical roles can result in the kind of cultural reproduction that concerns Payne, Trimbur, and others, they are only introductory roles, used in a way that resonates with Halasek’s discussion of the relationship between Bakhtin’s notions of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses to teach students to read actively (124). Robert Scholes’s call for readers to read “sympathetically” before they read “critically” (118) might clarify this relationship for students. Initially, I’m doing all I can to raise interest among students in reading and in what writers do. Composition teachers can imagine a time later in the semester, once the group’s social dynamic is established, when the groups might contain a Critic instead of a Writer, when the Passage Master points out troubling passages, when the Paragraph Expert finds “bad” paragraphs, or when the group contains a Rhetorical Analyst or a Doubter and a Believer—all of which aim more actively for a rhetoric of dissensus. And, of course, as I explain in introducing the roles to the students, this activity is meant to be a conversation not “taking turns,” and the role requirements are meant to facilitate that conversation—not confine people to certain tasks. If someone answers a Director’s question, someone else ought to respond. If someone reads a Passage, someone else ought to respond. The Director isn’t the only one who can ask questions; the Paragraph Expert isn’t the only one who can talk about paragraphs, and so on. And the only wrong answer is “I don’t know.” “I don’t know, but I think. . . . How about you? Maybe it’s on page 6. Any ideas?” is the way to say “I don’t know.”

A MIDDLE-STAKES RHETORICAL SITUATION

Within the social context of this kind of small group, issues like lack of student interest, preparation, or knowledge as to how to behave or what to say become non-issues, mostly because the small group discussion is so obviously a rhetorical situation. Each student goes home and does the reading knowing that s/he has to prepare in a certain way to speak before an informed and interested audience of three other people and to persuade that audience that s/he did the reading and has prepared sufficiently to have something of interest to say. Once students begin to feel a kind of responsibility to the group, preparation and participation become socially driven instead of mere class requirements they have to fulfill to meet a teacher’s expectation. (While they begin as “required by the teacher,” the Group Role notes each student turns in at the end of class fall into a non-evaluative assessment zone, collected in each student’s developmental portfolio to emphasize that they “count” even though they aren’t graded in any way. The hope is that students will see the connection between comprehensive preparation and a valuable conversation rather than write their prep notes in the service of a grade.) Furthermore, the teacher’s task of performing in order to draw students into the conversation

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becomes unnecessary: remaining silent in this kind of rhetorical situation is socially not an option for any student in the class. And finally, with regard to the larger goal of situating students of diverse backgrounds in the classroom, everyone has a relatively safe space to participate in the conversation, thanks equally to the kind of confidence the required preparation can engender and to the relatively low-risk situation of talking with an audience of three rather than addressing an audience of twenty.

While we can call the group discussion situation “low-risk,” we cannot call it “no-risk” since it, indeed, makes certain real demands of each student—demands aimed at motivating them to assert a kind of agency within the context of the small group discussion when they might normally have been content to sit on the sidelines. In defining particular discussion roles, we are, in effect, calling each student an orator and piling on all the pressure of performing that role in front of an informed audience. And no audience is more real than one sitting inches away that has the chance to question and respond immediately to what the orator has to say. It is here where the social pressure to participate does its job. Cicero demanded that the orator “know the facts” in order to be at his persuasive best (297). Here the student orator must know the facts—that is, come to class prepared—not only to persuade, but also for two readily apparent social reasons having nothing to do with her/his grade or with getting found out by the teacher: the unprepared student looks foolish, and s/he looks like s/he let the other group members down.

While getting everyone to do their homework and then to say something in class is the initial goal of this method, ultimately we’re aiming for a much higher level of engagement and discussion—a gradual, Platonic raising-of-the-stakes that depends on development of each orator’s “character” as defined by Cicero, Quintillian, and Aristotle, who all see the orator’s “good” moral “character” as an essential persuasive tool to, as Aristotle puts it, “inspire confidence in the speaker” (213). For our purposes here, we can adapt the idea of “character” to mean a certain level of inquisitiveness evident in the quality of the student’s preparation: a student of good “character” will, with some encouragement from the teacher, think in these Platonic terms of raising the stakes, and evidence of this thinking will be clear to her/his audience in the form of the quality of discussion and in the evidence of preparation in the form of detailed notes, underlined passages, and so on. Students who initially lack this kind of character will, through the social dynamics of the group, learn its importance soon enough: “You didn’t spend nearly as much time preparing as we did, and now you expect us to explain it all to you—you do not inspire confidence.” As the overall level of preparedness rises within the group, ideally, some kind of commitment to the group will also rise: “These people are helping me to understand the reading because they are putting effort into it, so
I owe them that same effort in return, and together we can begin to do more than just figure out what and how the writer is arguing; we can uncover all the possible truths there in the text.” Students I’ve taught have overwhelmingly bought into this idea of considering effort, rather than ability, when holding fellow group members to a kind of standard.

One further way to encourage this kind of Platonic raising of stakes is to use the social dynamic of the group in a different way: as students become more adept at handling their roles and coming up with opinions they can back up with solid textual evidence, the teacher might begin to encourage a spirit of disagreement within the groups—to start an argument in a way that resonates with Myers’s wish to emphasize conflict (169) and Trimbur’s rhetoric of dis-sensus. Instead of just putting their opinions out on the table, students will begin to sharpen their comments and defend them and then to persuade the group to wind up agreeing or to fail to do so. The rhetorical situation shifts, then, from the more exploratory Aristotelian model to a Bakhtinian definition of meaning: it is socially constructed by the interaction of everyone in the group. “The organizing center of any utterance, of any experience,” Bakhtin says, “is not within but outside—in the social milieu surrounding the individual being” (1220). While on one level this statement comments on the whole group experience (the student orator’s preparation and comments are functions of the material and of his/her membership in the group), we can adapt it here to take the search for Aristotelian possible truths a step further: the text does have a meaning and that meaning is constructed by the outcome of the particular group’s discussion situated at that particular moment in time. “Meaning,” Bakhtin goes on to say, “belongs to a word in its position between speakers; that is, meaning is realized only in the process of active, responsive understanding. Meaning does not reside in the word or in the soul of the speaker or in the soul of the listener. Meaning is the effect of interaction between speaker and listener produced via the material of a particular sound complex” (1226). The text’s meaning exists, on one level, between the author (speaker) and the reader (listener) and, on another, somewhere at the center of the four heads that make up the group (the dialectic and, in this case, reflexive orator/audience relationship). Insisting that this kind of meaning exists ends up creating a kind of tension within the group that causes members to make assertions and then defend them—acts we find at the very center of the best close readings and oral versions of the kind of argumentative discourse we’re expecting them to write.

**What happened to the teacher?**

Very early in the semester students come to see audience pressure as motivation to prepare and engage. But the goal here isn’t to scare them into doing their homework and talking in class, but rather to get them to see the
intrinsic value of the preparation and engagement as keys to making the group experience “work” for them—both as something fun and as an effective learning experience. The fact that the group work is fun is apparent from the start, particularly in the 7:30 a.m. class that I usually teach: this sure beats listening to the teacher and a few outspoken students talk for fifty minutes. But we still have to ask whether or not the students, in fact, see the group experience taking them to higher levels.

If there is any role for the teacher in all of this, it lies in ensuring a positive answer to this question. For beyond the initial detailed set-up of this system, the teacher appears to do little more than tell the class to find their groups and begin their discussions every morning. The teacher does not join any of the groups since her/his presence can ruin the dynamic. And the teacher does not convene the class as a whole with, say, fifteen minutes to go to make sure everyone “got” all the “important points.” Instead, the teacher’s main purpose is to emphasize the group analysis as a skill new to students and continually challenge them to improve that skill. As the semester progresses, everyone should expect the conversation to become more analytical—that shift to the Bakhtinian rhetorical situation that encourages assertions and defenses as it values each voice in the group. This move into analytical territory is the key to showing students that the process is, in fact, working and even working on a very practical level that engages the careerist students who concern Durst, and Fishman and McCarthy: it’s generating thesis statements for their papers.

While it’s difficult to actually prove my assertion that engaging in lots of spoken arguments facilitates one’s ability to write arguments, I have seen other important connections between the reading groups and student writing in my introductory composition class—a place where student writing doesn’t necessarily even engage the reading assignments directly. Students read from a variety of genres ranging from profile essays to editorial-type pieces to research papers written by former students. My goal is that they come to recognize and then criticize various rhetorical strategies, types of presentation, voices, research techniques, paragraph structures, word choices, and so on. Since I introduced the Paragraph Expert and Writer roles three semesters ago, discussions have moved from being content-based (which is easier and often more interesting to students) into this writerly area (which is more useful for my purposes in composition courses).

It’s a bit easier to see how the reading groups work when students engage reading assignments directly in their writing, as they do in other composition classes and as they do in my American literature class, where I use the reading groups exclusively. Literature students repeatedly tell me in conferences of ideas that “came up” in their reading groups, while understanding the dialogic nature of the groups to the extent that they see such
ideas as fair game to appropriate for their own arguments without having to footnote a classmate. One such idea turned into a paper centered on the thesis “Hemingway, Chopin, and Cather all write about female characters that may be viewed as acting selfishly or immorally, but I believe that these women are acting in defiance of the traditional role of women.” The student backs up this very personal assertion with detailed analysis of marriage in the 19th and early 20th centuries as depicted by the three authors and discusses how three female characters rebel against what she calls a “confining” institution women were forced to enter for economic reasons. Both the assertion and her evidence came directly from her reading group’s discussions—particularly from conversation generated by her group’s Connector (who helps put the various authors into context with one another) and its Feminist Literary Critic—resulting in an essay Kathy Cassity might call “voice-centered” (“I believe”) rather than textually centered. One might imagine this student’s group beginning with what-was-the-story-about questions on Hemingway and then moving through what-was-he-trying-to-say, through what-do-you-think-it-means, and then adding Chopin and Cather to the dialogic interaction in ensuing classes. This student decided that what mattered in the conversation was its critique of the institution of marriage. The other group members chose entirely different subjects for the Hemingway/Chopin/Cather paper.

It would be wrong to assume that the teacher can just assign roles, set this thing in motion, sit back and relax, and get this kind of result. I make daily observations on the quality of discussion—ones that do not assert “important points” authority over the material—such as, “Group A’s conversation went far beyond the content, analyzing research choices” or other rhetorical strategies I mention specifically. I interrupt groups from time to time (without sitting to join them), not to “teach” the material, but to teach how to ask follow-up questions or how to refer more often to specific passages. I evaluate the process as a large group whenever possible, occasionally distributing copies of questions generated by Discussion Directors, both good and bad, and taking some time to analyze the questions as a class. I always answer the question, “Is this what you’re looking for?” with the question, “Is it what you’re looking for? Did it help you and/or your group?” As often as possible I try to tie paper success publicly to the quality of engagement within groups. From time to time I have short conferences at the end of class with the next day’s Discussion Directors to offer some guidance without giving too much away or asserting too much authority. I’m also “pushy,” as Elbow describes himself to Kathy Cassity (137)—a kind of manager more than a teacher, one who asserts authority not over the material, but who works to ensure everyone has done her/his job.

Criticism of Peter Elbow’s writing groups often comes from those who complain that students don’t know enough about writing to give adequate
feedback on each other’s papers, and it raises the question here as to whether students get all they need out of, say, an essay ripe for rhetorical/discursive analysis when they’re left on their own—reading, as Elbow might put it, without teachers. In an introductory composition class, I’m less interested in doing a thorough rhetorical analysis of a particular essay than in letting students do a less adequate analysis themselves as a way to acquire the skill. Further, even skilled questioning to elicit the student responses we’re looking for more often than not becomes what Payne calls a “guess what we know” form of inquiry that leads, as he argues, only to more bank deposits while doing real damage to the notion that knowledge is socially constructed (“Composition” 624). To trump the value of the very discourse community a student helped to create by lecturing on what is “important” at the end of class may make teachers feel good about having “covered the material,” but it also undoes all we’ve accomplished in turning the classroom from the site owned by the dominant culture into a contact zone—what Pratt calls a social space “where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power . . . ” (34). If we want students to value their own discourse communities as places where knowledge is constructed and value their unique places in those communities, then we ought to value them ourselves. A good way to do so is to keep our mouths shut.

This is certainly a scary thought—one which left me staring at the ceiling night after night the first couple of times I surrendered my epistemological authority in this way. Are they getting the material? Are they completely wrong? And what do I do with the kind of “unsolicited oppositional discourse,” including hate speech, that Richard E. Miller encountered in explaining that sites of grappling are by nature uncomfortable and potentially dangerous (402)?

Ensuring the class works depends on how the teacher discusses, and the large group evaluates, the whole process. In evaluating as a whole class a student’s list of Discussion Director questions, for instance, the teacher can get students to see for themselves anything they missed in a particular writer’s argument—hopefully without a guess-what-I-know line of questioning. As everyone comes to some kind of agreement on what kind of discussion a “good” question generates—a kind of consensus that’s reachable without compromising the Director’s freedom or messing with the class’s heteroglossic dynamic—the notion of socially constructed meaning is, if not celebrated, at least kept alive. Miller’s more difficult concerns regarding the potential dangers of this free environment deserve more time than I’m giving them here, but for now I’ll say that to this point, the classroom’s overtly rhetorical nature has made it a natural place to take advantage of troubling opinions and radical misreadings as teaching moments, mostly because of the emphasis we put on things like the speaker-audience relationship and the discursive situation.
Consensus?

Maybe it’s ironic for me to conclude with the fact that my students have, in fact, reached a consensus of sorts. While on paper the workload difference between my class and other classes only amounts to the single page of discussion prep notes each student must turn in (some examples of which I’ve appended here), in practice my students must work much harder than someone in a lecture class or a less-structured group setting who can get by without doing any of the assigned reading. No one comes to my class without being prepared for what amounts to a low-stakes oral exam. But despite the paces I’ve put them through, their responses over the last six semesters I’ve been teaching this way have been overwhelmingly positive—on official anonymous four-choice course evaluations, for instance, 146 out of 151 students over this period chose either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” and invariably pointed to the student-centered nature of the class as the reason why. Two springs ago, several of my American literature students responded anonymously to a draft of this paper. Here’s a sample of those student voices:

• “Sometimes there’s so much to be said that you want to butt in on what someone else says.”
• “It helps students get over the idea that only one possible answer exists and therefore be more willing to explore unpopular interpretations of the text.”
• “It also takes time. Sometimes too much time could be spent discussing something of minor detail rather than something more important. How do we prevent this from happening? You don’t want students going in the wrong direction throughout the entire class period.”
• “There is a sense of obligation for one’s classmates that keeps student attendance at a maximum. I’ve readjusted my study habits unconsciously and only now recognize the class effectiveness. My experience in this class has been extremely positive. I enjoy coming to class, am more motivated, receive various interpretations of the selections, and feel compelled to dig deeper in thought. I wish other classes (i.e. social sciences) would consider replicating this style of learning.”
• “You assigning roles for each person has taught me the value of reading. It’s like you teaching us how to fish and feed us for life rather than giving us fish and feeding us today.”
• “One critique of social consequence: we are forgiving and understanding people, so compliance is not always a given in a rhetorical group situation. We are willing to let people slide. But for the most part, the stimulus is always there on some level despite the forgiving qualities of human nature…. I definitely noticed the value in letting
people speak and the effect verbal discussion has on the attainment of knowledge or understanding of subject matter. I study and speak Spanish and have learned over the years how important verbal channels are for the capacity to store and reuse knowledge.”

Positive student responses such as these come in no small part thanks to the way this pedagogy addresses cultural issues such as Halasek’s concern with hierarchy within groups, the uneasiness with consensus as a form of cultural reproduction expressed by Myers, Trimbur, and Payne, and Au’s call for “culturally responsive” discussion forms—in this case according to “the interactional rules for talk story, a Hawaiian community speech event,” and the local tradition of sibling caretaking as an argument for collaborative learning (8-9).

While only one student has ever specifically cited the group work as the reason for being “dissatisfied” with my class, I do know that I have not yet achieved the kind of classroom-wide heterotopia I found around the table at Manoa Gardens. But students who come to enjoy my classes and noisily succeed in them do so for the same reasons my friends and I took each other to higher levels at Manoa Gardens: they feel like what they have to say is important, they feel comfortable saying it, and, as many of them have stated on official course evaluations, they value (invariably using the word) the “different” voices that make up their group. I may not be able to serve beer in my classes, but I can create an environment where a high percentage of students of diverse backgrounds do not simply tolerate each other but come to see heteroglossia as an important component in their construction of knowledge.

Oahu, Hawaii

Appendix

DISCUSSION DIRECTOR:

1. What do you think of Swift’s proposal?
2. How does he begin his satire?
3. Do you think he organized it and thought it out well?
4. What does he do at the end that makes his argument unusual? Is this something you’d do?
5. Swift talks a lot about the problems, but also the solutions. Is there a balance? Or is it one-sided?
6. Why would arguments of this kind work? Are they scare tactics?
7. Thinking of your audience, how would you want them to feel after
reading your paper? Which argument did that the best of the ones we read? Why?

**Passage Master:**

“Last page, second column, from Swift. I didn’t really understand the position he was holding and the message he was trying to get across until I read this part. The language of the article was very confusing. I chose this passage because it’s the only one I could really understand. I finally got to hear his real thoughts on the subject.”

**Paragraph Expert:**

“I thought paragraph four on page 48 (lines 88-101) was a “good” paragraph. It is a narrative paragraph with a clear topic sentence. Its use of quotes adds to its credibility. For example, ‘I know the W.W.F. has caught wind of Pee Dee Dubya’ shows his character and what he’s like. It also gives you a better picture of what is happening.”

**Writer:**

“Page 74, column 3, lines 23-38. I thought the entire paragraph was a good writerly choice because it describes the events taking place thoroughly and, at the same time, it gives validity to the author since it’s describing his interview. The interview as a research choice was very good because it helped capture Karp’s character.”

**Reading Group Self-Assessment Excerpts:**

“One person in our group gets us going by adding humor to the discussion—whether he’s leading the group or not. This generates the conversation to flow and move along smoothly because everyone is awake and actively participating.”

“Right now I do put in my two cents’ worth when I’m asked a question, but I could probably add a little more to the discussion when I’m not asked.”

“Our Director used our answers to his questions as the basis of his next questions as well.”
“Our Paragraph Expert did a good job because she gave specific reasons for supporting why the paragraphs were effective. An improvement could be for her to express her opinions more, but over time I think she will improve, as we will.”

“She has strong opinions on things, but always says them in a way that doesn’t criticize anyone else’s ideas (except maybe the author’s—but I agree with that one).”

“Sometimes our Paragraph Master has a tendency to introduce her choice and not elaborate more than a sentence or two. I wish she would’ve talked about them more.”

“I know that I have to work more at finding a way to have the discussion go further than just focusing on the same story. I know that we need to go more in-depth on the authors’ writing techniques and comparing their effectiveness.”

“I need to be alive more and have more energy. I know it’s hard, but somehow I have to get my brain going early in the mornings. I also want to allow my other group members to feel at ease and not have to worry about saying something stupid. I think we’re coming along really well and starting to get to know each other so there’s more of an easygoing feel now that helps during discussions.”

“He also related all the past readings and compared them to the reading we just read. By doing this, he opened up the discussions about how each individual writer approaches their subject. This allowed us to see how we would attempt to focus on our future papers.”

“Although our Director did an excellent job, I thought that, no matter how boring, concentrating more on the writing itself (not the content) would have helped us with our own writing more.”

“I think I have been too quiet in our group. I have been trying to participate more, but sometimes I’m just too shy.”

“I could be better prepared with more points to back up my argument.”

“I believe he is not only a good speaker and Director, but also a good listener. It always helps our discussions… He kept watching the person who was talking, which can inspire the speaker.”
“My own performance was okay. Like everyone else, I think that I had good questions about the content, but didn’t do as well on the writerly questions. For next time I will try to come up with better writerly questions so that we will all become better writers.”

“Our Paragraph Expert used A Writer’s Reference to learn more about types of paragraphs, and the information he shared with us was very important.”

“He feels that as long as we’re spending the class period analyzing an article, we might as well make the most of it.”

“I need to be more serious.”

“I could be more outgoing and assertive.”

“I am really amazed at our ability to keep on task. I don’t think that there has been a reading group session where our group finished the discussion before time was up.”

“There’s usually more to say except I’m scared of getting the information jumbled up. . . . I usually don’t talk to people I don’t know.”

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GUMBO YA YA: TAPPING CULTURAL STORIES TO TEACH COMPOSITION

Like the blend of varied spices into a delightful concoction known as gumbo, the stories from my Louisiana heritage are the very essence of my being. My story is akin to this soup, a delicacy of spices, vegetables, meat, and seafood. It is Gumbo Ya ya—a Creole expression that means “everyone talks at once.” At times it has the jaggedness of an improvisational jazz or blues piece—a little Ma Rainey and Louie Armstrong rolled into one. Thus, my narrative will take the form of a medley that recounts the influences of my diverse linguistic heritage and my encounters with theorists, in and out of our field, who have shaped my teaching of language and literacy. My belief is that writing and language can best be taught by emphasizing the interrelationship between orality and literacy and by teaching respect for the home language and culture of others. My stories can more broadly appeal to those of any racial or ethnic group who wish to understand their own language practices and attitudes by reminding them of the inextricable relationship between language and culture. A careful study of the evolution and history of the English language illuminates the distinct varieties that each cultural group has contributed to its dynamism. As an illustration of my pedagogical philosophy and practices, I will tell stories about my personal experiences from my earliest years to my later years—experiences that have led to, and taken place in, my professional journey. To tell my story, I will mingle my voice with those of other writers; I will allow everyone to speak, albeit not simultaneously, and will allow a polyphony of voices to resonate throughout.

"Un, deux, trois, quatre, cinq, six, sept, huit, neuf, dix..." I chanted, then a child of about nine years old, as I eagerly practiced the French I had

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been studying in school. My Aunt Vic, whom I was visiting in Franklin, Louisiana, a small town nestled in the heart of Cajun country, became excited over my recitations. “Oh listen to that child; she speak-a French, she speak-a French!” Noticing that I had pleased her, I continued my recitations, then began practicing some of the dialogue which I had learned from Madame Thibault. I would envision Madame as she imparted our weekly lessons to us: “Quelle heure est-il?” Looking directly into the black and white television, we fourth graders would enthusiastically respond, in turn, “Il est huit heure, il est neuf heure, il est dix heure,” for drill and practice were the standard forms of language lessons. In junior high school I continued my French classes, which used songs as models for learning French. I can still sing the French national anthem, and I can still recite in French most of the Pledge of Allegiance. My French teacher, a Louisiana Creole woman, had taught us well. I remember her distinctly because she used to boast of the many French influences in New Orleans, especially how Elysian Fields, a major boulevard there, was named for the Champs Elysees in Paris.

Although I enjoyed my lessons in French, being the strong-willed individual that I am, I was happy that in high school I could choose which language to study. I decided upon Spanish, español, the other language of my hometown’s heritage. Or perhaps I should say the other language of which it boasts. Certainly anyone who has visited New Orleans has been to the Vieux Carre, as it is called by many natives, and has seen the many signs illustrating the city’s bilingual heritage. Visitors to this historic district will observe signs inscribed or posted on store fronts: “Aqui se habla español; ici on parle français.” Or they might notice the street signs asserting, “When New Orleans was under French rule, this street bore the name Rue Royale. When New Orleans was the capital of the Spanish province, this street bore the name Calle Real.”

I had not realized, because of either my cultural naivete or my cultural incuriosity, that the city was heir to another language evident in the songs sung by the African Americans who masqueraded Indian style during Mardi Gras. The songs were tinged with traces of an African ancestral past—songs like “Tu-way-pock-e way” and “Hoo-na-nay,“ which they rendered in call-response fashion. And I vividly remember how many black New Orleanians felt ashamed and embarrassed by the cultural displays of the Zulu Club who paraded with their faces painted black like those wild, barbaric Africans.

Recalling the stories of my youth helped me to realize the importance of using stories as a means to explore my cultural and linguistic background and of giving others a window into this rich legacy. The story is a particularly appropriate form to use because of its oral nature and its grounding in African American culture, even though it has other merits. Race theorist and public
hip-hop intellectual Michael Dyson has theorized that stories and narratives yield self-knowledge and hold the key to unraveling black self-identity (83). Black feminist critic Barbara Christian has aptly recognized the value of stories for the survival of people of color, who “have always theorized . . . in the stories we create. . . . How else have we managed to survive with such spiritedness the assault on our bodies, social institutions, countries, our very humanity?” (336). In fact, exploring mis varios cuentos in this essay will help me firmly locate the ideological bases of my teaching of language and writing viewed through the lenses of both race and culture. In the academy students from various socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds will encounter stories like mine. They should be armed with the cultural competence and respect for cultural traditions that many from privileged backgrounds tend to denigrate. By telling my story, I invite African Americans and others to correct long-standing misconceptions about the cultural and linguistic traditions of African Americans.

While a graduate student, I was asked to lead a seminar discussion on Geneva Smitherman-Donaldson’s article in which she issued a challenge to language professionals to advance a national public policy on language. She called for them to reaffirm the legitimacy of non-mainstream languages and dialects and to promote mother tongue instruction as a co-equal language of instruction along with the language of wider communication (35). “It’s time to call the children in and teach them the lessons of the blood,” (29) she urged. Her statement is important in that it purports the communal view establishing a linguistic link among people of African descent: they share a kinship that is not a genetic one. For Smitherman-Donaldson, it follows that these children should speak a language belonging to the community. Of course, Smitherman-Donaldson had little trouble convincing me to respect linguistic diversity. I who had grown up in a household in which my father regularly sprinkled his speech with Cajun expressions. A painful reminder jolted me into an awareness, however, that not everyone in my field embraced linguistic tolerance when I was ridiculed during that class session by two African American students who vigorously denounced the nonstandard dialect Ebonics, variously called Black English Vernacular (BEV) or African American Vernacular English (AAVE). These students, who, like me, were preparing to teach English, distanced themselves from what they perceived to be utter nonsense that denigrated African Americans.

It was then that I began to wonder why Smitherman-Donaldson believed that professionals who teach language and literacy could promote valuing nonmainstream dialects and languages when many English teachers themselves do not embrace each others’ regional forms of language. For example, there
still exists a widely held bias against Southern speech compared to the preferred Northeastern and Midwestern varieties of English. Only when language and literacy professionals learn to appreciate the linguistic differences among themselves and within their own local communities can they work to educate others about the diversity of languages, providing a strong, unified voice to influence public attitudes and policies toward language.

My own relationship to AAVE was also something I had contemplated. Surely it had been my first language. I do not, however, remember when I first learned to communicate in the language of wider use, although I am as skilled at making the transition from AAVE to Standard English as an Akan speaker from Ghana who switches from English to Twi during a conversation with friends. At home I use AAVE all the time, as had my mother, my father, and other relatives and friends. I can remember hearing my parents say things such as, “John, he been gone,” when we were relaxing at home. But I knew that in a more formal setting, they would construct that sentence differently: “John has been gone,” or “John left hours ago.” I always knew how to distinguish between home language and the language one used in school or at work. In school, the teachers reprimanded anyone who did not speak using the language of wider communication, making those who used AAVE seem stupid or lazy. Not wanting to be stigmatized, I persisted in using the formal language required when speaking in school. Writing was a horse of a completely different color, however, because when a teacher returned a paper, no one other than the teacher would witness my misuse of the formal language.

**Affecting Linguistic Tolerance**

Though Smitherman-Donaldson calls for a greater emphasis on linguistic diversity in the K-12 level (35), the college level offers abundant opportunities to affect the language attitudes of our students by reaching those educators who prepare future K-12 teachers. Thus, I have responded anew to Smitherman-Donaldson’s call to help shape students’ attitudes towards language.

At the height of the Ebonics debate in 1997, my frustration at not having any trained writing or linguistic professional consulted to engage in public debate in our local media prompted me to write a letter to the *Baltimore Sun*, clarifying misconceptions about what the Oakland School officials were proposing. After I wrote the editorial endorsing the view that students’ learning of Standard English might be facilitated by using Ebonics or AAVE as a bridge, I learned that I was able to affect not only practicing and prospective language and composition professionals, but also those in other disciplines. One of my colleagues in the philosophy department at the state university where I teach said that until she read my letter, she really had not understood the Ebonics...
debate. Another colleague in psychology, who teaches a course to prospective teachers, invited me to speak to her class because she felt that I could bring a much needed perspective to students, mostly education majors, studying to teach exceptional children. She now regularly invites me to guest lecture on nonstandard dialects because she learned more than she had ever anticipated.

Usually I begin my guest lecture by asking students to consider their language heritage using these questions:

- What is your language background? Is English your first language?
- What form/variety of English did you learn first?
- How many languages other than English have you ever studied?
- What are these languages?
- Which of these languages do you speak, write, or comprehend?
- When did you first study this language?
- Is English the first language of your parents?
- What form/variety of English do they speak?

The responses from the predominantly Caucasian group of students usually indicate that most students consider English their first language, that few have studied a foreign language, and that their parents’ first language is English as well. A small percentage of the students admit that sometimes both they and their parents speak an informal language variety at home. Few have admitted that in their families are residuals of language from working class communities, such as those in the Pennsylvania Dutch country, Appalachia, Baltimore, and Dundalk, Maryland.

In sharing my language background with the students, I mention my father’s frequent use of Cajun expressions and compare varieties of English that Louisiana Creole speakers use, such as “tree loaf of bread” for “three loaves of bread.” It’s not uncommon to hear a sentence like the following: “I buy tree loaf of bread when I make grocery today.” During one discussion, an African American woman, the only one in a classroom with mostly Caucasians, talked proudly about how she doesn’t allow her children to speak Ebonics because they will only become confused. Indeed, she, like many other African Americans, represent the most vocal opponents of AAVE. During the outcry against the Oakland Ebonics proposal, national leaders such as Jesse Jackson (though he later retracted), Maya Angelou, and Kweisi Mfume were among the most visible detractors.
Not surprisingly, the student displayed a common, middle-class African American belief about Ebonics that implies fear, shame, and distrust of an important component of their linguistic heritage. Some African Americans deny that Ebonics speakers use a language variety with its own specialized vocabulary, sounds, and structures, as indicated by the linguistic scholarship of prominent researchers (Smith [129-40]; Turner [209-46]); its opponents maintain that Ebonics or AAVE is simply lazy speech. The reality is that many African Americans persist in denigrating their own cultural and linguistic heritage just as those New Orleanians disparaged the African-inspired cultural practices associated with Mardi Gras.

I remembered Smitherman-Donaldson’s admonition to “teach the children the lessons of the blood;” but instead of using Smitherman-Donaldson’s quote to respond to the student’s criticism, I mentioned that I had observed several African children in a compound in Ghana speaking four and five languages simultaneously. I impressed upon her that children can learn to speak many languages, especially if they learn them during their formative years. Not certain that I had reached her, I culled many examples from my background teaching African American literature: “Writers like Langston Hughes, Charles Chesnutt, Zora Neale Hurston, and Alice Walker have successfully used the rhythms of black English to carve wonderful masterpieces of literature,” I argued. All of these writers have published works exemplifying bi-dialectalism. Some of their publications use mostly African American vernacular, others use Standard English, and others, still, shift between both the two. Like these writers, most African Americans who speak a home language other than the Standard can code switch. They use an informal variety with family and peers, but in more formal environments such as the academy, they use a Standard or wider-use variety of language. Those who resist such code switching limit their capability to master more than one language.

Although Standard English has been identified as the language of commerce, the language of choice of corporate America, many people have climbed the ladder of American success using African American Vernacular English, not always alternating shifts between AAVE and the Standard. Witness controversial sports promoter Don King, the countless African American NBA and NFL stars, fiery folk preachers like T.D. Jakes and Creflo Dollar, and the wealthy Hip Hop mogul and producer Master P, all of whom retain traces of their nonmainstream dialects. Even former President Bill Clinton has been known to use traces of Ebonics in his speech. Judging by America’s standard of economic success, one could argue that surely they have “made it.”

I judge myself successful when students are encouraged to imitate the precedent of using African American vernacular that these established writers
have set. Perhaps student writers will experiment with writing essays in their home language and “become more adventurous in finding audiences for their writing in nonprestige dialects,” as Peter Elbow suggests (“Inviting” 15). In the same way that students are sometimes able to switch between the standard and the vernacular when speaking, they should feel at ease doing so when writing. Or sometimes they should be able to write their essays incorporating the vernacular. Composition professionals have begun lending some support to this flexible use of language, as illustrated by Elbow’s prediction that one day more “mainstream readers will appreciate such writing” (“Inviting” 15). Elaine Richardson also advocates this position. She had students mimic Black discourse forms in writing refutational essays emphasizing a topic important to the African American community (123). In a summary of research on Black language practices in the composition classroom, Richardson concluded that “the use of African American language is helpful in teaching composition as it helps to develop a more well-rounded writer, while showing that Black language usage is a worthwhile resource in the educational enterprise” (30).

I also help students to understand the rich contributions of Africans to the English language and culture of the New World: the infusion of words like okra, gumbo, and jazz, or the ring plays like “Little Sally Walker” (Jones 108-10) or clapping plays like “Hambone” (Jones 34) that many sang on the playgrounds and in the classrooms of their youth. Many of these folk songs and games originated in Europe but took on syncopated rhythms in the African American community. At the end of the lecture-discussion, I distribute a bibliography, which students can use for further research into this topic, including James Baldwin’s wonderful essay, “If Black English Isn’t a Language, Then Tell Me What Is?” After class, students thank me for coming because, for many of these prospective teachers, this discussion represents their first conversation on the ways that nonstandard dialect can inform their pedagogical practices.

I judge myself successful when I am able to change students’ attitudes toward nonstandard English both in and outside of the composition classroom. In literature classes, I seize the opportunity to help students to appreciate language divergence. An assignment that has become a mainstay of my African American literature classroom is one in which students listen to “The African American Oral Tradition,” a one-hour lecture by University of Dayton professor Herbert Woodward Martin, delivered via Ohio University’s web site. In the lecture, Martin lauds African American slaves for having learned the English language “under duress.” Martin further argues that in spite of the prohibitive circumstances, they accomplished a feat when they learned the language solely by hearing it.

One student, who identified her language background as white, middle-class, had early in the semester displayed a disdainful attitude towards African
Americans’ use of dialect when she wrote in a summary of Dr. Martin’s lecture that “Blacks use too much dialect.” However, after studying some of the works written in the vernacular and hearing them read expressively, she seemed to change her viewpoint. By the end of the course, when this same student had completed her research paper about Their Eyes Were Watching God, she sang quite a different tune about Hurston:

In order for one to fully appreciate and understand the novel, the reader must be able to decipher the language used throughout the novel. In her video, Hurston was not timid about displaying the dialect spoken by the members of the town. The dialect is an important part of African American culture and is presented this way by Hurston. Again, the dialect is used to create a feel for the environment in which the characters were immersed. Sentences were spoken, as “Dat we don’t know. De store is got tuh be sold and then we’se goin’ off somewhere tuh git married.” By using the dialect the way she does, the reader gets a better understanding of the atmosphere. The use of the dialect also shows that Hurston does not fear her cultural heritage. A reader who is not used to this type of writing may have to get past the “language barrier” first. Once past the barrier the reader will better understand what is taking place in the novel. The dialect that is used in the novel is an example of Hurston taking her personal background and applying it to her writing.

I judge myself successful when I develop students’ interest in their home dialects; students have become interested in Bawlamerese, spoken in working-class neighborhoods like Highlandtown and Dundalk in Baltimore, Maryland. As an African American teacher at a traditionally white university, it’s important that I encourage students to recognize the validity of languages and speech patterns unique to local communities. Often students will question why African American Vernacular English has been recognized as a legitimate dialect and how it differs from the home and regional dialects spoken by non-African Americans. Geneva Smitherman explains AAVE in a way that students can begin to find answers to their questions: she identifies it as “a language born from a culture of struggle, a way of talking that has taken surviving African language elements as the base for self-expression in an alien tongue” (18). Also, AAVE has been for many decades the subject of serious linguistic scholarship that has established its legitimacy as a language system. The same breadth of scholarship is not available on the home dialects spoken by most of my students. To help the students understand a slice of language variety prevalent in some of their own backyards, I encourage viewing The Story of English series, which highlights the Chesapeake Bay fishing workers
who have retained the accents of their native Britain (McCrum, et al. 108-109). Unlike those who subscribe to the Richard Rodriguez camp of language learning, which insists that speakers alienate themselves from their home languages in order to assimilate into mainstream culture by speaking the public language (19-20), these students understand the origins of some of their parents’ and grandparents’ tongues. Having this information should allow them a clearer vision of and greater connection with students whose first language is a variety other than the language of wider use.

I judge myself successful when my students can talk about the well-known, dialect-filled “Arn’t I a Woman?” speech attributed to Sojourner Truth, analyze her arguments as sophisticated, and marvel at how she, “unlettered and untaught,” produced masterpieces of rhetorical elegance. I judge myself successful when they recognize Uncle Julius as a shrewd character who skillfully manipulates language and even attempt readings of Charles Chesnutt’s dialect in his fictional “The Goophered Grapevine” or Dunbar’s dialect poem “When Malindy Sings,” having overcome their initial timidity of reading Chesnutt. Perhaps one of the final measures of my success at changing their language attitudes occurs when they no longer use terms like “proper English” and “correct English” to distinguish the language of wider communication from various nonstandard dialects.

**From Orality to Literacy**

My familiarity with the richness and variety of vernacular language inevitably led me to become a proponent of orality in literacy. I have a strong interest in not only how people are affected by use of various levels of language, but also how teachers can use oral features to help students produce effective writing. In this subsection with a title that revises Walter Ong’s landmark book on orality and literacy, I will provide a glimpse into some of the ways that I have tried to affect students’ writing ability. Unlike Ong, however, I will not look historically at what has occurred as societies have shifted from orality to literacy; I will instead examine the pedagogical implications of this shift by analyzing how students in writing classes might write more vibrant, engaging texts by conscientiously engaging in the study of oral or speech-like texts.

Many in our field exhibit a bias towards the literate tradition and maintain that oral qualities present in writing hinder the development of effective expository prose while others highly value oral practices in writing. When writing comments on students’ compositions, instructors often write, “Avoid colloquialisms” or “you write as if you are talking.” Indeed, students should understand when speech forms are inappropriate in their writing, but there are times that speech forms can enliven writing styles. Peter Elbow, for example, maintains that the best writing has voice, the life and rhythms of speech. He
further argues that unless students are actively trained to translate speech into writing, they will write prose that is “dead, limp, and nominalized” (“Shifting” 291). Like Elbow, linguist Akua Duku Anokye strongly endorses the belief that oral language has qualities that can enhance writing. She argues that African Americans come from a lineage that values the oral tradition, evidence of which can be found among the values and linguistic practices of West African peoples (230). My research and teaching have been inspired by the attitude that both Elbow and Anokye have professed.

When Malcolm X in his autobiography told of his difficulties communicating to governmental officials and others in leadership positions by writing letters in the vernacular (34), he set the stage for a discussion of the differences between oral and written language. In my composition and writing classes, when students discuss Malcolm X’s popularly anthologized autobiographical piece detailing how he acquired learned the fundamentals of reading and writing, they explore the meaning of literacy. Thereafter, students begin to understand that there is a language—written language—appropriately used to communicate with a wider audience, while the oral language used with a narrower audience limits the number of people with whom its speaker can fully articulate his/her ideas. After this discussion, students are able to understand what is Standard English or the language of wider use; thus, they begin to understand the limitations of the term “proper English.” They gain an understanding of Malcolm X as part of a primarily oral tradition which others such as Sojourner Truth, Maria Stewart, and Frederick Douglass have helped shape. Though many of the speeches these speakers delivered were later published, because of their beginnings as oral texts their speeches retained the features of oral discourse. These texts are to be distinguished from those that emanated from the tradition of literacy. This oral tradition, which hearkens back to African shores, I realize, is something I appreciated as a child, whether I was listening to the call-response of those who costumed and performed American Indian-style at Carnival in New Orleans or whether I was absorbing the flavorful traditions of the Black preachers and teachers who mesmerized me with their captivating rhythms and cadences in their Sunday morning messages and their daily classrooms. As awed by these word artisans as Zora Neale Hurston, I studied their sermons, as did Hurston, but unlike her, I did not incorporate them for aesthetic effect in novels or as examples of collected folk traditions. Instead, my research and teaching draw upon the sermons and speeches of African American orators to highlight the oral-written link.

Black oratory, like the speeches from the Greek and Roman classical rhetorical traditions, provides sources of the African American rhetorical tradition. It is in the culture of African Americans that orality reigns supreme, where the poets, the preachers, and other people of the word command respect
and authority in the African American community, as did the orators of ancient Greece. By his own admission, Malcolm X exemplified one whose verbal artistry helped earned him a place of respectability among his street peers even before he became fully literate: “I had been the most articulate hustler out there—I had commanded attention when I said something. But now trying to write simple English, I not only wasn’t articulate, I wasn’t even functional” (34).

I theorized that if I could exploit the oral tradition to facilitate expression in the written tradition, perhaps this exploitation would provide an important link to achieving literacy among my students, most of whom feel more confident articulating their views in speech than in writing. After devising a way to teach writing by drawing upon this oral tradition, I generated an excitement in students who had grown up listening to another dimension of the oral tradition: rap, rock and roll, and rhythm and blues. My instructional project hinged upon students carefully studying the black sermonic style evident in the speeches and other oral texts of African American orators and writers to improve their writing styles.

Analyses of the speeches, sermons, and other oral texts indicated that these writers had used many of the stylistic embellishments of the Greek and Roman classical traditions, such as anaphora, antithesis, and chiasmus, as well as the call-response style inherited from African traditions, all of which are solidly grounded in the oral tradition. Socio-linguist Deborah Tannen calls these stylistic strategies that are based on repetition “involvement strategies,” those that draw an audience into the discourse emotionally (17-18). Tannen’s research analyzed speaking and writing that used involvement strategies basic to conversational discourse and found that these strategies engaged audiences in discourse through musicality and rhythmic patterns (17). Peter Elbow makes a similar point in his exploration of what he calls the “three mysteries of writing” (“Three Mysteries” 1). According to Elbow, writers use these mysteries to create engaging discourse for their audiences. Similar to Tannen’s theory of involvement, his third mystery of writing emphasizes how writers draw the reader into written discourse by using euphonious words and phrases (“Three Mysteries” 7). In response to Tannen’s and Elbow’s concepts, I argue that if highly effective writing attends to the needs of the audience, more highly involved texts, such as these oral texts, should be useful in teaching writing, especially persuasive writing. Writers who create the kinds of artfully balanced, musical sentences characteristic of oral texts establish themselves as mature, sophisticated, and credible writers.

As part of a research study, I designed a four-week instructional unit based on the theoretical principles espoused by Tannen and the rhetorical ancients and implemented it in an introductory African American literature class.
to assist students to develop a clear, elegant style (Ampadu 77-88). First, we discussed a brief background of classical rhetoric and the historical role that it has played in the preparation of speeches (Corbett & Connors 489-543); after receiving a handout with examples of the specific stylistic strategies (repetition) that exemplify orality, students engaged in an inquiry discussion about some of these strategies. Working in pairs or trios, students identified examples of these repetition strategies in the speeches they read. Next they analyzed these repetition strategies and the rhetorical intent of Douglass’s “Fourth of July” speech. Their first writing task was to demonstrate their ability to emulate skillful use of repetition by writing a short speech modeled after those that they had just finished studying. The speech, an argument against the enslavement of women, was to be directed to a hostile audience of whites. Though the enslavement of any human being is unacceptable, students were asked to argue specifically against the enslavement of women because that would allow them to focus intensely on one aspect of slavery they had studied in some of the model texts; thus, they should have more confidence in their ability to imitate these texts since they would be familiar with the kinds of arguments made for and against the enslavement of women.

Students’ speeches demonstrated that they had grasped the stylistic principles that they had studied in the unit because they wrote very engaging speeches, influenced by the models but which helped them in developing a lively, effective voice. One exemplary speech, entitled “. . . But What of the Woman? Freedom for Woman, as Told by a Man,” began its argument by stating the privileges that the writer had enjoyed as a free black man and argued that woman should partake of the same privileges because she had played a prominent role in helping to develop man socially, intellectually, and physically. An analysis of this speech reveals that the student used varied repetition strategies, including anaphora, antithesis, chiasmus, and parallelism. Though the student used similar stylistic constructions to those found in the original text, his own voice clearly can be heard:

I have fought for my freedom with words, with violence, and with spirit. Many of my fellow men have died fighting to gain for me what should already have been mine to claim . . . freedom. I know what it is to have life taken from me and to feel the joy of having life renewed; you know what it is to take life and to witness its return while seeing the error of your ways. . . . For if my mother, my wife, my sisters, and my daughters do not receive the same freedom I have received, the same joy I have felt, the same breath of life I have breathed, then vengeance shall open her bloody red eyes and extend her wings of darkness upon you. For the only thing worse than a man’s revenge is a woman’s scorn.
In a related study that I conducted,³ students studied a similar unit on speeches, then wrote a speech in response to a prompt centered on Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, arguing against the physical and mental abuse of women advocated by Celie’s husband, Mr._____. Again, students produced examples of lively writing that proved valuable in developing their voice. The best examples showed that students were willing to experiment with using some of the repetition strategies that characterize highly involved texts. An excerpt of a student’s speech follows:

…I see you all looking at me. I see your eyes searching for cuts, bruises, or a broken bone. Well you won’t find any of these kinds of injuries today, although I have had many in the past. Today, my wounds are not visible. You can’t see them because they are wounds to my heart, to my thoughts, and to my very existence as a woman… . Let me tell you about my husband, Mr._____. I was secretly hoping that he would try to stop me, show me some kindness, and let me know that he could not live without me. How do you think he responded? Let me tell you how he responded. He did not profess his love for me or offer to try to get help for our marriage. Instead, he chose to hurt me. He never lifted a finger or touched a single part of my body. Instead of physically abusing me, he attacked me verbally. . . . But words, hurtful, hateful words never go away. They are always there. They are always taunting you and making you doubt yourself . . .

The student composed an emotionally intense speech delivered by the abused Celie who testifies about how the hurt of physical and verbal abuse has damaged her psyche. Careful, balanced parallel phrasing is evident in her writing. Clearly, the wedding of the oral with the written has wielded some influence on the persuasiveness of the writing of those who emulated the oral features of texts.

By telling and reflecting on the stories in my professional journey, I have gained a better understanding of what motivated me to value linguistic diversity and adapt practices emphasizing orality in my classroom. I hope that others can assemble the jagged rhythms of my stories to unlearn common misperceptions about vernacular English. I hope they can learn to weave their individual voices into stories that shape and refine their own pedagogies, as they simultaneously intermingle their voices with my stories and those of my people. Perhaps they can truly begin to use their stories creatively to turn composition and language classrooms into symphonic sites of engaged learning that draw from rich musical passages presenting myriad representations of language and culture. This sustained emphasis on stories can help them to use oral language
conventions in a positive fashion: to produce powerful and poetic prose that transcends boundaries of race, gender, and socio-economic class.

Baltimore, Maryland

NOTES

1 I am indebted to Peter Elbow for reading early drafts of this essay.

2 In New Orleans the cultural tradition of Mardi Gras Indians who parade by chanting, singing, and dancing in the streets can be traced back 100 years. African Americans dressed in elaborate hand-sewn costumes laced with feathers and intricate beaded designs practice rituals that celebrate and honor a common spirituality and consciousness of their African and Native American ancestry. Groups that mask as Indians have taken on names such as Creole Wild West, Wild Tchoupitoulas, and Wild Magnolias. For a discussion of the evolution of this tradition, see Berry, Foose, and Jones.

3 For this research study I gratefully acknowledge support from the NCTE Research Foundation’s Cultivating New Voices Among Scholars of Color project, 2000-2002. This quasi-experimental study, “Oral Texts as Models for Teaching Persuasive Writing Style in an African American Literature Class,” was conducted during the summer of 2001, under the mentorship of Dr. George Hillocks, University of Chicago. Students at a four-year, Mid-Atlantic university studied stylistic strategies from the Classical Greek and African American rhetorical traditions as models for imitation. The study also examined students’ perceptions of how their participation in this instructional unit helped to shape their choices of stylistic strategies in persuasive writing assignments.

WORKS CITED


Douglass, Frederick. “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?” Gates and McKay 379-91.


ENGLISH 354: ADVANCED COMPOSITION
WRITING OURSELVES/COMMUNITIES INTO PUBLIC CONVERSATIONS

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

English 354: Advanced Composition is a required course for undergraduate majors in English, broadcast journalism, criminal justice, and pre-service English education, among others, at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, a research-one, land-grant institution with a student population of about 24,000. English 354 focuses on "intensive study and practice in writing non-fiction prose" and has a prerequisite of at least one 200-level writing course.

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English 354 is one of four composition courses that students can take above the 100-level in UNL’s English Department. It generally enrolls juniors and seniors. As a requirement for majors in English, English education, criminal justice, and broadcast journalism, to name a few, English 354 usually enrolls a diverse student population (not all of whom are enthusiastic about taking the course). Although 354 has a prerequisite of a 200-level writing course, UNL’s computer system cannot enforce this rule, so many students sign up for 354 without prior writing experiences beyond the first-year composition courses. Even those who do have experience in 200-level writing courses may not have experience with expository writing since 200-level courses in poetry and fiction writing also count toward the prerequisite. Most students come into the class familiar with small group work and portfolio systems of evaluation, but teachers cannot assume students will have knowledge of particular writing strategies or course “content.” Taught mainly by lecturers and a few composition and rhetoric faculty, there are a wide variety of approaches to the course. Some teachers focus on traditional literary research, others on “the personal essay,” and still others teach it as a general writing workshop. Students do not know which focus their 354 course will take until they enter the classroom.

Beyond being a requirement for particular majors, English 354 also fulfills UNL’s “Integrative Studies” (I.S.) course requirement within the comprehensive education program. I.S. courses are designed to engage students in critical thinking, writing, oral expression, analysis of controversies, exploration of assumptions, inquiry into the origins and consequences of intellectual bias, and consideration of human diversity. Students take ten I.S. courses throughout their undergraduate experience, with at least one at the 300 and 400 levels respectively. Students often take 354 to fulfill their 300-level I.S. requirement, and our goals for focusing on argument in the public and private sphere directly connect to these I.S. goals.

Theoretical Rationale

In Writing Ourselves/Communities into Public Conversations, our students explore public and private arguments and analyze how arguments are made within each (overlapping) sphere. We want them to consider the varying and sometimes competing strategies used to construct an argument, the cultural narratives that underpin them, and the ways that public and private arguments often connect and conflict. We hope that in studying public and private argument, our students will become more conscious of how issues of representation and genre are context-dependent and motive-driven. We also hope that they will come to see the writing of argument as both a personal and critical matter as they study the intersections between public writing and their own lives.
Our interest in public argument mirrors emerging scholarship that conceptualizes a more politically and socially active role for the writer. As Christian Weisser suggests, “Since its birth as an academic discipline, composition studies has gradually expanded its focus from the individual writer, to social notions of how knowledge is generated, to more political—and public—investigations of discourse” (1). For compositionists such as Weisser, Susan Wells, and Elizabeth Ervin, this social turn in writing is understood in terms of calls to analyze, theorize, and sometimes produce “public writing.” For instance, Weisser argues in Moving Beyond Academic Discourse that compositionists need to theorize public writing “by seeing how it is shaped and transformed by forces including the social, economic, political, cultural, and ideological” (97). He states, “By exposing these forces, both in theory and in the classroom, we arrive at a fuller understanding of what public writing is and how it works or fails to work in specific circumstances” (97). In a similar vein, David Bloome calls for writing teachers to engage students in Critical Discourse Analysis of arguments in the public sphere. As Bloome summarizes,

Critical Discourse Analysis asks us to look very carefully and in detail at the language used in a conversation, a newspaper article, a Web site, and even a “President’s Update” for how that language frames issues and people and defines the terms of debate and discussion, the assumptions it takes for granted as “common sense,” how agency is assigned or hidden, and for how any use of language privileges some at the expense of others. (12)

We are persuaded by these scholars’ calls for analyzing public writing in the classroom because we believe in the value of helping students to recognize the politicized function of language, particularly how it works to maintain and perpetuate oppressive power structures. Within English 354, we invite our students to consider questions of public writing, such as Who is speaking? Who is silent? Whose perspectives are absent? We hope that this questioning will lead students to a greater awareness of the power of language in shaping society and to realize, in turn, that they can write themselves into these conversations—to participate in, complicate, and perhaps re-make them.

Of course, it’s not always clear what constitutes “public writing.” Feminists and postmodernists alike have contended that separating knowledge into public and private spheres presents a destructive and flawed version of reality (Fraser, Gring-Pemble, Young). Like these scholars, we feel that conceptualizing argument in terms of public and private spheres ignores the complex ways that the two impact and are part of each other. This binary veils the ways that knowledge is integrally and intimately connected with the knower. Thus, while we are drawn to having students analyze public writing, we also want to
complicate their notions of “public writing.” Rather than having students write texts for the public sphere (for example, Elizabeth Ervin’s course design on writing for public audiences or Nora Bacon’s service-learning initiatives where students write for public audiences), we view the composition classroom as a productive site for examining what we mean by “private” and “public,” often re-framing our understandings of what these descriptors mean for argument and discourse. We want students to see that their family and/or community experiences are always already embedded within larger cultural narratives that they participate in and that they can speak to, add to, and complicate. In this article, we describe one vision of how we have tried to engage students in exploring the boundaries between personal and public arguments. In a previous article describing an assignment that we use, Amy explains the philosophy underpinning our version of English 354 in this way:

By emphasizing writing practices that value experience as an historical, social, and ongoing process of knowledge-making, we believe students can develop rhetorical awareness of and strategies for participating in discourses that exist in private and public spheres—and perhaps disrupting and remaking the boundaries between them. (Goodburn 23)

To carry out these goals, we foregrounded three critical terms—“narrative,” “representation,” and “genre.” Using these concepts, we asked students to look at the way writers situate themselves in their research in order to enter and intervene in ongoing public conversations. The term “narrative” served as a touchstone for thinking about social and cultural narratives and the ways that our writing and language are already always situated within larger discourses that shape (and sometimes limit) how we come to understand and know. We used course readings focused on Nebraska communities and histories because our student population is primarily from Nebraska (over 93%), and we wanted to provide models for how other Nebraska authors have used narrative to investigate and represent their homes and communities for public audiences.

Similarly, the term “representation” was a means for helping students to understand “research” as a process of knowing and interpreting connected to one’s own social location rather than a neutral or objective presentation of facts. Composition scholars have examined the ethics of representation in a variety of venues: in research methodologies (Fontaine and Hunter, Mortensen and Kirsch), in how we use and talk about student writing (Anderson, Brooke and Goodburn), and in understanding writers’ representations of self (Newkirk). In English 354, we used the concept of representation to help writers consider the ethical responsibilities entailed in their critical and rhetorical choices.
Finally, we focused on the term “genre” as conceptualized by theorists such as Amy Devitt, Anis Bawarshi, and Mary Jo Reiff as well as teacher scholars like Tom Romano who have explored the power of multi-genre writing with students. We view genre as a central term for helping students understand how forms for writing are integrally connected to one’s individual rhetorical purposes within broader social and political contexts. As Bawarshi suggests, “Genres function as sites of action in which writers acquire, articulate, and potentially resist motives to act . . . genre is a social motive and a rhetorical instantiation of that motive” (45). Thus in English 354 we invite students to write in different genres and to conceptualize genre in conjunction with one’s critical and rhetorical purposes for writing.

Students engaged with the terms “narrative,” “representation,” and “genre” through two four-week units and one six-week unit, each focused around a writing project, ranging from 8-15 pages. In Unit One: Writing Home and Community, students examined private and public representations of their homes and communities and, through research, explored the genres that are used to represent these places. Students located texts or artifacts that comprised the history of their community (i.e. scrapbooks, newspapers, church books, recipe/cook books, letters, journals, postcards, brochures) and wrote about their relationships to the values, attitudes, and identities represented in these textual histories of their homes and communities. In this way, students began to experiment with the interplay between personal narrative and public record.

In Unit Two: Analyzing Arguments in Our Communities, students conducted a rigorous rhetorical analysis of an argument of their choosing. Working from Andrea Lunsford and John Ruszkiewicz’s definition of argument as “any text—whether written, spoken, or visual—that expresses a point of view” (4), students were given two options: 1) rhetorical analysis of at least two texts on an explicit public argument or 2) rhetorical analysis of an implicit argument being made in a visual medium (movies, music videos, “reality” tv shows, etc.). With this project, we hoped that students would gain a more critical understanding of the complex ways that power operates within the public sphere through analyzing what counts as knowledge, explaining how evidence is produced, and identifying which forms of persuasion are most valued in their field.

In Unit Three: Writing Ourselves into History, students continued to examine issues of representation and genre as they undertook a multi-genre research project on a historical event of the 20th or 21st century. Students identified a topic that connected to their own family and/or community history and conducted archival, primary (including at least one interview), and secondary research on the topic. They explored various genres that have been used to document the event and were given the option to write in multiple genres to represent their research findings. Reinforcing the idea that their projects par-
participate in the public sphere, students presented their projects in the English department library where faculty and friends were invited to attend.

Although each project requires different types of writing, all three ask writers to take up questions of representation, genre, and narrative in similar ways. Underlying all three projects is the assertion that public representations are subjective, shaped by power relationships, and guided by social, political, and historical contexts. Projects one and three in particular raise ethical issues as students represent others’ experiences, asking, “What are the ethical implications of representing someone without acknowledging or representing one’s own subject position within the text?” and “How does one’s representation affect the reader’s understanding of the project?” These questions help students to gain insight into their own motivations and biases, to be more conscious of their rhetorical choices, and to be careful and creative in constructing their representations of others.

Beyond the writing projects, class readings were used in English 354 to invite students to consider how events and arguments are represented in public and private spheres. For instance, students read two different forms of writing about the history of the Genoa Industrial Indian School, an off-reservation, government boarding school that operated in Nebraska. The first text was an article from Nebraska History magazine that gave a broad overview of the school’s history. The second text was a collection of letters between a former GIS student and his boyhood friend that were published in a commemorative newspaper. In their informal writing, students addressed questions such as How do you see the history of the Genoa Industrial Indian School being represented by the different authors? Is there a common narrative for the school’s history? How do the writers’ uses of different genres impact your understanding of the school’s history?

Overall, our version of English 354 seeks to sponsor students’ critical understanding about research writing, providing them opportunities to interrogate assumptions underlying arguments and to consider the multiple factors that shape knowledge construction and textual production. From their analysis of public and private representations, we want students to recognize that all representations are open to analysis, debate, modification, and/or rejection. As Sandra Young suggests, “When representations become contested, … learning is also a process of unlearning, of replacing worn, outgrown, no-longer-useful representations with more authentic, authorial, and unpredictable ones” (79). As English 354 students construct accounts of home, community, and history that include alternative perspectives, unheard or silenced voices, and/or personal knowledges, we hope that they that they will acquire some critical and rhetorical tools for listening to and writing themselves into public conversations.
CRI T I CA L RE F L E CT I O N

It’s always difficult to assess students’ learning with respect to goals such as exploring how argument operates in the public and private spheres or examining how issues of representation and genre shape our composing processes. We don’t want to lapse into a teacher success narrative or claim that this course was always successful in its conception or execution. Even our individual readings of the course differ, and students’ perceptions are further distanced from our own. We struggled with issues of representation as we wrote this article, for instance, when we considered how to represent Heather, a teaching intern who was involved in pre-course brainstorming but who didn’t ultimately play a central role in the course’s design. While we chose to use first-person plural to signify our mutual investment in the course and our commitment to its goals, we acknowledge that this “we” prevented us from describing our varying locations and perspectives within the classroom and from exploring how these differences affected our experience of the course.

Representing student learning as a means of critically reflecting on our goals is also problematic; as we considered the task of documenting learning, we were aware that our perceptions of student achievement would be shaped by the questions and expectations that guided our inquiry. This understanding led us to reconsider how we wanted to write our critical reflection. We ultimately decided that our primary goal would be to showcase student work in order to give our students an opportunity to represent themselves.

Overall, we were pleased with how the course structure and focus sponsored students’ intellectual inquiry into writing and created an engaged classroom community. The twenty students in this particular 354 section represented a range of undergraduate majors: eight English, two English education, two communications, five criminal justice, one computer, one biological sciences, and one newspaper journalism. For the most part, students were highly motivated (especially surprising since three were graduating seniors). While we can’t take credit for fostering such class dynamics, we do believe that the central terms of the course gave students a language for reading and responding to others’ work in complex and critical ways. Their peer responses to one another were frequently over a typewritten page long and gave critical and thoughtful feedback. In their midterm narratives, students wrote glowingly about their “intellectual peers” and the ways they contributed to their learning. The public presentations of students’ projects were another highlight—it was clear that the students felt ownership and pride in their projects, and it was truly a public celebration of their work.

For many students, the focus on public/private argument offered a space to explore central issues in their lives from different perspectives via the three projects. For instance, in projects one and three, April wrote about growing up
on a family farm and the effects of her rural experience on her identity. April’s first project consisted of three loosely joined narratives while her third project was a 17-page, full-color magazine that utilized news articles, interviews, and family profiles to analyze her family’s experiences against the backdrop of the national farming crisis in the 1970’s and 1980’s. In many ways, her first project sponsored the development of her third project:

My initial research question revolved around the economic situation of my family. I wanted to know why I was a first-generation college student or why I lived in a mobile home until I was seventeen. My family didn’t seem to be poor, but I know that we were lower-middle class and I wanted to know why. I wanted to examine how my parents climbed the ladder of success to send their kids to a private high school and eventually buy a $145,000 home.

As April investigated the history of the farm crisis, she began to uncover attitudes that led her to understand her family’s history differently: “It helped me to understand why one of my grandfathers committed suicide and why the other refused to accept government aid. It simply opened up the historical nature of this issue to include an incredibly human side that is difficult to express.” In a similar vein, Lisa described her goals for representing her experience of being in Manhattan for a journalism internship on September 11, 2001:

I wanted to create a piece that I could use to encompass all the feelings around 9/11 that were not broadcast or published. I wanted to create something as an alternative history to the information that will most likely reach the history books. By writing myself and my family and friends into this historical moment, I feel that I am creating a more permanent memory that has some chance of being preserved …. I feel like by placing myself in such a place that I am writing myself into the history of the world. This may be an odd statement to make. .. but this is the only instance in my life where I have been in a place where the entire world is watching.

The course was also effective in leading students to engage with ethical issues involved in representing others’ experiences and the relationship of these experiences to their own subject positions. For some students, these issues of representation centered around privacy debates and the impact of their research on family members. For instance, Ann initially intended to include in her project a family member’s experience of aborting a fetus that tested positively for cystic fibrosis, but she ultimately replaced this section with a published account of a similar event because she didn’t want to stir up
controversy in her family. In writing about her uncle’s experiences in Vietnam, Kelsey struggled with depicting how her uncle died (in a house fire that he accidentally set while he was drunk) because she didn’t want to be stereotypical about Vietnam veterans. She wrote:

I think so many times people are afraid to write about the stereotype of Vietnam soldiers being drug addicts and alcoholics because they don’t want to feed into the myths, but my uncle did fit into the stereotype, unfortunately . . . the cultural narratives of typical Vietnam vets shaped my paper in a way because I was unpacking that idea and seeing why vets are often depressed etc.

Later in her narrative, Kelsey further reflected on the politics of writing about a family member whom she never knew:

The ethical issues I had were mainly with my family. I wanted to write this paper so as I wouldn’t offend my family or dig up too many painful memories, but I wanted to get the actual story across. I almost felt like I was being too crass because I didn’t have as much emotional involvement in David’s life because I wasn’t there for his life.

For others, ethics of representation involved their willingness to situate their own perspectives and experiences within their projects. A full class workshop of both Mandy’s and Margaret’s projects raised this issue. Mandy’s initial draft of her project, an examination of her mother’s and aunt’s experiences with breast cancer, concluded with a brief discussion of how Mandy and her three siblings were having genetic testing but didn’t offer much insight into how this family legacy was impacting Mandy’s perspective. In a similar vein, Margaret wrote about her distant uncle’s experiences in a Polish ghetto and subsequent concentration camp and the legacy of these experiences on her mother but didn’t reflect on the significance of these experiences in her own life. During the workshop session, class members asked the writers to account for the choices they had made in representing others and to provide rationales for why they hadn’t acknowledged or situated their own subject positions within their projects. These questions of representation became a key theme in students’ final research narratives. For instance, Mandy discussed how the class readings and discussions affected how she ultimately chose to represent herself and her family members in her writing:

In project three I had two goals: show how my family’s experience with cancer has changed over 20 years and show how the information has changed. The problem was that no one remembered exactly
what our family experience was in the beginning. Kingsolver showed me it is possible to blend the two goals and Quindlen showed me I could take what I know and add to it. Both of these articles have kept me thinking about what it means to take someone else’s story and make it your own. The story in project three is my mother’s story but I used what I knew to create my own story based on my mother’s experience. I realize this type of representation is dangerous because it means I’m speaking for someone else and I’ve kept this in mind throughout my writing.

That students benefited from discussing and exploring genre was another general sentiment in their writing. For many students, the course was valuable simply because it offered opportunities to explore new forms of writing. Lisa wrote:

I really enjoyed writing in a mixed genre form and am glad we had the opportunity to try writing in different forms. In past composition classes, everything was either all first hand narrative or more of a research style. It was like the two could not be mixed. If I did, I was told that I was losing the academic voice of a research paper.

The conception of genre as a rhetorical choice was also strongly evident in students’ writing. Students were quite articulate about the rhetorical choices they were making, particularly for their third projects. For instance, Margaret explained her project format in this way:

When I started writing up this project, I decided to write everyone’s story in first person. This was done for reasons on many levels; I think that organizationally this was the easiest and made most sense since I was dealing with multiple interviews to begin with. But this was also a rhetorical decision, especially in the case of Walter’s narrative. I wanted to juxtapose Walter’s personal story with the cold historical story that I told in italics. I wanted to make the reader think about the difference between these two types of history. Both are necessary to fully understand our histories.

Todd was also reflective about how he chose to represent his grandfather’s experiences in World War II and his grandfather’s silence when he returned home:

I think it was important to rhetorically talk about my purpose and reasons in the epilogue and prologue because it gave some context to the multi-genre format. I also think it complimented [sic] and speci-
fied the perspective from which I was writing. I wanted the audience to get a well-rounded idea about my grandfather’s experience. My favorite part is how I tried . . . to use different genres to show how the same event is represented in different ways. In particular I really thought about how I was going to have my grandfather “speak” to the audience. Was he going to tell them the truth by letting them see his thoughts or is the audience only going to get to see his letter to his parents and how he represents the war to them? Maybe one or more representations of my grandfather is missing, which, in a sense, represents the silence that he chooses not to tell.

In contemplating course revisions, then, we have mainly focused on how we could better carry out our goals through the design of particular course projects and class activities to accompany them. While we found the terms “narrative,” “representation,” and “genre” useful for conceptualizing this particular course, we can also imagine several revisions that might better support and extend students’ inquiry.

Modifying the first project is one important priority for us. Generally, the students’ projects on home didn’t focus enough on critical research and analysis of home and community narratives. Instead, students tended to write extended personal narratives, celebrating childhood experiences and showcasing artifacts from their communities rather than investigating or analyzing them. While a critical component to this project was lacking, student response confirmed what we already suspected: that students would enjoy writing about their home and family. In fact, after returning project two, Amy asked students which of the first two projects had been most useful for their learning. They replied that while they learned more from the second, they had found the first more enjoyable. In the future, then, we hope to revise project one so that it demands more cultural and rhetorical inquiry but still allows students freedom to pursue topics related to home that are important to them.

While project two was cited as important for students’ learning, its goals were also the most difficult for students to comprehend, partially because it asked students to analyze HOW a writer constructs an argument in place of the more traditional request of having students argue for or against a writer’s position. While students selected a rich diversity of texts and arguments for rhetorical analysis, they commonly fell into the pattern of taking a stance on the argument rather than investigating the strategies utilized by the writer to represent the argument. Students’ response to project two may parallel their learning development at this stage: many students have been taught that argument is essentially a form of debate and have developed their skills at arguing a point. Thus when asked to analyze how an argument is being made, they may fall back on this prior knowledge of and experience with argument. Clearly
differentiating between debate and analysis, then, is important as we think about future conceptions of this course. We might, for instance, draw upon Deborah Tannen’s work in The Argument Culture as a means of extending students’ initial understandings of what arguments are and how they work in our culture. Or we might incorporate Linda Flower’s rivaling strategies as a means of helping students explore multiple hypotheses, posit open questions, and examine underpinning assumptions.

One successful teaching tool was a list of rhetorical terms and questions that we gave students early on in unit two. While initially challenging—introducing terms like ethos, pathos, logos, etc.—this list was useful in providing students with a common language for interpreting rhetorical moves. Students also noted the importance of glossing in improving their writing. Adapted from a strategy used by Ann Berthoff, glossing asks students to work through a single paragraph or section of text at a time, noting in the margins not only what that piece of text says but also how it functions within the larger piece of writing. Throughout the semester, students glossed assigned readings as well as each other’s work. Notably, while students had varying degrees of success with project two, it was clear that the rhetorical analysis they took up in project two helped them to think about their own goals as rhetors in project three.

Our challenges and successes with integrating discussions of genre into the course have committed us to having students explore genre and, at the same time, pushed us to search for ways to make these explorations more fruitful. Because our students weren’t clear on what genre was or how it works in relation to argument (many of our students came into the class having never been asked to think about genre before), our early discussions about genre were particularly important in shaping students’ conceptions of the term. We wanted students to begin to understand genres as sites of social and rhetorical action that shape how knowledge can be represented and understood. For instance, students read a poem, an editorial, and a personal essay in a magazine about the meaning of the events of September 11, 2001 in order to consider how genre participated in the ways these events could be represented and explored. In teaching this course again, we would develop more class activities designed to illustrate these ideas as well as invite students to conduct and present their own genre searches. As students worked on project three, it became clear that the students who were most engaged with the research and writing process were those who understood the relationship between genre and meaning and who were able to analyze and represent their research as an instantiation of genre rather than as a neutral display of objective facts. While we don’t believe that having students read about genre theory is necessarily useful, we do think that it is valuable to provide students with multiple, ongoing opportunities to
analyze genre rhetorically and to experiment in writing different genres as they represent their own research.

Our experiences in English 354 have led us to think in curricular terms beyond this particular class. As we worked to engage students in discussions about narrative, genre, and representation, we considered how 100- and 200-level composition courses in our department might be reconceptualized to lay more initial groundwork for such conversations. We could imagine, for instance, emphasizing glossing as a primary tool within the first-year writing curriculum or developing a framework for introducing conversations about genre more systematically. We also could envision structuring more explicit conversations and activities about how forms of evidence are utilized and valued differently in various contexts.

Finally, co-authoring this article invited us to reflect upon how our writing about teaching also functions as an argument that crosses boundaries between private and public spheres and models the type of inquiry we hope to provide for our students. When we asked students for permission to use their writing, they saw how their “private” texts could be used as forms of evidence for arguments about teaching for audiences beyond their classroom. In this respect, we hope to practice what we preach by writing their and our 354 experiences into more public conversations about ways to envision goals and practices for writing in college classrooms.

Lincoln, Nebraska

Works Cited


SYLLABUS

English 354: Advanced Composition
Writing Ourselves/Communities into Public Conversations

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will explore how writers participate in public conversations and how our personal and community histories and narratives can join, contribute to, and sometimes change the form, content, and language of these conversations. To do so, we will center our writing and reading around three concepts—“narrative,” “representation,” and “genre.” Using these concepts, we will continually look at the way writers, ourselves included, situate themselves in their research in order to enter and intervene in ongoing public conversations. We will be engaged with the rhetorical challenges that accompany larger writing projects and the invention, revision, and reading strategies that can help us develop, organize, and complicate our writing for public audiences. We will also be experimenting with alternative genres as a means of understanding and rendering our (and our communities’) experiences and knowledges for public conversations.

*Note: Completion of a 200-level writing course is required for enrollment in Eng. 354.

TEXTS & MATERIALS
• Assigned readings have been placed on Love Library’s Electronic Reserve. You are expected to print out these readings and bring them to class on the days that they are assigned. We will be using them for in-class activities, informal writings, and discussions.
• You should purchase several manila folders for turning in work. I do not accept work unless it is in a folder with your name on it.
• You will need a computer disk (preferably several) with your name and course number and section labeled on it. You should bring a disk to every class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
• Three guided writing projects (each of which should result in approximately 10+ pages of polished prose). We will be writing multiple drafts of these projects, accompanied by author’s notes, and will workshop them in small-group and large-class settings.
• Nine Informal Writings (2-3 page typed responses to discussion questions, readings, and guided inquiry on your formal projects). You’ll receive a handout prompt for each.
• Typed peer responses to class members’ project drafts.
• Participation in class writing activities, class workshops, and discussions.
• Midterm and final course narratives that analyze and assess the quality of your work and your overall contributions to the course.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Project #1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project #3 (with presentation)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Informal Writing</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm/Final Assessments</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (peer response, class activities, group work)</td>
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DAY BY DAY SYLLABUS

Unit One: Writing Home and Community
What is “home” and what role does it play in understanding ourselves and others? What are the “homes” we inhabit (physically, mentally, geographically, electronically)? How do our homes shape our writing lives? What tensions do we face as writers in representing our homes or communities to others? What do our representations accomplish?

Week #1
Tue  Introduction to course and each other
Thu  Bring: Informal Writing #1: “Letter of Introduction and Individual Goals” & three objects to class that suggest home
     In Class: Archeological writing on objects and Intro. to Project 1

Week #2
Tue  Read: Ted Kooser’s “Preface” to Local Wonders (reserve)
     In Class: Introduction to Glossing with “Preface” and Invention Writing
Thu  Read: Knopp’s “Homecoming” and Colon’s “Grandma, Please Don't Come” (reserve) and bring Informal Writing #2: Glossing
     In Class: Discussion of Informal #2, readings, and more invention writing

Week #3
Tue  Read: Excerpts from Genoa Leader Times and Daddorio’s “They Get Milk Practically Every Day” (reserve) and bring Informal Writing #3
     In Class: Representing/Creating a Community through Texts
<table>
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<th>Day</th>
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| Thu | Read: Bragg’s “Prologue” from All Over But the Shouting (reserve) and bring home/community texts for class presentations  
In Class: analyzing community texts and developing purposes for writing |
| Week #4 |  
Tue | First draft of Project #1 for peer response (3 copies with author’s note)  
Thu | Read Knopp's OED Marginalia Texts (handout) and bring In-Formal Writing #4: peer response analysis and drive words  
In class: Revision Strategies on Drafts and workshop time |
| Week #5 |  
Tue | Final Draft of Project #1 Due  
In Class: Presentations/Readings from Project #1 |

Unit Two: Analyzing Arguments in Our Communities  
What arguments are taking place in our communities (homes, clubs, workplaces, professional organizations, etc.)? In what forms or genres do these arguments take place? What rhetorical terms can we use to analyze them? How can rhetorical analysis enable us to participate in, intervene in, or speak back to these arguments?  

Thu | Intro to Project #2: Analyzing Arguments  
Read: Chapter 1 from Everything’s an Argument  
In Class: Group analyses of editorials from Newsweek, The Nation, and Time using terms from Everything |
| Week #6 |  
Tue | Read Intro. and Chpt. 1 from Holler If You Hear Me  
Informal Writing #5: Analyzing how arguments are culturally framed  
In Class: Discussion and invention writing for Project #2 |
| Thu | Bring 2 textual arguments you plan to analyze for Project #2 and do interpretive paraphrases for each (handout)  
In Class: Discussion of interpretive paraphrases and guided writing |
| Week #7 |  
Tue | Read: Chapter 3 from Everything’s an Argument  
In class: Analysis of Arguments |
| Thu | First Draft of Project #2 Due (copies and author’s note for peer response) |
Unit Three: Writing Ourselves into History
How do we use writing to enter into or to make sense of history? To probe more deeply into a historical event? To understand it? To learn from it? What forms or genres enable us to do this inquiry? What languages(s), conventions, and structures are used to tell these stories? What are the differences between “private” and “public” representations of historical events? Whose perspectives get told in these stories and whose are absent? To whom are they told and for what purpose? How can we use our writing to participate in our telling and understanding of history?

Week #11
Tue Read Shihab Nye’s excerpts from 19 Varieties of Gazelle and O Magazine and Anna Quindlen’s “Imagining the Hanson Family” and bring Informal Writing #7
In Class: How writers used different genres/forms to make sense of 9/11
Thu Read Kingsolver’s “Foreword” and “Small Wonder” Proposal for Project #3
In Class: Continue discussion of genre and meaning making

Week #12
Tue Read: “The 2002 NCTE Presidential Address”
In Class: continue discussion of genre for argument/persuasion
Thu Bring Informal Writing #8: Secondary source analysis for Project #3
In Class: Genre Writing with sources

Week #13
Tue In Class: Genre Writing
Thu First Draft of Project #3 due (multiple copies for peers & author’s note)

Week #14
Tue In Class: Full Class Workshop of Four Drafts (posted to Blackboard)
Thu Bring Informal Writing #9
In Class: Style and Meaning Workshop

Week #15
Tue In Class: To be determined
Thu Editing and Polishing Workshop & Course Evaluations

Week #16
Tue Presentations of Projects (in Bailey Library) Final Portfolios Due
Thu Presentations of Projects (in Bailey Library)

COURSE READINGS
---. “This Is Not Who We Are.” O Magazine April 2002: 83-86.
THE CHANGING FACE OF WRITING ASSESSMENT


We never used to think much about the assessment of writing. We resented all the grading of papers and sorting of students but went about it as a grim duty, generally doing unto our students as our professors had done unto us. That was it. As Pat Belanoff puts it her preface to the Zak and Weaver collection of essays on grading, “It is the dirty little thing we do in our closets” (ix). And we agreed heartily when we heard Peter Elbow say at a conference that no teacher should put a grade on a student’s writing unless his or her job depended on it. As for writing assessment beyond our own classes, we never gave it a moment’s thought. Program assessment and assessment theory were out of sight and out of mind. Everyone today who writes on the subject begins by admitting that most teachers see assessment as the most disagreeable aspect of teaching. Writers on the subject work intensely to make their openings interesting, knowing that their readers are likely to prefer almost anything, except grading papers, to reading about assessment. Typical is Charles Schuster’s engaging foreword to the Allison, Bryant, and Hourigan book under review, an extended personal narrative of one of his own misadventures with grading a particularly troublesome student’s paper. Or the paragraph you are now reading, if anyone is.

But those attitudes belong to the past, along with grammar drills and orthography. The sample of recent books under review represents some of the developments that have brought writing assessment out of the closet, into the realm of scholarship, and onto every writing teacher’s to-read list. The number of books for this review could easily be tripled: I’ve omitted the half dozen books on responding to writing that have followed Straub and Lunsford’s landmark Twelve Readers Reading, the many technical books on educational assessment, the small library of books and articles published in the 1980s and 1990s that mention assessment as they provide wisdom about teaching, and, of course, my own books and articles on the subject. Scholarly work on assessment is arguably the most creative and varied in the entire area of composition studies. It has become impossible to be an informed teacher of writing in the twenty-first century and remain uninformed about writing assessment.

The pervasive political dimensions of this turn to assessment have little to do with the scholarship under review, though they are an unpleasant
reminder of the fraudulent uses of tests for political purposes, best exemplified in the supposed Texas miracle and in the Bush administration’s “No Child Left Behind” legislation. Tests, as a replacement for instruction, are a cynical manipulation of the public desire to see better writing in the schools at little cost; it is as if widespread distribution of thermometers could solve the health-care problems in America. Teachers at all levels have a right to be cynical about the misuses of testing for political purposes, and they look on in dismay as rigged test results influence contests for office from the local school board to the presidential level. This political dimension, I hasten to assert in this presidential election year, has nothing to do with the publications under review, which seek to enlarge our understanding of the many aspects of writing assessment for teaching and learning.

On the professional level, writing assessment has become a serious matter, well worth every teacher’s attention. This situation is a natural outgrowth of the process theories of composition teaching that have dominated the field for the last generation. After all, if writing is a process as well as a product, we must put revision at or near the center of our pedagogy. But alas, our students are clueless about revision; at best they try to decipher our marginal comments so they can “give you what you want.” How, indeed, can they accomplish genuine revision without some ability to assess what they have written, see what should be changed, what omitted, what expanded? If we teach revision, we must, willy-nilly, teach assessment with attention to the most important kind of assessment: self-assessment. And if we are to model really useful assessment, we had better find out what has been going on in that active field of inquiry.

I divide the books under review into three groups, beginning with those designed for teachers with little knowledge of assessment, whose principal concern is to use assessment well in their own teaching. The second group is for those teachers who, sometimes to their astonishment, find themselves writing program administrators (WPAs), now responsible for assessing courses, programs, even entire curricula. When this happens, assessment has an entirely new meaning and paper grading is the least of it; the job is to demonstrate the value of a writing program in such a way that school administrators and other outsiders will be convinced to continue or increase funding—or at least not destroy the writing program by shifting its funds elsewhere. The last group of books will be those that dig deeply into assessment theory and innovative practice, seeking to advance concepts in writing assessment in concert with other developments in composition and rhetorical studies. The most interesting of these books combine theory and practice, and they provide the grounds for thinking constructively about the ways assessment can support students, teachers, and writing programs.
In the first group, I’ve singled out the revised Cooper and Odell book, the Zak and Weaver collection, and the Allison, Bryant, and Hourigan volume. These books are heavy with good advice on the three aspects of assessment essential for the classroom teacher: devising suitable and productive writing assignments, providing (or having the students provide) useful feedback for revision, and, finally, grading. This genre assumes an audience of good-hearted but naïve teachers, mostly trained in literature, and utterly unaware of assessment concepts. For instance, such basic concepts as validity and reliability don’t even appear in the index to the Cooper and Odell volume. But these books do provide a ground for the intelligent and sensitive uses of assessment in the writing class and, hence, are worth your time if you have little or no background or interest in assessment concepts.

Cooper and Odell’s first edition of Evaluating Writing (1977) was an important event for writing assessment: it brought assessment into the nascent field of composition studies by presenting landmark essays by authorities such as Richard Lloyd-Jones and Leigh Hunt. For some years, it was the only book available for the courses in writing assessment that began to enter the graduate curriculum. The new edition with the same title is misleading since it has little intention of advancing new ideas in assessment and, hence, has annoyed specialists who had high hopes for it. Instead, the new edition focuses almost entirely on uses of assessment in the classroom, now asking its contributors to speak to teachers unaware of the importance of assessment as part of their classroom work.

On these terms, it has much to offer in its bulky 400 pages. The first section, “Describing Texts,” presents six essays, two of them by the editors, calling for sensitive reading of student writing. Duane Roen and two colleagues write about audience considerations, William Strong revisits syntax, Martha Kolln writes about cohesion and coherence, and Sandra Murphy discusses portfolio assessment. The second section deals with “Writing-to-Learn in Four Disciplines,” defined here as science, mathematics, history, and literature. The third section presents three essays with general good advice on “Supporting the Writing of Dual-Language Students.” The last section, “Issues in Assessment,” struck me as the most interesting one, though here, as throughout the book, one can feel the authors struggling with the limitations of the book’s designated audience. Here we find an essay on responding to writing by Chris Anson, focusing on a powerful paper written by a Cambodian refugee, then moving outward to many issues in responding; Sandra Murphy and Mary Ann Smith on creating a climate for portfolios; Fran Claggett on bringing reading and writing assessment together in the late and lamented California CLAS test;
and Roxanne Mountford urging teachers to recognize “a wider variety of ways to write well” on large-scale assessments.

The Zak and Weaver collection is focused on the single issue of grading, and, hence, is, in a narrow sense, more immediately useful to teachers than is the general good advice of Cooper and Odell. It also has a point of view: the “I hate to grade” perspective. Its fifteen essays are tight and pointed, fitting in about 200 pages, including student voices as brief introductions to each of its five sections. Peter Elbow’s voice is particularly prominent, as author or subject of three of the essays, and, as one might suspect, the implicit and explicit endorsement of portfolio assessment over conventional grading is everywhere.

The Allison, Bryant, and Hourigan book shares the distaste with current grading schemes of the other two volumes, but does so with a particularly futuristic view. “Let’s face it—grades are a flawed creation,” opens Chapter Ten, by Kathleen and James Strickland. The answer is not to improve your teaching by using assessment wisely or to replace grading with portfolios but rather to look into technology and other new modalities of teaching and writing for “evaluation techniques . . . valuable to students and to teachers (and parents and administrators)” (142). James Sosnowski claims that educational electronic environments (“EEEs”) are making obsolete conventional grading and proposes “an alternative model of collaborative work and a concomitant mode of evaluation better suited to cyberspace” (157). The eleven chapters by various hands in this unusually challenging book propose an energetic brave new world of with-it assessment and what David Bleich calls a commitment “to the principles of teaching without competitiveness, hierarchy, and authoritarian value, to teaching through cooperation, interaction, mutual respect, and communication” (33).

Any teacher completing these books will never again be able to grade student work without questioning how and why that grading is taking place. Whether that will decrease or increase the strain of constant grading that comes with our territory remains an open question. But there is no question about how much our students will profit if we can make our assignments and assessment criteria clear, consistent, and public.

Large-Scale Assessment

Sooner or later, and usually sooner, college compositionists become writing program administrators (WPAs) faced with assessment issues beyond the individual student, teacher, or classroom. The importance of developing convincing evidence of effectiveness for these programs can hardly be overstated: a powerful report is likely to gain funding and power for writing programs and their teachers while a weak, unconvincing, or absent report may well lead to the shifting of writing funds elsewhere or even the transfer of the
writing program to areas and administrators imagined to be more efficient and responsible. The problem is usually not an ineffective writing program but rather a WPA who is uninformed about what evidence to collect, how to gather it, and how to present it. The three books I have selected for comment in this area attend to the three most vexing assessment problems WPAs face: placement of entering students, mid-career (or graduation) assessment of student writing (which implies assessment of the first-year writing program), and assessment of writing across the curriculum programs. These are no longer matters to be left to someone else. Every post-secondary teacher of writing needs to be aware of the issues and procedures of these assessments upon which their programs and jobs may depend.

The most important of these books presents a genuinely new concept for placement of entering students. Royer and Gilles’s Directed Self Placement (DSP) argues that the time has come to shift the responsibility for placement from the institution to the student—provided the institution supplies enough information for the student to make a responsible choice. (Disclosure: I have written the foreword to this volume.) The book contains two sections, “Principles” and “Practices.” The four chapters in the first section are by the ubiquitous Peter Elbow, David Blakesley, the two editors, and Erica Reynolds (writing about the history and concept of “self-efficacy”). The second section contains six chapters from institutions that have put DSP into practice, not always with great success, and a fine concluding chapter by Michael Neal and Brian Huot considering the theory, claims, and validity of DSP. DSP proposes shifting funds from placement tests of dubious validity and unpopular remedial course work to intensive student counseling coupled with student choice of well-defined composition courses at different levels of demand. Whether DSP will work as well in practice as it does in theory will be decided by the results of experiments with it now going on all over the country.

Richard Haswell’s Beyond Outcomes is a detailed examination by him and others of the rising junior portfolio program now in place at Washington State University, the most careful and effective such program in the country. Anyone involved with such a program—and mid-career high-stakes assessments exist in many, if not most, large state university programs in the U.S.—should study this valuable and wide-ranging book as soon as possible. It is well grounded in assessment and composition theory, thoroughly practi-

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are reportedly in place in about one-third of post-secondary institutions, and every one of them attempts to present evidence that it is doing something valuable for students learning to write and writing to learn. The problem is nicely stated by Toby Fulwiler and Art Young in the preface to Assessing Writing Across the Curriculum, as they speak of their widely acclaimed 1982 book about the WAC program at Michigan Tech: “We hoped the research that went into Writing Across the Disciplines would show the world that our program worked; instead it showed only that our program needed more carefully designed assessment strategies” (4). Yancey and Huot in their important book on the subject have put together 15 chapters from the most informed figures in WAC, providing theoretical and practical guidance for this most difficult of assessment activities.

The three books reviewed in this section represent an important step forward in program assessment, one that has not been as well recognized as it should be. Any writing teacher about to face a dean or provost asking, “Can you show that that program of yours is really doing some good?” now has the ammunition that we have long sorely needed for such battle.

**Assessment Theory and Practice**

I have saved the best for last, the two books published last year by Utah State University Press. But, sadly, I have run out of space and cannot do them justice here.¹ Let me urge you to read carefully Brian Huot’s important (Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning, a book which redefines such key concepts as reliability and validity for writing assessment and, in fact, establishes new ground for thinking about the assessment of writing. Bob Broad’s book, with its fine title, What We Really Value, presents a research project using what he calls “dynamic criteria mapping” (DCM) as a substitute for the usual scoring rubrics used in essay readings. While I am not persuaded by his argument for DCM, which seems to me impractically complicated, I am impressed at his attempt to move beyond the usual scoring assumptions and procedures to develop a new way of visualizing the assessment of student writing.

It seems clear that we are passing through an incredibly dynamic period of professional concern for the issues posed by the theory and practice of writing assessment. The assessment of writing no longer means only grading papers or getting some clerical employee to hand out blue books and machine-scorable pamphlets and answer sheets. It has become an important venue for theory and practice to meet and express, as Broad puts it, “what we really value.”

Tucson, Arizona
NOTES

1 I have, however, reviewed both books for an issue of Rhetoric Review that should appear about the same time as this essay, and I suggest that you obtain that journal and add that review to this one for a more thorough overview.

Reviewed by Ruth Mirtz, Ferris State University

One reason Peter Elbow has helped so many of us become better teachers of writing is because he doesn’t make things easier and yet, somehow, he does. He keeps teaching and writing complicated while making it all so clear, often pointing out the hidden contraries we hadn’t seen before and then showing us how to embrace them both: how to write to an audience while ignoring an audience, how to teach academic writing by way of personal expression, how to teach through assessment. His collegial we’re-all-in-this-together, thinking-it-through voice gets us to the heart of each problem by modeling reflective questioning of even our best teaching. The essays in Writing With Elbow do a similar job of keeping Elbow clearly in the forefront while clarifying and complicating our understandings, misunderstandings, and diverse applications of his ideas.

The book as a whole does what its title implies: the essayists write with Elbow, not against him, by taking Elbow seriously, believing and doubting him as they go. The essays are sharp, thoughtful, well-written, and mindful of a diverse audience who may not have read Audre Lorde or Michael Polanyi (or not read them lately). The writers find objective, academic, textual, and experience-based reasons for Elbow’s influence, despite the constant negative criticism his work has received over the years. Rather than trying to reverse that negative criticism (although acknowledging it on many planes), they expand on his ideas, pushing us to apply Elbow’s ideas further and further. The essays are also highly complementary, with subtle thematic connections, such as the recurrent mention of Elbow’s deep listening in several essays. Two essayists point out how he has over- or understated his positions, while agreeing with his purpose and methods. Another two essayists disagree with each other in fascinating ways, one clearly wanting Elbow to be less expressivist by “dissolving” the distance between personal and academic writing (Keith Hjorshoj, “Dissolving Contraries”) and a second wanting Elbow to advocate for expressivism more forcefully as central to his political work in the way it “actively resists complacency and pushes for change, growth, and awareness” (Irene Papoulis, “Pleasure, Politics, Fear, and the Field of Composition” 168). Overall the essays rely heavily on his early work, especially Writing without Teachers (1973) and Embracing Contraries (1986), but they also cover his entire range of work in areas such as assessment, academic writing, voice, and his latest Everyone Can Write (2000).
The eighteen essays and collages are divided into four clusters: “Contextualizing and Categorizing,” “Exploring Contraries,” “In the Classroom,” and “Voice and the Personal.” Each section centers around a theme and is introduced with a short essay by one of the editors. “Contextualizing and Categorizing” places Elbow’s ideas into specific conversations about the history of composition studies, the debate over sentimental discourse, and the movement of ideas between antimodernism, postmodernism, and feminist expressivism. For example, Richard Boyd’s essay “Writing Without Teachers, Writing Against the Past?” explores Elbow’s early connections with the conscientious objectors movement, a past that I hadn’t known about and that illuminates the radical presence of teaching I find in Elbow’s subsequent work. Elizabeth Flynn, in “Elbow’s Radical and Postmodern Politics,” gives a rich look at the way that Elbow’s work has changed, how it is “considerably more politically progressive than it might at first seem” (34), and how it fits with other dynamic movements in composition studies. In the section titled “Exploring Contraries” are two strong essays that re-read Elbow in light of more complete (according to the essayists) and contextualized takes on his sources, Freire and Polanyi. The other two writers in this section look at Elbow through the lenses of ordinary language philosophy and non-dualist Eastern wisdom traditions. The “In the Classroom” cluster includes Kathleen J. Cassity’s direct observations of Elbow’s own classroom practice (haven’t you wanted to know whether Elbow practices what he preaches?), the Hjørshøj and Papoulis essays mentioned above, and two additional essays delving into teacher response and Elbow’s complicated relationship to writing assessment. The final cluster, “Voice and the Personal,” includes essays on Elbow’s physical metaphors, Anne Herrington’s take on the issues surrounding the need for writers to “render” experience, and an essay by Wendy Bishop on how she sees Elbow’s and her own work as a “balancing act,” with perhaps the best explanation of how Elbow comes by his “guru-gadfly” role. The section ends with two collages, one by Sondra Perl describing some of the scholarly and personal lives she has shared with the man Peter Elbow and a second one by a group of Elbow’s former students.

The final section of the book is the most personal, both in the way the essayists approach their subjects and in the work of Elbow they address. For this reason, some readers might prefer to read the essays in reverse order. However, I found there are two other, overlapping categories of essays in the book: essays that take Elbow’s ideas into new territory and those that disturb our old readings of his ideas. Some of the essays in the first group, those that take Elbow’s work in new directions, include Tom O’Donnell’s essay “New Uses for Doubting” and Jeff Sommers’s “Spoken Response: Space, Time, and Movies of the Mind.” O’Donnell teases out the problem of knowing when to play the doubting game and when to play the believing game, particularly in student texts. He points to a kind of doubt-within-belief that appears as a “dissonance” in the text that reader and writer need to “pounce” on in order to find out what exactly is believed and what is doubted. Sommers describes how and why Elbow’s reader response method, “movies of
the mind,” works with tape-recorded responses, emphasizing the temporal nature of the response and the benefits students derive from hearing the teacher’s voice. I can easily generalize his point about tape-recorded responses to include all “real time” movie-of-the-mind responses, which can mean peer responses during class or teacher responses during office conferences since access to tape recorders is a problem, although not an insurmountable one, as Sommers explains.

The second category of essays, the ones that agitate Elbow’s work and force me to reread his words, include Kate Ronald and Hephzibah Roskelly’s “Embodied Voice: Peter Elbow’s Physical Rhetoric,” C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon’s “Pedagogy for the Bamboozled” [emphasis theirs], and M. Elizabeth Sargent’s “Believing Is Not a Game: Elbow’s Uneasy Debt to Michael Polanyi.” Ronald and Roskelly analyze Elbow’s “erotic” in the sense that Audre Lorde uses the word—that is, the way his bodily metaphors and physicality “[become] the argument, a way of seeing the whole of his message about readers, writers, and writing rather than its discrete parts” (211), which has often been misinterpreted as the “personal” aspect of his writing. They realize that Elbow’s consistent emphasis on writing as an act that takes place between physical bodies is “both power and problematic in a profession that at once understands and values the personal location and mistrusts its use in scholarship” (219). Physicality pervades his work: eating, wrestling, using muscles, and seeing become ways to talk about nourishment, balance, struggle, power, and surrender in the act of writing and reading, all concepts that contain what Ronald and Roskelly call “oppositional tension,” the source of power (221). The “double perspective” of Elbow’s metaphors is part of his argument about thinking and writing: “the mind needs to be able to handle conflicting data, to use data that doesn’t easily mesh” (221). Knoblauch and Brannon take issue with Elbow’s reluctance, in “Pedagogy of the Bamboozled,” to see an unmediated version of Freire’s critical pedagogy moved from rural Brazil to American universities. They think Elbow sets impossible standards for American teachers, not because of the teachers’ lack of will or skill, but because of institutional and society realities and, thus, Elbow makes critical pedagogy equally impossible to conceive as a “meaningful ‘contrary’ to embrace” (67). Knoblauch and Brannon show how Elbow’s reasoning doesn’t take into account the possibility of adapting Freirean principles for American writing instruction. In another critique, Sargent discusses the concepts Elbow has derived from Michael Polanyi’s work with the tacit dimension of knowledge. Elbow has always acknowledged his debt to Polanyi’s thought, but Sargent clearly reads Polanyi differently than Elbow. In fact, she sees Elbow’s practice as profoundly aligned with Polanyi’s theories but sees his explanation of the doubting and believing game as different from Polanyi’s idea of belief in important ways: Polanyi describes belief as an irreversible commitment to seeing the world a certain way while Elbow identifies belief as one aspect of a dualism to be embraced, something to be tried on temporarily.

In our field today, we don’t regularly hear about the Believing and Doubting Game or teacher-less classrooms but, as this book attests, simply scratch the
surface of our field’s thinking and there’s Peter Elbow, bright and shiny like the new skin a snake regrows underneath the worn and scarred old scales. I haven’t thought too much about Elbow as I’ve prepared for my first-year writing classes in the last few years; however, when reading Writing with Elbow, I felt compelled to pull out my copy of Writing without Teachers and found that the first five weeks of my class, possibly the entire semester, is from Writing without Teachers. As awful as the metaphor is, this book does help us shed our superficial skin of peer conferences and portfolios and get back to what matters—why we have peer conferences, why we use portfolios, why we know what to say to students. That these essayists found Elbow’s ideas historically significant, generative of new ideas, and worth reclaiming through close re-reading shows us how much more we have yet to learn from him.

Those of us, and I include myself in this group, who had Elbow at our sides as we found our way to and through composition studies as a major field of study will be enticed and delighted by this book. However, those who find Elbow inexcusably personal, pedagogic, and non-academic will not find enough here to change their minds about his work. The same qualities of thought and writing style that irritate Elbow’s detractors are what intrigue and prompt the essays in Writing with Elbow. Indeed, most of these writers disagree with James Berlin’s assessment of Elbow as an apolitical expressivist. And while many of the essays re-categorize or get to the heart of a categorization issue, the more helpful purpose of this book is to extend, clarify, and complicate Elbow’s work, to “demonstrate,” as the editors note, “the diversity of responses to ‘Elbow and Elbowisms’ within the discipline of Composition and Rhetoric” (xii). That goal is admirably accomplished in the book. Yet many of the essays hint at another purpose: to illuminate the dismissive nature of some reactions to Elbow. Bishop, in “My Favorite Balancing Act,” describes Elbow’s work as “plate-spinning” of the type performed by Chinese acrobats on the Ed Sullivan show. She aptly gets to the heart of why so many of us admire Elbow’s work: it comes from his teaching; it has “acrobatic integrity” (252) in the way it keeps possibilities in the air rather than stretching for closure; it’s “textually gregarious” (250), taking us on a long journey with many side trips, “looking for a new place to stand, an unexpected and productive view” (247). Yet while Bishop and other essayists can point to people who denigrate and dismiss Elbow, they have only partial explanations about why people dismiss Elbow. Some of the essayists, such as Knoblauch and Brannon, and Sargent, get at specific lines of disagreement. Thomas Newkirk, in his contribution “Sentimental Journeys: Anti-Romanticism and Academic Identity,” describes, among other things, the difficulty our profession has with the power of sentimental discourse, which ultimately becomes our own struggle between belief and skepticism. The collection as a whole makes me wonder if this struggle may be one our colleagues project onto Elbow’s work, making them unable to read generously or write with him.

Big Rapids, Michigan
Reviewed by Stephanie Vanderslice, University of Central Arkansas

“It’s never been particularly safe to praise pedagogy, often its downright dangerous,” Wendy Bishop points out in the introduction to In Praise of Pedagogy: Poetry, Flash Fiction and Essays on Composing, co-edited with David Starkey. In celebrating classroom teaching, however, this rich collection does just that. Bishop, Starkey, and foreword author Ken Autrey offer several compelling reasons why a collection of creative writing about teaching is salient to our teaching lives, among them that a “richness . . . results when we think and write creatively about our lives in the classroom” (Autrey xiii), a depth of reflection that may get lost in more expository prose. Further, they hope that the collection will call teachers back to their own writing. In Praise of Pedagogy fulfills all of these worthy goals, but what’s more important is that, taken as a whole, these vignettes offer a rarely glimpsed portrait of our classrooms and students painted by those who inhabit and teach them.

Much has been written about the cliché-ridden popular image of today’s classroom perpetuated by movies and television, reinscribed by news reports and those ubiquitous letters to the editor wondering “what’s going on (or not going on) in today’s classroom?” Yet with a few exceptions, one voice is absent from the cacophony of noise and image that comprise current renderings of education—that of the classroom teachers themselves. In Praise of Pedagogy finally gives voice to the teacher. Moreover, unlike Haswell and Lu’s Comp Tales, which offers a more audience-specific portrait of the many faces of the composition discipline, tailored specifically to those who teach it, In Praise of Pedagogy expands the conversation significantly. Classroom veterans and novices alike will recognize themselves in these pieces, but ideally those outside the teaching profession may benefit from reading them as well.

Autrey, Bishop, and Starkey frame the discussion with an introduction, foreword, and afterward that weave exposition with their own pedagogical musings. In the six sections—From and For Classrooms; Language and the World; Of Writing, Teaching, Being Taught; Advice and Observations; Memories of Our Children and Families Learning; and Remembering Those Who Taught Us—we
enter a kaleidoscopic world where a classroom is anywhere that learning is taking place—from world literature classrooms to elementary school classrooms and homes for the aged—and a teacher is anyone facilitating that learning. At a time when those of us in the trenches of composition and education must worry about how we present our work, our discipline, to those on the “outside,” In Praise of Pedagogy offers a fully fleshed-out picture of the highs and lows of classroom teaching today. Thus the contents of the book itself, the poem upon compelling poem, the engrossing flash fictions, provide a powerful argument for the uses of creative writing to illuminate our teaching lives in ways that other writing cannot. In this way, the book may well call the “English instructors at secondary and college levels” back to writing about their own classrooms. But more than that, the book transcends its audience. I cannot help but wish that somehow others might pick up In Praise of Pedagogy out of curiosity—or have it handed to them. The same reporters and administrators and parent-citizens who presume to know what goes on in today’s classrooms and consequently how to “fix” them might be surprised and even moved by the portraits of teachers and students struggling to learn together, at times celebrating the learning, at times mourning the learning that has been lost. From these portraits they may just determine what we all already know: that there are no quick fixes or one-size-fits-all solutions; that today’s students and teachers, work together in a complex, varied world that offers no easy answers. In fact, in ending her introduction, Bishop recalls an epigraph from Robert Hass’s poetry collection Praise, in which a “‘Captain’ is asked how he will deal with his encounter with an immense beast ‘terrifying and unpredictable.’ The captain thinks a minute then says: ‘I think I shall praise it’” (Hass qtd. in Bishop 20)—advice Bishop hails as useful for “engaging this unpredictable beast we call teaching.” In Praise of Pedagogy is useful for all of us deeply engaged in teaching lives, in celebrating and writing about those lives. Somehow, we must not end its uses there but allow it to reveal that teaching life for others.

Conway, Arizona


Reviewed by Matt Smith, University of Saint Francis

Donald Finkel’s overarching theme in his text Teaching with your Mouth Shut stems from John Dewey’s belief that “no thought, no idea, can possibly be conveyed as an idea from one person to another” (x). Finkel explores, through both theory and praxis, possible methods for moving from the realm of “telling” students to “teaching” students. Early in his text, Finkel defines good teaching as “creating . . . those circumstances that lead to significant learning in others” (8). While this phrase
may appear reductive, it gets to the heart of a complex professional question that I
would like to explore through Finkel’s description and analysis of “teaching with
your mouth shut”: What is the role of the instructor in a composition classroom?
While his text is not specifically about teaching composition, Finkel discusses theo-
ries, activities, and strategies that could easily be situated in a composition course.
Important to understanding the text is Finkel’s carefully contextualized situation
stemming from his experience as an instructor at the University of Washington and
his work in the innovative seminar structure at The Evergreen State College—an
institution where students are evaluated with narrative comments rather than grades.
Aware of the importance of institutional context, Finkel continually asserts that his
book should not be used as a “teaching manual” but rather to provoke reflection
on what constitutes effective teaching and to remember that “learning is the end,
teaching is the means to that end.”

As with many composition teachers, Finkel utilizes inquiry and reflection
as central activities in structuring teaching activities to promote learning. In fact,
inquiry acts as the catalyst for all class activities in Teaching with your Mouth
Shut. He begins with a chapter that delineates the theoretical underpinnings of
the text while contextualizing his work in terms of his own teaching experience. The
following seven chapters walk the reader through a number of concrete classroom
activities and experiences. However, Finkel is careful not to adopt a “this way will
work for everyone” attitude; instead, he scrupulously lays out a critical framework
for his own curricular architecture and cautions the reader from understanding each
chapter as a blueprint for successful course design. He ends the book by providing a
critically reflective summation of the text and then, in his appendix, asks the reader
to enact this critical reflection of this text through a series of learning activities.
The book leads the reader from macro to micro and back again to macro
course design issues. The constant interplay in Teaching with your Mouth Shut reso-
nates with George Hillocks’s Ways of Thinking, Ways of Teaching, in that Hillocks’s
study of teaching methodologies in a variety of institutional settings recognizes the
importance of a teacher’s representation of the knowledge or outcomes associated
with a course. Hillocks writes that “a major factor in determining differences in the
macro- and microcurricula of various classrooms is the epistemological stance of
the teacher” (109)—in other words, how the teacher understands knowledge to be
made or transferred radically impacts all aspects of a class. Finkel shares many of
Hillocks’s points but especially his belief that how a teacher constructs knowledge
within the class will profoundly impact the way in which the student learns that
knowledge.

The implications of Finkel’s text for the composition classroom are most
evident in his discussion of course design. In fact, Finkel firmly illustrates early
on in the text where his pedagogy lies when he reports that “educational research
over the past twenty-five years has established beyond a doubt a simple fact: What
is transmitted to students through lecturing is simply not retained for any significant
length of time” (3). Finkel does not totally dismiss lecturing, but he does see it as
occupying only a tiny role in class activities. Lecturing as an ineffective primary
teaching strategy should be no surprise to many FYC instructors; however, the
struggle to best achieve student learning is constant. Thus, Hillocks’s recognition
that this struggle is fundamentally an epistemological one coincides with Finkel’s
recognition that “people only learn by thinking for themselves, the teacher’s task
is to set up conditions that provoke thinking” (151).

This recognition has been discussed by numerous other compositionists,
critical pedagogy theorists, and others. What is helpful in Finkel’s text is that he
augments this key epistemological recognition with a number of strategies for
individual teachers to enact. While utilizing expressivist strategies, Finkel also
recognizes that students must see a social connection with the material covered
in a course. In Chapter Three, Finkel advocates encouraging students to connect
course material to their life experiences as a way to connect to larger course/program
objectives. The instructor’s job lies in constructing the possibility for that event to
occur. And, as anyone who has struggled with that situation knows, Finkel real-
izes that therein lies the difficulty of “teaching with your mouth shut”: creating a
course where students are engaged and the instructor shares in the inquiry of the
course.

While he discusses the instructor’s role in creating this type of course,
Finkel also makes clear that students must take responsibility for their learning.
Finkel’s emphasis on inquiry-based courses illustrates methodology to construct
composition courses around particular questions in order to accomplish course or
program goals in a meaningful way for students.

The most direct link with the composition classroom occurs in Chapter
Five, “The Art of Writing.” Many of the strategies Finkel discusses in this chap-
ter will not be surprising to most composition instructors—using peer groups,
teacher response letters, and emphasis on the writing process. However, the way
he understands writing as an avenue for both student and teacher to collaboratively
inquire about the material they are covering and about the process that they are
enacting together forces us to step back and think about the macro-curricular issues
involved in designing our composition courses and/or programs. Finkel reinforces
the notion that writing instruction, as a component of a course, must be dialogic
and collaborative. His text represents a powerful statement in recognition of the
amount of work that comprises successful writing assignments and assessment.

Equally important to his discussion of writing for the position of the
composition instructor is Finkel’s critical examination of the difference between
power and authority in the classroom. Finkel devotes Chapter Seven, “Refusing
to Teach,” to making a distinction between these two concepts and providing a
case study on separating the two in class. John Dewey’s legacy in Finkel’s text
becomes most clear in this chapter as he explores how an explicit realization of the
difference between power and authority will “pave the way to democracy” (119).
Finkel defines power as “grounded in present realities,” i.e., grades, while authority
is that “which . . . justifies or makes legitimate a particular state of affairs” (121).
Often, these two ideas become knotted in the classroom, and Finkel recommends subtly untying them; at the same time, he recognizes that the teacher never totally retreats from a “power” relationship with the student because of institutional structures. However, by making the distinction and relationship visible to students, an instructor can facilitate inquiry in a more democratic manner.

The student’s role in understanding the teacher’s role in a classroom also becomes a point of discussion for Finkel in this chapter. Students often have a fairly rigid idea of what a “writing” teacher should be and how they should act. While many of us may be uncomfortable, either in theory or practice, giving up “power” in the classroom, students likewise often struggle with that issue because they are not familiar or do not trust the type of classroom Finkel describes. This issue becomes most evident in composition courses in terms of instructor evaluation of essays. Finkel stops short of discussing sharing some of the evaluation power with students but, certainly, engaging students in frank discussions about individual assignments and the overall course grade continues along the same thread that Finkel begins in this chapter. Allowing self evaluation and collaborative construction of rubrics also seem to be reasonable possibilities and extensions of Finkel’s work.

A discussion of power and authority leads me back to my original question: what is the role of the instructor in a composition classroom? Of course there is no easy answer. However, Teaching with your Mouth Shut does provide a framework. First, instructors must be critically aware of the context in which they teach, which might mean being aware of student demographics and program/institution possibilities and constraints. Second, Finkel’s text emphasizes the role critical reflection must play for instructors and students in both individual and collective examination of the course workings. Finally, Teaching with your Mouth Shut consistently reinforces the sense that student and teacher must work together in an atmosphere of inquiry, not always as equals in knowledge but as partners working towards course goals. Finkel’s lively text encourages instructors to constantly reflect, reframe, and reimagine the courses they teach. It thus becomes a worthwhile text for both the new and veteran composition instructor and administrator.

Fort Wayne, Indiana

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In their introduction to Available Means: An Anthology of Women’s Rhetoric(s), Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald note that their decision to title their collection with Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric as the “discovery of the available means of persuasion” reflects their aim of “locating women squarely within rhetoric but also acknowledging that their presence demands that rhetoric be reconceived” (xvii). Ritchie and Ronald fittingly assert that by reclaiming Aristotle’s definition, their ground-breaking anthology can and will illuminate ways women have discovered both to “connect with” and “depart from” traditional methods of persuasion, and they ask their audience to consider the notion of availability within future readings of women’s writing. For me, Aristotle’s concept of availability has always invoked images of cooking: as a long-time experimenter in the kitchen, I rarely set out to prepare a dish equipped with all the so-called “necessary” or “traditional” ingredients I need right in front of me. So, I have learned to depend upon questions like, “What’s fresh?” or “What’s in the pantry?” or “What might fit in my favorite iron skillet?” for answers to the culinary brainteasers I design for myself. As such, my “available means” often result in assemblages that sometimes delight and usually instruct. Though she unfortunately rejects incorporating Aristotle into any of her pedagogical plans, Katharine Haake seems also to be an “available means” devotee. Like Ritchie and Ronald, Haake aims to reconceive a writing education by departing from methods she deems traditional, connecting with a broad audience of student writers and counting on available means.

Haake’s What Our Speech Disrupts: Feminism and Creative Writing Studies often delights with advice, examples, and anecdotes from the author’s broad classroom experiences and the obvious, outright freedom and joy she gets from (and seems to give to) her students. At the same time, the book operates stylistically and argumentatively as a gathering of available means. What Our Speech Disrupts is a sometimes hastily assembled casserole of Haake’s own memoirs, pedagogical positions, sample teaching exercises, and sample student writing. The result is precisely what Haake intends: a gathering of student and teacher voices. Sometimes Haake is the teacher; sometimes, she is the remembering student; sometimes the voices are cacophonous; sometimes her voice tiptoes alongside student writing in the form of a textbox or different font. An example of this stylistic gathering of available means comes in the chapter “You Bricoleur, You” as Haake notes how she learned from Wendy Bishop to have students write self-assessments to their own fiction and reprints several of the students’ reflections. Alex, a student fiction writer assessing and reflecting on his story “Villamiseria,” interestingly notes:
Another thing that since I wrote that story I had been reading a lot of Italo Calvino. And I don’t know if I’m a goddamn thief or what, but the story I wrote in one night about the swimming hole (even though many of the ideas were old from other unwritten stories) sounded a lot to me like an Italo Calvino story. (137)

Haake’s teacher voice reassures Alex’s anxiety of influence in a textbox-formatted response with “Nope, just conversational. (You sounded like Calvino from the very beginning anyway—before you ever knew his work.)” (137). So, as in this example, What Our Speech Disrupts’ stylistic gathering of available means requires readers to position themselves squarely within an enacted feminist pedagogy. In the above example, scholar-teacher-writer Haake learned assessment strategies from scholar-teacher-writer Bishop and sought to enact theory into practice while responding with available means to the situation at hand—student-writer Alex’s worry that he had stolen from Calvino. Such memorable, instructive stylistic enactments of available means occur throughout the book. Argumentatively, the gathering of available means seems less clear, and Haake gets around this lack of clarity by stating early on that clarity is not one of her aspirations anyway. In “Red Shoes: An Introduction,” Haake claims that, in keeping with a feminist mission of polyvocal heterogeneity, What Our Speech Disrupts should not be regarded as a “seamless argument,” “a single voice,” or “a set of answers”; rather, she wants us to see her book as an attempt to integrate “several strands of English studies, especially critical theory and composition studies, with creative writing, which for too long has been aligned exclusively with literature and art” (9). Quite ambitiously, Haake takes on this goal by “showing” us what she thinks such integration looks like in her own classroom instead of “telling” us why and how to do it. At times, we have what Haake calls “atlases”—syllabi—from courses she has taught, say, “English 652: Creative Writing Studies” or “English 408: Advanced Narrative Writing” (225-234), but as members of the profession she is speaking to, we do not have nearly enough access to the broader institutional implications of her teaching strategies, Haake’s enactment of available means. Though “show, don’t tell” is the shopworn suggestion creative writing workshop participants who aren’t sure what to say about a classmate’s short story often fall back on, falling back on “show, don’t tell” seems ultimately less helpful if an attempted integration of “several strands of English studies” really is Haake’s aim. We can see what the atlases or syllabi look like, and we can see how they might provide fresh roadmaps to the classes we ourselves will teach, but we cannot see clearly enough how Haake intends for us to use them in the broader contexts of our various institutional settings.

Although readers do see through multiple examples how, like an innovative chef, an obviously gifted teacher like Haake pulls from this and that—from theory, fiction, poetry, autobiography, memory, pedagogy, spirituality, disappointment, strategy, and so on—to guide her students and help “cook” their thoughts and talents, any book advocating a new model of writing education is obliged to go further. In particular, a book promising, as Haake’s does, to advocate a new model of writing
education within specific fields of English studies should address hard and specific questions about institutional pressures, curriculum, employment, the undergraduate major, and graduate work. (Can’t a feminist strategist ask and propose scrupulous answers to such political, theoretical, and logistical problems? I have to believe so.) If we are to draw from available means not only in the classroom but in the profession as we think critically about ways strands of English studies can speak to one another—and I am persuaded that we are—then we should have access to more than reprints of well-wrought syllabi, excerpts of student writing accompanied by teacher responses, and autobiographical reminiscences of how graduate work shaped a talented writer and teacher like Haake.

What Our Speech Disrupts is full of tantalizing and provocative ingredients, but I cannot help but rejoin that we have to do something with the ingredients in order to make them into something new. Bricolage certainly jars and stirs the imagination, but is bricolage enough for reform? Haake’s moxy and innovation as a writer, scholar, and teacher is thoroughly evidenced by the way What Our Speech Disrupts places us imaginatively in one of her classrooms; her argument to bring feminism and creative writing to the forefront of a reimagined English studies deserves to be articulated beyond bricolage so that her important ideas can be brought out and deliberated by those of us who are eager to sit down at the table.

Nashville, Tennessee

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Reviewed by Rebecca L. Jackson, Texas State University

Recently, one of my colleagues expressed irritation with our textbook committee’s decision to scrap the handbook we’d used for years in favor of an altogether different text: new publisher, new authors, new approach. It is this last feature—the approach—that my colleague found particularly troubling. “What’s with all the visual stuff?” she asked. “Designing pages, using visual images, creating websites—are we supposed to be teaching students how to write? What happened to just writing essays?”

I suspect my colleague’s complaints are shared by others in our department—literature, creative writing, and rhetoric/composition faculty alike—and for very similar reasons. The new handbook challenges what the editors of Questioning Authority, Linda Adler-Kassner and Susanmarie Harrington, call
“textual authority”: notions about what “the essay” should look and sound like, what form it should take, and what language it should employ. Textual authority, Adler-Kassner and Harrington observe, “is perhaps the most authoritative idea we carry with us to the classroom” (9), and yet it is not, they argue, the only “authoritative voice” that influences our work in composition. Classroom practice is also shaped, at times constrained, by notions of “personal authority,” the “touting of narrative and lived experience as the basis of writing” (Hesse 26), and by various theoretical approaches to teaching composition. Authority shapes writing, Adler-Kassner and Harrington observe plainly, and their interest, at least in part, is in assembling essays that describe the three kinds of authority they consider most pervasive and influential—personal authority, textual authority, and theoretical authority. What they and the contributors to the collection are most interested in, however, is how individual teachers and students understand, use, question, and revise ideas of personal, textual, and theoretical authority. The “fundamental dynamic” of the composition classroom, the editors argue, “turns on questioning assumptions about authority and the essay,” for it is only when teachers “question received authority about composition [that] they promote generative change” (13). Particularly compelling is Kassner and Harrington’s efforts to (re)see authority through the lens of story: that is, to talk about the “authorities” that influence composition studies as metanarratives of sorts (although this term is never used), as “stories of composition” that currently narrate our work in the field and are simultaneously questioned and (re)narrated by writers and teachers in their daily work with one another. Adler-Kassner and Harrington provide a sketch of this overarching metaphor in their introduction, yet it is the essays themselves that illuminate its nuances blending discussions of narrative, theory, and classroom practice to illustrate the ways in which authority is questioned and, often, rewritten.

The first section of Questioning Authority, “Personal Authority,” explores what Douglas Hesse refers to as “the embrace of ‘the personal’ in composition studies,” the privileging of teachers’ and students’ lived experience and personal narratives as somehow more authentic, true, and authoritative than traditional forms of academic writing (31). In the first essay, “Stories, Style, and the Exploitation of Experience,” Hesse provides a frame for the essays that follow, raising important questions about motives for storytelling in the composition classroom and the implications of turning experience into “artifact.” Using his own essay as a case in point, Hesse weaves together personal history and narrative, theory, and classroom practice to challenge the notion that pedagogies emphasizing personal narratives are somehow “more faithful to postmodernity” than others—that they take a “stance against modernist rationalism and all its evils” in ways that other classroom practices do not (27). Hesse observes that when lived experience is expected as the “basis of student writing,” the essays we read are

no less conventionalized than are lab reports. They are rhetorical moves whose presence or absence tells readers to accept or reject a
personal narrative as a good, effective, or authentic one. “Authentic voice” . . . is authentic only insofar as it matches received conventions of authenticity. The magic of the whole concept of “authentic voice” is that it depends on a disavowal of convention. (27)

In other words, such “disavowal of convention” obscures the often strategic use of story for primarily instrumental or aesthetic functions, “experience turned into strategy in order to serve purposes that are, but simultaneously are not, ‘faithful’ or ‘just’ or even ‘respectful’ of that experience” (26). Hesse’s essay is intended to raise more questions than it answers and, for this reason, it works as an interesting counterpart to essays by Zawacki, Peters, and Golson, which focus on actual classroom practices, on ways to organize writing courses around a more complicated notion of “self” as always already fragmented, shaped by innumerable material, social, cultural, and ideological constraints (Zawacki 39). Terry Zawacki, for example, describes her current classroom practice of using personal writing as a vehicle for examining culturally produced identities, to explore how we (students and teachers alike) are “written into certain stories and not into others” (46). And Brad Peters and Emily Golson each discuss the ways in which personal narrative might be used as a springboard for reflection and for “forays” into alternative stories, perspectives, and histories.

Contributors in Section II, “Formal Authority,” tread more familiar ground in their focus on the authority of textual conventions in the writing classroom. Computer classrooms, ongoing discussions about the role of visual rhetoric in first-year and advanced writing, our students’ own media savvy—these realities have challenged those of us in composition studies to rethink notions of “text” as well as what we mean when we say that we “teach writing.” Readers will find essays here that extend conversations already begun in our field and describe specific classroom practices designed to challenge and, at times subvert, the traditional essay.

In “La Huesera,” Laura Brady invokes the legend of the Bone Woman, a collector of artifacts who “crisscrosses borders, goes against the grain, disrupts conventions” and “draws our attention to the politics of genre” (97) to elaborate a pedagogy based on the “shape-shifting” nature of the essay: from formal and didactic to conversational and exploratory (103). Anderson and Aronson in “Visualizing the Academic Essay” examine academic writing’s “outlaw of the visual” (116), while Thomas Reynolds in “Expository Essay Form and the Future of Newer Electronic Forms” foregrounds the essay as a “form of cultural authority” with roots in middle-class values. For Anderson and Aronson, the concept of “design” reinvigorates the practice of writing by encouraging an “integration of visual thinking into all aspects of the composing process” (127). Reynolds’ position is more overtly political: hypertext and other electronic media give students the chance to “write in forms that encourage them to combat the negation of difference found historically in the essay” (136).
In the last section of the book, “Theoretical Authority,” contributors offer a range of perspectives on the ways in which theory—both general and particular—drives classroom pedagogy. This section is the least consistent of the three, combining three essays that question particular theoretical constructs with one essay that demonstrates a particular theory’s relevance to the teaching of writing. This last piece, Ed Nagelhout’s “Essaying as Action,” offers a compelling look at the ways in which activity theory might be used to challenge the essay as composition’s “primary form” (204), but it might have been better placed in Section II with essays focusing specifically on the genre of the essay. That said, I found the essays in this last section more engaging: they explore issues of theory in composition studies that, as of yet, have not been widely discussed. This is particularly true of Dawn Skorczewski’s “Want to Tell a True Story about First-Year Writing Programs?” —a fascinating look at what the writing programs and writing curricula at Harvard, Syracuse, and the University of Pittsburgh tell us about their allegiances to particular theories of writing. Skorczewski concludes that no such single allegiance exists, that a “true” story of writing programs is less about a coherent and stable philosophy of writing than it is about “writing program directors constructing and reconstructing themselves in particular moments, in relation to local constraints, constraints that both limit directors and emanate from them” (179). Essays by Laura Gray-Rosendale and Ruth Mirtz examine the ways in which theory—at both the individual and disciplinary levels—shapes teachers’ and students’ work in the writing classroom. In “Once Upon a Theory,” Gray-Rosendale turns attention to our discipline’s embrace of contact zone theory and pedagogies, noting that, in her own classroom at least, contact zone pedagogies that promised to “authorize [her] students to speak,” actually authorized only one voice in particular—her own (161). Gray-Rosendale challenges those of us who use or might use contact zone pedagogies in our classrooms to closely examine the assumptions upon which the pedagogy rests and to listen to students when they tell us that our writing classrooms are serving teacher interests rather than student needs (161). Ruth Mirtz, in “Essaying Theory,” discusses the role of metadiscursive writing in interrogating the “folk theories” that shape teachers’ and students’ attitudes about and approaches to writing. For Mirtz, activities like interpretive paraphrase and invisible writing “put the conflicts between students’ and teachers’ theories on the table for discussion” where they can then be questioned and, perhaps, reinterpreted (188).

Questioning Authority is a difficult collection to classify: it is at once a collection of essays on theory, on practice, on the authoritative stories we tell about theory and practice, and, ultimately, on the ways in which we question, challenge, resist, subvert, and revise those stories. Novice teachers will find the collection an important guide to current conversations in the field, while experienced teachers may find the metaphor of story itself most interesting and productive, a way of reflecting on and reimagining their roles as teachers, scholars, and writers. In their introduction to the collection, Adler-Kassner and Harrington envision a work that
“authorize[s] readers to raise questions of their own, to revisit past practice, to have different kinds of conversations with students” (15). The essays in this collection give us a motive and a vocabulary for such activities.

San Marcos, Texas


Reviewed by Bruce Horner, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

This collection of essays presents a variety of arguments, many by prominent scholars of basic writing, for whether, how, and why students otherwise designated “basic writers” (and, in one case, those designated “ESL”) might be “mainstreamed” into “regular” composition courses. While all of the essays are new to this collection, several authors rehearse or draw extensively on previously published work. The collection is not a comprehensive gathering of all seminal work on the mainstreaming debate: relevant work by such figures as Peter Dow Adams, David Bartholomae, Tom Fox, Karen Greenberg, Judith Rodby, and Rhonda Grego and Nancy Thompson, for example, is discussed in many of the collection’s chapters but not included. Nonetheless, the book provides compositionists attempting to better understand what mainstreaming basic writing might mean with a useful introduction to such matters.

Gerri McNenny, the book’s editor, opens with an overview of recent shifts in the political climate and public policies prompting or even forcing many mainstreaming efforts and identifies some of the key issues. Following this overview are seven chapters comprising Part I, “The Controversy Surrounding Mainstreaming: Theory, Politics, and Practice.” These chapters present not simply arguments for and against mainstreaming, but also arguments about such arguments on the basis of analyses of national trends, local institutional histories, and reviews of the scholarly literature. In Edward White’s “Revisiting the Importance of Placement and Basic Studies: Evidence of Success” (a revised version of his 1995 essay “The Importance of Placement”), White reviews statistical evidence from the Institutional Research Office of the California State University and reports from the New Jersey Basic Skills Council on the effects of remedial writing programs on student retention. While cautioning that “[w]e must be careful about generalizing from the California and New Jersey programs” (27), he concludes these do demonstrate success in helping students remain in school. In sharp contrast, Ira Shor, in an extended elaboration of arguments he has made earlier (in “Our Apartheid” and “Illegal Literacy”), denounces basic writing courses as part of a long tradition of using literacy instruction as a means by which to justify and
reproduce economic inequality by failing students and then blaming them for not “meriting” better jobs (34). While admitting that “[n]o one plan for change will work anywhere, everywhere, or all the time” (48) and cautioning, “My criticism of the history and politics of writing instruction is not a criticism of my colleagues, full-time or adjunct” (47), he nonetheless condemns alternatives to mainstreaming as inherently oppressive.

Mary Soliday’s contribution, “Ideologies of Access and the Politics of Agency,” a reprise of some of the arguments she makes in her important book, The Politics of Remediation, points out that the identification of student access with the fate of remedial programs neglects other, more powerful, factors determining students’ educational careers, particularly the “devastating economic privatization of public higher education” (57). Using the recent history of remedial programs at CUNY, she demonstrates how an “ideology of access” has held basic writing programs solely responsible for student performance while, in fact, students have tended to be “held back” because of their need to work in order to pay for mandatory remedial courses and newly imposed tuition charges. In other words, it is the “privatization” of the costs of public education that has significantly impaired student access to and success in higher education. In the next chapter, Terence G. Collins and Kim Lynch critique both David Bartholomae’s “The Tidy House” and Ira Shor’s “Our Apartheid” for what they see as a tendency in these influential articles and in the mainstreaming debate generally to posit a “[conveniently] homogenized basic writing status quo against which mainstreaming is placed as a universally desirable fix” (73). They call for caution and attention to the specifics of local institutional circumstances in judging whether, or how, to “mainstream” students. Using the history of the basic writing program at the University of Minnesota’s General College (where Collins works as Academic Affairs and Curriculum Director), they argue that for that institution’s students, basic writing has created “a best possible realization of the kind of writing course that serves a ‘basic’ or developmental student,” and that mainstreaming courses like those described by Grego and Thompson, Soliday and Gleason, and Greg Glau “have done precisely the same thing,” i.e., “created the best site-specific social and intellectual writing situation possible for [their] students” (emphasis added, 83).

Reporting some of the findings of a longitudinal study conducted on the effects of Georgia Southern University-Statesboro’s basic writing courses, Eleanor Agnew and Margaret McLaughlin, in “Those Crazy Gates and How They Swing: Tracking the System That Tracks African-American Students,” shift the focus of the debate, arguing that those debating mainstreaming need to pay greater attention to the means by which students’ writing is assessed. Noting that one of their institution’s administrators unwittingly described a student’s exit essay he’d failed two days earlier to be “‘wonderful,’ and clearly a passing essay” (87), they warn that too often writing assessments used to place students are unreliable and invalid, allowing evaluators’ prejudicial attitudes toward AAVE to reign freely and thereby
“contribut[ing] to the widely recognized cycle of academic failure and high attrition rates for Black students” (86).

Marti Singer’s “Moving the Margins,” the chapter concluding Part I, provides an instructive, if sobering, tale of the vicissitudes of those writing teachers and program administrators committed to the literacy education of all their students. Singer tells the story of her experience at George State University adjusting and readjusting her professional identity and her composition curriculum over a twenty-year period in response not only to changes in her understanding of composition pedagogy, but also, and more prominently, to changes in students, state mandates, and institutional structures. Working in quick succession, first for an administrative “unit” of a free-standing “Division of Developmental Studies,” then for its successor, the “Division of Learning Support Programs,” and then for the “Department of Learning Support Programs” housed within the university’s College of Arts and Sciences after the “Division of Learning Support Programs” was abolished a few years after its inception, Singer recalls her efforts and those of her colleagues to help students pass a Board of Regents exam required of all students in Georgia’s state–supported colleges and universities, improve placement procedures, develop a “support” course for students in first-year composition, adjust to a variety of students’ and composition instructors’ perspectives on writing, make the switch from a quarter to a semester system, measure the effects of writing curricula on student retention and GPA’s, and train graduate students.

I present this lengthy, though in fact significantly abbreviated, summary of Singer’s story because it provides an important reminder that both courses in “basic writing” and efforts to “mainstream” students formerly designated “basic writers” all too often represent strategies developed and implemented in hurried response to circumstances not chosen by either composition teachers or their students but others—deans and provosts, political appointees, state legislators. And no decisions on whether to “mainstream” occur in an immaterial vacuum. In a chapter later in the book, Mark Wiley observes that there is an unfortunate tendency to categorize participants in the mainstreaming debate in terms of whether they argue for or against mainstreaming, understood in some monolithic, acontextual sense. However, it is more appropriate to understand the debate in terms of whether mainstreaming and basic writing courses are approached as structures operating transhistorically on but not within history or, alternatively, approached historically, as specific strategic constructions.

Framed this way, arguments like Shor’s, despite their apparent grounding in history, can be identified as ahistorical to the extent that they fail to distinguish among or recognize the histories of the specific basic writing (and mainstreaming) courses and programs they review. Instead, in such arguments, the specific historical effects of certain writing programs are redefined as their “function” for a society presumed to operate in a condition of homeostatic stasis behind the backs of its members. The specifics of how individual programs were initiated, developed, or changed are elided, as is the agency of those involved in these programs.
Alternatively, arguments about basic writing and mainstreaming by writers like Adams, Collins and Lynch, Grego and Thompson, Soliday and Gleason, Rodby and Fox, and even Bartholomae (in “The Tidy House,” contrary to Collins and Lynch) approach both basic writing and mainstreaming precisely as strategies that, by definition, must of necessity be questioned for their efficacy at achieving particular, intended goals and for the unintended effects they are likely to produce. Both those calling the strategic value of courses in basic writing into question, as Bartholomae does in “Tidy House,” and those defending specific basic writing programs, as Collins and Lynch do in this volume, are aligned in judging basic writing courses and programs (and, by implication, mainstreaming efforts) in terms of what specific material embodiments of such efforts might have accomplished for specific students and programs, not in terms of the social function basic writing, or for that matter a mainstreaming program, is imagined to fulfill.

While an anti-functionalist, materialist reading of basic writing and mainstreaming might seem to yield perverse curricular bedfellows (Bartholomae and Collins, for example), it can also enable us in our work as composition teachers, scholars, and program administrators to make more precise judgments of composition curricula, programs, theories, and pedagogies. While an anti-functionalist, materialist reading of basic writing and mainstreaming might seem to yield perverse curricular bedfellows (Bartholomae and Collins, for example), it can also enable us in our work as composition teachers, scholars, and program administrators to make more precise judgments of composition curricula, programs, theories, and pedagogies. 2 It’s worth recalling that the concepts of “basic writing” and “the basic writer,” like mainstreaming, were “invented” as alternatives to prior institutional arrangements and theoretical constructs—“bonehead” and “remedial” English and their “illiterate” denizens, for example, or “revolving door” admissions policies and “sink or swim” composition curricula superficially similar to mainstreaming. Maintaining a sense of the status of both basic writing courses and mainstreaming efforts as strategies developed and worked to different effects in different circumstances can lessen the temptations to either jump on the mainstreaming bandwagon as the newest (and illogically therefore deemed “best”) approach or defend in knee-jerk fashion current basic writing programs as universally guaranteed remedies for the ills imagined to threaten us and our students.

It is from this perspective that the chapters comprising Part II of the collection, “Alternative Configurations for Basic Writing,” should be read. Four of the five chapters in this section present specific curricular programs, with the fifth chapter consisting of a brief concluding overview of the collection’s arguments by Sallyanne H. Fitzgerald, the book’s associate editor, from the perspective of the histories of basic writing programs at a variety of institutions. Barbara Gleason’s “Returning Adults to the Mainstream: Toward a Curriculum for Diverse Student Writers” describes an introductory writing course she taught for the Center for Worker Education B.A. program within the City College of the City University of New York for “returning” or “nontraditional”—i.e., “adult”—students with widely varying educational backgrounds and writing experience. Based on a course she and Mary Soliday developed for a mainstreaming project (described in their article “From Remediation to Enrichment”) that involves students in exploring their own literacy experiences and conducting ethnographic projects, Gleason argues for the...
use of assignments that are sequenced to build on these students’ strengths with oral forms of communication and to give students both quick “success” and increasing intellectual challenge. Conversely, Rosemary Winslow and Monica Mische, in an extension of an earlier article (“The Hero’s Performance”), describe a course at a small, private university for traditional-aged students labeled “at risk” that focuses less on improving students’ writing than on changing student identity through a curriculum based on hero “identity quests.” Viewing their students as “individuals immersed in a mix of institutions in culture and society who did not know which way to turn to respond to daily and multiple conflicts,” Winslow and Mische focus their course on helping their students not only to read and write more complexly for their coursework, but also to determine their educational goals and resolve conflicts interfering with pursuit of those goals (148). The course uses small (fifteen-student) seminar meetings, even smaller (four to five-student) group writing workshops, frequent conferences, and assignments involving students in investigating hero myths, writing “creative” texts in response to paintings, and analyzing the architecture of Washington D.C.-area galleries, memorials, and museums.

In “Mainstreaming and Other Experiments in a Learning Community,” Mark Wiley reports on several related curricular changes at California State University, Long Beach, including the mainstreaming of basic writers, the reduction of the university’s basic writing curriculum from two three-hour courses to one four-hour course, and, more prominently, the inclusion of basic writing students in the school’s “Learning Alliance,” a version of learning communities in which students enroll as cohorts in several courses their first year in addition to working closely with advisers, participating in extra-curricular and community-service activities, and potentially serving in their junior and senior years as peer mentors to other Learning Alliance students. Finally, Trudy Smoke examines her own and other attempts to mainstream ESL students, who, Smoke notes, are as difficult to identify as “basic writing” students and are often as reluctant to take ESL courses as students are to be placed into basic writing.

All four of these chapters tell stories of “success”—increased student retention, improved academic performance, better writing, more satisfied students—tempting readers to take measures similar to those outlined in these chapters. Yet doing so would ignore the specificities of local institutional conditions. For example, Gleason’s course, designed for adult returning students, is probably a poor match for the confused, traditional-aged students for whom Winslow and Mische’s course was designed, and vice versa. It is particularly heartening, therefore, that Wiley and Smoke especially take pains to warn readers against such temptations. (Fitzgerald echoes these warnings in her concluding chapter.) Wiley explicitly refuses to draw any “grand conclusions” from the positive results of the experiments described, warning, “I do not hold up our learning community as ‘the model’ to be replicated,” and advising that “we must consider the structures we have in place on our respective campuses” to determine whether these meet the needs of basic writing students, and the sorts of curricula and pedagogies that

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would work best with those students (187, 188). Smoke similarly observes that “we need to look carefully at our own institutions before we decide on the best option for placing ESL writers in composition classes” (209).

As these writers emphasize, it is important that we not lose sight of the strategic and contingent character of these projects. At the same time, it is also true that whatever their genesis, mainstreaming projects, like the inception of basic writing programs, are yielding significant insight into students, writing, the teaching and learning of writing, and academic institutions and institutional practices. The stories Gleason, Winslow and Mische, Wiley, and Smoke tell of the implementation of mainstreaming projects (and the contexts of their implementation), however useful these projects might be for those participating in them, are of particular value for the insights they provide about the heterogeneity of students and, therefore, the limits of categorizing them, the many and often overlooked strengths as well as “needs” students bring to our classrooms, and the challenges of finding ways to draw on those strengths in the design of our own institutions, programs, and courses. Compositionists can draw on these insights whatever the institutional structures with which they individually happen to be working and whatever decisions they happen to be considering regarding mainstreaming.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

NOTES

1 I argue this point more extensively in Chapter Four of Terms of Work. For a general critique of functionalist analyses, see Anthony Giddens’ Central Problems in Social Theory.

2 Of course, a materialist argument can be “rendered” into a functionalist one. Bartholomae’s “Tidy House,” for example, has come to stand for an unqualified call to abolish basic writing, despite (or by neglecting) his statement, “Would I advocate the elimination of courses titled ‘basic writing’ for all postsecondary curricula beginning next fall? No. I fear what would happen to the students who are protected, served in its name” (“Tidy House” 20). I anticipate that many of the chapters in this volume will be read similarly despite the authors’ efforts to disavow such interpretations.

WORKS CITED


Reviewed by Pat Belanoff, State University of New York-Stony Brook

Composition (and Rhetoric) as a discipline has struggled throughout its history with the perception that it is somewhat lesser country—necessary at the college level solely because its clients (students) are defective in some way. And because these clients are at some lower level of development, the perception often is that their teachers are also—as though it takes less intelligence to teach kindergarten than
Shakespeare. Those within the field vary from one extreme that fights that image to another extreme that considers the issue irrelevant to its own work. It is at this end of the spectrum where most of the valuable work is being done—and none more valuable than that which makes connections between the practical and the theoretical/philosophical. Pedagogical approaches and research analyzing pedagogy have thus come to the forefront in recent years, but such work inevitably leads to considerations of how to represent itself. Drawing on the extensive scholarship on portfolio use, the contributors to Composition, Pedagogy & the Scholarship of Teaching, edited by Deborah Miner and Amy M. Goodburn, focus on the value of the teaching portfolio for documentation of both the practical and theoretical aspects of pedagogy. Although the topic might seem narrow, the editors and contributors to this volume demonstrate admirably the ways in which construction and evaluation of teaching portfolios can enrich programs, individual teachers, and current dialogues within the field.

The contributors to this book all approach their subject from different locations, but three major issues come to the fore: 1) how to integrate (or separate?) portfolio materials designed to indicate development and materials designed to promote the maker of the portfolio; 2) how to represent the “performativ e aspects” of teaching that “are, by nature, difficult to capture in the written texts we use to represent our teaching no matter how accurately we may believe we are doing so” (Anson and Dannels 95); and 3) how to negotiate the power relationships inherent in assessment and evaluation of teaching portfolios.

One aspect of constructing a teaching portfolio that those of us who use them may find enlightening is the discussion of the selection process (particularly in Newton, et al., “Reconsidering and Reassessing Teaching Portfolios: Reflective and Rhetorical Functions”). That made me reflect on—though the authors do not make this point—how similar such decisions must be to the decisions our students make as they construct a portfolio. We may tell them we want to see materials that demonstrate their development as writers, but they want to present to us only what they consider their best work. Newton, et al., advise young teachers to focus on the most effective way to present themselves to their audience. The conclusion of their article suggests that a teaching portfolio can demonstrate the teacher’s struggle to construct an identity within a particular environment, but I do not quite see how this struggle would meet the requirements stated elsewhere in this chapter about the need to present oneself positively.

The very next chapter, “Looping and Linking Heuristics for Teacher Portfolio Development” (Robinson, Cahill, and Blanchard), picks up this concern by struggling with how to construct a portfolio that presents one’s identity and yet serves other rhetorical situations. I find myself more sympathetic to this approach that suggests that teachers “return to their personal belief systems as a starting point” (16). In some ways, I wish this chapter had come first in the collection as it ties its dilemmas to those we actually face in our teaching: what is the balance between advising our students to begin by forgetting audience and to begin by
analyzing their audience? A genuine writing problem for all of us. The authors of this chapter are well aware that adherence to guidelines for constructing a portfolio may “promote an uncritical collection concept system rather than a critically self-aware portfolio system that emphasizes the conceptualized nature of teaching” (14-15). Again, I am reminded of my despair when I thumb through some student portfolios and realize that the student has merely followed a set of instructions and has not embodied in the portfolio, in any way, his/her writing self.

This tension between creating one’s identity in a portfolio and yet glossing over struggles in order to present oneself as having mastered all difficulties becomes more pronounced when one is preparing a teaching portfolio in a high stakes situation—tenure or promotion, a teaching award, or as part of a job-application packet. In “Constructed Confessions: Creating a Teaching Self in the Job Search Portfolio,” O’Neill confronts this issue directly, and while acknowledging the arguments of those who criticize the self-promotion aspect of portfolios, she asserts that the value of a portfolio to a teacher in a high-stakes situation comes during the construction of it and in the kinds of reflection it engenders, even though it may end up being mostly self-promotion. For her, satisfying an audience enabled her to discover new aspects of her own teaching. Again, such an awareness forces me to realize that some of my students do their best work by forgetting audience and others do their best work by analyzing it first. That’s a lesson for all of us.

Leverenz, in “The Ethics of Required Teaching Portfolios,” approaches this issue from a slightly different vantage point: the problem of requiring a teaching portfolio and ethical concerns about the valuing of diversity. To what degree will an individual teacher present a teaching philosophy and teaching practices that are at variance with the aims of the program in which she teaches? And if those who are evaluating teaching portfolios genuinely appreciate diversity, how does this play out as they assess portfolios? Leverenz concludes by praising the power of diversity and asserting her positive evaluation of portfolio assessment systems because they have the potential to manifest the tension between commonality and difference that is a productive force in any field of scholarship. While I am sympathetic to this approach, I’m skeptical about how well such deviation from a particular program’s goals might serve a teacher. For there to be no backlash, the program itself would need to create a high level of trust among all. Leverenz herself gives the example of her dialogue with a student who advocates approaches to which she and her program are not sympathetic. She quite respectfully asks him to give her views a genuine airing, but that request seems to me a one-way street as she does not commit herself to giving his views a genuine airing.

The second major concern I see in this collection is addressed at the outset by Ann Ruggles Gere in her Preface; scholarship directed at pedagogy must deal with attempts at direct representations of actual teaching. Such representation is not easy to come by in a text. I can read about how a particular teacher connects her/his teaching methods and her/his reflections on that teaching, but I cannot actually see it and hear it. I suppose that the ultimate artifact for overcoming this
dilemma someday will be a video accompanying a book such as this (or the teaching portfolio itself) that shows the actual classroom activity being analyzed by the prose. To give them extra credit, the editors of this book have made a move in that direction by providing a website (<http://www.heinemann.com/minter-goodburn>) that makes public materials relevant to the essays in the book itself. Thus, one can read a number of the chapters and access actual classroom materials that document what their authors say. Nonetheless, as Anson and Dannels so cogently put it, there is “no adequate way to re-present that temporal event,” to re-present the “oral, embodied and performative aspects of teaching” (“The Medium and the Message: Developing Responsible Methods for Assessing Teaching Portfolios” 95).

One further problem here is that the individual teacher “may be able to articulate” teaching approaches “more elegantly and convincingly than she is able to use them effectively in her teaching.” We have here someone who “talks a good game” but cannot produce points during actual play (Anson and Dannels 92).

In confronting this issue, LeCourt, in “Reading for Pedagogy: Negotiating the Complexities of Context from a Search Committee Chair’s Perspective,” moves away from any attempt to read a teaching portfolio as indicative of actual teaching practices. In debating with hiring committees at her own institution, she concluded that what is most important is the connections the job candidate forges between theory and practice and her ability to articulate that connection clearly. What she then looks for in a teaching portfolio is how a candidate “thinks about teaching” (108). LeCourt confesses that most teaching portfolios do not make these connections overt but that it is possible for careful and well-trained readers/evaluators of the portfolio to see those connections.

But the issue remains. How can a collection of texts present practice? How can we judge teaching without actually seeing it? Many hiring scenarios now include a segment in which the job candidate actually teaches a class. How representative is such a “performance”? The dilemma here is that faced by scholars and researchers, particularly ethnographers, in many fields: what is generalizable within the particular? And further: if I cannot generalize from particulars, if I cannot arrive at any theoretical or philosophical conclusions, is there any value in the particulars at all? For purposes of a review such as this, can I, as the reviewer, look at the texts and at the materials collected on the website and generalize about ways for making manifest the scholarship of pedagogy, or can I add to our conversations by scrutinizing the value of these contributions singly? I would argue that it is just this dilemma that leads many in academia to be uncomfortable about the “scholarship” of teaching. When I write a piece for publication, it appears after revision, suggestions from editors, careful proofreading, and so forth. I don’t include (as I often ask my students to do) earlier versions of the text. But if I present a visual reproduction of a particular class, I cannot go back and revise it; it’s there in all its glory (or lack thereof). How many such videos would I need to see of a particular teacher’s classroom before I could comfortably generalize?
This enigma is both fearful and productive. It forces me as an observer to recognize the teacher as an individual and to come to grips with the truth that every classroom situation is unique. It is just this truth that modern assessments want to hide. Advocates of such assessments want to find what is common to every classroom and—if it is judged successful by some process—how to transport that common element into every other classroom of the same subject, at the same level. In the process what is unique to a particular classroom is often overlooked, and teachers are forced to view themselves through the lens of assessors and remake themselves as carbon copies of some supposedly productive practitioners. Diversity is often given lip service but more often manipulated into standardized goals. It is in just such a climate that we must set forth the power of the individual classroom, the individual teacher, and the individual learner. Attempts, then, to render actual classrooms and put them on view for the public must be encouraged and financed in every way possible. This book and its website go in that direction.

Although I listed power issues as the third major concern of the contributors to this collection, many of the chapters do not make those connections directly. A portfolio compiled by one individual is turned over to another or to others for a reason: rehiring, tenure, a teaching or service award, promotion, a job search. Classroom observations, even by one’s peers, much more so by a hiring committee, can leave the observed teacher as a passive recipient of the judgment of others and can “set in motion a kind of master-apprentice model” (Minter, “Peer Observation as Collaborative Classroom Inquiry” 64). Power is inherent in evaluation, and yet not many of us understand how to evaluate teaching portfolios productively. I am not sure I would be as definitive as Anson and Dannels—“To review portfolios competently, evaluators first need to be excellent, reflective teachers themselves, familiar with the major literature on teaching in higher education” (98)—simply because I know that the faculty in my department are not going to spend their time reading such literature. And I’m sure my department is not unique. Yet they are going to continue to evaluate job applicants and vote on tenure and promotion. They have the power to do so; that power then virtually mandates that teachers constructing portfolios focus more on constructing an ideal teacher-self than on documenting a teacher-self. As Schendel and Newton, in “Building Community Through Reflection: Constructing and Reading Portfolios as a Method of Program Assessment,” note, making a “pretty” portfolio may actually take the place of efforts to improve. One presents herself as already formed rather than focusing on the forming process itself (123). Power here is detrimental.

Goodburn’s “The Course Portfolio: Individual and Collective Possibilities” comes at this issue by advocating a course portfolio which “represents a teacher’s experience with the significant moments, productive tensions, and assessment of student learning from the life of one course” (65). These portfolios can be shared with others teaching the same course or within the same department. In theory, such a portfolio aims to engender productive talk about a particular course and its role in the overall curriculum design. Goodburn skirts issues of power and
individual assessment here, but I suspect that individual teachers—particularly new and vulnerable ones—might not be motivated to present their problems with a class. The power of judgment remains.

Willard-Traub's essay “Beyond Course Evaluations: Representing Student Voice and Experience,” raises a different kind of power issue and analyzes its ethics: how to use students' voices in one's own materials for job applications. She demonstrates clearly why her philosophical position demands that she do so and yet examines thoughtfully the ethics of using student voices in this way. She is not altogether successful in bringing these two issues together and offering a neat solution—but perhaps that's as it should be. The whole arena of the use of student papers, comments, and evaluations in research is currently a much-conflicted arena.

Schendel and Newton confront power issues most directly. “Teaching portfolios are, in part, exercises of power” (121) is the very first sentence of their chapter. They quite clearly state that portfolios can be used both for development and for assessment. Development requires a safe environment; assessment militates against that. Regardless, however, of the purpose of a teaching portfolio, its construction also involves “negotiations of the many powerful discourses at work” in a teacher’s life. Thus a teaching portfolio is less about documenting “development” and more about “constructing” from intersecting influences an identity that can then be evaluated. Such being the case, these contributors advocate teaching portfolios more for program assessment than for assessment of individual teachers. Their ensuing discussion of standards and methods for program assessment is valuable in and of itself, apart from its inclusion of individual teaching portfolios. They value these chiefly because they present different lenses through which to view a particular program and, thus, can lead to a more diverse and realistic picture. Their main message is that if power is inherent in teaching portfolios, we need to harness that power to achieve institutional as well as personal goals.

A review such as mine cannot possibly capture all elements in this book. I am particularly appreciative of the obvious tolerance for difference of opinions on the subject of teacher portfolios. What I found most valuable in the book is simply straightforward discussion of issues with little strident advocacy of particular positions. Such an approach allows me to be a part of the discussion. I also value the timeliness of the issue itself. Increasingly, higher education is being called to task for its lukewarm interest in teaching. Composition and rhetoric may be, in the minds of some, a mere appendage on the maligned field of education, but that field itself is garnering ever more public attention. What I missed in the book was a contribution that simply presents the idea of a personal portfolio—one created just for oneself. What might I learn from creating such portfolio? Obviously materials from such a portfolio might be used in a more public way, but that would not be my reason for creating such a portfolio. I would see it mainly as a mirror, a place for my own reflections. Other than that omission, this collection will, I am confident,
be a valuable resource for many in the field: those constructing the portfolios and those struggling to evaluate them.

Stony Brook, New York


Reviewed by Aesha Adams, The Pennsylvania State University

In an aptly titled introduction, “Literacy in African American Churches: A Conversation Between the Academy and the Church Begins,” Beverly Moss explains how she came to the project of examining literacy within African American church communities. As a member of this community, she recalls listening to a sermon as both a church member and as a researcher. She was intrigued by what the minister said as well as how it was said. This moment, as the title reflects, speaks to the larger significance of her work: that is, Moss’s study dismantles the dichotomies between the academic and the spiritual. Often under the guise of the mantra “separation of church and state,” matters of the spirit are characterized as irrationality or at best, emotionality. As such, they are devalued and pitted against the rational, logical academy. Moss’s ethnographic study of four African American church communities merges both religious and academic concerns as she asks, “what constitutes a literate text in African American churches?” (139). Because she values these church communities and takes them seriously, she does not attempt to separate their belief systems from their literacy practices but instead recognizes them as interdependent. As such, Moss’s work disrupts dominant notions of literacy and literate texts as static, autonomous, written texts. Her study offers an alternative model of a literate text that holds profound implications for the composition classroom.

Moss situates her project within larger, on-going conversations about literacy acquisition and the literate practices of African Americans. Drawing upon the scholarly traditions of the New Literacy Studies as well as African American Literacy studies, Moss makes a case for the social nature of literacy. New Literacy theorists argue that literacy cannot be separated from its social context, which includes politics, culture, and power (see Heath, Gee, Street, Giroux, and others). These scholars use the term “literacies” rather than literacy to underscore opposition to monocultural, monolithic, and ideologically neutral conceptualizations of literacy. In addition to the political nature of literacy, African American literacy theorists emphasize that reading and writing are not the only components of literacy; cultural practices, identity, and language use influence the purposes and modes of oral, literate, and postliterate texts among African Americans (see Royster, Logan, Richardson, and others). Moss extends these discussions by broadening the domains
where one can find literacy, namely, the African American church, thereby confronting the myths that African Americans are illiterate and their language practices are deficient.

Her project is based on several key conceptions of literacy, all of which seek to highlight the social nature of literacy. For Moss, literacy is “a complex, social process involving multiple levels of participation by rhetors and audience, intertextual relationships (i.e., interdependent relations between oral, written, and sometimes musical texts) and complex belief systems of members of particular communities” (6). Moss names three key markers of literacy in churches that she develops in later chapters: “the presence of multiple participants in the literacy event; the presence of intertextual relationships; and the influence of cultural norms and ideology that shape the way participants, intertextuality, and discourse interact” (7). This conception of literacy as a social process, also referred to as “community literacy,” assumes collaboration by multiple participants in interchangeable roles in order to create a literate text. In this way, literacy is both process and product. Therefore, Moss challenges dominant conceptions of the radical individual, dismantles rigid boundaries between writer/speaker and audience, and punctures the illusion of the static text found in conceptions of academic literacy.

Moss extends this idea of literacy as a social process in African American churches by means of her textual analyses of sermons, artifacts, interviews, and other data gathered from her ethnographic study of four African American church communities. Moss spent five years collecting data from three churches in the Chicago area and one in Columbus, Ohio in order to demonstrate the cross-local nature of the literacy events she describes throughout the book. To the extent that Moss’ conception of literacy as social process is tied to cultural ideology, she must first lay out the complex belief system that undergirds the Black church and shapes participants’ beliefs about language use, behavior, and their roles within the community. For those unfamiliar with this community and its rituals, Moss provides extensive background knowledge of the historical, cultural, and at times, theological belief systems of the communities. For those already familiar with these communities, she provides provocative interpretations of these texts.

The bulk of the study focuses on three different ministers from three varying denominations who represent different preaching styles and composing practices: Reverend M, a “manuscript minister” from a United Church of Christ, who wrote out his sermons in their entirety; Doctor N, a “nonmanuscript minister” from a Baptist Church who rarely even used notes when he preached; and Reverend P, a “partial manuscript minister” from a Pentecostal Holiness Church who “wrote out approximately one fourth of his sermon” (10). Moss’s goal in selecting these varied preachers was to explore the relationship between written and oral texts within African American churches.

Moss’ analysis of the literacy events surrounding the sermon as a way to examine interaction between written and oral texts within the church is particularly interesting. Following Shirley Brice Heath, Moss defines literacy events as “any
action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print play a role” (146). For instance, Moss focuses on the phenomena of the church bulletin and offers a fascinating read of these artifacts that explores the relationship between oral and written texts to complete the text. Depending upon the church community, the bulletins list the order of service, church-related and non church-related announcements, prayer lists, calendars of events, names of church officials, spaces for sermon notes, and memory verses, Scripture readings, and responsive readings. Moss interprets these weekly bulletins as ways to disseminate information that is important to the church community. They also serve as markers of the ways in which reading, writing, and speaking interact in the church. Most of the information on the bulletins requires reading that is individual in nature; congregants usually read it alone before the service or use it to take notes about the sermon. In other words, these events do not take place in unison. However, there are prescribed literacy events that do engage the congregation as a whole, namely the responsive readings, scripture memory verses, and hymns which are read and/or performed in concert. For Moss, these events represent a shared knowledge within the community. Furthermore, the church bulletins demonstrate that “value is placed on reading, memorizing, and reciting . . . and also on community participation” within African American churches (41).

Moss builds upon this notion of shared knowledge, among other important concepts, in her third and fourth chapters, where she offers a more rigorous analysis of the transcripts of the sermons. Ministers enter a unique rhetorical situation in which they are both leaders and members of the community and must therefore rely upon several key strategies within the sermon to create, maintain, and negotiate a community identity: shifts in point of view, use of the familiar, codeswitching, shared knowledge, and dialogue, otherwise known as call and response. These rhetorical strategies work to blur the distinctions between preacher and congregation, creating spaces for the people to “enter the text and become part of the dialogue that constitutes the text” (81). In Chapter Four, Moss argues that the literacy events and traditions she identifies in the three church communities are not unique to these sites; instead, they exist across locations and point to a larger literacy tradition. To support her claim, she follows Rev. M to her home church in Ohio where he was preaching a week-long revival. Rev. M’s revival sermons also represent intertextuality, that is, the interweaving of song and the spoken and written word (127). Moss explains that this intertextuality is indicative of the cultural ideology of the community: “intertextuality is a key concept in understanding relations between texts (including conversational and written texts), between and among events, between events and cultural ideology” (128). Rev. M quotes songs within his sermons and sings to illustrate major concepts, as well as using songs at the end of the sermon as an extension of the sermon. According to Moss, this intertextuality works to link his sermons to African American history, creates space for the audience to enter and sometimes even take over the text, and blurs distinctions between the sacred and secular.

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Although her intent is to demonstrate that church literacy traditions are cross-locational and that these literacies help to create and maintain communities, I found Moss's analysis of Rev. M in a “new” community strained. She undercuts her claim when she describes the “new” community Rev. M enters. The host pastor of the Ohio church revival, a woman Moss calls Rev. S, was Rev. M’s protégé. She served as an intern at his Chicago church during her seminary years and moved on to be an associate pastor there. Although the Ohio church is smaller than the Chicago one in terms of membership and resources, Rev. S models her church after Rev. M’s. Also, Rev. M is no stranger to the congregation; he regularly preaches revival here, and the people anticipate his visits. I therefore question how “new” this community really is. While the opportunity to see him outside of his own four walls was useful, the argument could have been strengthened by providing another context or even looking briefly at a preacher not previously discussed.

Furthermore, Moss’s study glosses over the question of gender. She addresses it parenthetically in her first chapter: “Of course, I refer specifically to the men listed here, not ministers as men generically. A growing number of African-American churches are pastored by women. Most of the scholars I quote from directly regrettably use the male pronoun to refer to preachers” (24). While Moss does not claim the study of Black women preachers as an intellectual project, the fact that they are missing from the analysis is particularly odd considering that Moss’s own minister, Rev. S, is female. This problem may be indicative of the limitations of her methodology. Through ethnography, Moss offers us a panoramic view of the African American church and the people and places she observed, progressively narrowing the scope, presenting varying snapshots of particular churches, preachers, and sermons with each chapter; although she focuses and narrows the discussion on various sites, some aspects are blurred within the picture; others are missed entirely by the scope of the lens. For instance, we hear only voices of the audience as a whole (i.e., call and response during a sermon) and do not get individual reactions to the preachers. Moss claims that ministers are spokespersons and representatives of the community, but she does not interrogate how this may affect women in the congregation.

Ultimately, Moss’s work offers up an alternative model of a literate text. She rests her case in Chapter Five in which she outlines the major implications of her study for literacy learning and teaching. In her review of the major tenets of the literacy practices within African American churches, Moss exposes the disparities as well as the commonplaces between the academic literacy model of the classroom and literacies students bring into the classroom. Because of the ways in which the sermon blurs the boundaries between speakers/writers and audience through dialogue, shifts in point of view through first person singular and plural pronouns and collaboration through intertextuality, sermons function as community texts. According to Moss, a community text is one “where multiple participants must be present to ‘write’ in order for the text to exist” (138). A particularly provocative implication of the notion of the community text is how it complicates questions
about plagiarism and ownership of texts. As the preachers noted, the “sermon belongs to the moment” (143). As both process and product that is dependent upon audience-speaker relationships, the sermon becomes a new text each time. It cannot be duplicated. As such, the community “owns” the text.

This community text requires the reconfiguration of traditional conceptions of relationships between speakers, writers, and texts as well as the development of new terms to describe these relationships. Western conceptions of the rhetorical appeals become inadequate. Whereas logos, reason, is privileged and presented as a universal concept in Western traditions, the Black sermon, through its dependence on intertextuality, reconfigures what counts as logos. Moss argues that the sermon also calls into question the privileging of the essay-text model of literacy in the academy. Her study offers an alternative model that does not necessarily replace the dominant model but demonstrates that they are all models that work simultaneously. Students who have the sermon as their primary model of formal literacy bring it into the classroom and must negotiate between the two models.

Moss argues that this burden should not rest solely on students; educators must develop tools to help them navigate their way. The first step is the recognition of multiple literacies as effective, not deficient, literacies in the classroom. Then teachers can develop dynamic pedagogies that address students’ needs. Moss suggests that teachers use discourse analysis in the classroom as a way to discover both conflicts and common ground between students’ community literacies and academic literacy. In this approach, both teachers and students would bring in examples of formal discourse from their home communities to discover commonalities and sites of conflict. Recognizing that this approach is no easy task due to political and budgetary constraints on teacher-training, Moss ends her study by calling for more research.

I see myself as a member of Moss’s audience due to my personal experiences in church communities as well as my research interests in the rhetorical strategies of Black women preachers. As such, I found Moss’s study to be a refreshing, ground-breaking look at an important community that has been overlooked in rhetorical, composition, and literacy studies. Moss takes these communities seriously, analyzing their literacy traditions on their own terms. Through her writing style, especially the use of personal narrative, she demonstrates how her own membership in these communities has influenced her writing practices. Additionally, because of the broad audience she is addressing, which includes compositionists, literacy teachers, researchers, critical theorists, and the church community members themselves, Moss strikes an intricate balance between providing contextual information and textual analysis. Readers will benefit from the larger implications of her study, as she provides a useful framework for pedagogy development.

University Park, Pennsylvania
WORKS CITED


Reviewed by Kelly Lowe, Mount Union College

In WPA Circles, the question of how best to organize the administration of writing programs has not been widely debated. Many programs are the result of forceful personalities or historical accidents rather than conscious planning.

--Christine Hult, “Politics Redux: The Organization and Administration of Writing Programs”

Ten years ago Christine Hult’s comments were particularly apt. At that time, I was writing a dissertation which theorized a postmodern Writing Program Administration, and I began by arguing that there was little at the time that could be called Writing Program Administration Theory, citing Edward White’s book Developing Successful College Writing Programs as “the only book-length theory of writing program administration to date.” How things have changed. The past decade has seen tremendous growth in the scholarship of writing program administration. Books and edited collections by Joseph Janangelo and Kristine Hansen, Diana George, Linda Myers-Breslin, Irene Ward and William Carpenter, and Shirley

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Rose and Irwin Weiser have significantly deepened and broadened our discussion of what it means to administer a writing program.

One thing almost all of these books have done is to attempt to move WPA scholarship beyond the “here’s what we did at my school” genre, although in many ways, the ultimate argument for much WPA scholarship still seems to revolve around the simple fact that it works. Indeed, the only way to move beyond the “here’s what happened to me” argument is to work in a theoretical realm, which is what Shirley Rose and Irwin Weiser have encouraged their authors to do in the collection The Writing Program Administrator as Theorist. This text, which complements their previous volume, “continues to construct the figure of the WPA as agent by developing a description and characterization of the theoretical work of writing program administrators, suggesting a profile, if not a detailed portrait, of the WPA as theorist” (2).

The essays in this collection fall into two basic categories: theories of program and theories of personal. To wit: many of the essays deal with the complexities of writing program work within the larger cultural, social, and political institution of college/university/public life; these essays tend to look at theoretical structures on a programmatic level. For instance, essays examine how archival theory (Bishop), existential phenomenology (Hemmeter), or reflection theory (Popham, et al.) might (positively) affect the writing program as a part of a larger whole. The other essays deal with the writing program administrator-as-theorist. For instance, essays by Rita Malenczyk and Ruth Mirtz and Roxanne Cullen present cogent arguments about disparate theories WPAs might adopt to make their professional lives more bearable.

What makes this division even more interesting is that the essays in the first category (theorizing the program) deal with what, on the surface, might seem like easier targets for a theory of program administration: curricular design, T.A. training, assessment and outcomes planning, and the choosing (or not choosing) of textbooks. The essays in the second category, all of which are grounded in one theoretical position or another, revolve around the day-to-day issues of how to survive as a WPA: asking for money; keeping class sizes stable; working with/for deans, department chairs, parents, state legislators. But the subtext of all of the essays in this collection is the argument that WPAs need to fashion themselves as more than clerks and that they need to look upon their programs as more than something that merely services the larger interests of the institution.

Despite the fact that the book has two different kinds of essays, it does have a significant number of unifying ideas at play throughout; perhaps the most important and interesting are the ideological/political work of the WPA and/or the writing program and the WPAs’ need for theory in order to survive. These two central arguments are what should make this collection required reading for graduate students and WPAs, especially those at institutions with substantial TA training programs or graduate programs in administration.
The question of theory itself is taken up by many of the authors. Not only do WPAs need a theory (or theories), the essays argue; they also need to consider the nature of theory itself. For my money, the best discussion of the kind(s) of theory that WPAs need to develop or, alternately, the best way to consider theory comes from Shamoon et al., who write that “we need a definition of theory not as a unitary understanding or as the desired source for our practices, but as a flexible concept, one that embraces complexity and that responds analytically and critically to ongoing, real-world circumstances” (67). Those central ideas, that theory needs to be about the complexity of practice and that any theory about program administration is imbricated in the real world, are reflected in nearly all of the essays in this collection.

Rose and Weiser begin the collection by asking several specific questions about the theoretical nature of WPA work:

• How do WPAs develop theories about their programs?
• How do WPAs use theory to inform program planning and design?
• What is the role of theory and theorizing in the intellectual work of WPAs?
• How do WPAs develop their professional knowledge base?

The essays in the collection go about addressing these questions in a variety of ways: practically, theoretically, and, most interestingly, ideologically.

In many ways, Jeanne Gunner’s essay “Ideology, Theory, and the Genre of Writing Programs” sets the stage for the rest of the collection. Gunner’s provocative and challenging essay argues, “If writing programs are meaningful social structures and sites of meaning making—if they are more than a value-free housing of the first-year course—then they are ideological entities, and the writing program theorist is necessarily engaged in ideological work” (7). Gunner goes on to give the WPA/Writing Program a significant role in shaping the university’s relationship to language and culture, maintaining that the writing program needs to be looked at ideologically because it is “a social construct that helps establish and reproduce ideological values” (9).

Gunner’s argument is central to understanding the text because it establishes the point that in order to understand the role of the WPA and the cultural and ideological work of the writing program, one needs not only to understand a, theory, but to understand how theory works within a larger ideological structure.

That said, none of the other essays are as overtly ideological as Gunner’s; indeed, most of the other essays revolve on a problem-theory-solution axis. For instance, Susan Popham, Michael Neal, Ellen Schendel, and Brian Huot argue that reflection theory is an interesting way of complicating the writing program—particularly its role in GTA training. In the essay “Breaking Hierarchies: Using Re-
flective Practice to Re-Construct the role of the Writing Program Administrator,” they argue that “[a]s administrators, we use reflection to understand and assess our program and its growth and to evaluate our role in that program” (20). And while they never discuss the role that ideology might play in their program, it’s implicit in many of the decisions their writing program has made, for instance, the decision not to include an institutionally mandated student reflection in writing classes.

Related to the argument made by Popham, et al. is Tom Hemmeter’s fascinating suggestion that one way to define a writing program is as a “living entity” (29). Hemmeter claims that “writing programs exist to nourish the experimental qualities of writing, a perspective leading to the conclusion that writing program communities exist precisely in the living relationship programs embody” (30). This idea, familiar to those who have read cultural theory, makes sense in terms of program administration—to keep the program focused on the lived experience of the students. Hemmeter writes persuasively about “the relevance of engaging students in analyzing social structures, ideologies, and institutional pressures from the world outside academia, aspects of their lived experience in the world” (31). This notion, of course, is similar to deCerteau’s call to “bring scientific practices and languages back toward their native land, everyday life” (6). Again, Hemmeter’s argument does not overtly discuss ideology, but the very idea of working with students’ lived experiences is an ideological move.

The one essay in the book that really tries to turn program administration on its head is Joseph Janangelo’s “Writhing Across the Curriculum: Contemplating Auteurism and Creativity in Writing Program Direction.” In it, Janangelo argues that directing a writing program is akin to directing a film. Citing auteurist film theory, Janangelo makes a strong case that the work of a WPA is collaborative to a point, and yet there are many potential pitfalls in considering oneself “the director” of anything. In perhaps one of the most cogent statements on the tension between being both a program administrator and a theorist, Janangelo argues that “[a]uteurism shows WPAs that a project’s commercial component, however pervasive, can coexist with its creators’ artistic, intellectual, and political commitments” (148). Indeed, that’s a comforting thought for many.

Perhaps the only area where this collection disappoints is in its omission of straight-up management/administrative theory; indeed, it would seem fairly obvious to include, in a book on administrative theory, an essay that looked at systems management, strategic management, or operations management and how those theories might fit with/in a writing program. A few of the essays come close, and the Diane Kelly-Riley et al. essay touches on some ideas from organizational and network theory, but the book would have benefited from a look at the highly developed theories that scholars in business schools are working on. These theories, which touch on issues of marketing, management, administration, personnel, economics, and budgeting, can be very helpful to the WPA—especially the WPA who has to deal with those outside of her department, division, or school. The argument from strategic planning theory, for instance, that a good administrator
needs to understand “the way in which an organization allocates people and resources to organizational tasks” (Hill & Jones 223), with special attention to the distribution of decision-making authority, would be right at home in many of the essays in this collection.

Be that as it may, this is an incredibly valuable book. Current and future program administrators will benefit greatly from having it on their bookshelves or as required reading in their graduate seminars in program administration. Once again Rose and Weiser have done the WPA community a great service.

Alliance, Ohio

WORKS CITED


Reviewed by Mary Lamb, Georgia State University

English academics often blame television and new media for students’ literacy difficulties; indeed, composition studies itself has been seen—both from within and from without—as a way to offset the detrimental effect of television by offering print literacy and the incumbent critical thinking and analysis as a “social inoculation” against a mass media mentality (31). However, a growing body of scholarship on the rhetoric of new media offers a fertile field for exploring the complex relationship we all have with electronic media. Most notably, Kathleen Welch’s Electric Rhetoric: Classical Rhetoric, Oralism, and a New Literacy (1999) addresses both computers and television. Drawing on classical rhetorical theory,

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communication scholar Kathleen Hall Jamieson’s Eloquence in an Electronic Age (1988) explores how television affects rhetorical features in speechmaking read. Williams’s book indicates that we are beginning to pay well-deserved attention to how new media influence writing and how we might “engage students in print literacy more effectively and with less resistance and anxiety” (34).

Writing teachers’ privileging of print literacy over electronic media prevents us, Williams argues, from teaching students effectively. Composition scholars have traditionally examined the relationship between reading print texts and writing skills, but Williams extends this comparison to reading television. What he does is refreshing—he provides specific evidence about students’ literacy practices and attitudes within our broad cultural shift from print literacy to the secondary orality of electronic discourse. Notably, he resists merely offering techniques for using television’s content in traditional assignments that read programs as printed texts. Nor does his book simply suggest we study the “enemy” in order to mitigate its nefarious influence. Instead, his own enjoyment and consumption of television spurs his examination of “mass popular culture literacy skills and what articulations might exist with the writing and reading skills we have thought and theorized about so deeply” (6). Yet he remains committed to the value of print literacy, so in “Classroom Practice” sections following each chapter, Williams offers practical assignments that engage students’ televisual literacies in order to teach a facet of print literacy. Thus, Williams’s book successfully bridges the growing body of televisual rhetorical theory to the practical demands of the writing classroom.

The bulk of the book explains what Williams learned from his interviews with fifteen first-year composition students at a northeastern state university. His detailed discussion of students’ ways of watching in Chapter Two, “Ways of Watching: Learning from Students’ Print and Television Literacy Histories,” lays out the students’ viewing habits from which Williams extrapolates the rhetorical skills they bring to print literacy. Williams’s study is clearly limited (a fact which Williams carefully acknowledges) and pays scant attention to how students’ different subject positions shade their responses; nevertheless, his book is compelling in its attention to students’ voices and its eclectic argument that draws on film and television criticism, psychology, sociology, rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies—a welcome expansion of our field of inquiry.

In Williams’s argument, reading, or “consuming,” television is analogous to reading print texts, both of which produce certain attitudes about textual production. Each chapter describes the skills that students gain from television as a way to illustrate their expertise in this arena, even though they may lack the vocabulary to articulate their knowledge in traditional rhetorical terms. Writing teachers, he argues, should help students use this expertise to acquire rhetorical skills for print texts. However, rather than translate television’s rhetorical features to print in a simplistic way, Williams nuances his discussion by including how the two differ. Television viewing, for instance, is bound by time (length of programs), while print reading is bound by space (number of pages). Television reinforces “speed,
liveness, affect, and associative thinking,” while our writing courses value “recursiveness, reflection, detachment, and linearity” (152). To offset this change in the way students attend to texts, Williams argues, writing teachers must foreground these differences and offer specific strategies for developing the habits we value, habits “of reflection, of exploring interiors, of stepping back for analysis, of slowing down to let thoughts emerge and be refined” (147-48).

In Chapter Five, “Switching Channels: Authorship and Authority on Television and in Print,” Williams offers another useful distinction between visual and print literacies when he discusses students’ knowledge of televisival authorship against their own emerging sense of being an author, a topic that often gets blurred in our thinking about television’s influence. Students, he finds, do not feel confident about writing television scripts, only receiving the programs. Likewise, he distinguishes between writing for and writing like television. Undoubtedly, many writing teachers will recognize these characteristics in student writing—“impersonal detachment, as if through a camera lens” (114) and lack of details as if “readers are watching the program with them” (117). By contrast, printed work is valued for its ability to evoke ethos, or “signs of the logical workings of that single author’s mind” (122). Williams suggests using students’ skill at locating television’s commercial motives to help them develop the written ability to construct a motive or ethos in print texts. This chapter provides teachers with a more theorized understanding of rhetorical televisival and print qualities and offers useful ways to discuss these features with students. These observations are a few of many throughout the book that invite further thinking about not only how television influences students’ writing, but also how it changes the culture at large—our thinking patterns and the way we communicate.

The book’s final chapter, “Shimmering Literacies: Television’s Place in the Future of Teaching Writing,” highlights the pragmatism that has underpinned Williams’s project—that we can no longer afford to ignore the changes in print literacy wrought by television, computers, film, and other electronic media, “entrenched behind the ramparts of some romanticized view of essayistic print literacy” (176). Rather, Williams argues, those of us working in composition studies “should be in the forefront of exploring the evolving nature and interactions of print and electronic literacies” and deciding how to address such literacies in the classroom (176). If we do not, our field will quickly become one of the “marginalized, vestigial organs of the humanities” (175). Williams’s study specifies a way to prevent this uselessness by examining how students read television in order to change the types of texts we ask students to produce. “Our work should be concerned with the composition of texts. Technologies that let us choose to compose texts with print, image, and video will force us to consider how those choices affect the way we deliver a message or explore an idea” (176). To accomplish this, he advocates cultural studies as a common field in which communication and composition scholarship might “meet and collaborate” (184).
While he sympathizes with critical pedagogies and hopes students gain “more control over their lives in society” (186), some writing teachers interested in social change may not find in the book an explicit enough interrogation of the cultural and market forces shaping media production. However, this book succeeds not only by providing practical pedagogical strategies for addressing the current sea change in literacy, but also for advocating and inviting additional research into these questions. For example, I find myself questioning not only how to “translate” print, rhetorical, academic skills to students versed in televisual literacy, but also how the epistemological changes wrought by secondary orality affect knowledge claims, evidence, and style within academic writing. As I read, I also wondered how students’ viewings might be influenced by their gender, race, cultural and political leanings. In particular, since many have posited the “feminine” aspects of television, how does rhetorical knowledge of television vary within each of these subject positions? How might this variance (resistance?) affect the rhetorical knowledge we foster in the classroom? How does television’s favored narrative mode influence argument, political debate, and civic rhetoric? Williams closes by claiming, “We have an ethical obligation to practice and teach the communicative forms that are in the center of our culture, as well as the valuable forms that exist on the margin” (187), and his book succeeds by inviting us to examine more closely all the variations in these communication forms.

Atlanta, Georgia
ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Conference on Basic Writing (CBW) is pleased to announce the winners of its first annual AWARD FOR INNOVATION. Please join us in congratulating

San Francisco State University, “Literacy Unleashed—An Integrated Approach to Reading and Writing.” Application submitted by Professor Helen P. Gillotte-Tropp.

The University of Wyoming, “The Synergy Project: A Learning Community for ‘At-Risk’ and Basic Writing Students.” Application submitted by Professor Kelly Belanger.

The application materials were judged on specific criteria:

- Originality - the creativity and uniqueness of the innovation
- Portability - the extent to which the innovation lends itself to application in other institutions or contexts
- Results and Benefits - specific details, data, and observations derived from the innovation, focusing on specific educational benefits to students

The winning schools were presented with a plaque at the Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, in San Antonio. Winners were invited to give a brief presentation about their award-winning innovative program to SIG members.

For more information on the Conference on Basic Writing, please visit: http://www.asu.edu/clas/english/composition/cbw/.

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The Fourth Symposium on Second Language Writing
Sept. 30 – Oct. 2, 2004, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA

The theme for the 2004 Symposium is “Second Language Writing Instruction in Context(s): The Effects of Institutional Policies and Politics.” While the majority of work done in second language writing addresses instruction, the focus of much of this scholarship is on what happens in the classroom as
opposed to how the institutional contexts outside the classroom shape instructional practices. To help remedy this imbalance, this symposium will focus on institutional policies and politics and how they influence classroom practice. We refer here to policies on assessment, placement, credit, class size, course content, instructional practices, teacher preparation, and teacher support and to politics in terms of the relationships and interaction between second language writing professionals and their colleagues at the program, department, school, college, and university levels.

We seek proposals for 20-minute presentations that address how instructional policies and politics affect instructional practices. Each presentation should include (1) a description of a particular L2 writing instruction context, (2) an analysis of how institutional policies and politics shape the curriculum in this context, and (3) a discussion of implications for second language writing theory, research, instruction, assessment and/or administration as well as the professional development of second language writing specialists. The presentation may be theoretical (e.g., theorizing key issues, principles or mechanisms), historical (e.g., examining an historical development in the field or at a specific institutional context), empirical (e.g., reporting results of survey research, institutional case studies, critical discourse analysis of institutional discourses), or reflexive (e.g., reflecting on specific experience to generate insights into how instructional practices interact with institutional politics and policies). We also encourage other, innovative approaches. The presentation may be based on original data or a re-analysis of existing data in light of institutional policies and politics.

Special Event: Graduate Student Conference on Second Language Writing. This is a special event that will be held in conjunction with the Symposium. It provides opportunities for graduate students to present their research and scholarship on second language writing and receive feedback from their peers. Any topic related to second language writing or writing instruction is welcome. All presenters for this conference must be full-time graduate students.

Proposals must be received by May 15, 2004. For more information, please visit: http://symposium.jslw.org/2004/.

Tony Silva and Paul Kei Matsuda, Chairs

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Call for Papers: Rhetorical Activists and Activist Rhetoricians: How Rhetoric Contributes to Democracy

Seth Kahn (Department of English, West Chester University) and Jong-Hwa Lee (Department of Communication Studies, West Chester University) invite scholar/teacher-activists in any branch of rhetorical studies to contribute to the collection Rhetorical Activists and Activist Rhetoricians: How Rhetoric Contributes to Democracy. Rhetorical scholarship stems from the practice of democracy, civic engagement, and participation. But what exactly do we mean by those terms? We aim to open space for rhetorical scholars to reflect on their own professional work, i.e., to understand those tropes and relate them to their professional practices as teachers, scholars and activists. We would like contributors to address these types of questions:

How does the work that we do as rhetoricians contribute to democracy? How could it? How does our work make anything more democratic than it was before we did the work? How do we understand or define “democracy”? How does it enable our research, teaching, and service? What are our motives for engaging in democratic practices?

To maximize the number of participants and diverse points of view in the book, we are asking for short contributions (10-12 pages). We want to represent a wide array of political positions and presentational styles, as well as a range of activist experience and commitments. For example, we imagine some contributors narrating experiences in activist campaigns and explaining how those experiences frame teaching or research activities. Other contributors might describe current research projects and use this space to articulate the potential impacts the projects could have on democratic practice. Others might describe conflicts between political actions and institutional responsibilities, and discuss ways of working with/through those conflicts.

In broad terms, our goal is to share and juxtapose our reflections on the socio-political consequences of our work, especially in terms of democracy, civic engagement, and participation. In one sense, we see a conversation among rhetoricians who have been engaged in different struggles in which we share know-how and mistakes. In another sense, we see rhetoricians working through the problems and possibilities of being rhetorical activists, in hopes of prompting readers to make and/or follow through on their own commitments.

Please submit manuscripts by August 1, 2004. You can submit electronically (MS Word attachments) to skahn@wcupa.edu or jlee@wcupa.edu, or you can
send hard copies to Seth Kahn, Department of English, Main Hall, West Chester University of PA, West Chester, PA 19383. Queries are welcome.

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Summer Institute for Writing Center Directors and Professionals
The second annual Summer Institute for Writing Center Directors and Professionals will be held on the campus of Clark University in Worcester, MA, from July 11 to 16, 2004. Co-sponsored by Clark, Marquette University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Summer Institute offers new writing center directors (and established directors starting a new program or interested in new ideas) at all instructional levels the chance to spend a week discussing and learning about topics essential to writing center work. For more information, go to www.clarku.edu/writing.

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WPA 2004: Workshop, Assessment Institute, and Summer Conference
The Council of Writing Program Administrators invites you to three exciting events during July 11-18, 2004, at the University of Delaware: The Summer Workshop for new WPAs on July 11-15, 2004; the Assessment Institute on July 15th; and the Annual WPA Summer Conference July 15-18th.

Workshop for Writing Program Administrators (Limited to 25 participants).
This year’s workshop will take place at the beach community of Lewes, Delaware, at the University of Delaware’s Virden Center on the Hugh Sharp Campus for marine studies.

- Workshop Leaders: Kathleen Blake Yancey and Irwin (Bud) Weiser
- Fee of $795 until June 21; $845 after June 21. Fee includes all materials; housing July 11-14; and all but one meal, from dinner July 11 through lunch July 15.
- Early registration is strongly encouraged.

Assessment Institute (Limited to 25 participants). This one-day Assessment Institute will take place at Clayton Hall on the main campus of the University of Delaware in Newark, DE, just prior to the opening of the 2004 annual conference. (Please note: The Institute overlaps with the WPA Workshop, scheduled from July 11-15, 2004).
• Institute Leaders: Susanmarie Harrington, Marlene Miner, and Dan Royer
• Fee of $140 until June 21; $165 after June 21. Fee includes all materials as well as lunch and an afternoon snack.
• Early registration is encouraged.

Summer Conference for Writing Program Administrators.
WPA 2004, Re-Envisioning Writing Program Administration: Roles, Knowledge, Authority
This year’s conference will take place at Clayton Hall on the main campus of the University of Delaware.

• Fee includes breakfast July 16,17,and 18; lunch July 16 and 17; banquet dinner July 17; receptions July 15,16,and 17; morning and afternoon breaks on July 16 and 17. Lodging is separate. (Please note: Residence hall apartments at affordable prices will be available. See complete information on conference Web Site.)


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The Writing Center Journal is an official publication of the International Writing Centers Association, which is an Affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English. WCJ is published twice a year, in the fall/winter and spring/summer.

The Writing Center Journal’s primary purpose is to publish articles, reviews, and announcements of interest to writing center personnel. We therefore invite manuscripts that explore issues or theories related to writing center dynamics or administration. We are especially interested in theoretical articles and in reports of research related to or conducted in writing centers. In addition to administrators and practitioners from college and university writing centers, we encourage directors of high school and middle school writing centers to submit manuscripts. The Writing Center Journal also welcomes letters responding to WCJ articles and reviews.

Email your manuscript as an attached Microsoft Word file to both nlerner@mit.edu and eboquet@mail.fairfield.edu. If you don’t have access to Word, send your manuscript as an RTF file. Your email note acts as a cover
letter; thus, please make reference to the title of your manuscript and supply your complete contact information (mailing address, phone, email, fax).

All manuscripts are potentially sent out for blind review. Thus, it is essential that you remove all identifying information in headers, footers, body of the text and references. Also, WCJ manuscripts should conform to the specifications described in the current Modern Language Association (MLA) style guide. Please refer to Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 6th ed. New York: MLA, 2003. For instruction on preparing manuscripts in MLA format, see Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing. 2nd ed. New York: MLA, 1992.

Details regarding manuscript preparation and the review/revision process can be found on the journal’s web site: http://www.writing.ku.edu/wcj/index.html

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Young Scholars in Writing: Undergraduate Research in Writing and Rhetoric seeks theory-driven and/or research-based submissions from undergraduates on the following topics: writing, rhetoric, composition, professional writing, technical writing, business writing, discourse analysis, writing technologies, peer tutoring in writing, writing process, writing in the disciplines, and related topics. Submissions to this refereed journal should be between 8 and 20 pages, in MLA format, and should be accompanied by a professor’s note that the essay was written by the student. Please send three copies of manuscript without author’s name on manuscript. Please include author’s name, address, affiliation, email address, and phone number on separate title page. Send inquiries and submissions to Candace Spigelman and Laurie Grobman, Penn State University, Berks-Lehigh Valley College, P.O. Box 7009, Tulpehocken Road, Reading, PA 19610-6009. E-mail inquiries to cxs11@psu.edu or leg8@psu.edu.