Introduction
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GROWING PAINS: THE WRITING MAJOR IN COMPOSITION AND RHETORIC

In the fall of 2005, as the result of various local factors, we called ourselves together to consider reshaping the writing concentrations available for students within the English degree. Our “we” at Eastern Michigan University is happily broad; depending on how we count, those of us invested in writing studies number between eleven and eighteen. (Seven of us are most closely aligned with composition and/or rhetoric; four with technical communication; another four with English education, although three of those have extensive background in composition and rhetoric; and another three in journalism and public relations. Additionally, four creative writers work within our department.) The expertise on which we could draw when considering curriculum issues is concomitantly rich. Our curriculum redesign effort was prompted by a multitude of context-specific and external factors, including our:

- Awareness that, despite emphases in professional writing and technical communication, the disciplinary traditions and research practices of composition and rhetoric remained underemphasized for students;
- Growing understanding that there existed, between first-year composition and master’s level courses in composition and rhetoric, a body of students who those of us with the closest ties to composition and rhetoric wanted to teach and didn’t have access to;
- Collective sense of the myriad backgrounds and specialties we had as a group of faculty that could lead to a dizzying array of thoughtful, exciting possibilities for courses not yet dreamed up;
- Attendance at Kathleen Blake Yancey’s 2004 “Made Not Only in Words” keynote address to the CCCC.

Many others across the country have been thinking and working along similar lines, as is demonstrated by the numerous responses we received to our query about writing majors on the WPA-L that fall, as well as the volume

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of responses that came in when we posted our call for this special issue of Composition Studies. Over the next year, the evolving drafts of the pieces included here challenged our own thinking about our major, and we revised and rethought various iterations of a writing major curriculum. We continue to mull over possible curricular changes and their effects in our particular institutional context.

In her keynote address at CCCC in 2004, Kathleen Blake Yancey noted the growth in Composition and Rhetoric graduate programs, the increasingly theoretically grounded first-year composition programs, and the lack of courses in between. The “in-between”—the space for writing majors—is fertile ground for disciplinary expansion and redefinition, and the authors whose work appears in this special issue address various aspects of that territory. This special issue functions both as a record of “where we are” as a discipline right now in our development of writing majors and also offers various cautionary tales, frames from which to consider developing majors, and possibilities for the future.

There is compelling evidence that the number of writing majors at universities across the country has grown. In 1989, for example, Donald Stewart found that only 38% of the departments he surveyed had options for students to specialize in an area other than literature (in Chapman, Harris, and Hult 421). In their own later (and wider) survey in the fall of 1992, Chapman, Harris, and Hult discovered that 70% of the four-year universities reported that they offered writing concentrations of various kinds (422). Most recently, the NCTE Committee on the Major in Rhetoric and Composition has compiled data on 45 majors in writing from across the country (see http://www.ncte.org/cccc/gov/committees/majorrhetcomp). The information on this list, while not complete, offers a useful starting point for considering what a writing major “looks” like on paper, across the country, at various institutions.

This special issue offers another lens into programs, one different from the kinds of representations available through catalog descriptions and lists of courses. Here, the authors have not shied away from the local particularities of majors, programs, and departments; in addition, the authors take up various ethical, disciplinary, and cultural issues to consider as they arise with the development of the writing major. The articles lend insights from both contextualized, local experiences and from national perspectives. Themes of place, of steady curricular work over time that often goes unnoticed, of unexpected gifts and unanticipated crises, of timing and advocacy—these run through much of the work here. Since these articles developed independently of each other, the strength of these common themes is especially intriguing.

Anthony Scott’s “The Cart, the Horse, and the Road They are Driving Down: Thinking Ecologically About a New Writing Major” opens this issue by providing particular ways to think carefully about how writing majors function
as a space for text "circulation" and curriculum. He cautions us to learn from our legacy of relationships based on first-year writing as a site for teaching and administration as we develop writing majors.

In "Re-writing the Humanities: The Writing Major’s Effect Upon Undergraduate Studies in English Departments," Dominic Delli Carpini offers a context-specific look at how a writing major affects other aspects of undergraduate work in sometimes unexpected ways. Based on surveys of students and faculty, Delli Carpini articulates the ways in which undergraduate students in rhetoric courses use their growing understandings of rhetorical studies to enhance their work in other humanities courses.

Providing specific cautions about how writing majors must be responsive to local exigencies, Hill Taylor’s “Black Spaces: Examining the Writing Major at an Urban HBCU” describes the ways in which writing major courses can investigate and interrogate aspects of the field of composition from site-specific sensitivities. His work urges us to consider how particular visions of “the” writing major inevitably privilege particular versions of what that major is and should be.

Timothy Peeples, Paula Rosinski, and Michael Strickland use two complementary frames—that of chronos/kairos, and that of strategy/tactic—to uncover how key moments in their professional writing and rhetoric concentration led to significant changes and advances. In “Chronos, Kairos, Strategies and Tactics: The Case of Constructing Elon University’s Professional Writing and Rhetoric Concentration,” Peeples, Rosinski, and Strickland examine how their program developed through particular occurrences and because of particular conversations and events, some of which were unanticipated.

Lastly, we’re brought again to thinking more broadly about the role of a writing major as an act of disciplinary power through Rebecca Moore Howard’s “Curricular Activism: The Writing Major as Counterdiscourse.” Moore Howard posits that the writing major can change on-campus (and larger cultural) understandings of what writing “is” and “can do” far more than first-year writing programs or WAC initiatives.

Interwoven throughout these articles are brief “Reflections” and “Projections.” In our initial call, we solicited short depictions of what others have learned or done within the curricular space of writing majors, as well as short statements of possibilities for future development. Randall McClure’s “Projecting the Shape of the Writing Major” outlines the various factors that need to be considered as writing majors are developed; Jennifer Clary-Lemon’s “Hot Arctic: Writing Majors as New Sites for New Hires” acknowledges the attractiveness of the writing major to job candidates in composition and rhetoric; Spencer Schaffner’s “Grounding the Writing Major in the Socio-Graphemic Approach” offers a vision of a writing major where students become “spe-
cialists in the study of written language, rhetoric, writing technologies, and image/text semiotics”; Glenn Newman offers a student’s perspective on how a major brings visibility to the profession in “Concocting a Writing Major: A Recipe for Success”; and Kelly Lowe posits a localized account of what can go wrong in “Against the Writing Major.” Additionally, a cluster of three reflections (Thomas Peele’s “What do we Mean by ‘Writing’?”; Linda Shamoon and Celest Martin’s “Which Part of the Elephant is This?: Questioning Creative Non-Fiction in the Writing Major”; and Beth Taylor’s “On Brown University’s New Non-Fiction Writing Program—A ‘Focus’ Within the English Concentration”) all highlight the tensions, limits, and possibilities surrounding the definition of what “writing studies” is and who gets to claim it.

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RE-WRITING THE HUMANITIES:  
THE WRITING MAJOR’S EFFECT UPON UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES IN ENGLISH DEPARTMENTS

Calls for Composition Studies to move beyond the “universal requirement” of first-year writing,¹ and toward “a sequenced curriculum of courses that introduce students to discipline-specific principles and practices” (Crowley 9) have been partially realized by the growing number of writing majors. But only partially. Public descriptions of these programs have traditionally focused on developing writing techniques that are useful in a wide variety of careers, rather than on developing the “discipline-specific principles and practices” of our field. As such, less attention has been paid to the ways that this emerging group of majors might—and has indeed begun to—change our disciplinary relationships with English and humanities programs, where (despite the secession of many) most programs still reside.²

I will first provide a brief look at the ways that public representations of undergraduate writing majors have grown beyond claims to production or profession and toward wider definitions of “writing studies.” I will then draw upon the example of the Professional Writing major at York College of Pennsylvania to illustrate how this natural, largely student-driven evolution has begun to carve out a new disciplinary status for writing majors. A funny thing happened on the way to our (rhetorical) forum. As we prepared students for writing professions, they also became interested in the back story, in our shoptalk—i.e., in the scholarly and theoretical bases of our discipline. This interest was not limited to students in the major itself; rather, it included students majoring in other areas of the liberal arts. Our experiences, then, illustrate the potential that writing majors have to influence the disciplines with which we share institutional homes and to introduce undergraduate students to areas of research that, until recently, were reserved for graduate studies.³

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WHAT IS A WRITING MAJOR?

The undergraduate writing major has no single shape; it is, rather, an amorphous and still-developing construction that has varied missions, purposes, and course requirements. A brief survey of the public presentations of various programs reveals this diversity. Perhaps the most interesting way to categorize the descriptions and development of writing majors is upon a continuum moving from praxis to gnosis. That continuum is evident not only across program descriptions (i.e., with some focusing upon one or the other), but within the rich—and sometimes schizophrenic—representations of these programs. In most cases, the practical, career-oriented facets of the programs get center stage, speaking to the difficult question that has increasingly plagued English studies and other liberal arts programs as the demographic of college students has shifted dramatically toward career-based educational goals: "what will you do with that major?" (see figure 1). But unlike other technical or pre-professional programs such as Business, Nursing, or Computer Science, writing program descriptions migrate into areas like cultural studies, analysis, theory, and other forms of gnosis—often framed as a corrective or apologia to the impression that our programs are based in vulgar careerism (see figure 2). Other programs (including our own at York College; see appendix 1 for program details) explicitly keep one foot in each world, showing how the liberal arts and practical focuses can co-exist (see figure 3).

It would, of course, be shortsighted not to acknowledge the role of power in this evolution. Our major—and majors nationally—have attracted many talented students who came to the program with a rich mixture of affection for writing (and the liberal arts more generally) and a desire for career and personal rewards. Had the major not gained status by numbers (we became, in just our third year of existence, the largest major in an interdisciplinary department that includes Literary Studies, Secondary Education English, Philosophy, Film Studies, and Foreign Languages), and by its "fit" within an institution that recognizes the need to provide pre-professional training as well as liberal education, we would not have gained a place at the table. After all, when "writing programs" consist only of first-year writing courses and upper division courses that support other majors, their role is still largely seen as that of service.

Writing programs have indeed spent a good deal of time, as demonstrated by the descriptions in figures 2 and 3 above, negotiating between the Scylla of expendability faced by the liberal arts and the Charybdis of a vulgarized professional instrumentality. But there are many reasons why offering profession-based outcomes, while still staking a claim to geographies within liberal education, is more than just a compromise position. The idea of
a "writing studies" major, nomenclature that has gained an increasing amount of caché in our organization's conversations, asks students to go beyond the imitation of already-finished professional discourses, and to examine the social constructions placed upon them by their occupational roles. Fortunately, as we learned in the early years of our writing program, student writers bring with them a native desire to consider the larger human functions of writing. It is they who have driven us to back to our disciplinary roots, forcing us to consider the place of undergraduate writing instruction within other human-istic pursuits.

**BEYOND WRITING IN THE PROFESSIONS TO WRITING AS A DISCIPLINE**

Though originally conceived and marketed as a pre-professional program, the four year-old writing major at York College has begun to assert itself as a site of humanistic inquiry as well as a site of career development. This change in perception has actually—and not surprisingly—been slower among our departmental colleagues than among the students, who have subtly (but firmly) asked that we make room for them in the scholarship of our discipline. By contrast, faculty colleagues within other areas of our English and Humanities Department continue to articulate concerns. One faculty member notes that the Professional Writing major has "taken students away from Literary Studies enrollments and separated our experiences," worrying that "we may well have to face the question of the emergence of a separate Professional Writing department at some future date." This same faculty member reported no effect upon the study of literature in his classes, a claim that is at odds with student perceptions noted below. Another faculty member noted that "I'm a little worried, in general, about the erosion of literary studies programs by the far more marketable and 'useful' field of professional writing." She went on to suggest that "our department is a good example of this, insofar as the PW program seems much fresher and better organized and more theoretically sophisticated than the Literary Studies major." Many of the faculty responses acknowledged that the "career focus" of the writing major was a positive draw, but at the same time something about which they felt "ambivalent."

When faculty members across the disciplines of our hybrid department do see value in the major, they tend to focus upon the potential for the major toward "professionalizing" liberal arts students. One notes a sense that "the PW major definitely professionalizes writing students more than, in my experience as an undergraduate, English majors typically are. They seem to be more career-focused, with a broader sense of the usefulness of the English major." But there are concerns as well; one Literary Studies professor captured this cross-current well: "I think these students see themselves as humanities..."
**The Practical Focus:**

Many writing majors are marketed through a focus on the major's practical results, including the following:

- career opportunities
- opportunities for experiential learning
- marketable skills in technology
- writing "skills" provided by the major
- writing techniques applicable to a wide variety of practical genres (that is, the study of genre as a means of production, not merely consumption or analysis)

**Figure 1: The Practical Focus**
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Program / Excerpts of Program Descriptions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Georgia Southern:</strong> Professional &amp; Technical Writing involves the kinds of writing done in business and industry. . . . The Occupational Outlook Handbook states that the demand for professional and technical writers will increase steadily through at least 2008.</td>
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<td><strong>Eastern Michigan:</strong> The English Department at Eastern Michigan University offers four options for bachelor's degrees that lead to careers in writing.</td>
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<td><strong>Purdue University:</strong> Professional Writing is housed in the Department of English and is noted for cultivating expertise in writing for the digital workplace. . . . Students have numerous opportunities for internships and coursework in these subjects and gain important experience for the job market and advanced degrees.</td>
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<td><strong>University of Hartford:</strong> Professional and technical writers work in almost every discipline: software and computer industries, business, government, research, and non-profit organizations. These writers are in demand to make complex information available for experts and non-experts in any given field.</td>
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<td><strong>Kutztown University:</strong> Professional writing majors at Kutztown study a range of courses that includes magazine writing, journalism, copy and line editing, and writing for the workplace. These courses and others form a foundation upon which students can tailor their degrees to suit their individual career aspirations.</td>
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<td><strong>Millikin University:</strong> Millikin's writing major emphasizes experiences in a variety of writing contexts including journalism, professional writing, academic writing, literary writing, editing, publishing, and personal creativity. By learning to shift between these multiple contexts, Millikin's writing majors are prepared for a wide range of professional and lifelong writing, editing and publishing opportunities.</td>
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<td><strong>Oral Roberts:</strong> From courses like advanced grammar and technical writing to the off-campus internships that give the students hands-on experience in the field of technical communication, this major prepares students for a successful career.</td>
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<td><strong>University of Florida:</strong> In our current information-rich economy, an unprecedented demand now exists for college graduates with excellent communication skills. The Advanced Writing Model provides students with extensive preparation for the variety of writing tasks required of professionals in business, law, government, and administration, as well as of graduate students and educators in all disciplines.</td>
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<td><strong>Michigan State:</strong> The major prepares students for careers in professional editing and publishing, technical writing, information development, and web authoring. It also prepares students for graduate work in rhetoric, writing, technical writing, the teaching of writing, and the study of culture. This writing degree program emphasizes the organizational, disciplinary, and cultural contexts for writing.</td>
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<td><strong>University of New Mexico:</strong> The Professional Writing concentration is for those students interested in careers as technical and professional writers and editors. Students in this concentration learn and practice skills in editing, publishing, website development, technical writing, documentation, and proposal writing, among others.</td>
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**The Liberal Arts Focus:**

A growing number of writing majors have stated objectives closer to the more traditional Liberal Arts values expected in English and other humanities-based programs, including such stated outcomes and features as:

- The ability to analyze discourse and read texts critically (though often explicitly connected with production of professional texts)
- Attention to the central role of aesthetics and creativity
- Attention to the interdisciplinarity of knowledge
- A focus upon cultural studies
- Studies of rhetorical traditions

**Figure 2: The Liberal Arts Focus**
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<th>Program / Excerpts of Program Descriptions</th>
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<td>• <strong>Eastern Oregon University:</strong> The Bachelor of Arts in English with a discourse studies concentration is designed to help student recognize, analyze, and apply all facets of the writing and reading processes. In order to assist students in engaging, interpreting, and evaluating texts in a variety of genres and modes, courses are designed to help students understand the integration and interplay of language and its variety of expressions. Students discover the overlapping concerns of literary, argumentative, expository, and imaginative writing, and learn to recognize the common links language shares with cultural discourse and diversity. The degree nurtures an appreciation for the production of written and electronic language, with a focus on rhetorical conventions, variety, and the bond the written word shares with oral language.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Indiana Wesleyan:</strong> The liberal arts major in writing is designed to prepare students to become outstanding communicators with a high level of proficiency in the use of the written word. The major stresses both the artistic joy of composition and the practical application of writing skills to communication problems in everyday life.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Ithaca College:</strong> Because writing is, of course, the expression and analysis of something beyond itself, you will also take 18 to 21 credits in an outside field of your choosing—maybe politics or sociology if you're thinking of a career in journalism, or English literature if you think you could write the next great American novel.</td>
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| • **St. John Fisher:** Writing majors have the opportunity to become writers in the fullest sense of the word through this focused program in professional writing. . . . A student who chooses the writing concentration moves through a focused program in writing toward these goals:  
  - Enhanced ability as a critical reader and writer, able to make, express, and justify reasoned discriminations;  
  - A thorough understanding of the writing process, in both its cognitive and practical dimensions;  
  - Knowledge of various rhetorical traditions and their links to their cultural contexts  
  - Increased versatility as a writer able to analyze the context for writing and respond to it effectively through multiple strategies and voices. |
| • **Waynesburg College:** The Waynesburg College professional writing degree prepares graduates to use the power and beauty of words to enhance their careers and to express their ideas with clarity, strength and grace. |
Hybrid Descriptions:

Many program descriptions attempt to blend a Humanities-based, rhetorical tradition with the goals of a pre-professional major.

These descriptions, on one hand, illustrate praxis:

- The ability to demonstrate technical editing skills in all work
- The ability to incorporate appropriate visual elements and design in written documents and oral presentations
- The ability to work in appropriate media
- The ability to acquire, evaluate, manage, and use information

And on the other hand, the descriptions reflect more traditional humanities-based approaches to writing studies:

- Understanding of the intersection of technology, information, and knowledge
- Communicating, both orally and in writing, across audiences and cultures
- Addressing issues of ethics in technical communication
- Gaining an awareness of the global nature of technical communication—both culturally and economically
• **SUNY Courtland:** A Professional Writing degree gives students the chance to have important career-building learning experiences within the context of a well-rounded liberal arts education. In consultation with faculty, students create a professional writing portfolio to show to prospective employers. College graduates who are confident, well-trained communicators have an edge over their peers in the job market.

• **Utah State:** The undergraduate Professional and Technical Writing option prepares writers competent in a range of genres from technical to creative writing. Our program provides students with two components: first, a theoretical foundation in rhetoric so that they can assess any writing situation and adapt their writing to the context as audience-aware, self-aware, self-confident writers; and, second, writing practice in a variety of contexts using the most up-to-date tools of technology so that they know both how to write and why they are writing, thus preparing them for the ever-changing job markets of the twenty-first century. An important component of the program is to help students become humanists with ethical standards in various professional contexts.

As we designed our own Professional and Technical Writing option, we decided to adopt an Aristotelian framework, wherein the interpretation and production of texts are integrally related activities. Students in the Professional and Technical Writing option take a rhetorical approach to the science and technology of professional communication in all its many forms. They acquire a foundation of knowledge about rhetorical theory, reading theory, and linguistics before taking courses that focus on particular types of writing. While most of its graduates enter the workforce as technical writers, the program defines professional and technical writing broadly enough to allow students to supplement their training in technical communication with courses in the writing of poetry, fiction, drama, or nonfiction essays.

• **University of Pittsburgh:** The English major at Pitt is responsive to many of the traditional goals of a liberal arts education: it seeks, that is, to develop a broad critical and historical understanding of influential cultural traditions and to foster a range of reading and writing strategies as well as skills of critical analysis. It prepares students fairly directly for careers in teaching or writing. But the skills and knowledge it imparts are widely useful in numerous business and professional settings.

• **Drake University:** Unlike traditional English department curricula, which tend to be organized chronologically (literary history or periodization), generically (literary modes, like comedy or tragedy; or types, like drama, novel, and poetry), or by activity (critical reading OR creative writing), we have shifted our focus from a study of texts as containers of meaning (nuts to crack or puzzles to solve) to a study of the critical thinking process by which writers and readers activate meaning through language."
students when in fact they shy away from the more ambiguous and less product-driven aspects of the humanities education." Still another faculty member, a professor of philosophy, notes that to date "there has been too little overlap between the writing/rhetoric courses and the philosophy courses," while noting that "my advising [of philosophy majors] has changed and I think I am more aware of career paths for students in the humanities by virtue of seeing the kinds of internships and careers professional writing majors are undertaking." Overall, there remains a persistent sense that Professional Writing students are not fully engaged with the "traditional humanities"—i.e., traditional as defined by post-World War II departments that overwrote rhetorical studies—while also acknowledging, however grudgingly, its positive effects on career preparation or academic "skills." For example, one colleague in Philosophy, while asserting that "it's not clear to me that the major has altered our understanding of what it means to be a major in English or humanities," did acknowledge that philosophy students "probably pay more attention to rhetorical issues, especially when studying popular culture, film, and advertising" as a result of the writing major. Another faculty member in Philosophy notes that "students appear more capable of reading primary religious texts and separating style from content as well as demonstrating the ability to see how style informs content and/or opens up the possibilities of a surplus of meaning in primary religious texts" and now "recognize how important writing is in the workplace and how it is exactly those skills that the study of the liberal arts can develop."

Conversely, students—likely because they have less concern over disciplinary turf—find less reason to worry about writing studies eroding the "humanistic" approach to education from which our discipline has been marginalized. While students are often drawn to the career options offered by the program, once there, they have demonstrated a deep interest in the humanistic pursuits afforded by the disciplines of rhetoric and composition. To illustrate the ways that students have redefined our major’s focus, I will examine two related phenomena: the ways that the writing major has begun to influence the literary studies and philosophy majors, and in turn, the ways that our professional writing and secondary education majors have melded their career focus with the goals of inquiry and scholarship valued within a liberal arts department. In each case, this evolution has been quite natural, a synergistic by-product of our students occupying the same rhetorical and physical topoi (i.e., places)." The Writing Major’s Impact upon Literary Studies and Philosophy

Though faculty members in the humanities demonstrate mixed feelings about the writing major, students are markedly less conflicted, reporting
that their research within courses across the humanities has benefited by their wider understanding of composing processes and rhetorical traditions. Students, interestingly, attributed these changes not only to courses offered as part of the writing major, but also to the faculty members whose own areas of training and research include rhetoric and composition. One Literary Studies major wrote, “though it was not in a writing course that I was inspired, it was certainly a professor of writing who has inspired me, extracting my talents and encouraging me to pursue graduate school and eventually a career in literature.” Another student noted that “as a Literary Studies major, my writing classes have allowed me to map the arguments of theoretical and philosophical texts.” More specifically, the return of rhetoric to the undergraduate experience—both through specific courses and through faculty and majors whose research interests lie there—has enriched the array of topics which students research and upon which they write. For example, students in my own early modern literature courses have used their understanding of rhetorical traditions to re-think their approach to texts: one student wrote on the ways in which Mark Antony’s and Brutus’s funeral orations in Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, taken together, enact Quintilian’s vision of the “good man speaking well”; another wrote about Cicero, a relatively minor character in that play, illustrating how his oratory powers made him a significant danger to the conspirators and how his statements about “construing” meaning were based on sophistic ideas; and a third created a “webquest” that he could use in his future secondary school classes, which walked students through rhetorical principles used to elucidate a Shakespearean text. In each case, rather than seeing rhetoric and literature as separate categories, students were able to re-situate literature within a rhetorical tradition (where it resides in classical rhetoric). Another student applied her learning from our Advanced Composition class to her work on Milton:

Thanks to the careful study of word choice, word order, and grammar in my Advanced Composition class, I feel I have a deeper understanding and appreciation of rhetoric. I recently put this understanding to use when reading John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. His use of grammar and syntax is amazing—the reader falls in love with Satan, because he can convince you that his ideas are valid. The individual sentence and its components have become very important to me as a reader and a future teacher. There is importance in each mark of punctuation and each word—and when these are understood, the reader can find a richer value in the text. . . . It instilled in me a greater sense of love for writing and literature, and helped me to understand both better.
But students’ use of rhetorical principles goes beyond analysis; because they have experience as reflective producers of writing, they see authorship less as the result of a sacred muse and more as a craft that they themselves use. As one student noted, “without a doubt, [the writing courses] have influenced the way in which I write and the way I read any literature. For instance, if I’m reading and I see that the author has used a dash, I can denote different meanings. It’s almost as if having studied the formula for writing, I can translate it into all facets of reading, writing, and teaching.” Another noted that “the study of writing has furthered my understanding of literature because I am more able to look at a piece and, by understanding more about how the author chose to put the words together, get so much more meaning out of those words.”

An understanding of rhetorical traditions has also had a positive influence upon literature and philosophy students. One student, enacting the relationship between literary and rhetorical theory advocated by John Schilb (in Between the Lines: Relating Composition Theory and Literary Theory), wrote:

The biggest influence the study of rhetoric has had on my research is in any of my writings on Derrida. One can’t write about Derrida unless one realizes the purchase his text has on a continued commitment by the reader to analyze both etymological roots and rhetorical movements. I also believe this to be true whenever I read Žižek. Žižek’s approach to Lacan and Hegel is totally unique; the reader must be able to pay close attention to the way he reads certain texts and the way he is forming his argument.

A Philosophy student also discussed the influence of rhetorical studies upon his work, noting that:

As a Philosophy major, rhetorical theory instilled a greater awareness as to the relationship between philosophy and the rhetorical traditions over the course of history. . . . A philosopher will soon recognize that rhetorical theory enlivens philosophical inquiry as well. Instead of reading Locke or Descartes as merely philosophical, one can read them influencing other elements of society. Conversely, many authors unknown to philosophy majors have an enormous impact on social discourse and should be studied for their many influences.
While there are signs that the existence of our writing major has widened students' understanding of humanistic inquiry (as illustrated above), there are also signs that Professional Writing and English Education majors have benefited by the merging of the liberal arts and profession-based goals within our humanities-based department. Since Professional Writing majors in our program are required to complete a number of literature and humanities courses—and because they are housed in a department with other humanities majors—their experiences illustrate how the liberal arts context guards against a narrow, utilitarian view of language. One professional writing major tied changes in his reading habits to his coursework in rhetoric in ways that belie the sense that Professional Writing students have a limited understanding of writing's place in humanistic traditions:

Much has changed in my attitude, especially now that I have taken rhetorical theory. After reading how philosophers, teachers, and orators of the past and present have discussed rhetoric, I've gained a better understanding of its purposes and importance in life. Rhetoric is about using language to communicate effectively, and it really does have a long, rich tradition of being tied to the search for truth. Moreover, rhetoric transcends disciplinary boundaries. Film, science, law, and every other field of study must use techniques of rhetoric to send a message, persuade people, and reach a desired audience.

Similarly, another Professional Writing major found connections between her study of writing and other humanistic traditions: "In all of my other courses, I usually find some sort of application for my writing. Literature offers examples of various writing styles and plot developments to compare to my own. I have taken a Human Nature philosophy course and am currently taking a biology course and both offer unique concepts which could serve as fodder for fictional stories and nonfiction." In her research, this student brought together her studies of Quintilian in Rhetorical Theory and her study of composition pedagogy in our Teaching and Tutoring Writing course to write a paper on "the theory behind teaching writing through discourse analysis." In this way, the writing major supplied an architectonic for her studies, allowing her to cross-reference the work done across the liberal arts and sciences.
Still another Professional Writing major, a peer tutor in our writing center, discussed ways that her training in rhetoric has helped her to tutor others who are writing about literature—suggesting potential influences upon the pedagogy of “English teachers”:

They come to me seeking help with rhetorical analyses, and although they can dissect and summarize the literature they’re analyzing and then identify passages that contain rhetorical devices, they often show little to no other understanding of rhetoric. I ask students to identify what rhetorical devices are at work—ethos, pathos, and logos. But I also ask them to explain how and why these rhetorical devices are useful to the author. I think this is key, and conveying this idea to my peers has strengthened my own understanding of rhetoric.

Rather than viewing her education as narrow and career-driven—as some of our faculty colleagues have suggested—she describes the experience as “well-rounded . . . especially in the various genres and styles of writing.” She describes her education in terms that are clearly markers of a liberal education:

Professor Walters [a Professional Writing faculty member] often says “Writing is thinking,” and I agree. Writing goes far beyond sentences and grammar. It has to do with ideas and curiosities. It’s an attempt to understand our world—and ourselves. Writers aren’t just writers; we’re also observers. We make sense of things we don’t understand and make senseless the things we think we do understand. It’s not just a career or a hobby or a course of study, but a way of seeing the world.

It is hard to imagine a more eloquent description of the humanistic tradition—this from a professional writing major.

English Education, too, has benefited from the rich mixture of experiences with a writing program that is housed within a humanities-based context—and by interactions with writing majors who have developed an interest in writing pedagogy. The post-World War II history of educating “English teachers” for our secondary schools has, after all, been no less career-driven or pre-professional than narrowly-defined writing majors; it has largely been about learning the technologies of literary criticism and the strictures of standardized written English—emphases only exacerbated by the culture of quantifiable, standardized-test based assessment. Though more recent literary theories
have filtered, albeit slowly, into secondary education curricula, the pedagogies for literature based upon formalisms such as the "old New Criticism" still persist—largely because they provide a technology for literary studies with a distinct terminology (plot, characterization, setting, irony, and so on), and which allows for a study of literature that is standardized, assessable, and easy to develop into curricular materials. This hermetic system of teaching literature is completed by the influence of current-traditional rhetoric, which values an easily-assessable set of outcomes. For these reasons, the study of "English" in preparation for teaching becomes a type of closed system, wherein a priori principles of literary value become not only a method of reading, but also a curriculum for writing—largely about literature. In such a paradigm, writing in the English classroom becomes a type of apprenticeship in producing literary criticism, often to the exclusion of the rich array of rhetorical occasions that are valued by Composition Studies.

The introduction of writing studies into the English department, however, has begun to break this cycle in ways that the influence of recent literary theories has not. The existence of rhetoric/composition as a discipline that is visible to students through courses in the professional writing major—and faculty who are defined by that specialization—has provided an alternative narrative of authorship for students, a narrative that treats composition pedagogy as an area of inquiry rather than a fixed professional system into which they are socialized.

Collaborations with our college writing center (under the direction of Cynthia Crimmins), and the development of a course in the teaching and tutoring of writing, has been perhaps the widest conduit for composition theory and practices to find their way into the ethos of what it means to "teach English." This course, because it has been populated by a mixture of Professional Writing, English Education, and Literary Studies majors, has given students a common geographic, as well as a disciplinary, topos that brings together gnos is and praxis. In that space, students not only read composition and writing center theory, but become paraprofessionals through hands-on experience in our composition classes and writing center.

Though the course in teaching and tutoring writing began as a way to train tutors and to supplement the methods courses in our Education department, perhaps the most surprising facet of this course has been the disciplinary scholarship and activity it has prompted in students. Most simply stated, the course has introduced "English" students to areas of research that reach beyond conventional paradigms for literature-based research and pedagogy. Because composition theory is rooted in practices with which students have had a good deal of experience, and because teaching writing was a tangible, professional outcome, students found a pragmatic base from which to theorize a position
within our disciplinary work—enacting the mixture of profession-based and liberal arts inquiry driven by the growth of "writing studies."

Among the many effects of involving undergraduates in composition and writing center practices, perhaps most important and positive has been the growth of the inquiry-based community that students developed after completing the course. Many students, rather than merely finishing the course and taking on paid positions as tutors in our writing center, approached us with research ideas for independent studies, for internships involving writing pedagogy, for honors program projects based in our disciplines, and for information about graduate study in rhetoric and composition. The rich array of activities inspired by this course—activities carried out not only by education majors, but also by majors in Professional Writing and Literary Studies as well—provide rich examples of the synergy that can be created when the majors in all these areas come to see humanistic inquiry as their common geography rather than as separate forms of career preparation. Students took interest in the types of projects that rhetoric and composition faculty conduct, even asking to act as research assistants in our work. That is not to say that the Teaching and Tutoring Writing course was itself responsible for all of this activity; in fact, the full course of studies in Professional Writing—courses in rhetorical theory, advanced composition, editing, writing for the Web, etc.—all motivated the work that students planned and carried out. Still, our writing center has become a hub of scholarly as well as physical activity, a geographic and disciplinary space in which students have created a laboratory for humanistic inquiry. This new version of "professionalization" goes beyond vulgar careerism, developing students who are not merely training for future jobs, but for ongoing humanistic inquiry within those career fields. An overview of a few of the projects and initiatives taken on by students serves to illustrate the ways in which gnosis and praxis merged in ways that have the potential to drive a more engaged and vital version of the liberal arts department.

One student, Molly, developed an internship working with our writing center director and one of our developmental writing teachers, acting as a tutor for students in the course. After working with an ESL student who became overly dependent upon her, she then conducted research on theories related to dependent writers and developed a paper on the topic that she presented at our Student Scholars' Day as well as at the MidAtlantic Writing Centers Association (MAWCA) conference. Molly has recently been hired as supervisor of a high school writing center and is currently conducting research in a graduate school seminar on the relationship between the move away from formal grammar instruction and the growth of writing centers. Another student, Jaclyn, took on the task of developing a writing center that served students in grades 7-12 for a local day school. She established a policy manual based upon writ-
ing center theory, trained peer tutors at the school, and acted as administrator for the writing center. Based upon that work, Jaclyn studied the ways in which students and tutors interacted, delivering a presentation at the MAWCA conference called “A Linguistic Analysis of the Values of Directive and Non-Directive Tutoring Approaches to Tutoring.” This study, too, had its roots in experiential learning. She observed interactions among tutors and students, noting the ways in which directive and non-directive tutoring were used, and the situations within which they were most effective. She then researched theories of collaborative and non-directive writing instruction from composition and writing center theory, testing the validity of those theories by using transcripts of tutoring sessions. A third student, Cate (a Literary Studies major who also completed a minor in the Professional Writing Program), conducted an honors program project that analyzed linguistic patterns (and especially the use of personal pronouns) across tutoring sessions in writing and in the sciences. Her study has served her well: as a writing sample for applications to graduate programs in rhetoric and composition (resulting in admission to four top-notch programs with offers of fellowships and assistantships); as a presentation at the 2007 CCCC; and as a forthcoming publication.

The success of these research projects has opened the door for research among other students as well. One Professional Writing Major, Anna, acted as my research assistant for a study of high school students’ attitudes toward secondary and college writing; a Secondary Education major, Jenny, has begun a similar study of high school students’ writing practices, a project inspired by her work in the teaching and tutoring writing course and as a tutor in the Writing Center. And, based upon the growing student interest, Writing Center Director Cynthia Crimmins is piloting a Writing Fellows program, in which students will work with students and faculty in specific sections of first-year writing—a program that has already begun to breed a whole new wave of student research projects.

This student research, which developed at the intersection between profession-based interests and humanistic inquiry, goes well beyond the expectations we had for our course and for our program. Those projects, and the students who have undertaken them, have demonstrated the potential for expanding our concepts of “humanistic” research beyond the boundaries that sometimes constrict it.

**CONCLUSION: WRITING STUDIES IN THE LIBERAL ARTS DEPARTMENT**

Though writing majors are sometimes treated as pragmatic intruders among the humanities, literary studies has much to gain from re-membering its place within those rhetorical traditions. Our students’ achievements underscore the growing understanding among writing majors that liberal inquiry...
need not be mutually exclusive with profession-based goals, lending credence to the expanding mission of writing majors seen in the program descriptions surveyed above. However, this conclusion will not be an easy sell, nor is it intuitive. If we recall comments about the writing program by other faculty in our department, such as “I think these students see themselves as humanities students when in fact they shy away from the more ambiguous and less product-driven aspects of the humanities education,” or worries that the power that comes with writing majors’ success will erode the “traditional humanities” (excluding rhetoric by some unknown formula of what constitutes the humanities), we must recall also that the student research described above may not impress those who find theory somehow superior to practice.

No matter, really. As our experiences have shown, evolution does not require institutional approval to occur. More important, perhaps, is finding ways as writing faculty and administrators to nurture our commitment to the humanities through writing majors. Developing undergraduate majors that prepare writers for productive careers while at the same time enacting reflective, humanist practices is perhaps among the most crucial challenge we face at this point in the evolution of writing studies. Yet, if we truly believe in rhetoric as a methodology for analyzing as well as enacting situated knowledge, as a mode of invention as well as delivery, as important to citizenship as well as to career; and, if we are willing to follow our students’ lead in the evolution toward the writing major’s new place in humanistic inquiry; then, the writing major has great potential to widen the scope of humanistic education.
APPENDIX I. YORK COLLEGE PROFESSIONAL WRITING MAJOR
DESCRIPTION AND REQUIREMENTS
(from the York College Undergraduate Catalog)

With advances in technology and new management structures, the need for skilled writers and communicators within various organizations continues to grow, both nationally and locally. As a result, professional writing has become one of the fastest-growing areas of English studies. A major in Professional Writing combines the broad-based liberal arts education offered by all of our department's programs with the practical skills and career opportunities that can lead to a fulfilling and successful future. The Bachelor of Arts Degree in Professional Writing at York College is designed to prepare students for a wide range of careers. It is excellent preparation for students interested in work as writers or communications specialists in fields such as publishing, government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporate communications, non-profit and social-service organizations, health care, finance, the arts, etc. It is also among the most valued courses of study for those interested in post-graduate education in English or rhetoric, law, technical writing, or towards the Masters of Fine Arts in a variety of writing fields. And, in conjunction with our creative writing minor, the major can be useful for those who are interested in writing fiction, non-fiction, poetry, or drama.

The courses for the major in Professional Writing are designed to give students a broad base of writing skills. Courses are organized into five general categories:

- courses in language theory
- courses in practical application of writing skills
- courses giving students a hands-on career experience and asking them to reflect upon that experience
- courses in a field related to their career aspirations, and
- foundation courses in the liberal arts

Requirements for Graduation:

Required Major courses

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WRT210</td>
<td>Writing in Professional Cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRT225</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRT305</td>
<td>Rhetorical Theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIT310 Language and Literature  
WRT315 Advanced Composition  
WRT320 Writing for the Web  
WRT410 Professional Editing  
WRT450 Experiential Learning (on-site work experience as a professional communicator)  
WRT480 Senior Seminar in Professional Writing

- PLUS 6 credits of Writing Electives

**English and Humanities Electives:** 12 credits beyond the required courses above, chosen from the various offerings of the English and Humanities Department. **At least six credits of the 12 must be in Literature.**

**Minor:** All Professional Writing majors are required to complete a minor in a field related to their career interests, to be chosen in consultation with an advisor. This requirement allows students to devote focused study to an area within which you may pursue work as a writer. For example, a student interested in writing for industry might minor in Business, a student interested in working in web design/copywriting might minor in Visual Communications, and a student interested in writing for a social service organization might minor in Human Services.

**Notes**

1. See, for example, such calls by Sharon Crowley in *Composition in the University*, Kathleen Yancey in her 2004 CCCC Chair’s Address, “Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key,” and David Fleming in “Rhetoric as a Course of Study.”

2. This is especially true in undergraduate-focused institutions. As Linda Bergmann has noted, the distinction between literature and composition fields “is very different . . . in smaller institutions, where composition is an undergraduate course or two, not a graduate program, and where all or most of the literature faculty teach composition.” This essay, using the example of a writing major at an undergraduate institution like York College, explores what happens when the curriculum expands beyond that “course or two.”

3. This claim is made specifically in the description of the St. Edward’s writing program: “The English-Writing major at St. Edward’s University carries above-average prestige because there are only a handful of such programs
at the undergraduate level in universities across the U.S. Students can get a masters or doctorate degree in a major such as ours (a Rhetoric and Composition M.A. and Ph.D.), but not a bachelors degree.”

4 Many of these descriptions are drawn from the list of writing majors maintained at Drew University by Sandra Jamieson (with Doug Downs), available at http://www.depts.drew.edu/composition/majors.html.

Demographic shifts indicate the changing motives of the present college population. Perhaps driven by open enrollment policies and wider access to higher education, student interest in both career and monetary success has increased since the 1980’s. In 1980, 40% of women and 43% of men “said they went to college to prepare themselves for a career,” up from 21% and 31% respectively just a decade earlier (American Demographics, March 1987). By 1990, 72% of college students cited making more money their reason for attending college.

6 See, for example, the discussion of the pitfalls and potential of the “service” category by Daniel Mahala and Jody Swilky in “Remapping the Geography of Service,” where they note that “The problem is that such institutional definitions and pressures largely escape scrutiny when most subject to them are faculty members with the least institutional power to interrogate them, or when those pressures are regarded as shaping only the most marginal work of the discipline.”

7 Tim Peeples, in his Preface to Professional Writing and Rhetoric, argues for making “the field’s rhetorical discussions accessible to undergraduates and entry-level masters students” as “the field expands ‘up’ from service-oriented courses and ‘down’ from advanced graduate programs”—something that the writing major at his home institution, Elon University, has moved toward enacting. My own text, Composing a Life’s Work: Writing, Citizenship, and Your Occupation, similarly asks students to interrogate, rather than imitate, the discourses of various occupations.

8 I wish to express thanks to my students and colleagues in York College’s English and Humanities Department for their honest and thoughtful responses to queries about the effect of our writing major, which have greatly enriched this piece.

9 See my discussion on the links between literary studies and current traditional rhetoric in “Composition, Literary Studies, and the End(s) of Civic Education,” in Linda Bergmann and Edith Baker, Composition and/or Literature: The End(s) of Education.

WORKS CITED


———. “Composition, Literary Studies, and the End(s) of Civic Education.” Bergmann and Baker 17-35.


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...Reflections/Projections...

Jennifer Clary-Lemon  
University of Winnipeg

THE HOT ARCTIC: WRITING MAJORS AS NEW SITES FOR NEW HIRERS

You might say I've been thinking a lot about location.

It's April and eighty-eight degrees outside. In a few months, I will be leaving the beautiful springs and hot summers of the Southwest for six months of winter, an annual average of forty-three inches of snow, and rumored minus-forty-degree January nights. This move, prompted by a job offer, is a case in point about how far new PhDs will go in search of a writing major.

Writing majors are a new site for the discipline, a site that asks those of us at the cusp of job-seeking to explore a different kind of location in contrast with the usual suspects. In making my decision to move, the writing major required me to expand my current definitions of what and where composition is: as an area of specialization within English studies, as a curricular program, as an agenda of administrative assessment by universities—a discipline located in first-year composition programs, writing program administration, graduate coursework, and the composition practicum. The writing major instead forced me to be elastic about why composition is and where it may go. Instead of centering the work that we do in the hub of graduate study and administration, the writing major compels us to see undergraduate education as a viable space in which to “do” composition and rhetoric—a space in which we may engage the ideas and content of the discipline, where we may think and teach, theorize and practice, without being relegated to remediation and “centers” outside of the center, and without only reproducing ourselves and those who look to be like “us.” With writing majors, the potential exists for new scholars to recreate and reinspire a tradition of rhetorical undergraduate education with the goals of creating good men and women, thinking, writing, and speaking well—for longer than their first year.

These values will certainly not be held by all, and our more traditional loci of composition and rhetoric still hold sway over many seeking to enter the tower. Indeed, while on the market, I was wooed by jobs that offered dynamic graduate programs and curriculum and program development opportunities.
Yet the job that I found myself moving over two thousand miles (and crossing one border) for continues to woo and woo again in a number of different ways. While I have been called on to help plan and develop a proposal for a master's program, a more traditional site of action in the field, I have also found myself going boldly forward in ways that graduate school had never prepared me: how to teach the content of writing and rhetoric to undergraduates who want to be in your class, how to engage concepts of rhetorical theory and practice for an 18-25 year old audience (as opposed to graduate students), how to create content that will forge connections between university and K-12 teachers, how to come to terms with the fact that composition is a distinctly American enterprise (you'd think that one would have been made more clear, but alas, the ethnocentrism of our field became readily apparent only in my emigrancy) and how to forge new spaces for composition and rhetoric despite that fact.

It’s now the beginning of the second week of October, and they say that we’ll have snow flurries this afternoon. The weather here, like the job, has been a challenge to negotiate—it has required new strategies, a new perspective, and a completely new arrangement of my relation to what it is I do. It also requires a very heavy jacket.
Reflections/Projections

Randall McClure
Minnesota State University, Mankato

PROJECTING THE SHAPE OF THE WRITING MAJOR

The remapping of writing programs to accommodate developments in technology, new conceptions of writing and reading, and the growing body of scholarship in rhetoric and composition has been matched by a broadening interest in the undergraduate writing major. Recent discussions have provided a range of projections of theoretical foundations and pedagogical approaches that might occupy the center of the new writing major, and the discussions will certainly grow in number and widen in scope over the coming years.

It is likely that other projections connect the major to technology and digital literacy, visual rhetoric, and writing both across the curriculum and beyond the major. In addition to considering these popular topics surrounding the writing major, we must pay equal attention to its shape—the synthesis of content, format, and architecture. Shape, in fact, is a key concept for the future of the writing major.

Shape relies on a wide range of concepts and terms including configuration, format and structure; however, shape encompasses much more. For example, consider the many different formats for instruction or methods of delivery now available for teaching writing:

- Face-to-face instruction (F2F) in a traditional classroom
- F2F instruction partly or completely in a computer classroom
- Synchronous online instruction
- Asynchronous online instruction
- Hybrid online/F2F instruction
- Distance instruction (usually through interactive TV)
- Extended instruction (at sites apart from the main campus)
- Concurrent instruction (secondary teachers teaching their own students for college credit, sometimes in cooperation with college faculty)
- Weekend instruction (or teaching during off-hours)

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To some, format or delivery is a given. However, in the new writing major, these concepts should not be taken for granted. Unlike its predecessors, the new writing major has a richly varied shape that blends the traditional with the technological, the local with the distant, and the campus with the community. For example, there seems to be a growing interest in concurrent enrollment or dual credit programs, especially in writing, as part of the larger discussions about K-16 education. Here, the curriculum’s content, format, and architecture—or simply what, how, and how long—high school and college teachers teach students about writing are all vital to defining the shape of a writing major. Therefore, shape brings together architecture, format and content, making the major a site rather than a sphere of learning.

Some might argue that format is simply packaging and does not tell us much about the writing major’s shape or its future. The above list, however, highlights the importance of delivery in the writing major’s future. Enmeshed in these methods of delivery are human interactions fused with virtual ones; traditional students commingled with non-traditional students, native speakers of English alongside non-native speakers; and writing faculty linked with teachers in a range of fields and sites. Types of interaction, existing and emerging technologies, and the means of instruction therefore offer choices for, and more importantly, create relationships in the writing major, and all of these further define its shape.

In the end, the writing major will be more defined by its shape than by its place, whether the writing major remains largely a face-to-face enterprise or moves wholly online; whether it remains part of the offerings from traditionally-organized English departments or decides to stand alone; whether it ties into K-16 initiatives or creates partnerships across institutional boundaries; or whether it renews itself as a major that integrates writing across the curriculum or evolves within a range of disciplines as separate certificates. Further considerations of the writing major will attend to the spaces it occupies, but thoughtful deliberations of space as it blends format, content and architecture will extend and project the major.
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Curricular Activism: The Writing Major as Counterdiscourse

Compositionists have come to recognize the importance of majors in writing for the field’s disciplinary claims. As he outlines the basic structure of an independent writing department, Barry M. Maid contends, “If an independent writing program is going to be a real academic department, it needs a major” (458). Robert A. Schwengler addresses not just the writing department but the discipline of writing itself:

The widespread view that literature is a subject matter but that writing is a skill has tremendous ideological force, and this ideological force has created a curricular imbalance with direct and dire consequences for students, teachers, and the academy. What is needed now to build, or rebuild, our discipline is the ability to conceptualize writing courses as addressing fields of discursive, social activity. (25)

This vision of writing contrasts sharply—and ironically—with that of literary theorist Jonathan Culler. Schwengler describes the entrenched definition of writing “as a skill that is largely impervious to scholarly analysis” and explains that this definition has historically imposed tight restrictions on the development of writing curricula (26). As if to illustrate Schwengler’s point, Culler imagines an English major based on writing yet describes the work of writing instruction exclusively in terms of skill development:

One could imagine organizing the English major around writing: to major in English is to major in writing; to study writing and its rhetorical structures, from the simplest to most complex; and to practice it, whether in the development of critical argument and assessment of evidence or in imitation of literary genres (creative writing courses might
actually take that form rather than subscribe to an ideology of self-expression). (90-91).

But the English major, argues Culler, also needs visual, historical, and cognitive/moral components (91-92). For that, of course, he does not turn to writing courses.

The development of a writing major at any institution is fettered by this ideological baggage, this notion that writing instruction is exclusively skill-based and that it is to be administered only to those with "substandard" writing skills. As they design, report on, and theorize about writing majors, compositionists have articulated rationales, design principles, and strategies for navigating the institutional approval process. As I've written elsewhere, faculty interests, students' needs, and disciplinary paradigms all figure into most writing programs' calculations as they design a writing major ("History"). Another factor commonly considered is institutional constraints: what will "fly" with the out-of-department decision-makers—the administrators and committees whose approval must be secured? (see Schwalm). Yet another factor is the scrutiny to which the writing program will be subjected when it proposes a major: because writing programs are chronically vulnerable in their institutions, they are sometimes loathe to make themselves visible by raising issues that will provide critics with a forum for a new round of assaults on the program, its instructors, its students, or its curriculum.

These are legitimate concerns, but they do not constitute the entire picture. A factor not often considered is the possibility that proposing the writing major provides an opportunity for curricular activism, a moment in which compositionists can seize the microphone, and the stage itself, to circulate informed, nuanced, proactive visions of writing, of student writers, and of writing instruction—visions that exceed the skill-based ideology of literacy instruction.

In the introduction to Coming of Age: The Advanced Writing Curriculum, I argued that instituting an advanced curriculum benefits not only the students enrolled in its courses but also the teachers and students of the first-year sequence: the existence of an advanced curriculum challenges the expectation that "one or two required courses [can] provide all the needed writing instruction for an entire university" ("History" xxi). Here I extend that argument into the realm of ideology: The process of establishing a writing major can challenge the traditional normative vision of writing instruction and offer in its stead a representation of writing as a discipline and its instruction as a part of the intellectual work of the institution.

The writing major, I believe, can enact what Tracy Carrick and I have called curricular activism (Howard and Carrick 255-56): while the writing
major and its courses should be designed in respectful dialogue with a range of literacy ideologies, it can also be explicitly and overtly constructed around an egalitarian literacy ideology that coheres with disciplinary scholarship. Drawing on principles developed by the WPA Network for Media Action (NMA), compositionists who are proposing a writing major can prepare in advance for what amounts to an institutional public relations campaign. Then, once the writing major is successfully established, it can continue to function as an instrument of institutional activism that accomplishes what writing across the curriculum or first-year composition cannot: the demonstration of writing as an intellectual discipline rather than as a means of inflicting discipline upon the bodies of students. The desired result of this institutional activism is changed perceptions of writing and writing instruction, perceptions that do not participate in a class-based literacy hierarchy.

To explore these possibilities, I reviewed the rhetoric of websites established for U.S. writing majors, visiting each of the sites linked on a list compiled by Doug Downs and Sandra Jamieson (see Works Cited for URL). The websites listed typically detail the requirements for the major or minor, such as required courses and the grade point average students must maintain. Some, such as Illinois State (“Minor in Writing”), Cal State Long Beach (“Option”), and Eastern Kentucky (“Undergraduate Programs”), provide only this information.

Other institutions use their websites to promote the value of the major or minor. The University of Rhode Island page, for example, opens with the question “Should I Minor in Writing?” and then offers this answer: “It’s worth considering! A writing minor pairs very well with a number of majors. Employers are always looking for graduates with a strong background in written communication” (“Writing Minor”). Some sites use multiple media to advance the rationale: the James Madison home page loads each time with a different vignette, usually a picture of a student writing minor, accompanied by a brief written testimonial to the value of the curriculum (“Welcome”); and the Syracuse site includes QuickTime clips of student testimonials (“A Minor”).

All of these promotional messages seem to be aimed at an audience of students, presumably to recruit them. Kathleen McCormick and Donald C. Jones make the challenges of recruitment explicit: “After four years, we have not yet been as successful as we had hoped in marketing our program to our students as a single major, but we are achieving some success with marketing it as a double major.” Similarly, the rationales for the major are focused almost exclusively on the ways in which students will benefit. One of the benefits, as Arthur W. Shumaker testifies, is self-knowledge. Shumaker also lists WAC benefits of the writing major: students of “English composition”
are better positioned to work in other disciplinary fields. A third major benefit is economic: as the University of Rhode Island observes, good writers are employable ("Writing Minor").

While acknowledging the benefits that the writing major offers students, the scholarship on the writing major articulates a conflicted relationship with the larger university. From Shumaker’s 1981 “How Can a Major in Composition Be Established?” to John Ramage’s 2000 “From Profession to Discipline: The Politics of Establishing a Writing Concentration,” compositionists have imagined the relation of the writing major to the university as one of supplication: the institution is (or isn’t) “welcoming” of the major. In terms of its institutional relationships, therefore, implementing a writing major becomes a how-to question: How can the major be established?

This is a legitimate, compelling concern. The difficulties of establishing a writing major often exceed the challenges of establishing a major in, say, geography or film studies. As Susan Miller has argued, the teaching of writing—its students, its instructors, and its curricula—has traditionally been subordinated within the English department. Nor does removing writing instruction from English remedy the problem, because that problem is grounded in literacy hierarchies whereby U.S. educational systems preserve social privilege.

Insofar as it is commonly imagined, writing instruction in the university functions as one of the systems of difference that Pierre Bourdieu argues must be denaturalized. Hierarchical structures of social difference produce the fetishization of FYC as a literacy gatekeeper, and they inform the institutional structures that allow students to “test out of” required FYC, on the presumption that some writers have nothing more to learn about writing; in the association of FYC with writing instruction, as if nothing else of important can or does take place by way of writing instruction; in the staffing of FYC with legions of undercompensated part-timers, many of whom have no background or training in composition and rhetoric but who, by virtue of their own high literacy, are assumed to be qualified to teach writing.

Evidence of literacy hierarchies abounds, too, in the mass media, as the following headlines from CBSNews.com, the Chronicle of Higher Education, Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette, Kansas City Star, New York Times, and the Washington Post, demonstrate:

- “Writing in Schools Is Found Both Dismal and Neglected” (Lewin)
- “Educators Demand Upgrade in Writing” (Strauss)
- “Why Johnny Can’t Write, Even Though He Went to Princeton” (Bartlett)

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The cultural context for the writing major is one of normative instruction (Musgrove; De Lancey), one in which writing instructors or programs are readily described as abrogating their responsibilities (Bartlett); in which students are depicted as cheaters (Soderlund); in which instructors and students are pitted against each other in battle (Jackson & Laird); and in which the result is a nation of incompetent, unethical writers (De Lancey; Dillon; Leland; Musgrove; Read). Compositionists who attempt to do anything but remediate the shortcomings of their charges may be subject to the kind of derision that Mark Bauerlein brought to bear on participants in the 2006 Conference on College Composition and Communication: in his March 2006 weblog, Bauerlein criticized paper titles he found to be too theoretical or too playful. Compositionists may also be subject, too, to the kinds of retribution that Bauerlein longs for: “All the participants should hope for is that nobody with any decision-making power gets wind of them. They might find their funding streams drying up.”

It is in this environment that we work to establish writing majors, but it is this environment that the writing major itself can help remediate. To the question of how to establish the writing major within the hierarchical university, I would add another: How can the establishment of the writing major contribute to changing the hierarchical university?

I do not ask this question lightly, nor idealistically. I realize that far more than a writing major is needed to remediate naturalized systems of difference in institutionalized writing instruction. Yet I do believe in the potential for individual and, especially, collective agency in effecting change. Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem describe an annual Celebration of Student Writing that has “change[d] public perceptions of students and of student writing” at their institution (127), and McCormick and Jones describe the results of changes in institutional attitudes:

[T]he status of our first-year courses has risen across the institution as our colleagues in other departments have increasingly come to recognize the serious, extensive scholarship of writing studies. We think it is fair to say that more of our colleagues in other disciplines regard working with us now
as engaging in a partnership among equals than would have been the case if we had only taught first-year writing. (40)

These are indeed important advances. If, however, such changes are based entirely in the required FYC, they take place within the frame that is to be changed, a frame in which writing instruction is entirely normative, rather than an activity from which all writers at all times might benefit. If all the efforts to expand the institution's notion of writing instruction take place within the frame established at Harvard in the late nineteenth century, a frame in which writing instruction occurs as the result of writers' inadequacies, that frame is being reinforced even as it is being challenged.

It is in this context that I describe the existence of the writing major as a form of institutional activism, not just on behalf of the writing program itself but on behalf of all the students—all the writers—in the university. What is to be remediated by the existence and visibility of the writing major is not the students in writing classes but rather the normative representation of writing instruction, a representation that naturalizes class discrimination. I do not mean that those who espouse normative literacy ideology are deliberately exercising class discrimination; rather, I mean that normative literacy ideology can contribute to class discrimination in ways that are invisible to all participants. Cultural hegemony, John Trimbur points out, "is rarely imposed from above. It has to be negotiated locally in the practices and procedures of everyday life, naturalized as a matter of what we take to be common sense" (280). Mike Rose details the naturalization of class hierarchy in institutional representations of writing and writing instruction. Institutional language about writing instruction, he says, conveys five reductive, behaviorist ideas about writing:

Writing ability is judged in terms of the presence of error and can thus be quantified. Writing is a skill or a tool rather than a discipline. A number of our students lack this skill and must be remediated. In fact, some percentage of our students are, for all intents and purposes, illiterate. Our remedial efforts, while currently necessary, can be phased out once the literacy crisis is solved in other segments of the educational system. (341)

The assumptions about writing, writing instruction, and student need that inform these ideas, says Rose, "keep . . . writing instruction at the periphery of the curriculum." Yet these assumptions are of long standing and are tenacious. They are also exclusionary (341-42).
I propose, therefore, that compositionists add an explicit objective when implementing the writing major: seizing the opportunity to circulate a counter-representation of writing instruction. In an era of increasing accountability, in which administrations and legislatures increasingly intervene in and dictate the terms of educational endeavors, departments and programs may experience increasing difficulty in teaching what they know matters, in ways that they know are effective. Our best response is to intervene in and affect public perceptions of writing instruction, so that we find ourselves less in conflict with our programs’ powerbrokers and so that we are offering alternatives to hierarchical literacy ideologies. The public presence of the writing major offers a potentially important opportunity for counter-discourse. Instantiating the writing major can be a valuable public relations tool on behalf of the major itself, the writing program that sponsors it, and all the students in the university.

“Public relations” is of course a controversial concept today. Siva Vaidhyanathan raises a concern that commands attention in contemporary culture: the state and its institutions, he notes, have taken over some of the functions of the democratic public sphere. Instead of the public sphere, we have public relations. Vaidhyanathan notes that in Jürgen Habermas’s analysis this phenomenon amounts to a “‘refeudalization’ of the public sphere” (191-92).

In its most extreme form, public relations becomes “astroturfing,” which Disinfopedia describes as “the instant manufacturing of public support for a point of view in which either uninformed activists are recruited or means of deception are used to recruit them” (“Astroturf”). And its opposite, I would argue, might be the Rogerian argument, through which all the participants explore the available possibilities and strive for an equitable, reasonable position. With so much of composition pedagogy and theory oriented toward Rogerian argument and community service, a public-relations approach to persuasion might too easily be associated with the extreme utilitarianism of astroturfing.

The Network for Media Action, however, offers palatable, even appealing alternatives. Sponsored by the Council of Writing Program Administrators and predicated on the need for compositionists’ involvement in public deliberations on literacy issues, the WPA-NMA asks, “Tired of headlines like these?” and lists obnoxious titles such as “Universities’ Dirty Secret: Post-Secondary Institutions Dumbing Down First-Year Courses” (WPA Network).

The solutions offered by the WPA-NMA involve sharing information with other rhetoricians; writing not only letters to editors but also media stories themselves; and participating in publicity campaigns. Underlying such moves are assumptions that our classroom instruction and scholarly publications are insufficient to change public images of writing and writing in-
struction; that inaccurate public images of writing and writing instruction can adversely affect our classroom instruction and thus our ability to teach writing well; and that compositionists must themselves find ways to affect public perceptions. Such activism will not be accomplished by good classroom instruction and scholarly publications alone but by strategic public discourse, grounded in principles of ethical public relations (as distinct from astroturfing). Ellen Cushman asks, “How can we change institutional structures that devalue the teaching of first-year composition, that exploit the teachers of first-year composition, and that underestimate the disciplinary knowledge in the field of rhetoric and composition?” (121). One answer, I believe, is a highly articulated, visible major in writing.

A well-publicized, well-designed writing major is itself a public relations tactic, a material counterdiscourse to normative literacy ideology. Not only does the major need to exist, but others in the institution need to see it and be aware of it. And they need to be aware of it as a counterdiscourse to normative writing instruction. The writing major needs to be presented and enacted in ways that deliberately challenge normative literacy ideology, diminishing the possibility that observers might interpret the new major within that frame, as Culler does.

In addition to the strategies endorsed by NMA, websites offer a ready tool for pursuing this public relations campaign. Barclay Barrios has argued that the website for a writing program can be a pedagogical tool, offering information and materials that students need. I would add that the website for a writing major can also be a public relations tool, offering the intramural public a representation of writing and writing instruction that exceeds and challenges the hierarchical ideology in which writing instruction socializes the Great Unwashed.

I have previously argued for the need for multimedia presentations of the work of the writing program (Howard, “WPAs”). While I respect Barrios’s premise of aiming departmental publications at students rather than at institutions, I believe these publications can and do have multiple audiences. To ignore those audiences is to miss an important opportunity. Barrios expresses a desire to avert institutional colonization by making students the audience for his program’s website. Fair enough. But a department can exert agency within its institution by recognizing its multiple audiences and working to educate all of them, including administrators and faculty in the institution. The public relations objective should be an explicit agenda in the design of the writing major site.

The project is not an easy one. Douglas Hesse observes, “The wider academy can—in fact, for certain economic reasons, must—(mis)understand composition studies as freshman composition, an elementary skills-providing
activity it deems bereft of useful research beyond studies of student proficiency and teacher efficacy" (122). And for these very reasons, the project of curricular activism must be pursued at every opportunity. The implementation of a writing major is a very fine opportunity indeed.

Nor can the project be pursued through a universalized boilerplate. Rather, each writing program will need to consider its local context carefully, considering how target audiences might best be reached. The framing of the courses may contribute to the argument for a disciplinary rather than normative understanding of writing instruction. The description for the senior-level course, “Authors, Writers, Heroes,” that I am now teaching reads,

Students in this course will develop their own descriptions of the ways in which U.S. culture represents the author, the writer, the student, and the plagiarist, asking why these figures are so important to our culture; how an understanding of these figures enables a greater understanding of the culture that sustains them; and how students might use these understandings to attain their own authorial goals” (“Authors”).

The sample syllabus accompanying my program’s proposal for a writing major is that of another senior-level course, Adam Banks’s “Introduction to African American Rhetoric,” whose description argues, in part, “African American rhetoric is the study of the persuasive practices of individuals and groups of African Americans in the collective struggle for freedom, justice, and full participation in American society on their own terms” (Banks). These and other courses in our offerings inescapably contradict the skills-based, normative vision of writing that has long prevailed in the academy. So do symposia; publications from and celebrations of advanced student writers; and websites that depict the array of intellectual work accomplished in the writing major—and not just the skills acquired or jobs secured by graduates.

At every institution there is an array of opportunities for the writing program to use its major to deliberately advance a rhetorically sophisticated vision of writing, student writers, and writing instruction. Those opportunities are a benefit of establishing a writing major, and seizing them will benefit not only the major but FYC, too, which will more readily be seen as part of an open-ended course of instruction rather than as a dumping-ground for the grammatically challenged. Most important, this curricular activism counters the will to regulation that has too long defined the work of composition and rhetoric.
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WHICH PART OF THE ELEPHANT IS THIS?:
QUESTIONING CREATIVE NON-FICTION IN THE WRITING MAJOR

On a sun-filled morning in the fall of 2004, our writing faculty eagerly gathered to craft our own major. We began by bandying about ideas for required courses. Someone suggested a 200 level course, along the lines of an “Introduction to the Profession.” And then . . . a sudden schism.

In the tense debate that followed, some faculty argued that varieties of public, community, and workplace writing should be the sole focus of such a core course in a composition program, while others explained that creative nonfiction deserved inclusion as a legitimate part of “professional writing.” The disagreement was not resolved in that meeting and continues, in some ways, to this day. Why? We believe that part of the answer may be historical, but for writing programs that are developing a major, the issue is more fruitfully focused on the theoretical and conceptual issues.

At some institutions, creative writing has been housed in English Departments or in its own department or program, a set of circumstances that has allowed—or forced—compositionists to conceive of a “full” slate of writing courses without such classes. In the meantime, mainstream composition scholarship has focused on social theory, critical theory, and the development of writing courses informed by these theories. In these circumstances, any writing course preceded by the word “creative” or “expressive” or “imaginative” might be criticized as being a-social, a-political, and a-rhetorical, which situates the debate over the rightful “home” of such courses squarely in the middle of the writing program rather than between writing and English (or some other program).

In our program, while still questioning whether and how to integrate creative nonfiction into our writing major, we followed one line of reasoning that might be called Rogerian in its attempt to establish consensus. We developed a course called “Writing in the Expressivist Tradition,” which
recognizes expressivism as part of Composition’s history and ties such a course particularly to the writing of creative nonfiction. While this line of thought helped create a space for a “creative” course in our program, it also relegates expressivism to an historical moment rather than to the conceiving of such a course or way of writing as integral to a well-rounded writing major.

Other “Rogerian” approaches are available. For example, Chris Anderson examines nonfiction texts for their rhetorical elements, while Mary Ann Cain and George Kalamaris focus on the rhetorical in writers’ workshops. Their scholarship focuses on the rhetorical in the teaching and writing of creative nonfiction. Another intriguing approach invokes activity theory. Robert A. Schwegler reasons that if the ability to be a “writing agent” in a field calls for “particular knowledge, expertise and social experience,” then there is fertile ground for a writing course (31). Schwegler’s approach leads to courses that blend workplace, political, and creative nonfiction writing in the same course syllabus. For example, a course about the rhetoric and discursive practices of disabilities includes critical essays about disabilities narratives, public policy papers, and pieces of creative nonfiction.

Clearly, we see several possibilities for the teaching of creative nonfiction that make room for such courses amongst other writing or composition courses. However, unless we compositionists can easily and clearly explain the conceptual and theoretical connections between creative nonfiction and, say, business communications, any writing course with the label “creative,” could remain a schismatic problem for writing programs, especially those with writing majors.

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Reflections/Projections

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GROUNDING THE WRITING MAJOR IN THE SOCIO-GRAPHEMIC APPROACH

Central pedagogies that affirm writing instruction as intellectually rigorous inadvertently undermine the potential for a free-standing writing major. When critical pedagogy shapes a writing curriculum around what Ira Shor describes as “topical themes” (55), for instance, writing as the topic of inquiry can become subordinate to the disruption of ideology. Similarly, a cultural studies writing curriculum may teach students to recognize the mechanisms of social construction, but such a course can avoid inquiry into writing as constitutive of the social. When critical thinking, social action, and ethics (Greenbaum 84) ground writing courses, writing becomes merely what students learn to do rather than what students learn about.

A distinct and viable writing major will abandon this double consciousness separating learning about writing from the activity of writing. A socio-graphemic model is based upon the philosophy that our discursive lives are comprised of graphemes (fundamental units of written language) and larger graphemic assemblages (texts, forms, genres), thus justifying an inquiry-based discipline of writing. In the socio-graphemic writing major, students study, research, discuss, and write about writing as fundamental in their lives.

The curriculum in such a major would extend as far as writing does, so that institutional, educational, and everyday scenes of graphemic activity become scrutinized, researched, understood, and challenged. This is a writing major concerned with the histories, situations, materials, technologies, and spaces of writing, encouraging students to develop genealogies of such things as handwriting and writing on hands, typewriters and online word processors, the five-paragraph essay and the uses of writing as punishment. By majoring in writing, students become specialists in the study of written language, rhetoric, writing technologies, and image/text semiotics.

Faculty with training in writing research from a range of disciplines attentive to written artifacts and practices breathe life into the socio-graphemic writing major as an academic unit. The writing major would coordinate under-

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graduate, graduate, and faculty scholarship; the major also has the potential to sponsor informed graphemic activism and literate engagement. Through learning about the role of institutional and vernacular forms of writing in social engagements and confrontations, students become prepared to engage in informed activist expression that transforms the written landscape of the everyday, campus, and community.

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As faculty, writing program administrators, department chairs, and even deans and other academic administrative officers consider the possibility of developing undergraduate programs in professional writing, (something that has been on the rise for the past couple of decades), they are faced with a number of questions:

• Why would we have such a program?
• What kind of program would attract students within our student body?
• What kind of program best connects with our mission?
• What kind of program is attractive to future employers and responsive to the market? What resources—faculty, staff, physical space, networks, technology—are necessary?

These, and many more, are the sorts of questions we at Elon University also asked when we began revising our “writing concentration” in 1999.

Our revised program in Professional Writing and Rhetoric (PWR) became operational, so to speak, in the fall of 2000, when the revised curriculum was published in handbooks and when a small set of preexisting but rearticulated courses, and one or two new courses, began to be offered as an English major concentration in PWR. Four years down the road, we found ourselves revising our curriculum again for a variety of positive reasons: significant growth in course enrollments, the number of students choosing PWR as their “concentration” within the English major, administrative appreciation for our growing program, a doubling of the number of writing faculty, and a significant revision of the English major core. At this moment in our program’s history, we realized that we not only had enough distance on our past curricular revision process but also enough exigency related to the immediate curricular

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revision work to begin theorizing the construction of our programmatic identity and to gain from this intellectual work.¹

What follows develops a theory of—or better yet, theorizes—program identity development based on the related pairs of terms, chronos/kairos and strategy/tactic. We use these two sets of terms to frame the way we tell the story or the “case” of PWR’s developing identity at Elon, and in doing so, we offer to the readers a framework for identity development that is portable across contexts. We argue that there are times when chronos dictates or (as we will later clarify) times when one might approach program development from the sense of chronological time. In these instances, one stands before time, and there is time to plan ahead. This sort of place-in-time, we argue, calls on a practice guided by strategy and strategic thinking. However, program development is not always a strategic process enacted within or approached from chronos. There is another sense of time that is crucial to the work of program development and the development of programmatic identity: kairos. Rather than standing before time, one now stands in time. This other position in time, or approach to time, calls on a practice guided by tactical, rather than strategic, action.

What we find most powerful about this framework is the way it emphasizes the rhetorical, productive, compositional nature of program development; we write and re-write our programs. As a heuristic framework, the combination of chronos/kairos and strategy/tactic helps with the ongoing inventional process of program development. Though we acknowledge that our readers, as rhetoricians, are already aware of their own situatedness, we propose that this heuristic framework gives us a way to move beyond situated awareness and toward applying rhetorical-analytical skills to our own efforts at program development. In a way, this claim parallels those made about the genre function. Not only do strategic or tactical action, as genres, actively shape discourse (Miller), but they also constitute social realities (Bawarshi 357), thereby suggesting that our efforts at program development would be well-served by deliberately selecting our courses of action. Finally, we consider this framework valuable because it opens a space to talk about kairos and tactic, typically ignored outside of informal conversation, as significant elements of program development.

**Chronos and Kairos: Perspectives on and Approaches to Time**

Most Westerners think about time as what the Greeks referred to as chronos and would be surprised by efforts to encourage alternate ways of thinking about time. But the ancient Greeks spoke of time in two ways. From one perspective, time is understood as linear and measurable, the sort of time
we measure with clocks and calendars. This sort of time is what the ancients would have defined as *chronos*. As John E. Smith explains, “In *chronos* we have the fundamental conception of time as measure, the quantity of duration, the length of periodicity” (4). *Chronos* defines time quantitatively, not qualitatively. It refers to the time that stretches out behind and before us and can be measured and marked. Visually, *chronos* is often symbolized by “flight or marching single-file” (Baumlin 155), as it marches on in linear, orderly fashion. It is the time that is often disconnected from or independent of human action; it is a force of nature that carries on irrespective of human action (155). When discussing administrative action and practice, *chronos* dominates. Five-year plans, personnel reviews, course offerings, matriculation and graduation, cycles of assessment, re-accreditation: all refer to time as quantifiable, measurable, and linear. Such time marks and measures administrative work, like the developing of curricular programs.

The ancient Greeks, however, had a second way of seeing and approaching time. *Kairos*, often referred to as “opportune time” or “right time,” and later linked to “right measure,” sees and approaches time in a qualitative fashion (Kinneavy; Sipiora; Crowley and Hawhee; Hawhee). *Kairos* “can indicate anything from a lengthy time to a brief, fleeting moment,” so it is distinct from *chronos* not in duration or quantity (Crowley and Hawhee 37). Rather, *kairos* is distinguished from *chronos* because it refers to a “quality” or “kind” of time. The qualities that define *kairos* are opportunity, appropriateness, significance, and advantage. Even though *kairos* should not be misunderstood in terms of quantity or duration, it is nevertheless often distinguished as a point, a window, or a moment. Phillip Sipiora defines *kairos* using Frank Ker-mode’s phrase “a point in time filled with significance” (2). Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee define *kairos* as “a ‘window’ of time during which action is most advantageous” (37). Visually, *kairos* is often represented anthropomorphically as a god with a long forelock of hair and winged feet balancing precariously on a stick, or other such narrow object, while simultaneously balancing a set of scales in his hands. Unlike *chronos*, the single-file line of marchers stretching ahead predictably and unwavering, *kairos* is depicted by the forelock of hair one should seize at the opportune moment, the winged feet that represent the fleeting nature of time and situations, and the quality of balance needed to capture right time and right measure. Also unlike *chronos*, which dominates discussions about administrative work, *kairos* is rarely discussed in formal spaces. In the hallways, we might refer to this seized opportunity, or that missed moment, or windows of time. Yet, our experience developing the Professional Writing and Rhetoric concentration at Elon compels us to look more closely at this kind of time, as it seems to have significant impact on where we are, who we have become, and where we might go.
In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau argues that material practices and ways of acting in and on the world differ depending on the space from which one acts, and, in doing so, distinguishes between strategies and tactics. Though we do not ascribe to the often absolute, polemic, and militaristic rhetoric de Certeau uses to make this distinction, it offers a powerful heuristic for thinking about institutional action, such as program development. Strategy, de Certeau argues, "postulates a place that can be delimited as its own" (36). It is a form of power, a way of acting that arises out of a set of power relationships defined by having a place. As a result of having a place delimited as one’s own, one can act strategically, an action de Certeau describes as “a triumph of place over time,” “independence with respect to the variability of circumstances,” and “a mastery of places through sight,” which refers both to sight over a defined space (such as a curriculum, student body, or set of faculty) as well as time (for example, hindsight and foresight) (36).

As Paula Mathieu contends of de Certeau’s conception of strategy, “[s]trategic thinking accounts for and relies on measurability and rationality” (16). If strategy is the form of action one can take from defined—or what de Certeau refers to as “proper”—spaces, tactics are the forms action takes in undefined spaces. As de Certeau argues, “a tactic is calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus” (36-37). Tactical space “does not . . . have the options of planning general strategy and reviewing . . . [the] whole within a . . . visible, and objectifiable space” (37). Instead, tactical space or a tactic “takes advantage of ‘opportunities’ and depends on them” (37). The primary advantage of tactical space and tactical action is mobility, but as de Certeau points out, it is “a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment” (37). Whereas strategies “privilege spatial relationships,” tactics “gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time—to the circumstances which the precise instant of an intervention transforms into a favorable situation” (38).

Though de Certeau speaks of strategy and tactic as dependent on and developing out of discrete kinds of spaces, as if space determines action, these terms should also be understood as *approaches* to everyday practices, one might even say *strategies*, in the sense that they can be forms of conscious institutional action. We are led to this view of strategy and tactic from our experience illustrated in the reflections that follow; we see that there are times when we act tactically even though we are working both from and out of a strategic space. By seeing that it is possible to assume a tactical stance even when one has strategic space on or in which to stand, we become aware of
tactics as kinds of actions that can be enacted strategically. The same goes for strategy; though one holds no strategic position (e.g., does not yet have a formal program), one can create and act from a strategic position. This position on the nature of strategy and tactic echoes some of the recent literature on writing program administration and program development, literature that generally shares a view of writing programs as ongoing, dynamic, rhetorical "compositions" (Porter et al.; Hocks et al.; Grabill; and Peeples).

**Scenarios in the Development of PWR, or "The Case"**

We selected the two scenarios described below because they represent significant moments in the development of the Professional Writing and Rhetoric concentration at Elon University. The "Building a Faculty and Curricula" scenario is important because each new faculty hire's areas of expertise greatly affected our program's curriculum. From reflecting on this scenario, we learn that the shift from acting from a tactical position to acting from a strategic position is not only a result of time and place but is also a potential strategy in itself. We also learn from this scenario that we should be on the alert for the kairotic opportunities that careful tactical action opens. The "Building a Physical Space" scenario provides insight into how our program has been influenced by the physical spaces it occupies. Analyzing this scenario points out that layers of kairotic moments can contribute significantly to program identity and reminds us to value not only formalized places and discussions but also undefined spaces and informal conversations.

**Scenario 1: Building a Faculty and Curricula**

_**Scene:** Tim, Michael and Paula are sitting at the campus café. As they caffeinate in preparation for their afternoon classes, they begin discussing how to define the upcoming PWR replacement position and soon realize that it is inextricably linked to the concentration's history._

**First Hire:**

**Tim:** How are we going to define this replacement position?

**Paula:** How has the PWR concentration done this in the past? I know a bit about how we hired for the last TESOL position, but what about the position before that? And what about my position; how was that constructed?
Michael: Well, our ongoing hiring plans have always been designed with an eye towards curricular development. When Tim, Barbara and I met in 1999 to design the curriculum, we knew that we had to first design a minimalist curriculum that the English department faculty would actually accept. Even though the department unanimously approved the new concentration, it took one hell of a lot of work and a three-hour meeting to get the department to accept baby-steps. They weren’t going to approve anything close to what we would have mapped out in the ideal.

Tim: After the new curriculum was approved, we met to discuss hiring, and the fundamental question that we had to answer was, how are we going to grow this new curriculum from a concentration that consisted largely of repurposed old courses to what we would consider a respectable concentration? We saw a hole in our ability to offer courses in digital rhetoric, and we knew we needed and wanted more in this area, especially as the university was then considering the feasibility of an IT school. But we had to be careful not to design an undergraduate “Technical Communications” degree: the department, College of Arts and Sciences, Curriculum Committee, and School of Communications wouldn’t go for it; our student population wouldn’t embrace it; and it just wasn’t who we were as a faculty.

Michael: Here’s something that we can laugh about now. At first, the dean wanted Tim or me to take a course release and teach ourselves about the field of digital rhetoric, but with an exchange of uneasy glances and some fancy dancing, we quickly nixed that. Neither of us had the time or professional aspirations to do this. Plus, that wouldn’t help us grow the program. In addition to convincing the dean that one of us couldn’t simply “pick up” this need, we convinced him that a hire in digital rhetoric would open the English department’s technological horizons, something he was keen to do in a number of departments.

Tim: We would have never expected this when we developed this position, but one of the horizons created by this hire ended up being an extension of PWR “English” classes into a new minor. When the IT school idea was nixed, the focus went towards developing some “technology intensive” minors, and you [turning to Paula] became a key player in the Multimedia Authoring minor, which has brought us some interesting new students—I have two in my class this term—and interesting new linkages across campus.
Second Hire:

Michael: The second hire for the new PWR concentration was less about trying to move the concentration in a particular direction and more about grabbing a chance at a new line: the business school needed more business writing teachers and we were asked to help fill this need. At first we resisted their request because, again, they wanted Tim or me to “pick up” this need. But then we reconsidered this as a fruitful opportunity; we could craft a position that would cover two to three business writing courses per year and bring in a new person to help grow the PWR curriculum. With links to the Business School, we figured we also might draw in more students. So we crafted a business writing position and waited to see what else the candidates had to offer.

Tim: We searched for this hybrid business writing/PWR position for two years. In the first year, our candidate accepted another position for a lot more money, a fact that we seized upon. We researched figures on starting salaries and shared listserv emails about starting salaries with the dean to argue that we needed to offer more money to our job candidates.

Michael: In the second year of searching for this hybrid position, we connected the position a little less to business writing because the English department’s relationship with the business writing course was changing, which reduced the demand. What drew us to the candidate we eventually hired was her expertise in freshman composition and assessment. While she taught business writing courses, she also contributed assessment expertise to our FYC program. She also seemed likely to fulfill some of our earlier ideas about bringing advertising experience to the curriculum, since she had some work experience and connections in the entertainment industry.

Tim: The Business department eventually dissolved the link between English and business writing as they chose to staff all of their business communication classes with their own faculty. This left us with a faculty line all our own.

Third hire:

Paula: I was more involved with constructing the third line in PWR. I remember that we were brainstorming different possibilities, and one person was rather attached to a TESOL/linguistics position, although the rest of us were skeptical about whether there was such a need in our concentration, the
department, or even the university. Some people argued for a very different kind of position: a history/theory of rhetoric position.

Tim: Right. But in the end, we decided on a TESOL position for a variety of reasons: it was important to one of our colleagues, we knew that the rest of the department would support it because the position didn’t sound too high-tech or too hard-core PWR, and it would provide job and travel opportunities for our students.

Michael: And we figured that while there may be no candidates who would fit perfectly, we would search for someone who had TESOL experience and was also grounded in rhetoric. Luckily for us, we found a real gem, a perfect fit.

Fourth hire:

Michael: So how should we define this new faculty line?

Tim: Here are some of the ways I’ve begun thinking about it: We have so much on our plates, what could someone new do? Or if one of us were to choose to drop something, what would we choose to drop and what sort of person would we need to fill that void? What weaknesses have our outside portfolio reviewers seen in our students that might be addressed through this hire? I’ve been thinking that we need some sort of outreach project-management person. Each of us has been heavily involved with service-learning, client projects, and internships, but we don’t have the time to develop these into ongoing larger projects, and we’re really not the right people for this work.

Paula: That’s a good point. We always meant for C.U.P.I.D. [the Center for Undergraduate Publishing and Information Design] to act as a space for PWR students to work on real-world ongoing projects, but that hasn’t taken off because none of us has had the time or inclination. And what you’ve said highlights that we could really use a “point” person who organizes and keeps track of service-learning or client projects, so they don’t have to be limited to just a term.

Michael: What you two are suggesting would help us fulfill our PWR mission statement, which emphasizes the practice of rhetoric as a worldly art.

Paula: OK, the previous two hires in PWR were defined by looking at our curriculum and thinking about how we could fill gaps or grow the curriculum.
But for this next position, it looks like we’re talking a lot about our PWR mission statement and how a new hire could help us fulfill it better. This is actually a completely different way of approaching faculty hiring.

Michael: I think this has a lot to do with our new curriculum. Even though we can’t yet effectively cover our new curriculum, we have essentially created a complete curriculum, one that we are no longer focused on growing, like the old one.

**Reflection on Scenario 1: Building a Faculty and Curriculum**

Throughout this scenario, the curriculum is presented as a “proper place” from which we could act strategically to build a faculty, among other efforts. And we refer to the curriculum in chronological terms as something that stretches out before us, beyond any of us. But the scenario also shows the gaps that make that singular definition of the curriculum false. The PWR curriculum, as well as the faculty, has grown as much as a result of strategic planning and in chronological time as it has grown from tactical action and kairotic time.

As revealed in the first hire discussion, the original PWR curriculum was not the result of clean-slate, curricular design and strategic planning. In fact, because there was essentially no concentration, we were essentially placeless. To develop the original curriculum and begin a concentration in PWR, we had to be *bricoleurs*. We took existing courses from a “writing concentration” that existed only in name, some information about alumni and student interests, and declining numbers of English majors to create and argue for what we refer to as a minimalist concentration. Even when that concentration was in place in its first iteration, we had only a general sense of what courses would fill out the curriculum as we “grew” it. For instance, we imagined working with our first hire to develop some courses focused on digital rhetorics, and although we had general titles in our imaginations and in curricular sketches (such as “Writing for the Web”), the kairotic moments that were to come had as much influence on the courses that are now in our curriculum as any chronological visions. One of our now standard courses, “Writing, Rhetoric, and Interface Design,” was designed in response to a new interdisciplinary minor in Multimedia Authoring and took a shape that we could not have predicted as it went through re-articulation with a variety of other departments and our university-wide curriculum committee. “The curriculum” as a strategic, proper place has been as much of a fiction as a reality for programmatic planning and institutional action, for there are times when we perceive and present it (or *choose* to perceive and present it) as a proper
place in order to assume a strategic, chronological stance. In this way, the placelessness of the curriculum limited, but did not determine, institutional action. Looking back, we see that one can assume a strategic position and a chronological view as strategy, even though one may indeed be relatively placeless.

Though less obvious in our narrative, we see after reflection that we have also assumed placelessness as a tactical move even when we had the proper place of the curriculum from which to act strategically. In the case of our second hire—the business writing hire—we constructed an argument for a new line based on a need that had no stable, proper place. At that time, we could not argue that we had the students or courses in PWR to justify a new line, but in order to seize the opportunity for a new line, we located ourselves and the position in the liminal space between departments and schools. We did not pursue this new line strategically, in terms of the proper place of our curriculum or anything else, and we did not act within a chronology that stretched backwards and forwards in some clear way. We simply seized the opportunity and tactically built what arguments we could for a line that eventually—opportunistically—ended up dedicated completely to PWR.

In the previous case of the business writing hire, the opportunity arose and we seized it. Thus, we assumed a tactical stance because time dictated we do so. In a later phase of our curricular and programmatic development, we also assumed a tactical stance, one based on placelessness, but we did so very strategically. Our recent (2006) curriculum revisions were the result of an effort we began in 2004 to change the English major core, a very traditional literature core that ate up almost all of the credits in the major. Relative to the core and to an English department faculty dominated by literature specialists, PWR had little if any “place to stand” to change the English major core. The PWR curriculum wouldn’t be considered by colleagues a strategic place from which to argue for an English major change, and PWR faculty held little to no proper place within a core curriculum dominated by literature courses. Still, PWR needed more curricular space if it were to ever become a solid concentration. So, PWR faculty strategically gave up their one proper place—the PWR curriculum—as their site of action to tactically pursue a revision in the English major core. Rather than assume any one stable position, PWR faculty argued for changes from a wide variety of positions. A radically reduced English major core was adopted by the department, giving PWR (as well as the other concentrations) much more room to develop curricula. And as a result of this room to develop a more “proper place,” in terms of curricula, PWR has found itself arguing for new lines in different ways, as is reflected in the final part of the scenario.

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For curricula and for building of new faculty lines, *chronos* and *kairos*, and strategy and tactic have been crucial to development. An ability to stand before time and act strategically has led to significant changes, but seizing opportune moments and acting tactically have also been crucial. Yet, both strategy and tactic are not merely outgrowths of place and time. A proper place, in terms of space and place, does not limit one to strategic action in chronological time; one can strategically assume a tactical stance within streams of kairotic time. At the same time, placelessness does not force one into dependence on tactics and kairotic time; one can construct a proper place, even if a partial fiction, from which to act and from which to view/approach time chronologically.

**Scenario 2: Building a Physical Space**

All PWR classes, a number of first-year writing, and a few other English classes are taught in a computer-networked space called C.U.P.I.D. (Center for Undergraduate Publishing and Information Design). This networked space, one of only a handful at Elon not available as an open lab and reserved almost exclusively for a single department, has become identified with, and in some senses synonymous with, PWR’s identity. A chronological series of key “moments” below narrate the development of this space.

**First Moment:**

**From:** Tim Peeples  
**Sent:** April 21, 2000 11:26 AM  
**To:** Michael Strickland  
**Subject:** Five Year Plan ideas

Hey Michael—

I was thinking more about this five-year plan we need to create for PWR to include in the departmental five-year plan. We’ve talked about the need for a stable computer space for our students to do their work outside of class, one that would give them a place to commune and create a sense of identity (as we’ve seen happen at Clemson and Purdue), and maybe a big classroom (so I don’t have to keep finding an open lab whenever I want one for my class!) . . . though we both doubt we’d get the funds to get a nicely equipped computer classroom dedicated to us. Whatever we think might be possible, this might be an item to put in our five-year plan. What d’ya think?

Tim
Makes sense! Hell, we’re supposed to dream big, right? Our students will need such a space to get any solid work done on the sorts of projects we’re assigning and hoping to assign in future classes. Right now, only the Mac labs in communications offer the suite of software our students need, and they’re full-up with comm students.

You know I’m a Mac guy, and I know you’ve been both Mac and PC. Even though it pains me to say it, we should try to outfit this space with both so our students learn to work across platforms.

I’ll add it to our five-year planning notes.

M

Second Moment:

[Outside of Tim’s Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing Center Director office in the library]

Tim: Hey, Michael. Thanks for dropping by. I wanted to have you look at something and get your feedback.

Michael: Sure. What is it?

Tim: This little study room next to my office. Space is so limited around here, and we keep banging our heads trying to figure out where we might put this DDL [Document Design Lab] we’ve been thinking about. Well, I sort of have control of this study room, and I’m thinking it might be big enough to outfit as the DDL.

Michael: It’s much smaller than I was imagining for the DDL, but it’s space. Yeah. I could imagine instead of this one table and table-top extending around the edge, and . . .
Tim: Yeah, that’s the sort of thing I was imagining, too. A printer could go there . . .

Michael: . . . and a scanner there, plus a couple of dry erase boards. Sure.

Tim: And this is a pretty cool spot for it. This place out here where all the computers are is hopping at night, and our students would have their own little place right off of it, with a window onto all the action.

**Third Moment:**

Before the spring term of 2001, the English department chair convinced the dean and the IT folks (who were the recipients of a huge budget increase as part of a university-wide technology enhancement priority) to turn a tiered classroom into a dedicated English department laptop lab. A year later, Tim and the department chair were both on a building renovation committee and were pushing to move the laptop lab into a more appropriate space; the tiered classroom with bolted chairs made collaboration and any kind of movement very difficult. At one point in the process, Tim and the chair were invited to a meeting by the top IT people in another large tiered classroom in the building, where they led a brainstorming activity to discover what sort of space they might like to have. Though Tim and the chair figured they would be lucky to retain a dedicated laptop lab, just in a more effective space, they went ahead and let loose with blue-sky ideas and laughed about it afterwards.

**Fourth Moment:**

Joe (director of computer classroom services): [yelling across a quad] Tim. Wait up . . . I’ve got some pictures I want to show you and some ideas I want to talk with you about.

Tim: What’s up, Joe?

Joe: We just got back from visiting a number of campuses around the country that have leading-edge computer classroom spaces. While we were away, Jim and Chris [the directors of Academic Computing and Information Technology, respectively] and I got to talking about the ideas you were talking about for your computer classroom. There are only a few people on campus who
would really do anything creative and get good use out of such a classroom, and we kept coming back to you, your writing classes, and the ideas you’ve been throwing around.

**Tim:** Really? That’s cool.

**Joe:** So, I wanted to show you some pictures of computer classrooms. I only have a couple here, but I could send you the others when I get back to my office, if you’d be interested.

**Tim:** You bet!

**Joe:** You know how you were talking about a collaborative table design with individual screens and then a big shared screen? Well, we saw this huge plasma screen approach being used at one place, but they only had one table with it. Do you think this sort of thing could work?

**Tim:** That would be awesome, Joe. You say you had other pictures?

**Joe:** Yeah. Let me get them to you, and we can talk about this some more.

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**Fifth Moment:**

A year later, in the fall of 2003, one room in the newly renovated English building was abuzz with carpenters and technology folks fitting and re-fitting custom-sized tabletops, wires, and plasma stands. After the provost and dean walked by (rather by chance) one day and talked with Tim about this new classroom, the university president caught wind of it and saw it—as well as a new digital art lab and a new theater technology classroom—as an example of technological enhancements that also enhanced the engaged pedagogies the school emphasized and prided itself on. That fall, the dean asked Tim, as well as a few others on campus, to give a few mini-classes during weekend events to parents, campus leaders, and trustee members to show off such high-tech spaces and to illustrate what engaged learning feels like. In preparation for the first of these events, the president’s office called Tim and asked, “What is the name of the lab you’re teaching in? We don’t want to just call it ‘the English lab.’” “Well, we have started thinking of some names,” Tim stretched, “but I’d have to work on it a day or two to finalize that.” Two days later, a plaque was being put outside the door with the name “C.U.P.I.D.: Center for Undergraduate Publishing and Information Design,” and a week after that,
the president spent ten minutes of a 25-minute speech to new parents talking about and showing pictures of C.U.P.I.D.

**REFLECTION ON SCENARIO 3: BUILDING A PHYSICAL SPACE**

In moments 1 and 2, Tim and Michael both approach program development from the sense of chronological time, and their plans and calls for action are guided by strategy. Because the PWR concentration has to write a five-year plan, they strategize that they are going to take advantage of this administrative “hoop” and ask for something they’ve only dreamt about up until now: a computer-classroom that will give PWR students a place to work on projects outside of class and a more cohesive sense of community and identity. While neither Tim nor Michael seems particularly conscious that they are working from a strategic position, their discussion is dominated by the opportunity to plan ahead: not only will they request this computer-classroom space, but they might as well ask for both Macs and PCs so that students learn to work across platforms. Tim later assumes a more intentionally strategic stance in moment 2 when he invites Michael over to his office in order to examine a possible space for a wished-for Document Design Lab.

In moments 3 and 4, the programmatic development of PWR veers off into a realm dominated by *kairos*. While the English department chair and Tim attend a meeting that was planned in advance, they both seize the opportunity of having the undivided attention of the IT people and “let loose with blue-sky ideas” that even they think are so outlandish that they laugh about it afterwards. While strategically the chair and Tim hoped to only have the laptop lab relocated to a more appropriate space, they found themselves taking a tactical stance in a very particular time: as long as they had the attention of IT, they asked for the moon.

While Tim may not have realized that he was taking advantage of kairotic moments in moments 3 and 4, this rhetorical heuristic helps us understand how his response to these “off the cuff” moments contributed to C.U.P.I.D.’s creation. What we learn from moment 4 is that even encounters that are yelled across the campus quad can become integral moments in writing program development. Having just returned from visiting technologically-enhanced classrooms across the country, Joe is excited to share with Tim that the PWR concentration has repeatedly been identified as a program that would take advantage of similar resources. Joe remembered Tim’s previous comments about a collaborative table design with individual screens and one large screen, and offers the alternative of one huge plasma screen with one table. Again Tim assures Joe that he is interested in this alternative design and invites Joe to engage him in further discussions.
Finally, in moment 5, Tim works from spaces dominated almost entirely by *kairos* and tactic. This story recaps several moments that occur in informal spaces and that offered Tim fleeting “windows of time” in which to act: the provost and dean walk by as the new computer-classroom is actually being built and converse briefly with Tim; the president hears about this new technologically-enhanced classroom (possibly from the provost or dean), about how Tim will give a “mini-class” in this high-tech space to parents, campus leaders, and trustees and asks Tim if the space has a more interesting name other than “the English lab.” Although he probably was not aware of this at the time, Tim captures this fleeting time and situation by telling the president that, while alternative names have been “discussed” (a stretch at best), he’d need a few more days before a final decision could be made. This is a perfect example of how tactical space and tactical action offer mobility: by acting as if a formal name was already being discussed and could be finalized at any moment, Tim “seize[d] on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment” (de Certeau 37), and two days later, a plaque with the name “C.U.P.I.D.” is hung outside the classroom’s door and the president dedicates almost half of his speech to parents discussing this space.

But even though this scenario is dominated by *kairos* and tactic, there is at least one moment that took place in chronological time and in which Tim acted strategically: when Tim agreed to the dean’s request to teach a mini-class to publicize the computer-classroom’s capabilities. While he could not have known it at the time, this strategic action may have very well been integral for creating the fleeting kairotic moments Tim tactically acted on later in the scenario.

**Conclusion**

Being aware of time and timing can help guide us towards making more informed decisions about programmatic action, about whether we should act strategically or tactically in particular situations. For example, we are guided to remember that there are times dominated by *chronos* which provide us with the benefit of speaking/acting from formal and defined spaces or, in other words, from positions of power (for example, as concentration coordinator or program director) and which call upon practice guided by strategy and strategic thinking (such as five-year plans and assessment reports). Conversely, we are guided to remember not to underestimate the impact that kairotic moments and undefined spaces can have on program identity. Through this reflective process, we have come to see that important writing program developments have often taken place in moments requiring on-the-spot tactical action and decisions.
Nevertheless, our reflective, theorizing process has reminded us that program development cannot be approached with an essentialized sense of time or action. Instead, those involved with composing writing programs should use this framework as a way to consider deliberately their place in time and, accordingly, make appropriate decisions about what kinds of action to take. Since programmatic design takes place in both chronological and kairotic time and requires both strategic and tactical action, and while certain situations may be dominated by a certain kind of time and action, there are many points of overlap and even contradiction. And sometimes, a given situation may fluctuate erratically between different kinds of time, which in turn requires a fluctuation between different kinds of action. In other words, though appropriate action should be responsive to the space and time of one's context, action is not determined by space and time. Once we become aware of such points of overlap and variability, we become better equipped to understand our contexts and options, and thus to act strategically.

In writing program administration literature—in which we include the development and “administration” of writing minors, concentrations, majors, and advanced degree programs—it has become commonplace to point out that programs and their administration are locally situated, institutionally specific. As a result, recipes and rulebooks for program development mislead, at best. What then can be useful? From before the development of formal organizations like CCCC, WPA, ATTW, and CPTSG, one very clear answer to that question has been story-sharing. In fact, sharing stories about programs, classroom teaching ideas, and assignments led to the formation of several, if not all, of these formal organizations. Building a storehouse of knowledge, which includes stories or “cases,” is one powerful way to help agents more consciously develop their local, institution-specific programs. Although something akin to it was probably already a part of the story-sharing process of program developers, administrators, and composition instructors, “theorizing” has been recognized as a crucial part of what can help us act in our local contexts. Theorizing can most simply be understood as the process of reflecting on and reflecting in action (Weiser and Rose). “Without theorizing,” Irwin Weiser and Shirley K. Rose argue, “there are only isolated practices and actions, only situations requiring action. Without theorizing,” they go on to say, “we lose the opportunity to understand our situations, our work, our actions as informed rather than random or idiosyncratic” (192).

In the context of these traditions that our discipline’s larger community of faculty, curricular designers, and administrators have found valuable to the institution-specific work of program development, we have shared some stories significant to our own program’s development. As stated earlier, we have used the terms chronos, kairos, strategy, and tactic to frame the way
we tell the story of PWR’s developing identity at Elon, and in so doing, we offer to the readers a framework for identity development that is portable across contexts. The scenarios, or stories, themselves have heuristic value as they are integrated into the work of thinking about/through new situations and different contexts. The chronos/kairos and strategy/tactic framework is a second and complementary kind of heuristic that also helps us think through and reflect on our work. Already, we have put into action both of these heuristics. More conscious, careful reflection on the stories of our own program development has helped us think through other issues that have arisen as we were writing this piece. And the chronos/kairos, strategy/tactic framework has already become part of our shared language, helping us make sense of current situations, plan future action, and guide current actions. We argue that chronos/kairos and strategy/tactic is a powerful heuristic framework not only because it reminds us that we write and re-write our programs, but also because it facilitates the recursive invention process of such program development.

NOTES

1 Our PWR program is now built around a common set of four concentration courses, but individualized through a set of three electives carefully selected by students in consultation with their PWR advisor. Additional flexibility is achieved through the pursuit of internships and an individually designed “cognate” (an area of specialization, possibly a minor) outside of the major. The aim is to give students the flexibility to construct an educational experience that matches their interests while also ensuring a firm disciplinary foundation.

Just as PWR students are active in developing their studies, they are regularly engaged in hands-on work that challenges them to actively learn, implement, and reflect on course content, both inside the classroom and out. Many programmatic features support this hands-on, active-learning approach:

- PWR courses are taught within C.U.P.I.D. (the Center for Undergraduate Publishing and Information Design), a computer-classroom designed to place at one’s fingertips the tools of the trade, while also supporting hands-on, active, collaborative learning.
- PWR courses include active, creative, problem-solving assignments and projects ranging from simulated case studies to real-world client projects.
- In addition to traditional “classroom courses,” students are highly encouraged to include internships as part of their coursework.
PWR students take, in addition to four English major core courses, the following:

- English 215: Introduction to Professional Writing and Rhetoric
- English 304: Understanding Rhetoric
- English 397: Writing as Inquiry
- English 497: Researching Writing: PWR Senior Seminar
- Three English* electives (when appropriate and with advisor's approval, students may select electives from outside of the English Department)
  - one introductory (200-level) English* course
  - one advanced (300-level) English* course
  - one PWR advanced topics course (ENG 411, offered every fall) or a four semester hour PWR internship [double-concentration students are exempt from this third elective]

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Reflections/Projections

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ON BROWN UNIVERSITY’S NEW NONFICTION WRITING PROGRAM—A “FOCUS” WITHIN THE ENGLISH CONCENTRATION

Not long ago, Robert Scholes noted in The Rise and Fall of English that enrollments in English concentrations were dropping at most colleges. He suggested we re-evaluate our mission, asking if we are preparing ourselves, our graduate students, and our undergraduates for the critical reading and writing skills needed in our time. This was not a call for service learning or remedial skill building, but rather a re-appreciation of method. If students felt a disconnect between the passive consumption of literary/theoretical texts and the skills they needed to compete in the world, then we as teachers needed to reconnect what made a text useful with how it worked.

Prompted by an external review, in 1997 the English faculty at Brown University (including Scholes) took this challenge seriously and decided to transform a disorganized assortment of composition courses, taught mostly by graduate students, into a coherent writing program, taught primarily by PhDs who were active nonfiction writers. We recognized that most expository writing programs to date had not linked the process of writing in the academy to the nonfiction writing that many of us went on to produce; we acknowledged our students’ growing demand for such a link. So, we designed a program tailored to serve both the academic needs of Brown students and their professional aspirations. Due to Brown’s policy against mandating courses outside a student’s concentration and its encouragement of creative experimentation, the Nonfiction Writing Program (originally called the Expository Writing Program) was constructed as a small but deep cluster of nonfiction courses, meant to draw students from all disciplines, including English. Our goal was to move the self-selected student from sophisticated academic reading and writing courses to the disciplines of journalism and creative nonfiction. The emphasis in each course is on the “emerging” writer. The student is an apprentice in the process of critical reading, defining a problem, reflecting on
sources and drafts. Carefully they craft engaging, intelligent stories of life and intellectual journey that analyze, instruct, and persuade a general as well as scholarly audience.

Now an English concentrator at Brown can “focus” in Nonfiction Writing. They can take advanced writing workshops in the persuasive academic essay, journalism, and creative nonfiction—which includes the lyric essay, literary journalism, memoir, travel writing, historical narrative, science writing, and digital narrative. They can write an honors thesis of collected academic essays, feature articles, or prose poems; a memoir or biography; or a critical analysis of the evolving field of creative nonfiction. The top prize in 2006 for creative nonfiction written by an undergraduate went to a memoir in the form of a nonfiction graphic novel.

Early signs in our Nonfiction Writing Program at Brown show students are hungry for the skills we teach—writing that links academic analysis and research with nonfiction storytelling. Of the 3,005 undergraduates who took courses in the English Department in 2004-2005, 26% came for Nonfiction Writing courses. Among English concentrators of the class of 2005, 21% chose Nonfiction as their focus. In 2002 there was one inaugural honors thesis; in 2006, seven students wrote honors projects in Nonfiction Writing. Students are seizing the opportunity to be an apprentice nonfiction writer in a serious way, not just in a course or two. So far this seems an encouraging response to an English Department’s bold redesign so it stays useful to the world beyond the academy. The demand seems only to grow.

WORK CITED
CONCOCTING A WRITING MAJOR: A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The Writing Program at the University of Utah is perhaps unique in its institutional structure. A free-standing program, connected to English by only a cluttered hallway, it offers a minor in Literacy Studies and a series of specific rhetoric and composition courses designed to teach students not only writing as a practice, but also the theory and dialogue that guides the practice as well. The office doors are always open for students and faculty of all levels, creating a welcoming climate. It is a place where everyone feels important, supported, and equal.

I first came through the writing program’s door by way of another unique program at the University of Utah: the Bachelor of University Studies (BUS). In that program, students can design their own majors to fit their educational goals. My introduction to the BUS, and my invitation into the writing program came from a perceptive instructor in my first writing course, “Writing in the Humanities and Social Sciences.” When he learned of my desire to major in writing, Professor Sheldon Walcher introduced me to Dr. Maureen Mathison, the director of the Writing Program, who agreed to be my faculty advisor. Over the course of the next semester, we designed my major: a balanced program of writing practice and theoretical discussions, made up of classes from the Writing Program, and the departments of English and Communication.

At that point, my understanding of a large research institution shifted in at least two ways. First, I wasn’t just a number; I was a real person whose educational goals and needs were taken seriously by faculty who took a personal interest in me. And second, I realized that I would graduate with my intended degree in Rhetoric and Writing Studies. This, in addition to my appointment as a tutor in the writing center, leaves me poised for future admission to graduate school, and I have the potential to realize my goal of becoming a writing professor.

Being the first undergraduate to major in Rhetoric and Writing Studies at the University of Utah has given me graduate-level access to a program that is changing and growing to meet the needs of producing well-trained, effec-
tive, ethical writers. I have taken several graduate courses, including Classical Rhetoric and Literacy Studies; participated in new teacher colloquiums; and even sat in on the proposal selection process for a conference that we hosted last fall, the 10th Annual Western States Rhetoric and Literacy Conference.

My inclusion in activities such as these makes me feel like a cook in the kitchen adding spice to the stew, actively contributing to the success of the writing program while also picking up valuable experience and training for my own future success. I heard recently that my major is being considered as a minor; perhaps someday I'll have the privilege of mentoring students in a program that started with me and my desire to create my own major in writing.
My English department recently had a discussion of the first year writing requirement. Because the university was projecting a twenty percent increase in enrollment over the next five years, the department faced the possibility of being forced to add roughly forty new sections of first year writing to a program that already offers over a hundred sections a semester. Like most large state universities, our writing program is already overwhelmingly staffed by part-time teachers and lecturers on multi-year contracts. Because the additional forty new sections would no doubt be covered primarily by an expansion in non-tenure-track hires, the department faced the same dilemma that English departments across the country often face: are we willing to increase our heavy reliance on a contingent instructorate? Should we revisit the first-year requirement? Those who self-identify as rhetoricians and compositionists were generally ambivalent in our responses. Already discouraged by the degree to which the department relies on contingent teachers to staff writing classes, some advocated getting rid of the two-semester requirement, if only to reduce it to one semester. Others, however, resisted cutting the requirement. Giving up half of the first year requirement, in this view, was tantamount to surrendering important disciplinary “turf” that could diminish the overall position of writing in the department.

The situation is fraught with issues familiar to most professionals who work in rhetoric and composition, and those issues are important. However, I begin this essay with a description of this situation not because of the pervasiveness of the institutional and disciplinary issues it raises, but rather because it highlights a more general compartmentalization in the way that writing education tends to be discussed and therefore understood in the professional discourse of rhetoric and composition. This was a “writing program” discussion, and discussions of writing at the programmatic level tend to em...
ploy a rhetoric that focuses on administrative concerns. The possibilities and character of writing education were therefore largely constructed in terms of institutional factors such as compliance requirements, budgetary issues, the likelihood of new hires at full- and part-time levels, and the place of writing in general education and in English curricula. In contrast, scholarly discussions of writing pedagogy—method, purpose and praxis in writing classrooms—tend to account for very different factors: textuality, rhetorical theory, ideology, technology, revision, gender, race, and so on. As others have pointed out, though institutional concerns have a profound effect on the character of everyday writing pedagogy, they don’t often appear in research- or theory-driven discussions of postsecondary classroom pedagogy. Jeff Grabill, for instance, notes that research in professional writing often does not account for institutional factors and that this feature is one of the primary characteristics distinguishing such research from research more directly focused on writing pedagogy in postsecondary classrooms (16). Similarly, Margaret Syverson argues that researchers of postsecondary writing, for all of their insistence upon the importance of context, “have been somewhat atomistic, focusing on individual writers, individual texts, isolated acts, processes, or artifacts” (8).¹

In this article, I argue that this compartmentalization should be critically examined and transcended if the field is going to lead the development of undergraduate writing majors. Any new major should be conceived in a way that accounts for the institutional pressures, constraints, and professional contradictions that already characterize writing education in English departments that don’t offer majors. To be clear, this is not another justice-driven argument intended to bring attention to the exploitation of teaching labor in writing instruction. Those arguments have been made, and often made well, over the past decade and a half (see, for instance, Holbrook; Fontaine and Hunter; Schell; and Schell and Stock). Instead, it is an argument that, before we attempt to expand the disciplinary terrain of composition, we should achieve a deeper understanding that what we do in writing classrooms is profoundly shaped by the institutional means by which it is done. Historically-produced hierarchies, the status and working conditions of teachers, and the concrete immediacies of textual production are crucial factors in any pedagogical praxis. At stake with any expansion of postsecondary writing education is not only the status of writing teachers and the discipline of rhetoric and composition, but the vital relationship between the consciousness of students and the socio-material contexts of their literate development. The development of writing majors could present opportunities to transform the broader “ecologies” of postsecondary writing. However, developers of undergraduate majors will need to be aware of not only “the horse,” the scholarly vision that we hope will propel writing majors forward, but also the historical/institu-

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tional baggage that writing instruction carries, and the “roads” that the field is traveling and will likely see in the future. A materially grounded understanding of “circulation” in postsecondary writing could help us to make scholarly conceptions of literacy and institutionally-situated praxis (pedagogical and administrative) more accountable to one another. Without this materially grounded understanding, however, the development of new writing majors could actually have a negative effect on undergraduate English curricula and the profession more generally.

“CIRCULATION” AND POWER

Momentum for the development of new writing majors seems to have been increased by Kathleen Blake Yancey’s 2004 CCCC chair’s address, and published later in *College Composition and Communication*. Referencing a broad range of scholarly discussions, Yancey proposed a major that emphasizes the ability to adapt to new trends in technology, and rhetoric as situated action. Yancey’s proposal realizes that emerging digital technologies are dramatically changing literacy and that academic writing is increasingly disconnected from the shape that writing is taking virtually everywhere other than in classrooms. Postmodern in content and form, the proposal blends visual rhetoric with a creative style of explication, and resists framing the major itself in terms of what one might call traditional disciplinary content. For instance, rather than using terms like “subjects” or relying on rhetorical modes as a basis for curriculum, Yancey employs the more fluid term “approaches.” The “approaches” to composition that will be encompassed by her new major are “all oriented to the circulation of texts, to genre, to media, and to ways that writing gets made, both individually and culturally” (315).

While I certainly find aspects of Yancey’s proposal very engaging and reflective of current scholarly concerns, her avoidance of institutional factors — of the material terms of labor that frame everyday writing pedagogy and the production of students’ texts — is crucial. This avoidance becomes especially salient when Yancey asserts that “First-year composition is a place to begin carrying this [major] forward . . .” (315). The proposal doesn’t mention the circumstances under which first-year composition is typically taught: it doesn’t mention contingent teaching labor, or the fact that professional scholars with Ph.D.s in rhetoric and composition don’t actually teach the overwhelming majority of first-year composition classes. If professionals in rhetoric and composition who are in a position to do so “carry forward” from first-year composition, will it be as managers and theorizers of a project that further expands the de-professionalization of teaching in academia? Because
this proposal is driven by textual theory and doesn't take on questions of institutionality, it leaves open the possibility.

Yancey certainly alludes to the material contexts of writing and education. For instance, she stresses the need to found the writing major on an understanding of "circulation." She cites two kinds of circulation: "(1) the circulation of texts generally and (2) the circulation of a student's own work within an educational culture." She goes on to say that circulation and activity theory are basically the same thing: "What I am calling circulation can go by other names. Charles Bazerman and David Russell, for instance, call it activity theory, but basically it's the same point" (312). This is no small part of Yancey's vision. She cites a lengthy passage from Bazerman and Russell that describes texts as parts of broader activity systems; she cites John Trimbur's articulation of the circulation of writing; and the entire proposal—in its own way—emphasizes production and the social functions of texts.

I agree that circulation and activity theory have potential as starting points for envisioning a new writing major. I also think that analysis of circulation might be far more inclusive of important institutional factors. It is helpful to be mindful of the theoretical and ideological foundations of activity theory. Yrjö Engeström and Riejo Mittenen, who have been instrumental in the promotion of activity theory in the U.S., point out that while often not explicitly recognized in American scholarship, activity theory derives from Marx and dialectical materialism (5-13). Its foundations are in Soviet psychology and linguistics—in the work of Lev Vygotsky, Alexsei Leontiev, and Alexander Luria—and it was only after English translations of their primary work gained more currency in the late 1970s and early 1980s that activity theory began to catch on substantially in the West.

The Marxist perspective and conceptual framework that informs the research method is vitally important because it connects context with consciousness, and human productive activity with the systems of social organization that shape it. As Engeström and Miettininen put it, "the appropriation and creative development of central theoretical ideas of activity theory presuppose a careful and critical study of Marx" (5). In both Marx's work, and in the ongoing critical discussions that have followed, "circulation" is among the subjects of activity analysis, and the term carries particular resonances in the Marxist analytical framework out of which activity theory derives. It situates production within broader socio-political networks. While analysis of the circulation of student's work within educational cultures is now very useful, I think a different understanding of "circulation" might help us to recognize the full range of challenges with, and the broad potentials of, new undergraduate writing majors. Specifically, an examination of circulation can be directed
toward yielding new understandings of how ideology and institutional power relations are wired into sites of production in postsecondary writing education.

Circulation is central to one of Marx's primary projects in *Capital*: exposure of the contradiction between use value and exchange value—a contradiction that enables exploitation in part by separating products from production (Marx 188-244). Marx's project involved careful description of circulation—and through the description, a re-articulation of the relationship between labor in the context of production and a "commodity" at the point of exchange. When the product of human labor ceases to be valued as something immediately useful and becomes a commodity—when it is produced and sold in an organized market—it assumes exchange value. As commodity for exchange, the labor product comes to seem divorced from the socio-material processes of production and its uses as an aspect of the daily material lives of human beings. This divorce is affected, in part, through "circulation." As material goods are circulated from sites of production through mechanisms of distribution and exchange, they are revaluated, and those who are in a position to do so make a profit from this revaluation. So, and this is what is most important to my concerns, circulation is described as a means of identifying material relations of power. Those who are so positioned can pay x to have a good produced, but then sell it as a commodity for y. "Circulation" maps the network of relationships and exchanges that enables people to sell blue jeans produced under sweatshop conditions for pennies on the dollar at a substantial markup at an upscale mall. In contrast, in a primitive economy, workers themselves directly exchange products with other workers—for instance a chair for an ax. Through circulation, facilitated by money within the complex relationships that constitute a modern industrial economy, various parties profit from the movement of products from worker to consumer. "Surplus value" in the form of money, is created through circulation, and as Marx rather dramatically puts it: "Circulation sweats money from every pore" (208).

Marx's description of this process is painstakingly detailed and nuanced and, over the years, his analysis has been lauded, critiqued, dismissed, and expanded upon in response to global economic changes. Regardless of your views of Marx's economic analysis, however, "circulation" has a necessarily Marxist hue when connected to "activity" and "labor" in activity theory. This mode of analysis accounts for the particular historical and material circumstances of production as a means of understanding—and eventually confronting and transforming—relations of power. Leaving the particulars of circulation vague or general mystifies those relations, reproducing existing ideologies and oppressive social relations. Activity analysis is both somatic and systematic: it examines particular activities in order to connect physical bodies to products, sites, and institutionalized networks of relationships. It
is driven by the realization that there is no labor generally, only particular laborers involved in particular productive enterprises: as Marx puts it, “always a certain social body, a social subject, which is active in a greater or sparser totality of branches of production” (86). Production can be understood in terms of its unique social, historical and material terms. To gain a deeper understanding of those terms, however, we need to examine the entire ecology of human labor, from the particulars of its immediate context, to the historical circumstances that have shaped that context, to the circulation of its products.

We have much research that examines how ideology and power are deployed through literacy education in K-12 institutions and in community literacy organizations (see, for instance, Brandt, Cushman, and Grabill). We have few models, however, for such an examination of writing classrooms in postsecondary writing programs, and thus institutional factors remain at once pervasive in writing program discussions and largely invisible in most pedagogical research. Though Yancey’s proposal examines “circulation,” because it doesn’t mention the terms of labor in composition, it omits important questions of power, agency, politics, and historicity from the framework of understanding. This “bird’s eye” view, therefore, can ironically have the unintended effect of distancing texts from the factors surrounding teaching and writing that analysis of activity and circulation can be particularly useful for examining. Stripped of the imperative to enhance an understanding of textual production in critical, perhaps even ideologically meaningful ways, “circulation” largely references only movement—the appearances of texts in one place and then in another. So while the proposal seeks to account for “the circulation of a student’s own work within an educational culture,” it doesn’t discuss the complicated matrix of factors that produce that culture, or frame that work, or sustain its power relations (312). Ironically, the proposal actually downplays the importance of institutionality. New writing majors might be developed “in whatever site: English department, writing studies department, [or] rhetorical studies program . . . the institutional site is less important than the major itself, which can begin to secure our position in the academy while it makes space for the writing that students do on their own, now, without us” (321; emphasis added). Within this frame of analysis, the circulation of texts within educational cultures doesn’t seem related to the terms of labor in composition, nor to the institutional constraints on the goals and production of writing in educational settings. Nor does the vision explicitly connect to a broader political project—such as exploration of the relationship between rhetoric and civic life, or enhancement of the general understanding of literacy and ideology, or affirmation of human dignity. Circulation is, rather, employed as a means of identifying naturalized professional terrains that are
to be articulated and controlled by the rhetoric and composition professionals who are in a position to do so.

Materiality and unresolved questions about the subject and identity of the field are significantly subordinated to the professional imperative to, in Yancey’s words, “secure our position.” I wonder about who “we” are here. Because the material terms of production are omitted from this analytical frame, “our” could include both institutionally vested professionals in rhetoric and composition, and the armies of contingent teachers who teach the overwhelming majority of writing classes. “Our” positionality, status and ethos as workers is distinct, and blurring that distinction erases the differences in power in highly problematic ways. Unfortunately, and ironically, texts produced in educational cultures in this view of “circulation” appear in new contexts like products on store shelves. They might obviously bear the imprint of new digital technologies that enable them to be widely, almost instantly, reproduced and dispersed. They might also display the authors’ abilities to adopt multiple subject positions in a way that we associate with postmodernity. However, this view divorces student texts and writing education from the concrete, material circumstances that create and sustain most postsecondary composition programs. The institutional practices that characterize writing education are thereby rendered invisible, and arguably, student writing labor is itself functioning as a commodity from which a kind of surplus can be extracted, as it continues to create the professional terrain of rhetoric and composition: as subject of research; as illustration of successful curricular initiatives (in program assessment); as outcome of programmatic goals, etc. Implicit in this argument is that the concrete particulars of student and teacher labor aren’t that relevant. The imperative is professional expansion: the field should move to rationalize types of writing not currently subsumed by academic scholarship and pedagogy as the territory of rhetoric and composition. The curricular vision may be new, but the institutional means are business as usual, just bigger business.

Avoiding a discussion of institutionality keeps the conversation concerning a new major firmly, and too safely, within the terministic screen of a scholarly discourse that is about texts and curricular vision. This is where scholars understandably feel most comfortable when we do scholarship. This safety, however, comes at a cost. When we put on our writing program hats, we understand that curricular initiatives don’t spring from the heads of scholars; they are bound to the material practices of specific institutional settings. New writing majors should be informed by the road behind us and in front of us—by the historical position of writing education and recent and emerging trends in funding and administration in academia.
Rhetoric and composition carries the baggage of its history. A number of disciplinary histories describe how the field forged its identity and struggled for status within environments in which it has long been considered subordinate to literary studies. This is well-covered terrain (see, for instance, Berlin, Brereton, Crowley; and Miller). Some things certainly changed in the 1960s and 70s due to a variety of factors (see Harris, *Teaching*); however, the field continues to struggle against deeply-entrenched notions that writing instruction is remedial and not quite worthy of substantial focus and proportional resources at the postsecondary level. Unfortunately, the emergence of rhetoric and composition as a distinct scholarly field has done little to address the fundamental terms of teaching labor in undergraduate writing. This is true not only in traditionally-structured English departments, but also in freestanding writing programs. A Coalition on the Academic Workforce (whose membership includes CCCC and MLA) sponsored survey found that 93% of all introductory classes in freestanding writing programs were taught by non-tenure-track faculty. Moreover, only 60% of all undergraduate courses were taught by contingent faculty (“Report” 338). Freestanding writing programs also had the lowest proportion of tenure-track faculty (14.6 %) of all the nine fields in the humanities and social sciences covered in the study.

Research on general funding and administrative trends in academia point toward a potentially troubling future—especially in the humanities. As sociologist of educational labor Gary Rhoades argues, “seeking status within the academy is a fool’s paradise. It is even more of a fool’s paradise to seek status within a low-status field (English) that has declining status within the academy” (262). The heavy use of contingent teaching labor to teach writing is a part of a broader trend toward “casualization” (see below) of teaching in postsecondary education. Indeed, much research suggests that recent decades have brought about a systematic subsumption of educational functions and goals—including in the humanities—within disciplinary market models (see, for instance, Aronowitz; Martin; Rhoades; Slaughter and Leslie). Legislative and political changes affect the daily work of academics in myriad ways, including a gradual rise in academic administration and a movement toward cheaper instruction involving larger class sizes and more courses taught by non-tenure stream faculty.

Writing majors will need to be developed mindful of how current institutional practices already shape the ongoing concerns and work of the field. They will need to account for the deep historical legacy of bureaucratically-managed writing education and to respond to the synergies between the material terms of academic work, on the one hand, and the economic logics of academic and textual production, on the other. These logics have often positioned rhetoric and composition as “management science”: reluctant facilita-
tor of the casualized academic management model that relies on contingent faculty to teach large portions of a department’s total offerings. The creation of administration-driven writing curriculums has created a foundation for a new discipline but, in many cases, has also desperately truncated the potentials of writing education by efficiently marshalling the labors of institutionally-vulnerable teaching staff toward fulfilling administratively-dictated curricular goals. Some have tracked how what Donna Strickland calls the field’s “managerial unconscious” has shaped its scholarly concerns. Marguerite Helmers, for instance, has argued that the field tends to generalize about students and methods in order to commodify that method—“transhistorical,” generic students and learning experiences are a foundation for a more stable, more portable, more administerial or administratable curriculum (29). Similarly, Bruce Horner has lamented that student writing is produced as a commodity “in ways that guarantee its lack of exchange value: it is clearly authored by and for institutions, not the individual writer, and has an extremely limited range of circulation” (51). We should not “carry forward” from first-year composition toward development of any new major without first confronting what is deeply wrong with first-year composition and undergraduate writing education more generally at medium and large postsecondary institutions. When we create writing majors, we need to think beyond our historically-produced tendency to imagine undergraduate writing in terms of “writing programs” that sustain a dynamic in which literacy education is particularly vulnerable to technocracy. Curricular innovations need to be imagined in conjunction with fundamental institutional changes.

INTEGRATED TRANSFORMATION

Activity theory recognizes two basic processes operating continuously at every level of human activities: internalization and externalization. Internalization is related to reproduction of culture; externalization as creation of new artifacts makes possible its transformation. These two processes are inseparably intertwined. (Engeström and Miettinen 10)

Activity theory need not be about analysis and reaction to culture as given; it can be about creating understandings of positionality and power that can lead to new possibilities for agency and action. We can struggle to resolve the contradictions that exert a perpetual drag on our field through seeking to make administrative, scholarly and pedagogical work a singular praxis, an extension of integrated—if actively contentious and evolving—philosophies of labor, literacy education, and culture. New writing majors might be imple-
mented as parts of broader efforts to change the ecologies of postsecondary writing and thus have both what is written and the writers themselves be transformative.

Institutional transformation is necessarily local and varied, so eroding the numbers of courses taught by people who don’t hold full professional status will involve a number of measures, perhaps including abandoning the first year requirement. The issues of “abolition” and situated administrative pragmatism are well-covered and beyond the scope of this essay, but with the development of a variety of classes staffed by fully-vested professional teachers, we might see letting go of first year composition programs in their present incarnations as liberating. Rhetoric and composition might be able to move into a post-writing program era. Professionals in rhetoric and composition can then get out of the business of teacher management, and postsecondary writing pedagogy can be less constrained by technocratic mechanisms, such as mandatory syllabi and textbooks, and coercive assessments of teachers and student texts. More writing classes can be taught under conditions that enable professionally informed divergence and experimentation in pedagogy.

Writing education can be characterized by ongoing struggles to understand and positively transform the particular historical and material circumstances of textual production inside and outside of academia. They can be driven by an awareness of the dialectical relationships between materiality, social relations and consciousness. Neither the student nor the educational institution are transhistorical givens. Each is continually recreated by the daily labors of human agents and is therefore a potential site of positive change and hopeful possibilities for writing that have yet to be conceived. Let’s not allow any new majors to become business as usual in postsecondary composition.

Notes

1 There are some notable exceptions: Margaret Marshall and Bruce Horner, for instance, who discuss the relationship between the material terms of teaching labor and pedagogy in postsecondary writing. Nevertheless, the field has a surprising, and perhaps telling, dearth of research that critically examines the effects of managerial practices (programmatic policies and goals, evaluation procedures, required syllabi, etc.) on writing pedagogy and student learning in postsecondary writing programs.

2 I use the term “ecology” in the way that has had currency in literacy studies over the past decade. The term is developed extensively in Barton. See Grabill; Syverson; and James Zebroski for applications of ecological perspectives more specific to rhetoric and composition. Of particular relevance to the discussion that follows, Zebroski draws on Marxist theory to advocate “theory in an ecology of practices” in which “theorizing practices . . . are related to

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writing practices, curricular practices, disciplinary practices and professional practices."

3 This deprofessionalization has been documented and theorized in important ways by a number of scholars. Margaret Marshall offers a useful recent discussion of how it might be addressed. Others, such as Teresa Enos, Sue Ellen Holbrook, and Donna Strickland, have associated this diminished status of teaching composition with the more generally subordinate status of "women's work" in society.

4 The majority of those classes, 75%, were found to have been taught by part-time instructors and graduate assistants.

5 For an extended discussion of this issue, see Bousquet; Harris ("Behind"); Eric Marshall; Martin; and Strickland.

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WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY "WRITING"?

A writing emphasis does more than define the curriculum for students. In addition to this function, the writing emphasis curriculum produces a definition of what writing is and also calls into question the limits of disciplinarity.

In addition to having an M.F.A. program in Creative Writing and an M.A. in Composition and Rhetoric, our department has a contested undergraduate writing emphasis that requires students to study multiple genres of writing, including nonfiction writing, fiction and/or poetry, and technical writing. Many of the students in the writing emphasis are interested in becoming creative writers; some of them express frustration at having to study genres of writing that seem to require a different mindset.

The creative writing faculty have from time to time tried to change the writing emphasis to a creative writing emphasis. The desire to make this change, while in many contexts understandable, has the unhappy side-effect of leaving the composition and rhetoric faculty with no clear presence in the undergraduate writing emphasis. In addition, some of the creative writing faculty claim that non-fiction writing should be housed within the creative writing emphasis. The rhetoric and composition faculty would then be left with electives in argument and grammar. These tensions are further complicated by our dean’s repeated statements that he would not add any more emphases, because emphases create needs for new faculty that can’t necessarily be met.

Everyone here has good reasons supporting their positions. Creative writing faculty argue that schools with M.F.A. programs also typically have an undergraduate emphasis in creative writing, and that a creative writing emphasis would help our students get into M.F.A. programs. They argue further that technical communication, also housed in the English department, does not require students to take any writing classes that aren’t immediately relevant to their major. In fact, the technical communication requirement doesn’t even require literature courses.

For their part, composition and rhetoric faculty argue that without the possibility of adding a new emphasis, a change in the emphasis would leave
them and their courses marginalized. They argue further that students are unlikely to know about composition and rhetoric before they attend college, and that they are unlikely to understand what this field offers before they enroll in a required course. Removing required composition and rhetoric classes from the writing emphasis would decrease this area's visibility.

The question of disciplinarity is also contested. The creative writing faculty include poetry, fiction, and nonfiction writing in their subdiscipline. Rhetoric and composition faculty, on the other hand, are likely to want to include those genres as well as argument (a form of nonfiction, but not likely to be found in creative writing), grammar, and new media. Not wanting to hold the creative writing students hostage, yet unable to form an additional emphasis and unsure of the kinds of writing that that emphasis would entail, the composition and rhetoric faculty continue to feel uncertain about how to solve this conflict.

Change is slow in academia, and I have no doubt that this conflict will ultimately be resolved in a way that's satisfactory to most everyone concerned. But this conflict strikes me as symptomatic of the growing pains that the field of rhetoric and composition is experiencing. Here, as a result of the lack of resources, we find ourselves forced to contest the boundaries of our discipline, and to think carefully about what we mean when we say "writing." Perhaps our experience suggests that we should begin our planning of undergraduate emphases by answering that question.
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Reflections/Projections

Kelly Lowe
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AGAINST THE WRITING MAJOR

Rhetoric is the counterpart of Dialectic. Both alike are concerned with such things as come, more or less, within the general ken of all men and belong to no definite science.

— Aristotle, Rhetoric (Book I)

Despite my claim in the title, I am not against the writing major per se; that is, done right, a writing major can be a valuable resource for both students and faculty at colleges and universities. But it is the “done right” that matters. I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on what happens when a writing major comes into existence as a result of good will and good fortune but is compromised by bad planning and bad execution.

I write this with the full disclosure that the writing major I have most direct knowledge of is the one that I proposed, ushered through departmental and college approval, taught in, and loved, is the major that I am now no longer involved with. It is my hope that others can learn from the mistakes I made.

A writing major, especially at a small liberal arts college, with a dedicated but overworked faculty, can be a challenge. The writing major I was involved with from 1995-2005 is a case in point: it began with nine tenured/tenure line faculty, including seven literature faculty, one creative writer and one rhet/comp person, which was never enough staff for a proper writing major. Even as the department grew to have seven literature faculty, two creative writers, and three rhet/comp faculty, there were not enough faculty and/or courses to create a major that was ever really anything more than what one faculty member finally called it: “English without books.”

In other words, our major was not “done right” from the start. It was done with the best of intentions, and it succeeded in some small measure, but it was flawed and compromised as a result of our desire to have a writing major without much thought about what having a writing major might mean to the department.

So what might I mean by “done right”?

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Good question.

If there were a chance at a do-over, I would argue that there need to be two specific conditions in place for a writing major to thrive: proper staffing and proper attention to faculty strengths and weaknesses.

For a writing major to truly work as an equal to an established literature major, there needs to be staffing adequate to the task. For instance, the department at the time had determined that it took seven faculty to properly staff a literature major with both depth and breadth requirements. By contrast, a writing major, especially one attempting to be co-equal with an existing literature major, staffed with just one faculty member, created both departmental tension and an inferiority complex.

Related to the staffing issue is the strength and weakness issue. As the writing major grew, the department and college created two new tenure lines for the program. In what seemed like a good decision at the time, efforts to revise the program were put on hold while we hired new faculty, the argument being that we would wait for the faculty to arrive, assess their strengths and weaknesses, and revise the major accordingly. I now see the flaw in this argument: while the literature major and literature faculty stayed the same, the writing major and writing faculty were in constant flux. With each new hire, the major underwent extensive revisions. It was unsettled from year to year as the faculty stabilized. In hindsight, the better move would have been to first design and revise the major and then to advertise and hire faculty that would fit our program.

My final caveat about a writing major is that it is made far more difficult by writing's complex mission in the academy. As Aristotle recognized, writing is not necessarily a discipline of its own, and that, indeed, it is part of all disciplines. So a writing major, especially at a small college where writing is often taught by tenured or tenure-line faculty, can conflict with expected service missions that writing and its faculty often have at such colleges. Add to this the often significant administrative workload that most writing faculty have, and you find that staffing becomes an even more complex issue.

None of these examples indicate that creating a writing major is impossible. What they should indicate is that there needs to be careful planning and consideration when building a writing major, and that merely wanting one, while part of the battle, is not enough.
Hill Taylor
University of the District of Columbia

BLACK SPACES: EXAMINING THE WRITING MAJOR AT AN URBAN HBCU

A structural analysis of racism suggests that education will not produce less racist institutions as long as white people control them.

—Christine Sleeter (244)

Citizens of all sorts—whether they are teachers in the schools, college faculty, members of the mainstream general public, spokespersons for culture, or legislators—are likely to agree that a teacher’s job is to “improve” students’ language.

—Peter Elbow (359-60)

Education in D.C. public schools is horrible. Seven months ago I sat in my sister’s 12th grade class and it was unbelievable. The teacher had no control of the classroom. Students “clicked up” in groups and held whatever discussion interested them. The teacher walked up to the few students who were working and asked them what page they were on. She gave them all the answers, basically doing the work for them. My sister graduated that spring with two C minuses. She went to school for two classes and couldn’t do better than that. Sometimes my sister says things that don’t make any sense and I am amazed that they graduated her. The D.C. public school system is a travesty and I feel sorry for students going into the world without the proper education.

—Student blog post

I teach at an HBCU in Washington, D.C. My school, an urban public land grant university, sits in affluent Northwest D.C. surrounded by international embassies and offices of Fortune 100™
companies. At once, it is like other colleges and universities and, at the same time, radically different. Like me, most of the students have traveled on D.C.’s buses or subway to get to school; they have come from other places like Ward 7 and Ward 8 in Southeast D.C.—places where news crews venture when stories of inner-city crime and decay are needed. The students who I meet with are mostly black, either from inner-city D.C. or have recently emigrated from countries like Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Ethiopia. Many speak multiple languages deftly, though more out of necessity as vestiges of colonialism and empire, than out of progressive curricula and choice. Most are women, many of them single mothers working and taking classes. These students are, in many ways, the abstractions that curriculum theorists and teacher educators at suburban colleges and universities do not know, but write about and construct anyway. It is interesting and important for these students to have a place at this HBCU situated next to the embassies of Israel and China, and on the fringe of Cleveland Park with its multimillion dollar homes, just as it is important that appropriate curricula exist in such spaces. These relationships are important, though not for the reasons that one may immediately perceive.

In The Mis-Education of the Negro, Carter Woodson issues a mandate for a different and original program of education for African-Americans, specific to their own conditions. If we, as curriculum theorists in the field of composition studies, are to take this mandate into consideration when designing and implementing appropriate curricula and pedagogy, then we must start paying attention to the gritty materialities of the places our students inhabit and come from, the places they hope to go, and especially the worlds they aim to create. We must especially be concerned with the spaces that we (re)produce through our assumptions about curricula and knowledge construction within writing major initiatives at all levels and the sort of assessments and evaluations we privilege within the writing major. Certainly—or at least educators for social justice would hope—we do not want a writing major whose curricular assumptions tacitly subscribe to the notion that the “same educational process which inspires and stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worthwhile, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples” (Woodson xiii). Note the coincidental, yet prescient nonetheless, reference to standard(s) and measurement because this terminology will be important throughout our discussion here. Woodson also highlights the mindset of curriculum designers not invested in the project of social justice: “When you control a man’s thinking, you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his ‘proper place’ and will stay in it. You do not need to send him
to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit” (xiii). In the liminal curricular spaces of English departments, and Writing Majors specifically, not only are we teaching and normalizing how language is used, but we are centering patterns and practices—opening, closing, and prompting the cutting of doors.  

It was the socio-epistemic turn and its influence on English Studies, lest we forget, that enabled a thinking through of discourse not only as a string of written or spoken words, but as a set of patterns and practices informing, and contingent upon, ways of knowing and being in this world. This is the foundation of possibility for any progressive writing major. To be a critical curriculum designer in this vein requires that one not dismiss language or the “givens” of communication that enable and encourage readings and “recognitions,” of rhetorical situations in the everyday, be they in inner city D.C. or in the exurban enclaves of Fairfax County, just outside of D.C.  

As compositionists often charged with “improving” students’ language, as Peter Elbow’s earlier quotation intimates, we can easily find ourselves ensconced in pedagogy where we are not only “fixing” problems with language but also “fixing” identities and hegemonies in ways that run counter to projects of social justice and initiatives of opportunity. While the education, communication, and writing problems epitomized by my student’s blog post at the beginning of this article characterize the dire conditions that complicate urban education, the inclination to “fix” (or “improve”) these problems most often seems to be a tried and true maneuver of enculturation from our imperial curricular past. It is this past that inspired Woodson to write, “In the first place, we must bear in mind that the Negro has never been educated. He has merely been informed about other things which he has not been permitted to do” (144). In composition’s conjunctural present, we have an opportunity to do something different, something better, and something good—to build that two-way door. The writing major is a place to start.  

Within the field of composition, there is precedent for contextually-situated curriculum and pedagogy, albeit one not yet realized to its full potential. Johnathon Mauk remarks that “a thorough examination of practice necessarily involves an examination of social space—the material conditions that generate language and the social conditions that give it meaning. Moreover, an examination of materiality, of space, is also an examination of identity” (377). Mauk is building from the work of Nedra Reynolds and others influenced by studies of critical geography and the spatial turn in social theory. Even with the rise of scholarly interest in the importance of place, theorizing and designing the writing major at an HBCU is previously uncharted territory; rather, it should be, in the sense that it is an opportunity to enact a changed cartography of education. Within my university’s envisioned writing major, I am questing
for a new metaphor and new mapping through a student-centered curriculum that is place- and space-specific, one that acknowledges where my students are writing from, both materially and spatially. For the material of curricular inquiry, I most immediately think of the urban environs of inner-city Washington, D.C., as well as the other nearby urban areas that constitute the D.C. metro area—the places where my students live, work, and play. This pedagogical move should not be discounted, as always already “who we are and what we have to say is in so many ways interwoven, directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously, with our local environs” (Owens 37). As for the spatial, I subscribe to Doreen Massey’s notion that “‘The spatial’ . . . can be seen as constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales, from the global reach of finance and telecommunications, through the geography of the tentacles of national political power, to the social relations within the town, the settlement, the household and the workplace” (4). Within this spatial frame, where are my students situated historically, presently, and in possible futures?

Spatial positionality for most of the students at my university is vastly different than that of students at white, majority, non-HBCU, Tier I—or whatever typology one chooses to invoke—colleges and universities. And, as a result, reception and participation in curricula are different, not to mention “results” of curricula. I think here of the radical difference that socioeconomic status makes, illuminated by a consideration of the appropriateness of such curricular themes as service-learning; several of my students have lived in homeless shelters while attending classes. Do service-learning initiatives and other possible writing major components make sense for them in the same way they might for privileged students at elite universities? Can, or should, a common programmatic evaluation exist? To ignore my students’ positionali-
ties within this spatial frame would reinscribe current relations of power, as well as create an amplified environment of unsustainability where abstraction dominates over attention to the local and everyday.

In Composition and Sustainability, Derek Owens highlights the importance of knowing where our students are writing from when he discusses what “success” is in the composition classroom. Owens mentions that success depends “on how effectively the teacher and students work together to create a writing environment that they find intellectually and culturally related to their local conditions” (180). Just as “education” doesn’t just happen in Building 39 Room 110#, there are limitless and different contexts of writing and writing environments with all existing contingent on place and particularity. Owens follows Eric Zencey’s advocacy for a shift toward “rooted education” which takes to task what non-black universities often perpetuate in the name of “multicultural inclusiveness,” that being a “politics of placeless identity rather than
a politics of rootedness in place" (17). Identity is treated as an abstraction by curriculum designers in far too many instances, with architects of writing majors being no exception. Rather than have a curriculum that is anti-indigenous or not centered on place, I argue that the curriculum of writing majors should exist contingent on place and concerned with how place-centered literacies and communication practices become enabled or shut out, along with their attendant rhetors.

The recent attention to development of a post-secondary writing major has prompted many English departments to “get on board” and “develop” a writing major for their institution. In part, these initiatives are driven by employers demanding proficient writers and communicators, but I would like to believe the recent attention to the writing major also represents the fruition of various knowledge projects. This seems like a unique space—one that must be (re)claimed. As such, it makes sense to employ a unique and temporally appropriate curricular frame. Borrowing from the work of Giles Deleuze in A Thousand Plateaus, I privilege a “haptic” versus “optic” writing major. This “haptic” curriculum is predicated on contingency and participation versus the dominant writing major curriculum that tends to be “optic” and assumes that phenomena repeat, or are measurable, assessable representations of an ideal form, resulting in a simplification and homogenization of cultural identity as well as a cultural-deficiency perspective where gaps and “deficient” literacies exist (Sleeter 246).

The writing major that I am describing, at least prospectively, includes courses titled Introduction to Technical Writing, Introduction to Linguistics, Professional and Technical Writing, Advanced Composition, Writing in the Sciences, Mass Media and Reporting, Writing and Technology, and Creative Non-Fiction, as well as “advanced” upper-division course offerings. On the surface, these courses appear very similar to offerings at other colleges and universities, even those situated in radically-different environs and constituted by populations quite different than those at my HBCU in urban Washington, D.C. This similarity may appear to be one more iteration closer to a homogenized and easily “assessable” curriculum (that is to say, optic), but I argue for content and pedagogy that make it exactly the opposite.

Proponents of such a contextually-situated initiative will find themselves aligned with a quintessential project of liberatory education that hinges on the belief that the aims of education should be the pursuit and achievement of social justice, along lines of gender and race, with the ultimate goal being rearticulations of the gritty materialities of political economy and the construction of identity (and its perceived representations). For the writing major at my university, such a mandate is necessary due to its uniqueness as an essentially “open-admissions” urban public land grant university. This mandate
is emphatically underscored when juxtaposed with seemingly similar institutional, but radically different demographic, white and suburban spaces. In a way, the creation of a place- and space-specific writing major is a curricular deterritorialization. By this I mean that what has become standard practice and accepted writing major curriculum often appears as obvious and transparent, but in reality is not; rather what we assume as appropriate and commonplace (as common sense if you will) is, when “deconcealed” (a term I will return to), hegemony epitomized. For example, should we assume that all technical writing is done by similar individuals and in similar contexts? A haptic curriculum asks how race, gender, and socio-economic status matter in a specific locale, as well as how they matter in the process of globalization. Are we to assume that all resources are equal leading up to university study, or that even all universities have adequate resources? To both of these questions, I resoundingly answer, “No.” It follows that a breaching or shift in such a curriculum can throw participants into different spatial relations—one hopes relations of possibility and agency as opposed to relations of standardization, homogenization, and reinscription of the status quo. This is what Deleuze refers to as deterritorialization and sets up as a possible action when juxtaposing the haptic and the optic, or alternatively “nomad” and “State” space (see Essays).

For conceptualization of optic space, as for familiar notions of discourse, the awareness of what one obliviously takes as “given” and “invisible” is key. Often this is this case with optic space which is, philosophically speaking, very similar to the Kantian apriori and exists independently of what is in it. I think of homogenized curriculum here. The haptic space, however, is the space of insurgency brought on from stress enacted by the community of the multitude and its corresponding multiplicity of singular differences (Hardt and Negri xiv). It would seem that with the proliferation of talk, journal articles, and conferences that revolve around monikers like critical pedagogy, diversity, representation, identity, multiculturalism, and on and on, compositionists would be open to, and even excited about, insurgent curricular spaces. Additionally, if it is indeed true that the “failures of representation at the local and national levels increase geometrically in the processes of globalization” and the “mechanism of connection and instruction in the new realms of globalization are much more tenuous than even those of the old patriarchal representation” (Hardt and Negri 271), what other curricular choices, besides a place- and space-specific writing major, will enable and empower the multitude of students that make their way through English departments? In this conjunctural moment, communication and representation are always already contingent on these processes and the places in which they occur, undoubtedly setting the landscape of futures and possibilities that can be (re)produced and (re)created. We recognize this as a strategy for management and Panopti-
con-like control, for “norming” and measurement, and preservation of center with margin. My fear of a writing major not contingent on place and space is that students at my university and others like it might remain positioned on the margins as “other,” assumed to possess “different” and “unique,” but still “deficient” literacies.

As compositionists and experts in rhetoric, it is essential to remember (for we should, of all people, already know this) that spatial characteristics heavily influence habits of perception, meaning that different programmatic systems influence how we see the world and others in it. Our world is complex and indeterminate. A curriculum should reflect this reality and provide the tools for students to access their most immediate environments. My proposal for context-specific writing major curriculum does this by acknowledging that the gradients of haptic space “are produced region by region, neighborhood by neighborhood, through connections, deterritorializations, intensities and observances” inducing “new becomings, and is reciprocally produced by such becomings” (Roy 31). Nedra Reynolds recognized this for the field of composition when she wrote that “a spatial politics of writing works to deny transparent space and to attend to neglected places in their material reality rather than their imaginary forms” (30). Curriculum designers of the writing major need to recognize this geographical mapping of composition but, perhaps more importantly, they need to understand that within this cartography there are multiple positionalities that necessitate a pluralism of place- and space-specific pedagogies and curricular components that will result in a complex geography, a multitude if you will, of writing majors.

The outside forces that shape the more “structural” components of curricula are best accommodated by such a space-specific curriculum. Whether we see these elements of influence existing as the private sector demand for students with certain skill sets (technical writing, digital literacy, basic software coding) or as the complex and accelerating process of globalization (e.g., issues of cultural identity and social justice), it makes sense for curricula to be contingent and ever-changing in response to these hegemonies. In Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in Composition, Paula Mathieu (writing about marginalized publics and about homelessness specifically) argues that the challenge “is to help ourselves and our students see the interaction and interdependency between local and global forces in creating the world we live in” and that “this challenge is complicated by the gap that exists—in theory, in terminology, in understanding—between the dichotomies of the local and the global” (70-71). Mathieu's project is different than mine, as she is ensconced in a pedagogy and practice that “centers” homeless populations locally and globally. However, the acknowledgement and use of a spatial frame characterized by contingency enables a geography comprised of her project concerned
with homeless populations, mine focused on urban populations of people of color, and infinite other conjuncture-specific possibilities.

Certainly, arguments could be made that the mere emergence of a writing major in English departments, replete with courses in scientific writing, multimedia rhetoric and design, and community literacies, proves that the academy is delivering appropriate curricula that enable students to access their most immediate lifeworlds now and in the future. Well, maybe, but I'm not so sure that these curricular offerings are being designed with populations at HBCUs in mind. And even if some students do acquire those desired and much-ballyhooed skill sets essential for “success” in our globalized world, which students are achieving this and at what cost? How is this curriculum being taught? And, what is the specific content?

At first glance, the emergent writing major at my school appears to be made up of the same courses that comprise writing majors at colleges and universities all over the United States. However, the proposed curriculum would not function in universal concert with other curricula when it comes to measurement and assessment. Qualitatively, the proposed curriculum would “produce” knowledges and uses radically different than many other programs due largely to the spatial (and racial) context of the producers and users of this curriculum. So, while there are courses tentatively scheduled as Mass Media and Reporting and Sociolinguistics, the Afro-centric readings and readers in these courses in urban Washington, D.C. incorporate and elicit radical differences from, say, white counterparts in Des Moines, Iowa. Of course, there will be similarities as well that need to be explored, but I imagine the pressure to norm and rank outcomes will shift focus to the “differences” and “deficiencies.” This pressure is always already great and we have yet to find a constructive way to deal with it, outside of “correcting” and “fixing”, or worse yet by fetishizing the Other in a boutique multicultural sort of way? Rather than lament this spatial observation and racial characterization as essentialist, segregationist, or its qualitative differences as non-measurable (in a quantitative way), compositionists should strive for this sometimes uncomfortable and often unfamiliar qualitative diversity, with the first step toward reflexivity being a concern with the context-specific knowledges that are produced and how they are “used” by different populations.

Here is an example. It does not seem appropriate for a course in linguistics, for instance, to look the same (in content or in pedagogy) at a historically black land-grant urban university as it would at a Research I, predominantly white suburban university in the southwestern United States. The students and communities in these places are different, as is their lived practice of place—their space, if you will. The linguistic studies and works of Walt Wolfram, detailed in texts like The Study of Social Dialects
in American English (1974) and Handbook of Language Differences and Speech and Language Pathology: Baltimore City Public Schools (1993), are books researched and intellectually produced at local sites in the D.C. metro area, and pieces like these speak directly about the vernacular dialect and linguistic spaces of students at my HBCU. Certainly students at Tier I non-black universities should study Wolfram’s works, but place and positionality matter. Pedagogy matters, too. How these works are taught, by whom, and the responses (academic and otherwise) of students matter greatly. Within the writing major, we need to be willing to give up power; in other words, we need to be willing to forgo tendencies to adopt a curriculum and with imperatives of control that characterize a Foucauldian “Panopticon” state, which the institution of academe often resembles.

Juxtaposing local literacy projects and narratives that exist outside of “academe proper” provides resonance for students that is engaging and even produces new knowledge and new ways of knowing; maybe this is even the time to let Malcolm X’s autobiography truly stand in for the history of writing (Sirc 43) and to seriously ask as a field, “What would this history mean for urban black students in D.C. versus white students in the Midwest?” A curriculum of this sort can potentially result in fewer situations of student despondence (remember my student blog post at the beginning of this article) and maybe such a curriculum can even achieve vaunted academic goals like action-research where new knowledge or solutions are “produced” or “revealed.” I would even rearticulate this as a form of “deconcealment” where a “truth” gains its meaning when standing in relation to an “un-truth” (Heidegger 104-05). What is “truth” for a student in one place may be an “un-truth” for another student elsewhere; let us be skeptical of concepts like curricular “common sense” because such givens perfectly epitomize hegemony.

For my HBCU’s writing major, examples of content and practice for courses such as Contexts of Literacy and Community Literacy include local literacy projects and critiques of service learning initiatives, courses common in English departments. However, positionality and authenticity of experience play key roles here because the students at my HBCU often grew up as the subjects of service learning and community literacy initiatives, understanding very well the failures of many such initiatives that often only serve to validate the experience of the students privileged enough to work as literacy tutors and mentors. What if the roles were reversed? Students at my HBCU in Washington, D.C. have grown up with a representation of their hometown that differs radically from their lived experiences. They have also been rhetorically positioned and represented in ways that do not resemble who they are or who they aspire to be. Two student quotes epitomize these oft-occluded concerns. One student writes,
The media, as usual, only portray the political and "white" side of D.C. when they have something positive to say. If it is something negative, it will inevitably focus on a minority group, especially blacks. As the media ignores the reality of poverty, crime and delinquency in D.C., it will only be delaying solving the problem and allow it to fester. This was clearly seen in New Orleans when America "woke up," even if for a few days, to the reality of black poverty and desperation in this country. Sadly, after Katrina the media will go back to their old ways and this should change.

Another student comments,

To tourists, the media represents D.C. as this wonderful place to be with lots to do. Don't get me wrong, there are some beautiful places in D.C. to see such as the museums, monuments, gardens, and other historic places. This is not D.C. as a whole. This is a problem because leaving out important details is a lie; "lying by omission." To the white residents, D.C. also seems to be this great place to live, but if there are problems the reason it is going downhill is because of the minorities. All the crime you usually see broadcasted on the news in our area are committed by minorities. Like White people don't commit crime.

These are pivotal representations to factor in when designing a writing major because—believe it or not—curriculum design is a political act.

In addition to making better places and spaces through social justice initiatives, educators are charged with the task of providing skill sets to students so that they may earn livings and pursue the economic and social livelihoods they desire. The current tracks of technical proficiency in writing majors acknowledges quite well, and I firmly believe, that students at my HBCU need these courses and resources that go along with them just as much as students at Purdue or MIT. What is different, though, is the need for a localized and admittedly politicized curriculum, the same intimations that are tacitly imbued into the optic curriculums at non-black institutions that are educating for success in a capitalist context. So, the writing major at my school should indeed include courses such as Writing in Cyberspace, Web Page Design, Technical Writing for Biotech, Professional Communication for Government and Industry, and Writing for Journalism and Mass Media.
However, positionality, possibility, and the politics of language make these courses different at an HBCU. The economic opportunities available for students should be part of the discussion, as should the pathways to these opportunities. This equates to a discussion of historical and current trends in workforce participation and how such things jibe with notions of skill sets and positionality along lines of race, gender, and socioeconomic status, which necessitates a critical inquiry into access as it relates to institutionalized systems of oppression. Writing and communication can serve as conduits to success, but this relationship cannot exist as an abstraction.

There are two troubling scenarios here. One revolves around the Deweyian mandate that what is to be studied is a matter for local decision-making and that curriculum should mirror realities and show possibilities for students (20). If the writing major at an HBCU treats curriculum and possibility as abstractions and suggests that if only a student jumps through the curricular hoops in a non-place- and space-specific curriculum, then an abstraction also known as a job (replete with all the trappings of equality and social justice) will be there for them. By not discussing the specifics of the local economy and what employment opportunities are actually there (e.g., biotech, government employment, education) and the probabilities of immediate and future employment for writing experts (e.g., local unemployment statistics, emerging trends in job categories and outsourcing), we are selling bogus goods and setting up further exploitation and disappointment for already-marginalized groups. In Outlaw Culture, bell hooks encapsulates the detriment of constructing false realities and how they can work to make marginalized persons see themselves as poor and ostracized from an accepted and successful majority, regardless of actual achievements by these marginalized individuals (165-69).

The second point of concern for me is really about identity, for individuals and culture generally. When I lambaste a curriculum for positioning students and jobs as abstractions, I am actually guilty of propagating a misnomer myself. The abstractions that I lament are not abstractions for many students and educators. The literacies and opportunities that many writing majors herald are quite familiar for many students, just not most students at HBCUs. Woodson’s prescience is worth quoting at length here:

The chief difficulty with the education of the Negro is that it has been largely imitation resulting in the enslavement of his mind. Somebody outside of the race has desired to try out on Negroes some experiment which interested him and his coworkers . . . the keynote in the education of the Negro has been to do what he is told to do. Any Negro who has learned
to do this is well prepared to function in the American social order as others would have him. (Woodson 134)

With the vision of educators who recognize the places and spaces of students, curricula for students of color should come from within, not from without. Kenneth Gergen puts this clearly when he states,

Students themselves are experts within the discourses of their own particular subcultures—languages that help them to maintain their life-styles and adapt to the world as they construct it. Thus education should not be a matter of replacing “poor” with “superior” knowledge, but should be a dialogue, in which all subcultures may benefit from the discourses of their neighbors. (250)

Asking HBCU students to practice an “economy of identity” where they give up skills and ways of knowing in a supposed trade for employment or inclusion seems problematic and should be a major concern for all.

It is my hope that this article has provided a useful theoretical frame for the construction of writing major curriculum at HBCUs and elsewhere. On purpose and with clear intention, I have not hashed out or provided specific essential components of a writing major curriculum; rather, I have endeavored to outline the mindset from which such a curriculum should spring. Whether we have recognized it or not, we are of the multitude and a solidarity of differences and uniqueness is the only route to better worlds. By remembering that places and spaces differ, we can construct haptic curricula that are contingent on difference and recognition. By letting abstractions stand, we fall prey to assumptions, one-dimension mapping, and uncritical measurement that further occlude those so critical to our journey toward better words and worlds.

Notes

1 It is equally important here to acknowledge that “these conditions” cannot be reduced or generalized or typified by an anecdote or sweeping essentialization. In short, just as all blacks in American do not live in urban Washington, D.C., all blacks do not occupy the spaces associated with these “deficient conditions.”

2 In her critique of contemporary ideology, and what she labels as “The New Racism,” Patricia Hill Collins (2005) articulates discourse as “a set of ideas and practices that when taken together organize both the way a
society defines certain truths about itself and the way it puts together social power” (17).

James Gee articulates discourses as “ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes” (142). Gee often capitalizes “Discourse” to intimate a broader definition, one that posits Discourse as “a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize” (142).

On my campus most of the buildings are not named; rather, they are designated by numbers.

The many different articulations of literacy and socio-epistemic rhetoric over the past few decades epitomize such knowledge projects (e.g., the work of James Berlin, James Gee).

I write this after making my travel reservations for the CCCC 2007 Annual Convention entitled “Representing Identities.”

See Stanley Fish’s “Boutique Multiculturalism.”

This asks a lot of those teaching these courses, as they must be aware of a variety of trends and realities outside of academe—not allowing assumptions or abstractions to stand in here either.

WORKS CITED


I have come to discover that many fellow rhet/compers choose the field for similar reasons as I did: First, the field teaches a practical, useful skill: writing. Second, jobs abound (supposedly) in rhetoric and composition whereas jobs in literature can be tough to come by. Finally, the relative youth of the field leaves much to study, to theorize, to write, and to learn, and we all want to be a part of something seminal and exciting. From my vantage point, with only the above list motivating my hopes and dreams of what my career might look like, I found the essays, stories and reports in *Culture Shock and the Practice of Profession* both refreshing and harrowing.

Anderson and Romano have set out to craft a series of essays that offers three perspectives on what the work of a rhetoric and composition professional looks like: “Experienced teachers and administrators designing the preparation of future faculty . . . graduate students grappling with their own unstable situations . . . and newly hired PhDs [who can speak about] what it feels like to be suddenly ‘out there’” (4). These three perspectives are offered within three sub-categories that divide the book. Section 1, entitled “Being (Out) There: What We Got and How It Served,” focuses on stories from new and old members of the field reporting on how well served they have been by their PhD programs. Section 2, called “Models and Frameworks for Change,” offers practical advice on how PhD programs in rhetoric and composition should consider changing to meet the realities of the work said PhDs will be asked to do. Finally, section 3, “Visions Light and Dark,” suggests new (sometimes radically new) ideas about how to shape a different sort of future, one that better meets the needs of up-and-coming professionals.

In chapter 1, Lisa Langstraat and Julie Lindquist lead off the book with a common theme: a sense of under-preparedness for the “emotional demands” and “pragmatic skills” of real-world work in rhet/comp. Chapter 2’s authors, on the other hand, claim that their doctoral work was too focused on practice and not focused enough on training scholars to engage a relevant audience. Chapters 3 through 6 delve into specific types of programs and institutions, such as Technical Communication studies, online teaching, two-year college teaching, and Writing Program administration, and all three come to similar conclusions: PhD programs need (but often fail) to “respond to the
communit[ies] of diverse students [they] teach, rather than relying on an abstract definition of what graduate school is supposed to be” (84). At the end of this opening section, Scott Stevens succinctly sums up the problem, saying that “graduate study fails by not teaching us about the seemingly trivial things” (140).

Section 2 of the book picks up where section 1 leaves off, calling in chapters 7, 8 and 11 for future WPAs to be trained as citizens-rhetors by faculty who maintain a “leader-with-others ethos” rather than a “leader-above-others” ethos (146). Too much information about the realities of writing program administration gets transferred merely by observation rather than by explicit education in such matters. Textbooks are needed that directly address the practical, intellectual and political work that goes into writing program administration. In the midst of much repetition, Carter et al., in “It’s a Two-Way Street,” offer particularly helpful insights into issues of race in mentor-mentee relationships among faculty and graduate students. They, along with Sosnoski and Burmester in chapter 16, call for new models of authority in the teacher-student relationship in the belief that “strategies for cultivating individual relationships” are much more helpful in promoting intellectual achievement than traditional “helping behaviors” offered by teachers to students (257). These authors believe that changing the nature of the teacher-student relationship would bring about many of the other changes called for in this book. Finally, rounding out the second section, Brooke and Bender call for technological integration into the training of graduate students who will inevitably be asked in ways small and large to incorporate technology into their future classrooms.

In section 3, Brown and Miller propose that rhetoric and composition provides a perfect site for transformation in models of higher education because “we study and work at sites where the hierarchy of research, teaching, and service is coming apart at the seams as it fails to account for the conflicting purposes pushed upon institutions of public learning” (289). In chapter 15, Bazerman et al. suggest that the aims of composition marry nicely with the aims of educational theory and thus perhaps composition training belongs in schools of education, where “making a difference in lives and societies” fits with the core values of rhetoric and composition studies. The final two chapters call for reform from within, pointing out that we who see the problems mentioned in this book need to lead the charge for change if change is ever going to happen. As we rethink what rhetoric and composition should be, we have the opportunity to change English departments from within, but more importantly we have the chance to change entire universities and maybe even some of the antiquated modes of thinking in higher education.

Reading this volume as a graduate student leaves me feeling both excited by the possibility of helping change the future of our discipline but
also frightened that I’m not being prepared as I should for what lies ahead. That said, I would have found the book more helpful had it been both more concrete and better organized. Too many of these pieces call for broad, sweeping changes to the entire field of rhet/comp and graduate education. When I came across Brooke and Bender’s conclusion in chapter 13 that “it is often the small changes that make a real difference” (284), I found myself wishing that this book offered more suggestions for “small changes.” Carter et al.’s chapter about white faculty mentoring African-American graduate students offered just the sort of small suggestion this book needed more of. Yet I found it curious that it wasn’t coupled directly with Sosnoski and Burmester’s similar chapter about mentoring. Perhaps the book would have been easier to follow if the sections had been broken down by sub-disciplines such as Writing Program Administration, Technical Writing, and so on. It could have ended with a “General Changes” section where new ideas for teacher-student relationships, new ideas for textbooks, etc. could have been presented. While all of these concepts existed in the volume, they were scattered throughout the book in essays that were repetitive and difficult to synthesize.

Finally, I found some irony in the fact this book does call for necessary changes in rhet/comp education, but it seems to perpetuate the very problem it decries—that too much emphasis is placed on research and academic writing in our training institutions, and not enough emphasis gets placed on training for the day-to-day, practical work one ends up doing. Thus, while I found that this collection raised insightful and sometimes practical points (especially section 2, as that was its purpose), my own call is for those of us who see the need for reform to focus our writing more on practical suggestions for change—changes we try first and then reflect upon—rather than offering untried theories of how things ought to be. While Anderson and Romano deserve commendation for compiling a thought-provoking collection on how rhetoric and composition training needs to change, I found myself wanting more of the practical and less of the theoretical. After all, that seems to be the call of the collection itself.

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Reviewed by Melody Heffner, Georgia State University

Part of the Refiguring English Studies series, Bergmann and Baker’s collection updates the discussion in Winifred Bryan Horner’s 1983 book Composition and Literature: Bridging the Gap. After more than 20 years, however, the editors have chosen to re-orient the discussion by incorporating tales of both divisiveness and inclusion in the traditional English departments where most rhetoric and composition programs are housed.

Divided into three sections, the collection provides a wide range of approaches to the problems faced by the field of composition, but the book offers little to the “literary studies” academic seeking to engage these issues alongside compositionists. The authors claim their goal is to “extend faculty discussions about literature and composition,” but there seems to be little genuine curiosity about how a literary studies academic might feel about these same issues (xiii). This problem wouldn’t be so striking if that goal and the Call for Papers weren’t both so far-reaching. The editors state that they received “twice as many papers and proposals as we could include,” yet no article in the book was written by a literary scholar (xiii). According to Mary T. Segall, whose essay closes the book, students are the “missing voices” in the conversation, but one could also argue that the exclusion of literary scholars constitutes another group of missing voices, since the book aims to address issues that arise between literary and composition scholars.

After the introductory chapter by editor Linda Bergmann, the collection opens with the section “Institutional Contexts.” Aiming to place current problems into a wider historical and institutional context, these essays include discussions of power differentials between composition and literary studies, the debate about what composition courses should accomplish, historical and social analyses of the “divorce” of writing from literary study, and a rather pessimistic assessment of the English profession’s “schizophrenia” (54). However, one of the most relevant issues addressed in this section is the long-standing opposition between poetics and rhetoric.

The emphasis on poetics versus rhetoric grounds the analyses presented in section 1 because it serves as an important reminder to both literary studies and composition academics that our debates have a history dating back to the time of the ancient Greeks. Several writers delve into Aristotle’s division of poetics and rhetoric, as well as his dismissal of poetics as a mode of writing because of its failure to engage citizens in productive democratic discourse.
Thus, the editors chose an apt essay by Dominic DelliCarpini to open the collection. His work questions the trend of service-learning in composition courses in order to bring up the issue of writing as civic engagement. He cites statistics showing increases in student volunteerism, even as student involvement with political issues dwindles. This discussion opens the first section by directly addressing the goals of composition teachers, with DelliCarpini explaining the teaching of writing as a way to engage students politically by using writing to encourage critical thinking about civic and political issues.

Following Delli Carpini, Edward Kearns claims that English academics of all stripes suffer from professional schizophrenia, in which our multitude of aims are outstripping our abilities to fully address our students’ needs, or even to clearly define what those needs are. Drawing on traditional notions of aesthetics and the role of the writing teacher, Kearns’ essay perhaps oversimplifies the challenges faced by compositionists in different types of educational institutions. He does, however, make one clear statement that all scholars engaged with any form of English studies should take to heart: we should both respect and evaluate the work of both student and professional writers. He points out that English is the only academic department that consistently devalues working artists and those who teach them, and he asks that we look to other humanities departments, such as Art and Music, where student development and teaching are not dismissed as he feels they are in English departments.

Eve Wiederhold closes this section by responding to claims about the “ruined university.” She analyzes Bill Reading’s *The University in Ruins*, showing how his work fails to take into account the work of James Berlin. Once again, critical composition scholarship has been overlooked, much to the detriment of everyone involved, since Berlin’s aim was to point out connections between the approaches of Cultural Studies and Classical Rhetoric.

This final argument of section 1 thus supports the editors’ statement that they don’t advocate for either separation of composition from English departments or for their continued integration. As Timothy Doherty’s essay illustrates, there are significant problems when composition splits off from English departments, and his narrative outlines a number of institutional constraints that can make this separation detrimental for composition departments seeking to strike out on their own in a university system that requires clear-cut goals and outcomes.

In section 2, “Departmental Cultures,” Barry Maid provides an alternate vision of the differences between rhetoric and composition and literary studies. Where Kearns saw the work of artists in art and music departments being valued, Maid sees practitioners equally disenfranchised in foreign language, math, and political science departments. Maid suggests that writing
is an applied discipline, and this argument perhaps lies at the heart of every essay in this collection. Although composition scholars may or may not agree on this point, they all realize that many of their literary colleagues consider the teaching of writing an applied or practical discipline that is not relevant to advanced literary study. For this reason, Maid ends his discussion by asserting that compositionists need to abandon their “psychological ties” to English departments (107).

The notion of writing as an applied discipline relates to an issue also addressed by Kearns—the degree of scientific knowledge that an English department can claim. Early compositionists, such as Janet Emig and Flower and Hayes, took a social-scientific approach in their studies of basic writers, while compositionists like Kearns still view writing as an art form that can’t be scientifically explained any more than art or music can (although this point could be debated as well.) After this striking assertion, John Heyda and Dennis Ciesielski present other arguments. Heyda narrates his struggles to create an English 112 course that will motivate his students to become critical thinkers and involved citizens. Struggling with the discrepancy between his literature colleagues’ disdain for the course’s innovation and his own passion to change it, he gives an insightful critique from the inside of an English department as he wrestles with the relevance, politics, and economics of composition courses. Then, where Heyda has exposed boundaries and divisions, Dennis Ciesielski argues for “whole” English professors who are well-versed in both literary and composition theory. This well-rounded conception of the English professor may seem idealistic, but Ciesielski does succeed in pointing out the bizarre fact that graduate students in literature teach the bulk of composition courses (for which they have little training), while compositionists are barred from teaching literature courses because those areas are not their specialty. Ciesielski does all English professors a favor by holding these facts up to the light. The frustrations of literature students teaching composition courses has long been discussed, but the opposite situation, the fact that compositionists might like to teach literature classes once in a while, seems to be a relatively unaddressed concern.

In section 3, Fischer, Reiss, and Young argue that writing teachers should accommodate technology and its accompanying genre changes. With computer-mediated communication, students both expect and require new forms and conventions for their writing. In arguing for “multiple literacies,” these scholars continue the ongoing dialogue about the definitions of writing and of literature. Next, editor Edith M. Baker takes on almost all of the debates in the collection as she argues that literature in the composition classroom can accomplish both the civic aims of compositionists and the language-sensitivity practices that literature scholars value so highly. She supports the writing
teacher’s aim of involving students with multiple genres and texts, but she also argues that Literature can encompass these genres.

Finally, in the last essay in the collection, Mary T. Segall addresses student responses to the teaching of literature in the composition classroom. With an analysis of student responses to a questionnaire, she shows that there is no universal answer to the question, as students go to college for a variety of different reasons, all of which contribute to their interest in or understanding of literature.

The afterword to the collection provides one possible solution to the disconnect between literature and composition: focusing on the reading process (rather than on literature) as we have focused on the writing process (rather than the final product of student writing). This idea fits neatly into literary arguments for reading as interpretation and into composition’s arguments for focusing on student writing processes. By extending our “process, not product” theory to reading, Patricia Harkin ends the collection with a possible meeting ground for literary theorists and rhetoric and composition scholars.

Atlanta, GA


Reviewed by Joyce Adams, Brigham Young University

In Rhetorical Agendas: Political, Ethical, Spiritual, Patricia Bizzell has compiled the presentations given at the Rhetoric Society of America (RSA) conference held in 2004. This assemblage of writings illustrates some of the current rhetorical trends in composition. This book contributes to serious, scholarly discussions on the use of rhetoric in diverse settings. The value of the book lies in its convenient aggregation for those interested in the diversity of rhetorical agendas.

Bizzell, as President for the Rhetoric Society of America 2004-2005, sent out a Call for Proposals to encourage submissions of papers on the political, ethical, and spiritual elements of rhetorical agency. For Bizzell, in the papers that were received, patterns emerged which she grouped as “History,” “Theory,” “Pedagogy,” “Publics,” and “Gender.” The papers in each section are not mutually exclusive to that section; for example, there is no separate section for spiritual because Bizzell felt that every section treats religious discourses in one way or another.
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Bizzell included the talks of the conference’s featured speakers in Section 1, “Rhetorical Agendas.” The motif of diversity begins in this section. The text begins with Lester Faigley, who promotes “slow rhetoric,” such as that found at a conference. He says that the readily accessible “glut of information” has not increased global understanding; rather, it has led to increased “fragmentation, confusion, and exhaustion” (6). He concludes by prophesying that the future generations’ success will depend on how well students are taught to use slow rhetoric. This pattern of including various rhetorical agendas without concrete suggestions to apply them remains invariant throughout the book.

Section 2, “History,” includes a variety of papers on rhetorical history, including a look at Methodist preaching; the visual culture inherent in Milton’s *Areopagitica*; the use of acumen, memory, and imaginative universals in Vico’s *Institutiones Oratoriae*; spiritual and secular happiness rhetoric used by Joseph Smith, an early prophet for the Mormons, and John Stuart Mill, a professional rhetorician, who published widely throughout his lifetime. This section also includes an explication of Campbell’s view of argument as comparison. Of particular interest was Connie Kendall’s article on literacy as a means of avoiding being hanged. In a period that lasted more than 400 years of British history, clergymen were often exempted from legal punishments. To “prove” that a person was a member of the clergy, he had to read a passage to the members of the courts. This “neck verse” was the deciding factor in whether or not a member of the clergy would be hanged for his crime, or merely branded (97). The ability to read was limited at that time to clergy and the wealthy. Kendall then cleverly ties this history into the value or misuse of literacy testing.

This history section will interest the devotee of historical rhetoric. However, this readership would be well advised to peruse the book for additional historical papers that have been placed in other categories.

Section 3, “Theory,” combines a blend of historical rhetoric and theory. Historical rhetoricians will be able to read about Aristotle, Kenneth Burke, Levinas, and Archbishop Whately. Rhetorical theorists may enjoy insights into theories of the ethical practice of private commitments and public rhetoric, usability and image in electronic texts; moral-emotions, and rhetorical problems of music. This section does not contribute in-depth treatises on new theory; rather, it offers a variety of theories for which more studies should be done. However, it does include a variety of such insights as Lynda Walsh’s “The Scientific Media Hoax: A Rhetoric for Reconciling Linguistics and Literary Criticism.” Walsh apprises the reader of a brief history of media hoaxes, including Poe’s moon hoax. She then explains that she began her search to
explain the approaches to hoaxes by using H. Paul Grice’s four basic maxims formed from the cooperativity principle:

- Maxim of Quality: Tell the truth
- Maxim of Quantity: Be as informative as expected
- Maxim of Relevance: Make your contribution relevant to what has come before
- Maxim of Manner: Be brief, orderly, and clear. (166)

Walsh claims that these maxims, which are “usually adhered to in most ‘normal’ communication, written and spoken” have been violated in the use of scientific media hoaxes. She then presents her solution: the Optimality theory, which results in a new philology.

Section 4, “Pedagogy,” has practical implications for the use of rhetoric. Unfortunately, there are few papers included in this section, and each is short. So pedagogical buffs, like me, are left with a “taste” of what could be done with these insights, but without in-depth evidence or explanations. This section includes broad current topics such as community-based partnerships, speaking and writing exercises that can be used in home schools, electronic versions of collaborative pedagogy, as well as brief insights into Jasinski’s Sourcebook on Rhetoric, one Filipino’s view of reclaiming hybridity, and teacher training at two colleges in Massachusetts in the 1930s. There is much more of theory than pedagogical applications in these papers.

Section 5, “Publics,” puzzled me as to the method of choice of inclusions. Bizzell does not define “publics,” “counterpublics,” or “public spheres,” which she briefly mentions in her short preface. She simply claims that responses to these topics have been prolific over the past few years. Unfortunately, this severely limits the value of this text to only those who are part of the “conversation” on publics. In seeking for an explanation of the concept, I turned to Professor Greg Clark, one of the contributors to the text. Clark explained that in general, “public” refers to “the sorts of communities that are addressed by public discourses—people who have common concerns and must decide them together.” He offered the example of the election: “The US election discourses addressed local publics this week. In two years they will address a national public.” Clark emphasized that this is a current topic in rhetoric: “It comes out of Habermas on public spheres and a John Dewey book, The Public and Its Problems.”

This section addresses a broad spectrum of rhetorical topics, including rhetorical landscapes and religious identity, the doxicon, Byron de la Beckwith, Thomas Sloane, Niels Bohr, the master-planned community, weapons of mass destruction, victim impact statements, and “difference” as found in Will and Grace. I struggled to find a common thread for these essays, especially since several of the essays could also be sorted into the section on history.
Section 6, “Gender,” includes work on historical events and persons (Esther, the Christian Temperance Union, and American clubwomen of the 19th century), texts (Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, and Margaret Fell’s volume on women’s right to speak), and a form of child abuse where a caregiver, usually the mother, “fabricates or intentionally creates illness in her own child.” This section illustrates a rich variety of gendered rhetorical agendas.

I was occasionally surprised at the helpful content in essays whose titles gave no hint of the internal practical applications. Peter Mack writes of “Rudolph Agricola’s Contribution to Rhetorical Theory.” In spite of Mack’s goals to persuade the reader that Agricola significantly contributed to rhetoric, the real value of the essay for me lies in an explication of the value of planning a composition based on subject-matter, speaker’s intention, and audience. Mack distinguishes between exposition and argumentation which “[reflect] the speaker’s view about what the audience will believe willingly and what it will resist” (26). He says that in exposition, “we concentrate on clarity and order,” whereas in argumentation, “we add reasons and emotions” (26). Mack further explains emotional manipulation and the use of amplification. He recommends building up emotion gradually. In doing so, he claims, “You can make something seem important to an audience by linking it to things which are important to everyone or to the deepest interests of a particular audience” (30). Mack’s insights into the rhetorical triangle enhance the worth of this collection of papers.

I believe the worth of the volume would be enhanced if Bizzell offered more explanation of her rationale for assigning the various papers to given categories. I found it disconcerting to have a treatise on the use of white space as “rhetorical space” follow a study of Archbishop Whately. *Rhetorical Agendas: Political, Ethical, Spiritual* is informative, and may lead to further in-depth, well-developed treatises on the given subjects. For the reader looking for a quick review on current heterogeneous topics on rhetoric, this is a good volume to skim.

Provo, UT

Reviewed by Julie Kearney, Penn State Harrisburg

At the end of each semester, as my students complain about the amount of work required to create an electronic portfolio, and my English colleagues look down with an expression of mistrust at the collection of CDs dropped off outside my office, I sometimes wonder if the effort to research, to learn, and to teach the complexities of online writing is really worth it. Inman and Hewett’s Technology and English Studies convinces me that it is. The mix of contributors covers a wide range of professional careers and scholarly interests, but what each has in common is that in spite of either institutional resistance, difficult personal circumstances, a continuing search for legitimacy, or professional development requirements, they have forged highly successful non-traditional career paths which combine English studies and technology.

The editors preface their book by first defining the terms “technology,” “English studies,” and “professional paths,” concluding that while each of the three terms might be considered controversial, their powerful synergy is demonstrated by the experiences of the book’s contributors. Following the preface the book is divided into four sections: “The Past as Future;” “Searching the Academy;” “Pushing Boundaries;” and “Forging Beyond.” Each of the sixteen chapters contained within this framework reveal personal, and often poignant, narratives which emphasize the rewards of pursuing innovative professional paths.

“The Past as Future” includes chapters by Eric S. Rabkin, Wendy Morgan, Nelson Hilton, and John F. Barber, and explores ways in which their personal experiences have shaped their interests and professional paths. Rabkin, for example, interweaves the story of his immigrant roots and his experiences with students with his perception of a computer as a tool; a tool which enables him to communicate with and teach people, and eventually helps him find panel inscriptions at Ellis Island recording his great-grandparent’s arrival. Rabkin’s reflections emphasize the computer’s ability to humanize and democratize. Nelson, too, uses her experience with family—a mother and father team of statisticians—to explain the intersections of her literary and computing scholarship. In the next chapter, Morgan cleverly presents a “textual hypertext” for readers to follow documenting the relationship between classical studies and technology, while simultaneously chronicling the difficult balance between scholarship and the responsibilities of mother and wife. Continuing the reflective nature of this section, Barber recounts his life-long experiences...
with reading and writing, teaching, and technology, concluding that it was
the eclectic nature of his interests (cross-country skiing, freelance writing,
community college teaching, computer mediated classrooms) that led to his
ultimate professional successes.

Just as section 1 focuses on experiences, section 2, “Searching the
Academy,” emphasizes the notion of faith in oneself and ones research in
somewhat hostile environments. Joanna Castner, in chapter 5, believed she
could help to forge the new “consubstantial space” carved out at the intersec-
tions of language studies, minorities studies, and technology. Basing her nar-
rative on Burke’s notion of consubstantiality as compensating for humanity’s
inherent divisions, Castner describes the “cultures of possibilities” she has
discovered within these intersections. In chapter 6, Douglas Eyman uses a
creative metaphorical organization of a labyrinth to describe his faith in for-
gring support through professional networks. Beginning his narrative with an
account of his childhood experiences with computer labyrinth games, Eyman
guides the reader through his professional labyrinth, beginning with his posi-
ton on the periphery as a graduate student at an institution unsupportive of
technology and English research. He then journeys into virtual and real com-
mmunities of supportive professionals, eventually joining the staff of Kairos.

His advice: “Never lose sight of your passions” (89). Keith Dorwick’s focus
on the theme of faith is revealed by his immediate reference to Ash Wednes-
day—the day he begins writing the chapter—and his report of the connections
between technology and spirituality. Dorwick richly interlaces threads of a
narrative describing his diagnosis with HIV, the need for a dependable job
and health insurance but the desire to teach and research, and the wrenching
struggle that finally placed him in a tenure track position. His epiphany—“Fol-
low the heart and not the market” (102). The final chapter in this section
by Dene Grigar also offers words of wisdom stemming from reflective faith:
“[T]he life worth living is one not compromised of a preplanned path laid out
from Point A to Point B, but rather one made of many different roads twisting
and turning” (114). Grigar reaches this conclusion following her serendipitous
journey from producing wine and food catalogues, teaching troubled adoles-
cents, teaching computer-mediated composition, writing a dissertation on the
Odyssey using technology based research methods, to eventually becoming a
successful writer and researcher in hypertextual environments.

“Pushing Boundaries” is a particularly apt title for the third section
of the book, which includes narratives from diverse professionals who, either
literally or metaphorically, do just that. Pamela B. Childers, Jude Edminster,
John M. Slatin, and Mark Warschauer each contribute personal narratives
contemplating the need to take risks. Childers, a secondary education teacher,
provides numerous examples of her own risk-taking as she ventured into re-

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gions beyond the comfort of the traditional high school curriculum. The experience was not without some negative costs for, as she relates, while she encountered new professional allies in the realm of English and technology (including Cynthia Selfe and Art Young) she also sometimes encountered resentment and anger from her immediate peers. The benefits for her students, though, and ultimately for her own professional success, were well worth the risks. The same is true for Edminster, who forged new ground in her research on electronic dissertations, despite her own initial discomfort with computers and resistance from the academy. Slatin, a specialist in 20th century American poetry, also became an expert in assistive technology, initially through a need brought on by his own blindness caused by retinitis pigmentosa at age 20. He took risks with new software and hardware, at first to help himself, but eventually to help many persons living with disabilities. His hardest challenge, though, does not involve the hardware or the software; it involves altering preconceived notions about people with disabilities and their role in the university and society at large. The fact that more and more people are becoming interested in his work with accessible web pages demonstrates that the risks he took were worth taking. Warschauer, author of the last chapter in this section, is the contributor who crosses geographical boundaries, those between the U.S. and Egypt. Charged with improving English language teaching, Warschauer is challenged by the political, cultural, and technological differences between the two nations. His experiences proved to be a wonderful learning opportunity in international relations, and he finishes his chapter with a substantial list of recommendations for future projects.

For those readers interested in extending their knowledge of English studies and technology to careers beyond the traditional academic setting, the last section, “Forging Beyond,” includes a wealth of practical advice. James Elmborg, a student of literature who became disenchanted with the dissertation process went on to garner a large technology grant and is now a professor in information studies. His advice is to “ignore artificial boundaries” and “embrace change” (187). Similarly, Diane Greco, a student who was once told her paper sounded too much like a “think piece,” found herself living the double life of an academic student and intern with the hypertext publisher Eastgate Systems and provides a list of “lessons learned” from her hypertext freelance career. Beth L. Hewett’s describes herself as an academic who is employed by the private company Smarthinking, Inc. (an online student resource), and she provides concrete advice on shaping a career in the private sector. The last chapter, written by internationally-renowned digital artist Mark Amerika, provides a synopsis of the interviews he has given imparting his unique perspective on life as a “Technomad.”

*Technology and English Studies* is not a typical collection of composition scholarship. Its collection of personal narratives based on serendipitous
journeys is, however, rich in practical suggestions for any scholar, practitioner, or researcher interested in combining technology and English studies. Apart from practical applications, though, the book helps to legitimize and celebrate an often-misunderstood and unappreciated area of research. Students and scholars of rhetoric and composition, linguistics, English education, ESL, creative writing, literary studies, and of course, computers and writing, will find this book a valuable and enjoyable developmental resource.

Middletown, PA

Punishing Schools: Fear and Citizenship in American Public Education

Reviewed by Timothy Barnett, Northeastern Illinois University

Punishing Schools: Fear and Citizenship in American Public Education describes punishment as a powerful, systemic force in education that stems from a culture of fear and operates on multiple levels: From the bureaucrats who “punish” schools and students by drastically underfunding public education to the schools themselves who punish students by criminalizing youth and difference and establishing prison-like facilities for wealthy and poor alike. This study of two Ohio high schools—one a wealthy, mostly white suburban school and the other a poor, predominantly Black inner-city school—will primarily interest those who view education as a critical tool for democracy since the book argues convincingly that opportunities for progressive education are increasingly compromised by powerful state and corporate interests. It should also appeal to the growing numbers concerned with our country’s efforts to balance civil rights and public safety.

Compositionists will also find this book significant because many of us view literacy as central to democratic education and because Lyons’s and Drew’s focus on the precarious role of public schools is suggestive of the place writing programs often find themselves. Like the schools Lyons and Drew describe, composition programs are under surveillance by the university, public, and state (who simultaneously require, seek to control, and demean literacy instruction), as they also represent these groups, disciplining students so that they fit in, linguistically, with societal norms. We are the punished and the punishers, even as we espouse liberatory goals, and Punishing Schools highlights significant parallels between public schools as depicted by Lyons and
Drew and composition—arguably the most public and contested educational subject of all.

*Punishing Schools* consists of six chapters, with chapters 1 and 6 detailing the book’s often compelling argument. Chapter 2 describes the conflicts present in “Suburbia High School” (SHS), a state of the art institution with upper class white students and high tech surveillance techniques, while chapter 3 focuses on the movie *Pleasantville* as the authors suggest the multiple ways popular culture contributes to the demonization of youth and difference and helps construct identity at schools such as SHS. Chapter 4 documents the politics and history behind Ohio’s troubled urban schools, and chapter 5 offers a close study of “Urban High,” an inner-city school whose plight as a “school without a neighborhood” exemplifies the difficulties of urban education and the abandonment of urban communities.

The book succeeds on many levels but also reminds us just how difficult it is to comprehensively analyze something as complex as public education. In particular I appreciate Lyons’s and Drew’s overall argument that the state punishes schools—both “good” and “bad”—as a way of deflecting attention from the fact that it is not investing in education. Schools pass on this punishment to students, feeding off of a culture of fear and conflict stemming from exaggerated images of dangerous youth preying on each other and on society. Because of this culture of fear, Lyons and Drew argue, middle class administrators, parents, and teachers focus on students rather than the state as the “problem,” and, even more, focus on those who are already marginalized—inner city youth of color—as their primary fear. For their part, inner city communities have been virtually abandoned by the state and, left to fend for themselves as a result of white and capital flight, have few resources to fight the legal, political, and cultural battles necessary to make real change. Ultimately, Lyons and Drew suggest that because our educational critiques depend on misplaced fears of youth and racial difference rather than a comprehensive critique of the state, regressive goals for education—which use strategies of discipline to conserve and expand existing nodes of power—are prevailing over democratic ones.

*Punishing Schools*, then, provides a compelling theoretical argument that is complemented and supported by rich empirical detail and thoughtful analysis of many issues central to education in a post-Columbine, post-9/11 world. For example, Lyons and Drew provide multi-layered observations of Suburbia and Urban High Schools, which demonstrate how particular kinds of fears and hostility are directed at white suburban as well as Black urban youth. In conjunction with these analyses, the authors also follow Henry Giroux and others by suggesting the need to look at cultural texts, such as films, as instruments of pedagogy that “teach” all of us how to fit into a culture intent on
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both hiding and maintaining white male power. Finally, the authors’ history of public education in Ohio (as depicted through newspaper accounts, legal records, state histories, and alumni records) offers a detailed and damning narrative of the ways politics and influence can trump the needs of children, and, ultimately, democracy. As this outline of the many forms of research and analysis in Punishing Schools suggests, the authors have done a great deal of homework, and many different kinds of homework, to build their case. As the broad scope of their argument might also suggest, however, there are sometimes gaps between the data that are generated and the overall argument the authors present.

A few examples from the text will help illustrate this point. Punishing Schools opens with a detailed description of a lockdown at Suburbia High, where students are scrutinized by dogs and military-style officers intent on eliminating drugs and out-of-control youth from the school. The narrative is engrossing and sets the stage for a discussion of schools as prison-like institutions, but the chapter eventually focuses on the issue of conflicts among students and between students and teachers. For example, Lyons and Drew describe how the SHS students sense of entitlement alienates some teachers, along with the ways students make each others’ lives difficult based on perceived and real differences of sexuality, race, and class. These details matter, of course, but it is not always clear how these seemingly everyday conflicts advance a discussion of the ways schools are both subject to discipline from the state and authors of punishment in the name of the state. “Conflict,” rather than “punishment” becomes the key word for much of this chapter, and, while the two concepts are related, the focus on who is punishing whom and for what purpose becomes unclear.

Similarly, in the chapter on Pleasantville, the authors powerfully link their analysis of Suburbia and Urban high schools to their reading of the film by suggesting a racial underpinning for the culture of fear promoted by state and schools (77-81). Lyons and Drew argue that the state and media portray poor Black youth as such great threats to society that urban schools become the locus of many of our fears. As a result, schools such as SHS consume themselves with distancing themselves from the images that have been generated of inner city youth, and such obsession results in zero tolerance forms of discipline for white middle class youth (who are, therefore, not taught to question power or to become critical citizens) and overwhelmingly punitive settings for urban schools. Such surveillance, according to Lyons and Drew, results in severely limited forms of agency for all students and impoverished notions of democracy in our schools and culture.

Lyons and Drew, however, have addressed so many variables by this point—from the fact that SHS students label those who do not fit in as “gay,”
to the SHS adults’ fear of drugs in their school, to the way SHS is reminiscent of Columbine High School (which calls on very different images of violence than inner city violence), to the complex gender and sexual overtones of the film *Pleasantville*—that the nascent focus on race as a driving factor for our culture of fear is muted. Here and elsewhere, readers are left impressed by the variety of methods and analyses in *Punishing Schools* and by the overall argument even as we struggle to connect the ethnographic data, the readings of cultural texts, the history of a state educational school system and of two individual schools, and the multiple theoretical focuses employed by the authors.

As a reader, then, I sometimes want Lyons and Drew to pull the pieces of their analysis together more definitively, but I also see their study as significant because its analyses raise so many variables affecting public education today. Ultimately, one of the book’s greatest strengths is that it challenges us to question how we can accumulate complex, multi-layered forms of data about education—the kind we need to understand our schools in an ethically responsible way—and tie this data together in persuasive arguments for multiple audiences: academics, the general public, politicians, and parents. If the various forces affecting education will never be subject to neat, comprehensive analyses, how will we get such disparate audiences to listen to our multi-layered arguments, when those espousing simple (if less helpful) solutions are more easily heard? Lyons and Drew have not resolved this issue, but their ability to provide provocative theoretical and historical analyses along with detailed observation and close readings of texts compels us to think hard about the power corporate and state interests maintain over schools and how difficult the battle to limit this power will be.

Chicago, IL


Reviewed by Hui Wu, University of Central Arkansas

LuMing Mao’s *Reading Chinese Fortune Cookie: The Making of Chinese American Rhetoric* is the first theoretical endeavor that conceptualizes Chinese American rhetoric as a living rhetoric, an endeavor liberating to a group of border residents—Chinese Americans. The last two decades have witnessed exhilarating development of studies of Chinese rhetoric, for example, the works of Mary Garrett, Xing Lu, Xiaoye You, and others. Interest-
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ingly, although the majority of Chinese rhetoric scholars are border residents in the U.S., until Mao’s book, none of our scholarship has approached Chinese American rhetoric as its own kind, a hybrid that, like the fortune cookie (to repeat Mao’s metaphor), has evolved from both Chinese and American cultures and presents itself only in English in the U.S. Indeed, among us—scholars on the rhetorical borderland, Mao is the first to examine and define Chinese American rhetoric in its own right.

Reading Chinese Fortune Cookie has developed from Mao’s years of work on Chinese rhetoric since the early 1990s. His naming of Chinese American rhetoric as “togetherness in difference” reflects his daily interactions with his mainstream American students and colleagues as well as his involvement in scholarly and civic activities. Throughout the book, Mao lets readers feel his dilemma and triumph when he painstakingly reflects on his and other Chinese Americans’ rhetorical practices both in the real and literary worlds. Mao’s book maps out a complicated rhetorical borderland between Chinese Americans and their Euro-American counterparts, a rhetoric landscape “infused with conflicts, contestations, and ambiguities” (3). Therefore, in a sense, this book counts for more than a pure scholarly effort; Mao’s case studies show that he, a Chinese American, is the living embodiment of the rhetoric, and what he studies is a rhetoric for life. However, until recently, this rhetoric has often been studied through dualism and paradoxes, which, as Mao rightly points out, sometimes overemphasize differences between Chinese and American traditions and sometimes ignore essential differences to sustain a hope for harmonious co-existence.

Moving beyond the dualism and paradoxes, Mao characterizes the making of Chinese American rhetoric as “articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings” (3), moments of negotiations and creations in the daily borderland life. As a living example, Mao decides, though not without hesitation, to flout the English grammatical convention for the book title, “Reading of Chinese Fortune Cookie,” to recreate the hybrid rhetoric visually and to return to the Chinese convention wherein nouns are never preceded by articles. The book title then reflects precisely the author’s status as a border-straddling rhetorical practitioner, who is neither an exile nor an immigrant anymore because of his increasingly critical and refreshing perspectives on his original and host cultures, both of which have enabled him to think outside linguistic conventions and to transform them through his discursive practice. At the same time, the fortune cookie as an analogy to Chinese American rhetoric accurately reveals the nature of the hybrid rhetoric—a unique U.S. product of Chinese immigrants’ consistent and conscientious realignment, participation, and transformation in the host culture.
Unraveling the making of the fortune cookie in the opening chapter, Mao starts a daunting task to delve into the established analytical categories that, to some extent, have stereotyped and misrepresented Chinese and Chinese American rhetoric for decades. For example, face, harmony, interdependence, and indirection are often used to teach and analyze Chinese rhetoric (Gao and Ting-Toomey; Oliver). Recognizing that these features are visible in Chinese rhetoric, Mao reexamines these categories one by one, as they resurface in the U.S., intertwined with the Euro-American rhetorical tradition. In all of the six chapters, he carefully delineates the intricacies woven into the fabrics of Chinese American rhetoric to dispel misunderstandings and misconceptions. In doing so, Mao's highly analytical approach deviates largely from traditional rhetorical criticism dominated by the matter-of-fact logical reasoning distanced from the author’s personal voice. In a strong personal voice and with great candor, he shares his rhetorical dilemmas in the classroom and his reading of Chinese-American rhetoric literature and civil rights activism.

For example, to illustrate Chinese face (脸,面子) as a dynamic rhetorical concept, Mao reveals his thoughts about teaching in a strong personal voice:

In order for me to earn my 脸, I must comply with all the necessary conventions and requirements associated with good, effective teaching, . . . must meet and exceed the expectations of my students. . . . Because of this strong normative and communal connotation associated with 脸, any loss of my 脸 necessarily erodes . . . my 面子— that is, my reputation, my prestige. (40)

Furthermore, to explain “how Chinese indirection acquires its new form and content as it grapples with the logic of European American directness,” Mao uses his teaching moments again as well. Many of his mainstream American students enjoyed Maxine Hong Kingston’s The Woman Warrior but were puzzled by her narrative development. Mao utilizes these moments of discomfort and confusion to help his students realize that their classroom is part of rhetorical borderlands where they must learn to negotiate with other perspectives both in fiction and in the classroom. Indeed, while literary critics have approached The Woman Warrior from all sorts of standpoints—feminist, cultural, historical, and more—only Mao reveals that the voice which Kingston has chosen to tell stories may result from the interlocking tension between Chinese and American rhetorical traditions, a hybrid rhetoric confusing to many critics and students who are conditioned by the Euro-American literary framework emphasizing transparent and causal progression. On a different level, Mao’s personal
accounts also add pedagogical meanings to the dynamic rhetorical interactions between the Chinese American professor and his mainstream American students. These accounts remind us that the composition classroom is indeed a rhetorical borderland where both the instructor and students must read and write from diverse, even opposite, perspectives. Therefore, Mao’s book would be fitting for graduate seminars in comparative studies of rhetoric and literature. It is also a must-read for scholars in Asian American studies.

Mao’s reflection, however, does not stop at teaching practices. He takes the making of Chinese American rhetoric from the writing classroom to the street. Analyzing the speech acts of his fellow Chinese Americans in Cincinnati, Ohio, who deployed a different, non-confrontational “protest rhetoric” to combat racism and reclaim discourse agency, Mao demonstrates that mainstream American rhetoric has much to learn from highly performative Chinese American rhetoric. In 2003, an urban redevelopment consultant proposed to the Cincinnati Over-the-Rhine Chamber “never to rent to Chinese restaurants” (124). Against this racist proposal, the Cincinnati Chinese community strategically combined Western directness and Chinese indirection to deploy a non-confrontational, correlative rhetoric that ended up with creating “a confident, respectable 脸 for the Chinese community,” saving 面子 for the City Council, terminating the contract with the racist consultant, and protecting the common interests of the Cincinnati community as well. Mao’s analysis sheds light on the border residents’ awareness of the powerful relationship between the word and the world and on the transformations that the Chinese American rhetoric can bring to mainstream American rhetoric.

In conclusion, Reading Chinese Fortune Cookie: The Making of Chinese American Rhetoric is written with great care and exquisiteness. In the intentionally-chosen personal voice, Mao’s conceptualization of Chinese American rhetoric as “togetherness-in-difference” properly defines this emerging ethnic rhetoric. Reexamining commonly-used terminologies in Chinese rhetoric, Mao further reveals their complexity in practice and demonstrates that features like face, indirection, and interdependence indicate no deficiency but difference, which, if deployed properly, can create togetherness, a correlative perspective that American society needs for conversation and collaboration.

Conway, AR

WORKS CITED

Reviewed by Gyl Mattioli, Georgia State University

From the introduction of the first volume in Matsuda’s forthcoming series on second language (L2) writing, the reader learns that there is a gap in the field. L2 researchers to date have focused primarily on student writers within the classroom context, and have rarely stepped over their thresholds to look beyond the classroom microcosm and into the wider boundaries of the surrounding institution; hence this collection on institutional policies and their intersections with the dynamics of L2 writing pedagogy. The book’s title is borrowed from one of L2 writing’s most prominent scholars, Barbara Kroll. At the 2004 Symposium on Second Language Writing, a biennial meeting of L2 writing professionals and applied linguists, Kroll commented on the situational difficulties L2 writers on university and college campuses in the US face and imagined a “promised land” where these obstacles would cease to exist. Institutional policies and politics were the theme of that year’s meeting, and the ensuing papers evolved into the present volume. In the hopes of finding solutions to external (institutional/administrative/political) problems that impact internal (classroom/course/developmental/individual) learning contexts, the chapters of this work discuss systems and programs in place for students in general, and L2 students in particular. Despite the negative connotations of the term “politics,” the collection also presents possible solutions to the problems it discusses, and informs the reader of an area of composition pedagogy that often goes unnoticed.

The book begins with an extensive overview not only of the origins of the collection, but also a brief look at the budding field of L2 writing research. Much in the same way first-language compositionists often had to (and sometimes still have to) justify their existence and confirm their validity as scholars and members of the academy, the editors—two of whom, interestingly enough, are L2 writers themselves who have become leading compositionists and advocates for L2 student writer voice—seek to awaken a global consciousness to the world of teaching and researching writing in an additional language. The target audience is not just those in the know, they explain, but also those whose classrooms and institutions are increasingly populated by students who fall into the ever-broadening category of the L2 writer. The book has five sections that encompass the various areas and levels of academic writing—K-12, learning support, English for academic purposes (EAP), assessment, and professional concerns—and ends with a
final word from Kroll, whose phrase sets the tone for the whole work. From bilingual literacy to international teaching assistant training, writing centers to the dynamics of action research, the chapters examine the full gamut of L2 writing contexts.

Highlights of the sections include Fu and Matoush’s chapter on middle school-aged Chinese speakers in an innovative instructional project that allows student writers to scaffold their acquisition of English literacy with their native language writing skills. All fully literate in their native language (L1), students write in a mixed code style that allows them to slowly make the transition to English without devaluing Chinese expressive styles and abilities. Evidently an ongoing project for the two, Fu and Matoush presented this research at the 2006 Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) conference in Tampa, and the session was extremely well-attended due to obvious practical and ethical vectors of promoting biliteracy. At the university level, in the section on EAP, Gentil discusses the need for biliteracy development in Canadian institutions of higher learning and describes a student whose degree progress suffers by her having the option to use two languages, but not the institutional support to do so adequately and with proper academic writing instruction. Connected by the common thread of the existence (or lack) of institutional bilingual literacy programs, these two chapters show two sides of the issue.

A recurring theme is integration/assimilation of L2 student writers into mainstream L1 composition environments, be they formal classroom courses or tutored sessions in university writing centers. An interesting experiment is found in Dadak’s chapter on American University’s abolition of its English as a second language (ESL) program. Initially viewed as a problem, it seems now to have turned into an opportunity for alternative ways to serve L2 writers in one of Washington DC’s most famous international universities. ESL and composition professionals there have come up with ways to serve their L2 population that may not be ideal, but at least take students to the next leg of their academic journey. A plus from the situation is doubtless the increased awareness among L1 faculty of the particular needs and possibilities L2 students possess.

Educators have always wrestled with the dilemma of assessing student writing, and in L2 circles, this dilemma is intensified by ethical/political issues related to cultural and sociolinguistic concerns. To this end, two of the field’s most prominent assessment specialists have contributed chapters to the volume. Crusan’s chapter on directed self-placement—something L1 writers can do, but that is still in the experimental stages for L2 students—as a solution to placement testing discrepancies at her university, and Weigle’s optimistic findings about the washback (positive acquisitional transfer from
language testing) from an institutional exam L2 students are required to sit for both provide bright glimpses of successful assessment solutions. Once again, the potentially negative term politics is diffused by the professional commitment of the faculty and administrators described in these chapters.

In their discussions of institutional/political concerns beyond the classroom doors, the chapters’ authors pose a series of questions for which they often have no pat answers: How can international teaching assistants create a more acceptable/desirable ethos in class so as to compensate for the almost automatic dread they inspire in the hearts of their freshman students? How can institutions provide equal levels of support and instruction in two languages in order to truly foster biliteracy at university level? What can composition instructors do to better prepare their L1 and L2 student writers for writing in their individual disciplines in authentic, meaningful ways? How can writing centers effectively serve all student writers, and not just those whose English is native/near-native? Should institutions maintain separate (and hopefully equal) facilities for L2 learners, or should these students be mainstreamed? And, what kind of preparation do mainstream instructors need to be given to deal with the issues L2 writers bring with them to the classroom? On that note, who is an L2 writer, anyway? The questions are many and difficult to respond to, but this book is a very significant step towards answering them.

Just before the coda, as the penultimate chapter, the editors chose to insert a backwards look at the developmental stages of an ESL program in a California university. The chapter’s author has taught at the institution for over thirty years, and has been a part of the program’s growth and changes. Vandrick’s essay is a nice way to conclude the book as it helps the reader appreciate the dynamic nature of academia and the value of reflective teaching and administration as well. Overall, the collection is an informative, objective look at the multiple contexts in which L2 writing is taught and learned, and at how these contexts impact their instructional success.

Atlanta, Georgia

In the early 1970s, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) began as a grassroots effort to improve educational practices by applying two compelling concepts—writing to learn and writing in the disciplines. The movement is still loosely held together by these basic ideas, but WAC programs have taken on various forms depending on purpose, emphasis, organizational structure, and institutional support. Although there is still no national organization to guide the direction of individual WAC programs, the current success of the movement can be measured in part by the number of schools linking WAC to accreditation plans in recent years. As many programs experience this shift from bottom-up educational reform to top-down institutional initiatives, it is an ideal time to look back on the history of the movement.

*Composing a Community*, edited by Susan H. McLeod and Margot Iris Soven, offers a chance to reflect upon the early development of WAC. The book is a collection of eleven personal histories written by many of those involved in the early years of the movement. As John C. Bean suggests about his and the other narratives in the book, the beginning of the WAC movement is “a story of serendipity and community” (115). These themes provide a common thread throughout the narratives; the contributors did not know what would happen when they brought faculty from different disciplines together to discuss teaching, learning, and writing. Because the essays are from the perspective of those who were in the early stages of the WAC movement, the reader gets a sense of both the excitement and the anxieties about creating something new. The successes and failures do not seem inevitable as WAC grew from workshops and retreats to a nationally recognized movement.

The essays provide both the larger historical context of WAC’s beginnings as well as the particular and often personal details of the movement. By the early 1970s, educators had to come to terms with the fact that college was no longer only for the elite. Several of the narratives briefly discuss the opening of higher education to a more diverse body of students and the resulting perception of a “literacy crisis” epitomized by the 1975 *Newsweek* article “Why Johnny Can't Write.” In a sometimes hostile climate, these pioneers of the movement had to negotiate between calls for them to be grammar drill sergeants and what they understood as the actual educational needs of their students. The contributors all understood the significance of writing, but they knew that “Grammar Across the Curriculum” was not the solution.
Through trial and error in their own classrooms and through conversations and disagreements with other faculty members, the fundamentals of WAC took shape. Writing needs to continue beyond freshman composition. Students gain critical thinking skills when they write. Disciplinary conventions of writing must be taught to students. The narratives in *Composing a Community* provide the details of the individual experiences that led to these commonalities, the chance discoveries that occurred when faculty members came together from many disciplines in workshops, retreats, and conferences to talk about the needs of their students. By bringing together personal accounts, the collection captures the sense of “serendipity and community” that would most likely be missing from a textbook history of the movement. Readers can identify with stories like Barbara Walvoord’s humorous account of the birth of the movement: “In spring of 1970, when my Chaucer seminar failed to make its enrollment quota, I was worried that the department chair would give me another section of comp with another 25 weekly themes to read. So, ironically, WAC began when a young, overburdened faculty member tried to escape having to deal with more student writing” (144).

Beyond history, the book offers useful models for those involved in the development or restructuring of WAC programs. The collected experiences of the contributors provide powerful insights because these teachers from widely varying institutions have had similar successes and failures. What comes through most clearly in the narratives is the significance of setting up faculty development workshops. Although a relatively simple idea, this is the most common model of spreading WAC pedagogy. Faculty from different disciplines so rarely have a chance to sit down and talk to one another, and again and again the contributors write about their excitement in being able to facilitate these discussions. The bottom-up nature of these workshops is another common theme in the book. Indeed, much of WAC’s success has relied on faculty to faculty relationships. Although these early programs sometimes had the support of administrators, several of the narratives point out the dangers in top-down directives. Teachers are likely to try writing-to-learn assignments when they hear of the successes their colleagues have had; attempts at administrative mandates are bound to meet with anger and resistance. Several of the contributors stress the need to involve K-12 teachers, to introduce them to WAC concepts, but also for the insights that these teachers can bring to the table. Other helpful points in the narratives include the importance of communicating with other institutions, the value of gathering assignments and student writing to provide models, and the necessity of keeping WAC workshops interdisciplinary.

While *Composing a Community* offers much wisdom to those involved in building a WAC program or interested in the history of the move-
ment, it is not a handbook. The narrative structure that makes the collection compelling for the reader already participating in the community makes it impractical for the classroom teacher interested in trying out WAC concepts. The book is not meant to be an introduction to the basic principles of WAC. It does not offer an array of writing-to-learn assignments. This is a history of the movement told by those who were there, and, as such, is a collection of accounts that are to be read as stories. Even for the intended audience, the book can be, at times, tedious. The narratives are bursting with names of organizations, grants, conferences, WAC programs, schools, and individuals. This archiving of facts may be indispensable for the historian, but for other readers, the amount of detail is often distracting, particularly as many details are repeated from one narrative to the next.

*Composing a Community* is meant for a relatively narrow audience already invested in the WAC community. At a time when many programs are moving away from WAC’s grassroots beginnings, the collection provides a resource for those who are concerned with the direction the movement now takes. Because this is a history, the majority of narratives do not speak to the current situation. Chris Thaiss is the only contributor who hesitantly considers the question of WAC’s future. At the conclusion of his second chapter in the book he wonders whether WAC might now benefit from a more formal structure than the National Network of WAC Programs he helped build. A national organization, he argues, could “create an agenda to focus efforts, issue position statements, establish and publicize standards, conduct statistical surveys of members, and, maybe most basic, ensure continuity through an orderly process of succeeding leadership” (139). As one of the early members of the WAC community, Thaiss understands the bottom-up history of the movement, but he worries that the lack of a central organization has sometimes lead to misunderstandings about fundamental ideas. WAC pedagogy has spread because it works. As WAC grows, those involved in the community need to discuss the future of the movement. *Composing a Community* allows that discussion to be grounded in an understanding of the movement’s past.

Atlanta, GA

Reviewed by Letizia Guglielmo, Kennesaw State University

The dream of administration is that it is always possible to plan in advance; the reality of lived administration is that improvisation—of making do with what is at hand—is always at the heart of this work

—Miller and Cripps

Suggested immediately by the title of this text, Discord and Direction, the ongoing conflict and change experienced by many writing program administrators (WPAs) is illustrated in each essay within this collection. Together, the essays offer current WPAs, future WPAs, and graduate students considering writing program administration for the first time a comprehensive and realistic view of the issues facing these administrators with practical advice grounded in lived experience. In organizing the collection within a postmodern understanding of writing program administration, Sharon James McGee and Carolyn Handa assure readers that among the competing voices and interests of individual programs and institutions, the WPA, as a careful rhetorician, illustrated by the many arrows emerging from a mouth on the text’s cover, can move programs successfully toward change.

In their introduction, McGee and Handa immediately clarify their use of postmodern throughout the collection, making the term easily accessible for readers. They cite Lester Faigley’s belief that modern composition studies sides more often with modernism yet argue, “Postmodernism, furthermore, offers a useful lens through which to view the work of WPAs and to examine those various cultural and institutional issues that shape their work” (2). In other words, and in light of Ihab Hassan’s articulation of postmodernism, the nature of writing program administration fits the postmodern, and throughout the text, the authors attempt to illustrate that “postmodern theory can move us from discord to direction, if (and always) only momentarily” (4). Drawing from Hassan’s list of postmodern qualities in crafting their working definition for the text, McGee and Handa note a writing program’s open structure, potential for resistance to program decisions, process, participation, rhetoric, and antinarrative. Addressing one or many of these characteristics, “each chapter in this collection tackles a problem local to its author’s writing program or experience as a WPA, and each responds to existing discord in creative ways that move toward rebuilding and redirection” (12). Although the essays themselves are
not organized by section, suggesting that each responds to more than one of Hassan’s characteristics, some patterns do emerge within the text.

Providing foundational understanding of writing program administration through an unconventional comparison—writing program administration and the pastoral—Jeanne Gunner, in chapter 2, emphasizes the importance of understanding local conditions, reminding readers that what works well in one situation—one writing program—may not fit others and in doing so very clearly identifies the purpose of collections such as this one, an identifiable ability to provide readers with practical advice based upon the experiences of the author. Unfortunately, as Gunner’s piece illustrates, it is precisely this kind of rooted experience within a program that underscores her comparison throughout the chapter. “The [pastoral] form supports any dominant ideology that grounds its authority in a fictional, idealized past,” and it is generally this looking back that results in resistance to change seemingly “imposed” by the WPA (31).

With a specific focus on the Consultant Evaluator (C-E) visits provided by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, Deborah Holdstein, in “Where Discord Meets Direction: The Role of Consultant Evaluation in Writing Program Administration,” addresses precisely the dangers noted by Gunner and attempts to help WPAs learn to deal with power. Holdstein’s piece provides a detailed background on the evaluator program and serves new, seasoned, and future WPAs not familiar with the C-E procedure. She notes the benefit of the C-E program not only to improve writing programs through collaboration among faculty and students but also to validate the work of the program and specifically of the WPA within both departmental and institutional contexts. Also explaining the benefits of these evaluations, in “The Place of Assessment and Reflection in Writing Program Administration,” Susanmarie Harrington claims that “assessment done well can be perhaps the most important route to crafting an understanding of our programs,” especially when combined with careful reflection (141). Although Harrington offers a local example of a C-E experience, her review of the C-E program mirrors much of what is provided in the Holdstein piece, and while the editors are successful in reiterating the importance of the Consultant-Evaluator program as a tool for change, the placement of these essays within the larger text—nearly at separate ends—gives readers the impression that the repetition is not intentional. Explaining a similar strategy for success, Sharon McGee’s “Overcoming Disappointment: Constructing Writing Program Identity Through Postmodern Mapping” provides readers with one of the most practical strategies both for deconstructing and articulating the work of a WPA within institutional contexts. Citing her own experiences as essential to this understanding, McGee’s personal maps serve as useful visual examples for readers who also may initiate program change and will come to understand that “mapping makes WPAs active as planners; the
maps themselves become powerful rhetorical tools,” a characteristic of post-modernism noted by the editors in the introduction.

Appropriately, the two essays that follow McGee’s optimism illustrate for readers the ways in which decisions often are made within institutions, overlooking completely the input of the WPA. Edgington et al. share their experience with mainstreaming writing courses at the University of Louisville and the ways in which situations interpreted by administration bring about change not always in step with the goals of a writing program. The authors here also shed light on the power of the WPA in affecting change yet note “that before one can utilize this power, the WPA must recognize it is there” and influenced by local situations (73, 80). The authors conclude with strategies, couched in their own experience, through which WPAs can ensure that the their own writing programs continually address the needs of their students and faculty despite the changing political tide of the institutions in which they reside. Combining pragmatist philosophy with economics in the university, Keith Rhodes argues, “To become instead an active, evolutionary pragmatic administrator is necessarily to be troubled forever by unresolved matters of conscience and complicity. That often is the cost of getting things done” (89). Rhodes’s narrative on the Basic Writing program at Missouri Western and his careful compromises in negotiating change within that program offer readers a refreshing and even optimistic view of how unwelcome change can be envisioned as strategic maneuver.

With Gunner’s earlier description in mind, readers might expect that the remaining essays would describe local examples that resulted in morals, lessons, or new knowledge in writing program administration that is, in some way, applicable to other institutions. I would dare to argue, however, that although essays by Kemp, Miller and Cripps, and Billings et al. provide innovative approaches to a variety of issues facing their respective writing programs, the solutions themselves may not transfer as seamlessly as some of the others. Fred Kemp’s “Computers, Innovation, and Resistance in First-Year Composition Programs” suggests a novel, yet controversial, solution to the often wide-spread disconnect between professional training in composition and what happens in the classroom, and describes for readers the ICON (Interactive Composition Online) program at Texas Tech and its separation of the “classroom instructor” and “document instructor”—one who teaches and coaches in the classroom and the other who simply judges and evaluates the writing. In a similar response to local need, Richard E. Miller and Michael J. Cripps describe the ways in which Rutgers University’s growth and staffing difficulties were addressed by allowing all PhD candidates across disciplines to teach first-year writing and to receive funding, not as a way “to recruit future compositionists” but simply to respond to local needs (137). And finally, describing a timely approach to writing across the curriculum (WAC), Andrew Billings et al. introduce readers
to the Clemson University Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) program, one guided by a commitment to expanding communication (literacy) in all of its forms and funded most notably by a gift to the University. With these very local solutions at hand, the editors’ framing of the text within a postmodern definition becomes most significant here, especially with an antinarrative understanding in mind—there is not one story, one solution that fits every institution.

Also notable, especially for WPAs working with new teachers just beginning to design writing courses, essays by Mike Palquist and Christy Desmet make insightful observations regarding the use of technology in writing courses and the struggle in meeting the needs of both individual teachers and the writing program at large. In the text’s final essay, Carolyn Handa brings together both of these issues and one significant reality reiterated by many of the essays: despite a WPA’s most deliberate efforts to consider all parties when effecting change, her position at the front of the writing program often inevitably leads to discord. Bringing together the essays as well as the comprehensive bibliography within this collection, McGee and Handa offer a number of useful resources for moving realistically from that discord to direction.

Kennesaw, GA


Reviewed by Amy S. Gerald, Winthrop University

In this book, Krista Ratcliffe has a place to explore the intersection of rhetoric and composition, feminism, and whiteness studies, which seems to be the direction of her scholarship after the 1995 publication of _Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions: Virginia Woolf, Mary Daly, Adrienne Rich_. Challenged by Susan Jarratt “to consider how race informed gender in Woolf’s, Daly’s and Rich’s feminist theories of rhetoric” and discomfited by her own decision to maintain the focus of that book and not add a chapter on Alice Walker, Ratcliffe sets up _Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness_ as an answer of sorts (3). Not only does she perform the feminist act of recovering the neglected fourth literacy of listening, but also she takes a hard look at race in feminist rhetoric and posits rhetorical listening as a possible way for black and white women to work their way through, around, or past the impasse that has stalled productive dialogue between the two groups for decades. Pointing to the history of white
to the Clemson University Communication Across the Curriculum (CAC) program, one guided by a commitment to expanding communication (literacy) in all of its forms and funded most notably by a gift to the University. With these very local solutions at hand, the editors’ framing of the text within a postmodern definition becomes most significant here, especially with an antinarrative understanding in mind—there is not one story, one solution that fits every institution.

Also notable, especially for WPAs working with new teachers just beginning to design writing courses, essays by Mike Palquist and Christy Desmet make insightful observations regarding the use of technology in writing courses and the struggle in meeting the needs of both individual teachers and the writing program at large. In the text’s final essay, Carolyn Handa brings together both of these issues and one significant reality reiterated by many of the essays: despite a WPA’s most deliberate efforts to consider all parties when effecting change, her position at the front of the writing program often inevitably leads to discord. Bringing together the essays as well as the comprehensive bibliography within this collection, McGee and Handa offer a number of useful resources for moving realistically from that discord to direction.

Kennesaw, GA


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In this book, Krista Ratcliffe has a place to explore the intersection of rhetoric and composition, feminism, and whiteness studies, which seems to be the direction of her scholarship after the 1995 publication of *Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Traditions*: Virginia Woolf, Mary Daly, Adrienne Rich. Challenged by Susan Jarratt “to consider how race informed gender in Woolf’s, Daly’s and Rich’s feminist theories of rhetoric” and discomfited by her own decision to maintain the focus of that book and not add a chapter on Alice Walker, Ratcliffe sets up *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* as an answer of sorts (3). Not only does she perform the feminist act of recovering the neglected fourth literacy of listening, but also she takes a hard look at race in feminist rhetoric and posits rhetorical listening as a possible way for black and white women to work their way through, around, or past the impasse that has stalled productive dialogue between the two groups for decades. Pointing to the history of white
feminist discourse favoring commonalities among all women and ignoring difference and of black feminist discourse stressing difference at the expense of commonalities, Ratcliffe articulates the concept of rhetorical listening as a hyper-awareness of our language and our identifications that can be a means of overcoming this binary thinking and increasing the likelihood of productive communication in resistance-prone discourse. The metacognitive path that she sets forth is important for all of us working and studying in these overlapping fields, and what I find particularly compelling in this book is Ratcliffe’s own modeling of the sort of listening she advocates.

Significantly, in the introduction “Translating Listening into Language and Action,” Ratcliffe narrates the origins of this important project, describing a series of events that led her to reflect on her role in this particular corner of academic discourse. Here she recounts and analyzes her own thought processes, showing her readers a mental journey through rationalization, a guilt/blame logic, a search for absolution, and finally a realization of accountability. Beyond writing a how-I-began-this-project story, she shows readers how to identify and pay attention to the moments in our thinking when that thinking is muddled or unsure—when we respond to ideas that are different, difficult, or simply not what we want to hear. She models this “attention to dissonance” in each chapter, emphasizing the need for us to shift our attention to [and attend to] the gaps in understanding, the margins between things we know, the blurred edges, and the uncomfortable places in cross-cultural discourse and teaching (4).

Parts of the introduction and chapter 1, “Defining Rhetorical Listening” are pulled from Ratcliffe’s previously published article “Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct,” in which she explains rhetorical listening as “a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to any person, text, or culture” (1). This stance of openness is difficult even when we are willing, as Ratcliffe acknowledges, but it is necessary in order for “people to recognize the partiality of our visions and listen for that-which-cannot-be-seen, even if it cannot yet be heard” (73). As we are usually aware of and can more readily name ideas, people, and places with which we identify or against which we disidentify (disidentification), chapter 2, “Identifying Places of Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Disidentification, and Non-identification,” analyzes the limits of modern and postmodern concepts of identification and disidentification, and presents the concept of non-identification as “a place to pause, a place of reflection, a place that invites people to admit that gaps exist. Admissions of gaps may take the form of ‘I don’t know you,’ ‘I don’t know what I don’t know about you,’ or even ‘I don’t know that I don’t know that you exist’—whether that you is a person, place, thing, or idea” (72-73). Rhetorical listening can
be positioned at these places of non-identification in order to encourage problematic cross-cultural identification and foster the opportunity for better communication, learning, and change.

Ratcliffe uses the last three chapters to describe different circumstances under which rhetorical listening can take place, all of which have the potential to bring our identifications, disidentifications, and non-identifications to consciousness. Chapter 3 “Listening Metonymically: A Tactic for Listening to Public Debates” encourages us develop the habit of mind “to assume that a text or a person is associated with—but not necessarily representative of —an entire cultural group” (78). Exemplifying the Audre Lorde/Mary Daly “debate” which resulted in what Ratcliffe terms a “dysfunctional silence” that “represents a current mode of exchange in the U.S. about gender and race” (79), Ratcliffe listens attentively to the communications and the silences and walks readers through the rhetorical moves necessary to consider differences and similarities simultaneously. For instance, refusing to read Lorde as representative of all black women and Daly of all white women allows “listeners to model scholarship on Daly’s method while learning from Lorde’s critique” (99). This frees scholars to benefit from opposing scholarship while acknowledging its limits. Problematic in this chapter, however, is that while discussing the necessity to pull ourselves out of binary thinking and while describing our culture’s privileging of sight and speech over listening and silence and its reflection in our language, Ratcliffe consistently uses the term “debate,” which privileges speech over listening and which signals a win/lose mentality, reinforcing the unproductive binary. She becomes trapped by the limits of our language while examining those very limits.

Ratcliffe reminds us that we are accountable for how we react to cross-cultural discourse in chapter 4, “Eavesdropping: A Tactic for Listening to Scholarly Discourses,” parts of which were reprinted from an earlier article “Eavesdropping as Rhetorical Tactic: History, Whiteness, and Rhetoric.” She redefines “eavesdropping” etymologically as a form of listening rhetorically, with an ear to the purposes of language, speaker, and self, to a place where the listener is not addressee. Such overhearing can show us how a cultural group with which we identify is viewed. In Ratcliffe’s example of Ana Castillo’s *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanismo*, Castillo does not address (therefore does not privilege) white America. “I” and “We” are clearly Chicanos/as in the work. If white readers listen rhetorically to this discourse, they can pay attention to their reaction to not being privileged in order to realize their own privilege. White readers should continue reading, then, listening to realize things they would not have known otherwise, rather than deny or dismiss ideas with which they do not identify. Full of more opportunities for [white people to] eavesdrop (DuBois, Morrison, McKay, Walker, Baldwin, King), this chapter is of certain value to my teaching in a small, public, southern university with twenty-five percent African American enrollment.
Also of practical value is the picture into Ratcliffe’s classroom in chapter 5 “Listening Pedagogically: A Tactic for Listening to Classroom Practice.” To encourage rhetorical listening in her students, Ratcliffe develops classroom practices that resist student resistance to conflict-ridden classroom discourse about race and encourage students to share their stories and learn from each other. Presenting student work, she lays out goals and outcomes, lesson plans and assignments that broaden students’ world view and teach them that language is contextual, fluid, and therefore able to change and to be changed. The chapter and its appendix is an extended course design that outlines necessary pedagogical moves that build a classroom experience where rhetorical listening can occur among students and teachers. As she enacts her own reflexivity in this chapter, she advises teachers to model self-listening and attentiveness. She enjoins teachers to use tension and failure as teaching moments and says, “teachers just need to be honest about our own [gender and racial] markings and not pretend of speak as or for others” (140).

White women in the field who are concerned about race and gender and have read the literature understand the importance of not speaking as or for others, of admitting that they do not know what it is like to be black women, of not assuming commonality, and of not ignoring race. So what is new here? Speaking only for myself as a white, female, feminist teacher in the south with my own identification difficulties with black women, what resonates with me is that Ratcliffe gives me a path toward agency. I can listen rhetorically and hold in my hands both differences and commonalities to then learn something from the other. It is of value to me to have an articulate theory that can guide me consistently in my daily teaching and collegial life. This book gives white women readers a means of doing our own race work, rather than putting that burden on black women, as Ratcliffe carefully and respectfully avoids.

Rock Hill, SC

WORKS CITED


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Reviewed by Misty Dawn Carmichael, Georgia State University

Rather than begin Research on Composition with a preface that the reader may or may not read, Smagorinsky leads the compilation by omitting the preface and penning chapter 1 himself, titling it “Overview.” In this overview Smagorinsky explains the purpose of the book, which is to pick up where George Hillocks’s review of writing research left off in 1983. Smagorinsky cites the numerous changes in the discipline of composition studies as reason for his book, and loosely covers the advent of teacher research, multimodal conceptions of composition, family and community literacy, and writing in the workplace and professions. After justifying the need for his book, Smagorinsky moves on to reveal his method behind the organization of the text based on current projects in composition. I find it odd and perhaps even a bit distrust- ing of the reader that Smagorinsky didn’t situate this introductory material in a preface. I am more skeptical, however, of the book’s goal: to review over twenty years of composition in one sitting, is rather ambitious. Smagorinsky claims to follow Braddock and Hillocks, but has difficulty compressing the surge of interest in composition into one book.

Research on Composition has no section headers, only chapters, which makes the book a bit difficult to survey considering the vastness of the topic. The three main themes of the texts are developments in composition writing, composition pedagogy or learning methods, and general advancements within the field of rhetoric and composition. These categories rely heavily on intra-interpretation of various elements within the discipline of composition (which are almost never viewed in isolation, hence the rhetoric emphasis), but for the sake of this review the book is generally separated by these categories.

The most evident and recurrent theme in Smagorinsky’s collection is that of developments in composition writing. Chapter 2 specifically addresses the cognitivist movement and how that has shaped educators’ views of literacy development in preschool and elementary writing. Extensive research since the mid-1980s has caused a “social turn” by integrating Vygotskian activity theory, ethnographies, dialogism, and New Literacy studies into the way teachers guide beginning writers through cultural interpretation. This turn occurred because writing in the classroom community is shaped by how children interpret these elements, including literature, pop culture, and peer culture. Composition research has also extended to investigate which specific
writing tasks classroom settings and technologies “enhance cognitive and social purposes for writing” (36).

The chapter concerning middle and high school composition begins by addressing the problems associated with writing assessment, dividing problems of national, state and IEA standards of testing and how research on these tests reveals race, class, and gender bias—something suspected but not confirmed through research before 1983. Also since that time the concepts of writing to learn and learning to write have been introduced as a tool for fostering writing. Rhetorical teaching skills are stressed.

Before the mid-eighties, composition at the postsecondary level was characterized as current-traditional. Much work has been done since then researching the student writer, the teacher, and the contexts in which postsecondary education takes place. In line with chapters 2 and 3, chapter 4 focuses on the social turn composition has taken in the last two decades. With this turn comes a focus on gender issues, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, and service learning, and how studying these factors has contributed to the democratization of education. After covering all the grade levels and educational stages in teaching, the next set of advancements covered is writing in terms of advancement via teacher research.

Although not much thought or respect was given to teacher research previous to the late 60s, teacher research has grown to the status of “indispensable.” Collectively, teacher research has investigated a long line of “How do”-type questions, which this chapter systematically answers with recent research findings:

- How do students develop as writers? (111)
- How do teachers use writing to learn about students and become better teachers of writing? (115)
- How do teachers teach writing? (119)
- How do students use writing to make meaning of and act upon their worlds? (125)

This chapter ends with a short assessment of how far teacher research has come, making minor assumptions about the future of this research. A similar generic treatment is given to the topic of workplace writing. The advancements in these areas, however, can hardly be covered in any single chapter. To the author’s credit, chapter 5 is both dense and as thorough as any article seeking to cover over twenty years of said research in so few words.

Naturally workplace writing, chapter 9, has become a major focus in the US due to both our capitalistic society and the ongoing democratization of education. Beaufort takes progressing technology into account when
discussing these phenomena, but cannot possibly cover all developments and impacts since 1983 in one chapter. She makes a valiant effort, however, neglecting deep discussion on technical writing theory in the process, neglecting to discuss the ongoing debate concerning composition researchers’ reluctance to embrace empirical methods. She does, however, link school to work and research to theory with transfer of learning. Multi-modality undoubtedly governs how well we function in our mandatory multi-tasking workforce. She concludes chapter 9 by stressing the importance of teaching writers to be able to “transition from one writing context to the next” (235).

Chapters 6 and 8, which both deal with literacy and learning in the family community, provide a bridge between the two topics of developments in composition writing and composition pedagogy or learning methods. Leki, Cumming, and Silva, experts in the area, struggle to summarize the advancements. Since the early 90s, English academics have more seriously considered ESL composition as an integral part of the field of composition. The prevalence of English as the dominant language of commerce, among many other variables, has caused a contextually-focused shift and an entirely separate set of curricula has been organized for ESL students. In the ESL composition realm, social, political, and ideological considerations have found solid support. Research in this arena has proved that ESL students need, “unique educational consideration,” mostly because of diverse cultural backgrounds and their own social climate (155). Research reveals that L2 writers face many of the same obstacles that native English speakers face, but the approach to teaching an understanding of composing processes must consider the cultural background of the students’ native language in development of learning strategies.

Next, Cushman, Barbier, Marzak, and Petrone tackle developments in family and community literacy since 1984. Literacy did not pluralize in the discipline of English without some turmoil and upheaval. This should come as no surprise—the ethnocentric results of colonialism are still quite visible in Africa and India. So, appropriately, chapter 8 starts by noting the opposition this segment of research had to overcome. However, research through ethnographies and other qualitative methods has fostered a more diverse understanding of literacy, building on the works of Taylor and Heath since 1983. Much of our understanding about family and community literacy relies on our understanding of identity within each culture. This presents teachers with many challenges that are still being heavily researched.

Between these transitional chapters on literacy and ESL, chapter 7, reviews and rehashes the controversy within the discipline of English—namely the “tension [that] persists between those who ‘teach writing’ and those who ‘teach literature’” (182). This is arguably the greatest obstacle. Chapter 7 and 10, on rhetoric research and composition’s historical studies respectively,
comprise the more general advancements within these two fields. Since 1983, chapter 7 asserts, a sociolinguistic emphasis has prioritized language-critical pedagogy and inspired a rift “between rhetorical theory and composition practice” as well (177). However, shifts towards teaching language as a social phenomenon allows students to understand and perhaps better control or even manipulate their social situation to their advantage. These ideologic dynamics are still fiery and oft not-popularly received by the more traditional sect of English. Chapter 7 is left relatively open-ended, as more pop-culture and visually-interpreted rhetoric is still in the process of both being defined and finding their place in the field.

Chapter 10 begins with an overview of all the rhetorical factors that create the current situation of composition studies, then moves on to address the specific circumstances in Mass education, elementary and secondary schooling. Russell comments on the superb quality of composition research done since 1984, and partly attributes the rise in importance of the field within English to this historical research. He concludes with a call to action for further research, and particularly debate on research. This debate, he argues, will stimulate and push the field to even greater levels of progress and status.

Although notably mentioned, perhaps at the expense of Technical Writing in chapter 9, glaringly absent are chapters that solely address advancements in the study of visual rhetorics and technology in composition. These topics are frequently touched on in nearly every chapter, but they are denied focus.

These issues so crucial in the research and progression of the socially constructed influence on composition (arguably ruling the last 2 decades), certainly merit their own chapters in composition research. However, the urgent and continuously changing pace of new technologies would quickly render any technology-based section outdated soon after publication. And until compositionists can get over their own biases against modernity, which, ironically, they seek to challenge with “teachers of literature” in chapter 7, visual rhetorics will remain a topic for semiotic and linguistic professionals to address and debate.

Atlanta, GA
Winner of the 2004 W. Ross Winterowd Award and the 2006 CCCC Outstanding Book Award, Morris Young’s Minor Re/Visions is an engaging, elegantly written text that provides a poignant yet critical analysis of the ways in which literacy practices and cultural expectations influence our notions of citizenship. Drawing on the emerging field of autoethnography—autobiographical details of an author’s own literacy narrative set within the framework of understanding his or her relationship to literacy, race, and citizenship—Young focuses on two central issues: one, the complicated relationship of minorities, particularly those who bear visible markers of difference, to the status quo; and two, the notions of literacy that dominate the expressions of citizenship by the status quo and minorities. Even as he resists the master cultural scripts and hegemonies of oppression within dominant literacy practices, Young takes neither an oppositional nor radical stance, choosing instead a progressive agenda. Preferring to reform from within the system, Young provides one minority researcher-teacher’s honest, nuanced attempt to find fulfillment and seek justice within a “racist” system, even as he enjoys the successes and rewards accorded to him by that system.

Chapter 1, as with each chapter in the book, opens with a personal anecdote related to Young’s literacy, situated within the genre of literacy narrative. He remembers being evaluated by a speech therapist. Accompanying this anecdote are several literacy artifacts, the school pathologist’s report on his school health card, Young’s first library card, and other documents from his preschool story hour programs. These artifacts, according to Young, demonstrate the power a community confers on literacy, highlight the master narratives of transformation and success, and underscore literacy’s role of conferring citizenship in America. Literacy practices, then, organize America’s sociocultural relations to maintain the beliefs of the dominant culture. Literacy narratives carry generic expectations of adaptation, belonging, and citizenship so that minorities who “interact with dominant discourse . . . understand the material conditions under which they operate and must account for their positions within dominant culture in order to critique it” (41). Two more anecdotes position Young in the nexus of two cultures: minority—he is insulted when a comic book seller asks “Can’t cha read English?”—and dominant—he considers his Filipino friend Alan different because he had just been naturalized. Young argues that the rhetoric of citizenship, when applied to minorities, particularly those with visible markers of difference, has connotations of
alienness and raises questions of their legal standing. He calls for “alternate constructions that provide appropriate forms for a polyglot citizenry” (52).

Seeking to complicate the racial landscape beyond black and white by focusing on the blurred boundaries between Asian American and American cultures, chapter 2 emphasizes the material and psychological pain connected to literacy and citizenship. Young examines the literacy narratives in Richard Rodriguez’s *Hunger for Memory*, Victor Villanueva Jr.’s *Bootsraps: From an American Academic of Color*, Carlos Bulosan’s *America is in the Heart*, and Maxine Hong Kingston’s “Song of a Barbarian Reed Pipe” from *The Woman Warrior*. He identifies Rodriguez’s assimilationist tendencies of connecting Standard English with public language and mainstream legitimacy with Villanueva’s professional life critiques of systems of power even as he draws on personal experiences and writing to craft theories about literacy, race, and citizenship. Young examines the reception of Bulosan’s work as a “cultural translator,” who reproduces the oppression and hierarchies of race and gender employed by literacy practices while trying to keep American ideals alive. He stresses the role of silence and alienation in Kingston’s story of the disturbing incident when young Maxine takes on the role of the violent oppressor by “forcing” another young Chinese girl to speak. The chapter ends with a painful revelation. After leaving Hawai‘i to begin his doctoral work at Michigan, Young encounters a marginalizing realization: “I did not become Asian American until I left Hawai‘i and entered a situation as a ‘minority,’ where those kinds of pan-ethnic coalitions are important political categories” (71). Once part of a majority, Young now understands full well the stakes involved in the intricate dance between minor and major, the agonizing benefits and losses that come with being a minority.

Chapter 3 begins with a personal anecdote about how Hawai‘ian Creole fulfilled Young’s doctoral foreign language requirement, serving as a segue into a history of Hawai‘ian literacy education, its role in constructing a white culture, and the displacement of the native Hawai‘ian language. Young seeks to shift the debate to the cultural roots and personal choices where local identity, values, and language practices are legitimized. Examining two short stories by Marie Hara and Lois-Ann Yamanaka, he explores the resistance, schooling, and power roles for students who speak pidgin, weaving his analysis of these stories with the public debate in the local newspapers concerning Standard English. The story of Hawai‘ian Creole in relation to Standard English is one of assimilation, social advancement, and economic opportunity—a familiar theme in the concerns of minorities and their literacy practices.

Quoting from his teaching journal about his first teaching day at his first job, Young admits, “I exploit my ‘exoticness’ to gain some cultural capital in this class” (141). Having “embraced” the role of minority, Young now offers
himself as a “text” in the classroom (165). Chapter 4 provides four assignments that demonstrate the pedagogical uses of literacy narratives. Students read and write literacy narratives to develop critical skills. To understand the complexities of language practices in relation to whiteness, Young describes in careful, elaborate detail how each of the four assignments helps students understand that literacy is more than the ability to read and write; literacy has the power to “maintain systems of oppression . . . [and] to construct someone as less than a full person” (148). Offering an understanding of literacy as fluid and changing, Young also discusses how whiteness and its normative values are also constructed and maintained by literacy practices. These assignments that focus on reading and writing literacy narratives are the clearest demonstration of Young’s progressive agenda of working to reform the system from within, one student at a time.

Chapter 5 focuses on the professional, academic arena with Young highlighting the symbiotic relationship between “the personal and public [which] cannot be read as discrete narratives but rather must be read together as the parts of a whole story” (172). Referring to two personal literacy artifacts, a K-6 student progress report and a literacy worksheet, Young demonstrates how literacy and good schooling are ideological and political projects that put the onus on the individual and obscure the political mechanisms of control. Thus, he maintains, personal literacy stories can serve as the lens through which public, grand narratives can be understood, examined, and hopefully, disrupted (183). By purposefully assuming the role of a minority and speaking from a minority perspective in his role as a teacher, scholar, and researcher, Young counters what he sees as a racist, oppressive, dominant culture by describing the material consequences of race: “I was becoming Asian American because I had started to understand the necessity of addressing issues of racism, of knowing the history and culture of Asian Americans, because those things are most at stake when they are innocuously absent, when they are not a ‘critical’ concern yet” (190).

Minor Re/Visions focuses reflexively on the symbiotic relationship between the personal and the public as it explores how race and citizenship influence and are influenced by dominant literacy narratives. Giving voice to and performing from a minority perspective, Young eloquently demonstrates the problematic yet ethical choices he makes to research and teach within an institution that discriminates and excludes. At question, then, is if Young seeks to “convert” his students and what maneuvering room his students have in relation to their teacher’s overt ideological stance. In describing his pedagogy, he admits that “I do push students to think” (161), leaving me wondering if students feel compelled to echo the views and beliefs of their teacher. Rather than engaging in a dialogic relationship with his students, Young de-
tails in chapter 4 a top-down relationship where the teacher controls the terms to which ideology and knowledge are investigated, discussed, and produced in the classroom. I would be less concerned with the potential of reproducing a monologic system of oppression within the classroom had he included descriptions of his students’ dissent and resistance in his discussion on pedagogy.

*Minor Re/Visions* is an invitation to understanding how literacy, race, and citizenship are simultaneously rhetorical, ideological, and political projects. Young offers himself and his work as one teacher-researcher’s struggle to live and practice ethically and justly in both the personal and public spheres.

San Antonio, TX