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## Crafting A Pedagogical Identity: A Multiple-Method Examination of an English Department's Writing Pedagogy

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CRAFTING A PEDAGOGICAL IDENTITY: A MULTIPLE METHOD EXAMINATION OF  
AN ENGLISH DEPARTMENT'S WRITING PEDAGOGY

by

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## ABSTRACT

### CRAFTING A PEDAGOGICAL IDENTITY: A MULTIPLE-METHOD EXAMINATION OF AN ENGLISH DEPARTMENT'S WRITING PEDAGOGY

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This study developed after a program review of my current English department. The review pointed to a lack of coherence within our required writing curriculum. To learn more about my colleagues' practices and values in writing instruction and to discover similarities and strengths that might guide our curricular revisions, I devised a multiple method, descriptive study of my colleagues' pedagogies. I initially distributed surveys and used four key pedagogical taxonomies from writing studies scholarship (current-traditional rhetoric, expressivism, cultural studies and critical pedagogy, and rhetoric and argumentation) to analyze the survey data. Finding these taxonomies to be inadequate frameworks for understanding my colleagues' practices, I then constructed three schemas (reading/writing, academic/real world/personal writing, and institution/instructor/student goals) and used them to analyze the writing pedagogies of three colleagues in detailed case studies, whose data consisted of interviews, classroom observations, and course documents. The data and my analysis revealed that faculty members engage in a complex process to determine and implement their pedagogy, a process I label *crafting a pedagogical identity*. I suggest that this process, in combination with David Gold's argument for a values-based view of pedagogy and Bruce McComiskey's connection of identification and articulation, may be beneficial for writing program administrators as they seek to balance faculty members' pedagogical interests and identities with curricular coherence.

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This dissertation is dedicated to Jody, for her loving support, for her patience (of which she needed plenty), and for her reminders that I could do it. I also dedicate this dissertation to Natalie and Ella, who let me work even when they—and I—just wanted to play.

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## GLOSSARY

The definitions below are for the key pedagogical labels and the schemas I used throughout the dissertation. Although I define these at length in the dissertation itself, I intend these shorter definitions to allow readers to gain a quick overview of my sense of these terms and how I am using them in the dissertation.

### **Pedagogies**

*Cultural studies and critical pedagogy* refers to a combination of pedagogical approaches that emphasize social, cultural, and political themes. Students tend to learn about theoretical perspectives that will then allow them to analyze cultural artifacts for the cultural codes and symbolic power embedded in those artifacts, all in the hope of making students more aware of these codes and their influence, developing students' writing abilities, and empowering and liberating students academically and politically.

*Current-traditional rhetoric* prioritizes formal and sentence-level correctness, drawing on arrangement and style as its focal points. The rhetorical modes (e.g., exposition, description, narration) are often key elements of writing instruction, as is a sequential or building-block view of writing (strong word choice leads to effective sentences lead to strong paragraphs lead to good essays). "Good" writing in a current-traditional view is seen as universal, which transcends rhetorical considerations.

*Expressivism* is a writer-centered pedagogical approach that intends to help the student grow both as a writer and as a person and to develop the student's own personal writing voices or styles. Students' personal experiences and interests guide writing topics, and the writing students subsequently produce serves as the primary material for the course. Class time focuses on

working through stages of the writing process, providing students with and allowing them to practice various writing strategies, and offering students' feedback on their writing, both from the instructor (who acts more as a guide or coach than as an assessor) and from classmates. The genres produced tend to be personal and reflective (journals, I-search papers, writing and reading reflections).

*Process* is a general pedagogical approach that instructors use to highlight the recursive process of writing. Students write in stages and learn strategies that assist with writing in each stage. While this developed with expressivism, it is not exclusive to expressivism. Indeed, process approaches can and do work with any of the pedagogical theories of writing instruction, though some of those theories prioritize the product more so than the process.

*Rhetoric and argumentation* refers to a variety of approaches that encourage rhetorical awareness (of audience and the overall rhetorical situation) and argumentative strategies. These approaches tend to focus on research-oriented and/or thesis-driven texts, persuasion through evidence and reasoning, genre awareness and application, discourse community knowledge, and transferring these skills (often within the academy but also to external contexts).

### **Schemas**

*Reading/writing* refers, largely, to the content of the course. Practices tending toward the reading pole would focus on external texts and the interpretation of those texts. These texts then drive or serve as the exigence for the writing in the course. Those practices toward the writing pole rely on internal or student texts as the primary focus, with class time dedicated to applying writing strategies and producing texts. Reading in this context serves writing by providing models, research, or ideas to apply.



*Academic/real world/personal* suggests the types of writing students are to produce for the course or the writing goals for the course. At the academic pole, the writing skills emphasized include research, argumentative strategies, and knowledge of academic genres (e.g., annotated bibliographies, research essays). Real world writing approaches stress, primarily, workplace writing and its genres and conventions but also include public/civic writing and goals. The personal pole includes practices that seek to promote students' development as people and as writers, especially in terms of finding their own voice or style. Personal genres (reflections, journals, personal narratives) dominate, and personal experience is highly valued as evidence.

*Institution/instructor/student* points to the roots of instructors' goals, the influences of their pedagogical choices. At the institution pole, instructors strongly rely on goals from external institutional sources (regental systems and even employers and the wider public) and internal ones (the university, the department, and even one's sense of responsibility to other departments) to shape course goals. Instructors who depend more on their own experiences with writing, their own training or disciplinary background, their own faculty development or personal research and study would tend toward the instructor pole of this schema. The student pole includes practices that are student-centered, using students' interests and needs (actual or perceived) and giving students greater agency in course decisions and goals.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Since the first required writing courses at Harvard in the late nineteenth century, English departments have typically been responsible for staffing required writing courses. Given that English departments often consist of faculty members whose interest in, training in, and experience with writing instruction varies, a required writing curriculum may produce debates—or even heated arguments—about the nature and goals of that curriculum, especially when a department faces internal or external imperatives for changing the curriculum. Adding to this is the complex history of the development of English studies as a field. English departments often include specialists in five main areas—literature, writing studies (or composition and rhetoric), creative writing, linguistics, and English education—as well as various subsets of these areas (digital rhetoric, film studies, English as a second language, journalism, and so on). These different specialties may have their areas of overlap, but in general, they are quite distinct from one another. And as the history of English studies as a field illustrates, the joining of these specialties under the umbrella of “English” has had more to do with happenstance than deeply held affinities.<sup>1</sup>

However, in those departments whose entire faculty, from teaching assistants and contingent faculty to tenured and tenure-track faculty, must staff required writing courses, varying views and values about writing and its instruction come into direct contact and, potentially, into direct tension. This is perhaps even more likely in what we might refer to as “traditional” English departments—those departments that focus primarily on literature and staff the majority of their tenure-line positions with literary specialists and unpublished creative

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<sup>1</sup> Sharon Crowley, for example, explains that the use of entrance exams about literature to diagnose writing problems led to the idea that English departments should house writing instruction (10-11).

writing MFA graduates—because of the history of the troubled relationship of literary and writing studies. In smaller departments, faculty members whose background is not exclusively or primarily writing studies still have a vested interest in the writing curriculum, as they will typically teach writing courses as part of their workload.

However, disciplinary diversity, even in the most collegial departments, may well create difficulties in achieving a coherent writing curriculum. Because of the variety of pedagogical approaches created by these differing backgrounds and experiences, faculty have difficulty defining the goals of the course to each other and the wider campus community, administrators struggle to see connections across these courses (and thus their purpose and value), and students in one section of a required writing course may experience an entirely different course from students enrolled in another section. In some ways, this may be beneficial—for example, different topics or themes might appeal to students with different interests or from different disciplines. However, this variety becomes problematic if it comes with a loss of rigor or coherent goals, creating confusing and conflicted messages about writing for students and about the curriculum for our colleagues across the university, administrators of all levels, and even the wider public.

The combination of this diversity and pressures for coherence in required writing courses may generate some potentially productive conversations about writing curricula. Unfortunately, however, most of these conversations begin without a clear understanding of the nature and sources of instructors' views and values related to writing pedagogy, which means that we would do well to investigate not only the differences in pedagogical practices and ideologies that exist among our colleagues but also how our colleagues arrive at the pedagogies they employ. Having this knowledge allows writing program administrators (WPAs) to look for commonalities and

shared strengths, to discover the processes that faculty work through when adopting or revising pedagogical practices, and to develop ways to achieve greater curricular coherence. These goals are at the root of the study that follows, a study that takes as its subject the department in which I currently teach.

### **Study Exigence and Context**

This study, for which I collected data from the summer of 2014 through the spring semester of 2015, began in response to my department's most recent (2012) program review. The external reviewers who participated in this review provided some critiques about the coherence of our department's writing curriculum, critiques we have been trying to address. While we are a generally collegial department, these conversations about writing pedagogy and curriculum have sometimes become tense rather quickly. At root in this tension is the sense of "best" practices, of being committed to particular pedagogies and resistant to others because of one's own experience with those pedagogies. Faculty members will suggest or directly claim that other faculty members ignore this or that important feature of writing instruction because of their adherence to expressive or cultural studies pedagogies or to some other pedagogical theory. What is missing in these conversations is a real sense of one another's practices—and the recognition that these pedagogical (taxonomic) labels, whether explicitly identified or implied, do more to hinder our progress in collaboratively developing a required writing curriculum that would be effective in our context.

The study for this dissertation starts with these concerns to explore departmental views and values for required writing instruction, particularly in the Composition II courses. Eventually, I plan for the results of this study to contribute to our department's work on creating greater horizontal coherence, leading to further discussions about vertical coherence, making

Composition II a more fully articulated extension of Composition I. But the more pertinent results come in the form of greater understanding of my colleagues' pedagogical approaches to writing instruction and how they develop and employ these approaches.

This greater knowledge of my colleagues may well ensure that our future discussions are more productive, allowing us to discuss the merits and potential drawbacks of particular practices in our specific context. If these discussions are well-informed and include a variety of voices from the department, they will be much more likely to create an atmosphere of cooperation and a sense of shared ownership of our writing curriculum. Beyond developing notions of shared ownership, though, by closely studying these views and values, I have developed, as a member of the department and as a student-researcher, a truer sense of my colleagues' pedagogical goals and complexities, a sense that goes beyond disciplinary affiliations—something I hope writing studies more broadly will embrace. For as much as writing studies now avoids taking a deficit approach to students' writing abilities, we may do well to avoid such a view of the teaching practices of our non-writing studies colleagues, as they may have much to offer our views of writing instruction. Such a view is based on the workshop model promoted in WAC scholarship, a model that promotes egalitarian discussions of writing practices and sharing effective writing instruction strategies (Russell 11), with the end of promoting more reflective practices (McLeod 113).

The context for this study is an English department in a land-grant, public university in the upper Midwest. It is a mid-sized university with roughly 13,000 students enrolled at any given point. These students typically come from the surrounding area, though our student population has been diversifying slowly of late, largely due to increasing international student matriculation.



As a land-grant university, the institution's most predominant disciplines are STEM fields, the agricultural sciences, nursing, and some other unique technical majors (aviation, for example).

In our department, the curricular focus<sup>2</sup> is primarily on literature, though we have been adding more writing courses (creative writing courses, mostly, but a few technical writing courses) in recent years. Our majors have three options for completing the undergraduate curriculum. Students completing the literature track will take four survey courses (early and modern versions of both American and British literature) and various other literature courses. English education majors also focus on literature, though the coursework is a bit more prescribed: they must take a grammar course, Shakespeare, and a course in juvenile literature. The writing emphasis is the third option, and it primarily emphasizes creative writing and a near-equilibrium of literature and writing courses (twelve and fifteen credits, respectively). All students in the major must complete Introduction to English Studies, which is taught by different tenured or tenure-track faculty and covers different aspects of English studies but with a predominant emphasis on issues related to literature. The other course required of all English majors regardless of specialization is the capstone course, the theme of which is determined by the faculty member teaching it that semester. The capstone, I should mention, fulfills the upper-level writing requirement, so it may well be the only course with a required writing component a major with a literature specialization takes after the required writing sequence.<sup>3</sup>

The master's curriculum consists of two emphases: Literature Studies and Language and Rhetoric. Both emphases require twenty-four credit hours of coursework related primarily to the

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<sup>2</sup> I would like to note that this characterization of the curriculum reflects the state of the department at the time of the study. As the faculty and curriculum are intertwined, I wanted to reflect the situation of the department at the time my colleagues were providing me with data.

<sup>3</sup> Of course, instructors in the literature courses regularly require students to write essays—sometimes multiple essays, but instructors are not required to assign written essays in literature courses.

student's area of emphasis. The literary courses tend to span the typical British/American and period divides with differing focuses (varying theoretical angles, genres, particular artists, and so on). The rhetoric and language courses comprise mainly linguistics courses, a rhetoric seminar, a creative writing course, a composition pedagogy seminar (required of all TAs), and special topics courses that vary in content and availability. Most of the students in the M.A. program tend to take the literary path, but this may have more to do with interplay of curriculum and faculty make-up.

The curriculum described above reflects the interests and backgrounds of the faculty. Our department consists of about twelve tenured and tenure-track faculty, twelve to fifteen full- and part-time instructors, and around ten graduate teaching assistants (depending on the year).<sup>4</sup> The tenure-track faculty are mostly literature and creative writing specialists with one composition/rhetoric specialist and one linguist. But this categorization does not speak fully to the diversity of interests that exists among the tenure-track faculty. A few of the faculty members are what I would call "hybrid" faculty, who merge a variety of interests and disciplines into their teaching and research. For example, the department head has considerable interest in film studies and professional writing. The composition coordinator (the composition/rhetoric specialist) is trained in rhetorical theory but also teaches several advanced literature courses and literary theory. The linguist teaches sci-fi literature and composition and even served as composition coordinator for a time. The department's poet, whose Ph.D. is in creative writing, completed a significant amount of doctoral course work in composition and rhetoric and has a considerable interest in the department's composition curriculum.

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<sup>4</sup> As with the curriculum, the details about faculty here reflect the departmental make-up at the time of the study.

Much like the tenure-track faculty, the instructional faculty members' backgrounds are primarily in literature. Most—close to all, in fact—have completed the department's master's program. But again, this superficial background belies a greater diversity of interests. Film studies, professional writing, creative writing, and online writing instruction are just a few of the other interests in this group.

The TAs, as noted above, are mostly on the literature track of the master's program, yet they, too, have and gain a certain level of disciplinary hybridity. One of the first courses of their program of study is the composition pedagogy seminar. As a result, they receive an introduction to the composition/rhetoric side of the department early in their course of study. Most also spend time tutoring in the writing center, which teaches them about a slightly different area of writing studies. And while they are novice teachers and tutors, they come into their positions with their own notions of what constitutes effective writing and teaching. In other words, they bring experiences and values that can complement or possibly conflict with the required writing curriculum.

The curriculum and the make-up of the department suggest a key point. Although the department is, on the surface, a "traditional" English department, that is, primarily a literature department that also staffs the required writing courses, this categorization conceals deeper complexity that exists in the department. This complexity is at once encouraging and concerning. It is encouraging because it speaks to a potential openness to different ideas, to an awareness of the variety that can make up an English department, and to a willingness to make room for that variety. It is somewhat concerning, though, when we consider that these varieties of views and backgrounds all exist in the required writing curriculum, at times coherently but also possibly

incoherently in other instances, as sometimes seems to happen in my department's writing curriculum.

My position in the department affords me a unique view on potential discussions about writing curriculum design and revision. I began as a TA in the department and received my M.A. in literature, specializing in early British modernism. I was then hired with the expectation that I would pursue a Ph.D. in composition and rhetoric (or a related area of specialization), making me now one of the department's hybrid faculty, which may speak to some of the changes in disciplinary attitudes within the department. Once I complete my doctoral work, my position will become tenure-track (it is not now), and I am to begin working more closely with the composition coordinator (whose background is in rhetoric and composition as well as literary theory) on our department's writing curriculum and, in all likelihood, I will eventually move into the composition coordinator position. Since I was hired, I have been serving on the department's composition and curriculum committees. And in the fall of 2014, I began serving as the department's writing center coordinator. In short, I am in a position in my department to take part in and implement changes to the writing curriculum. But while my position and background establish me as somewhat of an expert (or at least a nascent one) on writing studies in the department, I do not want this to undermine or override department's collaborative curricular efforts. So my expertise will be *part* of the conversations we have on writing curriculum as a department, not the *whole* conversation. In other words, while I can and will use my position to speak to current trends in writing curricula and pedagogy, I will also use it to promote collaborative efforts toward meaningful, purposeful, local change.

*The Required Writing Curriculum: A Local Problem*

When the focus of the department and educational backgrounds of the faculty are primarily in literature, decisions about the writing curriculum and the practices in the classroom may not be grounded in the most current writing studies scholarship. In our department, which is responsible for staffing two required writing courses (Composition I and Composition II<sup>5</sup>) to nearly every student that attends our university, faculty of all ranks and backgrounds must teach at least some required writing courses each academic year. Instructors and TAs staff the Composition I courses. The 2014 undergraduate catalog describes Composition I as the “[p]ractice in the skills, research, and documentation needed for effective academic writing. Analysis of a variety of academic and non-academic texts, rhetorical structures, critical thinking, and audience will be included.” This course has a common syllabus and common texts designed and chosen by the composition coordinator. The primary focus of the required texts and common syllabus in this course is a cultural studies model that asks students to think critically about and analyze media representations (advertisements, news programming, gender representations, and so on) and their effects on the culture. While faculty still debate the value and consequences of a cultural studies approach, the curriculum for Composition I raised no concerns among the external reviewers.

Composition II is a slightly different story. Instructors and tenured/tenure-track faculty teach the Composition II courses. Composition II, according to the 2014 undergraduate catalog, is the “[s]tudy of and practice in writing persuasive prose, with the aim to improve writing skills

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<sup>5</sup> Composition II does have a couple of alternative courses: ENGL 283 is a creative writing substitute, and ENGL 277 is a technical writing course that fulfills the Composition II requirement, but this course is specifically and exclusively for engineering students. All of these required writing courses, though, meet the Board of Regents requirement of written communication, which the 2014 university catalog describes as developing in students the ability to “write effectively and responsibly and [to] understand and interpret the written expression of others.”

in all disciplines.” Those teaching Composition II have greater autonomy in determining content, texts, and assignments, with only a few generic guidelines and objectives determined by the Board of Regents (BOR). As a result, these courses vary quite widely in terms of content and assignments. For example, because of Composition I’s emphasis on cultural studies and the fact that most instructors received their writing studies pedagogy training in cultural studies, many versions of Composition II continue that cultural studies perspective; others are rather literary or expressive in nature; a couple rely on a film studies approach; while still others emphasize rhetorical strategies (both classical rhetoric and the modes) and/or argumentative strategies, including academic argument.

The concern in these numerous approaches to Composition II is not the variety itself but the inconsistencies they can and often do generate in a required general education course. Indeed, the external reviewers for the department’s 2012 program review challenged us to consider the connections—or more properly, the tenuous connections—of our Composition II courses to each other and to Composition I. That is, in our required composition courses, we struggle with incoherence of two types: vertical (between Composition I and Composition II) and horizontal (among the various Composition II courses). As a result, we have begun to examine how we might bring greater consistency to our Composition II courses.

### *Imperatives for Change*

One of the key goals of this study has been to discover ways to promote departmental discussions about possible changes to our required writing curriculum in response to certain internal and external pressures, but this goal is not nearly as neutral as it may initially seem. In particular, this raises questions about motivations for curricular changes and the complex

contexts that inform such motivations. What follows are brief discussions of a few such motivations (and I will address my own motivations as well).

Local pressure for change is mounting outside the department, and this is creating some conflicting internal views about curricular change. As already mentioned, the program review revealed some curricular incoherence between our required Composition I and Composition II courses. In addition, we constantly face pressure from other departments, administrators, and our state's Board of Regents to address what they perceive as valuable in writing instruction. Certainly, some of these pressures are the usual "students-can't-write" admonishments, but those concerns that center on core academic and professional writing competencies (argument, analysis, rhetorical awareness, and so on) are worth our attention. These pressures are not purely external either, as some members of the department have begun voicing their concerns about these matters in meetings and retreats. These concerns have arisen mostly through faculty members' own experiences and their hallway conversations about writing. Some specifically reference the suggestions from our program review and ask what we are doing to address those suggestions.

Pressure for change also comes from the writing studies discipline, especially from the more pedagogical parts of the discipline. Historically, composition pedagogy has experienced numerous shifts in "best" practices. (See Chapter II; see also Berlin, "Contemporary Composition"; Fulkerson, "Composition in the Eighties"; Fulkerson, "Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century.") Even today, scholars seek to define and apply new sets of "best" practices, from Douglas Downs and Elizabeth Wardle's *Writing about Writing* curriculum to the New London Group's multiliteracies pedagogy to genre theory and even to a resurgence of WAC/WID pedagogies.

Aside from individual scholars, disciplinary organizations also advocate certain goals and outcomes. The Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) published the “Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition” in 2000 (which was amended in 2008 and again in 2014). This document, though not specific about actual pedagogical approaches, identifies key skills and abilities students should have by the time they complete first-year writing courses. As a sort of extension of this document, the Council of Writing Program Administrators, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and National Writing Project (NWP) jointly issued *The Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, which lists seven “habits of mind” (such as curiosity, openness, and metacognition) that students who succeed in postsecondary writing possess, as well as practices that can encourage such habits of mind (practices that derive directly from the “Outcomes Statement”). Like the “Outcomes Statement,” this document does not advocate certain pedagogical approaches. However, the goals and habits of mind outlined in both documents undoubtedly emphasize wide-reaching rhetorical awareness and argumentative strategies, which implicitly suggests certain pedagogical values, treating writing as communicative and not as necessarily or simply utilitarian. Ultimately, if specialists in writing studies see these as a bit of a yardstick (and to be sure, not all do), these documents may become only slightly veiled demand for certain curricular choices.

Regardless of whether change is advocated by local or broader external forces, if people feel forced into change, they may not see that change as a priority and may in fact resist those recommended changes. A department may also hesitate to change because of a more deeply-seated, almost unconscious sense that no change is needed. That is, the need for change recognized by outside entities (such as external reviewers in our program review), or even internal ones, may be the result of the very practices currently in place in the department, and



external pressures may be conflicting with the more dominant internal views of the department. Moreover, if faculty members view even valid pressures for change as coming from an external entity, some (even many) within the department may feel a lack of ownership of that change.

The question then becomes, is change—even change toward greater curricular coherence—something the department wants at all? Undoubtedly, I have my desires for change, most of them in line with the findings of the program review. I believe required writing courses should have some levels of vertical and horizontal coherence, though not to the point of common texts and syllabi across the board. Additionally, to my mind, these courses should prepare students to respond to a variety of writing contexts and situations through rhetorical awareness, notions of genre, and introduction to and practice with a variety of argumentative strategies. Given my history in this department as an undergraduate and graduate student, as a TA and an instructor, my background and some of my interests lie with the Composition I emphasis on cultural studies and critical pedagogy. Finally, I feel required writing courses should address changing views of what it means to compose in a digital age and should address changing student populations, which is slow at our institution but happening nonetheless.

While my desires for change are not necessarily representative of the views of others in the department, in general, I have seen at least some glimmers of a desire to make the kinds of changes suggested by the program review. Discussions about Composition II and our required writing curriculum in general, though often brief, occur more frequently than they have in the past. And when we initially began our discussions of this, nearly all faculty members (tenured/tenure-track and instructional staff alike) offered to serve on any committees discussing this issue. Our composition coordinator has promised to chair any such committee, and we have begun meeting sporadically to discuss some updates to course descriptions, goals, and outcomes

for Composition I and Composition II. While unofficial discussions are occurring, our limited action on these issues may suggest writing curriculum change is being left behind due to other departmental and faculty priorities. Nonetheless, we have attempted some modest changes. We have piloted a couple of discipline-specific sections of Composition II, but only a few faculty members were involved in developing these pilots and the pilots have thus far been rolled out in only a few sections.<sup>6</sup> But these are only general indications of the internal attitudes about change, and as such, my study explores the internal imperatives for change as well as the potential practical value of answers to my research questions. The practical value, of course, would be greater faculty involvement in discussions of curricular change and, likely, a more robust curriculum in which faculty feel invested.

So how might we face such issues? As I will suggest and investigate in this dissertation, one approach we might take involves two stages. We should, first, consider such challenges as opportunities to learn about our colleagues; their views and values about writing instruction; where these views and values come from; and how faculty members craft their pedagogical identity using their experiences, views, and values. This knowledge of our colleagues, then, serves to identify possible strengths upon which the department can build, enabling us to put these different pedagogical ideas into conversation with each other and with contemporary views from writing studies. This has the potential to generate productive tensions through which faculty may address the merits and faults of these matters in their own specific, local context and, we can hope, reach a sense of shared ownership of their writing curriculum.

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<sup>6</sup> We do not face any particular sanctions for failing to address the concerns raised in the program review. However, our motivation is more intrinsic: the desire to deliver what others in the profession see as effective, meaningful writing instruction to our students. In other words, we want a curriculum that prepares students well for the demands of writing in the academy and beyond and one that we feel is intellectually rigorous and pedagogically sound.

## **Research Statement and Research Questions**

For this project—a descriptive, multiple-method study drawing on surveys, interviews, and case studies—I investigated the views and values related to writing instruction held by faculty members in my department. The study examines the roots of these views and values and what they might offer the department in terms of generating unifying and coherent approaches to the department’s required writing curricula. Ultimately, I wanted to understand the influence of different disciplinary views, educational backgrounds, pedagogical perspectives, and even writing experiences within my own department. As noted above, my hope is that having access to such information will help me and the other members of the department discover ways to put these views into productive conversation with each other so that we might build on the different strengths we bring to writing instruction. But these goals and this study may have implications for the wider field of writing studies, writing program administration, and even English studies more generally because writing instruction often falls on all faculty members in an English department at certain types of institutions, usually including faculty members who have had limited specific training in writing instruction. However, these faculty members have valuable practices and goals to contribute to conversations about writing curricula. Thus, I have attempted to avoid approaching my colleagues’ knowledge as if it is ill-informed, out-of-date, or otherwise deficient. Instead, my goals were to gain a stronger sense of what influences writing instruction, how it is practiced in the department, and how these different influences and practices may generate discussions about (and possibly changes to) writing curricula, graduate teaching assistant training, and faculty development—all in an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration.

I did not come into this study pretending to be purely objective. I have my own views and values, shaped by my interactions with more recent scholarship on writing theory and practice, and given my position within the department, this is expected of me. While others in the department hold views similar to my own, I recognize that these are not shared values across the department. Knowing about these differences can help us move beyond our own isolated perspectives, beyond the influence of taxonomic labels, and into more meaningful discussions about the complexity of our practices and where beneficial intersections and problematic gaps arise. I also see this study being relevant beyond this department primarily because of its goals in seeking out and exploiting such intersections and because of the methods by which I hope to achieve these goals, which may well model the processes and stances that others might initiate and carry out these kinds of discussions.

To come to a better understanding of these issues and to model such processes, this study explored four primary research questions.

- What do faculty members of all ranks in my department value in writing and writing instruction?
- What do these values and practices tell us about our departments' pedagogical strengths and weaknesses?
- How do faculty members balance differences within their own goals and approaches, between their goals and approaches and those of their colleagues, and between their goals and approaches and those of the department and institution?
- How do faculty members' values and goals reflect different sources (e.g., experiential, disciplinary, institutional) of pedagogies or pedagogical choices and practices?

Initially, I tested the curricular waters of our department with a project for a research methods course. After receiving IRB exemption, I sent out a survey, which could be filled out anonymously, to members of my department via SurveyMonkey. (See Appendix A for the survey.) The aim of this survey was to investigate how faculty members of all ranks in the department approached writing instruction and what views and values informed these practices.

I approached this pilot survey with three hypotheses, stemming largely from what changes I would like to see in the department's required writing curriculum, including a more specific and explicit set of goals and outcomes (related to the CWPA's "Outcomes Statement" and emphasizing argumentation and rhetorical awareness) and thus a more unified sense of purpose. First, as my department consists primarily of literature and creative writing faculty, I assumed I would discover a fairly consistent expressivist approach to writing instruction. Second, I expected to discover some practices that recent scholarship in writing pedagogy has spoken out against, particularly significant emphases on surface-level correctness. Finally, I felt I would find a general need for faculty development in the department.

The results of my pilot study illustrated some problems in both my methods and my thinking. In terms of the problems of method, I will detail these more fully in Chapter III as they led to some of the choices I made in the survey I designed for this study. Generally, my errors were of design and distribution. The design created some confusion among participants and thus some confused results. Additionally, since I sent the survey out toward the end of the semester, I only received six complete responses to the survey by the time I began analyzing the data. I sent the request to all forty-six<sup>7</sup> members of the department, so my response rate was only thirteen

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<sup>7</sup> At the time of the data collection for the dissertation itself, the department had forty-two members, as some TAs had graduated, and one faculty member had retired.

percent. The busyness of the end of the semester likely led to my colleagues' limited participation.

The larger problem the pilot indicated was that my assumptions and hypotheses were quite mistaken. In limited ways, the survey did reflect my hypotheses. A couple of respondents made comments that alluded to expressive practices in their writing: focusing on students' experiences, a desire for students to explore the self through their writing, examining the self in relation to larger cultural contexts. And four participants valued surface-level correctness as indicative of effective writing. In addition to these practices, though, were discussions of practices that have greater acceptance in the scholarship today: developing rhetorical awareness and argumentative strategies, helping students improve the writing skills they will need in contexts beyond academic ones, and promoting critical thinking skills, for just a few examples.

Because the results were demonstrating some practices I had not expected to see so well represented, they challenged my thinking about my colleagues and my study in two crucial ways. First, my sense that my colleagues would rely heavily on expressivism and surface-level emphases was quite mistaken. Even when such approaches appeared in the responses, they were combined with other pedagogical approaches in complex, thoughtful ways. Therefore, I was finding hints of a richer, more complex combination of pedagogies that included combinations of grammatical emphases, expressivism, rhetorical perspectives, and academic discourse, to name a few. Most revealing in this pilot survey were the limits of my initial hypotheses and my neglect of the pedagogical complexity existing within my department and what information I was lacking.

Second, these surveys were showing me what *I* considered "best" practices in composition instruction. I was catching myself favoring (or at least agreeing with) those responses that

emphasized rhetorical awareness, academic argument, and matters of genre and disciplinary discourse conventions. Because my biases were occluding some potentially beneficial pedagogical practices that might help bring together the practices of the department, I had to reexamine the responses that initially struck me as emphasizing surface matters or expressivistic ideas too much. Only after revisiting these did I recognize that my initial analyses overlooked some of the other layers present in them. The fuzzy borders and the overlaps in such responses might provide me with the kinds of spaces from which our department can find commonalities within our differences. As a result, I began to realize that I would need a fuller, more robust picture of faculty members' views and values, how these developed, and how faculty employed them if I hoped to truly understand how our department thinks about writing and to find ways to make these ideas work together.

Consequently, I settled on a three-part approach using revised surveys and adding interviews, both of which were open to any in the department who wished to participate. These approaches intended to develop a broad picture of the department, though the interviews had potential to add greater depth of understanding to individual participants' practices. Following the surveys and interviews, I collected data—additional interviews, classroom observations, pertinent documents—from three willing case-study participants to develop a much more in-depth vision of what these faculty members' pedagogical views and values were and how these faculty members developed their pedagogical philosophies and practices. What this research revealed, which I will discuss in the conclusion, was a complex process of pedagogical identity work rooted in values instead of ideology and of flexible adoption and adaptation of faculty members' extant pedagogical views and practices to meet the demands of changing and varied pedagogical circumstances—a process I call *crafting a pedagogical identity*.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

As English studies began to develop as a field of study in the late 1800s and early 1900s, much of the focus was on the study of literary texts.<sup>8</sup> Attempts to legitimize the field grew through analyzing literary texts scientifically (as in the case of philology) or, later, theoretically. As such, the intellectual and theoretical efforts focused on literature while the courses funding these endeavors, required writing courses, were treated as practical courses or as courses in service to other disciplines in the university. While this division of theoretical (literature) and practical (composition) subordinated writing studies to literature within English departments, it did allow writing studies to develop as a pedagogical field, or as Joseph Harris refers to it, as a teaching subject.

During the twentieth century, and continuing through today, the pedagogical focus of writing studies has led to a number of approaches emerging through trial and error and, later, more research- and theory-driven efforts to discover effective ways of teaching writing.<sup>9</sup> The greater emphasis on research in writing studies and the theorizing of writing over the last forty to fifty years leads Amy Rupiper Taggart, Kurt Schick, and H. Brooke Hessler to define writing pedagogy as “a body of knowledge consisting of theories of and research on teaching, learning, literacy, writing, and rhetoric, and the related practices that emerge” (3). They go on to distinguish writing theory as relating to “text production, circulation, and reception,” and

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<sup>8</sup> The historical and pedagogical sketches provided here are indeed that: sketches. My purpose is not to explore comprehensively the disciplinary and pedagogical development of English studies in general or writing studies in particular but to trace some of the ideological and practical elements of some pedagogical approaches germane to this study.

<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that while these approaches are situated in the historical and pedagogical development of the writing studies, they have been taught by those from disciplines other than writing studies and that these approaches may not necessarily correspond to a faculty member’s particular background, though certain correlations do exist (e.g., cultural studies and literature).



characterize writing pedagogy as that which “explains the teaching and learning of writing,” while still recognizing that these are not separate concepts, that they inform one another (4).

The work of writing studies, especially from the 1960s on, has been on pedagogical praxis, on examining practical and theoretical concepts related to writing in ways that allow teachers to help their students develop their writing abilities.<sup>10</sup> But as this is both practical work (rooted in experience) and theoretical work (rooted in ideology and epistemology), numerous debates about what constitutes effective writing pedagogy exist, leaving us with a number of co-occurring pedagogical practices today. This may not necessarily be to our detriment as instructors with different viewpoints about writing and pedagogy, under collegial and collaborative circumstances, can offer each other new viewpoints and greater insights into their own practices. In short, as Taggart, Schick, and Hessler argue, writing pedagogy is rhetorical, and they tie this to Carolyn Miller’s notion of genre as social action: pedagogies are the genres in which writing instructors work, and they must determine which genre (pedagogy) best suits the circumstances (5-6).

While Taggart, Schick, and Hessler accept the multiplicity and rhetorical nature of pedagogical choices, we must also recognize that most instructors, knowingly or not, approach writing instruction from a certain base pedagogy that they might mix with other practices. And given that no one pedagogy has become *the* pedagogy, we are still surrounded by the variety of pedagogies that have arisen over the years. Often these pedagogies adopt what David Russell (citing Mike Rose) explains as the “myth of transience,” by which scholars and teachers sought out one certain “fix” to student writing instead of acknowledging the depth and complexity

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth mentioning that some debate about this purpose exists as some, especially in the cultural studies and critical pedagogy camps, might argue that preparing students as critically-thinking citizens in a democracy is even more important than the writing itself (e.g., Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures* 87; A. George 78).

involved in writing (7). As a result of this view, different pedagogies have arisen, usually in response to whatever approach was dominant at the time. More significantly, though, this helps to explain why elements of various pedagogies linger: Since these pedagogies looked for a specific solution to the problems of student writing rather than a holistic solution, they were often effective in addressing certain aspects of student writing and thus seen by some as more universally effective. Furthermore, while pedagogies may fall out of favor, they often stem from instructors' experiences and align with certain ideologies they hold. Therefore, these pedagogies (or elements of them) never completely disappear. As a result, within a given department and within a given writing program, multiple pedagogies might exist simultaneously. These categories and characterizations of "pedagogies" have become embedded in the discourse about teaching writing through histories, advocacy, and critiques of each by prominent scholars.

### **Current-Traditional Rhetoric**

After the 1880s, the numbers of students attending institutions of higher education began to increase dramatically. Driving this was, in part, the move to the Germanic model of higher education that offered more majors appealing to students from more diverse backgrounds. As a result, universities struggled to accommodate the literacy differences these new students had with their predecessors. Concurrent with these shifts in higher education were the efforts to establish English (meaning literature) as a discipline. These efforts led to greater focus on the study and theorizing of literature, while the more practical side of the field, writing, was marginalized as rather beneath the efforts of serious scholars. The result of these simultaneous forces was the rise of what often came to be labeled and critiqued by scholars of the emerging field of rhetoric and composition as current-traditional rhetoric.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> These days, and indeed since the 1970s, this label has primarily negative connotations, suggesting outdated and superficial approaches to writing instruction. However, that is not entirely the case, as I will discuss later in this

In 1978, Richard Young categorized the features of current-traditional rhetoric as focusing on product over process, discrete units of language, the modes of discourse, and surface-level writing issues (31). Later, scholars continued to explore the development and nature of current-traditional rhetoric. James Berlin and Sharon Crowley separately note that current-traditional rhetoric is arhetorical. For Berlin, this approach stems from a “positivistic epistemology” in which language becomes “a simple transcribing device for recording that which exists apart from the verbal” (*Rhetoric and Reality* 7). Crowley, agreeing that current-traditional rhetoric was not rhetorical, felt that the practice derived more from humanism, primarily because it was not developed or delivered by scientists but by humanists, and she argues that the attention to form and style aligned with “humanist impulses” at that time (94-95).

Both agree, though, that its emphasis was on arrangement and style. The focus on arrangement led to prescribed formats that students were to use, the five-paragraph essay being a common one (Crowley 94). Current-traditional rhetoric also relied on the modes of discourse, or EDNA (exposition, description, narration, and argument) (Crowley 94; see also Berlin, “Contemporary Composition” 770; and Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 9), with exposition as the most common mode (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 9; Miller 144). Along with proper use of the modes, students also were expected to demonstrate mastery of grammatical correctness and linguistic clarity (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 38; Crowley 95). These underlying sensibilities aligned well with the desire for efficiency in teaching and giving students what they “needed” to be considered literate in the academy. As such, application of current-traditional pedagogies resembled the dreaded “kill-and-drill” approach in which students would receive direct instruction in the expectations of form and style through lectures and perhaps some practice on

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section. Despite the negativity surrounding this term, I will use it primarily because it is the recognized label for this approach.

worksheet-like exercises devoid of content or context, all focused on discrete units of language, from words to sentences to paragraphs (Crowley 96). Students were then expected to display their mastery of these units of language in their writing.

Currently, some teachers may adopt current-traditional approaches, though not avowedly, and very few scholars claim to use or write about current-traditional approaches, in large part because of the negative connotations this pedagogical approach has had associated with it since the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>12</sup> Yet concerns with form and style remain. Richard Fulkerson notes as much in an endnote to his 2005 article, “Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century”: “There are [...] still plenty of current-traditionalist teachers. Their views don’t appear in publications, but signs of their existence show up in anecdotes about papers being failed for comma errors, and in the continued sales of handbooks and workbooks. [...] Current-traditional formalists you shall always have with you” (681-82, n.2).

In response to this rather dismissive, even derisive, claim, Jeffrey Zorn notes that while current-traditionalism may not be a popular approach among scholars, those who still adhere to some of its precepts feel that they are doing important work. He notes that stakeholders from teachers in other disciplines to administrators to members of society at large want composition to give students the kinds of skills considered current-traditional. As he argues, “‘current-traditionalists’ teach students command of the written language, including purposeful organization, firm diction, correct spelling and punctuation, parallel constructions, the nondangling modifier, and conventions of quotation. We insist that the students make sense and

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<sup>12</sup> The critiques of current-traditional rhetoric concerned its overemphasis on surface-level correctness (Crowley 95; Fulkerson, “Composition in the Eighties” 412-13) and formal correctness or adherence to the modes (Berlin, “Contemporary Composition” 770; Crowley 94, 95), and its connections to a positivist mentality that seemed outdated in light of more social-constructivist, postmodern theories arose (Berlin, “Contemporary Composition” 771; Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 36).

prove what they claim to be the case” (753).<sup>13</sup> Fulkerson’s dismissal of current-traditional approaches and Zorn’s defense of them (along with his resistance to efforts to theorizing writing studies) perhaps both miss a middle ground. Joseph Harris, for instance, notes that we might look to superficial matters less as matters of correctness and more as matters of authority, that we “ought to argue for a view of literacy that clearly recognizes and includes such concerns but is not wholly defined by them” (115). In short, although a current-traditional approach, especially in its more dogmatic variations, is widely panned in writing studies circles today, elements of it still have value to some teachers, students, and other stakeholders inside and outside the university.

### **Expressivism**

While current-traditionalism largely dominated textbooks and mainstream writing instruction in the early part of the twentieth century, teachers began to feel this approach alienated students from their writing (Burnham and Powell 113-14) and was not serving their students well, especially in light of the changing demographics of student populations brought on by the civil rights and feminist movements of the time, the GI Bill, and open-enrollment policies at a number of universities. Instructors began to feel that students’ own experiences, both in life and with language, should guide writing, that developing students’ own voices and not their academic ones should be the goal of the course, and that these focal points would make students more engaged and better writers. For Burnham and Powell, this is the entire aim of expressivist approaches to writing instruction. “Expressivism places the writer at the center of its theory and pedagogy, assigning highest value to the writer’s imaginative, psychological, social, and spiritual

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<sup>13</sup> I should note that this sense of standards is not an apolitical argument. For example, the view that students need to meet certain grammatical and stylistic standards can carry with it racial overtones (see Inoue 29-31 and Young 52-55 for two such discussions).

development and how that development influences individual consciousness and social behavior” (113). And rather than papers being about predetermined topics established by the instructors, students could write about topics they found interesting or were familiar with.

To put some of these changes in different terms, they marked a shift in the focus of writing instruction on the objective to a focus on the subjective, from an external sense of truth to an internal personal sense of truth (and the use of writing to express that truth). This shift was not necessarily new, though. Berlin points to some expressive tendencies arising in the 1920s and even further to Platonism with its sense that “reality is a personal and private construct,” making the individual apprehension and vision more important than the audience’s perceptions (*Rhetoric and Reality* 73-74, 146-47). In this view, the act of writing guides the writer to discover and express her own personal vision of the world, of reality. Meeting an audience’s expectations were less important than achieving the author’s vision (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 146-47).

While Berlin is right to acknowledge the importance of students’ internal apprehensions of truth, I think he somewhat downplays the ultimate goal of expressivistic approaches to writing, namely that the aim is not just for students to develop as individuals and to hone their own personal visions of the world; the goal is also to help students develop as writers. Harris points to the development of this view from the Dartmouth conference of 1966. Growth proponents such as James Britton felt that students would develop their skills “in an incidental fashion, not through direct training in stylistic or grammatical exercises [...] but as a natural outcome of meaningful practice in writing and reading” and exploration of “[their lived experience” (Harris 9). While students were focusing on these personal elements, they were also writing—often a considerable amount. By giving students the opportunity to write frequently,

expressive instructors hoped that students' writing skills would improve by virtue of persistent practice and by looking more deeply at their own lived experiences.

Another element of expressivism was the development of the student's "voice." While current-traditionalism had focused almost exclusively on "correcting" the student's voice, on aligning it with academic expectations, expressivism sought to return to students their ability to discover and develop their own authentic voices, that is, what language was true for them and not merely what was "correct" (Harris 9). Language thus became a tool to explore and identify the self (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 153). Moreover, if students were able to discover and leverage that authentic voice, they would be able "to assert [themselves] against what was seen as a dehumanizing corporate and university system" (Harris 36). Yet such goals were seen as mired in vagueness (who decides that the student is using an authentic voice?) and as potentially anti-intellectual in that the idea of *voice* could limit "more critical sorts of talk and argument" (Harris 33-34, 42).

Critical to the development of expressivism was the growth of process pedagogy. By moving students through stages of drafting, instructors encouraged students to discover what was meaningful and worth writing about to them (prewriting), to write those experiences (writing), and then revising the writing based on feedback from others (rewriting).<sup>14</sup> Despite their concurrent development, expressivism and process notions are not exclusively intertwined. As I will explain below, process, in fact, is somewhat more universally applicable.

To enact these beliefs about growth and voice, an expressivist instructor creates a classroom with markedly different practices than those in a current-traditional classroom. Rather than the instructor imparting knowledge through readings and lectures, the expressivist instructor

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<sup>14</sup> Often, the goal of receiving feedback was not necessarily for the writer to think more about the audience but to help the writer identify more clearly her or his personal vision (Berlin, "Contemporary Composition" 772).

endeavors to create an environment conducive to student writing (for example, see Burnham and Powell 114; Murray 5). In this environment, students are actively engaged in activities related to writing, often writing itself. As expressivism focuses on invention (discovery), in-class activities consist of journal writing (on predetermined topics or ones self-selected by students), freewriting, or group conversations about writing. The instructor serves as a facilitator of these activities and provides feedback on writing, which in this approach, has greater significance to students' development than does assessment. As Harris explains, "The task of the teacher was to assist with [the] process of growth, largely through being a sympathetic listener and reader, and through setting up an environment [...] in which students are given frequent chances to use language in different and meaningful ways" (18-19). Given that the goals of expressivism rely on students discovering their own voices and focusing on topics that are important to them, the writing that students produce tends to be more personal in nature.

Despite the emphasis on the self, on personal development, and on the student's voice, advocates of expressivism argue that it is not wholly devoted to the personal. Indeed, contemporary expressivists believe that through a deeper understanding of themselves, students can have more meaningful socio-political interactions and influences. While Berlin and Fulkerson seem somewhat skeptical of the centrality of this end for expressivism, they both acknowledge the possibility for it (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 155; Fulkerson, "Composition at the Turn" 668). Harris, despite some of his concerns, points to some of the growth and voice notions of expressivism that might well lead to challenges to the nature of education and society at large (19, 36). Likewise, and more forcefully, Burnham and Powell argue that expressivism's project does not stop with the personal. "Individuals can use personal awareness to act against oppressive material and psychological conditions" (118). They also note that expressivism is not



entirely divorced from the rhetoric of the academy, pointing to efforts to connect the personal and the academic, such as through I-search projects and in developing the idea that the personal can complement the academic (120-21). In short, while the personal is the primary focus of expressivism, the self is, as in reality, much more complex and nuanced, able to reach beyond the individual and influence society at large.

### **Process**

Along with the development of expressivism, though not exclusive to that pedagogical approach, came process pedagogy. It, too, was a response to current-traditional rhetoric and its flattened sense of the writing process that looked only to the product (Anson 215). As Donald Murray proclaims, the idea is to help students develop as writers by allowing them to “experience the writing process for themselves” by giving students greater control of the choices they make about their own writing with the guidance of the teacher (5-6). By making the process an explicit part of instruction, teachers embracing process pedagogy were drawing on their own (and others’) experiences as writers, leading to a practical, experience-based pedagogical approach (Anson 221-22). The goal was not what students produced but more the steps by which they produced it.

Because it developed in parallel with expressivism, process pedagogy shared some of the traits attributed to expressive pedagogy. For instance, Murray points to process as a way of guiding students to their own inner truth, that Platonic notion Berlin connects to expressivism, saying “We have to respect the student, not for his product, not for the paper we call literature by giving it a grade, but for the search for truth in which he is engaged” (Murray 5). And through the writing process, students are to search for this truth—and their own voice. Chris Anson notes process pedagogy’s overlap with the expressive ideas of finding one’s own authentic voice. He

recognizes, though, that process “shift[s] the orientation of learning away from expectations for a final text and toward developing the knowledge and abilities needed to produce it” (217). While finding one’s voice or writing clearly and persuasively about a topic may be important ends, more important was acquiring the skills needed to write, the means that would bring students to the end product. Yet this idea of helping students grow as writers certainly connects to the growth model espoused by James Britton and others in that camp. Furthermore, process pedagogy and expressivism share a view of the role instructors are to play. Rather than assessors and content deliverers, instructors adopting a process approach are to be “coaches, encouragers, developers, creators of environments” (Murray 5; see also Anson 218).

The move toward expressivism, however, was not the sole source for process pedagogy. At this time, the field of writing studies was attempting to gain disciplinary legitimacy in the academy. Then, much as now, that legitimacy came in the form of research, and the more scientifically grounded that research was, the more legitimacy it carried. The rise of cognitive psychology provided such an opportunity to “scientize” writing studies. Since cognitive psychology sought to explain the developmental structures and processes of the mind and of thought (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 159), researchers could apply these developmental heuristics to writing processes to examine how writers at any level went through the stages of writing. Notions of process combined with cognitive psychology, then, provided writing studies with a more scientized research agenda (Anson 219-20).

Regardless of the intent behind its development—pragmatic application for students or a research agenda for the discipline—process pedagogy in practice looks much the same. Students engage explicitly in three main stages of writing: prewriting (invention), writing, and revising. Often, this work would occur during class, again drawing on expressivism’s desire to make the

work more hands-on, more tangible for students. In addition, as students work through these stages, they receive feedback on their writing from classmates and the instructor, pointing to the re-envisioned role of instructor as coach and facilitator instead of assessor. Despite some such common elements, since process lacks content as we normally think of it, writing instructors might adopt various other pedagogical approaches while still utilizing many elements of process pedagogy. A class with a cultural studies angle, for example, could encourage writing in stages, in-class workshops, and so on, while still examining cultural issues and artifacts. Process may exist as a pedagogy on its own, or it might blend with any other pedagogical approach.

For the field at large, process pedagogy was a revelation, one that revised teaching practices nearly universally. This wide-spread adoption was not without its criticisms, though, especially as process became somewhat standardized in writing studies pedagogy. For James Berlin, process became procedural, mostly because of its connections to cognitive psychology's interests in developmental stages. "Rhetoricians influenced by cognitive psychology, like classical rhetoricians, are more likely to provide a set of procedures for students to follow in generating the matter of discourse" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 162). The creative processes of writing, then, become more procedural, more controlled. Berlin also worries that the focus on these cognitive and procedural structures leaves out "historical, social, and economic considerations" that also have a bearing on the writing produced (*Rhetoric and Reality* 163).

Joseph Harris, too, laments the rigidity that can accompany a strict, linear adherence to process pedagogy, referring to it as "a new sort of formalism" in which students must follow the "correct" steps, minimizing what they have to say (76). But Harris is also concerned that process pedagogy is interested in helping students become better writers in a narrower sense of producing better papers in the academy (85-86). What he sees, then, is that process pedagogy

sometimes begins with 1) a sense of the student as needing to become more technically adept at writing without enough recognition of their individuality and 2) “an ideal text and working backward from that. The process you teach turns out to depend on the product you want” (76, 90). When these are the starting points, the writing becomes not an exploration of the ways in which writing develops but becomes as much about the product as any form of current-traditionalism. Or as Harris says, “The effect of process teaching thus becomes not an opening up of multiple ways of writing but an inculcating of a particular method of composing” (90).

Critiques<sup>15</sup> such as these have led to the claim that we are, in fact, in a *post-process* phase as a discipline. On the surface, such claims seem to suggest that process is no longer an element of writing pedagogy. Quite to the contrary, though, post-process is in response to the very reductive types of process critiqued by Berlin and Harris (and others). Leann Kastman-Breuch notes that various models of post-process pedagogy make room for both the idea of writing as a process and rhetorical methods, dialogical interactions of the constituents of a rhetorical situation, student agency, and generally more nuanced versions of process itself. So rather than writing being the goal, writing in post-process becomes “an activity—an indeterminate activity” (103-04, 110). This view of writing in which the process may have general stages but one in which the processes depend on contextual, audience, and authorial considerations is perhaps more consistent with the original purposes of process.

Although process may not be at the forefront of research in writing studies today, and while it may seem less explicit in instructors’ syllabi and course goals, process pedagogy is nonetheless deeply embedded in our pedagogical practices today. In his attempt to create a “full

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<sup>15</sup> It is worth noting that some argue that such critiques of process pedagogy as formalistic are critiques of a version of process pedagogy that diluted or otherwise corrupted the original aims of process (e.g., Fulkerson, “Composition at the Turn” 670). However, while this formalism may not have been part of the original purpose of process, such formalistic tendencies did arise and are worth critiquing.

theory of writing,” Richard Fulkerson argues that such a theory “necessarily includes a conception of how writers go about creating texts” (“Composition Theory” 411). Anson, too, notes that while process is not often part of the explicit discussions in the field today, it is certainly still a large part of how we teach students to write (225-26). And while Berlin disagrees with process pedagogy’s focus on the process over the product (at least insofar as that was the case in some of its earlier formulations), he recognizes that “[e]veryone teaches the process of writing, but everyone does not teach the *same* process. The test of one’s competence as a composition instructor, it seems to [him], resides in being able to recognize and justify that version of the process being taught, complete with all of its significance for the student” (“Contemporary Composition” 777). That is, writing is and has always been process-oriented; the larger questions are how we conceive of that process, how we ask students to employ it, what that process works toward, and, on all counts, why.

### **Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogy**

The main pedagogies described thus far are ones that focus largely on the writing (and in the case of expressivism, the writer). Cultural studies and critical pedagogy, though, move that focus to the realm of society, culture, and the political. Diana George, Tim Lockridge, and John Trimbur point to the interest in the 1950s and 1960s United Kingdom of “recover[ing] the culture of the common people” as a key starting point for cultural studies, but they recognize, too, the rise in the general interest in the rhetoric of public spheres and the public roles people play (95, 100). Overall, cultural studies and critical pedagogy are interested in engaging students in political discourse, seeking social justice, and empowering and liberating students (at least intellectually) by prompting them to engage critically with the educational, social, political, economic, and cultural systems around them (A. George 80; Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 189;

Berlin, *Rhetorics* 87, 100). This work often requires students to critically examine cultural artifacts (advertisements, films, popular music, and so on) as well as cultural institutions to understand the messages and influences created through them.

Before I continue, I want to explain why I am connecting these two pedagogical approaches. These two approaches share several similarities and are complementary projects in terms of both practice and ideology. Both ask students to question and critically engage with the culture that surrounds them and its values (Berlin, *Rhetorics* 90, 113; A. George 79-80; D. George, Lockridge, and Trimbur 104). In doing so, both rely on cultural artifacts as texts to analyze, which will reveal the codes and symbolic structures that reinforce certain cultural messages and values (Berlin, *Rhetorics* 90, 100; Fulkerson, “Composition at the Turn” 660-61; D. George, Lockridge, and Trimbur 104). Ultimately, the goal of this work aligns with Freire’s goal of raising students’ critical consciousness, to liberate and empower them (Berlin, *Rhetorics* 105-06; Fulkerson “Composition at the Turn” 661; A. George 78).

Furthermore, cultural studies and critical pedagogy share a strong belief in the social nature of language and in the idea that language both mediates and creates the truth. The interconnectedness of language and thought is an important concept for the liberatory aims of critical pedagogy. As Ann George points out, “Because language and thought are inextricably linked, language instruction becomes a key site where dominant ideology is reproduced—or disrupted” (78). And if cultural studies is interested in “exposing a culture’s underlying codes and systems of meaning” (D. George, Lockridge, and Trimbur 104), then language plays a key role in both creating those meanings and examining them. Ultimately, as Berlin notes, truth (or, we might say, reality) in these approaches relies on the centrality of rhetoric, through which

“[m]eaning emerges not from objective, disinterested, empirical investigations but from individuals engaging in rhetorical discourse in discourse communities” (165-66).

The cultural studies/critical pedagogy classroom, as I have noted, relies considerably on cultural artifacts as texts to interpret. Students comb through these cultural texts (often popular culture texts) looking for elements of social, economic, political, racial, or gendered messages and consider the effects of such messages on the wider culture. Such interpretations are often rooted (explicitly or implicitly) in Marxism, feminism, critical race theory, postcolonial theory, queer theory, and/or other postmodern theories. Despite this turn toward the social and the political, cultural studies/critical pedagogy did not unlearn lessons from expressivism or process pedagogy. Often, the students are at the center of this work, asked to put their experiences with texts into the interpretation as well (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 189; D. George, Lockridge, and Trimbur 104). And this work, though more focused on the content and the texts being interpreted, leaves room for a writing process to develop. Students engage with texts (readings, artifacts) to develop ideas that they will later explore in their writing, receive feedback (from instructors and peers in the class) on those ideas and that writing, and revise their work accordingly.

However, while writing plays a role in the cultural studies/critical pedagogy classroom, some have argued that it does not play a large enough role. The concern is that the content of the course and not the activity of writing tend to dominate. Some have said that this is a version of composition that suffers from “content envy” or that its emphasis on interpreting texts is really just a different version of a literature course (Fulkerson, “Composition at the Turn” 662-63). Through this emphasis on content, then, writing receives short shrift in the course schedule. Others worry about the indoctrinating effect this might have (Fulkerson, “Composition at the

Turn” 665; A. George 85). In such courses, students may be essentially forced to read cultural artifacts through whatever lens the teacher provides them (Marxist, feminist, post-colonialism, and so on) without allowing them the space or the intellectual freedom to examine alternatives to those readings. Finally, tensions may arise with the emancipatory goals of the cultural studies/critical pedagogy project in the hierarchical environment of a classroom (A. George 83). No matter how much a teacher tries to avoid it, a power difference exists between her and her students. Is it, then, all that liberating that students are doing what their teacher tells them because, in the end, their grades depend on it?

### **Rhetoric and Argumentation**

Another response to current-traditionalism, expressivism, and process pedagogies—and, to an extent, some versions of cultural studies/critical pedagogy—has been a resurgence in rhetorical approaches to writing. Current-traditionalism, as Sharon Crowley claims, is largely arhetorical, concerned almost exclusively with the form (94-95). Expressivism centers on the author, almost to the exclusion of the audience. More extreme versions of process pedagogy that care *only* about the process also leave out the audience, as well as the subject matter. All three can also neglect elements of context. The return to more rhetorical sensibilities—and more holistically rhetorical, i.e., concerned with all elements of the rhetorical situation—arose to counter the swing away from rhetoric that had largely taken place throughout the development of writing studies as a field. Richard Fulkerson, in “Composition at the Turn of the Twenty-Frist Century,” identified three main categories of such rhetorical approaches (argumentation, genre, and academic discourse), which I will discuss below.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> I do want to note that Fulkerson seems to approach these as somewhat different projects under the broad heading of “rhetorical approaches,” whereas I see them as potentially integrated and complementary.



### *Argumentation*

Of the three rhetorical approaches, argumentation is perhaps the most commonplace, present in a great many other pedagogical approaches (Fulkerson, “Composition at the Turn” 672). Indeed, while it is less significant in expressivism, argument is important in the other pedagogical approaches. Fulkerson argues that this does not have much scholarship on it (“Composition at the Turn” 672), yet if we consider the roots of this in rhetoric, much has indeed been written about argumentation and creating persuasive writing.<sup>17</sup> First, though, we must consider what *argument* means in the context of writing instruction. For David Fleming, it is not the narrow view of debating with the intent to defeat an opponent (to *have* an argument), nor is it “rationalizing our opinions.” Argument, or rather, *argumentation*, is “*reasoning with others* [...] the process of *making* an argument in the context of *having* an argument” (249, original emphasis). Certainly, we can look to the classical rhetoric of Isocrates, Aristotle, Cicero, and others for a starting point of argumentation, as Fleming does, but argumentation did not stop there. Fleming continues to trace it through Kenneth Burke, Carl Rogers, Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, and Stephen Toulmin (255-57). All these developments and changes have meant different approaches to argumentation and persuasive writing. Nonetheless, “thesis-driven prose remains the heart of the academy, the key genre of political life, and perhaps the apogee of humans’ sociocognitive development” (Fleming 259).

While Fleming may overstate his case a little bit here, he is right about the perennial persistence of argumentative writing in higher education generally and the composition classroom in particular. Most students in composition classes are regularly asked to write essays

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<sup>17</sup> It is also worth mentioning that in 2002, three years before Fulkerson’s article, Timothy Barnett compiled an entire anthology of writings about argumentation: *Teaching Argumentation in the Composition Course: Background Readings*.

guided by a central, argumentative thesis. They are then to produce claims, evidence, and reasons in support of that argument to convince an audience. Precisely because these practices are so widespread, Fulkerson argues, argumentation does not have its own pedagogy or epistemology (“Composition at the Turn” 674). This may neglect the function rhetorical theories can serve as epistemology, for certainly, those theories have a sense of how knowledge is created and disseminated. But Fulkerson may be right about the lack of pedagogy. Instead of argumentation having a pedagogy, it seems to adopt whatever pedagogy it occurs within, much like what Berlin noted occurs with process. In other words, how an instructor teaches argumentation has more to do with the nature of that instructor’s other pedagogical approaches than with notions of rhetoric and argument themselves.

### *Genre*

Before examining genre pedagogy itself, I would like to briefly explain my reasoning for including it as a rhetorical approach. While he can be a bit reductive of genre approaches, Richard Fulkerson makes a clear case for genre as a rhetorical approach. In large part, he sees (as I do) genre as illustrative of both rhetorical context and exigence. Citing both Carolyn Miller’s and Ken Hyland’s work on genre, Fulkerson recognizes some genre approaches as interested in providing students with the ability to analyze extant genres rhetorically (for their audience, purpose, and context) and to produce writing aware of its rhetorical situation through attention to generic conventions (674-75). As genre bears these hallmarks of rhetorical awareness, I am comfortable in following Fulkerson’s classification of it as a form of rhetorical pedagogy.

On one level, genre pedagogy seems to be a slightly updated version of *imitatio* or mimesis. Fulkerson claims it is an extension of modes pedagogy (“Composition at the Turn” 674). In some ways, this position makes sense: genre pedagogy is based on the idea of providing

students with model texts in a certain genre to give them a sense of what their texts might look like (Fulkerson, “Composition at the Turn” 675; Devitt 148). It is at this point where Fulkerson’s examination of genre pedagogy stops. He does acknowledge its moves toward the social and socializing functions of genre (674), but he paints it as a sort of text-based formalism, lacking explicit notions of process, and a pedagogy of imitation (675, 677). Yet, this is not the entirety of genre pedagogy, as its practice and theory go far beyond formalistic imitation.

Genre goes beyond the formalistic largely in its recognition of the social and socializing functions of genres. The simplistic view of genres merely as forms neglects the current view, prompted by Carolyn Miller’s essay “Genre as Social Action,” that genres are rhetorical and that they “make rhetoric visible” (Devitt 146). From this understanding, genres are not simply templates to follow but rhetorical responses to particular, repeated communicative situations. Treating genres as such, then, can more effectively bring students into a rhetorical understanding of their writing and give them rhetorical agency. As Amy Devitt asserts, “If genres are rhetorical actions, then genre pedagogies can help students learn to act rhetorically, and if genres are based in situations, then genre pedagogies can use genres to help perceive, understand, and even change situations” (146). In this light, genre pedagogy is not only practical and rhetorical but also emancipatory and empowering for students.

In her chapter in *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, Devitt describes three versions of genre pedagogy that illustrate genre pedagogy’s scope from replication to social action: instruction about specific genres, about genre awareness, and about critiquing genres. These three approaches, she says, can work together “to give students access to and control of particular genres [...] to help students learn how to learn any unfamiliar genres [...] and to help students see the cultural and ideological nature of genres in order to make their own choices and

gain critical understanding” (147). The first of these approaches, teaching particular genres, is perhaps the version Fulkerson labels as being a pedagogy of imitation, as students work with models and produce texts that (largely) adhere to the conventions of that genre. However, this approach is not without its sense of pedagogy or process. Devitt sees this approach as based on a direct teaching model in which students analyze models, collaboratively produce an example based on that analysis, and then individually write an example. The instructor should provide a sense of context for these genres, show how a genre can vary through multiple examples, and allow students to go beyond the conventions of the genre (148-49, 151). The purpose behind this is not so much to ensure strict adherence to the form, for indeed, this is flexible (148). Instead, the goal is more egalitarian: “The primary rationale for teaching particular genres is to let everyone play the game, to give everyone access to the rules and tricks” (147).

The second approach is to help students develop genre awareness, which Devitt defines as a pedagogy that “treats genres as meaningful social actions, with formal features as the visible traces of shared perceptions” (152). Rather than seeking to develop expertise with certain generic conventions, it helps students understand the social and rhetorical functions of a given genre. To do this, students analyze examples of a genre to consider what goes into creating the genre, and in the end, students gain metacognitive awareness of the genre, not only technical knowledge of it (153).

Finally, Devitt discusses the genre-as-critique approach. This connects more to the cultural studies/critical pedagogy values than the other two approaches in that the goal is not knowledge of genres per se but of the cultures and values that go into shaping them and to examine motives and power structures behind them (154, 156-57). In such an approach, students

might analyze a genre and then reconceive and rewrite it, or they might explore “hybrid, blurred, or emerging genres” (155).

When the three of these approaches work together, Devitt sees them as helping students transfer their learning more broadly (157). Or, as she concludes, “Helping students create their own unique meanings in the midst of shared social understanding is the heart of all genre pedagogies” (160). Genre pedagogies, then, go beyond structural imitation and, when employed in more critical and analytical ways, can bring together all elements of the rhetorical situation. In engaging in this work, students learn not only about the types writing they produce but also learn about the social and cultural contexts that demand and value such writing, which leaves room to critique such values.

#### *Academic Discourse*

As at the beginning of the genre discussion above, I would like to take a moment to explain my sense of academic discourse as part of the rhetoric and argumentation category. This strikes me as a mostly rhetorical approach, one grounded in notions of discourse community, which in turn are grounded in developing students’ awareness of the academic rhetorical situation. As Fulkerson puts it, “The goal is to allow students to read, write, and reason as they will be expected to do in other college courses, and thus to absorb the sorts of rhetorical moves that will help them survive in college” (678). In other words, proponents of this approach intend to introduce students to and even immerse them in a specific rhetorical situation (the academy<sup>18</sup>) and help them meet its rhetorical demands, which include understanding the expectations of effective argument in this context.

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<sup>18</sup> Neither Fulkerson nor I are trying to suggest that *academic discourse* is a settled idea. Indeed, numerous debates remain regarding its existence, what constitutes academic discourse, and its potentially exclusionary nature, to name a few debates (Fulkerson, “Composition at the Turn” 678).

Academic discourse pedagogy has grown as writing scholars and teachers have turned toward more social considerations, exploring the influence of community on both writing practices and writing instruction. This work of helping students become more effective participants in the academic discourse community has been a prominent goal of writing pedagogy since the appearance of David Bartholomae's seminal article, "Inventing the University." In this article, Bartholomae argues that for a student to write successfully in the university, that student

must appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and he has to do this as though he were easily and comfortably one with his audience, as though he were a member of the academy or an historian or an anthropologist or an economist; he has to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language while finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, on the one hand, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline, on the other. He must learn to speak our language. Or he must dare to speak it or to carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is "learned." (135)

Success is not simply a matter of clear grammar or insightful thinking (though these help).

Success, as Bartholomae argues here, has much to do with how well the student assumes the discourse of the academy broadly and of certain disciplines specifically.

Introducing students to academic discourse aims "to allow students to read, write, and reason as they will be expected to do in other college courses, and thus to absorb the sorts of rhetorical moves that will help them survive in college" (Fulkerson, "Composition at the Turn" 678). These moves bear considerable similarity to those promoted in argumentation strategies.

Students would learn how to establish claims, how to use texts as evidence to support their arguments, how to present and engage with counterarguments, and how to use the language and form of academic writing (678). Students' work is assessed on "how well it meets the demands of the expected academic audience, of how well it suits the logos, pathos, and ethos accepted in the academy" rather than how well it applies certain analytical lenses, as would be the case in a cultural studies approach (678).

As I noted, academic discourse as a pedagogy relies on some of the ideas and strategies employed in argumentation models. One area, or genre, that receives considerable attention in academic discourse is the research essay, especially since the ability to find, interpret, and integrate sources effectively into writing is a persistent demand in higher education. Fundamentally, researched writing seeks "to help students learn research skills and practice incorporating sources in an extended, often argument-driven, paper" (Howard and Jamieson 232). However well-intended the goals of researched writing are, Rebecca Moore Howard and Sandra Jamieson note, it can become a problematic approach. Instructors may not clearly articulate the research-based goals of an assignment to students, or instructors may ask students to perform research that looks markedly different from the type of research the instructors perform; the result is that students find researched writing to be "an inauthentic genre" and an "empty performance" (232-33, 235). To avoid these pitfalls, Howard and Jamieson argue for an approach to researched writing that is guided more by the aims and ends of research and the effective use of sources—an approach that is about the process of research more than the product. This process, for Howard and Jamieson, includes emphasis on engaging with sources or seeing sources as taking part in a conversation, on helping students read sources critically for

argument and support as opposed to looking for the “killer quote,” and on guiding students in practices to effectively integrate those sources (235-41).

In some ways, the goal of researched writing (and argumentative practices more generally) is to help students transfer the skills that they learn in a required writing course to other contexts across the university. Efforts to extend this engagement with academic discourse beyond the required writing course(s) fall into the writing across the curriculum (WAC) and writing in the disciplines (WID) pedagogies. WAC refers to the presence of writing tasks throughout a students’ academic career and relates to learning academic discourse somewhat more generally. WID approaches focus more on specific disciplinary conventions and expectations (including elements of argumentation, genre, and research). When used in composition classes, WAC and WID approaches serve to broaden the sense of discourse analysis and is part of students’ need for guidance in developing as writers beyond what they receive in first-year writing courses (Thaiss and McLeod 287). This prepares students for the reality that a universal academic discourse is too simplistic and that the goalposts of good writing move depending on the context and the audience. To guide composition students in WAC and WID practices, Chris Thaiss and Susan McLeod suggest engaging students in projects that analyze academic literacies or in disciplinary ethnographies through which students learn to see the complexity of a discipline’s discourse (294-95). Although WAC and WID generally exist beyond required composition courses, through the sorts of projects Thaiss and McLeod suggest, students can begin to develop metacognitive awareness about different rhetorical situations and genres that can enhance their abilities to develop as writers throughout their academic careers (and beyond).



Whether a general focus on academic discourse generally or on the discourse of specific academic disciplines, the goal is much the same: to bring students into a community of academic discourse. However, as Joseph Harris argues, that notion of community in the scholarship—he critiques Bartholomae for this in particular—often becomes fixed and viewed in terms of insiders and outsiders (135). As he notes, though, neither *discourse* nor *community* are fixed, easily definable terms, and the label *discourse community* often neglects that. He says that “the borders of most discourses are hazily marked and often traveled, and [...] the commonalities they define are often indistinct and overlapping” (140). This means that academic discourse is not homogenous but is instead a polyglot, more like a city in which tensions and differences may exist alongside a sense of community (143). Rhetorical practices are thus shared *and* debated, just as are the ideas and epistemologies within and across fields. Key in the academic discourse/discourse community approach to writing, then, is helping students recognize the situated nature of communicative practices. Ultimately, this recognition is perhaps the goal of the rhetorical approaches. All three seek to teach students about and encourage them to examine and employ the constituents of rhetorical situations, to realize that these constituents work together and influence one another.

### **Some Concluding Thoughts on the Debates**

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, the pedagogical ideologies I have discussed here are not all of the approaches that exist, yet they represent ones that are important not only for my study but also for the field of writing studies as it developed as a discipline. Furthermore, these practices have largely permeated teaching practices for required writing courses, regardless of the disciplinary background of the teachers of those courses. As a result, some fiery exchanges about these have taken place in the scholarship, in conferences, and in hallways. Such debate

benefits pedagogy as it strengthens our abilities to justify our pedagogical rationales to colleagues and an audience of non-writing studies stakeholders. Yet we might do well to keep in mind the myth of transience. The pedagogies I have traced here developed as scholars and teachers responded to the pedagogies that preceded them, each proclaiming to be the approach that would “fix” student writing or demonstrate that writing studies is a legitimate scholarly field. However, in responding to one another, these approaches also frequently adopt from one another, ensuring that elements of all these often exist within any given English department today—as is the case in my department. Of course, the fact that teachers tend to teach writing the way they were taught writing also partially explains the persistence of certain pedagogical approaches. The problem, though, is seeing the various approaches as isolated from or even contrary to one another, which I will discuss more fully in Chapter V. As Taggart, Hessler, and Schick point out, “rare is the teacher who does not blend the practices of many pedagogical philosophies” (6). Still, we may too easily sort ourselves and our colleagues into neat pedagogical categories or presume that certain practices are contradictory simply because they come from a different pedagogical approach. Looking at pedagogical approaches as either/or choices, though, causes us to miss the depth and complexity that go into the pedagogical choices we and our colleagues make.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODS

The taxonomies of writing pedagogies described in Chapter II often broadly generalize instructors' pedagogies and can create unrepresentative demarcations among the categories they propose. Instead, I designed my study to examine individuals in their pedagogical contexts to understand their approaches and practices, looking for theoretical and pedagogical consistencies while also addressing potential inconsistencies as they arose. In this chapter, I will explain my objectives for the study, my methodological considerations, my research designs and data collection methods, and my coding processes.

#### **Study Objectives**

While I discussed my objectives and research questions more fully in Chapter I, I want to return to them briefly to discuss their role in guiding my choices of methods and methodologies. Given the situation of our department—and my own uncertainty about my colleagues' views and practices—I wanted to approach this study as one of discovery. This meant, quite simply, conversing with my colleagues through various formats about the practices they employed in their writing classes and why; what they valued in writing instruction and student writing and why; and how and why these sensibilities, goals, and practices originated for them. In doing so, my intent was largely local, looking for strengths my department might build upon and potential weaknesses we might address, but I also considered the potential for this study to be useful for WPAs and others involved in similar discussions in English and/or writing departments elsewhere. These were my primary research questions:

- What do faculty members of all ranks in my department value in writing and writing instruction?

- What do these values and practices tell us about our departments' pedagogical strengths and weaknesses?
- How do faculty members balance differences within their own goals and approaches, between their goals and approaches and those of their colleagues, and between their goals and approaches and those of the department and institution?
- How do faculty members' values and goals reflect different sources (e.g., experiential, disciplinary, institutional) of pedagogies or pedagogical choices and practices?

In addition to these questions and to guide some of the protocols I developed, I also generated a list of sub-questions.

- What do writing instructors look for in student writing?
- What pedagogies, commonly identified in writing studies, do the instructors identify with?
- What texts do they use to teach literacy in their classes and why?
- What are typical writing assignments they give students?
- What sorts of activities take place in a typical class?
- How do their practices relate to their expressed pedagogical viewpoints?
- What experiences related to writing (as students, teachers, and/or writers) have they had, and how do they feel these experiences have shaped their current pedagogical views and practices?

### **Methodological Considerations**

Given the goals and research questions I developed for this study, I needed to be careful in my selections of methodologies (and methods) so as not to overlook answers to my questions nor to become overwhelmed with the data generated by the study.

### *Descriptive Methodology*

Primarily, this study was descriptive, in two senses—purpose and method. First, my purpose in this study is descriptive in that I want to tell my colleagues' pedagogical stories, that is to provide a narrative of their pedagogical choices and practices. More to the point here, though, is the second sense of *descriptive* in this study: my methods are descriptive. The three methods I chose to use in this study—surveys, interviews, and case studies, each of which I will discuss in detail below—are descriptive methods. I intended the surveys and interviews to provide broad descriptive details about my colleagues and the department with the interviews serving as somewhat of a bridge between the breadth of the surveys and the depth of the case studies. The case studies, then, provided more in-depth, detailed descriptions. Together, these approaches allowed me to represent my colleagues' pedagogies with both breadth and depth.

My study began with a survey, the goal of which was to reach as many of my colleagues as possible and to generate a broad sensibility of the pedagogical views and values present in the department. In developing the surveys, I drew on design advice from John Creswell (*Educational Research* 385-90; *Research Design* 146-47) and Janice Lauer and William Asher (65-66). I will discuss this design more fully later in this chapter, but here I will mention that through these sources and my own pilot survey conducted before the survey for this study, I created a multi-section, mixed methods, web-based survey for my colleagues to complete at their leisure.

To gain some more details in addition to those generated by the surveys, I also conducted interviews within the department. I did not intend for these to be as wide-reaching as the surveys, recognizing that not all my colleagues would want to sit down for interviews. Therefore, the aim here was to learn more specific details about the pedagogical choices my colleagues were making, to have deeper conversations about writing instruction with them, and simply to learn

more about their instructive practices than a survey could generate. While greater depth was my primary goal in the interviews, they also provided some breadth as I had nearly as many interview participants as survey participants as well as a couple of new participants in the interviews. I relied on a loose schedule of questions to give some guidance to the interviews but to allow for some more open conversation (see Bishop 96; Creswell, *Educational Research* 221; Merriam 104).

The survey and interview approaches provided me with ample data, but the pictures they provided of the department and my colleagues still felt incomplete. Wanting to gain greater insight into the pedagogical choices instructors made and how they implemented those choices, I added case studies to my project. For the case studies, I worked with three willing colleagues who had participated in the interviews and who seemed to represent a variety of approaches, experiences, and positions within the department. In addition to the already-completed interviews, I added a classroom observation; interviews before and after that observation; and document analysis of syllabi, assignments, and any other relevant materials the participants were willing to provide. Informing these choices were suggestions from Creswell (*Educational Research; Qualitative Inquiry*), Sharan Merriam, John Stake, and John Gerring.

### *Study Population*

The participants in my study are my colleagues in the English department of a state university in the Midwest. At the time I was collecting data, the department consisted of forty-two people, including TAs, instructors (full- and part-time), and tenure-track faculty. Since the major in English's curriculum focuses largely on literature and primarily the coverage model of literature, the professorial ranks are filled with period and some author specialists, e.g., Victorian, Shakespeare, early American, and so on.

At the time of the study, a few of the tenured faculty were nearing retirement, but also in the department were several relatively new tenure-track hires and some who had been with the department for several years but had not yet received tenure. As for instructors, most were (and are) graduates of the department's Master of Arts program and many are under forty—with a few exceptions. In short, despite some similarities in disciplinary focus, the department at the time of the study (and to this day) was a mix of diverse levels of experience and different approaches to writing instruction. This is not entirely unsuspected in any department, and examining the similarities and differences within our department may provide a richer understanding of the complexities and nuances that exist in all writing instructors' approaches, even (and perhaps especially) those whose primary background is not writing studies.<sup>19</sup>

### *Ethical Considerations*

Despite my colleagues' willingness to participate in my study, they are still my colleagues, people with whom I must work and interact regularly. For this reason, I needed to conduct this research carefully, with my mind on treating my colleagues fairly while still representing my findings accurately. Furthermore, I needed to be mindful of the ethics of studying my colleagues, especially since my position as writing center coordinator meant that I partially supervised some of the TAs who participated in the study. In an effort to approach my study as ethically as I possibly could, I carefully considered issues related to using my colleagues' contributions for research data, the possibility of my position within the department to influence participation and responses, and the role my biases might play in the research.

I first needed to avoid harming my participants in relating their views of writing instruction as some of these views could conflict with the department's curriculum for

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<sup>19</sup> I will discuss the specific participants more fully when I address data collection for surveys and interviews. Chapter VI will also address in great depth the three case study participants.

Composition I or with other prevailing views in the department. As the surveys were anonymous and faculty syllabi and assignments are relatively public documents (shared with the department head, posted online, shared with colleagues as examples), I had fewer concerns about potentially damaging or otherwise problematic information (personal and/or professional) coming from these data sources. However, observations and interviews had the potential of generating such problematic information. To guard against this, I developed protocols to aid me in steering the conversation in “safer” directions.<sup>20</sup> I presented my study to Old Dominion University’s IRB to ensure that any potential dangers to participants were slight enough for the study to receive exempt status, which it did on June 2, 2014. In addition, I kept faculty members’ names out of the dissertation and any related documents, using pseudonyms for the interview and case study participants. In the cover letter I sent out to colleagues explaining my research (see Appendix B), I stressed that my goals were to discover areas of connections and strengths that we, as a department, may draw on to develop our required writing curriculum and not to identify those faculty members with views of writing instruction that somehow do not align with those of leaders or the majority in the department.<sup>21</sup>

Second, I recognized that my position within the department might influence participation in the research. While I do not have any say in employment or promotional decisions, I do coordinate the writing center, which means I directly supervise (at least partially) the TAs who work as tutors in addition to their teaching loads. To address concerns about my

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<sup>20</sup> I recognize, of course, that participants’ views and practices might be recognizable to others in my department. However, in as much as they are recognizable to colleagues, I presumed that they have in some way shared their practices and values with others in the department, so I did not see this as especially concerning. However, as they may not have wanted their views and practices shared outside the department, I still took steps to protect their identities.

<sup>21</sup> As the department goes forward with curricular changes in response to the program review, I plan to bring into those conversations summarized versions of my findings that point to our shared strengths that we might use this knowledge in productive ways.



position in the department, I assured all participants, especially the TAs, verbally and through informed consent documents, that the information they provided would only be used for the purposes of this study. Additionally, I am one of the few people in the department with course work in writing studies, making me somewhat of an expert in that area within our department. Such a perception could possibly affect how participants responded to my questions—e.g., attempting to present their instructional methods in ways dissimilar from their actual practice. The case studies in particular—because of their depth and the ability to triangulate analysis through multiple streams of data—helped me attend to the possibility of participants skewing responses as these allowed me to triangulate data through what they said (interviews), what they did (observations), and what they wrote (course documents).

Finally, I considered the role my own biases would play in my research and analysis. My pilot study had already done much to reveal to me my biases about writing pedagogy, and to claim I could simply suppress those biases not only would be misleading but also would ignore the spirit of my study. I want to understand what faculty in the department value in writing and writing instruction, and this includes my views. However, I am consciously aware that my biases have the potential to skew my perceptions of what my colleagues value, causing me to miss some important and complex intersections of views that truly might benefit our department's required writing curriculum, as happened in my pilot study.

What helped me address this potential for bias and what guided my research were postcritical research methods, feminist methodologies, and rhetorical listening. I drew on Patricia Sullivan and James Porter's ideas of postcritical research, which they describe as a process of critical reflection and awareness of the rhetorical situation of the research project. This critical awareness leads them to view research as praxis, or as consisting of a constant negotiation

between the theoretical and practical considerations of a research situation (26). Postcritical research methodologies, then, must be self-aware, contextual, and adaptive. For feminist perspectives, I also drew on Sullivan and Porter and their sense of feminist methodologies' emphasis on the situated nature of research, the relationship of researcher and researched, power dynamics in these relationships, and the fluctuations that result from such considerations (58, 62). Additionally, I considered Katrina M. Powell and Pamela Takayoshi's notion of reciprocity between the researcher and the researched. In this model, the research not only works for the benefit of the researched but also allows the researched to determine for themselves how the relationship with the researcher and to the research project may benefit them (395-96). Finally, Krista Ratcliffe's idea of rhetorical listening makes room for difference (experiential and cultural) and emphasizes responsibility, largely in the sense of identification with others (204). What these three concepts offered my ethical considerations was a recognition of the contextual nature of my research, the importance of valuing rather than evaluating my colleagues' perspectives, the role my position and my biases may play in my participants' responses, the need to work for the benefit of my participants and not just my own benefit, and the pedagogical differences (within and across participants' practices) as indicating places of exploration rather than as moments of difficulty to overcome.

Combined, these different methodologies and practices—postcritical and feminist methodologies and rhetorical listening—guided me toward some specific practices to mitigate my biases and encourage me to emphasize ethical and beneficial treatment of my participants, my colleagues. In particular, I

- Did my best to suspend judgment and labels during the collection and reporting of data to hear what my colleagues value and why and allowed their words and not my interpretations of their words represent them;
- Valued what my colleagues do and what they find effective and useful and used their labels for my analysis codes;
- Did not pit particular views against one another, even as some aligned with my perspectives and others did not;
- Shared summarized versions of my findings with all my colleagues for them to use as they wish (to bring to departmental meetings, to put into conversation with their existing practices, to bring additional thoughts to my work, etc.);
- And shared drafts with my case-study participants and asked them for their feedback to ensure they felt I represented them fairly and accurately.

In the end, I wanted these practices to create for my study and for my department a tone of cooperation and of egalitarianism, a tone that establishes the importance of valuing the expertise and experiences that all faculty bring to writing instruction.

## **Research Designs and Data Collection**

### *Survey Design*

To explore the practices and values of my colleagues, I began the study with a survey. To an extent, I intended this survey to gauge my colleagues' potential interest in the study as I did not want to take for granted that they would participate simply because I am their colleague. Therefore, a survey was a useful way to see if I was going to be able to generate enough interest and data to conduct this study. The main goal of the survey, however, was to gain a broad overview of the department, to get a sense of the prevailing approaches and attitudes, which I

hoped would help me calibrate any later stages of my study. A survey also seemed a less intrusive way to begin my study as participants would be able to complete it anonymously at their leisure without committing to more time-consuming interviews or case studies.

About a year before sending the survey discussed here, I sent a pilot survey to my colleagues. The goal of this pilot survey was also to examine the values faculty members held regarding writing instruction with the hope of identifying places of commonality, strength, and possibly weakness to inspect as a department. I created the survey using SurveyMonkey, a free, user-friendly application, and sent emails to all members of the department soliciting responses. As the survey went out at a busy time of the semester, I tried to make it as brief as possible while still trying to maintain its ability to yield rich results. The survey consisted of six open-ended questions, asking participants to weigh in on their sense of their own pedagogy, the kinds of lesson planning they do and assignments they give, and their definitions of good and poor writing.

Only a handful of my colleagues (six) responded fully to the pilot survey. Although those six responses gave me a peek into some of the variety and complexity of writing instruction in the department, I also began to see issues in the study. The first was a matter of general design. I created a two-page survey to separate demographic questions from the more substantive questions I was interested in. As a result, several faculty members completed the demographic section without answering the open-ended questions. This created uncertainty about which demographic information aligned with what qualitative data. The second was a matter of question design. The goals of the questions were valuable, but upon reflection, I decided they might have been clearer or more precise in some instances. The final matter was one of timing. As I sent this out toward the end of the semester, when my colleagues were busy grading, my

response rate was lower than it might have been. Overall, by using this pilot survey, I was able to gauge the efficacy of its design (see Lauer and Asher 65; Creswell, *Educational Research* 385, 390).

Taking these lessons into account, I designed an updated version of the survey, one with three sections all in one page of the survey. (See Appendix C for the survey questions.) The first section requested simple demographic information: the participant's rank/position, years of experience, and the typical number of required writing courses the participant teaches per academic year. This section did not aim to identify participants as the survey results were treated as confidential and anonymous—so much as they could be, given my familiarity with several of my colleagues' practices. Rather, this information served as an additional lens through which I could consider participants' sensibilities about writing instruction, such as how experience or even rank affects pedagogical choices. The second section, consisting of open-ended questions, was much more important to my goals. These questions gave participants the opportunity to discuss their views, typical assignments, notions of good writing, background and experiences that shaped their writing pedagogy, and thoughts about the current required writing curriculum. The final section consisted of a series of Likert responses about participants' sense of what features and approaches were important in their own practices. These various types of survey questions allowed me, then, to collect different kinds of data, providing different perspectives on writing instruction in my department (see Lauer and Asher 65; Creswell, *Educational Research* 385).

Before sending the updated surveys to my colleagues, I petitioned a fellow Ph.D. student from Old Dominion University to pilot the surveys with colleagues at the university where she taught. I asked her to have her colleagues check the survey for two main criteria: the amount of

time needed to complete the survey and the clarity of the questions in the survey. I did not want to distribute a survey that would inordinately strain my colleagues' time, especially since some had already completed one survey for me, nor did I want them to be unclear about what my questions were asking. More to the point, I was trying to avoid the kinds of problems that arose in the original pilot survey I sent to the department a year prior to this one. After a couple of days, my fellow Ph.D. student let me know that several of her colleagues had taken the survey and found that it took them roughly fifteen minutes to complete and that they felt the questions were sufficiently clear. With this information, I was ready to distribute my survey.

#### *Survey Distribution and Data Collection*

While I had used SurveyMonkey for the pilot survey with my department, I opted to use Google Forms for this version. This change was not because of any glaring problems with SurveyMonkey. I felt Google Forms offered a cleaner, simpler interface, and I hoped this (along with the familiarity of Google) might draw in some of the less tech-savvy members of the department. Furthermore, Google Forms offered some free analytical tools that, while simple, provided all the analysis I would need for the Likert responses, including details on totals, averages, and so on, so that I could compare to a participants' responses elsewhere and across all survey participants. Finally, given some of the issues I had with responses to the SurveyMonkey pilot—though they were mostly because of my faulty design—I wanted to try something a bit different with this survey.

The sample population for my survey was anyone in my department who taught required writing courses, including Composition I, Composition II (including its creative writing and writing for engineering versions), and Technical Communication.<sup>22</sup> To put this more simply, the

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<sup>22</sup> This is not technically a required course, but enough departments in the university require it of their students that it has taken on a "semi-required" status.

survey was open to every faculty member, instructor, and TA in the department because we all teach some version of a required writing course. Part of this was a matter of convenience to me, but the primary reason for not choosing a subset of this population to sample was that I wanted to collect as many responses as possible to yield the broadest picture of the department as possible. Although research scholars recommend random sampling in surveys as opposed to convenience sampling to ensure the results are more representative of the population (e.g., Creswell, *Educational Research* 381-82; Creswell, *Research Design* 148), my goal was not to generate representative responses from which I could extract generalizations. Rather, I wanted descriptive responses. Only through numerous responses would I be able to understand more fully and deeply the axiologies and pedagogies shaping required writing instruction in our department. Quite simply, I wanted to know what my colleagues were doing in their classrooms and why. Had I limited this to certain groups or certain individuals based on my assumptions of their practices (always dangerous), I would have missed a considerable amount of depth and nuance in the writing pedagogies in our department.

Before sending out the survey link, I sent a preliminary email to my colleagues. This introduced them to the purpose of my study, informed them of the nature of the survey and its questions, assured them of IRB exemption, and included the informed consent document. As this was an online survey, I could not collect physical signatures to the informed consent, so faculty were advised that by participating in the survey, they were agreeing to the informed consent form. (See Appendix D for the informed consent document.) In addition to letting my colleagues know about the nature of the survey, this initial email also prepared them to watch their inboxes for the actual survey, in the hope that they would be less likely to miss its arrival and thus (I hoped) increase the response rates to the survey.

A few days after sending out the introductory email, I sent an email with the survey link (and the informed consent document again). Instead of sending this out toward the end of a semester as I had done with the pilot survey of my department, I sent this survey out after the spring semester had ended. My hope was that faculty would be removed enough from the semester to not feel burdened by my survey request yet still be close enough to the semester to have fresh in their minds the ideas raised in the survey. And sending the survey at this point also meant that faculty were likely still checking their emails somewhat regularly. Then, after sending out the survey, I waited about two weeks before emailing faculty again. This reminder email thanked those who had participated and provided the link to the survey and a request for others interested in participating to complete the survey. Reminders of the purpose of the study and the informed consent were included again as well. I sent one final reminder about one month after the original message had been sent.

These strategies—the initial email and subsequent reminders—intended to boost participation in surveys. As Lauer and Asher point out, nonresponse is a common element of survey research that researchers must attend to (67). While these nonresponses can never be fully eliminated, various strategies can mitigate them. Creswell recommends the very strategies I employed: alerting participants ahead of time and following up with reminders at planned intervals. Creswell also recommends strategies I had already embedded in the design of my survey, such as studying a topic of interest to the population and creating a brief questionnaire (*Educational Research* 390-91). Given the need in our department to address curricular and pedagogical matters related to our Composition II course, faculty were likely invested in this topic. Furthermore, I had already aimed to create a survey that was not burdensome for my



colleagues, one they could complete quickly (though I also hoped they would be willing to provide more detailed responses).

After sending out the survey and the periodic reminders, I checked for responses relatively frequently—about every day for the first few days after I sent an email to my colleagues when response rates went up, then about once every few days after emails went out, and finally, about once a week after I had sent the final email request for participation. By about a week or so after the final email went out, most of the participants' responses were in, though two participants responded after I had begun to request interview participants at the beginning of the fall semester. I converted the responses to a Word document and printed out the Google Forms analysis of the Likert data for easier analysis.

### *Interview Design and Implementation*

In addition to the survey and while the survey was still open to colleagues (though almost all responses to the survey had been posted), I began conducting interviews with colleagues. While the survey was providing insightful data, it was rather structured, which perhaps did not allow participants to address their ideas and experiences as deeply as they otherwise might have. As noted above, the survey asked specific and fairly structured questions, although they were also open-ended questions. Faculty might have felt a bit constrained by the structure or might have felt that they did not have the time or room to provide answers that were as detailed as they might have liked. Indeed, one respondent stated several times in the survey responses a preference to speak about her/his ideas and approaches. And some respondents provided brief answers without much explanation or detail. I wanted to provide, then, an opportunity for faculty members to explain their pedagogies and values in a more open-ended context to allow them to

talk through their ideas and to allow me to ask for more details and greater clarity at times. The interviews served these ends.

The interviews served a deeper purpose, too. While I was analyzing the surveys, I was using emergent coding practices similar to those used in grounded theory analysis, but I was also looking for patterns or connections to more traditional pedagogical taxonomic labels (e.g., expressive or current-traditional rhetoric)—perhaps inconsistent with some grounded theory practices. I was learning through this initial analysis, though, that those traditional taxonomies were not fully effective in capturing my colleagues' approaches to writing instruction. (I will discuss this more fully in Chapters IV and V.) The interviews allowed me to look at additional data about my colleagues in a more truly emergent way, in a way that let me focus more on what my colleagues were saying and coding that data with a much more open perspective consistent with my commitment to rhetorical listening.

As I wanted to make the interview process as inclusive as possible, I did not limit this to faculty members who had completed the survey. Indeed, since the survey was anonymous, in some instances, I was unable to tell whether a colleague I was interviewing had completed the survey. Furthermore, I did not limit the interviews to certain categories of colleagues (e.g., only instructors or only tenure-track faculty) or to instructors who only or primarily taught certain required writing courses. I wanted to hear from all faculty members who were teaching or who had taught any writing courses that might fall under either the Board of Regents', the university's, or specific departments' definition of required writing.

For these interviews, I developed a schedule of questions that I distributed to participants prior to the scheduled interview. The questions were not intended to provide a strict structure for the interview; rather, the goal of the questions was to generate conversations. My intent was for

these questions, as Wendy Bishop notes, to “be used as a loose guide and a discussion prompt, with interviewer and interviewee improvising on the preselected cues and questions” (96).

Knowing, too, that I wanted to be more attentive to the conversation taking place than to a specific series of questions I wanted to adhere to, I took Sharan Merriam’s advice in relying on a couple of broad, open-ended questions to “[unhook me] from the interview guide [to enable me] to really *listen* to what [my] participant [had] to share” (104). Creswell, too, acknowledges the benefit of open-ended research in providing more information from the participant (*Educational Research* 218). For the interviews I conducted, my protocol included only three questions (also included in Appendix E):

1. Talk about your goals for a general education writing class. How do students respond to these goals?
2. Where do these goals come from for you? How/why did you develop them? (Talk about your past experiences/training in writing instruction that informed this class meeting’s goals and your larger goals and practices.)
3. How do you design lesson plans? Talk about a specific classroom lesson/activity and/or one of your major assignments you use and why you find it effective in working toward your goals.

I sent these questions to faculty before our interviews to give them an opportunity to reflect on them and sketch out any answers they might wish to give—I did not want them to feel as though they were being quizzed or interrogated. While providing them the questions in advance might have allowed participants to shape their responses in ways that benefitted them, I wanted my colleagues to reflect on their practices and to respond thoughtfully to these questions. In our interviews, faculty members could discuss at any length they deemed appropriate any of

the themes created by the questions, which is precisely what I wanted from them. While Creswell hints at the possibility of planning probes (*Educational Research* 221, 222), I chose not to plan any specific probes. Instead, I wanted to allow probes to develop somewhat naturally through the conversation with a given colleague. These design decisions aimed to allow more open, in-depth conversations and helped me focus on the specific participant I was speaking with at the moment, as opposed to a too-strict schedule of questions that impeded participants' responses and depersonalized the study overall.

I also planned to tape the interviews. While the protocol was neither lengthy nor detailed, I still wanted to remain as active a participant as I could, not slavishly noting every statement the participant made. I could spend my time, then, reflecting on their statements, considering their rhetorical positions, the relationship of their perspectives to my own, and thinking about additional points of interest to pursue. Recording would give me an exact record of what participants said during our conversation, but I also planned to take brief notes as the conversation unfolded to keep track of certain ideas or possible follow-up questions and as a back-up for any equipment failures (see Creswell, *Educational Research* 221; Merriam 109). Further, recording the conversations ensured I was accurately representing what my colleagues said in their responses, not just my recollection of what they said.

Although this was not a grounded theory study, I found Kathy Charmaz's sense of interviews useful for my purposes. For Charmaz, interviews should be "emergent interactions in which social bonds may develop." Furthermore, she contends, "asking a few interview questions allows the research participant to tell his or her story without the researched preconceiving the content, or for that matter, the direction the interview will take" (93-94). By using a few broad questions, I ceded control of the interviews to the participants, allowing them to determine, by

and large, the direction of the conversation, making their ideas and not my goals the focus of the discussion, very much in keeping with my interests in postcritical and feminist research methods as well.

### *Interview Data Collection*

At the beginning of the fall semester 2014, I sent out an email asking those who were interested in participating in the interview portion of the research to contact me. The email included the interview protocol and the informed consent document I would ask them to sign/date and bring with them if they chose to participate in the interviews. In the email, I stressed both the privacy of the interviews and their relative informality. I hoped that if faculty knew I would protect their privacy and that they would be taking part in a conversation about writing between colleagues, they would be more willing to share their perspectives and experiences.

For those who were interested in participating, we worked together to find the most convenient dates and times to meet, and I was willing to meet them wherever they wanted to meet. Some of them wanted to meet in my office, which was especially the case for TAs and instructors as they share offices with other TAs and instructors. Others wanted to meet in their offices. When we met, I asked them to bring a signed copy of the consent form; I brought extra copies in case they needed one to sign. Before interviews began, I double-checked to ensure all their questions or concerns about the study were addressed. During the interviews, I used a tape recorder, which all participants agreed to—some enthusiastically so since they would be

represented accurately,<sup>23</sup> and hand-wrote a few notes to capture my reactions or ideas to follow up with and to serve as a back-up in case of equipment failure.

As noted above, the goal was to have a conversation about their approaches to teaching, not to follow a strict interview protocol. As such, my loose protocol served to begin the conversation or to bring conversations back to my main goals. In general, the interviews began (after some pleasantries) with the first protocol question, or a variation of it, about their goals in a required writing course. In only a few instances, though, did the conversation progress through the protocol in its established order. These were very much conversations about writing: Participants were engaged and willing to share their experiences, with some of the interviews lasting well over an hour (most were about a half an hour).

Soon after the interviews, I loaded the digitally-recorded audio files into NVivo (a qualitative data management program) to allow for easier transcription. Using NVivo to play the interviews and Microsoft Word to transcribe them, I created a transcription of each interview in its entirety. Overall, I kept participants' wording as spoken, only making changes for the sake of grammatical or contextual clarity. I then printed each transcript for later analysis and coding.

### *Case Study Design*

The surveys and interviews provided some good overview data, but that data was limited in its depth and told only through the statements of the participants themselves. To add still more depth to the data I had collected to this point, I conducted three case studies of colleagues. Here, the sampling was rather more purposeful. Rather than recruiting any and all volunteers, I chose three of the interview participants whose responses demonstrated complex pedagogical

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<sup>23</sup> One participant did ask me to stop the recording for a moment as she wanted some reassurances about privacy as she was planning to share what she saw as some unpopular or potentially problematic views. The recording remained off while we discussed these concerns.

approaches and represented, to some degree, the types of pedagogical approaches common in the department. From this group, I approached four faculty members of different rank and asked them if they would be willing to participate in the case study portion of my study. One possible participant reluctantly declined for various personal reasons. The other three readily accepted, and the case studies began in the spring of 2015.

With each case study participant, I conducted two more interviews, observed one classroom session, and collected relevant course documents. These multiple layers of data presented not only a deeper sense of the participants' practices but also opportunities to examine patterns and themes, connections and contrasts, and even possible tensions within their pedagogies. Ultimately, I wanted to compare my colleagues' professed practices with the realities of their practices in the classroom and in their course documents, not to catch them in inconsistencies but to understand how they viewed their practices, perhaps especially when they might seem incongruent.

The first stage of the case studies was a pre-observation interview. For two of the participants, this interview occurred the day of the observation, and for the third participant, the interview took place one day before the observation. I approached these interviews with a simple, two-fold goal. First, I wanted the participant to articulate her goals for that day's class and to explain the plans she would use to reach those goals. My second goal was to have my colleague explain where her goals and plans came from—that is, address if these grew out of explicit training, pedagogical research, the instructor's own experience, faculty development, or some combination of these elements. To spur such conversations, I used a loosely structured interview protocol (see Appendix F). While some of the questions sought certain, specific information about the day's lesson plan and goals, I ensured that the questions were generally

broad enough to make the participants' views and ideas the focal point of the interview over my sense of effectual writing pedagogy.

For the second stage of the case studies, I observed one of the participant's class meetings.<sup>24</sup> Observing first-hand my colleagues' teaching seemed an effective way to compare their practice to their professed approaches to teaching. I conducted these observations as a nonparticipant observer, which Creswell defines as one who observes the event but does not participate directly in any of the actions of the event (*Educational Research* 214-15). I did not want to participate directly in the class activities because I wanted a more authentic sense of how my colleagues taught in their classes, nor did I want to be absent from the room and video tape the class meeting. While video recording might have made my presence less obtrusive in some respects, setting up the technology and participants knowing they were being recorded might have had the opposite effect. Although I was going to be present in the class, I planned to be as unobtrusive as I could and take notes on what was happening as the class unfolded.

To facilitate my note taking, I devised an observation protocol (see Appendix G) that combined observational and reflective prompts. Some of the prompts asked for simple overviews: the layout of the room, numbers of students, and so on. The core prompts for the observation were about what the instructor was doing and what the students were doing. While simple, these action-oriented prompts guided me toward focusing on what was happening in the class sessions with enough flexibility to add my thoughts. The protocol's reflective elements pointed to the kinds of pedagogical values and theories that might be guiding these practices, the connections of what I observed in class to what the participant stated in the pre-observation

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<sup>24</sup> Undoubtedly, more observations would have given me more data to examine and a greater sense of the participants' in-class practices. However, I only observed one session because I did not want to impose too much on my colleagues, and I had to consider my timeline for completing the dissertation.



interview, and possible follow-up questions I wanted to explore in the post-observation interview.

The third stage of the case studies was a post-observation interview to discuss with my colleagues their thoughts on the class session I observed. The main question in the protocol for this interview (see Appendix H) was about their sense of how well the class went. This question was to elicit general, summative responses as well as some deeper responses, with some prompting, about meeting the class's goals. The conversations also went beyond details of specific class I observed and into additional discussions of general goals and pedagogical values.

Finally, I collected several documents from each participant. I asked specifically for syllabi and prompts for the assignments students were working at the time of my observation. I also asked the participants to include any documents they felt pertinent or reflective of their practices. The purpose of the documents was, again, to add another layer to the data and another source of comparison.

#### *Case Study Data Collection*

As was the case with the departmental interviews, I asked case study participants to sign an informed consent form at the beginning of the first interview. The interview protocol was brief, with the intent to prompt more genuine conversation about the participant's objectives for the class and the activities students would engage in and why. The second interview took place within a week of the observation, so the class was relatively fresh in our minds. Primarily, the purpose of this interview was to gauge the participant's perception of how her class went: what went well, what might have gone better, and so on. I recorded both interviews to preserve the conversations and for transcription, and I took notes to inform my analysis. While each participant was eager to share her plans, goals, and approaches with me, all the interviews lasted

roughly a half an hour each, and, as I hoped they would, the conversations went beyond participants' perceptions of the observed session and into some of the purposes and methods they had employed in the class.

For the observations, I asked the participants to choose which class meeting they would prefer me to observe. My only request was that the session be one representative of the kinds of activities the participant generally used in class. I arrived at each observation a few minutes early and positioned myself toward the back of the class. I did not want to hide my presence from students, but I also wanted to stay out of the way of class activities. The participants had let their students know I would be observing and all three took a moment to introduce me at the beginning of class. Then, I simply watched the class session progress and took notes on what I was seeing and hearing, guided by my protocol. While I did not often write down student-teacher exchanges verbatim, I worked to capture the nature of each class session, especially how my colleagues conducted their classes. My focus was primarily on the activities of the instructor, those of the students, and how the instructor and students interacted. In these interactions, I discovered considerable detail about what the instructor valued and how she worked toward those values in actual practice. My note-taking process relied on a two-column approach, with one column focused on my direct, descriptive observations and the second column focusing on reflection: my thoughts, reactions, and questions (see Creswell, *Educational Research* 217). After each observation, I examined my notes, added additional reflections based on them, and used them to generate additional questions to the post-observation interview protocol as pertinent for each participant.

Finally, each case study participant provided me with several documents relevant to the course. Each participant sent me her course documents via email. (One even dropped paper

copies in my mailbox.) In addition to the two specific documents I requested, the course syllabus and the prompt for the assignment students were working on at the time of my observation, participants also provided additional assignment prompts, rubrics, and handouts on various writing skills (style, documentation, and so on). I printed all of these for coding.

### *Research Questions and Study Design and Data Collection*

The key elements I considered in developing these research strategies and collecting these data were my research questions. Generally, my research questions pointed to three sorts of goals: providing a description, both broad and deep, of the department and individual faculty members; emphasizing the faculty members' practices and values and not an idealized version of what they should be; and examining where and how tensions arise in those practices and values and how faculty members seem to respond to such tensions. I juxtaposed these goals of my research questions with my anticipated research methods to guide the design of my study, considering how best to design the different phases of the study to elicit the kinds of data I would need to generate answers to my questions.

The bulk of my research questions pointed toward the descriptive aims of my study and the corresponding need for descriptive data. Largely, I wanted to hear my colleagues' sense of their own pedagogies, how and why they apply these pedagogies, and their sense of the effectiveness of those pedagogies. In short, as I have said elsewhere, I wanted their pedagogical stories to understand their pedagogical identities. My methods, then, sought ways to make this possible and to yield data that created a broad picture of the department and more granular images of individual faculty members. The surveys provided the breadth, and by consisting of largely open-ended questions, the surveys allowed a starting point for the kinds of descriptive narratives I hoped to have access to. The interviews added some more of the breadth, in large

part because nearly as many faculty members participated in the interviews as participated in the surveys. Additionally, the interviews also allowed for greater depth with each participant—to the extent they were willing to provide more and deeper responses during our conversations. Faculty members could reflect on and more fully explain the pedagogical choices they made and their reasons for them in an open atmosphere. Finally, the case studies, through their additional streams of data, provided the greatest amount of insight into individual participants' pedagogical views, values, and practices. In other words, my study design and its methods intended to promote both broad and deep conversations about and the sharing of pedagogical practices and values.

However, as I noted in my discussion of ethical considerations, I did not come into this project free of my own pedagogical views and values. As much as I could, though, I attempted to partition my pedagogical sensibilities from those of my colleagues and explore the pedagogical practices *they* valued. Through the open designs of the surveys and interviews, I was able to give participants the space needed to talk about their values. I did not limit their responses but tried to limit my own responses to probes and prompts that might elicit more discussion from participants. Furthermore, as I discuss below in my explanation of my coding processes, I avoided evaluative assessments of my colleagues' responses. My interests were not in rating the quality of their pedagogical choices but instead learning about the nature and sources of those choices.

I also wanted to understand how my colleagues addressed any tensions in their pedagogical approaches. As I have mentioned, I was not trying to create “Gotcha!” moments through which I could accuse colleagues of inconsistencies. From my own experience, I assumed these inconsistencies to be a rather natural part of pedagogical development and application, so I

was more curious about how participants navigated those tensions. To access data that might yield such insights, primarily in the case studies, I collected multiple types of data. By collecting additional interviews, observation data, and documents from case study participants, I was able to examine if such tensions arose and consider if and how my colleagues were recognizing and responding to them.

## **Data Analysis**

### *Overarching Methods*

To analyze the data for my study, I relied on an emergent view of coding as opposed to relying on more set codes, and in doing so, I drew on a general, pragmatic view of coding as well as some of Charmaz's grounded theory coding practices. I began with Johnny Saldaña's definition of a code: "A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or a short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (loc. 448). This guided me toward a view of my codes as serving multiple purposes including description, analysis, comparison, contrast, connection, and so on (see Saldaña loc. 530). Primarily, though, my general view of coding, at least in its initial stages, was that it was "a heuristic [...]—an exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas or algorithms to follow" (loc. 564). My study generated a substantial amount of data: fourteen survey responses, hundreds of pages of interview transcripts, observation notes, and course documents. To analyze this body of data from a diverse group of individuals, preset codes would not work (at least not well, as I discovered during my analysis of the surveys). Furthermore, my central goal in this study was to learn about my colleagues, to discover their pedagogical views and values related to writing instruction. Approaching coding as a heuristic process made the process of discovery even more attainable.

While Saldaña's views of coding gave me one lens through which to view my coding, Charmaz's notions and processes of grounded theory coding also informed my data analysis. Although this study is not a grounded theory study, many of Charmaz's ideas about grounded theory coding align well with Saldaña's views of coding and my own desire for emergent coding. Like Saldaña, Charmaz views coding as a way to both identify and analyze data, to "define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means" (111, 113). Additionally, and important for weighing my biases and their influence on my analysis, both Saldaña and Charmaz view coding not as objective reality but as a researcher-generated construct. For Saldaña, this means that "coding is not a precise science; it is primarily an interpretive act" (loc. 476). Charmaz concurs, noting that codes represent the researcher's interpretation of the data, not showing "empirical reality" but the researcher's sense of it, or in other words, "grounded theorists aim to code possibilities suggested *by* the data rather than ensuring complete accuracy *of* the data" (114, 120, original emphasis). These ideas allowed me to approach the data with a certain amount of analytic openness while still enabling me to recognize my own subjective role in the analysis, consistent with Sullivan and Porter's postcritical methods.

Additionally, two of Charmaz's three stages of grounded theory coding also proved useful in the analysis of my data. The first stage of coding—which she says should begin as soon as results come in and continue throughout the collection of data—is initial coding. "During initial coding, the goal is to remain open to all possible theoretical directions indicated by your readings of the data" (113). While initial coding is primarily emergent and bound to the data (116), Charmaz recommends a few general practices to guide that coding. The codes themselves should use action-oriented words as their base, and they can progress through the data either word-by-word, line-by-line, or incident-by-incident (116, 124-25). As I began coding the survey

data, I did not approach it with any fixed set of codes, though I did have in mind some of the traditional pedagogical taxonomies, such as expressivism or cultural studies approaches, which proved to be insufficient (see Chapters IV and V). Principally, I was coding for values, pedagogical practices and theories, elements related to writing. Therefore, I focused on what participants were doing, what their statements or actions or course materials demonstrated to be important to them in their teaching and, to an extent, how and why these became important to them. As Charmaz recommends, then, I used action-oriented codes that attempted to draw out the processes my participants were engaged in relative to their teaching of writing.

Charmaz's notions of second stage coding—focused coding—moved my analysis forward. The overall goal of focused coding is to discover which initial codes may best serve to “categorize [the] data incisively and completely,” drawing out what the researcher sees as substantial and meaningful themes in the data and linking them (138). In other words, the initial codes themselves become an object of analysis along with the data, and the researcher begins to look for patterns and connections among and across the initial codes and the data and these connections become focused codes. Like Charmaz, I viewed this as an emergent process of discovery. Having learned that predetermined codes were ineffective for my analysis, I simply asked of my initial codes, “What practices are at work here?” This allowed me to connect more focused activities—say, teaching students about thesis statements—with broader practices related to writing instruction, such as learning to participate in academic discourse. These larger categories, which I developed into schemas (see below and Chapter V), captured and represented larger swaths of my data and began to shape the pictures of the kinds of pedagogical choices my colleagues were making.

Connecting these layers of coding were the analytic memos I wrote. Saldaña compares memos to journals or blogs in which a researcher thinks through writing to explore more fully a given idea or object of study or code emerging from the data (loc. 1270). Much like codes themselves, memos are both heuristic and analytic, providing space for the researcher to think about and develop new ideas and to look for comparisons to other codes and ideas, which might prompt further analysis of those existing codes and ideas (Charmaz 164, 170; Saldaña loc. 1489). Charmaz notes that the researcher can use whatever methods of memoing best suit her/him so long as the memoing begins early to initiate analysis and is frequent, analytic, and comparative (i.e., comparing codes from the data to one another to develop which ones may best serve focused coding) (162, 164, 181). Although my initial memos were more descriptive than analytic, the memoing process became increasingly useful for my analysis. During initial coding, I wrote memos to explain to myself the codes that I was using, which often led to sharpening or revising some of the codes and a stronger sense overall of why I labeled certain segments of data as I did. The memos were perhaps most important as I worked on focused coding. I used them to understand similarities and differences, to determine how certain codes might fit together, and to develop codes that seemed central to my thinking.

These codes grew both from my emergent approach to the data as well as from necessity. Through initial analysis of the survey data, I found that coding based on more “traditional” pedagogies was not adequate to capture and represent the practices of my colleagues. (Indeed, I am not sure that any preset coding could fully do so.) In Chapter IV, I will detail the testing of these traditional categories against the survey results. This led me to develop other codes and ultimately schemas that I could apply to the research data gathered in interviews and case studies, which I discuss in Chapter V. These codes and schemas were more generic yet also more



inclusive. Because of this, I was able to apply the codes with more granularity than the either/or sensibility that came with codes based on taxonomies common in writing studies. For example, one of my colleagues would employ some reflective, personal writing (expressive) but in ways that encouraged students to think about the influence of their research on their ability to think critically about their essay topics (rhetoric and argumentation). For every such instance, I needed to account for this “double-coding,” and while I could explain that complexity (see Chapter V), I felt a better system of coding might benefit my analysis of the other stages of my research.

To address this, I envisioned my coding with more generic labels as consisting of three schemas as opposed to binary or exclusive labels. The schemas I created are reading/writing, academic/real world/personal, institutional/instructor/student. In using these as schemas, I could position any given colleague’s practices within a framework most reflective of the colleague’s specific practices. So, for example, if a colleague relied on reading texts associated with a cultural studies approach (say, texts about gender roles in American culture), instead of labeling these as strictly reading-oriented, I could examine the uses of those texts within the reading/writing schema and consider how the texts relate to reading or content goals *and* how they relate to writing goals. Ultimately, I established these schemas because my colleagues, like all who teach writing, have complex pedagogical approaches, and a more flexible means by which to label those practices allows us to reflect that complexity in our examinations of our colleagues’ pedagogies.

The process of coding described above constituted the bulk of my data analysis, and for some samples of my coding, see Appendix I. I used it to analyze all the interviews, the open-ended questions in the surveys, the observations (using the incident-by-incident approach in this case), and the documents provided by the case-study participants. However, I did employ other

approaches depending on the source of the data. Below, I discuss those different methods more fully.

#### *Data Analysis: Surveys*

Since the surveys consisted of three distinct yet related sections, I approached each section with slightly different methods for analysis. The demographic section was relatively straightforward in terms of analysis, so I simply recorded the information and used it for descriptive purposes. I also used this information contextually, to inform some of my analysis of the other elements of the surveys.

I used the coding processes discussed above to analyze the responses in the open-ended questions. I looked for statements that pointed to specific pedagogical practices, detailed classroom approaches, indicated specific values related to writing, or were otherwise interesting. In this first round of coding, then, I was not looking for anything specific other than information that explained what my colleagues did in the classroom and (possibly) why. After the first round, I reviewed my codes, looked for similarities or ones I could join, and began thinking about larger patterns to capture the responses.

Unique to the surveys were the Likert responses, which led to a slight mixed methods approach. Creswell defines a mixed method study as one in which the researcher combines both qualitative and quantitative data, which he argues, yields a stronger sense of the research problem and different perspectives that might not come out of only a qualitative or quantitative study (*Educational Research* 535). This approach was not a core part of my study, which is why I did not discuss it with my methodologies, but a mixed methods approach allowed me to use the information in the surveys, especially the quantitative data from the Likert responses, in different ways.

I analyzed the Likert responses at two levels. At the first level, I examined them as related to the specific survey respondent. In other words, I looked at those responses as reflective of that respondent's approaches and considered them in relation to the other responses he or she provided. So, they provided confirmation of or contrast with the respondent's open-ended responses. At the second level, I considered the Likert responses in relation to the Likert responses of the other participants. I considered, for example, the number of respondents who rated as particularly important to their pedagogy rhetorical awareness or argumentative strategies or research practices. This allowed me to create a picture of the kinds of strategies and values that might be popular within our department, knowing that the limited number of responses I received precluded me from making definitive connections between the Likert responses and the prevailing views within the department.

*Data Analysis: Observations*

To analyze the notes and reflections I had compiled, I employed strategies much like those I had used for the interviews and open-ended questions from the surveys. However, as I did not have lines of transcripts or an abundance of direct quotes from the observations, I relied more on coding the observations by incident rather than coding my notes, as those were already based somewhat on my interpretations (see Charmaz 128). While I had been using some particular codes for a while by this point, I still tried to approach my first pass through this data open-mindedly, creating codes based on what stood out to me. Many codes remained the same or of the same type as in the initial coding, though. As I went through my notes again, I began to look a little more closely in terms of the relationship of what was happening in the classroom to the details that participants had provided me in our conversations.

*Data Analysis: Documents*

I examined the documents my colleagues provided me much like interview transcripts. In my first round of coding (open coding), I was looking for patterns, for hints of pedagogical approaches, for details that indicate their goals and values as well as information connected to the other data sources. Often, these overlapped with ones I had already been using, though some came up with some more frequency (codes related to regental and university requirements because of the semi-legal nature of syllabi, e.g.).

Combined, my methodologies, methods, and coding processes revealed much about my colleagues and their practices—much more than I had learned through passing conversations with them. Indeed, I learned much about the multifaceted nature of their pedagogical practices and values, and the depth of this complexity that emerged from the data was, to be honest, rather surprising to me (though it perhaps should not have been). In the remaining chapters, I will detail the results of my study and the pedagogical intricacy of my colleagues the data revealed and address my perspectives on how faculty members craft their pedagogical identities. In doing so, I will draw both on the traditional pedagogies as labels for specific values and practices that individual instructors can combine in their teaching and the schemas as providing spectra within which teachers may be located or along which they may move.

## CHAPTER IV

### BEYOND TAXONOMIES

As discussed in Chapter I, this study grew out of two exigencies. The first was an external review of my English department. The department received high marks on almost all review items; one of the few exceptions was the need for greater coherence among the Composition II courses and between Composition I and Composition II. This has often been a topic of conversation at departmental meetings, even before our program review. Faculty members recognized this as a concern and were looking to remedy it, and the program review provided some greater impetus for this work.

The second exigency was my own curiosity about my colleagues' views and values related to writing studies. As a more "traditional" English department, nearly all of my colleagues were trained in literary studies. Given the role disciplinarity can play in developing one's pedagogical practices, I was curious to examine what was happening in this regard in our department. Furthermore, although I earned my bachelor's and master's degrees in this department and have been teaching in it for over thirteen years, I felt quite unfamiliar with what my colleagues were doing in their writing classes. Having observed some of my colleagues' courses for review purposes, I was aware of some variety in teaching goals and practices in the Composition II courses, but I wanted a fuller picture of these similarities and differences and the pedagogical views and values that inform them.

This chapter will demonstrate how I analyzed my first set of data, the survey results, through the lens of four pedagogical categories composition to classify modes of teaching. The purpose of using these categories was not to put faculty members into discrete groups and pronounce that our department adheres mostly to a certain pedagogy. Rather, I wanted to test the

validity of such categories, to examine their accuracy in terms of how well their theoretical and more abstract components correlated to what teachers actually *do*. Through this analysis, I ultimately discovered the categories, while useful in terms of organizing some practices, fail to adequately account for the complexity of instructors' views and approaches.

### **The Four Categories**

Before examining the specific results, I want to comment on the four categories I tested my colleagues' responses against. I tried to choose categories that were more or less "common sense" categories, ones that are or have been much discussed or commonly used. These categories certainly grew out of the more theoretical and historical work of scholars such as James Berlin and Richard Fulkerson, but given the make-up of my department, I knew such abstractions and histories would be of little importance to many of my colleagues. In short, I was looking to establish a relatively small number of categories that would comprise several different practices and attitudes, as well as ones that would be relatively practical in their nature. The four categories I used were current-traditional rhetoric, expressivism, cultural studies/critical pedagogy, and rhetoric and argumentation. The discussions of these categories that follow correspond previous discussions of taxonomies found in Chapter II; therefore, these will be only brief overviews of the categories.

#### *Current-Traditional Rhetoric*

Current-traditional rhetoric receives typically pejorative treatment in the scholarship, mostly as being old-fashioned, ill-informed, and too focused on the superficial elements of writing. While I tend to agree with the superficial critique (and somewhat with the old-fashioned claim), I do not intend this to be a negative label. As with all the categories, this label serves to identify a set of characteristics and practices that often—though not always—function together.

Furthermore, I do not intend here to argue for or against current-traditional rhetoric (or any of the other categories). These are to serve to test the veracity of such categorization.

As discussed in Chapter II, current-traditional rhetoric has often served, as Robert Connors puts it, as a “whipping boy” in composition studies (*Composition-Rhetoric* 5). As pedagogical practice, it is often associated with a sort of formalism, as focusing on elements of grammar and mechanics, abiding by strict formal structures (such as the five-paragraph essay), and assessment based on errors (Fulkerson, “Composition Theory” 412-13). Often, the grammatical elements receive the most attention. According to Fulkerson, “The most common type of formalist values theory is a grammatical one: good writing is ‘correct’ writing at the sentence level” (“Four Philosophies” 344). Sharon Crowley also ascribes modal approaches (narration, description, and the like) to current-traditional rhetoric, as well as a reliance on universal, even arhetorical, notions of good writing (94-95). The role of the teacher in this approach is often one of assessor of errors as opposed to an audience (Crowley 96-97; Fulkerson, “Composition” 413). Based on the definitions of current-traditional rhetoric in the scholarship, I analyzed participants’ survey responses using the following characteristics:

- A significant focus on grammar and surface-level issues;
- Emphasis on formal features (including thesis, topic sentences, precise documentation practices);
- Attention to modal views of writing;
- A sense of universality or lacking rhetorical considerations;
- A building-block view of writing (good sentences lead to good paragraphs lead to good essays);
- And the teacher as assessor and not audience.

### *Expressivism*

The second category is also one that receives plenty of bad press these days, but again, I do not intend this label to come with any certain judgments about the quality of instruction provided by those who might adhere to it or to certain expressive practices. Despite some negative views of them, expressive practices still appear in many instructors' repertoire of pedagogical practices. Though expressivism cannot lay sole claim to process notions of instruction, process does play a central role in expressive pedagogy, especially in terms of prewriting practices (such as freewriting and journaling), peer review, and revision (Burnham and Powell 115, 114). Expressivism is an especially student-centered approach. Chris Burnham and Rebecca Powell describe expressivism as "plac[ing] the writer at the center of its theory and pedagogy, assigning highest value to the writer's imaginative, psychological, social, and spiritual development and how that development influences individual consciousness and behavior" (113). Thus, the individual and the personal receive prominent focus in expressive pedagogy with the goal of students discovering themselves and their own voices as writers. This does give a somewhat Romantic notion to expressivist pedagogy, but Burnham and Powell note that it does include social aspects as well. They cite Peter Elbow's contention that a stronger sense of self leads to stronger social and cultural interactions, and they argue that the emphasis on voice is about promoting "agency and resistance" (114, 118). As a result, instructors are not the assessors of error they might be in a current-traditional rhetoric classroom. Instead, an expressivist instructor serves more as a guide helping the student reach her own sense of self, her own voice. The expressivist traits I examined the survey data for include these features:

- Emphasis on the writer, the individual;
- Development of personal style and voice;



- Use of the writing process to achieve author's intent and develop that voice;
- Collaborative work with classmates (review process);
- Student texts serving as primary texts for the course but with some emphasis on works by professional authors (often literary in nature) to serve as examples;
- Use of students' personal experiences or interests for essay topics;
- Reflective and inventive writing (e.g., journaling and freewriting);
- And the instructor seeing herself/himself as a guide more than a teacher in the traditional sense.

### *Cultural Studies/Critical Pedagogy*

For the third category, I combined cultural studies and critical pedagogy not because they cannot stand on their own but because they share many features in common. Cultural studies looks to connect writing and rhetorical practices to larger social, political, and economic forces, giving composition courses more public- or civic-oriented goals. Much of this grew from a desire to give composition content: texts to study and analyze beyond students' texts (D. George, Locke, and Trimbur 104), often leading instructors to incorporate "more deliberate use of popular culture and media studies into the composition course" (99). This focus on contemporary issues intends to help students examine the culture around them, develop analytical skills, and think critically about whatever type of text or artifact they happen to be analyzing. And in developing these writing and rhetorical skills, those embracing cultural studies also aim to create better citizens (97-98).

Much like cultural studies, critical pedagogy espouses an interest in not only preparing students as writers but also as citizens. Critical pedagogy traces its roots to the pedagogical work of Paulo Freire and his efforts to challenge the norming and oppressive effects of education by

raising students' "critical consciousness" (A. George 79, 78). Critical consciousness, by and large, is much like critical thinking, but in a more cultural sense. Given its emphasis on cultural norms and experiences, critical pedagogy emphasizes cultural themes and topics that students would readily recognize and with which they would already have some familiarity (78). All this works toward a pedagogy of cultural critique, the goal of which "is to revitalize students' conceptions of freedom and inspire them to collectively recreate a society built on democratic values and respect for difference" (80). Thus, social justice, democratic principles, diversity, and student agency all have a strong place in critical pedagogy.

Based on these two overviews, we might say that a cultural studies/critical pedagogy approach would bear a number of the following traits, ones I looked for in my colleagues' survey responses:

- Connections of language, politics, and power;
- Emphases on democratic, emancipatory, social justice goals;
- Use of contemporary cultural and social themes and topics to provide content and writing tasks for the course;
- Analyses of culture and cultural artifacts;
- Goals of making students better writers *and* better citizens;
- Empowering students academically and politically.

### *Rhetoric and Argumentation*

The final category I tested against the survey results is rhetorical and argumentative pedagogy, or what some might call the pedagogy of academic discourse, though a rhetorical approach would emphasize the fluctuating and contextual nature of writing. The beginnings of this approach go back to the ancient Greeks and "traditional" notions of persuasion and

argumentation. It can take on a number of forms, whether stemming from Aristotle, Kenneth Burke, Stephen Toulmin, or Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, for just a few examples. David Fleming claims that while rhetorical and argumentative approaches have been in decline recently, the “thesis-driven prose remains the heart of the academy, the key genre of political life, and perhaps the apogee of humans’ sociocognitive development” (258-59). Though a bit hyperbolic, Fleming is correct that at the university level, thesis-driven research essays remain one of the key genres students will encounter both in their reading and in their writing. This genre relies extensively on argument, research, evidence, and logic—often presented as the benchmarks of “good” writing at the university level. Although the thesis-driven research essay is the most popular genre in academic writing, rhetorical and argumentative approaches often make room for other genres, recognizing and promoting the functional, purposeful, and audience-oriented nature of much writing. Given its connections to various forms of rhetoric (academic and public), rhetorical and argumentative pedagogy often carries many of the following characteristics, for which I analyzed the survey data:

- Emphasis on persuasion, including awareness and exploration of multiple perspectives, debate practices, use of reason, and so on;
- Use of researched, reasoned claims in student writing;
- A thesis-driven approach to student texts;
- Attention (explicit or implicit) to instilling in students a sense of rhetorical awareness, particularly of audience and purpose;
- Attention to generic conventions.

I then examined the responses from the fourteen survey participants with the characteristics of these four pedagogical categories in mind. Below, I discuss each participant's response and how she or he fit (or did not fit) into the various categories.

### **Survey Participant 1**

From the first response, I began to discover the complexity that existed in the pedagogical approaches employed by faculty members and thus realized that the categories may not test well as discrete pedagogical markers. The first survey participant, SP1<sup>25</sup>, is a full professor with many years (fourteen) of experience teaching composition and technical writing courses. The responses from this participant are brief yet provide a profile of this participant as one of pedagogical complexity.

SP1's responses do not speak much to expressivism overall. However, one of the responses suggests an interest in the kind of individual style that expressivism favors. SP1 values "effective—but not flamboyant—style," and this interest in style appears in the Likert responses, receiving a score of five from the participant. Some of the other Likert responses that can relate to expressivism (self-exploration and small group work), receive lower scores (a three and a two, respectively).

I also note some hints of current-traditional rhetoric views here, mostly in terms of SP1's emphasis on stylistic matters, such as clarity and concision. These can translate into matters of content, but they seem to receive more emphasis at the stylistic end of the spectrum. In describing a "good piece of writing," this instructor looks for "[c]larity; concision; precision [...]." On one level, this does point to an emphasis on some superficial matters, and this comes up elsewhere. In explaining a commonly used assignment, SP1 mentions goals of clarity,

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<sup>25</sup> I labeled all participants with the abbreviation SP (survey participant) a number corresponding to the order in which they submitted their survey responses.

precision, and concision again; and in the Likert responses, stylistic clarity receives a score of five, as does documentation, and grammatical correctness receives a four. Again, SP1 might frame these in the context of larger pedagogical aims, but given the attention they receive here, I would say that they at least point to some leanings toward current-traditional rhetoric.

After I initially examined SP1's response, I saw this participant as embracing a cultural studies/critical pedagogy-oriented approach. However, after I reexamined SP1's responses, I found this view was perhaps unwarranted based on the data. What initially stood out to me was SP1's use of a popular culture/cultural studies reader (*Signs of Life*) in composition courses and some of the Likert scores: four for cultural analysis, four for civic awareness/responsibility. SP1 also rates analysis a five in the Likert section, but I do not know that this translates directly to cultural studies/critical pedagogy. It strikes me a bit as a more "universal" sort of skill or outcome. I would imagine current-traditional rhetoric practitioners would find analysis of grammatical and formal correctness a valuable skill/outcome as well. So I do see a few hints of cultural studies/critical pedagogy in this participant's responses, but nothing in the data that is too specific. This might be a thread that runs through this participant's courses, but based on the responses here, claiming SP1 draws *primarily* a cultural studies/critical pedagogy approach would be inaccurate.

The current-traditional rhetoric tendencies I noted above tend to overlap a bit with some rhetorical aims. The passage I quoted above mentioning clarity and precision continues with "accurate audience awareness," and in describing a typical assignment, SP1 mentions how this awareness of audience is to guide students' writing of that assignment. They are to describe a process to an "audience [. . .] comprised of people who will have absolutely zero idea coming in what it is they are describing." This might connect somewhat to current-traditional rhetoric's

notions of readability and reader-centered prose (Crowley 94-95), but SP1 also rates rhetorical awareness as a five in the Likert section. These mentions of rhetorical awareness in the open-ended responses seem to represent a legitimate interest in developing students' rhetorical awareness. Furthermore, SP1 also sees argumentative strategies as important. Though this instructor does not mention argumentation or components of argumentation (thesis, persuasion, research, counterarguments, and so on) explicitly in the text, argumentation receives a score of five in the Likert section of the survey.

I would also add one more element that adds some nuance to this. SP1 mentions the importance of technology in her/his classes. When discussing pedagogically influential experiences, SP1 cites two conferences, saying they “changed the ways I utilize technology in both my teaching and in the work I require of my students.” Correspondingly, SP1 scored multimodality as a four in the Likert responses. (I should note that SP1 was the one of the only respondents to mention the influence of technology on pedagogy beyond the most basic of influences and the only one to rate it so highly in the Likert portion.) I could make connections between this shift to technology and rhetoric—and I think such connections exist in terms of generic influences, effects on delivery, and so on. More to the point, though, this emphasis on technology seems to add another layer to this professor's pedagogy, one that the instructor feels that students find important and of value.

In sum, then, SP1 certainly mixes a variety of approaches while ultimately leaning a little more toward the rhetorical/argumentative camp. SP1 certainly has some current-traditional rhetoric and cultural studies/critical pedagogy tendencies, enough so that they are not to be ignored.

## Survey Participant 2

Much like SP1, SP2's pedagogical values and approaches do not fit neatly into any one of the four pedagogical categories discussed above. SP2, though, is a bit of a special case in this context. At our institution, students can take a creative writing version of Composition II. This professor teaches some of these sections, but no "regular" sections of Composition II. Thus, creative writing approaches figure prominently in SP2's course, and many of these practices draw from expressivist approaches to writing: collaborative workshops, writing in various literary genres, creative revision strategies, creativity in general, and emphasis on self-exploration, for example. SP2 draws minutely (if at all) from the cultural studies/critical pedagogy that characterizes the Composition I and some of the Composition II courses in our department, and surface level matters beyond stylistic and creative uses of language receive little attention from this participant.

What is perhaps most interesting about SP2's approaches to writing is the merging of expressivist practices with rhetoric/argumentation practices, which stems from this instructor's educational background, including courses in rhetoric, creative writing courses and workshops, and courses in literature. SP2 draws pedagogically on these experiences; the best example of this interdisciplinary background appears in a discussion of an assignment from one of SP2's classes. This assignment asks students to visit a local museum and find an object that speaks to them and then write a poem based on that object. Certainly, this is creative in nature, as students are to write a poem, one that expresses their personal reactions to or interactions with a certain object or piece of art. However, this assignment is to be grounded in observational research and even extended with research into facts related to the object or piece of art: "Consider fleshing out a

personal experience with facts that enrich the narrative and that may also be alive with metaphoric significance.”

I also noted a sense of growth at work here. SP2 wants to challenge students and give them guidance to improve their writing (through manuals that guide and challenge student and through the steps/guidance in the sample assignment). This focus on the growth of students is balanced with the goals and interests of the instructor, which I think is a fairly common or typical balancing act that writing teachers must employ. SP2 seems to want to grow, too, by learning through experience with students and through the interplay of SP2’s own writing and pedagogical practices, seeing the two as reciprocally and symbiotically related, dynamically influencing one another. This sense of shared growth seems to speak to the role of instructor as guide and a view of the classroom as a writers’ workshop.

SP2’s pedagogy strikes me as creative but not entirely as expressive. This seems a little counterintuitive since SP2 does use some self-exploratory practices and goals. The emphasis on the rhetorical nature of writing SP2 draws on, as well as the focus on research, seems to move in a pedagogically different direction than simple expressivity. Certainly, expressive pedagogy can and does value rhetorical awareness and research practices. What I think is really happening here is that the growth sought for students is not so much of the personal sort. SP2 is not explicitly trying to help these students figure out who they are as people; rather, SP2 seems more interested in their growth as writers, in helping them learn tools, strategies, and approaches that will help them be more capable and effective writers.

Again, I think SP2 is rather hard to categorize because the class this instructor teaches is rather different from the typical required composition class. This might point to the instructor’s role in responding to a certain context or situation, a response grounded in one’s experiences as



more meaningful than adopting any specific theoretical position, which of course makes certain pre-scripted categories rather meaningless.

### **Survey Participant 3**

SP3 was another participant who did not categorize neatly. SP3 is certainly not an expressive in looking at the responses to the open-ended questions. In the Likert responses, though, I am seeing what, out of context, might come across as expressive: self-exploration, four; creativity, three (though that is not an especially high score); descriptive language, five. In context, though, these have to do more with SP3's literacy/linguistic focus evident in other responses.

Literacy development is an important part of SP3's pedagogy/curricular goals. SP3 focuses strongly on "literacy skills because of the marked trend toward aliteracy in American culture." SP3 has a clear sense of what students "need" in terms of language skills/language awareness, and this instructor plans to deliver on those, providing students with the content and tools to grow in their literacy capabilities.

That comment on the cultural influence on literacy also denotes attention to cultural matters as well, some cultural criticism. If students are shaped by the culture, especially the culture of aliteracy, and SP3 wants to challenge students' perceptions of literacy, this then becomes cultural critique. However, I sense that SP3 is more interested in the literacy aspects of these cultural connections than in the cultural critiques. The assignment this instructor describes does much to confirm this. The assignment is an autoethnography of sorts, drawing on students' own literacy skills and uses as subject matter. SP3 sees a poor response to this assignment as one that struggles grammatically and stylistically and, in terms of content, doesn't value literacy as highly as SP3 feels students should value it. A good response is one that represents strong

language skills, coherence, and organization (though SP3 mentions little in terms of content here). In this, I am also seeing some tensions in SP3's relationship with students. The description of the assignment includes some presumptions about students' literacy ("why they stopped reading for pleasure in middle school"), and much of this comes down to a sense that students just don't care about learning, about language and literacy anymore (which to an extent is probably true). I do not doubt that SP3 wants students to do well and to learn to write better, but this instructor is also quite upset by their lack of motivation and their lack of willingness to learn.

I also noted what I might call some current-traditional rhetoric elements. SP3 gives considerable attention to language matters throughout (and especially in the Likert section) and proclaims a strong sense of the value of handbooks on more than one occasion. I also think some of this is rhetorical, though much like the cultural analysis ideas, SP3 discusses these ideas in passing but rates them highly in the Likert section. So even though some of the tendencies of current-traditional rhetoric appear, SP3's pedagogy is certainly more nuanced than that. It is rhetorical in its attention to language awareness and facility. Language skills at the more superficial level, then, could easily work in favor of the view that much of this is about rhetorical awareness.

In terms of "labeling" SP3, I have a hard time with this because again, SP3 is not a neat fit. SP3 displays less concern with argument and creativity, but stresses matters of correctness, cultural analysis, and rhetorical awareness. SP3 is not directly current-traditional rhetoric but does display some hints of that, nor does this instructor adopt cultural studies/critical pedagogy, but elements of this emerge as well. SP3 draws on matters of academic discourse and a little bit about genre/form, but not exclusively. The only category I might make any certain pronouncements about is expressivism, which SP3 does not seem to espouse in any meaningful

ways. Again, we have an experienced teacher who draws from a variety of approaches rather than any set category.

#### **Survey Participant 4**

SP4 has over thirty years of instructional experience, and teaches primarily Technical Communication, not Composition I or Composition II. Although technical communication is not a required course, it is close to it. Many majors do require the course for their students, which means that it often incorporates some of the more universal notions of writing.

Because of the focus on technical communication, SP4 sees the course and writing in it as quite practical: “writing that does its job well” is “good” writing. This speaks to a rhetorical sensibility of writing in this course, that it is about meeting certain goals from a certain audience in a particular context. What SP4 also notes as “good” does not mention style much right away; the first points have to do with logic, understanding, and support. But SP4 does come back to style as important, too.

Genre is important to SP4 as well, as this instructor praises the textbook used in class for its “chapters on extended definitions, process, formal analytical reports, job application letters, [and] business letters (including ‘bad news’ letters).” SP4 also assigns a research assignment drawing on the different types of assignments, such as a definition assignment. Genre also receives a four in the Likert responses. Again, this attention to genre makes sense given SP4’s focus on technical communication, yet it still requires the instructor to understand and (to a degree) appreciate the rhetorical nature of genres.

The discussion of the research assignment provides some of the most insight into what SP4 values in writing. Some of this is practical, pedagogically speaking: scaffolding, building toward the course’s final assignment, having it be the culmination of the other work.

Nevertheless, it speaks more to other values of writing. SP4 mentions format, grammar, spelling—superficial matters—but downplays them. Instead, SP4 says “the main goal would be clear, accurate discussion for a general audience, explaining the topic well, including background and definitions, reaching a convincing conclusion, and effectively supporting one’s ideas with appropriate references and citations.” In this, SP4 clearly identifies some rhetorical matters (audience, persuasion, contextualizing) as well as some of the more universal notions of argument (good evidence/support).

To my mind, SP4 approaches writing instruction with a more rhetorical, academic writing approach. This includes some elements of argumentation (persuasion, good evidence), but what is interesting in that is that for the Likert response on argumentation, SP4 only gives it a score of one. Does this mean some disconnect exists? I do not have a clear answer to this. But the focus on writing being effective for its purpose and context, goals of convincing claims with strong support, and generic accuracy all point to a more rhetorical/argumentative approach. The Likert responses also contain a slight disconnect in the emphasis given to style, documentation, and grammar. These might hint at current-traditional rhetoric, but they might also reflect the practical and precise nature of Technical Communication.

### **Survey Participant 5**

Like the other respondents thus far, SP5 is an experienced instructor who teaches writing courses regularly. From the beginning of the survey responses, SP5 establishes a varied sensibility about pedagogy: “I value and emphasize detail as well as awareness of rhetorical style, rhetorical strategy, and audience. I also feel that you have to know the rules in order to effectively break them, which may or may not sound contradictory to the first sentence.” This pedagogical “incongruity” (one I don’t find as incongruous as SP5 does) seems to foreshadow

many of the remaining responses SP5 provides. Throughout, SP5 seems to shuttle between all four categories, and often somewhat easily.

Primarily, SP5's responses pointed to a rhetoric and argumentation approach. SP5 teaches the "required research essay," which may suggest some reluctance on this instructor's part to do so, until we come to this instructor's Likert responses in which SP5 rates argument and research as "very important" (five) to this instructor's pedagogy. These rhetorical aspects have the most prominent place in SP5's pedagogical discussion. The sentence quoted above presents the types of rhetorical focus this instructor emphasizes in required writing courses: stylistic rhetorical choices, rhetorical strategies, and audience awareness. SP5 mentions, too, numerous genres of texts that this instructor uses in class readings. On the one hand, this may well show an interest in exploring different generic conventions with students (which does receive a four in the Likert ratings). However, it may also represent some other pedagogical approaches, which I will address shortly. Finally, SP5 recognizes the rhetorical situation of a pedagogical context and its effects on pedagogical choices: "As I have modified my rhetorical choices for the digital environments [i.e., online classes], I suppose I have increased the level to which I address these issues with my students." This awareness likely transfers to students, and SP5 explicitly engages students in conversations about the influences of genre and modes of delivery.

Were these the only points SP5 made in response to the open-ended questions, this instructor would certainly fall squarely into the rhetoric and argumentation category. However, SP5 dabbles a bit in the other categories as well. In particular, this instructor's responses point to several expressivist attitudes informing this instructor's pedagogy. Above, I noted SP5 discusses a wide variety of texts this instructor uses in the course: "I designed my own anthology because none available offers the range of content and authorship which I desire for prose and poetry

(fiction and non, narrative/storytelling, and research/reporting), classical and canonical to contemporary, and minority as well as international authors.” Of course, to call this all simply “literary” would be misleading as this covers a wide diversity of texts, genres, and authors. In addition, SP5 does not elaborate the use of these texts: they might serve as textual/formal models, as pieces to aid in the inventive process, or as research or sources for students.

Process, important to expressivist pedagogy (but in fairness, to all approaches today), is a key component here as well. SP5 mentions process as kind of a key component to students succeeding at the research essay. “Successful submissions come from students who can (and choose to) think actively about their own writing process, from brainstorming to researching, drafting, revising, and editing. They see writing as a process, not just a product.” This is a personal take on process—one’s own process—that would fit well within an expressivist pedagogy but would also benefit the work students do in rhetorical/academic terms. Finally, SP5 also gave high ratings to practices in the Likert section that reflect some expressivist notions: Stylistic clarity (five), self-exploration (four), creativity (five), descriptive language (five), though small group work (a common feature of expressivist classrooms) only received a two.

Characteristics of the final two categories, current-traditional rhetoric and cultural studies/critical pedagogy, appeared in SP5’s responses, though not with as much frequency and prominence as rhetoric and argumentation and expressivism. Elements of both seemed to appear primarily in the Likert responses and regarding the course readings. Regarding current-traditional rhetoric, SP5 rates each grammatical correctness, stylistic clarity, and proper documentation as a five. The readings, if used as formal models, could carry some of the modal notions of current-traditional rhetoric as well. cultural studies/critical pedagogy traits in the Likert responses consist of analytical abilities (five), cultural analysis (five), civic awareness (four). In addition, if the

course readings serve as content/idea pieces for students, their diversity does suggest that they might examine some social/cultural issues in the course.

One final note: I find SP5's Likert responses intriguing. This participant scored only three topics at a three or lower: collaboration (three), small group work (two), and multimodality (two). First, this last one is interesting given SP5's view of the importance of technology and its rhetorical and pedagogical influences. But more to the point, the fact that all other topics get a four or five makes SP5 a little hard to pin down. These might reflect this instructor's rhetorical approaches, but they also reinforce the breadth of approaches and values SP5 presents in the open-ended responses.

### **Survey Participant 6**

The university catalog description for Composition II says the course is the "study of and practice in writing persuasive prose, with the aim to improve writing skills in all disciplines." This emphasis on argument and rhetorical awareness seems to set up a course specifically with those ends, and as SP6 begins responding to the first open-ended question of the survey by directly quoting this description, I was anticipating considerable attention to rhetoric and argument in the remaining responses. However, SP6 crosses numerous pedagogical boundaries throughout these responses.

Immediately after quoting the catalog description, SP6 moves into current-traditional rhetoric territory, highlighting the importance of surface-level correctness: "This is an advanced composition course. Students in this course are expected to spell and punctuate properly, to write a grammatical sentence, and to organize paragraphs and essays coherently." This attention to surface-level, formal matters appears again in the Likert responses, where SP6 rates grammatical correctness and documentation both as "very important" (five). In many of the later responses,

though, these current-traditional rhetoric characteristics fade away. Perhaps as SP6 discusses other pedagogical elements, these current-traditional traits and goals remain as expectations, but SP6 does not specifically mention them.

What SP6 does specifically mention in the remainder of the responses, though, points to cultural studies/critical pedagogy goals. This instructor identifies the main textbook for the course: *Conversations: Readings for Writing*. This popular culture reader addresses social, public, contemporary issues (education, gender, technology) and certainly fits well with the Comp I cultural studies/critical pedagogy curriculum. SP6 also themes the course according to certain topics: “education; crime and punishment; families and human relationships; gender, race, and ethnicity; technology; and sustainability of our planet.” (I cannot say if these all appear in one semester or in a rotation from semester to semester, as SP6 did not specify this.) Furthermore, the research assignment SP6 describes points to a cultural studies/critical pedagogy approach. SP6 has students consider “whether or not our country is a united government of our people as envisioned by the founding fathers or whether in recent times, especially, based on the writings in the text and outside sources, we are becoming more divisive as a nation.” This includes topics such as freedoms, gender matters, economic inequality, race/ethnicity, and so on—grounding many of these topics in some of the foundational American documents. Finally, SP6’s Likert responses point to cultural studies/critical pedagogy: analysis (four), cultural analysis (five), civic awareness/responsibility (five).

Elements of rhetoric and argumentation exist throughout as well. Use of the course description speaks to a sense of universality of some of the notions of academic writing, persuasive writing. The assignment SP5 discusses seems to have an element of persuasion to it as well; students are to try to convince an audience (though the audience is never really specified).



The project also emphasizes research; however, that research, given its historical, cultural, and ultimately critical roles, also connects to cultural studies/critical pedagogy. The Likert responses also correspond to these rhetorical and argumentative views in the open-ended responses: argumentative strategies (four), style (five), research (five), genre (four), rhetorical awareness (four).

Overall, in many ways, SP6 tends toward cultural studies/critical pedagogy with elements of rhetoric and argumentation, but the emphasis on matters related to style and correctness seem to tend a little more toward current-traditional rhetoric. Furthermore, some of the current-traditional rhetoric elements seem to push against the catalog description that SP6 highlights. On the surface, this all seems to point to a tension in SP6's pedagogy, but in the responses, SP6 does not seem to notice or remark upon this tension. Rather, this seems to be not a tension at all. SP6 seems to treat the connections of these different approaches as understood, as a matter of course that current-traditional rhetoric elements can and do work with rhetorical and argumentative or cultural studies/critical pedagogy approaches—contrary to what a more taxonomic or ideological view of pedagogy might suggest.

### **Survey Participant 7**

In many ways, SP7 shares some of the same traits as SP6, particularly in the blending of current-traditional rhetoric and cultural studies/critical pedagogy characteristics. And as is the case with SP6, SP7 does not seem to have any sense of these as in conflict or competition, suggesting, perhaps, a feeling that these are or can be complementary.

My sense of current-traditional rhetoric in SP7's responses come primarily from two points. First, SP7 uses *Patterns* in Composition II. A fairly cursory review of this text reveals it to be a modes text with readings of various types and genres, and this variety fits well with what

SP7 says about the kinds of readings in the class: “I look for variations of essays, including length and difficulty as well as contemporary and classic authors addressing topics which are relevant to students today and which they can relate to their own life to reflect upon.” On the one hand, this might suggest that SP7 draws on these readings as models of various modes of writing (narration, description, and so on). On the other hand, though, the notion of connecting readings to one’s life and reflecting on one’s experiences as a result does have the ring of expressivism here, though the lack of further references to and low Likert scores for expressivist practices keep me from assigning that label to this comment. I would also like to add that even though *Patterns* uses a modal approach, SP7 may not necessarily use a modal approach. Therefore, SP7 may have chosen this text because of its readings.

Second, SP7 also rates highly some elements in the Likert section that point to some potential current-traditional rhetoric attitudes, most notably in rating grammatical correctness and documentation as “very important.” Other small comments along with the Likert responses and the use of *Patterns* also give some hints to current-traditional rhetoric elements. SP7 looks for writing that has “well chosen verbs and adjectives with variations in sentence structures” and mentions “six components of quality writing” in terms of assessment. While SP7 does not elaborate on these components, they do suggest a bit of a static sense of “good” writing. (Again, the lack of detail makes this difficult to substantiate beyond supposition—a drawback of the survey approach.)

Although SP7 only hints at some current-traditional rhetoric approaches, the instructor offers some stronger evidence indicating a preference for cultural studies/critical pedagogy approaches. Initially, I thought SP7 would show some resistance to this pedagogy, noting that the Basic Writing and Composition I readers (which are cultural studies/critical pedagogy texts—

popular culture, cultural studies readers) were chosen by the composition coordinator as opposed to being texts SP7 had or would have chosen. However, later statements showed that this was likely not a resistance to this pedagogical approach. SP7 describes a gender analysis assignment in which students analyze a television show or a movie. In this, students are to create “an argument about the messages this [show or film] sends to each gender, how to treat each other, vested interest, etc.” SP7 also notes a preference for the cultural studies/critical pedagogy approach: “I like the focus in remedial and [Composition I] courses centering on pop culture as students seem to be more confident in discussing and writing on this topic.” Likert responses, too, point to cultural studies/critical pedagogy traits: cultural analysis (five), analysis (four)—though civic awareness only receives a three.

SP7 also brings up (mostly in passing) some rhetorical and argumentative elements. Aside from valuing some surface-level matters in writing (students’ writing and writing more generally), this instructor also appreciates “[i]nteresting, concise, relevant, insightful, organized” writing that “avoid[s] clichéd thinking or stating the obvious.” SP7 also discusses practices related to academic writing, such as “narrowing [a] topic ... [and] balancing details and analysis by giving readers the necessary information and leaving out irrelevant details...”—a sense of purpose and audience, in other words. And research and argument receive high scores in the Likert responses (five and four, respectively), though rhetorical awareness receives a three.

In many respects, then, SP7 is almost a pedagogical duplicate of SP6. Elements of rhetoric and argumentation, cultural studies/critical pedagogy, and current-traditional rhetoric seem to merge and blend in SP7’s pedagogy. Whereas some scholars might see these as conflicts, as problems needing attention, SP7 expresses no such worry. The discussions and

connections of these different attitudes and methods seem to come across as common sense, as harmonious parts of a whole pedagogy.

### **Survey Participant 8**

SP8 represents one of the neater fits into any one pedagogical category, and for this instructor, that is cultural studies/critical pedagogy. SP8 was a TA with only a couple of semesters of teaching experience at the time of this survey, yet SP8 felt quite strongly that the cultural studies/critical pedagogy curriculum was the most suitable for teaching writing and for expanding students' thinking and civic-mindedness.

[The TA training] course was instrumental to the way I approach my writing pedagogy. [The professor's] theory that a writing class ought to improve a student's critical thinking skills along with his/her writing skills made an impression on me. Since we are teaching a required course, we have an opportunity—lord willing—to help create better citizens in addition to better writers.

SP8 maintains this connection to cultural studies/critical pedagogy while discussing an assignment the instructor uses in class. In this assignment, students are to write an essay in which they are to analyze a cultural artifact (an advertisement in this case). The students are to explore “the rhetoric of the ad”: its graphics, language, and so on. But they are also supposed to “[make] larger cultural connections” through their analyses. That is, the assignment asks them to situate the ad and its messages in their cultural context. SP8 notes that this is the kind of response that would demonstrate critical thinking, and that a response lacking this would be “vapid.” Much of the emphasis of the assignment, then, is on the content of the essay, content rooted primarily—even exclusively—in cultural analysis and critique.

SP8's Likert responses further confirm some of these connections to a cultural studies/critical pedagogy. While some more surface matters (grammar and style) received a five rating, the other practices and values receiving a five could easily fall under the cultural studies/critical pedagogy label: cultural analysis, civic responsibility, analysis, argumentation, and rhetorical awareness (though the latter two would also fall under a rhetorical pedagogical approach, discussed below). The more expressive elements of the Likert section received low scores: self-exploration (two), collaboration (one), and small-group work (one).

SP8 responses do overlap a bit with other pedagogical categories, rhetoric and argumentation in particular. For example, the instructor appreciates writing that knows its purpose and reaches its audience effectively: "prose that is clean but takes risks, humorous but not without purpose, engaging and well considered." SP8 was also formerly a music journalist and recognizes the "the power of strong prose." Some of the Likert responses mentioned above point in the rhetoric and argumentation direction as well, yet this respondent fit into the cultural studies/critical pedagogy category almost without exception. The grammar and style preferences in the Likert responses could easily function in service to the cultural kinds of goals typical of cultural studies/critical pedagogy and are not exclusive to current-traditional rhetoric. The rhetorical matters, too, can easily work in relation to cultural studies/critical pedagogy, functioning in support of the kinds of analysis and argument SP8 advocates in response to the open-ended questions.

### **Survey Participant 9**

Initially, SP9 seemed poised to defy easy classification as this participant started the survey with a wide-ranging litany of characteristics of good writing: "clarity, concision, imagination, good imagery, good logic, good structure, good documentation, good grammar,

correct spelling, etc.” In this first list, only two (“imagination, good imagery”) stand out as what one might consider “expressive.” In addition, SP9’s Likert responses placed some importance on cultural analysis (rated a five) and civic responsibility (also rated a five).

However, other areas of SP9’s response indicated some more expressive characteristics. SP9 points to the textbook as one chosen primarily for its “paper and *journal* assignments” (emphasis mine). Of course, journaling is not a practice exclusive to expressive pedagogy, but it is an important part of that pedagogy. SP9 also emphasizes the personal. In the description of a common course assignment, this instructor lists an I-search paper (a research-based project about something of personal interest to the author that typically uses a personal and reflective style). SP9 does not specify the subject matter for this I-search, but notes that the student should have “strong personal engagement with the subject matter” and that a good response to this assignment should include “[p]ersonal impact on [the] student[’s] future life choices.” Also in the open-ended questions, SP9 values collaborative work, especially for peer editing. Indeed, this instructor mentions only this this is the only faculty development experience as being pedagogically influential. The Likert responses, despite some of the outliers mentioned above, further highlight SP9’s expressive tendencies. In keeping with the emphasis on peer-editing groups, SP9 rated both collaborative tasks or projects and small group work as fives. And perhaps most revealing was the five-rating SP9 gave to self-exploration.

However, these strong connections to expressivist practices do not mean that SP9’s responses are without other elements, in particular some rhetoric and argumentation goals of improving students’ academic writing. SP9 identifies “[g]ood research and documentation” as components to a successful student essay and recognizes the difficulty of writing well for an academic audience and hopes to help students improve their writing in that respect.

Argumentative strategies, research, and rhetorical awareness have strong showings in the Likert responses, too (four, five, and five, respectively). These, combined with the high Likert ratings for cultural studies/critical pedagogy, demonstrate SP9's sense of pedagogical breadth beyond expressivism.

### **Survey Participant 10**

SP10 also fits well into the expressivist camp. This respondent, though, is a little more confined in adopting an expressive pedagogy because this instructor is a TA, meaning SP10 is required to teach Composition I with the required texts and assignments (for the most part)—and SP10 is quick to point out how this felt problematic: “I teach the texts [I am required] to teach”; “I dislike forcing my students to read [an] essay written before their birthdate and asking them to ‘care’ about such matter[s]”; and “I strongly dislike the current curriculum [...]” (I will add to and discuss this last quote more fully below).

However, I did not categorize SP10 as adopting an expressive pedagogy because of some distaste for the cultural studies/critical pedagogy nature of the Composition I curriculum but rather based on the kinds of writing and values this instructor favors. Primarily, SP10 is interested in writing that is personal, that the author is emotionally invested in, and that generates an emotional connection between the author and the audience. SP10 points to her/his own writing as indicative of this, saying, “I have done freelance writing—writing about subjects I care little to nothing about...I have a blog that leads toward my ‘end all’ project regarding [topic deleted to help maintain anonymity]...I have a deep conviction that people write better when they write about matters for which they care the most.” In overall writing preferences, SP10 points to an appreciation for writing “that ‘moves’ me to consider my own life/circumstances. I value writing that reflects an author’s ability to write his/her own experience in a way that causes

me to consider my own—critically.” In short, SP10 favors writing based in personal experience and writing that is emotionally evocative.

SP10 also frames this in terms of goals/practices related to students. When responding to the question about meaningful training or experiences, SP10 found “[a]llowing my students to write about/explore critically their life experiences to date” as one such meaningful experience. Additionally, SP10 explains efforts to achieve such an approach, even within the context of the Composition I curriculum, saying,

I deeply wish we allowed our students an opportunity to write and learn and research about matters which matter most to them . . . I strongly dislike the current curriculum which forces them into units of "gender," "mediation," and "advertising." Based on my own experience, when I finally get to the anti-intellectualism unit [often the final, research-based unit of the course] and I allow my students to write and research with more of an "I-search" mentality, their writing and enthusiasm jumps in leaps and bounds.

Even though the Composition I curriculum is rooted in a popular culture/cultural studies approach, SP10 sought out ways to incorporate some more personal elements in at least one of the major writing assignments for the course, giving students the opportunities to explore their own interests and become more personally invested in their writing.

Despite these inclinations toward the personal and against the cultural studies approach, SP10 made some nods toward the latter in the Likert responses, giving both cultural analysis and civic awareness/responsibility scores of four. This does not necessarily mean that SP10 is pedagogically conflicted, as it might simply point to a sense of the Composition I curriculum more than beliefs in those elements as important. Furthermore, these ratings might have more to



do with curricular context. As a TA required to teach a largely pre-determined curriculum, SP10 might have felt somewhat compelled in these responses to acknowledge the goals of that curriculum as important. Whatever the reason these two elements received higher scores, SP10 clearly valued the more expressive characteristics in the Likert ratings: self-exploration and creativity both received a rating of five, while small group work received a four, indicating that this survey participant was not wholly committed to any one pedagogical approach.

### **Survey Participant 11**

SP11 is perhaps the one respondent that fits most neatly into the rhetoric and argumentation category. Throughout this instructor's responses, SP11 downplays content and emphasizes in-class writing. From a course design perspective, SP11 frames the course not around certain content but rather around rhetorical matters. This instructor chooses readings for their rhetorical approaches, not their specific content. As such, SP11 feels "it's not at all important to me that the course have a consistent topic or theme, but rather that the essays display a wide range of topics and writing skill sets (and, of course, that they relate to the writing assignments in some way)."

The in-class work, too, revolves more around writing than content. Indeed, SP11 is quite adamant about the importance of this. When addressing the influence of colleagues' pedagogical insights, SP11 says that experience has shown that "instructors have a tendency to over assign readings and not leave enough time for in class writing and student to student workshops, exercises, interactions." Furthermore, in discussing curricular concerns about Composition I, SP11 asserts, "The schedule of the English 101 syllabus is far too dense and overdetermined. There is always too much happening [in too] short of a time, which stifles opportunity for in class writing, discussion, etc." While in-class work in itself is not exclusive to rhetorical

pedagogies, when combined with a course design that is rhetorical, it certainly creates the impression that the in-class application is more than likely rhetorical in its emphasis.

SP11 discusses a typical assignment, which continues to shore up the rhetorical nature of this instructor's pedagogy. The assignment this instructor discusses has sort of a popular culture feel to it: Students are to go twenty-four hours without using digital technology and report on their findings. Far from being simply a personal reflection, this assignment asks students to incorporate outside research and develop an argument based on the comparison of their experience to their expectations and what this might suggest "about the nature of digital media based on their immediate experience." Aside from getting students to produce a well-written text, SP11's assignment also helps them make a generic transition from personal essay writing to research essay writing, what this instructor calls a "hinge assignment."

Aside from some passing references (e.g., the somewhat personal nature of the assignment addressed above), the other categories make minor or almost no appearances in SP11 responses. In addition, whereas other participants' Likert responses often point to elements of other approaches, SP11's Likert responses adhered closely to the rhetoric and argumentation focus present in this instructor's open-ended responses.

### **Survey Participant 12**

Rhetorical terms consistently define SP12's pedagogy, especially language and practices relating to academic discourse (the use of *They Say/I Say*, for example) and argumentation (having something important to say and supporting that well). When discussing *They Say/I Say*, SP12 says, "I like how this book pulls back the curtain on the genre of academic writing and gives students concrete models to help them enter the conversation." Furthermore, SP12, in responding to a question about the current state of the department's required writing curriculum,

describes a revised curriculum that would emphasize four parts--"1) summarize and evaluate, 2) analyze, 3) synthesize, and 4) reflect/self-evaluate—in the Composition I curriculum and the research essay in the Composition II curriculum. In other words, SP12's sense of the curriculum would be one based around rhetoric and argumentation goals.

Much of this shows in the sample assignment as well. This consists of summarizing and comparing ideas from two sources, synthesizing and commenting on these—in short, very academic. The assignment also asks them to consider these ideas (from Nietzsche and Wollstonecraft) with and apply them to contemporary matters. This is a researched, thesis-driven argument, rooted in reading and in others' views and ideas that students then use to explore their own ideas. SP12 also points to her/his own writing as providing salient examples for "students to help them see that even professionals struggle with questions about audience and thesis and have to revise repeatedly." Finally, the Likert responses further emphasize the rhetoric and argumentation approach: argument, analysis, genre and rhetorical awareness all receive fives.

However, SP12's responses also demonstrate some cultural studies/critical pedagogy elements. The text for this course is a "big ideas" reader that consists of challenging texts from various periods, genres, disciplines, and so on. These raise "big philosophical questions about the world around us." SP12's goal is to get students to apply these ideas to big social problems. Certainly, a "big ideas" approach does not exclude elements, but the attention paid to some of the broader social issues seems to hint at a primarily rhetorical approach blended with elements of cultural studies/critical pedagogy. The assignment also contains elements of cultural studies/critical pedagogy. This assignment asks students to "[e]valuate [Nietzsche's and Wollstonecraft's] arguments by applying them to a current social issue or problem...." SP12 also rates cultural studies/critical pedagogy practices highly in the Likert responses (cultural analysis

and civic awareness both receive a score of four), though not as highly as the rhetoric and argumentation practices.

### **Survey Participant 13**

SP13 is yet another participant who does not fit neatly into any one category. This experienced instructor mentions some more current-traditional rhetoric elements by mentioning the importance of surface-level matters, such as "knowledge of sentence types and knowledge of proper punctuation." Along with this, SP13 values student writing that displays "the top three: unity, coherence, and development." Some scholars attribute these three traits to a current-traditional rhetoric approach (e.g., Crowley 94), yet they may well go beyond that (which I will address more below). Likert responses regarding grammar and documentation (both fives) also suggest at least some emphasis on surface-level, formal matters.

SP13 also displays some current-traditional rhetoric tendencies in textbook choice. The reader SP13 has chosen uses what SP13 calls "classic selections." SP13 wants to expose students to these texts, saying, "I think students should read selections that have proven themselves time and again as classic works," without much in the way of explicit reasoning for this. This could mean that the texts function as models students are to follow in producing their own works, but the texts could also serve more rhetorical functions. Again, the purpose is not explicit.

Finally, some of the more prescriptive elements of the course as SP13 describes them also suggest some current-traditional rhetoric attitudes. In describing a typical assignment, SP13 discusses some more student-centered approaches, for example, wanting to explore topics that are likely to interest them and giving them some freedom in this regard. These elements, though, are somewhat limited. The potential for interest is based on SP13's perceptions of student interests (likely a correct assessment), leading SP13 to choose the main topic of this assignment

(addressing the influence of culture on notions of body image). In explaining a successful response to this assignment, SP13 points to a somewhat predetermined outcome: "A successful response to this assignment would include demonstrating an understanding that how we perceive ourselves and others is based largely on cultural influences, that culture is very powerful, and people tend to bend to the values imparted by the media."

Yet the discussion of the assignment also suggests some cultural studies/critical pedagogy focus. Clearly, the goal of this assignment is to encourage students to examine the strength of cultural influence and perceptions, and SP13 wants students to develop an awareness of underlying cultural causes for even our notions of self. This, in short, seems to work toward equipping students to understand, analyze, and assess that influence, which certainly falls in the cultural studies/critical pedagogy domain. Accordingly, SP13 rates civic awareness and cultural analysis quite highly in the Likert responses (five and four, respectively).

Moreover, because they lack greater detail, some of the responses that appear to suggest current-traditional rhetoric values might also fit a rhetoric and argumentation approach. The attention to unity, coherence, and development might traditionally fit into a current-traditional rhetoric approach; however, these can also relate to important elements of academic discourse, and to effectively and thoroughly communicating one's ideas to an audience. The texts used in the class, too, might also function in rhetorical ways. SP13 also ranks highly a number of rhetoric and argumentation practices in the Likert responses: argumentation (four), research (five), genre (four), and rhetorical awareness (five).

#### **Survey Participant 14**

Like SP8, SP14 fits well in the cultural studies/critical pedagogy camp. This respondent was one of the more seasoned faculty members responding to the survey, with thirty-four years

of teaching experience. Generally, SP14 values in writing a strong sense of content of content (knowledge of/insight into the subject, good argument) and of style (humor, voice, and the like) come up.

Where SP14 begins to stake out the stronger cultural studies/critical pedagogy position when discussing the course's textbooks. SP14 has a clear sense of purpose for the course texts. The handbook is to provide guidance for grammatical, mechanical, technical matters, and the manual on academic discourse (*They Say/I Say*) is to give them some strategies to help them enter academic discourse. The reader for the course is to give students material to think about and write about, to provide source material, and to offer models of academic prose (readings in the service of writing). This reader consists primarily of critical essays focused on various facets of popular culture, such as advertising, technology, gender, and so on. Given the emphasis SP14 places on content in terms of what constitutes "good" writing and the fact that this reader is to provide material to help students develop that content (among its other services), the connection to cultural studies/critical pedagogy is appropriate.

SP14's discussion of a typical writing task further confirms this. SP14, like SP8, asks students to examine a cultural artifact (again, an ad) with the goal of exploring the ad's features and what they contribute to the culture at large. SP14 sees a successful essay response to this assignment, then, as one that "would account for all significant features of the ad, analyze them in relation to the entire ad, explain how they shape the ad's explicit and implicit messages, and situate these features within the appropriate social/cultural/political context. A successful response would make an argument about the ad and about the work it does in the culture at large." This task also emphasizes the goal of getting students to be more thoughtful citizens,

more aware of important, significant social and civic matters. In short, this goes beyond the goal of good writing as clear style and coherent organization, and it connects writing and thinking.

Even when discussing pedagogically formative experiences, SP14 makes a point to bring the discussion back to more civic, cultural matters. After tracing some ineffective experiences as a graduate student and then touching on some useful professional development experiences, SP14 comes to the overall goal of wanting to create successful writing courses by promoting successful writing. “In addition to what I've said in response to previous questions, I believe a good writing class should instill in students a sense of civic responsibility, which includes speaking and writing knowledgeably and clearly about important social issues.”

As was the case with SP8, SP14's Likert responses demonstrated a little overlap with some other pedagogical categories, rhetorical approaches in particular. Argumentation and analysis both received scores of five, and style, grammar, rhetorical awareness, and generic conventions all received scores of four. Cultural analysis and civic awareness both received scores of five. When taken with the statements in the open-ended section of the survey, SP14 displays a number of clear markers for cultural studies/critical pedagogy. The overlaps—ones similar to those in SP8's responses—do not represent a disconnect but rather suggest practices and values that SP14 uses in conjunction with a primarily cultural studies/critical pedagogy.

### **Assessment of the Categories**

While some of the survey responses were not entirely surprising, through these surveys, I gained a greater sense of the depth and complexity to my colleagues' pedagogical approaches than I had before. What these responses ultimately told me, though, was that the taxonomic view of pedagogies is inadequate to represent what my colleagues claim to do in their classrooms. Occasionally, some respondents approached a direct match to a particular pedagogical category

(SP8, SP10, and SP11, for example). Ultimately, though, most participants' responses demonstrated numerous and substantial overlaps—some overlaps that taxonomists might even call contradictory. In short, pedagogical categories, while offering some general notions of practices, seem a bit too simplistic to be able to accurately capture faculty members' views of their values and practices. Furthermore, faculty members responding to my survey, if ever, mentioned specific pedagogical theories or categories as influential rarely (other than addressing general terms like *rhetoric* or *argument*). This leads, then, to some larger questions. How do faculty members come to their values and practices? Why do they do what they do, pedagogically speaking? And what does knowledge of this offer a writing program administrator?



CHAPTER V  
ANALYTIC SCHEMAS

**Pedagogy Based on Epistemology or on Values?**

This chapter attempts to address the two questions generated by my analysis of the survey data in terms of traditional pedagogical categories: first, if instructors are not defining what they do in ideological ways, how are they defining their practices and values? Second, why are they defining their practices and values as they do? The attempt to answer the former question will consume the bulk of this chapter, but composition historian David Gold may provide us with at least a starting point for an answer to the latter question.

In his 2012 *CCC* article, “Remapping Revisionist Historiography,” Gold calls on composition historians to consider how overlooked histories and figures inform the wider field and begin that work “with the assumption of a complex and multivocal past” (17). But he works toward an answer to the second question I posed above when he claims that historians “must recognize a more fluid interaction between ideology and pedagogy, resisting the temptation to reinscribe easy binaries, taxonomies, and master narratives, even when countering them” (17). In short, we must approach pedagogical application and values with more nuanced and flexible assessments.

To understand this interaction of ideology and pedagogy, Gold examines James Berlin’s well-known pedagogical taxonomies, pointing out how these have become reified in the field, perhaps in a misrepresentation of Berlin’s original goals. Gold contrasts this ideological fixity with Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca’s notion that “argument does not arise so much from discrete systems of opposing values as competing hierarchies of interconnected and often-shared values,” which Gold feels can lead us to view taxonomies not “as fixed and

mutually exclusive, [but...] as fluid and intersecting, and, returning perhaps to Berlin's original intentions, as historically contextualized practices rather than a priori categorizations" (21).

While I tend to see Berlin's views as a little more fixed based on the fact that he was actively advocating for one pedagogical approach (epistemic rhetoric) while portraying the other practices as inadequate to the task of developing students as writers and as citizens (see "Contemporary Composition"), I agree with Gold that at least part of Berlin's objectives were to ground these pedagogical taxonomies in historical contexts.

Nonetheless, this view of taxonomies leads Gold to create a distinction of models: epistemological models and values models, and his distinctions become a useful way to more fully understand how writing instructors such as my colleagues make the sorts of pedagogical decisions they do. As he explains,

Under an epistemological model, one cannot hold mutually exclusive positions in relation to knowledge making, and each position implies a specific ideological end; under a values model, one can hold intertwining and even incompatible ends. Under an epistemological model, contradiction appears schizophrenic; under a values model, it appears inevitable, even necessary. Under an epistemological model, a pedagogy enacts a corresponding ideology; under a values model, any given pedagogy may represent the concrete expression of a number of abstract values and commonplaces, explicit and implicit. (21)

Key in this seems to be how faculty might (explicitly or implicitly) view their teaching and from where it begins. If their teaching begins with theory and scholarship, they may be more likely to adopt a more epistemological viewpoint. But if they develop their teaching practices from practical experience and their own notions of writing (supplemented, perhaps, by study and

scholarship), the values model might be a more suitable way to understand how they are choosing and developing their practices. The values model resists fixity in favor of flexibility and a rhetorical, fluid sense of pedagogical practice.

While Gold asks his audience to consider such ideas in studying the history of composition, we would do well to consider how they apply to current, on-the-ground composition practice—the practice of our colleagues. Indeed, while finding the taxonomic (i.e., epistemological) views of composition pedagogy insufficient to understand my colleagues’ teaching, Gold’s idea of a values model seems to be a useful framework through which I could examine my colleagues’ views and practices. To test this, I applied three simple questions to the series of interviews I conducted next with some of my colleagues: What do faculty members value in writing instruction? Why? And what does this say about their pedagogical identity (or at least about the identity they wish to create)? Below, I discuss the analytical approach the values model allowed me to create: three flexible schemas within which faculty members’ practices might move depending on their contexts and goals. To apply these schemas, I conducted three in-depth, data-rich case studies, using the schemas to draw complex pedagogical profiles of the case study participants.

### **Case Studies and Schemas**

Seeking to understand more deeply my colleagues’ practices in ways the taxonomies were not affording me, I interviewed ten faculty members in the English department: Amy, Carol, David, James, Jenna, Joshua, Heather, Michelle, Thomas, and Tracy.<sup>26</sup> From this group of ten, I chose three colleagues (Tracy, Carol, and Amy) for case-study examination based on the variety of their experiences, approaches, values, and willingness to participate. I then collected

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<sup>26</sup> All faculty names are pseudonyms to protect their privacy as much as possible and listed in the order they met with me for interviews to avoid any semblances of priority or privileging of viewpoints.

from them additional data, primarily additional interviews, observations, and germane course documents. (See also Chapter III.)

As I analyzed data from the ten interviews and the three case studies, my coding began to trend toward specific values, views, and practices that fit into larger categories: reading/writing (subject matter), academic/real world/personal writing (goals), and institutional/instructor/student (influences). I view these categories not as binaries of opposing practices but as schemas within which faculty move to suit their goals and practices. In identifying these schemas, I wanted to make them both simple and inclusive, while still leaving room to demonstrate the complexity of the choices teachers make in devising and developing their approaches to writing instruction. Below, I explain the three schema and their characteristics.

Before doing so, I would like to add a quick note about how I will use certain taxonomic labels as I address the case study participants. Despite these concerns about the taxonomic labels, they do still serve a practical purpose. As holistic taxonomies, they insufficiently describe the pedagogical practices of any one instructor—at least this has appeared to be true of those instructors I have studied in my department. However, in terms of naming specific *practices*, these taxonomies can still function as descriptive labels. Missing this distinction, too, has led to some problems in the field of writing studies. By seeing these terms as wholly determinant of pedagogical approaches—that is, as ways to describe individual instructors' pedagogical approaches based on a few shared characteristics with practices affiliated with that taxonomy—we have imbued them with broad categorizing powers. Instead, we would be wiser to look to them as names for certain practices, which may well be how these labels began. In other words, an instructor may use expressive practices (journaling, personal writing, and so on) but that does

not mean that the instructor is an expressivist. With this in mind, then, I reject the taxonomies as holistic. However, I still find value in their ability to label certain practices, which is how I will use them as they arise in later discussions in Chapter VI.

Additionally, by using these traditional taxonomies as descriptive labels and not holistic ones, we can better understand what these faculty members may actually be doing in terms of developing their pedagogical practices. In drawing from various elements of these taxonomies, rooting them in contextual practice, faculty members seem to be acting as bricoleurs, developing their pedagogy as a bricolage.

Bricolage is a concept initially developed by Claude Levi-Strauss and explored in relation to research by Norman Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (among others). Karl Weick examines this concept a bit more generally. As he notes, bricolage is the process of “us[ing] whatever resources and repertoire one has to perform whatever task one faces,” and the person engaged in such a process is a bricoleur (62). The bricoleur draws on materials (in this case, pedagogical ideas and practices) that she already has available, has used in various ways in the past, and knows well; reflects on the applicability or adaptability of the materials; and applies them to projects and problems as they arise. This does not mean that the results of the bricoleur’s work is slap-dash. Instead, the results can be quite organized, given the bricoleur’s knowledge of the materials available to her. As Weick contends, “Intimate knowledge [of resources] often suggests artful recombinations of seemingly miscellaneous materials” (62-63, 64). Bricolage, then, is a careful and thoughtful process, informed by one’s knowledge, experience, and ability to reimagine the resources developed through that knowledge and experience in purposeful and imaginative ways.

If we apply this to what faculty members do when they develop their own pedagogies, we can see how certain pedagogical practices related to the traditional taxonomies may well serve as

concepts and practices that faculty members draw upon to fit certain needs but ones that instructors may not necessarily adopt wholesale. For example, a faculty member may begin teaching an honors section or a topics section of Composition II. This would present some new challenges for that faculty member, but instead of completely reinventing her pedagogy, she is much more likely to consider the existing repertoire of pedagogical theories and practices and adapt those to the current pedagogical situation. Pedagogical choices, then, become less about their epistemological and ideological value and more about their practical value. This helps us recognize the importance of considering traditional taxonomies as descriptive labels and relying more on the schemas I describe below to understand how teachers develop their pedagogical practices.

### *Reading/Writing*

Although this seems a basic, even simplistic schema, it is not without its own complexities and debates. Certainly, the centrality of writing for required writing courses is of little debate: Students must write in a writing class. How much writing and the nature of that writing are up for more debate, however. More debated is the role of reading in required writing courses. Many, even most, instructors at our institution (and I would hazard to say, nationwide) have students read something, whether that reading is essays and articles, literary texts, handbook materials, one another's writing, or some combination of these or even other "texts" in the broad sense of that term, which can include alphabetic and visual texts of various types. In short, that writing and reading appear in required writing courses is not of concern. What instructors and scholars debate are the interconnections, the intersections of these two tasks—the how, why, what type, and how much of each to include. This debate about the two sides of the literacy coin also seems to fall along disciplinary lines within English studies. Certain areas of

the field may gravitate more toward reading (literary studies, for example), while others attend more specifically to matters of writing (notably composition and rhetoric and creative writing). Therefore, a teacher's disciplinary affiliation will likely have some bearing on the purposes for and extent to which she uses reading and writing.

Perhaps the most notable such debate has to do with the type of readings instructors should or should not assign in a writing course. The much-cited Tate-Lindemann debate examines views about the role of literary texts in composition courses. Gary Tate, arguing in favor of incorporating literature in composition classes, cites the humanistic benefits of imagination and style and the ability of literature to engage students in conversations about issues important outside of the academy. And he worries that too much attention to academic discourse leaves and too little attention to reading (especially reading literature) turns composition into a mere service course to the other disciplines. Lindemann, however, argues that the focus needs to be on writing—on production over consumption. Relying too much on outside texts, she posits, puts too much emphasis on the teacher, encouraging her or him to devote more class time to talking about readings and less time writing. The writing she feels students should spend time with, given the general status of required writing courses, is academic discourse. While this debate focuses primarily on the role of literature in composition courses, it speaks to broader debates about what should receive the emphasis in those courses. I believe most writing teachers would claim that writing should and does receive the emphasis in their courses, but do their practices bear that position out?

Scholars and practitioners both wrestle with the “best” balance of reading (subject matter) and writing (application), with some instructors valuing one end over the other, perhaps aligning with their disciplinary backgrounds. If we think of this as an issue of subject matter (i.e., what

should a writing course be about?), we might wish to examine more deeply the role of reading in the composition classroom. While my goal here is not to revisit this well-trod debate about whether more reading or more writing or a balance of the two makes for better writers, we still must consider questions about the nature and function of readings in instructors' courses. This is, in short, an issue of purpose, and Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem identify four purposes for reading in the required writing course: for subject matter (reading for ideas and connections of ideas); for the writer's process (reading for how writers produce texts); for structure (generic conventions); and what they describe as "practice-based" reading, which incorporates the preceding three purposes and the possible tensions among them and encourages students to engage in meta-reflection of their own reading practices (40, 42). With such purposes in mind, we might ask several questions about an instructor's purpose in using readings in her class. Do the readings serve as model texts for generic or structural matters? Do they serve as heuristic tools to help students discover their writing topics? Do they intend to teach students about these topics, that is, providing them with ways to define or analyze ideas related to these topics?

*Writing*, too, connotes different methods and skills to different people. Commonly, *writing* might entail grammatical or formal correctness, summative responses to readings, persuasive/argumentative writing, or researched writing. More theoretically, for some teachers, writing instruction is about engaging students in a process by which they go through invention or prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing stages. (And in some of these instances, students have free rein to determine their essays' content.) Others might feel as Joseph Harris does that students need to learn to recognize and position themselves within the various and sometimes competing discourses of the university—and beyond (104-06). Some others might see writing as a personal journey through which students are to find their own voice, their authentic selves



(Harris 24). Some might adopt a view similar to Berlin's, about which he says, "Our business must be to instruct students in signifying practices broadly conceived—to see not only the rhetoric of the college essay, but also the rhetoric of the institution of schooling, of politics, and of the media, the hermeneutic not only of certain literary texts, but also the hermeneutic of film, TV, and popular music" (*Rhetorics* 100). Student writing in this context is to analyze the role of rhetorical constructs in shaping our world and our responses to it.

Clearly, *writing* evokes a variety of purposes, as these few examples attest, raising several questions about the instructor's purposes in using writing. Is writing done in the service of reading (providing summaries or responses to texts read for class, for example)? Is the point of writing to prompt or facilitate in-class discussion? Do students write for its own sake, to simply practice writing itself? Are students writing to practice certain lessons (e.g., how to write a developed and unified paragraph)? Do students write to learn and practice the conventions of certain types of discourse, such as academic discourse generally, or the discourse of a certain discipline?

Sometimes, an instructor's affinity for a particular pedagogy (e.g., expressive, current-traditional rhetoric) or for elements of a particular pedagogy determines the roles and functions of reading and writing in their courses. As Richard Fulkerson has argued, albeit a bit broadly at times, those who teach from a cultural studies/critical pedagogy perspective rely substantially on interpretation of texts (in the broad sense) to expose problematic cultural conditions ("Composition at..." 659-60). Expressivist pedagogies, on the other hand, tend to focus on students' writing, though in some instances the instructor may determine the nature of the writing students complete. Chris Burnham and Rebecca Powell insist that "[f]or expressive teachers, the education of the writer is the central problem" (113). However, I think it fair to

claim that many writing teachers want to see reading and writing in the composition classroom work together to help students develop as writers, with readings serving to provide subject matter and ideas to write about (that is, to serve as heuristics), to exemplify certain writing features, and/or to serve as source material or research, among other rhetorical purposes, suggesting that an instructor might hold both poles of this schema as important to her pedagogy in different situations and for different reasons.

Thus, in approaching the poles of this schema, we might better position our understanding of those poles and what they entail based on the purpose of the activity. That is, for what sake is the activity undertaken in a certain class, for the sake of reading or for the sake of writing? Focusing on an instructor's intent, design, and delivery of instruction gives greater insight into where an instructor might fall on this schema. For example, if an instructor has students read a number of texts in a course, we might be inclined to see this instructor as leaning toward the reading end of the schema. If, however, that instructor uses those readings as rhetorical models (e.g., providing examples for paragraph structure or source integration or any of a number of writing techniques) and not solely for their subject matter, the readings are more for the sake of writing than for reading and thus move that faculty member toward the writing end of the schema. In short, the act of reading (or writing) alone does not necessarily position a faculty member toward one end of the schema or the other; the context of the activity is essential to determine the nature of the course's goals for the assigned reading and writing.

Given the centrality, then, of reading and writing, it is no surprise that in the interviews and other sources of data I collected, every participant mentioned ideas or practices related to reading or writing (and, frequently, both) in her or his class. Beyond representing the unsurprising universality of these references to reading and writing, examining teachers' choices

within this schema provide some nuance to participants' practices and values. It captures numerous practices common in the writing classroom without ascribing certain pedagogical labels associated with epistemological views of writing instruction, some of which can carry negative connotations (e.g., current-traditional rhetoric or even process pedagogy). Instead, the reading/writing schema can contain both specific and broader literacy values of many general education writing courses, as well as and to the ends of helping students learn to navigate and create various kinds of texts, which is in keeping with some of the "best practices" documents in the field, such as the "WPA Outcomes Statement."

Finally, this schema allows me to consider the nature of a given participant's view of her or his course's focus, whether the core of the course is what students write or what they read. Whether epistemologically-based or values-based, to use Gold's terminology, pedagogical practices often depend on what receives the majority of the course's focus: outside/others' texts or inside/students' texts. Aligning this schema with matters of course focus thus allows for an understanding of why and how the course covers the material it does and how this content fits into the larger picture of an instructor's pedagogical views.

Table 1 summarizes many of the characteristics of this schema. And while this table presents two sets of characteristics, these are not binaries; rather these are poles within the schema between which faculty may move fluidly depending upon their pedagogical practices, goals, and circumstances.

<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External (not student-written) texts the main focus</li> <li>• External texts providing subject matter</li> <li>• Students' writing primarily/often responding to external texts</li> <li>• Writing serving to explicate reading</li> <li>• Interpretation an important goal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student texts the primary focus</li> <li>• Reading primarily serving writing (evidence, models)</li> <li>• Class time on studying and practicing writing techniques, strategies</li> <li>• Developing a process and/or metacognitive awareness of one's own writing integral</li> <li>• Students to write in certain discourse communities</li> </ul>

Table 1. Reading/Writing Schema.

### *Academic/Real World/Personal*

Much like the reading/writing schema, the academic/real world/personal schema represents a number of common themes in the study's data. But while reading/writing indicates themes more connected to specific subject matter, academic/real world/personal points more toward course goals, that is, what the instructors envision as the role of writing in their classes and what their students will accomplish through their writing. Again, the poles within the schema are meant to be broad enough to capture and examine a wide range of pedagogical approaches and values.

Before discussing how I made this distinction in my analyses of the data from my participants, I want to discuss the three poles of this schema. What primarily connects these is the idea of discourse communities. Generally speaking, a discourse community "has as its central unifying force a common interest, a common goal, a common focus, a common knowledge, a common situation, or somewhat more specifically, common channels of communication, common systems of texts and practices, common genre conventions and canonical knowledge, or common needs and desires" (Smit 86). In other words, a discourse community embraces

common knowledge, values, and communicative conventions. As David Smit clarifies, though, these commonalities are not all encompassing, nor do they fully address how we learn to write as members of those discourse communities (93, 96). Harris further argues that even in a discourse community such as academics (though some might argue if this is narrow enough to qualify as a discourse community), enough difference and diversity exists to render discourse communities more like cities, spaces in which various and competing discourses intersect and struggle with one another (106). Despite the debates about discourse communities, this concept does help us understand some of what happens in writing classrooms, for whether consciously or not, whether focusing on the academic, the real world, or the personal, instructors are asking students to adopt certain practices of and work toward becoming participants in the discourse of certain communities.

The academic pole derives from a more traditional view of the function of general education writing courses and comprises those skills most applicable (at least immediately so) to advancing and improving students' work in higher education. Instructors teaching academic literacy principles may thus see as their goal introducing students to the academic discourse community, which Fulkerson says "is to allow students to read, write, and reason as they will be expected to do in other college courses, and thus absorb the sort of rhetorical moves that will help them survive in college" ("Composition at the Turn" 678). Some practices associated with this pole would be research and the analysis and effective use of information, or information literacy (see Howard and Jamieson). Another common element of the academic pole is argumentative writing rooted in "claim, evidence, assumption, counterviews, refutation" (Fulkerson, "Composition at the Turn" 673; see also Fleming 249), as such argumentative structures are constructed as being nearly universal across all academic disciplines. It is worth

noting, however, that not all scholars agree with this universality. David Russell, for instance, citing Mike Rose, notes that this is the “myth of transience,” or the idea that discovering certain generalizable and transferable keys will unlock all of the troubles and complexities of writing and writing instruction (7). Rather, he argues, writing is not a matter of being taught certain skills, ones that cannot completely and universally transfer to all rhetorical contexts; it is instead a matter of acculturation, of learning and honing specific, context-dependent rhetorical practices (15-16). Despite such perceptions, many inside and outside of English departments feel that attention to academic discourse will carry beyond the writing classroom to other university contexts.

The real-world<sup>27</sup> pole arises from the shifts toward a more vocational sense of education, or what Kathleen Blake Yancey describes as a movement “away from the view that college is good for the *country* [...] and [...] toward the view that higher education is good for the *individual*” (“Made” 304, emphasis in the original). This translates into goals of providing students with more vocationally-oriented skills, those they will need to be successful beyond the academy and in the workplace, including collaborating, writing in professional/technical genres (e.g., memos, project proposals, résumés, and various types of business letters), and composing in various media. But, as Yancey also recognizes, much writing is done in public spaces and through public media and genres (“Delivering” 3; “Made” 298, 300-01).

In addition, drawing from the liberal education tradition, some instructors value a sense of civic mindedness in their courses, hoping this translates into a sense of civic responsibility in their students long after they finish the writing course and, indeed, their education. Cultural studies and critical pedagogy connect most closely to these goals. Cultural studies promotes

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<sup>27</sup> I recognize that for those of us in the academy, academic writing is our real-world writing, so I use this label not to belittle or isolate the work we do but rather as a short-hand for writing done outside of the academy.

examinations of language and power, examines cultural artifacts to provide understanding of cultural norms and values (as well as the means to challenge those norms and values), and incorporates activist and community-based projects, in it more service-learning oriented variations (see D. George, Lockridge, and Trimbur). Critical pedagogy hopes to instill in students a sense of social justice and encourages them to critically examine and challenge the power structures in place in their cultures (see A. George). Therefore, I find attention to matters of civic responsibility or public life to be part of the real-world pole of this schema, as these goals emphasize issues and applications beyond the academy.

The final pole, the personal,<sup>28</sup> has its roots in expressive pedagogy. Berlin describes this as the Neo-Platonist view of writing, which promotes the idea that the goal of writing is to discover “one’s unique voice,” positioning the individual’s personal experiences and apprehensions at the center of the pedagogy (“Contemporary Composition” 772). To more effectively express their voice and perceptions of reality, students work in dialogue with one another and with the instructor to clarify the meaning and ideas in their texts (“Contemporary Composition” 772-73). Chris Burnham and Rebecca Powell explore this more fully, pointing out the centrality of the writer and the development of her or his individual expression in this pedagogical approach, but this attention to the individual extends into “the relations between language, meaning-making, and self-development” (113, 115). In general, this view of writing values the development of the student as writer, focusing particularly on the student’s personal life or experiences as the primary topics for writing subjects.

An instructor employing more personal approaches will ask students to write about and from personal experience, making their writing topics more immediately relevant and pertinent

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<sup>28</sup> By *personal* in this context, I mean the nature of the writing that students do and from where they derive the majority of their evidence as opposed to the instructor’s personal goals determining the focus of the course.

to students. Students might write in personal genres, such as journals and other types of reflection, that might serve the general purpose of promoting regular writing or reflective practices without necessarily calling attention to the other writing students are to do for the course, and their larger assignments may also rely on more personal genres (memoirs, I-search essays, and so on). The evidence that students provide is often internal, deriving from students' own experiences and reasoning. Instructors promoting the personal pole likely require students to engage in critical thinking, though the version of that here is more likely in the service of helping students come to deeper understanding of themselves, their interests and beliefs, and their experiences.

Beyond some of these features unique to these poles, I also think it important to mention that a couple of key goals fall between the academic and the real-world poles. One of these is critical thinking, that ever-present, sometimes hazy term that typically describes a willingness to analyze, consider multiple perspectives, and be curious. As this is a skill desired both in the academy and in the real world, I see it as a mid-schema goal unless the context clearly moves it toward one part of the schema or another. As one brief example, Carol has students reflect on their experiences with a specific place, and in doing so, asks them to explore why that place has been important to them (critical thinking in service of personal growth/understanding). A second overlapping goal is the aim to prepare students for work in their major. This is academic in the sense that students are to develop skills that will help them as they advance in their discipline-specific coursework. But in that these majors connect to what students will be doing professionally outside the academy, this goal can become a real-world one, especially for those students whose majors align more with the professions than with the liberal arts and the sciences. Again, the context is important in determining a teacher's intent.



In Table 2 are the primary features of the academic, real-world, and personal poles of this schema.

<b>Academic</b>	<b>Real World</b>	<b>Personal</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intent to develop academic skills</li> <li>• Scholarly evidence most valued</li> <li>• Analysis of information and academic debates the purpose of critical</li> <li>• Use of academic genres, e.g., research essays, annotated bibliographies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation for professional lives and/or their public lives</li> <li>• Popular or scholarly evidence valued, usually serving practical ends (e.g., choosing a certain business model, responding to rhetorical chicanery in politics, and so on)</li> <li>• Critical thinking to analyze information but not interested in academic debates</li> <li>• Professional genres (memos, reports, letters) or public ones (op-ed style letters, essays on cultural observations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' personal and writing growth the purpose of the course</li> <li>• Internal/personal evidence most valued, drawing from a student's individual experiences, reflections, and reasons (though external evidence may supplement this)</li> <li>• Critical thinking to guide students toward greater understanding of themselves and their experiences</li> <li>• Personal genres (journals, memoirs, I-search essays)</li> </ul>

Table 2. Academic/Real World/Personal Schema.

### *Institution/Instructor/Student*

Throughout the course of the interviews and in some of the other sources of this study's data, participants regularly state or suggest a variety of influences shaping their pedagogical choices. Such responses can help us understand how faculty members might respond to such influences while still trying to implement their individual goals and interests, and, perhaps, those of their students. These influences, external and internal, give us valuable insight into the process

of crafting of a pedagogical identity. This leads to the final schema, institution/instructor/student,<sup>29</sup> I used to explore my colleagues' pedagogical views and values. This schema, then, relates to contextual and personal perceptions of participants' courses, their pedagogy, and the development of both.

As I am defining them, institutional influences consist of two types. The first is more external, stemming from requirements. These requirements include regental requirements that dictate certain goals and outcomes for general education writing courses. Additionally, these institutional influences consist of requirements—either implicit or explicit—from the university and department, especially the English department in the latter case, as, in our department, Composition I consists of common syllabi and texts. A more internal or personal institutional influence also exists. This consists of a sense of responsibility to other departments that a writing instructor might embrace. That is, a writing instructor might feel that her job is, in part, to develop students' writing abilities so that this task becomes less the responsibility of her colleagues in other departments. In a sense, this is somewhat of an individual and internal motivation for that faculty member. However, as it intends to meet real or supposed desires of other departments, this motivation seems to me a more institutional one.

The second type of influence is the instructor's aims and interests. These might include goals developed through past teaching experiences, one's disciplinary interests, or a faculty member's theoretical/pedagogical orientation (a critical pedagogue or an expressivist, and so on). For example, a faculty member might discuss his teaching training in graduate school or explain

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<sup>29</sup> This schema developed loosely from two sources. The first is Jill M. Gladstein and Dara Rossman Regaignon's curricular analysis of small liberal arts colleges, which they placed into two categories, curriculum-centered ("rooted in the work of staffing and teaching first-year writing and other writing requirements") and student-centered ("rooted in the work of supporting student writers") (37). This helped me consider the relationship of institutional goals with students' goals. The second source is Lisa R. Lattuca and Joan S. Stark's examination of external and internal influences on college-level curriculum. While somewhat beyond my scope, their discussions brought in some more specific ideas related to institutional goals as well as some that apply to real-world contexts.

how certain professional development workshops altered his pedagogy or address how his own classroom trials and errors led to revisions of lessons, assignments, or curriculum. We might categorize this as a teacher-centered view, which Sari Lindblom-Ylänne, et al. define as focused on the “transmission of knowledge” with an “emphasis [...] on how to organize, structure and present the course content in a way that is easier for students to understand” (285-86). In this approach, the sensibility is that the role of instructors is to disseminate their knowledge, gained through their learning and experiences, down to students, much as in Paulo Freire’s “banking concept of education” (A. George 78). I would also like to note that an instructor’s willingness to focus on her or his own goals and interests may also depend upon that instructor’s status within the department. Tenured and tenure-track faculty may feel a greater sense of freedom to experiment with their courses’ subject matter, assignments, and assessments. Teaching assistants and contingent faculty may feel that their lack of status limits their abilities to explore and employ their own pedagogical approaches in required writing classes, and thus for these teachers, they may not feel they have much control over this aspect of their pedagogical identities.

The third influence relates to how the faculty member perceives, responds to, and integrates students’ writing goals. In such instances, a faculty member might give students greater agency in the course, allowing students to choose topics for assignments (or the kinds of assignments themselves, to decide what work will be assessed and perhaps by what rubric, or even to articulate their goals and interests to provide the bulk of the curriculum and content). In addition to encouraging students to take an active part in the course’s content, design, and grading, faculty embracing a more student-centered approach “see teaching as facilitating students’ conceptual change. These teachers focus on what students do in relation to their efforts

to activate students' existing conceptions, and on encouraging them to construct their own knowledge and understandings" (Lindblom-Ylänne, et al. 286; see also Lattuca and Stark 55). In other words, the goal is not to transmit predetermined knowledge to students but to discover where students are in terms of their knowledge and build from that base.

See Table 3 for an overview of this schema.

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Instructor</b>	<b>Student</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regental goals/requirements</li> <li>• University goals/requirements</li> <li>• Departmental goals/requirements</li> <li>• Sense of responsibility to other departments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructor's interests (in terms of disciplinary background, course subject matter)</li> <li>• Instructor's sensibilities of "good" writing</li> <li>• Instructor transmitting information to students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students' interests and goals</li> <li>• Students having more power in decisions for the course</li> <li>• Students more responsible for their own learning</li> <li>• Student-faculty relationship one more of facilitation</li> </ul>

Table 3: Institution/Instructor/Student Schema.

Certainly, this schema and the others contain much potential for overlap. A faculty member's personal goals often align with institutional goals. One teaching assistant I interviewed, Joshua, noted that he felt that required writing courses should teach students to analyze the world around them in the hope of making them more thoughtful and critical citizens, which is perfectly in keeping with our standard Composition I curriculum.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, some teachers may design their courses with specific institutional goals in mind. For example, some

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<sup>30</sup> This is not always the case, and some instructors even actively resist institutional goals. Heather is one such example. A TA in the department at the time of the interviews, Heather had a decidedly expressivist sense of writing instruction and disliked the cultural studies curriculum of Composition I that she was required to teach.

institutions require students to pass certain proficiency tests before they can proceed in their studies. Some instructors might develop a curriculum to meet such an exigency to serve the best interests of the students, even though such exams and what they might embody run counter to that teacher's pedagogical values. Furthermore, students in one section of a course might bring to an instructor's course strong notions of what they want from the course, to which the faculty member might alter her instruction in response. However, I tend to look at these contextually. That is, I labeled these in the terms by which the faculty member frames them. If the faculty member perceives a certain task or assignment as "institutional," that is how I categorized it.

### **Aims of the Schemas**

These schemas offer a few key advantages to this study of faculty members' sense of pedagogical identity. First, the schemas provide a means by which to analyze faculty members' pedagogical data (interviews, documents, and so on) in a systematic way. Although they arose from the interview data, they provided a means to review that data and analyze additional data. (See the discussion of analysis in Chapter III.) Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, the schemas allow me to highlight the complex and malleable nature of the choices faculty members make in crafting their pedagogical identities. These choices involve a wide variety of approaches based on the specific pedagogical context, a rhetorical situation of sorts. By using schemas to examine such choices, I am able to recognize and represent these complex choices more accurately than by relying on certain pedagogical taxonomies. Furthermore, the schemas leave room for the likelihood that, whether through added experience, faculty development, or individual research, these teachers will change their approaches. Therefore, these schemas represent teachers at this moment rather than suggesting that they adopt and adhere to fixed practices, taking those practices on as a sort of permanent identity.

## CHAPTER VI

### CASE STUDY RESULTS

In this chapter, I present three case studies of colleagues in my department. The case study participants are representative of the department in their differences, as the variations in their attitudes about and approaches to general education writing pedagogy reflect the common themes that arose in the surveys and interviews. The purpose of the case studies is to examine the nature of writing instruction in my department and to represent through the schemas the richness of teachers' individual pedagogical approaches and the complex, malleable nature of their pedagogical identities.

#### **Tracy: Blending Process, Literature, and Rhetoric**

Tracy is a lecturer (the highest promotion an instructor can attain) who has worked in the department for nearly twenty years, since working as a graduate teaching assistant in the department. As a lecturer, she teaches a 5/5 load—quite a daunting amount of work. Yet she is an enthusiastic teacher who cares about her students and works to revise her courses in the hope of continually improving her teaching. She regularly teaches Composition II (standard and honors sections) and technical communication courses (the standard version of this course as well as an engineering-only version), and online versions of both courses. Indeed, she is quite a dedicated online instructor, and, as both a participant and as a leader, she takes part in workshops related to online and other computer-mediated instruction practices.

When I sent out requests for initial interviews and, subsequently, additional interviews, observations, and course documents, Tracy was an eager participant, and our interviews were relaxed yet thoughtful. She always gave the impression that she was careful in her preparations for her courses, applying her sense of the most effective writing pedagogies developed through

her experiences and her own research and participation in faculty development events. Her sense of effective pedagogy, as she demonstrates throughout our conversations and the other data she gave me, is a rhetorical approach, adhering, in most instances, to the classical version of rhetoric (with attention to audience, invention, arrangement, style, and so on), though in a few other instances, she does adopt the “modes” version of rhetoric (e.g., description and narration). Her approach also draws significantly on process pedagogy as well as attention to literary elements. Tracy designs her pedagogy by blending what has been characterized in the scholarship as more traditional views of writing instruction while adding some more updated sensibilities about those practices.

For this case study, I examined two of Tracy’s courses: Composition II and Technical Communication. The section of Tracy’s Composition II course that we discussed and that I observed was an honors section and part of a pilot of topic-specific sections—science, in this case. The class had ten students, which is not atypical of a spring-semester, honors Composition II course. Tracy describes the class in her syllabus as “focus[ing] on science as a broad theme and subject matter (with inquiries into research, literature, and ethics), enhancing student success via cross-disciplinary learning.” The syllabus emphasizes the importance of research and information literacy, critical thinking, and rhetorical awareness throughout. To work toward these focal points, she splits this course into three main units: “Empiricism, Information Literacy, and Research: Critical Issues, Critical Thinking”; “Human Condition, Personal Voice”; and “Ethics, Science, and the Land.” Each unit, according to the schedule, includes a mix of literary readings, research-based or expository readings, and handbook/writing techniques readings.

Tracy’s Technical Communication course was an asynchronous online version (hence, no observation). According to her syllabus, Tracy intends this course to be “practical” for students,

and much of this practicality converges on professional and workplace contexts. Many of the readings and assignments noted in the syllabus center on professional document types (memos, reports, resumes) and principles typically associated with creating professional documents (ethics, document design, collaborative writing). However, for all this emphasis on workplace-oriented writing, Tracy also says this course's practicality will apply to their academic work as well, and some of the work on research for students' formal report, writing annotated bibliographies, and rhetorical development support academic aims well. The sample assignment she provided me, given its focus on research and use of memo format, also indicates this interconnection of academic and workplace writing processes. Below, I will discuss more fully the interweaving of the workplace and academic sensibilities.

### *Tracy's Philosophy*

Overall, Tracy views the aims of writing instruction as promoting rhetorical awareness. However, her philosophy becomes more complex than that—perhaps because of her interest in classical rhetoric. That is, she approaches her teaching with a mind toward students' best interests, and as those interests change with the courses she teaches or advances in technology or any substantial change in her pedagogical rhetorical situation, so too do her approaches change. Yet students' interests are not her only guide to her pedagogy. She notes that she develops her pedagogy in part from the demands of students' prospective employers. Though she thinks of these employers in generic, hypothetical ways, she does think of their demands in literal terms. For example, she points to recent polls of employers who “all offer the same three weaknesses in employees: communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. So I introduce, emphasize, and repeat that fact to my students...*a lot!*” In short, she consistently and emphatically imparts to students that what she teaches them is in demand with their future employers. Ultimately, at the



core of her philosophy is a combination of process pedagogy, an interest in literature, and the goal of developing students' rhetorical awareness in academic and professional contexts, which may seem an incompatible combination but is one that suits Tracy and her values well.

### *Process*

Tracy seems to believe strongly in adhering to elements of process pedagogy, and she does so in some traditional ways. In both her Composition II and Technical Communication courses, Tracy's schedule highlights invention/prewriting, drafting, revising, and polishing with numerous deadlines and in-class activities listed for the various parts of the major essay assignments. Her Technical Communication syllabus mentions the importance of "process-based drafting" several times in the instructional methods section and in the course's learning objectives. The assignments for both courses, too, demonstrate this attention to the writing process, giving students sets of scaffolded tasks they are to work through. The research assignment for Composition II, for example, asks students to start with a proposal, draft an outline, produce a draft for peer review, and then revise to a final draft. Perhaps the most telling evidence of her emphasis on process in her course documents comes from a document she uses in both classes, "The Major Elements of Writing." This flowchart provides students with a visual representation of those six elements of writing—content, structure, format and design, style, grammar, and documentation (and sub-elements related to each of these)—they should consider in their writing. Tracy attaches these elements to the writing process, as a way "to isolate and thus control the elements of writing and drafting."

Tracy has further confirmed the significance of process for her pedagogy in some of our discussions, particularly the pre- and post-observation interviews. In the pre-observation interview, Tracy says the day's class would be a sort of "polish" day—a chance for students to

ask any remaining questions to help them prepare their final drafts. And the students were asking the kinds of questions that demonstrated to Tracy they were indeed at this final stage: The questions tended to be more technical in nature, relating to finer points of documentation, strategies for stylistically cleaning up their drafts, and ways to solidify paragraph structures. Overall, students seemed to be interested in cleaning up their texts in ways that would be acceptable to a broader academic audience, and Tracy, in what seemed to be an attempt to encourage students to maintain a broader audience awareness and a general rhetorical awareness, presented her answers not in terms of what *she* wanted but in terms of what is expected in academic contexts. Given the nature of their questions, students were where Tracy anticipated they would (or should) be at this stage of their writing process.

Overall, process pedagogy seems to be a matter of course to her. As noted above, Tracy explains that the goal of the class session I was to observe is to give students time to ask final questions before their draft is due. She says that she has “gone through the *standard* process, with the conferences and some in-class workshopping, peer reviews” (emphasis added). That “standard” creates an air of certainty about how this is to happen in a writing course. Furthermore, this statement also indicates, to some extent, that she views process approaches as near requirements. This somewhat fixed view of process appears in some of Tracy’s course documents as well. “The Major Elements of Writing” document asks students to “[k]now (and follow) the *writing process*” (emphasis in the original). The Technical Communication syllabus states that by semester’s end, “students should be able to follow the writing process to correctly plan, research, draft, revise, edit, proofread, and share a wide array of document types for academic and professional contexts.”

However, Tracy adds to these traditional views of process more contemporary ideas of metacognition. In particular, she is interested in creating in students an awareness of their own writing processes and practices. In our first interview, she mentions this goal frequently. At the beginning of the interview, she says that lately she “talk[s] more about metacognition, too, about the students actually really looking inwardly at their own writing process and figuring out what works and what doesn’t.” Later in the interview, she returns to metacognition, an idea that began to appeal to her after a faculty development session on the topic. Tracy mentions that she really wants students to “enumerate their writing process.” But this isn’t simply about students reflecting on their own writing in the abstract. With each assignment for both Composition II and Technical Communication, Tracy asks students to complete a self-assessment rubric. While not specifically tied to their writing process, these rubrics do ask students to critically evaluate their own writing, to think about what they have accomplished instead of simply turning in a writing project and forgetting it until the instructor returns the graded version. And she asks students to use class time to reflect on their writing. In the Composition II session I observed, she asked students to write briefly at the beginning of class, and one of the questions they were to write on asked them to consider their initial position on their research topic and compare it to their current position. Though time did not allow for the class to discuss this question, the act of writing on it likely encouraged students to think more deeply about their research essay as a whole and about their positions on the topic in particular.

### *Literary Elements*

Tracy’s attention to literary texts seems to be an important aspect of her pedagogical philosophy. Tracy’s use of literature in writing instruction occurs in her Composition II course, and an examination of the schedule indicates that she uses at least five directly literary texts

(such as Ursula Le Guin’s “The Ones Who Walk away from Omelas” and Walt Whitman’s “The Learned Astronomer”), as well as several personal essays in the last two units of the course. The second unit in particular rests on some of the personal, literary elements of writing, as indicated by its unit title, “Human Condition, Personal Voice.”

Her use of literature fits well with her description of the course as developing students’ ability to use “effective expression,” recognize diversity, and “[w]rite with sincerity.” But more so, it aligns with her interest in language that she mentioned in our conversations about her courses. In our first interview, she discusses her interest in developing students’ sense of language from “the classics [...] all the way up to contemporary, sort of informal, almost edgy stuff like Hunter Thompson or excerpts from Cormac McCarthy and things that really model informal writing, I mean nonstandard English.” This emphasis on language use aligns well with the attention to personal voice that the second unit seems to address. The final unit’s use of literary reading, as she explains in our post-observation interview, has more to do with connecting the scientific and the story-telling nature of “the land ethic.” She sees this as prompting students to think about different kinds of scientific writing—narrative in this case—for which the readings provide models more so than content or research. In short, this unit’s purpose dictates a use of readings that differ from the use of readings in the research unit.

On the one hand, of course, this interest in literature seems a bit antithetical to a writing course focusing on the sciences. She wants students in this class to develop their academic research capabilities, especially in terms of evaluating research. She also wants students, especially in Composition II’s first unit, to look into tangible, pressing problems in various scientific fields. This seems to run counter to the more literary approach in the latter half of the course. On the other hand, Tracy’s use of literature connects to the “cross-disciplinary learning”

she hopes to instill in students and evokes a liberal-education quality to Tracy's pedagogy. In some ways, Tracy does carry over some of these liberal education attitudes into her technical communication course by attempting to foster in students critical thinking abilities, (which she does not explicitly limit to workplace contexts), information literacy, rhetorical awareness, and ethics. Yet the work of the course, as detailed in the syllabus and some assignment documents, settles into a more practical view of writing, a view emphasizing document design and format and professional discourse, suggesting that, along with some of her own goals, Tracy uses the course context (including institutional goals) and the expectations of her students to determine how much of a literary and liberal education design she can implement in her courses.

### *Rhetorical Approaches*

While process and literary elements are important components of Tracy's pedagogy, at its core, her pedagogy is primarily rhetorical. Tracy wants her students to engage rhetorically with their writing and understand the nature and effects of the rhetorical contexts in which they are writing. Her rhetorical views draw strongly from classical rhetoric (including the rhetorical canon); more contemporary notions of the rhetorical situation;<sup>31</sup> and the classical appeals of ethos, logos, and pathos. Beyond helping students develop their rhetorical prowess, Tracy also abides by rhetorical principles in creating her courses' curricula, positioning her own rhetorical awareness as an element as critical to her courses as the rhetorical awareness of her students.

Tracy's sense of classical rhetoric runs through both courses I examined for this case study. In her syllabus for Composition II, for example, her description of the course's instructional methods explains that, among other focal points, the class will address "the

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<sup>31</sup> When I refer to the rhetorical situation here, I will be drawing on Keith Grant-Davie's views of the rhetorical situation as consisting of an exigence for the communication; a rhetor or rhetors responsible for creating the communication; an audience that is the target of and receives the communication; and the constraints (though I prefer the term *context*) that define, delimit, and/or enable the communication.

fundamentals of classical rhetoric,” and in our pre-observation interview, she says that she hopes students will be able to “make full application of rhetoric from that classical context” to their own writing. Furthermore, the class schedule for Composition II includes specific topics dedicated to rhetorical matters and the classical appeals (including fallacies). Her Technical Communication syllabus, too, points to a variety of rhetorical considerations (audience, genre, stylistic clarity), especially in that she points out to students that they must consider various audiences, situations, writing personae, and generic conventions.

In both courses, she gives considerable attention to the five canons of rhetoric, though not always explicitly so (and as is typical today, not much attention to memory). Of the five canons, for example, arrangement and style receive perhaps the most attention in Tracy’s course documents. In terms of arrangement, she typically provides students with explicit guidelines about structuring their documents.<sup>32</sup> The Composition II research assignment includes a section about the outline students are to produce as part of their drafting process. For their outlines, students are to use the pattern of Background-Opposition-Lines of Reasoning-Implications (reminiscent of the classical structure of argument). Similarly, the report proposal Tracy assigns in Technical Communication requires students adhere to a memo format with specific sections they are to include, such as purpose statement, summary, proposed tasks.

Style is also an important element in Tracy’s rhetorical approach. In our first interview, she notes that one of her goals is to help students “master rhetoric”—that is, to “master language all around them” primarily for the purpose, seemingly, to be able to navigate different kinds of writing and deliver that writing effectively to an audience. In some instances, this effective

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<sup>32</sup> Tracy does talk about genre, but primarily in the literary sense. When I asked her about her use of genre during the pre-observation interview, she mentioned her use of poetry, prose, and even drama in some instances. She does expect students to write in various genres in both of her courses—research essays, narratives, personal reflections in Composition II and memos, reports, proposals in Technical Communication.

delivery pertains to matters of style. In her Composition II syllabus, she says she wants students to be able to “[e]mploy rhetoric for vivid and effective expression,” and the phrase “quality of self-expression” appears several times in her Technical Communication syllabus.

Aside from the rhetorical canon, Tracy emphasizes—perhaps more strongly and explicitly—the rhetorical situation for students. As many instructors do, Tracy uses her prompts to create an exigence for students, but her prompts vary in terms of the nature of that exigence. In Composition II, for example, Tracy predetermines some of the exigence for students’ research essays. She has a set list of topics (e.g., the National Football League concussion issue, overuse of antibiotics, depletion of water resources in the world) and readings from which students are to develop their essays, but students can decide on which topics are most interesting to them and their positions on and additional research about these topics. The exigence for the Technical Communication report is much more open to students: they are to choose a problem or issue in their field of study and produce a researched report on it. In both instances, Tracy is careful to make clear for students the value of having a sense of purpose in their writing, having them consider why they choose the topics they do, what questions they want to answer, and what possible implications for this topic exist.

Tracy also wants her students to consider their role as rhetors in creating their texts. This extends rather directly from exigence and purpose—what they want to accomplish—and on the notions of adopting various personae and adhering to ethical standards, as she emphasizes in her syllabi for both courses. More significantly, though, this relates strongly to Tracy’s emphasis on metacognition and reflection, as discussed in the process section above. And as communication needs an audience, Tracy reminds students often of the importance of the audience the students are trying to reach. In Composition II, the sense of audience is a bit more implicit. Her references

to “college-level expression of critical thinking” in the assignment rubric suggests the audience consists of college-educated individuals, and her insistence in the assignment prompt that sources are scholarly and represent depth and breadth of the topic affirms that implication. She continues this focus on audience in Technical Communication, recognizing in the syllabus that students will need to be able to communicate to “various types of audiences” and that they “will study audience analysis to align research content with specific audiences.” Tracy uses the report proposal prompt to connect the goals from the syllabus pertaining to audience with that specific writing assignment, beginning the prompt, “With audience in mind [...]” The rest of the assignment includes a goal of “Demonstrat[ing] understanding of [their] audience” and a reminder that employing rhetorical strategies, “those choices that you make which reflect critical thinking about how *content*, *purpose*, and *audience* work together,” are imperative to complete the assignment successfully.

Finally, Tracy guides students in considering context, and this is shaped by the nature of the course she is teaching, determining whether the focus is academic or more workplace/real-world oriented. As Composition II is a course intended to expand and deepen students’ academic literacy, Tracy appropriately positions the course in an academic context. For her, the academic context centers on research/information literacy and critical thinking. In terms of research and information literacy, Tracy insistently reminds students that at the college level, they are expected, as she states in her Composition II syllabus, to “[c]onduct academic research to the University information literacy standard.” She views developing students’ research skills as a central purpose in assigning readings in the research unit of her Composition II course. These readings, as she says in our first interview and in the post-observation interview, serve as both models for research and as ways to fact-check additional research. In our first interview, she



explains the goal of fact-checking as a way to help students conduct more effective, academic research. I will say more about the use of research in Technical Communication below.

Critical thinking is perhaps the predominant element of academic literacy that Tracy emphasizes in her pedagogy, stemming from her own research on the subject, through which she has learned that students often make limited gains in critical thinking during their first two years of college. Before discussing her application of this idea, I want to mention that it is not a concept with a clearly delineated definition; teachers often have varying sensibilities of what critical thinking is and how students are to employ it. For Tracy, critical thinking seems to consist primarily of metacognitive awareness of one's own views and practices (for example, understanding the roots of one's position about a given topic) and of the importance of recognizing that any given issue or claim will foster multiple perspectives, to which critical thinkers (and writers) must attend if they are to address that issue or claim thoroughly and effectively.

To help students improve in this regard, she makes this an explicit part of her course. In her course description of Composition II, she has eight bullet points about what students will develop throughout the course. The ninth bullet states students will “[e]mploy all of the above to THINK and WRITE CRITICALLY” (original emphasis). And the course descriptions, instructional methods, and goals and outcomes sections of the syllabi for both courses frequently mention the significance of critical thinking to the work students will be doing in either course. Furthermore, the assessment rubrics for students' writing assignments both emphasize critical thinking. In her Composition II research essay rubric, she asks students, “Does the content reflect college-level expression of critical thinking?”, and in her Technical Communication rubric for the report proposal, she states students are to “[a]pply **critical thinking** to articulate the broader

context and the specific nature of a problem or opportunity within [their] discipline” (original emphasis) and to engage in problem-solving practices to address the issue in their proposal.

In her Technical Communication classes, Tracy is more aware of the real-world implications of the types of texts students will produce, and overall, this informs much of her pedagogy. Many of the documents students produce and many of the readings listed in the schedule relate to the workplace: memos, collaborative presentations, resumes, and various professional letter genres. However, Tracy includes the academic here as well. She says the “course will help [students] develop practical communication skills for both academics and the workplace,” and students will also produce annotated bibliographies and conduct academic research. This blending of the two is in keeping with Tracy’s view, expressed in our first interview, that the difference between academic and professional communication is “more and more seamless these days.”

What I hope has begun to become clearer as I have discussed Tracy’s pedagogical use of rhetorical principles is that her approach to her own pedagogy is itself rhetorical. That is, she holds herself to the expectations she has of her students. As she asks students to consider their audience, so does she consider her audience. Primarily, her audience is her students, and I will discuss how she centers many aspects of her courses around them momentarily, though I will mention briefly here that she sees her audience as the one to be persuaded to adopt certain practices, not as an audience to be appeased for the sake of good reviews. However, she also recognizes that certain stakeholders will be indirect recipients of her work in the form of the students she teaches. For instance, in our first interview, she notes the influence of employers on some of her pedagogical choices. As I discussed when previewing her overall philosophy, Tracy points to national data about the demands of employers and uses that to inform her teaching, at

least partially. And even a cursory review of Tracy's course documents and our interview transcripts confirms that these demands are indeed ideas and practices that she emphasizes in both of her courses. In addition, Tracy recognizes the university and wider regental institution as an audience—at least as an audience of assessors. She refers to the required elements of persuasive researched writing for Composition II and connects those specified goals and outcomes to assignments in syllabi, assignment sheets, and assessment rubrics.

*Tracy and the Schemas: Rhetorical Blending*

Superficially, the elements of Tracy's pedagogy seem to bump into one another—more traditional and more contemporary views conflicting or the rhetorical context of scientific discourse clashing with literary goals and texts. But Tracy provides a key clue to reconciling these possible tensions. In our first interview, Tracy and I discuss academic writing and real-world writing (more details on that conversation below). During that conversation, Tracy says that a goal of hers is for students to “master language all around them,” regardless of the context. She goes on to explain that the distinction between academic writing and real-world writing is “more and more seamless,” ultimately arguing that students have “different [rhetorical] selves” who use different kinds of communication that are not inherently good or bad—“they're just different.”

What this exchange demonstrates to me is perhaps the core tenet of Tracy's pedagogy: blending. Tracy's desire to avoid sharp distinctions between academic and real-world writing seems to me to carry over into her pedagogical views, leading her to avoid sharp distinctions about what can and cannot be taught in a given writing class. While her section of Composition II is science-themed, she makes ample room for the humanities in what students read and write. The traditionally real-world oriented Technical Communication receives an injection of

academic principles and strategies. Tracy does not see contradictions here; rather, she sees opportunities for students to develop rhetorically, academically, professionally, and intellectually through the blend of these different pedagogical elements.

Where, then, does this position Tracy within the schemas? Quite simply, her philosophies demonstrate the kinds of complexities and, as noted above, even potential contradictions that arise in crafting an approach to a pedagogical situation. Within each schema, Tracy moves as one would expect a rhetorician to move: responding to the intersections of the contexts of her courses, their audiences, and her interests and goals.

### *Reading/Writing*

Tracy expresses some interesting, if seemingly conflicting, ideas about reading and writing in her classes. She places considerable importance on students being able to write academic or real-world texts and genres and to begin applying the tactics and skills they are learning in class. Yet she also draws on literary texts and genres and on texts that rely on “nonstandard English” as ways to examine the fluctuations in language use to convey meaning though these explorations of variety are not necessarily done in ways that she explicitly connects to what students produce, especially in terms of those academic and real-world texts. Ultimately, Tracy seems to suit the texts to the purposes of the task at hand, moving between the two poles of this schema.

In some instances, Tracy seems quite committed to having students read texts. She even creates her own anthology for her Composition II course. In constructing this anthology, her focus seems to be on the content, “go[ing] back to the classics and then bring[ing] it all the way up to contemporary, [...] sort of informal, almost edgy stuff.” These texts also serve her interest in exploring diversity. “I also like to make sure that I have a balance of genders, I have

international authors, not just American writers, or minority American authors.” In addition, Tracy looks for variety in genres that she uses for texts but talks about this in terms of literary genres. This variety of course texts points to the variety present in her pedagogy and the various purposes texts serve in that pedagogy. Texts for her can be generic models, provide ideas and evidence for their writing, or simply offer pleasure in and of themselves—or perhaps even all of these purposes at once.

However, Tracy’s focus on the texts students read for class serves purposes beyond reading. One purpose is to provide students with models. For example, one unit in her course is a narrative unit. The readings for this unit consist of a number of narrative essays, short stories, and other readings that Tracy and her students examine that server as models and guides for the development of their own narratives. She also addresses issues of “informal, contemporary language” to help students think more about their stylistic choices, and in doing so, she asks them to read materials with more informal, nonstandard usages (e.g., Hunter Thompson, Cormac McCarthy).

In addition to using texts for structural and linguistic/rhetorical models, Tracy also uses the texts in the course to help students with their research assignments, evaluating source material in particular. She notes the difficulty of finding credible sources through online search engines and wants to provide students some basis against which they can check their sources, in the hope of making the research process a little easier for them. This basis starts with the texts they examine in class: “[So...] I’m just going to have them start with this article or this video, [...and] you have to do all the fact-checking against that.” In her Composition II assignment, Tracy gives them a series of “primary sources,” some videos and some readings from the class anthology, “one of which will serve as the foundation of [their] topic and for fact checking.”

Thus, the texts serve as the starting point for their research, and a tool to help students evaluate their other research. While this might be a little prescriptive in terms of what counts as good research, it does provide a means for students to think about what makes a credible source, how to connect sources to one another, and how to put those sources into conversation with one another.

Her uses of texts in these ways point to her additional interest in the texts students produce and how they develop their writing abilities. Her discussion of research points out a movement within the schema between wanting students to read texts and wanting them to write texts, often using texts written by others as models for students to develop their own texts. Primarily, this is an effort to introduce students to and engage them in writing academic discourse, which is why, at least partially, her assignments for both Composition II and Technical Communication offer students fairly prescribed structures and research requirements. Even the more literary texts Tracy has students read in Composition II serve mostly in this capacity. She says in our post-observation interview that students are to look to these texts as models for narrative structure, symbolism, and tone. Yet Tracy's interest in representing wide varieties of literary genres, diverse authors, and complete texts seems to point to a hope that students will develop an appreciation for good writing.

What Tracy seems to want to develop in students mostly, though, is their ability and willingness to reflect on their writing. She promotes this reflection by making it a part of the assignments. In both classes, Tracy asks students to complete a self-assessment rubric evaluating their own work in the same way she will assess their work: in terms of content, structure, style, research, and format. During the class session I observed, she began class by asking students to compare their perspectives on their topic at the outset of their writing process to their

perspectives at the end. Indeed, prompted by her own research and some faculty development workshops, Tracy strongly advocates for metacognition related to writing processes for her students, wanting them “really looking inwardly at their own writing processes and figuring out what works and what doesn’t,” being able to make adjustments based on their specific rhetorical situation, and learning how to transfer that knowledge and those practices to other contexts. And by providing students with different types of writing contexts in Composition II (research essays and narratives) and Technical Communication (various workplace and academic genres), she attempts to develop in students the ability to transfer these skills.

*Academic/Real World/Personal*

Tracy’s curricular ideas seem to tend toward the academic and real-world poles of this schema, shifting variously depending upon the course and her purposes. Before examining her connections to the academic and the real world, I want to mention that her connections to the personal pole of this schema are relatively limited. The largest personal element of Tracy’s pedagogy is her goal of strengthening their reflective and metacognitive awareness of their own writing and thinking, which for her serves the goal of promoting transfer and rhetorical awareness. Aside from this and giving students some freedoms in topic choices in both classes, Tracy draws little on personal elements in her writing pedagogy.

Her primary focal points, then, are academic and real-world literacies. In some instances, her focus is on the academic skills (research, argumentation, reflective practices) that will help the students in their work throughout the academy. However, in other instances, she discusses the kinds of skills employers will want of these students after they graduate: critical thinking, which she promotes broadly throughout her courses; generally effective communication skills, which she develops by giving students detailed handouts and assignments about her expectations

for clear and effective writing; and collaborative abilities, which she fosters through peer review groups in both classes and collaborative writing projects in Technical Communication. Critical thinking (and analysis) and writing practices receive the most attention from Tracy in this regard, so this seems to connect to both academic and real-world goals. More importantly, though, this speaks to notions of transfer and bridging academic and real-world writing. Tracy wants students to be able to take what they learn about research, style, rhetorical awareness, and critical thinking from the course and apply it to other contexts, including both academic and real-world contexts. For her, this is not contradictory in the least. As she says of academic and real-world writing, “one isn’t bad and one is good; they’re just different.” Rather than moving between the two poles, then, Tracy collapses them as she sees the differences between the two collapsing.

Tracy grounds much of her work along this schema in two key ideas. The first is the notion of rhetorical transfer. Tracy wants students to gain an understanding of rhetorical principles as these will likely serve them outside of the required writing classroom and even beyond the academy. “[I]f there are sort of conventions emerging for [...] when you should be using the less formal platforms, then I think the styles that go along with those are going to be more and more pervasive in the work environment.” Recognizing these different rhetorical contexts thus includes language awareness and the use of informal and formal language and their rhetorical uses, and students “need to see those different categories.”

This leads to the second idea that informs Tracy’s sense of the relationship between academic and real-world communication: that to her they do not exist in a hierarchical relationship in which one is more valuable than the other. As Tracy says, this is not a matter of right and wrong or better and worse but simply a matter of difference. While she sees similarities in these forms of communication, Tracy considers them and other forms of communication



(formal/informal, e.g.) as belonging on different ends of a spectrum. By students recognizing the rhetorical nature of communication, they may also begin to recognize how to work with different changes resulting from technology or changes in conventions and expectations and therefore be better able to navigate the various communication spectrums that will be necessary for their future success in academics and the world beyond the academy. Certainly, not all students will find relevance in the course's topics, but in valuing the rhetorical nature of communication, Tracy tries to push students to look beyond the content and into the argumentative, grammatical, and generic structures that students are to use to explore these topics.

In addition, Tracy demonstrates this merging of the academic and the real world as she discusses some of the work students do in her course. Frequently, Tracy refers to the research projects that students do, and much of this research seems grounded in academic notions of research: finding sources related to a topic, checking those sources against one another, and developing an argument (and an essay) based on those sources. The research essay Tracy discusses also relies on a fairly typical academic essay trope: addressing themes related to current events. However, this also connects to the ideas of real-world writing and critical thinking in that issues students are familiar with and perhaps interested in outside of the classroom become the focus for an academic essay. For example, the research essay in Composition II asks students to consider topics such as worldwide water shortages, the NFL concussion controversy, or the use of pesticides in agriculture. Through this, students might begin to see that the principles of academic writing (research, critical thinking, and so on) have meaningful functions outside the academy.

Although this merging of academic and real-world notions of communication seems to take precedence in a significant way, Tracy does move toward an emphasis on real-world

communication at times. This occurs primarily when she talks about focusing on the kinds of outcomes wanted by employers. While I will develop this more below as it relates to the institutional/individual schema, it is worth mentioning here because it points to Tracy's interest in the real-world implications for what students learn in the course. And Tracy makes this a key point for her students: "employers who are polled about recent graduates all offer the same three weaknesses in young employees: communication, collaboration<sup>33</sup>, and critical thinking. So I introduce, emphasize and repeat that fact to my students...a *lot*." In this respect, although she does emphasize some academic elements at times, she claims to make more tangible for students some of the real-world implications of the practices and skills she hopes her course will teach them.

*Institution/Instructor/Student*

Similarly, Tracy seems to shift positions a bit within the institutional/instructor/student schema. Primarily, she focuses on helping students. Based on her own research and experiences, students need to know how to produce academic texts and those of the working world, and she intends to help them achieve these ends. In this sense, her view is strongly individual, aligning more closely with the instructor and student poles of this schema. Along with this, though, comes the recognition that employers will be looking for certain traits and skills in prospective employees' writing. Tracy seems well aware of this and draws on those working-world desires to shape her course material as well. Here, too, Tracy is adapting her pedagogy in rhetorical ways, based on the situation and various audiences affected by her pedagogy.

In many ways, Tracy develops her course primarily through her own sense of what students need. This leads, at times, to a relatively pre-determined and fairly structured approach,

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<sup>33</sup> Collaboration is most prominent in Technical Communication. Even in her online sections of this course, Tracy asks students to complete a group project—collaboratively researched and written.

particularly in research project and the units of her Composition II course. For the major research assignment, students have some choice in terms of topics, but they are limited to a few specific scientific topics, though they can explore those topics from different points of view and with different levels of granularity. Tracy also approaches the course with some specific units that students will address: current events and matters of language awareness (narrative writing, the purposeful use of informal language). Students, too, are to abide by a specific outline structure for the project. This outline gives students room to develop their ideas, but it asks for specific placement of information and certain content expectations. Similarly, the report proposal assignment in Technical Communication displays some of these more pre-determined elements. The topics are more open (essentially, any substantive problem students recognize in their field of study), but the prompt again asks students to abide by a specific structure, which is not all that out of character for such a course. Additionally, her basis for addressing these matters is rooted in what she has discovered through her own research or through professional development as beneficial to students, especially those matters related to metacognition, critical thinking, and rhetorical language use.

Her research and professional development do seem to position her more closely to the institutional pole of this schema in her attention to both external influences (the workplace, the regental system) and more internal influences (the university, the department). Primarily, she refers to the ability of students to move what they learn in her course to academic and workplace contexts beyond the course. As she explains, “I would like students to leave feeling like they have made a lot of gains in their ability to master language all around them, whether it’s the pop culture from the [Composition I] focus, or, to the other end, the higher-level academic work that they’re doing, [or] workplace work.” As I noted earlier, she sees the demands of the workplace

informing some of her practices and some of the concepts she addresses in her course (collaboration, critical thinking, effective style). Like all of us who teach required writing courses, she also attends to the objectives of the system and institution for which she works, including representing and working toward those explicit goals, as she does in her syllabi. These external, institutional influences demonstrate a sense of responsibility to these other stakeholders and her willingness to structure her courses at least partially according to those influences.

Despite her attention to her own goals and those of from external and internal influences, Tracy does gravitate toward the student pole of this schema in some telling ways. Her goals and the institutional and external motivators addressed above actually have more to do with students than with those outside stakeholders. For her, it is about helping students succeed in the academic and real-world contexts. She works with students on what will be expected of them in terms of communication and critical thinking after their class, guides them in specific research practices, provides them models of language use that they can use to explore their own language use, and challenges them to look at and reflect upon their own writing thoughtfully and critically. Her attention to metacognition—having students reflect on their writing and thinking in classroom activities and through self-assessment rubrics—highlights her goal of developing students' writing skills as that practice can only serve students (though its results can benefit some of those external stakeholders).

What Tracy represents overall is a fluidity with these schemas. Depending on her context (the course, the students, her goals, and so on), she draws on the full range of influences present in the schemas, and she seems to merge them in ways that make sense of her, that fit with her own pedagogical aims. That is, her pedagogical aims are informed by and merge with these influences. By the sound of this, one might think her pedagogy as contradictory, yet the result is

not a disjointed bundle of contradictions. Instead, drawing on her interests in classical rhetoric, Tracy discovers ways to successfully blend her views and practices with the other influences represented by the schemas.

### **Carol: Students' Growth and Agency**

Carol is a full professor in the department with more than forty years of teaching experience. She specializes in Native American literature but teaches other American literature courses as well. The only writing course she teaches regularly is Composition II. As a tenured faculty member, she teaches a 3/3 course load, with roughly half of each year's course load dedicated to Composition II courses. (In some years, she teaches two sections of that course instead of three.) Though she approaches her writing courses differently than Tracy does, Carol is as dedicated to her students, working diligently on providing them meaningful writing assignments and providing them thoughtful feedback on their writing.

As a participant, Carol was quick to agree to the initial interview and to participate in the case studies. She was eager to discuss her approaches, even though she worried that, since she had no formal writing instruction training and does not keep up with current scholarship in the field, her approaches would seem "old fashioned." Nonetheless, in our interviews, she carefully detailed those approaches, explaining her reasoning for her pedagogical practices, including assignments and assessments.

As I noted above, the only writing course Carol teaches, and thus the only one I used for this case study, is Composition II. When she first came to this university, she taught some technical communication courses, though that did not last long. With a slight chuckle, she says "[W]ell, it wasn't suited to me, and I wasn't suited to it." After that, her writing instruction turned exclusively to Composition II. In her version of the course, students use a handbook and a

textbook that is not a reader but rather a guide to a writing process and a series of journal and essay assignments. Carol has students write four major essays (two personal and two with research components) and a number of other small writing assignments, including daily journal writing. The emphases for each of the four units are not based on specific themes but focus instead on the type of paper they are writing. Carol's course relies strongly on drafting and feedback, particularly peer feedback.

### *Carol's Philosophy*

Much like Tracy, Carol grounds her approaches in helping students develop as writers, though her sensibilities of this differ somewhat from Tracy's. She draws substantially on expressive practices in her commitment to attending to students' writing and their interests, which in some ways marks her as outside the more dominant cultural studies/popular culture approaches in the department. At the core of her course is "giv[ing] students opportunities to improve their writing." Initially, this seems like a somewhat mundane, even obvious statement, but it embodies her primary commitment to help students grow as writers and develop some agency in their own writing, which she facilitates through an emphasis on process and students' interests in the hopes that this growth will transfer to other contexts. In terms of the course's subject matter, Carol draws primarily on students' writing (which is mostly personal in nature, with elements of academic writing) and on some literary elements. Aside from the required handbook, she does use two texts for the course. The first one, *One to One*, outlines a conference pedagogy (one that Carol does not fully adopt, though she does conference with students three times in the semester), includes at least one assignment prompt and many of the journal prompts that Carol uses, and provides the process terminology and criteria that she employs. The second

text, N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, is a literary text that allows Carol to share some Native American literature, mythology, and history with her students.

In the course of the semester, Carol's students complete four major essays, two of which she categorizes as descriptive and two as research oriented. The two descriptive essays, the observation paper and the place paper, are largely personal essays. The observation paper asks students to record and relay their sensory experiences in any location of their choosing and their perceptions of those sensory experiences. For the place paper, students are to write about a place that had significant bearing on their own lives. But even the more research-oriented essays have personal components to them. Students write an argumentative letter (adopting a letter-to-the-editor style) in which they try to persuade an audience about their position on a topic they choose based on their own personal interests. The final essay for the course is an I-search paper. In Carol's version of the I-search, students are to pick something or some activity they want to learn more about, but it must be something that will have some substantial impact on their lives, such as a major, career, or hobby to pursue, not which smartphone or sneakers to buy. This consists of the author choosing a topic of personal importance and then conducting research, interviews, and personal reflections on that topic. It is in many ways an examination of their process of researching this as well as the revelations this research provides the students.

In the discussions below, I examine more deeply the concepts and practices that Carol employs to promote her students' growth and agency as writers.

### *Growth*

Before examining the more specific elements of Carol's philosophy and practice, I want to discuss growth briefly, as it underlies most of the other elements of Carol's approach to writing instruction. In *A Teaching Subject: Composition since 1966*, Joseph Harris traces the

development and application of some of the key pedagogies of the latter half of the twentieth century. The first of these, coming from the immediate aftermath of the Dartmouth Seminar of 1966, is growth. He describes this as a transition in which “[a]n old model of teaching centered on the transmission of skills (composition) and knowledge (literature) gave way to a *growth model* focusing on the experience of students and how these are shaped by their uses of language” (1, original emphasis). Student language became the focus through a “deemphasis on teaching correct or standard forms” (8) with the goal of expanding on students’ extant knowledge of language and writing, using that knowledge to help them more fully understand and relay their experiences (10). The role of the teacher in the growth model also shifted. The teacher was to be “supportive and nurturing, [...] working with rather than challenging what her students have to say” (15). As such, the traditional classroom approaches became problematic: “The aim of growth theorists was [...] to get rid of as much of the restrictive apparatus of the school as they could—by having students read, write, and talk about subjects of real concern to them, and by having their teacher not so much judge as respond to their work” (15).

In short, the growth model promoted a student-centered, writing-focused classroom that worried little about content beyond language generally and writing specifically. Student experiences and student texts serve as the focal points. This, indeed, aligns well, though not perfectly, with Carol’s pedagogy. For example, students’ personal experiences are the basis for the first two major writing assignments of the course and at least partially inform the other two major writing assignments. Carol also takes on the growth model’s notion of the supportive teacher by focusing on guiding students through their writing rather than focusing on grading their work. She has a detailed method of grading, but students don’t receive major grades until the end of the semester, and they are the ones who choose which assignments Carol will grade.



The goal, then, is not to provide a string of grades all semester but to allow them to build and practice their writing skills in more low-stakes ways throughout the semester, such as having them write journals and response papers, ungraded drafts, and other small writing tasks. Finally, she seems to embrace a less traditional view of the classroom. Students frequently work in groups to talk about writing and give each other feedback, and Carol says little lecturing takes place; she would rather have them actively engaged “than just sitting there in rows listening to me.”

However, Carol’s version of growth differs somewhat from the version Harris describes. As noted above, growth theorists were not particularly interested in correct grammar or other prescribed structures. In some instances, Carol adheres to this idea, noting that during an oral reading in class, a student’s essay contained some “spicy language.” This, she explained to her students, fits the context and thus worked rhetorically. In other instances, though, Carol makes clear that students are to work toward clarity of style and overall grammatical correctness per notions of Standard Academic English. Perhaps most representative of this sensibility is the criteria for the final draft of each paper all require students to maintain tense and point-of-view consistency, to write concisely, and avoid repetitious wordings or structures.

### *Agency*

Despite some of these more structured approaches to language, growth remains for Carol her central goals. Critical to this growth is the development of students’ sense of their agency as writers. Put another way, she wants students to grow not just in their writing skills but also in their sense of their own capabilities to write effectively. Rhetorical agency is a complex concept, made more so by the postmodern turn and social conceptions of writing. For my purposes here, though, I am defining agency in relatively basic terms, drawing from Cheryl Geisler’s sense of

the shared view of rhetorical agency: “the capacity of the rhetor to act” (12). Throughout her article, Geisler weighs the postmodern views of the limitations of the individual agent with those of the traditional humanistic (or Romantic) view of the agent—that is, the difference between social and contextual influences or individual choices and motivations being most crucial in the production of discourse. Like Geisler, I agree in seeing agency as taking a middle path in which we “acknowledge[e] the contingency of all action while at the same time [allow] the rhetor the power to respond to those shifting circumstances” (13). In other words, I see individual rhetorical agency as possible while still recognizing other influences on that agency.

One small yet important way Carol begins to promote students’ agency is to allow students to choose individually which of their major essays Carol will grade. Of the four required major essays, students can choose one descriptive paper and one research paper for final grading. Up to this point, Carol has not given them grades on their essays. She has commented on their drafts of these essays, and now students can revise one last time and select which essays they want her to grade. Not only do they get to choose what makes up seventy percent of their final grade (according to the breakdown in Carol’s syllabus), but they also have the opportunity to finish any work they have yet to complete before semester’s end, and Carol gives them the opportunity to rewrite a graded essay in an attempt to raise a “plus grade” (e.g., C+, B+) to the next grade level (my institution does not use the +/- system for final grading). What this indicates is that Carol is less concerned about grading students and more concerned about giving them a sense of control over their own writing.

She also builds this sense of control by giving them choices in the writing for the class. While Carol determines the overarching theme for each of the four major essays, the students can choose their own specific topics for each of the papers. For example, in the largest research

project for the course, the I-search essay, Carol's only stipulation is that the topic be something the student wants to learn more about, be it a hobby, a potential major, or a future job. Beyond general themes, Carol sometimes gives students different avenues by which they can complete certain stages of the essay, most often the prewriting. She says that "with some papers, I let them write any kind of prewriting that's useful to them." Opening up the process even in these small ways allows students to attempt different strategies and discover ones that may better facilitate their writing.

What she seems to want from this is for the students to develop a general sense of control over their own writing, a sense that is transferable to other contexts (more in the next section on transfer). Part of this is to impress upon students the importance of receiving feedback on their writing and applying it. While on the one hand Carol sees their peer editing workshops as inculcating in students that willingness to receive feedback about their writing from others, she also sees them as opportunities for students 1) to recognize the benefit of rereading their own work, to hear incongruities and lapses in clarity and 2) to begin to determine which feedback to accept or reject because their essays are just that: *their* essays. In short, a practice such as a peer review workshop is in place to help students discover ways and receive feedback to advance their text from its current state to a more complete, effective state and make choices about their own writing leading them to that end—that is, to take responsibility for their own writing.

Despite these efforts to "grow" students in their writing and their agency, a tension exists, one I will explore more fully when discussing the institution/instructor/student schema below. But for now, I think it worthwhile to note that the desire for growth and agency seems somewhat at odds with some of the structured parameters of the processes for the major essays. For each essay, students must complete specific stages with a specific set of criteria. While she does give

them some choices in terms of topics and some prewriting strategies, students are to follow the patterns and guidelines she establishes. This certainly gives students a clear template, but it may also limit their ability to develop their own sense of agency.

### *Transfer*

Aside from helping students grow as writers and develop their own agency, Carol seems to intend her pedagogy, ultimately, to provide students with skills they can transfer to any—or at least most—writing situations they might find themselves in in future courses. While the nature and possibility of transfer is much debated in writing studies, Carol seems to worry little about such debates. As she notes, she does not monitor developments in writing pedagogy all that closely. Furthermore, whether debated or not, transfer is to Carol possible and even likely.

During the course of our interviews and during the class session I observed, Carol explicitly mentions transfer only once. While discussing a goal of journaling in class, Carol says that she wants students to learn “to write quickly because I’ve been trying to teach them that that skill can then be transferred to prewriting and rough drafts.” Of course, the context of transfer here is only her class and not to other contexts in the university or their professional lives. However, her syllabus establishes transfer as an implicit objective of the course. In the course description, she includes the catalog description that Composition II proposes “to improve writing skills in all disciplines.” Granted, including the language from the catalog description is an institutional requirement for all syllabi, but her own description furthers this aim:

This course will provide you with the opportunity to improve your skills in the writing, revising, editing, and reading of clear and effective prose; to develop your ability to think and write critically, persuasively, and imaginatively; to

expand your information literacy; to improve your research and documentation skills; and to increase your understanding of diverse cultural perspectives.

With the exception of writing “imaginatively” and, to an extent, the “understanding of diverse cultural perspectives,” much of Carol’s description presents goals oriented toward academic writing and thus aligns with the catalog description.

Although transfer might seem like an institutional mandate that Carol—and indeed all instructors—must teach toward, Carol suggests its presence and importance throughout the data she gave to me. As I mentioned above, she wants students to be able to transfer what they learn about writing on a small scale. In her syllabus, Carol explains to students the goal of application, writing, “I have set up this class so that you can *apply* what you learn during the semester about style and content to two of your papers that I letter grade at the end of the course [...]” (emphasis added). She also uses their in-class journal to teach them different strategies that she later has them apply to their major essays: “And so the technique that they learned in their first two journals [freewriting], they applied to their prewriting [for the observation paper].”

Carol also intends local transfer to occur through feedback, and this feedback comes in three types. The first is feedback from their peers during their peer editing workshops. During these workshops, students read each other’s papers and talk about them, giving each other feedback. The second type is one she mentions throughout our interviews: self-feedback. Of this process, she says, “They get feedback from themselves if from nobody else by simply reading it out loud, and they see where it’s not fluent, where they meant to say something different [...]. I always encourage them to read it out loud to themselves if to no one else.” The third type of feedback comes from her, which she explicitly states she wants students to carry from essay to essay: “I tell them, ‘You have to apply what you learned from my comments on your first two

papers to the last two papers.” In the earlier stages of the major essays, Carol makes it a point to provide this feedback quickly, collecting and quickly reviewing in class their essays for the required criteria of a given stage, as she did during the class I observed. She thinks it important to provide students immediate feedback to help them keep their writing process progressing. She worries that if she were “to collect the papers and give them back the next time, it would slow the whole process down.” The hope here seems to be that if students receive timely feedback and are able to work through the drafting processes more continually, they might learn more about writing and be able to apply it more effectively, increasing the possibility of transfer.

Beyond the goal of local transfer, Carol does imply that some more global transfer is to occur as a result of her pedagogy. Part of this is apparent through the variety of writing she asks students to complete. Although she asks students to write primarily about some personal topics through personal genres, she does not limit the type of writing they do to the personal. Students in her class write a résumé; they produce an argumentative op-ed style essay; they conduct research for use in an essay. In short, Carol strives to give students opportunities to write in various contexts so that they might be able to shuttle between different genres in the remainder of their academic careers and throughout their professional lives. Furthermore, and perhaps most tellingly, Carol’s emphasis on process points to her desire for students to develop transferable skills through her writing course, as she wants them to develop *a* process that they can employ in many, or even most, writing situations.

### *Process*

Process approaches to writing are perhaps the most integral part of Carol’s pedagogy as related to students growing as writers, gaining greater rhetorical agency, and transferring their skills to different rhetorical contexts. Practices related to writing processes make up the bulk of

what students do for Carol's writing course in and out of class. Her interest in writing as a process seems to stem from her own sense of writing. During our initial interview, this view of writing comes up within the first minute of our conversation. She says, "I think of the writing as, I think of the paper as going through stages." That initial reference to writing in general as procedural before specifying the paper as rooted in process speaks to Carol's sensibility about process as it develops throughout our other conversations and in the other data Carol provided me. She comes back to ideas about these stages as useful to her students because they help students better understand the nature of writing. For example, Carol says "one of the major things I'm trying to teach them is that it's important to revise." By assigning multiple drafts that students approach as part of a process reinforces the importance of revision because they "see for themselves the necessity of going over a paper after they've typed the last word." In addition, Carol generally values teaching students a process helps them to focus on the quality of their writing as opposed to its quantity, which she holds can keep students from feeling overwhelmed by the task of writing. But a more general and somewhat deeper principle about process seems to inform her adherence to process. The end is that students learn *a* process, that they learn the value of working on a writing project through stages and what that teaches them about writing.

Carol's two major course documents—the syllabus and the schedule—spell out this emphasis on process right away for students. In her description of the course in the syllabus, after the standard description from the course catalog, Carol says, "This course will provide you with the opportunity to improve your skills in the writing, revising, editing, and reading of clear and effective prose." As this is the first point in the additional description, this perhaps suggests its importance. What solidifies the importance of process is its place in the rest of the syllabus. Carol spells out to students that they will be completing four major essays, with students

choosing individually which two essays Carol will grade. These essays are rather short—two to three pages each, but as Carol explains, her purpose for this is not for the sake of giving short assignments and scoring points with her students. Rather, she feels that assigning multiple drafts of each essay “adds up to more actual writing” and that students are “focusing on good writing, and not just getting enough pages.” To ensure that students engage in that process, she grades them pass/fail on these stages and whether they meet the criteria she establishes for those given stages.

Her schedule, too, illustrates her commitment to process pedagogy, establishing deadlines for various drafts and carving out large swaths of time for work on their drafts in class and in-class work on various other writing activities—and Carol expects students to do plenty of out-of-class writing, too. Many of these activities provide opportunities for writing in class on the current assignment. In many ways, the process as illustrated in the schedule remains the same throughout the semester: students prewrite, draft, receive feedback on the draft from Carol and from peers, edit, receive some more feedback, and polish. This creates plenty of overlap and repetition, acculturating students to the idea of writing as a process and providing a sense of continuity.<sup>34</sup> Scheduled writing in class also demonstrates the role process plays in Carol’s pedagogy. For instance, students may learn about freewriting through an in-class journal, and then employ that same strategy to an upcoming assignment. In other instances, regarding the I-search paper that Carol assigns, for example, students use their in-class journals to create lists of topics for further exploration and then move into a freewrite on that a specific topic. In sum, the

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<sup>34</sup> I should note that the attention to process in such ways can cause some loss of rhetorical awareness as the role of process may not be as prevalent or useful in all rhetorical situations. That is, the process may be quite different based on the task at hand, and utilizing the same process for all situations may hinder that rhetorical sensibility.



schedule clearly creates process-oriented view of writing, one in which the classroom serves as a place to both scaffold and employ those activities.

The assignments, too, reinforce the importance of process in Carol's pedagogy. Each major assignment asks students to complete three stages: prewriting, rough draft, and edited draft. For each stage (excluding the edited draft, the criteria for which remain the same throughout the semester), Carol provides students with specific criteria. In general, the prewriting criteria ask students to generate ideas for focusing their writing; the rough draft criteria give them some guidelines about what topics to focus on with the intent of developing their content and structure; and the edited criteria focus primarily on style—point of view, tense consistency, concision, vivid description, and so on. These criteria sheets, then, orient students to certain purposes of that stage in the writing process while also making those purposes relevant to that specific assignment.

As an example, we can consider Carol's "Place Paper" assignment, the one assignment document she provided me. The assignment asks students to consider a place that was important to them and their lives. They are then to write a narrative (including "character(s), setting, and a plot," "a variety of descriptive techniques," and "some dialogue and/or monologue") about that place, focusing only on events occurring over a couple of days. For the prewriting stage, students are to complete a freewrite in which they meet the following criteria:

1. Write quickly. Include sense imagery of four or five senses. Don't stop to change anything. Don't take your pen or pencil from the paper. [Students do have the choice to type or write by hand.]
2. This free writing must be about a place only.

3. This free writing must be a full single-spaced page long in handwritten or a full double-spaced page long if typed.

Students must abide by a number of guidelines in the rough draft, including that the draft “focuses on the writer’s relationship with a particular place and how it has affected his or her life,” “tells an actual story,” “contains vivid descriptive detail and sense imagery,” “contains some dialogue [...] or monologue,” and “is a full two pages long.” The edited criteria, as noted above, do not change from one major assignment to the next and require students to maintain point-of-view and tense consistency, concision, and variety in word choice. Together, these drafts ask students to concentrate on certain tasks, making prominent (and manageable) certain elements of the writing process Carol wants them to utilize.

In this, though, some tension begins to develop between her aims at student agency and the process she wants students to complete for a given assignment. Students have the choice of focus (e.g., the place they choose to write about or the career they are interested in for their I-search papers). But the criteria sheets point to certain objectives for them to accomplish at a certain stage, which determines whether they have completed the task successfully. This gives students some useful guidance, but because of it, they may begin to compartmentalize the process, begin to take a linear view of it. Thus, the process becomes somewhat rigid and stage-oriented rather than recursive—and it may seem to students like *the* writing process; this is one of the common critiques of process pedagogy. Despite this tension, Carol’s emphasis on process likely helps students recognize the value of working through a writing task using some sort of a process. If students do begin to recognize this value, they are likely to develop some greater confidence in their writing abilities, which aligns Carol’s attention to process with her goals of agency and transfer.

*Collaboration and Feedback*

Almost as critical to Carol's pedagogy as process is collaboration. In her syllabus, she positions this collaborative work prominently under instructional methods ("peer editing in small groups"), the requirements (expectation of active participation in the groups), and student learning outcomes ("[a]quiring skills working with others as a member of a team.")<sup>35</sup> Carol establishes collaborative work as central early in the semester, placing students in "teams" (as opposed to the typical term, "groups") that they will remain in for the semester. She does note that some readjustments are necessary, but generally, the group make-up stays the same. In terms of devising the groups, she says her goal is diversity generally (e.g., relatively even numbers of men and women) not necessarily diversity of writing skills. This practice of using the same groups all semester is perhaps the one strategy that Carol learned in a professional development context. She notes that she had always used peer review groups, but a session on team-based learning convinced her to make group work more frequent regular and to establish set teams for the course of the semester. The teams meet frequently throughout the course of the semester—about once a week (sometimes more) according to the schedule. Sometimes they are to discuss certain readings from the textbook or Momaday's book, but primarily, the function of these groups is to provide feedback on each other's essays.

This latter activity made up the agenda on the day I observed class. After ten minutes of journaling, students got into their groups. A little reshuffling of groups took place because of some absences. Once the groups got together, Carol pulled up the criteria for the rough draft of the place paper and briefly discussed them. The students were then to read their own drafts aloud

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<sup>35</sup> This language is from the IDEA survey, the tool used at the end of the semester for students to evaluate the course. Instructors may choose three to five objectives as "essential" or "important." That Carol chooses group work as one of her three speaks to the value she places on it.

in turn, and the other students were to provide comments on their writing. Initially, students—even though they had worked together as groups before—hesitated a bit as their work began, and at times, they were offering somewhat minimal feedback. But one of the two groups did become more engaged in offering feedback, though that feedback did remain primarily stylistic, including advice on rephrasing sentences and some matters of diction. Few students, when acting as either author or commenter, took notes on what others said. Carol listened in on the groups at times and prompted students to consider points related to the criteria or offered some of her own suggestions. Even then, some of the students whose essays were not the one receiving attention seemed a bit disengaged.

As I noted above, students were a little disengaged and somewhat hesitant to participate in the workshop, which may have stemmed from the fact that they perceived this work as somewhat beyond their role, congruent with the belief that the instructor is the only one who can and should offer feedback. Carol confirms this, at least from her perspective. After saying “I always wish I could get them to do more response to hearing each other’s papers,” she speculates, “I think it’s just the entire idea of responding to each other’s papers. They’re not used to it; they think that the procedure is that I should be doing the responding.”

Despite some of these concerns, Carol asserts that she “will certainly not change that exercise with rough drafts.” This stems from her overall commitment to ensuring that students receive feedback on their writing. As I noted above, this is the key driver of the group work in her class. She wants students to recognize “how important it is to get feedback from anybody they can get feedback from.” She points out to them that professional writers often belong to writing groups, and that she is not “having them [work in peer editing groups] because they’re novices but because it’s a good practice” that professionals engage in. Even when the sessions

don't go as well as she might like, she still sees value in it. In all three of our interviews, she repeats her sense that students get value from this simply by engaging in the process. By reading out loud, “[t]hey get feedback from themselves if from nobody else [...]”

Collaboration and the feedback students receive through it do not end in the peer groups. Carol sees herself as a collaborator with students and aims to provide them the kinds of useful feedback on their writing she wants them to provide each other. One version of this is the immediate feedback she strives to offer. During these draft stages, her goal is to provide feedback as quickly as possible. For example, on the day I observed, while students worked on their journals and then with their writing groups, she was commenting on their essays using the same criteria the students were working with in their groups. As mentioned above, Carol favors immediate feedback to keep the writing process moving. This is not to say that Carol only provides the kind of feedback one could offer numerous students in fifty minutes—that is, quick feedback based on specific criteria. When students turn in their edited drafts, she says she does “a very thorough job of going over them for the edited and polished criteria. [...] I give them back their papers and they're all marked up.” This work, she says, takes her “about a half an hour per paper.” Given that these essays are two to three pages long, Carol must indeed provide substantial commentary on students' writing.

Undoubtedly, collaboration and feedback play a useful role in terms of transfer. From Carol and their peers, students receive suggestions about their writing that they can apply immediately to their current projects, and, as noted above in the section on transfer, Carol wants students to use the comments they receive on one essay to guide their work on future essays, especially that ability to create a correct paper in relation to the criteria provided. Collaboration and feedback feed into the idea of process quite well, too, as comments students receive inform

their revising and editing phases. Collaboration and feedback have a more complex relationship with agency, though. On one level, these practices seem to promote a more social view of writing, one in which the individual agent plays a less central role in the creation of a text. Yet the more expressive view of writing that Carol endorses sees this feedback and collaboration as serving the development of the students' own writing and voice.

### *Frequent and Varied Writing*

In addition to facilitating students' growth and agency through a process view of writing and through collaboration and feedback, Carol also promotes her goals through an emphasis on the act of writing. Carol assigns numerous writing tasks throughout the course, and these tasks often consist of different types of writing—from journaling and freewriting to response writing to application letters and résumés to writing with academic goals. The impetus behind this work, simply put, is to get students to write frequently and in different genres in the hope that doing so will make them better, more adaptable writers.

Foremost in this is frequency, for as Carol states, this helps them develop the kinds of habits she says as valuable (drafting quickly, for example) and improving their comfort levels in writing. Frequency takes a few main forms. First, students are to complete multiple drafts of each essay (four drafts, in fact). Each of these drafts has a different purpose and different associated activities. For example, the prewriting draft of the place paper asks students to write a focused freewrite based mostly on their memories and sense experiences of a certain place. The rough draft of the place paper then asks them to build on this freewrite and examine the place and its significance to their lives in more depth. Therefore, each draft looks to improve certain competencies (invention and content development in this example). But writing multiple drafts of the essays do not entirely account for the frequency of the writing students do in Carol's class.

Each day, students spend the first ten minutes or so of class writing in their journals. These journals, at times, serve larger assignments, but in other instances, they are, as she says, “writing for writing’s sake.” Carol also adds a number of small, low-stakes writing assignments throughout the course: an ekphrasis piece, reports on campus lectures and other events, a short piece mimicking N. Scott Momaday’s structure in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, among “[a] number of other writing assignments.” Often these seem to have limited direct connection to the major essays for the course but rather serve more indirect purposes (e.g., practicing description, which they can then apply to their first two major essays) and the general approach of engaging them in frequent writing tasks.

Also important to students’ writing in Carol’s pedagogy is the variety of writing that students complete, which seems to have the rather rhetorical end of developing in students the ability to achieve different purposes with writing. In terms of the major assignments, students complete two descriptive essays and two research essays. Within the assignments themselves, though, students focus on a variety of strategies to complete the essays. In the place paper, for instance, students begin with a focused freewriting for which Carol provides specific goals. The assignment also requires students to craft not a simple description but to tell the audience a story about a particular place that is important to them, and this story must incorporate certain formal elements (dialogue, e.g.) and specific stylistic features (including figurative language).

Her use of variety is perhaps most notable in the number and variety of smaller assignments students complete throughout the semester. Beyond their daily journals, students write several “reporting” essays (often less than two pages each). For one assignment, students must visit the campus art museum and then write about their reaction to a specific piece of art. They must also attend one campus event of their choosing and write a report on that. Other

reports include one about a biennial writing conference hosted by the English department and one about an online video on global warming. In addition to these reports, students also work on résumés and cover letters, preparing them for some more professional/technical writing practices. They also mimic some literary work in the case of reproducing Momaday's structure using their own "legends."<sup>36</sup> Students produce texts with expository, personal, research, literary/imaginative, and professional purposes and styles. This variety, coupled with the amount and regularity of writing that students do, not only engages them in the process, but also provides them some different rhetorical contexts and genres that may well lead to transfer of some skills and a greater sense of rhetorical agency in students.

#### *Expressive and Personal Writing*

Student writing seems to be the main content of the course, with some attention to literature in the form of an essay based on the sense of place expressed in N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. But the nature of this writing has significant bearing on and reflects Carol's pedagogy. Carol approaches writing instruction with an expressive/personal angle. While often presented as a pedagogical theory leading to practical application, the expressive approaches in Carol's pedagogy seem to supply a means to her more principal end of students' growth as writers.

Carol's emphasis on students' personal experiences represents her strongest connection to expressive pedagogy. Indeed, the bulk of the writing students do in her class has at least personal inflections if not completely personal focuses. The journal writing students do trends toward the personal. During the class period I observed, students journaled about what they had done or

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<sup>36</sup> Momaday's book consists of chapters about specific places important to the Native Americans of the Great Plains. Each chapter has three brief passages discussing an individual place: one passage talks about its history, another addresses its legendary or mythical aspects, and the third passage explores Momaday's own experiences with the place.



what had happened to them that morning or the evening prior. Other journal assignments that she described to me include entries about personal interests, lists they might use for upcoming assignments, or practice with certain techniques that will benefit their writing processes. Many of the other smaller assignments also have significant personal components. The art museum assignment includes at least some attention to their reactions to a piece of art, and the event reports all ask students to include their personal reactions to the lectures, films, or other events they attended.

This attention to the personal extends to the major essays as well. Each of the essays Carol assigns has a personal element to it. The two descriptive essays (the observation and place papers) both ask students to record their personal insights and reactions. The research-oriented papers (the letter to the editor and the I-search) both encourage students to ground their research in their interests, whatever they may be. Writing, then, is presented throughout the course as beginning from a place of personal interest and significance.

Carol's use of collaborative groups, her strong emphasis on process pedagogy, and the consistent use of personal experience as source material for students' essays all point to a tendency toward expressivist practices. But as Burnham and Powell point out, expressive pedagogy can go beyond the personal. While they discuss this in terms of making students more "morally aware citizens" (112), Carol seems to view expressive approaches as able to afford students opportunities to develop academic literacy skills, such as research. Expressive practices for Carol are not merely about attention to the personal; rather, her approaches use the personal to work toward other ends.

*Carol and the Schemas: Consistency of Approaches*

In many ways, Carol's philosophy seemingly exhibits much more consistency than does Tracy's philosophy, though both instructors' pedagogy follows from their core sensibilities about writing. Carol's approach begins with goals of growth and of developing students' sense of their own agency. Throughout, her use expressive practices and personal writing aim to engage students in what they are writing and to allow them to focus as a class on the writing. She provides them with different tasks and contexts to allow them to practice various rhetorical strategies. Students work through a writing process to make writing manageable and to give them tools to write in different contexts. In terms of the schemas, then, Carol falls toward the points that one would expect of someone adopting a mostly expressive approach to writing: her course is writing-intensive, personal, and (largely) student-centered.

*Reading/Writing*

In my English department, most composition instructors tend to utilize anthologies of readings for course content. Carol, however, seems quite resistant to reading-intensive models of writing instruction. This is not to say that she completely rejects reading in writing courses—indeed, she uses texts in the course, and I will examine that use momentarily. But in Carol's writing courses, what little reading she assigns serves writing. Beyond that, student writing makes up the bulk of her primarily process-oriented approach, putting her squarely at the writing end of the schema.

Carol's focus on writing in the course extends even to the texts she uses. The primary course text, *One to One*, serves largely to provide writing assignments (the observation paper assignment and prompts for students' daily journaling) and the structure of the process that she asks students to work through. As she notes, "I followed the steps as they described them. They

have the prewriting, the rough draft, and then what they call editing, and then what they call polishing.” This fits well with her goal of developing students’ facility with writing process (see above section on the role process plays in her pedagogy). And even though the book does contain some essays, she says, “I don’t think they’re very good. I’ve never used them.” Indeed, she claims, simply, “I don’t have them read essays.”

This is not to say that students only read texts related to writing practices, but even in the instance they do read less writing-focused work, in the case of Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain*, the purpose of reading the text has more to do with writing, serving as a model for two writing assignments. For the first assignment, a small pass/fail assignment, students are to mimic Momaday’s structures by discussing something with a legendary aspect to it (a holiday like Christmas, with its legends surrounding Santa Claus, for example) and write a paragraph about the legend, a paragraph about the actual history connected to the legend, and a paragraph about their personal connections to the legend. The second assignment is the place paper, for which students are to describe a place important to them (described in greater detail above). They examine Momaday’s descriptive and structural techniques and employ them in their own essays. Although Carol enjoys focusing on the literary aspect of this, her focus remains on using the text to provide students examples of techniques they can employ in their writing.<sup>37</sup>

Since the texts that students read serve primarily as ways into writing, student texts receive much of the focus in the class, and often, much of the writing is of the low-stakes variety to encourage writing. I have discussed this in detail above, but I would like to reiterate the frequency and variety of writing that takes place in her course. Each day on her schedule—even

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<sup>37</sup> I must say that more might exist to Carol’s use of this text. During our initial interview, she says, “I don’t want to say too much about why I have them read N. Scott Momaday.” I wondered why not; however, I did not push the matter because I did not want her to feel compelled to reveal information she felt uncomfortable sharing.

on days when she cancels class so they might attend certain campus events and lectures—contains writing of some sort: writing reports, journaling, working in groups with drafts, and so on. Students share their writing and provide feedback to one another. Her emphasis on process, too, makes their writing the central texts, the content for the course. While the essays she assigns them to write are quite short, she wants students “focusing on good writing, not just getting enough pages.” In the end, she wants students to employ process strategies in their own writing, learn to receive and apply feedback from others, and transfer what they learn to other rhetorical situations.

Therefore, for Carol, having students write is the heart of the course. While she does incorporate some literature, even it functions as a model for students’ writing, not as content for them to use—that is, Momaday’s book does not provide ideas they are to respond to, other than the importance he gives to place in one’s own personal development. Students write daily, draft often, and work with each other and Carol to develop their own writing. As students do this, she wants them to develop writing skills that will serve them in other contexts as well. Granted, little personal writing occurs in academic or professional contexts, but Carol seems to embrace a sense of the transferability of the writing process.

*Academic/Real World/Personal*

As the course does not have specified content beyond matters related to writing, the subject matter students write about tends to be rather personal. As with her approaches to reading and writing, this focus on the personal puts Carol’s approach again a bit outside what some of the others in the department do. Primarily, Carol’s approaches lean strongly toward the personal. A number of her goals, though, suggest elements of transfer to some more academic contexts with

occasional nods to real-world ones as well, making Carol's positions in this schema a little flexible.

In terms of that academic focus, Carol mentions the thesis-driven nature of students' writing. Even in the observation assignment she has students complete, Carol requires that they develop a thesis, an assertion about what they observed, because "it's really good for them in terms of thinking about what you really have to have in a paper to give it some focus." Additionally, two of the four major essays have a required research component. This gives students the opportunity to practice researching (topics of their choosing, mostly) and documentation. In her syllabus, too, she notes the importance of information literacy, given the regental requirement of this goal. The I-search essay is the most research-oriented of her assignments with its requirements for library-based research, personal interviews, and some other, less formal research practices.

Less central to Carol's writing instruction is real-world writing. One small assignment they complete is to write a cover letter and a résumé. On the day this is due, a guest speaker visits the class to discuss resume writing. Students revise this once more and submit it at the next class session. One other version of real-world writing comes in the form of a larger assignment in which students write a hypothetical letter to the editor about a topic of importance to them, which gives them an opportunity to practice persuasive writing in a more public forum. However, this does not seem to be an explicit, concerted effort to make students better, more aware citizens as Burnham and Powell argue can be a function of expressive pedagogy (112) so much as it is an additional genre for students to learn about to develop their writing capabilities and perhaps one Carol simply enjoys to read.

In addition to these academic and real-world elements, much of the writing is mostly personal in nature. Students journal daily, and the topics are usually personal reflections—not necessarily topics related to a current assignment but ones to get them started writing for the day. And as noted above, two of their four major essays focus on personal writing (description and observation) over academic writing. In fact, their final project for the course, the I-search paper, focuses on a topic of interest to the student and draws on personal interviews and first-person accounts, so even this research-oriented project has personal roots. In other words, the bulk of writing that students do is personal in nature. Through this combination of personal, academic, and real-world elements, Carol hopes that students ultimately will grow as writers, not necessarily becoming better writers in one category over another.

*Institution/Instructor/Student*

Aside from the occasional reference to the academic elements of the course, especially the research components as those are required by the Board of Regents, Carol gives almost no indication of any institutional influences on her pedagogical choices. Instead, she works on striking a balance between her criteria and assessment practices and the agency and writing improvement of her students. At times, these create some interesting intersections because she is quite committed to students developing as writers, but she also has some specific ways by which she wants them to achieve this.

To an extent, Carol approaches required writing instruction through her own interests and goals. This leads to some prescribed notions about Composition II. As I addressed above in discussing Carol's use of texts, Carol does rely considerably on the textbook to develop the course in terms of the process students use and some of the assignments they complete (the observation essay and journal entries in particular). She also relies on some of her own interests

to shape the course. Her background in Native American literature has led to her use of Momaday's book, which in turn is the basis for at least the nature and techniques of the place paper. Additionally, the place paper assignment demonstrates the influence of her goals in the writing students produce. She requires certain narrative and descriptive techniques and constrains the content of their essay to an influential place in the students' lives.

Her discussion of assessment also points to the influence of her own goals on the course. Most of the major essays follow a fairly prescribed pattern, and with each draft of each essay, students have specific benchmarks they must meet. For example, in the observation paper, Carol gives students specific prewriting practices they are to implement and must complete to receive credit for the prewriting stage: extended lists that include experiences related to all five senses and specific details. This leads to a specific approach to assessment for each of these parts of the writing process in which Carol looks for a few specific components at each stage of the draft, though as I noted above, her feedback has depth beyond this.

Despite some of this focus on her own interests and some of the more structured elements of the assignments and assessments, Carol gives considerable agency to her students. Even in the more structured assignments, students still have the choice of topic. So, though they might be describing a place of importance to them or completing an I-search paper, they choose the place, they choose the I-search subject. And this goes for most of the portions of the process they complete with the papers. Except for the observation assignment, Carol says she "let[s] them write any kind of prewriting that's useful to them." For conferences, she wants the students to lead: "they're supposed to be in charge of what they want to learn, what questions they want to ask me." Grading, too, takes on a more student-oriented focus because "it all seems so nebulous to them." Carol allows students to choose which research paper and which personal

paper they want to submit for final grading, gives them opportunities to complete any late work, and offers an opportunity to raise their grade at the end of the semester.

This agency points to Carol's interest in helping students develop as writers. Indeed, this is about the first point she makes in the interview: "I want to give the students an opportunity to improve their writing." She sees the short assignments fitting into this goal so that students can focus on what they are writing and not trying to meet a certain page requirement, and she gives them numerous occasions to practice and develop by making class time a time to write. The frequent use of peer groups and her feedback also aim to give students commentary that can help them develop as writers, and she hopes that they use the commentary in ways beneficial to them. As she says, "I always tell them that they're in charge of their own papers." Even with plenty of her own goals and interests guiding her pedagogy, she ultimately gravitates toward the students.

#### **Amy: Liberal Education and Academic Literacy**

At the time of this study, Amy was a relatively new assistant professor in the department. This newness created some sense of curricular uncertainty for her; however, she knew she wanted to engage students in academic conversations and develop their academic literacy through her required writing courses. Her pedagogy, then, is one that strives almost entirely for academic outcomes. In many ways, her aim is to provide students with opportunities to think more fully and critically about complex topics and readings and then write in response to that reading and thinking. She works with students to guide them toward these ends by helping them understand the readings and offering them ways to apply those ideas in their own writing. Amy sees her required writing courses—Composition II, in particular—as a way to impart onto students what they need to know about thinking and writing in the university. Yet her goals extend beyond the university. Indeed, she hopes that students will begin to see the importance of



the ideas they work with not only for the university but also for their own lives and for the world around them. Working in conjunction with her goals of academic literacy is the goal of providing students with whatever amount of liberal education she can supply in a sixteen-week course.

Amy's specialty is Victorian literature, but she has had some formal training in composition pedagogy, some of which she says she may have "blocked from memory,"<sup>38</sup> and considerable experience working with student writing as both a tutor and as a reader of student entrance essays at a different institution. Like Carol, Amy is a tenure-track instructor who teaches a 3/3 load with a balance of composition (mostly Composition II) and literature courses. Unlike Carol, Amy does teach an occasional section of Composition I. Some details about this course did arise in our conversations, so I will mention it when appropriate; however, the vast majority of the data here refer to her Composition II courses. These courses take some different forms depending upon her focus. One version of the course (an honors section) addressed notions of ethics and "goodness." The version of the course under examination here focuses primarily on issues of diversity and the role of diversity in gaining knowledge and perceiving the world. As I will discuss more fully below, she grounds the course and the three student essays around a few core readings in three units: one about racial diversity, one about gender diversity, and one about the nature of education. Reading and writing interconnect considerably, but the reading that students do and the ideas that come from the various readings do much to inform the writing students do throughout this course.

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<sup>38</sup> I failed to follow up on her phrasing here, and I initially wondered if Amy felt that her training was inadequate or otherwise ineffectual or if this phrasing suggests a negative view of writing instruction overall. However, after reviewing my write-up of her case study, Amy told me that this comment was more out of her concern that she would inaccurately cite names or theories.

*Amy's Philosophy*

As I mentioned above, Amy wants to provide students with instruction that prepares them both for their future academic careers and for their civic lives. To achieve this, she intertwines a number of attitudes and approaches that impel students to investigate challenging, nettlesome issues and to do so relying mostly on the conventions of academic argumentation. She hopes that by engaging students in issues that matter to the larger world (and perhaps to them), students will engage in the work readily and learn what it means to communicate in the academy and to attempt to persuade an informed, if skeptical, audience.

*Engaging Students*

Much like Tracy and Carol (and the vast majority of instructors, I dare assume), Amy has a strong interest in drawing her students into work of the course, from classroom discussions, to small out-of-class assignments, and to the major essays they write. She cultivates this engagement in two ways: developing their investment in the content and giving them agency as they work with that content.

Her focus overall is to have students actively participate in scholarly conversations. Given the emphasis on more practical as opposed to liberal views of education common in the wider culture these days, Amy seems to recognize that for students to see the worth of these scholarly conversations beyond this class and the academy, students need to have some buy-in to those conversations. Amy begins developing student investment in the course through their work with the readings, which she sees as following a certain, though flexible, process. In our initial interview, she describes a three-day plan in her approaches to readings (though she acknowledges that this is not always the case). On the first day, students simply work through the claims of the text to uncover its meaning and its arguments. To establish more fully students'

connections to these texts and their ideas, she often has students engage in some outside work in which they will look for examples or challenges to the arguments in a particular reading. For example, she describes working with a reading about “fast food advertising that’s marketed at men.” Students were then to find examples of similar ads that they could share and discuss with the class. All of this occurs before they begin to debate the claims of the reading. When they reach the third day or so, “we could agree, we could disagree. We [have] all kinds of evidence to do that.” Through this process, students begin to compile evidence from the text and from their outside work on it, so by the time they begin to participate in the conversation, they have reasons and evidence for their views and are more invested in addressing those views and participating in that conversation. In doing this work, students will have spent time with the text and its ideas, will have looked for connections of those ideas to the world around them, and in all likelihood will have become more committed to arguing certain points of view in relation to that text.

To further develop this sense of investment, Amy allows students to determine some of the work they do for the course. One way Amy provides this sense of control is through her discussion leader assignment. For this assignment, students work in a small group (three to four) and select an essay for which they will lead the discussion. This student-led discussion comes after the class has worked together to explain the themes and claims from the essay. The leader group posts three questions to the discussion board the night before class and is responsible for beginning and sustaining the discussion throughout the class meeting. In short, they take over Amy’s role as teacher for a day, and she sees her role as that of modeling what she wants from students in these discussions. This grew out of her desire “to make sure there [is] always a student voice happening.” Amy’s goal for this, aside from students having a voice, is for

“students to guide things, [...] to find questions that matter to them, [...] and] to dig a little deeper and make connections to other things.”

She further promotes student control through the assignments she gives them. For their first assignment in the course, students used Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” to address a current issue about race. Aside from this specification, the topic was broadly construed because Amy “wanted them to follow their bliss.” The results, though, disappointed her somewhat, mostly because she recognized that students at our institution lacked experience with racial diversity that would have nuanced their discussions more substantially. After this, she says she imposed a few more constraints in the second essay. While she does give them two specific options for the second essay, both leave room for students to follow their interests. In the first option, she asks students to choose a contemporary gender issue that needs change, and the second option asks them to choose an issue related to ideas of gender binaries and fluidity raised by the Judith Butler selection they read. And students generated some interesting topics. In our post-observation interview, Amy reported what topics students had chosen, some of which included “changing gender roles in Russia,” how a culture with strict gender roles (Japan) would respond to Butler’s argument, and gender non-conformity on college campuses. Even when more “constrained,” students were still able to “follow their bliss”—and Amy recognized their excitement about their topics. By allowing students to determine some of their own goals, she gives value to their ideas, for as she says, “[S]ometimes, we need that reminder that they really do have great ideas, and they’re really capable of doing it on their own, and sometimes the best class is the one where you’re not in charge of it.”

*Big Ideas and Liberal Education*

To further facilitate student engagement, Amy strives to make the work worthwhile for students by making important, meaningful ideas the focus of the course content. These ideas come from the reader she uses, *A World of Ideas* by Lee Jacobus. This reader includes numerous challenging readings on topics ranging from science to government and ethics to culture. In using this reader and its ideas, Amy enacts liberal education notions of breadth of knowledge, social awareness, and complexity of thought.

Amy's intent seems to be to get them to engage with these "big ideas." To engage with these ideas is not simply to understand them. This engagement starts with understanding, but she wants it to expand beyond understanding and into response and synthesis. Throughout our conversations, she talks about the importance of students being able to see how ideas connect to other ideas and to examine the significance of those connections. (I will say more about this below as these connections are an integral part of her pedagogy in themselves.) Engagement with the ideas, then, is an active process, and one that should be challenging work for them. She wants students to work with difficult texts, to have "something meaty to play around with" for both class discussions and their essays. This desire grew out of her experience teaching an intellectual heritage class at a different university. Through that work, she developed the sense that it is "good for kids to grapple with big ideas." In so doing, this prepares them for the work of the university and its complexities, which I will address more fully when discussing her emphasis on academic literacy.

To put this in other terms, Amy wants students not only to understand these big ideas but also to be willing and able to debate them (in the academic sense—through persuasive use of evidence and reason), whether in class or in their own writing. As discussed above, the class uses

roughly three-days to develop the evidence and reasons necessary to engage in meaningful debate about the readings and their ideas. On the day I observed Amy's class, debate was indeed what I witnessed. It did take students a little while to warm up, but by the end of class, they were wrestling with notions of gender fluidity and gender binaries. Students aired their agreements (often qualified) or disagreements with Butler and with each other. In many of their responses, students seemed to truly grapple with the tensions Butler's ideas created with the wider culture and with their own experiences. They drew on passages from the text and their own lived and cultural experiences to argue their positions. They did not reach consensus, of course, but they debated respectfully and well, something that Amy saw as successful in itself. In essence, students were engaging in informed and thoughtful conversation about a complex, relevant social issue, and they seemed to recognize that the point was not the debate itself but being able to respond to someone else's claims and put this all into a larger conversation about the issue (gender fluidity, in this case).

More than even engaging in debates about such complex topics, Amy wants students to take this work with ideas beyond their class. In part, she sees this as preparing them for work with complex ideas elsewhere in the academy. More substantially, she seems to approach engagement with ideas from a liberal education mentality. In the pre-observation interview, she talks about the ability for general education writing courses to provide places to introduce students to new ideas and different perspectives on their ideas. While she frames this largely in terms of diversity (more on this in the next section), the point is making her composition classroom a place where students encounter those sorts of ideas that will challenge them and will prompt debate and questioning. The end goal of this liberal education focus is for students to internalize these approaches to ideas, allowing them to engage with such ideas as they exist in

the real world. This is first a matter of intentional application, of applying these ideas to events happening in the world around them. The second is more incidental but no less important. She wants them to “[look] at the world a little differently. I hope sometime later in the day [after their class], they were walking through the Union and saw something and thought, ‘Huh, this is exactly what Judith Butler was trying to explain.’ I hope they look at the men’s room and the women’s restroom and said, ‘This would be really hard for some people.’” In other words, she hopes these big ideas and this liberal education approach help students commit to an intellectual life of awareness, understanding, empathy, and questioning, which also derives from her use of a cultural studies approach in her teaching.

### *Cultural Studies*

In our initial interview, Amy discussed some of her approaches to Composition I. At one point, she says, “I don’t do [...] a load of the cultural criticism. I know that’s sort of the bread and butter of the regular [Composition I...].” Initially, I saw this as a refutation of a cultural studies approach, but in her Composition II course, Amy does indeed embrace a cultural studies approach, at least in the iteration used for this case study.<sup>39</sup> As I noted in Chapter IV, cultural studies and critical pedagogy approaches comprise a focus on cultural themes and artifacts, attention to the intersections of language and power, a sense of empowering students academically and civically, and an interest in politically emancipatory goals, among other traits. As we will see, the subject matter and some of the goals of Amy’s course work consistently toward such ends.

Amy views her general education writing courses (and this course in particular) as an opportunity to promote diversity. In the pre-observation interview, she laments the fact that our

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<sup>39</sup> She does say that she teaches this course with different themes, pointing to the focus on ethics she used in her previous version of the course.

institution scored poorly in terms of diversity in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), saying students “report on graduating that they did not encounter other people with different opinions.” She took it upon herself in this class to try to change this. “Composition is a place where we can do something about that. No matter what students are here, we can give them texts that represent really diverse opinions, and we can make them engage with other writing that has diverse opinions. Once we start doing that, there are going to be people in this room who have different opinions that they would never have realized.” Here, then, Amy points to not only diversity but also challenges to the status quo and empowerment of students by giving them greater insights into the perceptions that exist in the world around them and into their own perceptions.

To take up this challenge, she structured the course around three main units—race, gender, and education—with the goal of exposing students to not only topics about diversity but also diverse viewpoints about those topics. Within each of these units, she draws on a variety of texts. As she says in the syllabus, the readings from the course “will range across historical periods and cultures—from educational theories of the third century B.C.E., to eighteenth century feminism, to the civil rights debates of the 1960s, to gender bending in the 1990s.” The first unit focuses on race, using Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” Her intent in this unit was to have students consider a contemporary civil rights issue through the lens of Dr. King’s ideas. The results, she felt, were mixed at best. Some of the papers were “so unknowingly racist,” and she recognized that students “had all of these wonderfully politically correct things to say about African Americans, but then suddenly somebody brought up Native Americans, and what they had to say was very different. Or somebody brought up gay rights, and now suddenly what they agreed with in King was for King.” Nevertheless, Amy still feels this



work is important, even if the results were less than she had hoped for. Even simply exposing students to the idea of looking at contemporary civil rights issues that they may not agree with through the lens of past civil rights arguments that they largely agree with may lead to future changes in their perceptions.

For this case study, though, most of the materials Amy gave to me related to her second unit on gender issues. In this, the cultural studies trends in her pedagogy were obvious. The two main readings for this unit were Mary Wollstonecraft's "Of the Pernicious Effects Which Arise from the Unnatural Distinctions Established in a Society" and a selection from Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender*. During the class session I observed, Amy and the students discussed the Butler selection. In this discussion, students debated the nature of gender, discussed their own experiences with gender norms, and pointed to the difficulties faced by people who do not fit neatly into prescribed gender binaries. These discussions extended into debates about power and cultural norms (e.g., who gets to decide what the norms are and why). And Amy was elated about their work in this. In the post-observation interview, she expresses her happiness in their willingness to work through and debate these issues, to consider other perspectives in terms of gender norms.

But it was in the assignments for this unit that the major emphasis on cultural studies arose. She provided me with two tasks that she assigns students related to this: a small assignment and a major essay. The small assignment, "Shopping for Gender," asked students to simply go to a store, such as Walmart, and look through the toy aisles. She provided them with a worksheet of sorts, one that asked them to consider a variety of questions about the gender messages conveyed through the toys: the nature of girls' and boys' toys, which toys are active or passive and how those relate to gender, what bikes look like for each gender, and so on. This

assignment, then, aims to prepare students to discuss gender norming that begins in childhood and encourages students to look at cultural artifacts for their messages about gender norms. The major essay continues this work, but at a higher level. Students had one of two options for this essay. They could either “choose a specific claim from Wollstonecraft’s text that [they] think is still relevant today and write an argumentative essay to show [their] audience *what* we need to change and *why*” (original emphasis), or they could draw on Butler’s text and “consider *how* gender binaries shape a specific area of culture (e.g., toys, clothing, music, film and television, sports) and write an argumentative essay to show readers *why* we should or shouldn’t expand our notions of gender in this area” (original emphasis). The intent, at minimum, is to encourage students to begin questioning and possibly challenging these norms and extant power structures and, even further, to argue for change to cultural norms through an examination of culture and some of its artifacts. This is guided practice in the critique of cultural assumptions about gender with the goal of promoting this sort of critique in other contexts.

Her use of a cultural studies approach seems to extend from the emphasis on complex ideas. These issues (race, gender, education) all raise thorny questions and have engendered considerable debate, as evidenced by the wide range of historical periods reflected in their course readings. By drawing on these, she gives the students some ideas to discuss in class and in their writings; in short, they provide some focus for students’ ideas and some subject matter for class discussions and students’ essays. She also uses these to help students recognize and challenge the norms around them—their own and those of the wider culture. All of this is an effort to achieve her goal in constructing the course as she did: to prompt students to interact with diverse opinions, thereby improving the diversity of their own thinking.

*Connections*

While cultural studies shapes the subject matter of the course, the idea of connections establishes what Amy hopes students do with the ideas generated by the course. To clarify a bit, this idea of connections does not seem to be about unity, that is, finding a certain coherence among ideas, but rather connection addresses a sense of conversation and of looking for relationships (whether compatible or contradictory) among ideas. Primarily, these connections come through their work with texts in which they discover and/or develop these connections. During our pre-observation interview, while she was discussing how she scaffolds their work with texts in class discussions, she frames her idea of connections quite succinctly: “I want them to make connections either to what we read or to something they’ve experienced in the world, to start figuring out why we even bother reading Judith Butler. What good is she to us? What can we do with her?” These connections come in the form of connecting to other ideas in the course, to their own ideas and experiences, to their writing, and to contexts beyond the class—coming back to her liberal education goals.

Amy looks to start building these connections inside the class and then help students consider connections to those contexts beyond the class. As we discussed her plans for the class meeting I was going to observe, she said that through their discussion of Butler’s text she “want[s] them to make connections to the other things we’ve read so far.” This includes not only the Wollstonecraft essay they had read two weeks prior but also with the gender shopping task she had them complete, looking for ways Butler’s ideas might connect to other texts or artifacts or experiences related to their work in the course. In some ways, students did work toward this goal in the class I observed, but Amy was prepared to help them should they miss some possible connections. When students circled in close to ideas from other readings or class discussions but

did not quite land on them, Amy was quick to point to those, asking students if they remembered what Wollstonecraft or King had said or referring them to a previous discussion about gender norms based on the gender shopping assignment, which usually led to more discussion among students.

The next step is for students to consider connections of ideas generated in the class to contexts beyond the class. She encourages students to consider how a text and its ideas relate to their own lives and experiences. In some ways, this is about developing in students their ability to synthesize ideas. To do this, she wants them to discover how their lived experiences connect to ideas from a certain text rather than predetermining that for them. While students may have needed some prompting from Amy to uncover some of the connections to other texts and ideas from the class, they needed little help when making such connections to their own experiences. During class discussion, students were more than willing to share their experiences. Several of the female students in the class discussed their experiences facing gender stereotypes. One female student in particular identified herself as a “tom boy” and spoke to the negative effects she experienced because others did not consider her “girly” enough. These kinds of experiences led students to weigh the kinds of challenges facing someone like David/Brenda (who was born male but as the result of disfigurement during surgery was raised female) discussed in Butler’s text, which was, of course, Amy’s goal.

Undoubtedly, the key goal of these connections is to generate ideas for students to explore in their writing. After especially productive points of discussion, Amy would highlight useful topics they could explore for their upcoming essay. That major essay, which allows students to choose one of two options to complete it, asks students to think about this idea of connection. Between my observation and our post-observation interview, Amy had talked with

students about their topic choices and was quite excited about the connections they were making (see my discussion about engaging students for a few examples).

Another type of connection to consider here is how the course readings connect structurally to students' writing, that is, how the readings serve as models for students. However, even though she asks students to seek connections in and across texts, their experiences, and their writing, she also sees a certain disconnect between the nature of students' writing and what she asks them to read for the course. In our post-observation interview, she comments that students need to work to create clear writing for their audience "because we're not Judith Butler, so [students] need to make [their argument] a little clearer than she does." This led to a conversation about this distinction, a discussion she wishes she would have had with students: "I wish they had asked that [...] because most of what we read doesn't look like what they're supposed to write, and that's so often the case in comp. But I think they're starting to figure that out." Since Wollstonecraft and Butler do not look like what she wants them to produce, she says she does give them a shorter, simpler text about gender, Sameer Pandya's "The Picture of Men: Superhero or Slacker" (published in *Pacific Standard*), which more closely models how she hopes they will write. She ultimately sees this as a matter of rhetorical connection, saying, "I want them to produce writing that everybody within their interpretive community knows what to do with. And so in academia, we write in a particular way so that we all know what to expect from each other. But we respond to things in the world that are following different genres."

Aside from using the idea of connections to help students produce work for the class, Amy wants them to carry this process of making connections beyond her class, reflected in the subtitle she had given her course: "How to Change the World." As she says in the course description, the class "will consider how writers have used their rhetorical skills to challenge

prevailing customs and argue for change. And through our discussions and writing exercises, you will have the opportunity to use these classic texts to argue for the changes *you* would like to see in the world” (original emphasis). The assignments, too, ask students to think about the kinds of change they want to see in the “real” world. For the first assignment about Dr. King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” students were to explore how his arguments relate to a contemporary civil rights issue. In the gender unit, students were to argue for certain kinds of changes in cultural norms and perceptions of gender. In short, students were to take the ideas from inside the class and apply them to issues outside the class. The academic nature of the writing they did relates to connection academic writing to the work they will do elsewhere in the university outside of this class, but I will discuss that more fully when I talk about transfer in the next section.

#### *Academic Literacy and Transfer*

Despite the importance and effort Amy gives to the other elements of her pedagogy, the heart of her practices rest on developing students’ knowledge of and abilities with academic literacy. Indeed, her attention to academic literacy allows her a way to weave together these various pedagogical threads in a coherent fashion. In her class, students work with complex ideas, ones relating to and challenging cultural perceptions, and look for connections with other ideas and their own experiences. As she says in her syllabus, the course is “designed to develop critical thinking, writing, and research skills.” These receive specific mention because they represent the sort of work academics do and thus what the students will be likely to do throughout the remainder of their academic careers.

Important for Amy in developing students’ academic literacy is working with ideas and sources. Amy develops this through a scaffolded process. They start building these practices by

working with claims authors make in their texts. As they work with a reading from their anthology, Amy and the students start with identifying the claims. “I imagine if we’re reading a thing on the first day, we’re going to do something that’s really about the ‘they say’ part of it. We’re going to identify claims; we’re going to figure out the reasoning that the author is arguing. [...] But we’re not jumping in there [i.e., identifying what they agree or disagree with] right away [...]” The goal is to set up an understanding of the text and its ideas, giving them a place from which to build. The major essays, too, demonstrate the importance placed on an essay’s claims, especially in the capacity for these claims to generate ideas for students’ essays. In both options for the second major essay, she invites students to identify specific claims from the text they are working with (Wollstonecraft or Butler) and apply that claim to a contemporary issue of their choosing. In other words, the text provides inventive material for students’ writing.

This work with ideas and texts leads them into conducting and incorporating research into their thinking and writing. Again, the progression of in-class discussion intends to promote the idea that students need to reinforce their positions with textual evidence, with other examples and illustrations, but Amy also wants them to move these in-class practices into their writing. She explicitly builds these into her course description (“This course is designed to develop [...] research skills”) and in the student learning outcomes (“students should be able to [...] conduct research in scholarly and popular sources to support arguments”). This, too, is scaffolded and begins rather practically. She mentions in several instances that she makes time in class to help them navigate the library’s databases and find sources, and she reminds them of specific places in their handbook that offers advice on recognizing and evaluating different types of sources. She then devises small assignments to help them in their work with sources: finding certain types of sources (e.g., editorials vs. news stories, scholarly sources vs. popular ones) or connecting a

scholarly source to an essay they read for class. Finally, they are to synthesize these ideas by incorporating sources into their major essays. For example, in the second essay, both options require two outside sources (one a peer-reviewed scholarly article) and “direct textual evidence from the course text and two outside sources.” This work helps students move beyond personal opinions and ground their claims in research, sources, and textual evidence.

Amy ultimately wants the work they do with sources to strengthen their abilities to analyze information and, through the connections they develop with other information, to synthesize information, thereby creating their own ideas and arguments. These become important goals to her as she feels that students need the most help with these practices, synthesis in particular. In discussing her goals for the course in the pre-observation interview, Amy says,

[A]s far as the critical reading, critical writing part of the course, which is the heart of it, they need practice analyzing, and I think they need practice synthesizing. I mean, they still need help analyzing, but I think the synthesizing part is really a surprise and difficult for them. So they're ready to meet me where I say you need to know what this article argues or what this person says, and they struggle with that. But when I expect them to now do something new with it, tell me why I should care, what [...] else is has to do with, [...] there are a lot of them who are just sort of like, “I'm sorry, what now?”

Because of these perceived needs, Amy designs her course with them in mind. Her course description mentions they will “practice analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing ideas,” and three of her student learning outcomes connect to this work: “summarize, analyze, and evaluate challenging texts [...] construct original and worthwhile arguments that respond to others' ideas [...] and] produce thoughtful writing [...]” Amy integrates these goals in her assignments for the



course, even in the small assignments. The gender shopping assignment, for example, gives students heuristics to help them analyze cultural artifacts (kids' toys and typical shopping centers), as well as opportunities to weigh in on how what they observe pertains to what they had been reading and discussing for class. In the second essay, the idea of synthesis becomes even more central. Students are not just analyzing claims by Wollstonecraft and Butler; they are finding their own interests and synthesizing ideas from their source material with their own goals and ideas.

What students are ultimately working on, then, is being able to produce academic discourse, to be able to take part in academic conversation. The development of this discourse begins with thinking in academic ways. Primarily, this relates to students' abilities to critically analyze texts and ideas and synthesize information based on that analysis, as I discussed above. Beyond this, though, is thinking more in argumentative terms. Both options of the second essay ask students to raise and support an argument about their particular topic, and the class session I observed focused on students making claims and turning to the text and to their own experiences to support those claims. Therefore, the class discussions serve as practice for the kinds of academic debates they are to engage in when writing their essays; Amy wants students to be able argue by making a claim and backing it up. Or as she says, "[T]hat's really what I'm hoping for. They can argue anything they want if they argue it well.

This thinking, then, is to turn toward the idea of academic debates as contextualized, as conversations. Her extensive use of Gerald Graff and Kathy Birkenstein's book *They Say/I Say*, which examines ways academics incorporate and respond to other parts of the conversation surrounding a given topic suggest this view of academic debate. Amy further solidifies its importance in her course syllabus, writing that students will "[c]onstruct original and worthwhile

arguments that respond to others' ideas" thereby "[participating] actively in scholarly conversation with peers and a broader audience." Embedded in this is the ability and willingness to consider multiple points of view, which during the class observation, students were engaged in doing, giving each other time to speak and responding to one another's and Butler's viewpoints. In the post-observation interview, Amy spoke to this, noting that she was excited that students were willing to look at these different perspectives, especially regarding David/Brenda from Butler's text. Students recognized that "it's bad for people like David [...] that these gender norms weighed heavily on him. On the other hand, there are ways they make like more convenient." This sort of examination of other elements of the conversation is important to her. As she confesses, "[M]y secret agenda is that whatever position they're holding, I want them to start thinking about how the other side is valid. There's something there, you know. It's not that everybody else is stupid and you're right. Even if you still believe you're right when you're done, I do want them to be able to see why someone else could legitimately believe the opposite." Students are not just gathering or developing information to support their points; they should be paying attention to possible counterarguments, thus developing their ability to think through and argue about different positions.

Of course, Amy wants to see students not just recognize these conversations but to be able to take part in them. This shows up in the assignment for the second major essay in its source requirements but also in the emphasis on engaging with texts' ideas, to add their own voice to the conversations these sources are initiating. For example, the first option for the second essay asks students to focus on "a specific claim from Wollstonecraft's text," but they are to use this as a lens to examine a gender issue that they see as important and worth challenging and changing. In other words, the assignment is asking them not simply to rephrase a

conversation someone else is/was having but to engage actively in that conversation and make it relevant to their thoughts and concerns. While I did not get to see the results of this assignment, I did see how students were engaging in academic conversation during my class visit.

Finally, Amy wants students to engage in such conversations through “academic discourse.” This term makes several appearances throughout our conversations and the course documents she provided me. In her student learning outcomes in the syllabus, she notes that students should be able to “[p]roduce thoughtful writing that observes the conventions of academic discourse.” And in the assignment sheet for the second essay, she explains what a successful essay will consist of, criteria that largely correspond to what we might generally consider academic discourse: use of an arguable thesis statement, logical organization and paragraph structure, considerations of counterarguments, adherence to appropriate documentation guidelines, and support for one’s claims. Ultimately, she wants students to abide by that traditional “formula of thesis and support” but to do so in ways that are more fully aware of what this entails: that this is not just a simple formula but a way of arguing, a way of conversing in a specific context and abiding by certain conventions and expectations embedded in that context.

As was the case with her “big ideas” and cultural studies work, Amy seems to envision these academic literacy skills as transferable. In the more local sense, she wants students to be able to look within the class and transfer ideas from one reading, one class discussion to another, to see and explore how the ideas they are discussing related to each other and to their own thinking. She also wants students to be able to transfer their work to other parts of their academic lives, to be able to take what they learn about critical reading and writing, about analysis and synthesis, and apply those ideas to other classes. Amy, in her hope that students take what they

learn beyond the academic context, also wants students to be able to apply these critical thinking and analytical skills to their lives outside of the university.

*Amy and the Schemas: Preparing Students for Academic and Civic Life*

Overall, Amy's pedagogical identity bears some similarities to both Carol's and Tracy's. Like Carol, her approaches have a considerable amount of consistency. She has a clear sense of the goals she wants to achieve (such as academic literacy and the values of liberal education), how these goals relate to one another and the various practices she uses in the course, and how she wants them to manifest in the work students do for the course. Her academic focus, the breadth of ideas she addresses, and the attention to texts as material both for classroom discussions and student essays aligns her sensibilities with many of Tracy's sensibilities. Yet she has some distinctions from the other two participants. She seems to give more direct attention to cultural studies, especially in the form of diversity, challenging existing cultural norms, and use of cultural topics and artifacts for subject matter for the course and students' essays. And while the other two hint at some elements of a liberal education, Amy embraces that goal more fully. Finally, Amy gives more attention to the role others' ideas and texts play in relation to student writing. These pedagogical approaches and values allow her to fall somewhere in the middle of the reading/writing and institution/instructor/student schemas and somewhere in between the academic and real-world poles of the academic/real world/personal schema.

*Reading/Writing*

Writing certainly drives Amy's courses, but during our conversations, the discussions tended to focus more on reading. Seemingly, then, she works to develop students' academic literacies through interpretation of, response to, and synthesis of ideas generated by the course's readings. Therefore, the point is not simply the interpretation of texts but rather the development

of students' abilities to communicate in academic contexts—that is, to write texts that exemplify and exhibit the hallmarks of academic discourse, such as clear arguments, effective use of evidence and reason, and academic conventions. While the readings do not serve as models exactly, they do support students' writing in terms of invention and source material for their essays. Furthermore, Amy's schedule brings writing to the fore in ways that are not as apparent in our conversation. Throughout the entire course, students only read a handful of essays (fewer than ten), and while they may spend a few days on each essay, the bulk of the work of the course according to the schedule is spent exploring the conventions of academic discourse through *They Say/I Say* and the handbook. Although writing is not infused into Amy's course as it is in Carol's course, writing does have a strong presence in Amy's pedagogy.

Amy's most explicit statement of the position of writing in her courses comes relatively early in our conversation, noting that in her syllabi she establishes that students will “summarize, analyze, and evaluate challenging texts; construct original, worthwhile arguments that respond to others' ideas; conduct research [using] scholarly and popular sources; participate actively in scholarly conversations; and produce thoughtful writing that observes the conventions of academic discourse.” (I will add to this statement shortly as it highlights the intertwining of reading and writing that characterizes Amy's teaching.) Thus, Amy points to the importance of students' abilities to create and develop researched academic arguments.

It is in this, though, that Amy begins to shift her focus toward reading. For students to develop those “original, worthwhile arguments,” Amy feels that for students to write well (at least in the academic sense, they need others' ideas and a deeper sense of conceptual context. A closer look at the passage cited above shows its connections to others' ideas: working with other texts, “responding to others' ideas,” and researching using a variety of sources. Certainly, this is

all relatively typical, but those interests in “challenging texts” and working with others’ ideas shape a significant portion of Amy’s pedagogy.

Amy structures many of her lessons around working with and understanding complicated texts. Her main reader for the course, *A World of Ideas*, is a “big ideas” reader, and from it, students read works by Mary Wollstonecraft, Friedrich Nietzsche, Judith Butler, and Hsun Tzu (among others, depending on the larger thematic structure she establishes for the course). Students begin work with such texts by addressing what the author’s points are, trying “to figure out the reasoning that the author’s arguing, and we might start posing some questions about it, look[ing] for places we can then maybe jump in. But we’re not jumping in there right away because they all want to say, ‘I don’t think so,’ or ‘Oh, yes.’ And I don’t care ‘yes’ or ‘no’ yet—I care later, but I don’t care on day one.” What she is interested initially is if students will “actually engage with what the author is saying.” After this initial work, they often examine examples from their experiences or the wider culture to see how the ideas from a reading may or may not apply. Again, she wants to delay their agreements and disagreements to encourage them to focus on why some might believe or not believe the author’s claims. Finally, after all of this (perhaps, as she says, on day three), students can begin to air agreements and disagreements. This way, their opinions are grounded in a context created by the class. This work carries over into their writing assignments in which they typically use a certain claim from an essay and apply it to a related issue in contemporary culture of each student’s choosing.

The point of this is to challenge students’ views and to encourage them to approach other texts, including their own, in critical ways. Her intent is not that students agree or disagree with the texts they read. Rather, she wants to give them the means to establish and support their agreement and disagreement. And as became clear throughout our conversations, in the

classroom observation, and in her course documents, Amy seems to want students to take this approach into their writing, to take the conversations and ideas that have come up in class and produce some writing based on them.

*Academic/Real World/Personal*

Clearly, the reading and writing that occur in Amy's writing courses largely academic in nature and purpose. She sees the work with difficult texts as preparing them for difficulties they will face as they proceed in their academic careers, and the kind of texts they are to produce draw significantly on academic rhetorical patterns of argument and research. Any real-world connections relate to developing students' social and civic mindedness, often serving to make tangible what is happening in the academic texts they are reading (e.g., looking for an advertisement that points to certain gender norms as they examine an essay by Judith Butler or considering how Dr. King's ideas in "Letter from Birmingham Jail" can inform contemporary civil rights debates).

One place to begin positioning Amy in the academic/real world/personal schema is to identify what it mostly is not, and that is personal. Amy largely avoids personal elements in this aside from the idea that students' essay should be based, first, in the texts and ideas they are encountering in the class and, second, in the students' choice of what socio-cultural issues are important to examine in light of these texts and ideas. Indeed, she even tries to tamp down personal responses. As noted above, when they work as a class on a text, she quickly snuffs out the initial personal responses until they have established a baseline of information about the text's claims and its possible connections to the world around them.

But perhaps a better place to begin positioning Amy on the academic/real world/personal schema is with the core statement of her goals for students: working with challenging texts,

creating meaningful arguments, conducting effective research, engaging in academic conversations, and abiding by the standards of academic discourse. This statement grounds nearly the entire aim of her writing pedagogy in academic values: working with others' ideas and texts, responding to those, researching, developing one's own arguments and ideas, and adhering to a sense of academic convention.

This work begins with the texts students work with for class. As noted above, their consumption of texts is meant to be generative, and the kinds of texts they examine are almost exclusively academic in nature. This helps students prepare for working with difficulty elsewhere in the university. As she says, "it sort of gears them up for all kinds of difficulty because a college class should pose difficulties." Furthermore, Amy tries to incorporate texts from a variety of disciplines, for example, gender studies, journalism, political science, and philosophy. In part, this is because she recognizes that her course consists of students who are not in or interested in the humanities. But more so, the reasoning is a desire for applicability beyond this class, to familiarize them with distinct writing styles and differing audience expectations, and to make them aware of different notions of evidence.

This all works toward the academic nature of the texts they are to write. This consists of research and argumentation. In terms of research, Amy sees this as a possible identity for the Composition II course, as a way to distinguish it from Composition I. She wants students to engage in some "rigorous researching" in this course, and she sees the work with complex texts as part of that researching. Part of that work is to help students recognize the need for evidence to support their claims, hence the resistance to "I feel" responses early in class discussions of a given reading. Additionally, the research and textual work immerses students more so in the conversations existing around a particular topic, allowing them to prepare stronger arguments.



They are able “at least for a little while to adopt views that they don’t want to” (to look at an issue from multiple viewpoints) and explain their reasoning for their own positions.

What Amy seems to hope for all of this is that their work in the class will transfer to other courses. As I have already mentioned, she explicitly intends the work they do in reading and discussing complicated texts to go with students to other classes, preparing them for textual difficulties ahead. She is a little more subtle and implicit about notions of transfer related to writing. However, based on her perceptions of argument, evidence, and rhetorical situation in the texts students read and in the general academic values (conversation, argument, support) she wants to see in students’ texts, I do not think it much of a stretch to claim that Amy sees writing skills as transferable.

And not only does she hope to see these skills transfer to other academic contexts, but she also wants them to transfer to the real world in terms of greater social, cultural, and civic awareness. In part, this is about being able to examine and critique the cultural norms surrounding us, as she asks students to do in the gender shopping assignment, in which students are to observe, analyze, and reflect upon how gender norming begins at a young age through toys and games. Moreover, she wants their work to make them see the world a bit differently. She hopes that after reading Judith Butler, students will look at something as simple as a restroom sign and recognize the cultural and gender implications that go along with it and how some people may struggle with those implications depending upon their own perceptions of gender. While her focus is primarily academic, Amy also makes considerable room in her pedagogy for these real-world debates.

*Institutional/Instructor/Student*

Given some of Amy's statements cited above, she sees her pedagogy as one that benefits students, even if primarily in academic contexts. Yet she does not necessarily draw directly from their goals and interests. Instead, she draws much from her own experiences and values. And as a new faculty member, she feels she must rely on those experiences and values more so. She has a sense of what she would like the curricular requirements to be, but she notes a level of uncertainty about what those requirements or expectations are. Thus, Amy's own goals and experiences significantly influence her pedagogical choices within this schema.

Amy is interested in certain institutional values and broader curricular goals for required writing courses. For example, she points to a course she taught at previous institution. In approaching that course, a course with some wide-ranging views as to its purpose and one she describes as a "mess," Amy said she and her colleagues used the prescribed goals for the course, "and we clung to them." Aside from this broader sense of at least some value in prescribed goals, her interests in such goals relate here to establishing a clear trajectory and set of distinctions for Composition I and Composition II. As she says, "It helps to have some sort of identity to the program that you can point [out] to students and say, "This is what it's about." For her, this identity would consist of Composition I being a course in argument and Composition II placing research in a more focused and prominent position (which fits well with her approaches to her own writing courses).

However, Amy speaks to some uncertainties about the curriculum, specifically not knowing what the goals and distinctions of Composition I and Composition II were when she first arrived—and she seems to suggest that this uncertainty continues. Even with a couple of semesters behind her, she still claims to not "know if it [her course] is anything like what

anybody else does.” This uncertainty affects her approaches to what her courses cover. She points to research as an example, noting that Composition I needs to have a substantial research component beyond what she might otherwise want in her ideal curriculum. Quite simply, this is because she does not “know what’s going to happen in the [Composition II] that they take [...].” She continues, stating that she does not “know what happens to them when they leave, and I don’t want them to not know how to research.” As a result, she applies to her Composition I courses the same “research standard” that she uses in her Composition II.

Because of these uncertainties, Amy says her goal became “to give them the best thing that I [could] give them [...].” She fell back on her own goals (described above), creating courses grounded in academic literacy. In part, these goals extended from the class she called a “mess.” This was a course that had students reading “really challenging works from our intellectual heritage [and] history.” Even though she had some concerns about the course, she feels “it was good for kids to grapple with big ideas that are presented in ways that are not necessarily catering to us as readers.” In short, Amy’s interests in academic literacy, challenging texts for both the sake of the challenge they offer and for their ideas, and liberal education shape the bulk of her teaching goals.

This does not mean that her interests totally eclipse those of her students. The idea of helping them prepare academically for work that they will face as they advance in their college careers undoubtedly fits at least partially into some students’ goals. But she makes a statement later in the interview that points a bit more directly to her goal of helping students. As she discusses the benefits of her tutoring experiences in a writing center, she notes how it helped prepare for teaching by preparing her to deal with student problems in writing—and to do so in ways that was not simply fixing the problem for students but that were teaching them how to fix

the problems for themselves. While this was somewhat of an aside, I think it speaks to her desire to develop students' academic literacy capabilities in ways that would help them apply those capabilities beyond her course. Yet these goals came from her individual aims and experiences, and she set the emphasis on academic literacy skills over more real-world literacy skills, thus not drawing specifically from the aims of her students.

The data that Amy supplied for this case study reveal strong interconnections of reading and writing related to the development of academic literacy, responses to curricular uncertainty, and a belief in challenging students to think and write about big ideas in a liberal-education fashion. Grounded almost exclusively in an academic milieu, Amy's courses rely much on reading to "give students something meaty to play around with" and thus to help them write the kinds of academic texts she sees as most beneficial to them. Benefitting students is her goal, and she draws on her own knowledge and experiences to develop and validate her practices and values.

## CHAPTER VII

### CRAFTING A PEDAGOGICAL IDENTITY

Throughout my research of my colleagues and analysis of the data they provided, I wondered why almost no one mentioned the traditional writing pedagogies in their contributions. Certainly, as the data seem to indicate, faculty members may align with or wholly embrace certain practices that we might call *expressive* or *cultural studies*, for example. Yet very few participants seemed to claim such labels directly. Carol, for instance, clearly employs a largely expressive pedagogy and even references Peter Elbow in one instance. However, she never uses the label *expressive* to describe how she teaches. She mentions the importance of process, of making the writing of personal significance to the students, and of having students provide each other regular and meaningful feedback (among several other expressive practices). As I mentioned in Chapter V, the value of the traditional pedagogical taxonomies may lie less in their ability to categorize whole pedagogies than in naming specific, contextualized practices.

Furthermore, faculty members seemed to move around within the various schemas and across certain pedagogical ideologies as they saw fit for their context and goals. Amy and Carol tended toward certain areas consistently, aligning them with academic literacy and expressive focuses, respectively, but they also showed instances in which they moved toward other areas of the schemas as they deemed beneficial for their practices and their students. Tracy, perhaps more so, adopts practices and values relating to academic literacy, rhetoric in general, cultural studies, and even expressivism. In short, understanding faculty members' pedagogical positions requires a deep awareness of the faculty members themselves, what they value in writing and writing instruction, and the processes by which they have developed these values.

This creates a complex situation for writing program administrators (WPAs) to address, especially when they are seeking some sense of coherence in a system- or university-wide required writing course or sequence of required writing courses. If faculty members embrace varied and potentially conflicting notions of what constitutes effective writing pedagogy (including the design and content of their writing courses), how can a WPA lay claim to curricular coherence? Furthermore, if these pedagogies are more value-based than epistemological (as Gold suggests—and I agree), the WPA faces a difficult—even impossible—task of convincing faculty members to accept approaches that do not align with their values. They may agree to teach in certain ways or to use certain content, but they may not buy into those approaches or materials, a lack of commitment to the goals and content of the course that even first-year students are likely to recognize.

In response to this, WPAs might consider a simple but in-depth process like the one I employed in this study. Getting to know my colleagues pedagogically was an insightful experience, one that challenged many of my assumptions about them and what I expected to be their practices. I developed an understanding of my colleagues in two principal areas: what we share pedagogically and the process by which they develop their pedagogical approaches. Both of these areas are critical for WPAs seeking curricular coherence.

First, in recognizing commonalities, WPAs may be able to find common pathways to particular goals, pathways that are more likely to receive broader faculty support. Second, while we generally understand that one's pedagogy develops from a complex array of theories, experiences, and even intuitions, WPAs may need to consider the nature and process of the development of these pedagogies, a process I have come to label *crafting a pedagogical identity*. As I will explain, this process is both personal and social, is grounded in both experience and

knowledge, is both malleable and personally valued, and, therefore, is a process that requires the attention of the WPA and others involved in making curricular decisions for required writing courses, including the faculty members themselves.

### **Commonalities from the Data**

Before exploring how WPAs may think about responses to the various approaches and values faculty bring to the curricular table, I would like to tie together a few themes from all the data collected for this study but particularly from the in-depth portraits developed through the case study research. One of the first areas to consider is what values and goals faculty have in common. Based on the data provided by my colleagues, I can see three areas of commonality.

The first commonality is origination of faculty goals, and these strike me as largely an interplay of student, faculty, and institutional goals. On the one hand, faculty members who participated in this study are quite interested in meeting student demands—what students may be interested in, what students want to achieve in and through their writing. In having students write about personal topics and experiences, Carol is hoping that students will be able to write about material interesting to them. Tracy's use of scientific topics in her course also speaks to this desire to capture students' interests. And both instructors assign different tasks and genres to give students a broader writing experience that they may find useful in other courses. However, my colleagues also bring with them their own expectations and the sense of the expectations of others. Amy is a good example of a faculty member who draws on her own goals and her own sense of what she thinks is "good" for students, what they need to know and what they need to think about, especially her commitment to the idea that students need to tackle complex issues and concepts and wrestle with difficult texts. Despite relying strongly on her own goals, Amy also sees her pedagogical choices in relation to the wider institutional community and what

students will need to know how to do as they progress through their academic careers. Tracy, too, shows how other stakeholders influence her pedagogy by considering their demands in relation to what she teaches her students.

Another commonality, one a bit more complicated and part of a larger debate in writing studies, is the goal of transfer. To an extent, we might argue that this has long been the goal of required writing courses, though debates about the purpose along with the pejorative notions of “service” courses have led to some resistance to composition being about teaching transferable skills to other contexts in the university. Yet we might wonder if the goal is not to teach students about a variety of writing skills and concepts that they can transfer (we hope) to other situations, then what can we say is the purpose of required writing courses? Even in discipline-specific or more career-oriented writing courses, much of the goal is to learn about writing in ways that lend themselves to rhetorical adaptability.

In both the interviews and the case studies, my colleagues viewed transfer as both possible and a primary goal. Principally, participants in this study saw transfer in terms of academic literacy, that is, that a key goal of their course was to prepare students for the writing (and other tasks) they would need to complete throughout their academic careers, including work in different genres, research, and argumentation. All three of the case study participants adopted such a goal. Carol emphasizes the importance of process for all writing tasks, assigns writing tasks using different genres, and asks students to conduct research. Tracy promotes metacognitive awareness as a tool for analyzing and responding to different rhetorical situations, allows students to identify significant problems and research those problems and potential solutions, and uses argumentative strategies to help them in these efforts. Amy mentions explicitly her desire to prepare students for their work in later courses, pushing them to work



through difficult texts, write arguments about complex and thorny issues, and synthesize information.

In addition, instructors also shared a sense that students should be able to transfer the skills learning in a required writing course to more “real-world” contexts. Primarily, this type of transfer related to writing (and reading and thinking critically) skills in the workplace. Carol demonstrates this in the work with application and résumé writing she asked students to conduct, though this was only a brief venture into workplace writing for her course. Tracy, especially, views one of her goals as preparing students to write in the workplace. Certainly, her Technical Communication course exhibits this, but even while talking about her general pedagogical views, she notes that she sees employers as a primary group of stakeholders and thus seeks to create a pedagogy that might produce future employees who will meet employers’ expectations.

Instructors also see a real-world value in required writing courses related to preparing students for citizenship, to be thoughtful and critical participants in the world around them. For example, Tracy wants her students in her science-themed Composition II course to think not just about the science but about the ethics of science and about the implications of science for the environment and for humanity. Carol asks students to write a mock letter to the editor, which, in even a small way, speaks to an embrace of civic engagement. Amy seems to be the strongest proponent of using her course to transfer civic mindedness to her students. Through the course’s readings and discussions, Amy wants students to come away with the ability to recognize and appreciate others’ views and to allow those different views to shape the students’ own views, making them more conscientious and critically aware members of society.

Another substantial commonality was the goal of improving students’ rhetorical awareness. The goal of transfer that many of my colleagues seem to embrace relates to

developing in students a greater sense of rhetorical awareness. This is a widespread goal—nearly as widespread as notions of process writing. Often, the goal of rhetorical awareness comes up specifically in two ways. First, participants often mentioned the importance of audience and their desire to prompt students to consider an audience beyond simply the instructor. Second, participants would draw on different genres for students to use in their writing. Carol, for instance, had students examine the structure and narrative methods of N. Scott Momaday and apply those as well as more practical genres, including application letters and letters to the editor. Amy, too, had students work with distinctions between news and opinion articles and spoke about the difference in texts that students produced and those they consumed, both functions of genre and rhetorical awareness.

These approaches that the case study and interview participants discussed sought to help students understand the contextual and rhetorical nature of writing in the hope of preparing them to write in various contexts throughout their academic and professional careers. Indeed, this overlaps with transfer in that sense, but rhetorical awareness represents a way of thinking, a set of considerations a writer may make in determining and responding to a certain rhetorical situation, more so than it represents something that students achieve.

While none of these participants claimed so with any specificity, each of these areas of commonality revealed in the data align well with current areas of research and debate within writing studies (and even within higher education more generally). Transfer has been a recurrent and recently resurgent area of interest as scholars debate the possibility, perils, and concepts of transfer in writing studies (e.g., Beaufort; Blaauw-Hara; Brent; Driscoll and Wells; Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak). Rhetorical awareness, too, is of perennial interest and often receives special attention in disciplinary position statements (see, for example, Beaufort; “Principles”;

“WPA Outcomes”; “Written Communication”). Much like rhetorical awareness, process has been a key part of writing studies and its pedagogical methods since the 1970s, and even recent texts seek to maintain process’s place within writing studies scholarship and pedagogy (Beaufort; “Principles”; “WPA Outcomes”). Interestingly, my colleagues, whose practices pointed to or aligned with these current conversations in the scholarship, did not explicitly connect their views and practices to the scholarship. Instead, these larger issues seem to be filtered indirectly through my colleagues’ own experiences and practices, which suggests the importance of that experience, as well as contextual matters and the instructor’s own sense of pedagogical identity.

Also notable about each of these three areas of commonality is that not one of them stems from a certain pedagogical viewpoint. (Rhetorical awareness certainly aligns with the rhetoric and argumentation taxonomy, but it, like process, is not exclusive to it. An expressive instructor can draw on rhetorical approaches in certain contexts, as we can see with Carol’s approaches to genre.) To achieve these goals, then, instructors might employ any variety of pedagogical approaches that they see as appropriate to their ends. Furthermore, in doing so, faculty may negotiate between two end goals, the first being the ends faculty members wish to work toward with their students and the second being their interpretation of the program’s goals. As my research suggests, this is commonplace in my department (and I would hazard to say in most English departments). Therefore, instructors may draw on different experiences depending on the demands of the situation and their experiences—different student needs, new or revised institutional demands, additional faculty development, and so on. Pedagogical work becomes a recursive and rhetorical process, much like the writing process itself. As a result, faculty members do not fit into clearly delineated pedagogical categories. Many, in fact, may embrace approaches that, if we view them through an epistemological lens, seem inconsistent with one

another. But this does not mean that instructors arrive at these practices haphazardly. Rather, they seem to engage in an experiential, rhetorical, identity-based process that I call crafting a pedagogical identity.

### **Crafting a Pedagogical Identity**

Below, I will elaborate on the elements of this process of crafting an identity, but I want to begin by briefly explaining why I see this as a process of crafting. Other possible choices for this exist, to be sure: developing, constructing, and so on. *Crafting* strikes me as especially apt for a few reasons. First, *craft* is a popular descriptor now, especially in culinary contexts, but the popularity of the term is less important than what this often connotes in these contexts: a product that is locally made and often from locally sourced products, is unique and fitting to its locale, and is produced through applied knowledge and experience.

*Craft* in this sense can easily apply to pedagogical contexts. Jan Van Driel and his colleagues explored this possibility and used what they labeled craft knowledge as a framework to examine curricular changes in an engineering program. They defined craft knowledge as “refer[ring] to the integrated set of knowledge, conceptions, beliefs and values teachers develop in the context of their teaching situation” and includes “theoretical and scientific knowledge” that teachers gain through their education and scholarly activities (107). In other words, in an educational context, *craft* is also grounded in the local context and drawn from the experience and knowledge of skilled craftspeople, teachers in this case.

Furthermore, the idea of craft has deep roots in writing studies. Certainly, notions of craft arise when we think about producing writing in general and creative writing in particular. But the role of *techne* has a significant place in the rhetorical roots of writing studies. The discussions surrounding *techne* (craft, making), *episteme* (theory), and *phronesis* (practical wisdom) (see R.

Johnson 675-76) are too varied and extensive to trace fully here, other than to note that *techne* often represents the lower level of the hierarchy of these three concepts (R. Johnson 674). Robert R. Johnson, though, works to recuperate *techne*'s value in writing studies (specifically in terms of interdisciplinarity). In particular, he encourages us to consider *techne* in five ways: that *techne* is both knowledge and construction of knowledge; that "*techne* begins within the maker"; that it is concerned both with the product and its use; that "the craftsperson both creates and transfers knowledge" through the making of the product and its uses; and that *techne* is connected to the culture in which it arises (677-78).

It is in the penultimate point about *techne*, the combination of *techne* and *phronesis*, that we might find the most pertinent idea in understanding how craft may be useful for writing instructors. As Robert R. Johnson asserts, the two come together "within the frame or craft knowledge: the knowledge of the why, the what, the how-to, and the role of the maker and the thing made within its resident culture" (679). This combination of knowledge, practice, the individual, and the context illustrates the work that instructors seem to engage in as they develop their overarching pedagogies and their specific courses. We might see the combination of *techne* and *phronesis* in action through Amy's discussion of trying to understand the local pedagogical context as a new faculty member while also bringing in her own specific views about what she has discovered to be most beneficial for students and their thinking, reading, and writing in academic contexts. Thus, *craft*, when examined through the current popular use of the term and through the lens of *techne* and *phronesis*, accounts for the local, experiential, knowledge-based work involved in developing and employing a pedagogical practice, which my data seem to indicate as the general approach that my colleagues take to their teaching.

In my current sense of the process, crafting a pedagogical identity seems to consist of three overlapping and relatively personal elements, though I will complicate this personal nature of it in the discussions below. In addition, these elements may not always occur as a result of an instructor's conscious effort. Indeed, and especially for more experienced teachers, the process may feel like a natural outcome of practices, and perhaps to some degree, it is. However, it is in recognizing the process, these elements, and their consequences that WPAs might begin to approach curricular development more collaboratively and holistically.

### *Bricolage*

What the case studies demonstrate is perhaps what we have already known or assumed about the process of developing one's pedagogy: that it is messy, complex, and polyvocal. These case studies in particular highlight the dynamic nature of this process. Each of these teachers seems to have a core value to her pedagogy. For Tracy, rhetorical awareness is central; Carol values a personal focus grounded in developing students' writing processes; Amy positions academic writing at the heart of her practices. Yet all three adapt or abandon practices related to traditional pedagogical taxonomies and move fluidly within the various schemas I identified *as suited to their context*. In short, they do not seem as deeply ideologically committed to certain pedagogies as we might assume if we view taxonomies as determinant of one's pedagogical epistemology and axiology. These three participants seem to have been acting as bricoleurs, creating a bricolage pedagogy from the combination and culmination of their experiences, ready materials (i.e., existing pedagogical approaches), and current contexts.

As a concept, bricolage emerges from Claude Levi-Strauss's work *The Savage Mind* "as a metaphor for how mythical thought works" (C. Johnson 358). Levi-Strauss describes the agent of this, the *bricoleur*, as one who

is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with “whatever is at hand” [...], that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogenous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions. (qtd. in C. Johnson 361)

In other words, the *bricoleur* seeks to solve problems or make meaning by using the tools readily available, and while this might be limited at times to what the *bricoleur* knows, the applications can be various and inventive (C. Johnson 362).

Such is the case with these three case study participants (and, I would dare say, many writing instructors). Overall, Tracy, Carol, and Amy all seem to rely largely on the pedagogies, ideologies, and axiologies they already have. They then respond to their pedagogical situations by adapting their existing practices and values to new or different challenges. Tracy was faced with teaching a science-oriented section of Composition II. Rather than abandoning her interests in literature and narrative, she frames those approaches to incorporate and expand on notions of science in the academy and the real-world. To bring more research into her class, Carol opts for a personal version of the research project: an I-search paper. Amy, while not in favor of a popular culture approach in writing instruction, recognizes its prominence in the department’s writing curriculum. Instead of resisting it, she incorporates elements of it with her more pressing goal of introducing students to the vernacular and thinking of the academy. All three of these

participants, then, stitch together a variety of approaches not because they are inconsistent in their thinking but rather because, as *bricoleurs*, these faculty members are using the tools and the knowledge they possess to produce the most effective writing pedagogies they can.

### *Retrospective Sensemaking*

The concept of retrospective sensemaking also serves the process of crafting a pedagogical identity. Karl Weick explains this concept as the attempt “to convert a world of experience into an intelligible world [...] not to look for the one true picture that corresponds to a pre-existing, preformed reality” (9). In other words, retrospective sensemaking is a process of reflecting on what one *has already done* to explain why one made a particular set of choices. Weick identifies seven properties of sensemaking: social context, personal identity, retrospect, salient cues, ongoing projects, plausibility, and enactment (461-63). He sums up their functions and relationships in two ways.

First, sensemaking seems to follow roughly a sequence in which people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage ongoing events from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively while enacting more or less order into those on going events. [...] A second way to animate these seven properties of sensemaking into a process is by means of the familiar recipe, “How can I know what I think or what I feel until I see what I say and do?” (463)

In terms of the case studies, this sensemaking occurs as participants reflect on their practices in relation to other faculty members, their own experiences and goals, and the choices they made for particular lessons or assignments or even entire course structures. They are attempting to create coherent pictures of their practices, pictures that do not necessarily abide by



certain predetermined practices but pictures that align with their practices as they already exist. Perhaps Amy sums this up well. In our first interview, she commented on my question about her process for lesson planning, saying, “I had to think about it. That was the one I was really like, ‘Golly, what do I do?’” She perhaps had lesson planning practices in place, but she did not have a ready-made explanation for those practices. She then had to look back into those practices, consider why she was employing in them, and justify those practices to herself and to me, or, in other words, engaging in retrospective sensemaking. I suspect that this is a likely a common occurrence for my colleagues.

By engaging in retrospective sensemaking, an instructor can begin to see her actions and choices as having purpose, not merely as a set of cobbled-together approaches. Such a sense of purpose unites what, from the outside, may look like slapdash and potentially contradictory goals and practices, which would be true if an instructor were to proclaim to adhere to this or that particular pedagogical theory. But rather than proclaiming a theory, an instructor can proclaim what works for her and why, allowing her to justify her practices and connect them in ways that make sense to her and that feel efficacious and purposeful.

### *Identity*

At the core of the process of crafting a pedagogical identity is the identity work involved in it. As has been the case with the other elements of crafting a pedagogical identity, identity and identity work are so multifaceted and substantially researched that examining them fully here is not possible. Instead, I will sketch out some brief definitions and then explore relevant themes related to the process of crafting a pedagogical identity.

First, I would like to note that the term *identity* is not synonymous with *self* here.

Through his review of a substantial amount of the scholarship on identity, Andrew Brown noted

a distinction between the terms *identity* and *self*. The former refers to adaptations a person makes in response to fluctuating circumstances, and identities can themselves fluctuate—and often do. *Self* tends to refer to a more static condition. As Brown puts it, “selves are constructed from a relatively stable set of meanings, which change only gradually, but identities [...] can be acquired, lost, switched, or modified much more quickly, and perhaps, instantaneously as contexts and preferences alter (26-27). Furthermore, identities may only be presentations of the self (Ybema et al. 304), reflections of how an individual wants others to see her at a given moment or in a given context. Identities, then, are fluid and responsive/adaptive while selves tend to be more stable.

These fluid identities also have a discursive element. While the identities may fluctuate, they remain quite personal. For individuals explaining them, these identities take the shape of stories, as “self-narrative[s] [that draw] on cultural resources as well as memories and desires to reproduce or transform their sense of self” (Alvesson, Ashcraft, and Thomas 15; see also Beauchamp and Thomas 181). And although the narratives are personal, identity is also a matter of social connections. This can take a couple of forms. First, we may hold differing senses of identity: the personal, which consists of our “unique, personal attributes,” and the social, which is “an individual’s perception of him or herself as a member of a group” (Alvesson, Ashcraft, and Thomas 10). Moreover, and more important here, the social element of identity refers to the identities one defines for oneself and the identities others define for us (Clarke 186; Ybema et al. 301). Ultimately, then, in pedagogical contexts, identities are stories we tell ourselves and others about the positions, attitudes, and behaviors we adopt in response to a given context, which connects them to the concept of retrospective sensemaking. These narratives, though, are also

shaped by others and their perceptions of us, adding further to identities' fluidity and responsiveness.

In other words, identity becomes a rather complex concept, and so too is the process of identity work (or formation, development, or any number of other synonyms).<sup>40</sup> Identity work is somewhat distinct from identity in that identity work explains the process and not the result. Mats Alvesson, Karen Lee Ashcraft, and Robyn Thomas define identity work as “the ongoing mental activity that an individual undertakes in constructing an understanding of the self that is coherent, distinct, and positively valued” (15). Sierk Ybema and his colleagues explain identity work “as a complex, multifaceted process which produces a socially negotiated temporary outcome of the dynamic interplay between the internal strivings and external prescriptions, between self-presentation and labeling by others, between achievement and ascription and between regulation and resistance” (301). Not only is this a complex process, but it is also an ongoing, nearly constant one.

Beyond a sense of definition, identity work is a way to achieve greater agency for oneself. Regardless of postmodernism's critiques of the possibilities for agency, agents still try to act and want their actions to be or seem efficacious. If we see identity as developing from one's own notions of her or his identity *and* from others' perspectives of one's identity, while not wholly from these other perspectives, then some room for agency in claiming identities exists (Clarke 187). As Catherine Beauchamp and Lynn Thomas claim, “What may result from a teacher's realization of his or her identity, in performance within teaching contexts, is a sense of agency, of empowerment to move ideas forward, to reach goals or even transform the context. It is apparent that a heightened awareness of one's identity may lead to a strong sense of agency”

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<sup>40</sup> I will tend to use the label *identity work* here as this label seems relatively common in the scholarship and suggests its ongoing nature.

(183). Through a (mostly) clear sense of one's identity—even if that identity or parts of it fluctuate across different contexts—an instructor may feel more capable of taking action, of embracing one's own goals and values as legitimate and then feel able to enact those practices in her course design and pedagogical application. For example, Carol embraces an identity as a guide for students, although she notes that her practices may not fit well within the departmental context or current practices in writing studies. Nonetheless, through her experience, she finds this identity a worthy one and enacts associated practices. In this sense, Carol's identity allows her to take agency for her pedagogical approaches.

Furthermore, we can draw some connections between pedagogy and identity. Indeed, Robert P. Yagelski sees teaching identities as rooted in the relationship between students and teachers, with pedagogy as an enactment of that relationship (35-36). Yagelski's interest is mostly in terms of how teachers reevaluate their approaches and revise them as needed, but this is not a matter of mere self-assessment. As he suggests, "it amounts to rethinking the very *identity* of the teacher" (36, original emphasis). Based on this perspective, pedagogy is not only an enactment of what the teacher perceives as her relationship with students but also an enactment of the teacher's sense of who she is in the classroom. In terms of crafting a pedagogical identity, an instructor sees herself through a pedagogical lens that is in a dialogic relationship with other elements of her identity.

Taken together, these elements of the process of crafting a pedagogical identity give instructors powerful means to develop and implement their pedagogical views and values. The process allows instructors to position themselves with a context, recognizing the values and expectations that come along with that context. But instructors are not then subsumed by the context. In crafting a pedagogical identity, an instructor can seek out her own agency within and

in response to that context and make her own choices (which may be in accordance with the expectations of the context or possibly in conflict with them, so much as that is possible). The choices that an instructor makes, the goals she pursues, also come from a sense of identity, and that identity draws from the context, the individual and her own knowledge and experiences, and others within that context. Crafting a pedagogical identity also consists of a reflective component, through which an instructor can examine, reexamine, and revise practices and the elements of the process itself, feeding this information back into her identity and her pedagogy.

### **WPAs, Curricular Coherence, and Crafting a Pedagogical Identity**

Crafting a pedagogical identity is a complex, nuanced, often implicit process for individual faculty members, yet a WPA, in attempting to create and justify a curriculum for required writing, must navigate these various pedagogical identities in ways that balance the value of individual identities with the need for curricular coherence. As if this balancing act were not complicated enough, the disciplinary tensions within English studies can add to the complexity facing the WPA. In departments such as mine, and as is typical of many English departments, various fields are represented within the department: literature (often the primary field), writing studies, creative writing, English education, and linguistics.<sup>41</sup> Faculty members trained in and representing these fields bring with them certain disciplinary expectations and conventions that shape their views of pedagogy, and when these instructors teach required writing courses, which may be regularly required of them, they bring these disciplinary notions along with their work in crafting their pedagogical identities.

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<sup>41</sup> While these are the five main fields in English studies, these are not the only five fields represented in some departments. Fields such as film studies, journalism, women's/gender studies, or certain ethnic studies (American Indian Studies, in the case of my department) may be housed within the English department.

In response to this heightened disciplinarity, some have called for greater unity in English studies, seeking out practical and theoretical ways to smooth these tensions.<sup>42</sup> Some in the field have called for unifying terms such as *literacy* (Miller 2-3), though some are critical of such approaches, seeing them as illusory (North 71-72). Some scholars, rather than drawing a specific term, look to processes that will remake English studies in productive ways. Jim Nugent and Lori Ostergaard refer to these as transformative responses, ones that question deeply the principles and assumptions of the discipline, emphasize the practical and materials conditions of a given institution or department, and rely on a “polyvocal” view of that draws on and listens to and works with members of all the fields within English studies (13-15).

One version of a transformative response that lends itself well to the process of crafting a pedagogical identity and would be useful for WPAs working with that process is Bruce McComiskey’s combination of Kenneth Burke’s idea of identification (wherein separate groups recognize some shared project or interest but maintain their uniqueness—identified but not identical) with Stuart Hall’s concept of articulation (the ability to make/remake connections, disconnect, and/or realign ideas or values as needed) (41-42). What these processes lead to, for McComiskey, is a more fully integrated English studies, the goal of which is “the analysis, critique, and production of discourse in a social context” (43). What we must be careful of—and this is a concern I could see my own colleagues raising—is that these terms, practices, and values are coming from some external entity, creating a feeling of imposition. For example, were a rhetoric and composition faculty member to bring McComiskey’s ideas into curricular

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<sup>42</sup> I do not intend to ignore the discussions about separation, often literature and rhetoric/composition separating from one another. However, I am treating this as less likely in a more “traditional” English department, that is one producing primarily English majors with literature specializations (although some may take a writing—creative or otherwise—track) and primarily relying on the coverage model. Furthermore, McComiskey argues that separation is not desirable as it does not allow students to experience the breadth of English studies (48).

discussions, that professor's or instructor's disciplinary background may shade how her colleagues view those suggestions. We are, then, facing a bit of a conundrum. If we need some revisions to our disciplinary structures yet those very structures are impeding those revisions, how are we to proceed?

Here, I see the ideas of crafting a pedagogical identity, McComiskey's combination of identification and articulation, and David Gold's values model merging in productive ways for the WPA and for other faculty members. In some ways, crafting a pedagogical identity is a performance of Gold's values model of pedagogy in that it is personal, somewhat idiosyncratic, and not always or necessarily grounded in theories or scholarship. As such, a WPA seeking to address and possibly revise the required writing curriculum must recognize that making an argument for why a certain pedagogy or type of classroom practice should be employed or avoided may not lead to faculty conversion. Carol, for instance, noted that she would likely never do away with the peer review workshops she conducts in her class, even though the one I observed was not especially successful. Her reasoning does not draw specifically on any scholarship but on her sense that it is helpful. How would a WPA who wants to discourage such a practice (not likely) convince Carol to abandon it when it is a part of her values system?

In response to such questions, we might begin turning more specifically toward crafting a pedagogical identity and McComiskey's connection of identification and articulation. In doing so, we might think of this work as incremental and primarily pedagogical (even though McComiskey sees his conceptual work as important for re-seeing English studies as a whole). Doing so has three key benefits. First, in many departments, required writing courses are a shared project. In my department, for example, *everyone* (except for the department head) teaches a required writing class. As a shared project, required writing courses create the need for

conversations about the curriculum, about learning outcomes, about assessment standards. This seems to me a natural place to begin looking for overlaps, places for synthesis, and places for Burkean identification.

The second benefit of approaching this project incrementally is just that: it is incremental, making it potentially more appealing to a wider group of stakeholders. If a department discusses pedagogical views and values regularly and substantively, some of the elements of crafting a pedagogical identity can occur. Initially, it allows instructors to articulate their identities and, through the process of sensemaking, justify those identities and their associated practices. Being aware of this identity shaping what faculty do pedagogically helps us see the value in McComiskey's use of Burkean identification. Recognizing that a colleague's pedagogical identity is not solely or always based on haphazard or outdated or ill-informed sets of practices makes listening to others' pedagogical perspectives easier—and a richer experience in that we are better positioned to truly understand their practices, learn about our similarities and the roots of our differences, and learn more about our own practices. It also prioritizes the values and practices held by a specific department with a specific set of instructors. So rather than starting from an external place, we can identify the goals and ideas we share, ask how we can build a curriculum around them, and define and develop that curriculum. This process may presuppose a level of geniality not be present in all departments, but starting from shared positions is likely to yield better results than alternative approaches because what is produced is locally agreed upon and more authentic, giving greater legitimacy in the department. Furthermore, this process will likely allow faculty members to maintain a sense of rhetorical agency: they are enacting changes to their approaches not because someone told them to but because they have found, through their colleagues, a reason to make such changes.



Third, the WPA can leverage these conversations in ways that strengthen the writing program. McComiskey's use of the concepts of identification and articulation are valuable in that they provide guides for interaction. But the WPA can consider elements of the identity of a writing curriculum based on the overlapping views and values of its faculty members, can act as a *bricoleur* (or an articulator, to use a term closer to McComiskey's views) who draws on relevant and situationally efficacious pedagogical elements and practices as needed, can claim agency (on behalf of the instructors) in enacting those pedagogies and practices, and can encourage sustained reflection to make sense of and justify the current practices and revise those in need of revision. In short, just as faculty members work to create their own pedagogical identity based on their pedagogical rhetorical situation, their background and experiences, and their own goals, so too can a WPA draw on the identities of her faculty to create an identity for the required writing curriculum, one that need not necessarily align with preconceived writing pedagogies.

### **Future Work**

My sense of the process of crafting a pedagogical identity is still in its early stages and requires considerably more work to make it a viable concept. This work would consider expanding this kind of research beyond my department to examine whether similar processes occur elsewhere and under different circumstances. With more evidence of this process taking place, should such evidence exist, we could further theorize crafting a pedagogical identity by deepening understandings of the key elements discussed above and their interplay. In particular, I see the need for further examination of the influence that the concepts of identity/identity work and even rhetorical agency may have on the process. Furthermore, crafting a pedagogical identity may provide insights into the way WPAs construct *their* identities. That is, for WPAs,

this process might produce a variation we could call crafting an administrative identity.

Exploring the possibility of such a process as well as how it relates to crafting a pedagogical identity might yield some fruitful conversations about the interactions of writing faculty and WPAs.

Whatever direction(s) this research takes, what I have examined here is simply a starting point for it. As a field, writing studies will continue to explore new pedagogical approaches and revisit past ones, all with the hope of improving the instruction we offer our students. But as we do so, we must continue to consider how individuals develop and apply their pedagogies. It is a process rife with messiness, contradictions, and tensions, but with some sense of the elements of that process, WPAs (and faculty members themselves) may be in a better position to examine pedagogical choices at the personal and contextual level and refine those choices in ways that balance individual and curricular goals and values, perhaps yielding greater curricular coherence and faculty commitment to the curriculum.

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APPENDIX A  
PILOT SURVEY

**Demographic Information**

1. What is your faculty rank?
  - a. Graduate Teaching Assistant
  - b. Instructor (part-time or full-time)
  - c. Tenure-track or tenured faculty
  
2. How many years of writing instruction experience do you have?
  - a. 0-2 years
  - b. 3-5 years
  - c. 6-10 years
  - d. 10-15 years
  - e. 15+ years
  
3. How often do you teach required writing courses? (Required writing courses consist of 101, 201, 277, and 283.)
  - a. 1 required writing course per academic year
  - b. 1-2 required writing courses per semester
  - c. 3+ required writing courses per semester

**Views and Values Related to Writing Instruction**

This section should take 30-45 minutes. You may write as much as you wish, and the more detail you provide, the more accurate my portrayal of our department's views will be, both for my research and possibly for future curricular and faculty development considerations.

1. How would you describe your overall pedagogy—the theories and strategies that guide your teaching?
  
2. Describe your goals and objectives when you teach required writing courses.
  
3. What classroom practices, lesson plans do you engage in to meet these goals and objectives?
  
4. Describe one or two assignments that you feel work well toward these goals and objectives.
  
5. What would you categorize as good writing? And why?
  
6. What would you categorize as poor writing? And why?

## APPENDIX B

## COVER LETTER TO FACULTY

Dear colleagues,

I want to begin by thanking all of you who participated in my survey work last spring. Your responses were instrumental to that project and revisions to my survey.

I will be asking for the department's assistance once again. As was the case before, my goals here are to explore what we as a department value and practice in terms of writing instruction. This, I hope, will add to our abilities to make curricular and faculty development decisions and respond to some of the concerns raised in our recent Internal Program Review (IPR). In addition, I hope our collaborations can even add to how other English departments understand how their faculty from different philosophical backgrounds approach writing instruction and how these different approaches might work together productively.

I will undertake this work in three phases. In the first phase, I will be conducting an online survey. At the end of this email is a link to the revised survey—I have cut or combined some questions and added a few more. I would greatly appreciate your time and your thoughtful responses. As in the previous survey, I have tried to consider your time by making this survey focused yet still capable of yielding rich results. This survey should take about 20-30 minutes to complete. I also have attached the survey protocol to this email should you wish to think about your responses ahead of time. I will treat all survey responses as anonymous and confidential, and any identifying information will be removed from all reports.

The second phase will consist of brief (about twenty minutes or so), loosely structured interviews with as many of you as are willing to participate. I will treat your responses in these interviews as confidential. (Since I of course will know who I am speaking with in the interviews and in the case study phase described below, I cannot treat this data as anonymous.) These interviews will serve three purposes. First, I will be using these to supplement the findings of my surveys—to add some additional breadth and depth not possible in surveys. Second, I want these interviews to be the beginning of more focused departmental conversations about our required writing curriculum, its strengths and possible weaknesses, and its adaptability to changing demands from various stakeholders. Finally, these brief interviews will help me identify possible participants for the third phase of my research.

This third phase of my study will be case studies of willing participants from the department. In the case studies, I will ask to observe a few sessions of one or two of the participants' required writing classrooms, conduct pre- and post-observation interviews, and collect some course documents (syllabi, lesson plans, assignment sheets, etc.) for analysis. (Again, all of the data collected here will be treated as confidential.) My goal with these case studies is to select, as I am able, participants with relatively representative practices; to consider these practices in relation to one another, the survey responses, and the initial interviews; and ultimately to discover and exploit the strengths of our writing pedagogies to answer recommendations about writing curriculum raised in the IPR.

And please note: Participation in this study is purely voluntary and will have no effects on your position or status within the department. Of course, the more participants I have, the more complete the picture of our department's writing instruction practices and the richer our conversations about them will be.

This study is being completed under the direction of Dr. Kevin Eric DePew and Dr. Louise Wetherbee Phelps. The study has been approved by the Old Dominion University College of Arts and Letters Human Subjects Research Review Committee. Should you have any questions on that IRB process and exemption, please contact Robyn Bluhm ([rbluhm@odu.edu](mailto:rbluhm@odu.edu)).

Here is the link to the survey:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1evi01TSmSciiibVfv9cuq1DJOTIbQ3h7Ln-s\\_qoZQtM/viewform?usp=send\\_form](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1evi01TSmSciiibVfv9cuq1DJOTIbQ3h7Ln-s_qoZQtM/viewform?usp=send_form)

If you wish to participate in the brief interviews, please contact me (via email or phone) at your earliest convenience to set up a time and place to conduct the interviews.

My sincerest thanks for your considerations,

Nathan

Nathan Serfling  
Instructor and Writing Center Coordinator  
English Dept.

## APPENDIX C

## SURVEY

Please complete the following survey. Answer at any length you see fit, but the more information you provide me, the more information I will have about our department and the writing practices we employ.

1. Faculty rank:
  - a. Teaching assistant
  - b. Part-time instructor
  - c. Full-time instructor
  - d. Assistant professor
  - e. Associate professor
  - f. Professor
2. How many years have you been teaching required writing courses?
3. About how many do you teach per academic year?

For the following questions, consider the required writing course you teach most frequently and respond as appropriate to that course.

4. Please describe what you value in a good piece of writing—writing that you read for fun, writing that you read to participate in the world around you, and student writing that you read to assess.
5. What text(s) do you use when you teach a required writing course? Why have you chosen these?
6. What is one writing assignment that you regularly or typically give to students? Describe a few characteristics that would mark both a successful and an unsuccessful response to this assignment.
7. What have been a couple of significant experiences and/or training (seminars, other courses, workshops, etc.) in writing instruction that have informed your writing pedagogy? What did these experiences teach you about writing instruction that you wanted to carry into your practices? What did you learn that you thought was extraneous?
8. What type of writing do you do for professional, personal, and social reasons? How do you feel your own writing practices inform how you teach writing?
9. What would you like to see changed about our required writing curriculum? What would you like to see stay the same?

Rate the following in terms of their importance for your writing instruction practices on a scale of 1 (“not important”) to 5 (“very important”), again as they apply to the required writing course you teach most frequently.

- Argumentative strategies: 1 2 3 4 5
- Collaborative writing tasks or projects: 1 2 3 4 5
- Stylistic clarity: 1 2 3 4 5
- Multimodality (visuals, use of various technologies, etc.) : 1 2 3 4 5
- Analytical abilities: 1 2 3 4 5
- Grammatical correctness: 1 2 3 4 5
- Research practices (conducting and incorporating research) : 1 2 3 4 5
- Generic conventions (e.g., personal or argumentative essay conventions) : 1 2 3 4 5
- Documentation: 1 2 3 4 5
- Cultural analysis: 1 2 3 4 5
- In-class practice with materials covered in readings, discussions, lectures: 1 2 3 4 5
- Rhetorical awareness (audience, purpose, context, etc.) : 1 2 3 4 5
- Self-exploration (journaling, self-reflections, use of personal experiences) : 1 2 3 4 5
- Creativity: 1 2 3 4 5
- Small group work: 1 2 3 4 5
- Civic awareness/responsibility: 1 2 3 4 5
- Descriptive language: 1 2 3 4 5

## APPENDIX D

## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

**Project Title:** Discovering Our Writing Curriculum: A Descriptive Study of an English Department's Perspectives of Writing Instruction (Preliminary Interview Phase)

**Introduction**

The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES.

**Researchers**

Responsible Principal Investigators:

- Dr. Kevin DePew, Ph.D., Graduate Program Director, English Department, College of Arts and Letters, Old Dominion University
- Dr. Louise Wetherbee Phelps, Ph.D., English Department, College of Arts and Letters, Old Dominion University

Principal investigator (identified throughout this document as PI): Nathan Serfling

**Description of Research Study**

The overall goal of this study is to create a rich description of the writing instruction values and practices of our department. This phase of the study will consist of brief, loosely structured interviews in which we will discuss your views and practices related to writing instruction. These interviews will supplement the survey data collected previously by adding some greater depth of information to those findings. Furthermore, these interviews will help the PI identify willing participants for the case study phase of my study.

**Exclusionary Criteria**

As the PI is seeking the greatest number of participants as possible, and as all faculty members are or have been responsible for teaching required writing courses in the department, this study has no exclusionary criteria.

**Risks and Benefits**

**Risks:** The primary risks may be that colleagues in the department may recognize certain practices of yours and/or might view them negatively. To protect against such risks, the PI will take several steps to protect your confidentiality, including the following:

- Removing names and identifying information from all reports
- Using codes for participants' names in the collection and analysis phases
- Reporting some information (from surveys, initial interviews) in aggregated forms

**Benefits:** This study will offer several key benefits to you as a participant. First, as the department is facing pressures to address perceived inconsistencies in its required writing curriculum, this study will empower you by providing you an opportunity to take part in these conversations. The information/data you provide will serve to inform departmental discussions and to help shape future curricular decisions. Second, through the PI sharing of summarized aggregate results, you may gain a stronger sense of what others are doing in writing courses, which may provide you with new ways to think about your pedagogies. Third, and directly related to this, this study will actively encourage you to reflect on your practices—to think about what practices you employ in their writing classes and why.

**Costs and Payments**



The PI is unable to give you any payment for participating in this study at this time.

**New Information**

If the PI finds new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then he will give it to you.

**Confidentiality**

The PI will take all reasonable steps to keep private and identifying information, such as names and specifically identifying assignments, confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations and publications (including future curricular discussions within the department); but the PI will not identify you. Of course, your records may be subpoenaed by court order or inspected by government bodies with oversight authority.

**Withdrawal Privilege**

It is OK for you to say NO. Even if you say YES now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study -- at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with the English department or South Dakota State University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

**Compensation for Illness and Injury**

If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Kevin DePew at 757-683-3991, Louise Phelps at 757-683-4023, Nathan Serfling at 605-610-5456, Dr. George Maihafer the current IRB chair at 757-683-4520 at Old Dominion University, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

**Voluntary Consent**

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

- Kevin DePew: 757-683-3991
- Louise Phelps: 757-683-4023
- Nathan Serfling: 605-610-5456

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. George Maihafer, the current IRB chair, at 757-683-4520, or the Old Dominion University Office of Research, at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

--	--

<b>Subject's Printed Name &amp; Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
---	-------------

**Investigator's Statement**

I certify that I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

<b>Investigator's Printed Name &amp; Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
--	-------------

## APPENDIX E

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Talk about your goals for a general education writing class. How do students respond to these goals?
2. Where do these goals come from for you? How/why did you develop them? (Talk about your past experiences/training in writing instruction that informed this class meeting's goals and your larger goals and practices.)
3. How do you design lesson plans? Talk about a specific classroom lesson/activity and/or one of your major assignments you use and why you find it effective in working toward your goals.

## APPENDIX F

## PRE-OBSERVATION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What are your goals for this class meeting? How do these goals fit with your larger goals for required writing courses?
2. How are you planning to meet these goals?
3. How have you developed this lesson plan?
4. What assignment are students currently preparing for or working on?
5. How will this lesson help them in relation to the assignment?
6. Do you have any back-up plans for this lesson plan?
7. How do you think your experiences and/or training in writing instruction have informed these practices, goals, plans?

APPENDIX G  
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

1. General notes on:
  - a. Initial faculty-student interactions (building report, responding to questions, announcements)
  - b. Classroom layout and how faculty member uses
  - c. Technologies/tools faculty member uses, students use
2. What is the faculty member doing?
3. What are students doing?
4. How is the faculty member responding/adapting to students' reactions, activities?
5. What seem to be the explicit and implicit lesson goals?
6. What views/values seem to be informing these classroom practices and goals?
7. How do these coincide with the pre-observation interview?
8. Notes/thoughts for post-observation interview.

## APPENDIX H

## POST-OBSERVATION INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. How did you feel the class went? Why?
2. If you were to teach this lesson again, what would you do the same? What would you do differently? Why?
3. What do you think students took away from this class meeting?

(Additional questions will develop from the specific observations that take place.)

APPENDIX I  
CODING SAMPLES

Below are examples of my coding from survey participant 5's responses and from an initial interview with Amy. For clarity and formatting reasons, I have converted my coding to Word document, highlighting key comments with underlining and adding my codes in curly brackets.

**Survey Response: Participant 5**

For the following questions, consider the required writing course you teach most frequently and respond as appropriate to that course.

10. Please describe what you value in a good piece of writing—writing that you read for fun, writing that you read to participate in the world around you, and student writing that you read to assess.

*I value and therefore emphasize detail as well as awareness of rhetorical style, rhetorical strategy, and audience. {Focusing on the surface level but also rhetorical awareness} I also feel that you have to know the rules in order to effectively break them, which may or may not sound contradictory to the first sentence. {Not feeling beholden to surface-level correctness} {Wondering about consistency in pedagogy}*

11. What text(s) do you use when you teach a required writing course? Why have you chosen these?

*I use the required St. Martin's Handbook, {Giving attention to institutional requirements} the annual Common Read selection (with some exceptions), and a custom anthology which I designed through Pearson. I teach the Common Read every year because of the co-curricular and University experiences for students as well as the opportunities for them to explore and deeply analyze novel-length texts. I designed my own anthology because none available offers the range of content and authorship which I desire for prose and poetry (fiction and non, narrative/storytelling, and research/reporting), classical and canonical to contemporary, and minority as well as international authors. {Readings meeting variety of purposes: literary, academic, rhetorical—thus variety of taxonomic appeals: argument/rhetoric, expressive, current-traditional}*

12. What is one writing assignment that you regularly or typically give to students? Describe a few characteristics that would mark both a successful and an unsuccessful response to this assignment.

*I teach the required research essay. {Pointing to institutional requirements—not by choice then? Also: exhibiting academic (rhetoric/argument)} Successful submissions come from students who can (and choose to) think actively about their own writing process, from brainstorming to researching, drafting, revising, and editing. {Students reflecting on their own writing process—process in the individual sense} *They see writing as a process, not just a product.* Unsuccessful submissions reveal students who don't read the assignments or participate actively in practice items, discussion, and peer reviewing. {Students needing to attend to course texts, goals, requirements to succeed—slightly current-traditional} Good writers can look objectively at their work. Poor writers opt not to look objectively at their work. {Encouraging/wanting objective views of their own writing—process}*

13. What have been a couple of significant experiences and/or training (seminars, other courses, workshops, etc.) in writing instruction that have informed your writing pedagogy? What did these experiences teach you about writing instruction that you wanted to carry into your practices? What did you learn that you thought was extraneous? *Well, I don't have much to offer here.* The majority of my pedagogical development comes from reading traditional publications (mostly books) and online discussions and articles about writing and higher ed (e.g. *The Chronicle of Higher Ed* online, *FacultyFocus*, etc.). {Developing through own research, study} I did find the 2014 Spring Faculty Development Conference to be partly useful in that the guest, Dr. Saundra Chauncey, emphasized intentionally teaching students about metacognition--though I was anticipating a much more technical presentation (about the brain). I can also recall [composition coordinator's] talk on writing and academic rigor at the 2013 January conference (if I'm correct), with which I agreed strongly, but his audience was the rest of the faculty outside of English. I didn't really learn anything new there. {Attending and often learning from faculty development opportunities}

### **Preliminary Interview: Participant 8 (Amy)**

IP = Interview Participant

Int = Interviewer

**IP:** ...and I'll say that...coming in new, um, it was unnerving. I mean I've taught different levels of writing classes, and I mean, I've done all sorts of weird programs where they weren't sure what they were really after. So it wasn't so much a problem of not knowing, but I kind of got the sense that perhaps they *did* know, right? That there was this definitive difference between 101 and 201, but that I didn't know it and I couldn't figure it out, and it wasn't articulated anywhere. And so ... you know, I started to chat people up, but I mean, that could only happen once I was already teaching my course, so I planned my 201 in my first semester, and just thought, I'm going to give them the best thing that I can give them, and it will be good for them, but I'm not



entirely sure that it's what the department thinks they're supposed to get... {Expressing uncertainty about institutional goals and about what colleagues do}

**Int:** Right.

**IP:** And it was an honors class and that was my, sort of my thought in the back of my head—that if it is different, it's OK because honors can be different.

**Int:** Mhmm.

**IP:** But since then, I feel better about what I do, but I still don't know if it's anything like what anybody else does... {Continuing uncertainty of practices, goals}

**Int:** [laughs]

**IP:** ... and like that makes me uncomfortable. I'd like to know what other people do, just so, just so I know if students are talking to their friends and their hearing ....

[...]

**IP:** Or "How does this jive with your experiences?" {Connecting to students' experiences} So, I don't do it like a load of the cultural criticism. I know that's sort of the bread and butter of the regular 101, but, um, I'm doing food and culture with my honors 101... {Resisting (slightly) established curriculum}

**Int:** OK.

**IP:** ...right now. And so we do read some, there's pop culture in this...

**Int:** Right.

**IP:** ...um. We just read an essay that talks about fast food advertising that's marketed at men. It's from the *They Say/I Say with Readings*.

**Int:** Yeah, OK.

**IP:** Right? So, and it's basically arguing that like men are told have it your way, you don't have to listen to women,... {Drawing on some cultural studies/critical pedagogy}

**Int:** [laughs]

**IP:** ...and consume meat, and consume women, and men are tough and manly, right? And, um, it was interesting because there was like a kid who was so undone by this that he just...and he's like one of my most active participators, would not talk. He just said, "I'd like to skip if that's alright." Like he, I called on him and he just, "I really, I can't." He couldn't talk about it.

**Int:** Huh.

**IP:** And, uh, we worked that out later, and he didn't want to fight with his classmates; he did not agree. His position was they're just commercials, you know? But trying to hold back the "Do you agree?", like "have you seen this before? Do you see this anywhere else?" right? So if, like for day two of that, before we were jumping immediately into I agree/I disagree, I wanted them to find a commercial, and talk about whether it upholds this or challenges this in some way, and they can post links to YouTube on our site. So when we came to class, they had to post something, they had to watch other people's commercials, and to comment on two of them, right. Like "Oh yeah, this is right, this is whatever"...

**Int:** Right.

**IP:** ... so that the conversation was sort of already happening.

**Int:** Mhmm.

**IP:** And I just wanted to keep it like, let's talk about examples. Do they fit, or don't they? And... I mean that was a nice moment of really having to put my heels down and say, "Not yet. [laughs] You don't get to agree yet or disagree. Just not yet. What do you see based on this?" Right? Because after that you can't say, "Well, it's just a commercial or it doesn't happen," right?  
{Preparing students for developing and responding to arguments → academic writing}

**Int:** Right.

**IP:** Because like the essay explains why they're just not commercials. Other people agree that they are problematic, so you can't say that, and you can't say it doesn't happen anywhere else because somebody's shown us that in some cases that it does, unless you want to *read* it differently, which we can *do*, right?

## VITA

1004 W. Tradewinds St.  
Sioux Falls, SD 57108  
(605) 610-5456/nathanserfling@gmail.com

103B Briggs Library/Box 2115  
Brookings, SD 57007  
(605) 688-6559/nathan.serfling@sdstate.edu

**EDUCATION**

Ph.D. candidate in English (Rhetoric and Writing Studies, Writing Pedagogy), Old Dominion University, 2019 (expected)  
M.A. in English (Literature), South Dakota State University, 2006  
B.A. in English and History, Summa Cum Laude, South Dakota State University, 2004

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY****Administrative (at SDSU)**

- Writing Center Coordinator, 2014-present

**Faculty/Graduate Student**

- Instructor, SDSU, 2006-present
- Academic Advisor, 2009-2015
- Writing Center Tutor (as Writing Center Coordinator), SDSU, 2014-present
- Adjunct Instructor, Augustana University, 2007-2008
- Adjunct Instructor, University Center, 2008
- Writing Center Tutor (as Graduate Teaching Assitant), SDSU, 2005-2006
- Graduate Teaching Assistant, SDSU, 2004-2006

**PRESENTATIONS****Refereed**

“Changing the Mindset: Rogerian Argument in the Honors Classroom” (poster presentation). National Honors Conference, Chicago, IL, 12-15 November, 2015.  
“Changing the Mindset: Rogerian Argument in the Honors Classroom” (panel presentation). Upper Midwest Regional Honors Conference, Mankato, MN, 19 March 2015.  
“Passing an Impasse: Making Rhetorical Agency Work in the Postmodern Classroom.” Conference on the Teaching of Writing, University of Connecticut, 6 April 2012.

**SDSU Invited**

“Writing Literature Reviews.” Briggs Library, 21 February 2019.  
“Writing Teaching Philosophies.” Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, 15 February 2019. (Handout)  
“Paraphrasing Effectively.” Psychology Major, 29 March 2017.  
“Writing Concisely.” Psychology undergraduate students, 15 November 2017.  
“Plagiarism and Effective Use of Sources.” Agriculture and Biosystems Engineering Graduate program, 3 October 2016.  
“Writing Across the Curriculum.” Teaching and Learning Center, January/February 2014.  
“E. M. Forster’s *Howards End*.” The English Novel (English 335), October 2006