CURRENTS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Beginnings

Josna Rege

Welcome to the Spring 2009 issue of *Currents in Teaching and Learning*. As *Currents* completes its first year, I want to reflect on beginnings. As the late Edward Said noted in *Beginnings*, his first book, a beginning is a new departure, but it is not necessarily an origin (3). For *Currents,* nearly a year of groundwork by a number of people preceded our inaugural issue. Furthermore, as Said emphasized, a beginning immediately establishes relationships with already-existing works. This was particularly true for *Currents* as a new electronic journal as it began to interact with an already-flourishing network of conversations about teaching and learning in higher education.

Currents is beginning to circulate in an ever-widening web of overlapping networks: from scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) journals and newsletters to listserves and blogs. We are gratified that our geographical range is getting deeper as well as wider, with our outreach bringing us inquiries, subscriptions, and submissions from our own Central Massachusetts and the Central United States, and garnering interest from Tennessee and Texas to Australia, India, and Nigeria. While the inaugural issue primarily carried essays and reports from contributors based in the Eastern and Western United States, this issue happily features work by a number of writers in the Midwest and Southwest: Minnesota, Illinois, Kansas, and Nevada, as well as New England and Hawai'i.

This issue of *Currents* features two pieces of particular interest to beginning teachers, but addressed to all. In "Best Practices," based on their experience mentoring future and early-career faculty, Deb Wingert and Tom Molitor have assembled a "basic toolkit of strategies and resources" designed to prevent and manage a wide variety of challenging classroom situations. Sean Goodlett reviews James Lang's *On Course: A Week-by-Week Guide to Your First Semester of College Teaching,* a book that he believes "should be required reading for all new college and university teachers."

Currents is delighted to encourage contributions by new talent as well as by seasoned teacher-scholars. This issue features two essays and one teaching report by university teachers who are also doctoral candidates: "Class Barriers," by M. Thomas Gammarino, "Lessons from Quintilian," by Andrew Bourelle, and "The Self-Deconstructing Canon," by Randy Laist. As students and teachers, all three are attuned to the needs of students and attentive to

double standards in the classroom whereby instructors and institutions fail to practice what they preach. Gammarino argues for breaking down the binary of critical and creative writing; Bourelle calls for the implementation of writing and rhetoric across the curriculum, often embraced in principle but less frequently in practice, and Laist puts forward a design for a survey course that both teaches and demystifies a discipline's canonical texts.

Across-the-curriculum courses are only just beginning to get serious attention in many academic institutions across the country. Despite the fact that interdisciplinarity has been a buzzword for at least two decades, many colleges and universities are only now training their faculty to incorporate such courses seriously and systematically into their curriculum design. Andrew Bourelle's abovementioned essay advocates strongly for writing and rhetoric across the curriculum not as newfangled notions but as both long-established fundamentals of a person's higher education and necessary components of a contemporary curriculum. In her teaching report, "Making Reading Visible in the Classroom," Ellen Carillo similarly makes a case for teaching reading across the curriculum. Strangely, while literacy is recognized as a fundamental prerequisite for informed citizenship and, as one of the three R's, reading is considered essential to elementary and secondary education, reading often seems to drop out of sight in higher education curricula, although reading—and particularly, interpretive—skills are critical to student success.

Courses often have a series of beginnings, as all of us know who have offered a pilot or Special Topics course and fine-tuned it in subsequent iterations. Three pieces in this issue address course design or re-design: Randy Laist's Teaching Report, "The Self-Deconstructing Canon: Teaching the Survey Course Without Perpetuating Hegemony," offers liberating strategies to those of us charged with teaching a required

department survey. Both M. Thomas Gammarino's aforementioned essay, "Class Barriers: Creative Writing in Freshman Composition" and Amy Cummins' teaching report, "Tell Me a Story: Effective Use of Creative Writing Assignments in College Literature Classes," make the case for including creative writing in courses across the curriculum and offer provocative and usable ideas for how to do so.

As online courses become more widespread, teachers are becoming more sophisticated in designing courses specifically for online instruction. For those who might still think that teaching a course online means merely tweaking one's face-to-face course syllabus and posting it on a Web-based course management platform, Vicky Gilpin's detailed review of Robin Smith's *Conquering the Content: A Step-by-Step Guide to Online Course Design* will be an eye-opener.

Finally, as the prospect of summer hangs before us like a mirage, it is worth reminding ourselves that we are human beings as well as teachers. In his review of Parker Palmer's *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*, Jeffrey Cohen does just that, urging us to honor our multifaceted identities and to renew ourselves and our passion for our work.

Jumping into a dynamic interdisciplinary field (SoTL) and a rapidly evolving medium (online publication) quite new to me has been a humbling as well as an exhilarating experience, and one that I would not have been able to navigate alone. Launching *Currents* has been a joy because it has been a collective effort, and as we celebrate our first year, I want to thank everyone who has made it possible, both in our home institution and beyond. First, thanks to Worcester State College's Office of Academic Affairs and to Andrea Bilics of the Center for Teaching and Learning for sharing our vision for *Currents* and continuing to support us despite the difficult fiscal climate. Thanks, too, to the Center's Graduate Assistant, Ana Salinas, who has taken on additional work this semester with competence and

grace. Kathleen Lynch, our first Editorial Assistant, did a terrific job doing the preliminary research to establish the need and niche for *Currents* and setting up our electronic filing system. We wish her the best as she graduates with a Master's in Occupational Therapy and look forward to welcoming our new Editorial Assistant Brian Burgess in the fall.

Our founding Advisory Board has been as solid as a rock through this past year, shaping the policy and profile of the journal and carrying out its day-to-day work with a will. Heartfelt thanks to our Editorial Subcommittee members Ruth Haber, Karen Weierman, and Beth Russell, who have gone beyond the call of duty in working closely with contributors in sometimes extensive copyediting, formatting, and proofreading. Equally, thanks to our Technology Subcommittee members Karl Wurst, Jeffry Nichols, and Daron Barnard for their work and expertise in updating the website and the subscriber listserve and posting the PDFs for each issue. Book Review Editors Cathy Wilcox-Titus and Matthew Johnsen are doing a terrific job in building the Book Reviews section; please write to them if you are interested in reviewing for *Currents*. We have Matthew to thank for having come up with our journal's name and Dan Shartin for having helped us word and work through our mission statement. Most of our Standard Operating Procedures are now in place, thanks to SOP Subcommittee members Pearl Mosher-Ashley, Sue Foo, and Bonnie Orcutt, though we are still a work in progress.

Currents has been fortunate to have professional designers and editors (and—full disclosure—family members) generous enough to give their time to the project: thanks to Nikhil Melnechuk for his elegant design work and infinite patience, Eve Melnechuk for her creation of the style templates, and Ted Melnechuk for his meticulous proofreading. The work of our referees has been invisible but essential to reviewing the submissions, maintaining high standards for the journal, and giving usable feedback to contributors. To Gouri Banerjee, Daron Barnard, Elizabeth Bidinger, Phil Burns, Maureen Fielding, Sean Goodlett, Jenny Goodman, Ruth Haber, Jennifer Hudson, Matthew Johnsen, Kim Hicks, Sangeeta Kamat, Bonnie Kanner, Sara Korber-Deweerd, Jeffry Nichols, Mathew Ouellett, Bonnie Orcutt, Michael Reder, Beth Russell, Sandra Singer, Rashna Singh, Carey Smitherman, Pennie Ticen, Don Vescio, Jeanie Warnock, Kristin Waters, Karen Woods Weierman, Catherine Wilcox-Titus, Margaret Wiley, Karl Wurst, Sharon Yang, and Adam Zahler: heartfelt thanks for the generous gift of your time and expertise.

Finally, thank you to the growing body of *Currents* contributors, without whom there would be no journal at all, and our far-flung network of readers, whose feedback and participation we crave. In the coming year, we look forward to creating an External Advisory Board for *Currents* and have been gathering names of interested candidates with a range of expertise and from a cross-section of different institutions. Please write to me if you would like to be considered. Also, do send us your recommendations of teaching-and-learning-related websites for Current Clips & Links and your announcements for our Work-in-Progress page.

Please note that we have extended our submissions deadline for the Fall 2009 issue by two weeks, to June 1st, 2009. Here's to new beginnings, again and again! ▮▮

References

Said, E. W. (1985). *Beginnings: Intention and method*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Best Practices: Preventing and Managing Challenging Classroom Situations

Deb Wingert and Tom Molitor

Abstract

Professors currently face significant challenges in the classroom. Over the past two decades, teachers have increasingly been called on to handle minor classroom disruptions, accommodate learning needs of students with disabilities, and recognize and address warning signs of significant student distress and potentially volatile behaviors. Particularly vulnerable to these challenges are future and early career (EC) faculty as they begin to build their teaching repertoire. Through our work in mentoring hundreds of future and EC faculty and a review of research on best practices in faculty development, we present a basic toolkit of strategies and resources to support and to improve the overall teaching and learning environment.

Keywords

future and early career faculty, identification, prevention and managing challenging classroom situations, challenging classroom behaviors, recommended classroom strategies

Deb Wingert is Director of Educational Development at the College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Minnesota. She also serves as Early Career Facilitator and Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) Coordinator for UMN's Center for Teaching and Learning.

Tom Molitor is Distinguished Teaching Professor and Chair in Veterinary and Population Medicine at the College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Minnesota. His research interests include teaching excellence in science-based university education, molecular mechanisms in the pathogenesis of viral diseases, neuroimmunology, and the modulation of host defense responses by addictive drugs.

Introduction

A crisp, sunny day in April, a rare time Minnesotans cherish. Spring semester of 2007 is winding down. The class of 30 interdisciplinary doctoral students enthusiastically buzzes about final exams, pending degrees, and upcoming interviews as they focus their sights on academic careers in the professoriate. As more students arrive for class, news spreads quickly of a horrendous tragedy unfolding at Virginia Tech; the class demeanor abruptly quiets. Serious class discussion emerges, centering on what happened, why it happened, and, especially, whether this could happen to us here or on any campus where we might be teaching.

This paper focuses on the rich fruits of that discussion. What potentially difficult situations do professors face today? With little or no training beyond their discipline, how can professors discern which classroom behaviors are potentially dangerous or could lead to tragic circumstances? What is the role of the professor in guiding a distressed student to the appropriate skilled, trained personnel? Where can a professor find consultation and support, rather than going it alone? With professors on the classroom front lines, what essen-

tial support systems can faculty access in a collaborative effort to identify, prevent, and/or manage disruptive or disturbing student behavior? Such situations are particularly challenging in research institutions, where classes are often large, with enrollments of 30, 50, 100 students or more.

Campuses Today

Disruptive student behavior, from mild antics to dangerous, potentially lethal aggression, in college and university classrooms has increased significantly over the past two decades (Kitzrow, 2003). Professors have struggled with students who arrive late, leave early, chat through class, dominate the class, or refuse to participate at all. Meyers (2003) found that at least 20% of all college students demonstrate classroom incivility during their college years. Likewise, the 2004 American College Health Association Survey found that 94% of 47,000 students surveyed felt overwhelmed at times; 45% felt depressed, seriously enough that the depression adversely affected their functioning; 63% felt hopeless at times; and 10% had seriously considered suicide.

Challenging classroom situations can seriously interfere with the teaching and learning process, adversely impacting faculty, students, and the overall learning environment. In such situations, faculty feel increased stress and tend to spend more time dealing with disruptive behavior than teaching critical material. Teaching excellence takes a hit. Caught in this unfortunate crossfire, students experience derailed learning due to the tense or chaotic learning environment (Morrissette, 2001; Schneider, 1998).

Challenging Classroom Behavior

Over the past 25 years, we have taught higher education students with a myriad of challenges. Through programs offered by the Center for Teaching and Learning, we have mentored hundreds of future and early career faculty. From such experiences and from research on best practices in faculty development (McKeachie and

Svinicki, 2006; Richardson, 1999; Braxton and Bayer, 2005; Sorcinelli, 1994; Meyers, 2003; Morrissette, 2001; Schneider, 1998), we have compiled an array of strategies and tips to support future and early career faculty in effectively handling common challenging classroom behaviors seen in today's college and university classrooms. Six common challenging classroom behaviors in higher education are described in the sections below and briefly listed in Table 1. Each behavior, briefly described as a short scenario in the left column, is paired with suggested strategies to prevent and/or manage the behavior in the column to its right. These scenarios, with the corresponding strategies, have been used in faculty development workshops to engage faculty in further developing and strengthening their teaching excellence.

Unprepared Students

One of the most common concerns of future and early career faculty remains how to deal effectively with students who may not have completed the assigned readings or assignments and can contribute little in class.

Quizzes. A highly successful technique we have used (and recommend) is the frequent employment of quizzes, especially Instant Feedback Assessment Techniques (IF-ATs). IF-ATs refer to quizzing techniques that provide instant feedback to students. Instructors can administer IF-ATs for full credit or partial credit during each class session, rather than solely for traditional mid-term or final exams. Students tend to prepare more for class sessions when they know they are held accountable for mastering content. The use of IF-ATs tends to increase student learning, retention, and engagement, a significant student motivator (Brosvic et al., 2004). For example, if the instructor uses PowerPoint, s/he can incorporate a slide, every 7-10 slides or so, that contains a multiple-choice test item based on the previous slides. If they know that questions are coming, students focus strongly on essential information, especially when the instructor tells them

Challenging Behavior	Potential Management Strategies
1. Unprepared: A small group of students often attends your class, but its members have not read the assigned readings, and therefore contribute little in discussions. How would you handle this situation?	• Give brief, periodic quizzes • Provide study questions or study guides to be completed by class session (can be submitted for grading) • Assign students to present selected content to the class
2. Inattentive: A few students enjoy reading the paper during class or frequently carry on their own conversation, which, at times, annoys others. How would you handle this situation?	• Try using small groups (increases engagement) • Use Think/Pair/Share (call on inattentive students, after asking a question that students think about and share with a peer) • Use Write/Pair/Share (call on inattentive students, after asking a question, having students write down an answer, and having them share their answers with a partner) or One-Minute Paper (call on those students, after asking a question, and students write a one-minute answer) • Move around the classroom for proximity to inattentive students • Rotate class seating or re-group students • Confer with student(s) privately
3. Reluctant to Participate in Class: (Name) comes to class, sits in the back of the class near the door, rarely speaks to classmates, and has yet to ask or share information in class. How would you handle this situation?	• Use structured small groups: assign group roles and require group processing • Randomly select group members to share a summary of group work • Use Think-Pair-Share and Write-Pair-Share
4. Hostile/Oppositional Behavior: (Name) seems to have a chip on his/her shoulder. His/her comments in class often sound either angry or hostile. Even his/her nonverbal behavior seems contentious (looks of contempt, etc.). How would you handle this situation?	• Acknowledge student as an individual (encouraging comments on assignments, confer with student on assignments, respond in a constructive manner, etc.) • Meet privately with the student and respectfully ask him or her to moderate his or her behavior. • Listen carefully and respectfully. Then state your position, calmly presenting the issue to entire class, and encourage responses

Challenging Behavior	Potential Management Strategies

5. Argumentative/Heated Discussions:
A lively class discussion has turned into an intense argument involving 4-6 students. Hostile and damaging comments are being exchanged. How would you handle this situation?
	• Use constructive controversy/structure a debate (Johnson, D. & Johnson, R., 1997):
	  -Encourage discussion of multiple views
	  -Instruct students to debate the opposite view
	  -Encourage discussion of multiple views
	• List evidence of views on board (T-Chart or Two-Column method or more, representing each view)
	• Slow tempo of voice and ask an open-ended question
	• Use Rotating Chair technique (speaker summarizes previous statement before sharing their comment)
	• Circular Response Discussion (each student shares a comment)

6. Cheating/plagiarizing Student Behavior: You just discovered a student cheating on an exam in your large lecture class of 150 students. How would you handle this situation?	• Review University's policy [e.g., (Office for Student Conduct and Academic Integrity)] • Remind class about consequences of cheating (e.g., failing assignment/test, lowering final grade, failing course, etc.) To Prevent Cheating: • Review policy in syllabus • Require multiple drafts of paper • Use different forms of the same test or randomized test items

Table 1. Potential Classroom Management Strategies

that the IF-AT questions indicate what "might be on an exam."

IF-ATs are a lower technology tool. The lower, less expensive tech resource includes an actual IF-AT form resembling a lottery ticket, in which students simply scratch off a given rectangle to expose the correct answer. The IF-ATs are constructed so that the answers cannot be changed and instructors can tell how many trials it took to get the final answer (IF-AT information available at: epsteineducation.com). Instructors can choose from a variety of response tools, including some higher-technology tools. High- tech response tools include the iClicker (Cummings, 2008; iClicker information available at: Pearsonhighered.com). Faculty may prefer response forms currently used by

their departments or even simpler forms at the low end of the tech spectrum: sticky notes, or small pieces of paper collected either after each question break or at the end of the class. We recommend that faculty incorporate quizzes/questions directly into their class session materials and select the appropriate response tool for their particular setting. Holding students accountable increases preparedness.

Study Guides. Many future and early career faculty search for ways to ensure that students complete required readings and master massive amounts of content before class. We encourage future and early career faculty to develop study guides consisting of a small set of questions based on content to be addressed in each class. Effective professors develop questions that address

the most critical content of the upcoming class. We recommend creating questions that require the students to demonstrate their understanding of the assigned material by applying the material in some way, rather than to regurgitate material. To ensure that students use the study guides, we recommend that faculty require students to submit their answers prior to the class session. An easy way for them to do so is to submit their work online through a course WebVista site or other similar academic software that offers a grading option in which they earn credit for submissions. Students who are required to complete study questions at home tend to be more prepared, allowing class time to be more productively used; if they have read the assigned material, they can follow and even contribute to analyses of the content, and they can be expected to use higher-level, critical-thinking skills in class discussions. In concert with IF-ATs, well-designed study guides both help students navigate large amounts of complex material and increase the probability of their coming to class with the reading done.

Students Present Selected Content. Effective ways to engage students abound. One of our most successful strategies involves assigning specific content for students to share/teach/present to peers, usually in small groups. Students particularly enjoy the jigsaw, in which students, usually in small groups of 4-6, divide up a portion of an assigned reading, each taking responsibility for a different part (Aronson et al., 2007). We require students to read the assigned reading outside of class. While we sometimes have them answer study questions online before class, as described in the previous paragraph, at other times we wait until they are back in class to give them questions on the reading they have prepared and then have them share their responses, comparing and analyzing their answers in their jigsaw groups. After sharing, groups complete either an individual or small-group IF-AT as previously described. Using a jigsaw exercise means that chances are lower

that students will attend class unprepared, but, should they do so, other options are available to the instructor. Here are two of our suggestions: (1) do not give unprepared students credit for this class session/activity; or (2) assemble unprepared students into a separate group and give them lower credit for the session.

Inattentive Behaviors

Inattentive students can significantly derail a class session, annoying others with their incessant chatter, online gaming, and other distracting behavior. To regain their attention, professors can implement a few strategies. First, inattentive behavior can be a cue to initiate a brief, classwide think-pair-share (or write-pair-share), which involves asking a question related to the course content and then instructing students to think about (or write) a possible answer, pair up with partners next to them and share their responses. Reminding students to be prepared to share with the class tends to increase their accountability. After allowing a brief moment for general student sharing, respectfully ask the inattentive student to contribute.

Whether the class is large or small, even in a seminar or lab, the instructor can place students in small groups, either deciding who should work together or asking students sitting near each other to work together. Merely separating inattentive students into different groups can decrease inattention. Further, students who are both given a specific task (i.e., to address specific questions) and held accountable (i.e., expected to be prepared to submit or present answers/findings) tend to function with increased attention and focused participation. Crucial to this strategy is group processing, in which the small group submits a written description of one thing that they did well, as well as one suggestion to improve their group's performance. Having to hand in a self-evaluation contributes to both accountability and on-task behavior.

A very simple strategy to decrease inattentive behavior quickly pertains to physical proximity. Moving

away from the front of the classroom and speaking to the students from the sides or aisles can increase their attention. Standing close to the inattentive students and engaging them briefly with respectful eye contact (no glaring!), as if conversing with them, can be particularly effective.

Finally, in order to maintain a high-quality learning environment, faculty should establish class ground rules (i.e., only one person talks at a time; students and faculty criticize ideas rather than people; laptops should be used for note-taking only, and so on), state them in the syllabus, review them, and revisit them when inattentive behaviors recur. If necessary, the professor might also consider meeting the student(s) privately to discuss course expectations and the importance of participation in class, including consequences of continuing inattention, such as low grades or even removal from the course.

Reluctance to Participate in Class

For various reasons, some students do not participate in class. They may feel self-conscious, anxious, embarrassed, unconfident, or uninterested. The reluctant student in your class may be a reflective learner, needing time to formulate a response, or may be afraid of public speaking, especially if he or she is an introvert or perhaps comes from a culture which discourages students from speaking out. Many of the small-group techniques suggested for inattentive behaviors also apply for reluctant students. Likewise, using think-pair-shares or write-pair-shares or even short one-minute writes can be particularly effective in engaging reticent students. Activities such as think-pair-share provide students with a chance to organize, prepare, and share their thoughts. A one-minute write entails asking students to use the last minute of class for writing about a topic such as the main points that they will take with them from the session or their response to the content presented during the session. Such activities address the problems of the reluctant and/or reflective learner.

Oppositional Behavior

One of the most frequently expressed concerns of our future and early career professors relate to hostile, oppositional student behavior in the classroom. Oppositional behavior can manifest as criticizing other students' opinions, professor's comments, course materials, or grading policies. Ignoring oppositional behavior often increases contention within the classroom. Both McKeachie (2006) and Brookfield (1995) recognize that the hostile student usually needs to feel heard. Dialogue can be initiated through written communications (we recommend journals, student writings/reflections, one-minute papers) or verbal communications (i.e., private conferences outside class). The professor can choose to model effective communication during the class session by first empathically acknowledging the student's stance, then calmly stating his or her own perspective and going on to encourage responses from other students, opening the discussion to the entire class. If there is a chance that other students might see this strategy as a chance to vent their hostility toward the disruptive student, simply enforcing the ground rules for civility in the classroom and announcing that everyone can contribute twice to the discussion but must wait to make the second comment until after everyone else has spoken can help maintain a respectful, spirited discourse.

Argumentative, Heated Class Discussions

Heated discussions handled well in class can ignite meaningful learning and enhance the overall learning environment. Effective professors harness and guide the students' interests. A few tips: Start by reviewing the class ground rules previously discussed. Two of our favorite strategies to facilitate productive heated discussions are T-charts and constructive controversies. In the first, we draw a large T on the whiteboard, assign a student to serve as scribe, and begin facilitating the discussion. Comments from one perspective are listed on the left side of the T, and comments from an oppos-

Challenging Problem Behavior	Potential Management Strategies
1. **Student(s) with Attention-Deficit Disorder (ADD):** You receive an accommodation notice from the disability specialist about a student in one of your classes who has Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). A request is made for allowing him/her an extra week on a research paper. You believe that this is too much time and that the extended time may put the student behind on the next assignment. **Students with a Learning Disability Condition:** Several days after the first exam in your class, a student approaches you and tells you that s/he has a learning disability, which affects his/her ability to take multiple choice exams. S/he has failed the exam and asks that you provide him/her with a make-up exam in essay format.	What do you do? • Contact and consult with Disability Services What teaching strategies are indicated? • Vary your teaching format (i.e., break up lecture with active learning strategies such as: small group discussion, think-pair-shares, IF-ATs,) • Use repetition, extreme clarity, and explicit organization (Lecture outlines, handouts of PowerPoint slides with bullets and partially complete content in order for students to take notes; clear, specific and concrete directions of all activities and assignments) • Present information about assignments/exams verbally AND in writing
2. **Student Suffering from Depression (and Anxiety):** In a private conversation, a student tells you that's/he has missed several classes during the past two weeks because s/he has been severely depressed. S/he has been seeing a psychologist for therapy and a psychiatrist for medication. S/he tells you that his/her medication is affecting his/her memory and s/he is having difficulty taking notes in your class. S/he asks you for copies of your overhead transparencies and all your class notes. You wish to help, but are unsure if you should accommodate this request.	How should you proceed? • Contact Mental Health and Disability Service professionals. (They can provide support and guidance for next steps and strategies)

Table 2. Disabilities in the College/University Classroom

ing perspective are listed on the right. This method can also be adapted to use a blank, two-column PowerPoint slide that can be posted and/or emailed.

Likewise, a constructive controversy, also known as a debate, planned and implemented effectively, can help students see several perspectives on a given issue/topic (Johnson & Johnson, 1997). When a professor wants to give direction to a heated, course-related discussion, s/he can assemble groups of 4-5 students and ask each group to prepare one side of the controversy. Within each group, members are assigned roles such as presenting the position, providing evidence for their side, rebutting the opposing view, and making a closing statement. When they have assembled their cases, including evidence drawn from course content and strong reasoning to make the evidence compelling, each group presents its side. Since each student and group has prepared for the debate, all are expected to ask questions during this time, with the class ultimately discussing and voting for one side, based on the evidence and analysis presented by a group.

Other effective strategies to use in facilitating productive heated discussions include rotating chair, circular response discussion, and open-ended questions. Rotating chair helps to slow down the discussion and increase listening during heated debates. In this exercise, each student is required to summarize the previous student's comment before sharing his or her own. Paired with the instructor's slower tempo of speaking and the use of open-ended questions (no specific right/wrong answer), the heated discussions tend to cool down naturally, in concert with increased reflection and analytical comments. Finally, implementing a circular response discussion, in which each student shares his or her thoughts and opinions without judgment from the rest of the class, allows all students to share their comments, rather than enabling a few students to dominate discussions.

Cheating/Plagiarism

Recent research indicates a continuing increase in student cheating (Hinman, 2004). The good news, particularly for future and early career faculty, is that a few simple strategies can help prevent or significantly reduce the likelihood of cheating, including plagiarism. Review your college's or university's policy on academic integrity with your students on the first day of class. State this policy clearly in your syllabus, including specific consequences for cheating (i.e., failing assignment/exam, receiving a lower final grade, failing the class, etc.), as determined by you and/or your department. Be sure to define plagiarism clearly, so that students will understand what is and is not responsible use of sources. Requiring students to sign an honor code has also been found to reduce the likelihood of cheating (McCabe & Pavela, 2005). To keep students from benefitting from paper mills or finding online articles and using cut and paste in order to simulate original work, require multiple-draft submissions of a major paper or project. When it comes to cheating on exams (especially traditional, objective exams), we find that the most effective preventive measures are using different forms of the same exam and/or randomizing both the test items (for same or different forms of an exam) and, for multiple choice tests, the possible answers for each question.

Increase in Students with Disabilities on College/University Campuses

More than ever before, students with a wide range of disabilities attend colleges and universities. Both technological and pharmaceutical advances have made educational opportunities available to persons with conditions that would previously have barred them from higher education (Kitzrow, 2003). The reassuring news for future and early career faculty, who may feel apprehensive about working alone on the front lines of teaching and learning, is that many campuses have highly qualified disability service and mental health professionals to support faculty as they work with an

increasingly diverse student population and to oversee the identification of students in need of help, refer them to the appropriate services, and identify and implement appropriate accommodations for them.

The University of Minnesota's Disability Services serves as a national model, supporting effective learning and working opportunities for students, staff, and faculty with disabilities. Its comprehensive range of services include online access (http://ds.umn.edu/disabilities/) to extensive resources, information, and teaching and learning strategies helpful to students with conditions including deafness (also hard-of-hearing and deafblind); mobility impairments (paraplegia, quadriplegia, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, amputation); systemic disabilities (diabetes, seizure disorders, lupus); traumatic brain injuries; visual impairments; and invisible disabilities such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD and ADD), learning disabilities, and psychiatric disabilities. In this section, we will focus on strategies to support students with these invisible disabilities.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADHD/ ADD) and Learning Disabilities

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD/ADD), a set of symptoms of inattention, remains one of the most common invisible disabilities, affecting an estimated 3–5% of the child population, 60%–70% of whom experience attention-related problems into adulthood (American Psychiatric Association, 2000).

A learning disability (LD) is a lifelong disorder that significantly compromises a person's ability in one or more of the following areas: speaking, listening, reading, writing, computing, recalling, and/or organizing information. The U.S. Department of Education estimates that LD can be found in 5% of the population, although others report higher estimates (2001).

Although LD is different from ADHD/ADD, these two conditions often overlap. An important factor for future and early career faculty to consider in their academic planning is that effective teaching and learning strategies helpful to ADHD/ADD students often benefit students with learning disabilities as well. A few selected problems and strategies are briefly described below and summarized in Table 2.

First and foremost, contact and consultation with Disability Services is essential. On most campuses, disability services staff provide both valuable support for faculty and needed services for students. Professors can share their concerns with trained personnel and seek expert assistance as they try to figure out what steps to take with ADHD/ADD and LD students. Support for students can include reasonable accommodations that do not compromise required course competencies (i. e., private test space) and referrals to mental health services, if necessary. Even if students refuse accommodations, Disability Services can provide faculty with classroom strategies to help LD and ADHD/ADD students in the classroom.

One of the most effective classroom strategies for students with LD and/or ADHD/ADD is to vary your teaching format. Break up traditional lectures with opportunities for students to process and apply the material that you have just presented. We recommend that faculty use the IF-AT or an alternative method of inserting multiple-choice test items in PowerPoint presentations, as we described earlier in this paper, being sure that the questions require students to think critically about the content presented in the prior 10-12 minutes. The professor does not need to grade the test items: students can discuss answers with their peers and share their answers via class vote, taking less than a minute to do so. We find that while all students respond well to this very brief activity, it is particularly valuable in helping LD and ADHD/ADD students to organize, recall, process, and apply course content in manageable chunks. Other ways to vary your teaching format include the use of brief and structured small-group discussions; think (or write)-pair-shares; one-

- Absenteeism (pattern of missing class)
- Failure to identify oneself by name
- Failure to complete assignments
- Significant change in interaction level (no longer interacting with peers)
- Inability to interact with any peers
- Hostile interaction pattern with peers and or faculty, TA, etc.
- Fatigued and disheveled (dirty clothes, uncombed hair, etc.) appearance
- Mention of suicide or comment that s/he has no reason to live
- Hostility toward peers
- Sending of toxic, vitriolic notes/emails to faculty, TA, peer or campus official
- Sending of threat(s) via note, letter or email to faculty, TA, peer or campus official
- Significant decrease in student grade point average (GPA)
- Bizarre behavior (hearing voices, calling oneself by another name, hallucinations, etc.)
- Extreme fatigue
- Inability to sleep
- Frequent agitation
- Harassment or stalking of other(s)
- Invasion of privacy (e.g., taking cell phone pictures without permission) of another
- Substance abuse
- Possession of weapon(s)

(Sokolow & Lewis, 2007)

Table 3. Warning Signs

minute writes; writing/sharing their "muddiest point" (whatever they find most confusing in the class session so far); and short case studies/problems that require students to apply course content.

Revisit course content with brief reviews. This can be as simple as asking questions (i.e., IF-ATs, PowerPoint slide with sample test item/question or think-pair-share) at the beginning of class regarding the previous session to revive students' memory of the older material so that the instructor can build on that foundation as he or she presents new concepts and information. Reviewing material outside of class can be encouraged in a variety of ways. A class favorite presents the review in the form of a *Jeopardy*-style game (template available at: decsoftware.com) created by the instructor for students to play with peers or alone. This type of activity helps students easily revisit, engage, and master essential course material without sacrificing additional course time.

Faculty who present course content with concrete clarity in a well-organized manner tend to excel in teaching (Skelton, 2005; Sorcinelli & Davis, 1996). Students, particularly those with LD and ADHD/ADD, learn more effectively when course content is taught in a well-organized and clear manner. Faculty can disseminate class-session outlines or even hand-outs of partially completed PowerPoint slides that give students an organized structure to follow as they take notes. Finally, faculty should provide clear, specific and concrete directions for all activities and assignments, being sure to explain them verbally during class and in writing, including such information in the course syllabus and in rubrics/checklists setting out concrete and specific expectations for all assignments and activities.

The Increase in Mental Health Issues on College/University Campuses

Today's colleges and universities have experienced a dramatic rise in a host of student mental health issues, ranging from such common problems as stress and alco-

hol/substance abuse to serious psychological/psychiatric conditions, such as major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive behaviors, and suicidality (Kitzrow, 2003; UMN Disability Services, 2009; Fogg, 2009). Professors, particularly early career faculty, can benefit from both the collaborative, collegial support of campus professionals and an array of powerful teaching strategies to effectively engage an increasingly challenging student body.

The University of Minnesota recently created the campus-wide Provost Committee on Student Mental Health to review the issues and barriers faced by students with mental health needs. The committee's goals include raising awareness regarding student mental health, impacting policy change, and helping to improve the overall preventive and management conditions, services, and resources for student mental health. As a result, a comprehensive website (http://www.mental-health.umn.edu/) was developed to provide immediate support, resources, and direction for students in distress, concerned faculty, staff, parents, and friends/peers. This website contains valuable, applicable information for both the University of Minnesota and other colleges and universities.

Stress and Mental Health

Dr. Christenson, Director of Mental Health at the University of Minnesota Boynton Health Services, reports that stress both adversely impacts academic performance and plays a major role in mental health problems (2008). He explains that common stressors for students in higher education settings include: shared living space, new relationships, conflict with parent/roommate/significant other, homesickness, increased access to alcohol/drugs, increased independence, poor eating habits, irregular sleep patterns, and financial pressures. The UMN mental health website includes excellent resources that are accessible to all regarding healthy stress management.

Indicators of distress. Dr. Renninger (2008), Senior Psychologist at the UMN's University Counseling and Consulting Services (UCCS), shares the following significant signs/indicators of potential student distress: academic indicators, which include missed assignments, deterioration in work quality, a drop in grades, a negative change in classroom performance, verbal aggressiveness in class, disorganized or erratic behavior, continual excuses (requests for extended deadlines, late submissions), assignments/writings that indicate extreme hopelessness, rage, social isolation, or despair; physical indicators, such as dishevelment/deterioration in physical appearance/hygiene, visible change in weight, hangovers, smell of alcohol, excessive fatigue; personal indicators, including tearfulness, unprovoked anger/hostility, excessive dependency, expressions of hopelessness/worthlessness, expressions of distress over family/other problems; and safety/risk indicators, such as comments about going away for a long time, history of suicidal thoughts or suicide attempts, distribution of prized possessions, or self-destructive/injurious behaviors.

Suggested Next Steps. Professors need not be psychologists or disability experts (sigh of relief) to teach students effectively. Professors can contact campus professionals to share concerns, glean suggestions, and begin the referral process, if appropriate. Disability Services professionals can provide faculty and students with a wealth of support and services such as confidential consultations, determination of disability and appropriateness of reasonable accommodations, and referrals for additional campus health and counseling services. Classroom support might include accommodations in exams and coursework.

Dr. Renninger (2008) provides the following guidelines for professors to use when talking to a student about your concerns: First, write down your specific concerns (see indicators above) and possible campus referral sources. Consult with campus mental health and/or disability services professionals. If you are concerned about campus or personal safety, contact campus police. Second, contact (email or phone) and invite student to confer at a designated time in your office or a designated private, confidential room. A mental health professional can offer guidance about effective ways to approach a troubled student, including helping you to evaluate whether it is safe to interact with the student without witnesses. Third, share your concerns (what you have observed) in a nonjudgmental manner. Fourth, listen to the student's details, reasons, feelings and concerns about the situation. Fifth, work together in looking at options (i.e., referral to campus professions, follow-up conference); and sixth, follow up, as determined.

In concert with this, Rinehart (2008), UMN Provost for Student Affairs shared, with faculty and staff, a simple model for talking with a person about a sensitive issue, which "...often consists of the following elements: 'I care', 'I see', 'I feel', LISTEN, 'I want', 'I will'." Rinehart suggests the following "basic outline" for an email message requesting a meeting:

> Dear (student name),
>
> As your instructor, I am concerned (I care) about how you are doing in class. I see you failed the last exam and you have not been participating in class discussion (specific observable behaviors). I am worried (I feel) that you may fail this class and I would like (I want) to talk to you about difficulties that may be keeping you from succeeding. My office hours are. . . . If these times do not work, please email me suggested times so we can make an appointment (I will meet with you).

Depression and Anxiety. Results from a 2007 health survey conducted by the University of Minnesota Boynton Health Services indicated that one in every ten students surveyed met the criteria for major depression, and had seriously considered suicide in the past year (Christenson, 2008). Christenson reported that

students who have difficulty managing their stress are three times more likely to be diagnosed with depression. Both disability and university mental health services can collaboratively support faculty and assist students with depression to provide appropriate, tailored accommodations. If a professor observes one or more of the previously listed indicators or suspects that a student struggles with depression and/or anxiety, we encourage immediate consultation with both campus mental health and disability service professionals.

Volatile Behavior: Warning Signs of Potentially Dangerous Situations

Several troubling student behavior patterns can alert professors and other university officials to potentially serious or even dangerous emotional functioning (IACLEA, 2007). Sokolow and Lewis (2007) identified that one or more of the following student behaviors, summarized in Table 3, can signify potential warning signs which might be observed not only by professors and instructional staff, but also by student housing personnel, and other university officials.

Sokolow and Lewis (2007) advocate creating a campus Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) to provide a unified approach in addressing difficult, potentially lethal student behaviors. Representative members comprising this team could include campus police, academic affairs officers, student housing staff, disability services professionals, general counsel, student affairs personnel, counseling/mental health clinicians, and faculty/staff. Instead of receiving fragmented pieces of information regarding a student's behavior from different sources, the BIT team can be centralized to receive information from many areas of the student's college life and quickly detect patterns that could signify serious problems in time to help the student and prevent him or her from endangering himself/herself and others. Intervention can be tailored to the student needs and might include mental health assessment, hospitalization (voluntary or involuntary, depending on the situation), support and

accommodations from Disability Services, and support for faculty/staff. Students who refuse to cooperate with recommendations for assessment and treatment, especially those who continue behaviors such as invasion of privacy, harassment, or stalking that violate the campus student conduct code, could be given the choice of either compliance or withdrawal for noncompliance. Similar to the model described above, the University of Minnesota created the Behavioral Consultation Team (BCT) that faculty and staff can immediately access to relay and discuss concerns about disturbing student behavior.

Finally, the involvement of parents early in the process can help in both sharing essential information and receiving support for plans of actions. Although the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) may limit sharing information with a parent, information can be shared when it relates to the 85 % of college and university students whose parents still claim them as dependents for tax purposes (Sokolow & Lewis, 2007).

Summary and Conclusions

Professors have increasingly faced a myriad of potentially difficult classroom situations, from mild challenges to potentially dangerous dilemmas that can significantly interfere with the teaching and learning process. With solid support from centers for teaching and learning and faculty development specialists, faculty and instructional staff can learn to identify, manage, and prevent a wide range of disruptive classroom behaviors. Campus mental health and disability services can provide both essential support for faculty and appropriate services and accommodations for students. Creating a team that includes members of the campus police, academic affairs, student housing, disability services, general counsel, student affairs, counseling/mental health services, and faculty/staff can expedite the detection of distressing and even harmful

behavior patterns and enable action to be taken more quickly to get troubled students the help they need and keep dangerous situations from escalating. Tragedies such as those experienced by Virginia Tech engender hard lessons for all institutions. From immense loss, we have learned to strengthen our strategies and coordinate efforts by many different offices within the college community to provide a safe, high-quality teaching and learning environment for all. ■■

References

American College Health Association. (2004). National college health assessment: Penn State University System executive summary, Fall 2004. Baltimore, MD.

American Psychiatric Association. (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders.* (Fourth Edition, Text Revision) DSM-IV. Washington, D.C.

Aronson, E., Wilson, T., & Akert, R. (2007) *Social psychology.* (6th edition). Garden City, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Braxton, J., & Bayer, A. (2005). Faculty and student classroom improprieties: Creating a civil environment on campus, No.100. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning,* No. 77, Indianapolis, IN: Jossey-Bass.

Brookfield, S. (1995) *Becoming a critically reflective teacher.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series.

Brosvic, G., Epstein, M., & Cook, M. (2004). Provision of feedback during preparation for academic testing: Learning is enhanced by immediate but not delayed feedback. *The Psychological Record,* 54, 207-231.

Christenson, G. (2008). Faculty and staff mental health training: A public health approach. Presentation to UMN faculty, CVM Seminar on Teaching, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN, November 14, 2008.

Cummings, B. (2008). *iClicker classroom response system.* New York: Addison-Wesley, Pearson Education.

Disability Services (2008). http://ds.umn.edu/ disabilities/. University of Minnesota: Minneapolis, MN.

Fogg, P. (2009). Grad-school blues: Students fighting depression are not alone. *The Chronicle of Higher Education: The Chronicle Review.* Issue: Feb. 20, 2009.

Hinman, L. (2004). How to fight college cheating. *Washington Post,* September 3, 2004.

International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA). (2007). How to respond effectively to troubled or suicidal college students. IACLEA Web Seminar.

Johnson, D., & Johnson, R. (1997). Academic controversy: Increase intellectual conflict and increase the quality of learning. In W. Campbell. & K. Smith (Eds.) *New paradigms for college teaching.* Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.

Keller, C., Finkelstein, N., Perkins, K., Pollack, S.,Turpen, C., & Dobson, M. (2007). Research-based practices for effective clicker use. 2007 Physics Education Research Conference, AIP Conference Proceedings, 951, 128-131.

Kitzrow, M. (2003). The mental health needs of today's college students: Challenges and recommendations. *NASPA Journal,* 41, (1), 167-181.

Mauer, R. (1996). *Beyond the wall of resistance: Unconventional strategies that build support for change.* Austin, TX: Bard Press.

McCabe, D., & Pavela, G. (2005). New honor codes for a new generation. *Inside Higher Education,* 11, March 2005.

McKeachie W.J., & Svinicki M. (2006) Chapter 14. Dealing with student problems and problem students. *Teaching tips: strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers,* 12th Edition. 172-190, Houghton Mifflin.

Meyers, S. (2003). Strategies to prevent and reduce conflict in college classrooms. *College Teaching,* 51, 94.

Morrissette, P. (2001). Reducing incivility in the university/college classroom. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning,* 5 (4). 1–12. Available at: http://www.ucalgary.ca/~iejll/volume5/morrissette.html

Renninger, S. (2008). Faculty and staff mental health training: Talking with a student about your concerns. Presentation to UMN faculty, CVM Seminar on Teaching, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN, November 14, 2008.

Richardson, S. (1999). Promoting civility: A teaching challenge. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning,* 77, Indianapolis, IN: Jossey-Bass.

Rinehart, J. (2008). How to approach a student you are concerned about. Email communication to University of Minnesota Twin Cities Faculty and Staff. December 1, 2008. Specific suggestions available at: http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu/facstaff/HowTo.pdf

Schneider, A. (1998). Incivility forum looks at classroom behavior. *Indiana Daily Student.* Available at: http://idsnews.com/news/100598incivility.html

Skelton, A. (2005). *Understanding teaching excellence in higher education: towards a critical approach.* London: Taylor & Francis.

Sokolow, B., & Lewis, W. (2007). A framework for student mental health & violence prevention. Magna Online Seminar Co-sponsored by Magna Publications and the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management (NCHERM), July 10, 2007.

Sorcinelli, M. D. (1994). Dealing with troublesome behaviors in the classroom. In K. W. Prichard and R. M. Sawyer (Eds.), *Handbook of college teaching: theory and applications.* Greenwood: Westport, CT.

Sorcinelli, M. D, and Davis, B. (1996). Understanding 'teaching excellence' in higher education: a critical evaluation of the national teaching fellowships scheme, *Studies in higher education,* 29, 4, 451–68.

Class Barriers: Creative Writing in Freshman Composition

M. Thomas Gammarino

Abstract

Despite numerous calls for increased dialogue between the disciplines of composition and creative writing over the past fifteen years, few have interrogated the assumptions underlying that basic binary itself. In this essay, I want to argue that the distinction is fundamentally classist and to offer one practical suggestion for complicating the binary that I have yet to see articulated elsewhere in any thoroughgoing way. A glance at the lion's share of freshman composition textbooks and syllabi will still show this suggestion to be a radical claim: namely, that *teachers of freshman composition, whenever there is ample institutional leeway, should include at least one assignment, if not a whole unit, of creative writing in their courses.* Not only will this benefit students' writing skills in general, but it will also serve to dismantle the century-old bias that partitioned the disciplines off from one another in the first place.

Keywords

creative writing, composition, the fiction assignment, rhetoric, class

M. Thomas Gammarino has an MFA from The New School and is completing a PhD at the University of Hawai'i. His short fiction has appeared in Dzanc Books' *Best of the Web 2009 anthology*, *The New York Tyrant*, *The Adirondack Review*, and *Noö Journal*, and his first novel, *Big in Japan: A Ghost Story*, is due out from Chin Music Press in November 2009.

Introduction

Having spent the better part of last summer reading everything I could find on creative writing pedagogy, I was refreshed to come upon Michelle Cross's exhortation in her essay "Bestsellers and Blockbusters: Lore and Popular Culture" to creative writing theorists to start "looking beyond their frequent compare-and-contrasts with literary and composition/rhetoric pedagogies" (2007, p. 74). Among others, Wendy Bishop (1994), Joseph Moxley (1989), and Eve Shelnutt (1989) had spearheaded that line of inquiry back in the early nineties and it has reappeared under various guises since, indeed so much as to effectively dominate discussion in the nascent field of creative writing studies to this day. Most of the discussion has revolved around those areas of composition research that creative writing teachers would putatively do well to take as models for their own sorely undertheorized field, but there has been remarkably little by way of interrogating the assumptions that underlie the basic binary of composition and creative writing, which I take to be classist at root. In this essay, I want to offer a practical suggestion for complicating that binary that I have yet to see articulated elsewhere in any thoroughgoing

way[1], and which a glance at the lion's share of freshman composition textbooks and syllabi will still show to be a radical claim, namely, that teachers of freshman composition, whenever there is ample institutional leeway, should include at least one assignment, if not a whole unit, of creative writing in their courses.

A Practical Injunction

Wendy Bishop's charge back in 1994 had gone like this: "No doubt, students are confused about the relationship between composition studies and creative writing because English studies, as a profession, is confused" (p. 187). Evidently her call to arms went largely unheeded, for as late as 2006, when I began my PhD coursework at the University of Hawai'i focusing on creative writing, I myself was boggled by what I saw as the thoroughly counterintuitive divorce of these two disciplines. I felt out the boundaries soon enough, but in trying to make some historical sense of what I saw as a patently false dichotomy, I turned to Bishop's *Colors of a Different Horse*, where I found D.G. Myers' tentative definition:

> . . . creative writing seems to denote a class of composition once simply called fiction . . . As such it is a makeshift, omnibus term for poems, novels, novellas, short stories, and (sometimes) plays; for the invented as opposed to the historical; for the imaginary in contradistinction to the actual; for the concrete and particular as distinguished from the thorny and abstract. In short, for non-nonfiction . . . . (p. 187)

For Bishop, however, Myers' definition, even with all its hedging, was still too sure of itself, and she dismantled the binaries it took as its basis:

> The textual creations Myers catalogs as fixed genres will be found by many current compo-

sitionists (and literary theorists) as convenient, contingent, and situated. The historical must be discovered through the ideologically based author; the actual can only be apprehended through the representations of language and constructed texts; and the thorny and abstract may provide valid, but (currently) not sanctioned, ways of learning about the concrete and particular . . . When genres blur, it is necessary to remind ourselves that categories are constructed and that genres are defined. (p. 187)

Indeed, in our post-postmodern age, it goes without saying that any specimen of writing might be productively thought of as a variety of fiction, at least in the etymological sense of being "fashioned" or "formed," language never being so streakless a window as the nineteenth-century realists liked to think it was. Myers' distinction between the imaginary and the actual is perhaps the most specious of all. As Ann Berthoff reminds us over and over again, all writing is in some sense imaginary: "The imagination is the shaping power: perception works by forming—finding forms, creating forms, recognizing forms, interpreting forms" (1981, p. 64). The writer of nonfiction must still engage in the same sort of transfiguration process engaged in by the writer of fiction. Forms emerge from the primordial chaos of the writer's mind and are sorted through, nursed to coherence, tailored to certain rhetorical purposes and fit to what is, by definition, the linear, one-word-at-a-time nature of language. In choosing language to embody mental phenomena, the writer—whether of the play, the news article, or the holy scripture—can at best produce only a version of things, a kind of fiction.

Practically speaking—and I really do want to speak practically here—I am not suggesting that there is no difference between the terms "fiction" and "nonfiction" as they are conventionally employed, only that the genres have more in common than not, and that

---

1   Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom (1994) and Tim Mayers (2005) have each questioned the possible role of imaginative writing in the first-year program, though none, so far as I can tell, has accorded it much space, let alone sustained a sound argument in its defense.

the delineation is more elusive than it may at first seem, growing blurrier the harder we look. What we're talking about finally is more a distinction in subject matter than in technique. Certainly the personal narrative, which is widely taught in first-year composition courses, bears a closer resemblance to the Chekhovian short story than to the con/pro essay, though even this, I would argue, draws on many of the same faculties. Why then the longstanding bias against fiction in the composition classroom when the personal narrative has become almost de rigueur?

The common wisdom among composition teachers, if we go on the evidence of most composition textbooks, is that the writing of fiction does *not* engage the critical faculties in any potentially meaningful way. Judith Harris observes:

> Creative writing, in a sublime sense, suffers from its own aesthetic attribute—rendering it "useless" to composition teachers whose goal is to raise students' class consciousness. Hence, in these redactors' views, students should be first trained to decipher the tropes and conventions of 'discourse communities' and only subsequently be allowed to write creatively. Creative writing pedagogy should have no place in composition practice. (2001, p. 175)

I don't imagine that these "redactors" are consciously sowing the seeds of their own pedagogical undoing when they set out to raise students' class consciousness, but the great irony here is that the bias they uphold in shunning creative writing as a means of getting there is itself an exercise in classism.

In *The Elephants Teach,* his history of creative writing in the US academy, D.G. Myers traces the origins of the composition/creative writing divide:

> It [composition] was formulated at Harvard in the last two decades of the nineteenth century out of the belief that the ideal end of the study of literature is the making of literature . . . Indeed,

the subsequent heterogeneity of composition can largely be explained as the result of successful attacks on it for being too literary—something less elitist (as we would now say) was called for. By that time, however, the demand for literary fluency was already beginning to be satisfied by creative writing. (2006, p. 284)

In case we were hesitant to make the leap from "elitism" to "classism" within the academic context, Bishop did it for us, "The lessons here are obviously political ones; fundamentals precede art and art writing is for the elite (endlessly, the white, literate, at least middle-class kind), and composition writing is for those who need nothing more than basic literacy (although what that is no group has yet been able to agree upon)" (1994, p. 187).

Perhaps in the early twentieth-century university context this dichotomy made more sense than it does today. Maybe it really was only the moneyed elite who found the time to torture sonnets while the less well-to-do had to focus on the more pragmatic concerns of their future careers (though I suspect a little research would show otherwise). But I wonder how many of us are comfortable in the twenty-first century reinforcing these old stereotypes, clinging to genre boundaries that "mark status and buttress privilege and pretension" (Bishop & Ostrom, 1994, p. 6)? Is creative writing still reserved for the elite? Are we comfortable with the idea that our job as teachers is merely to make sure students are properly manufactured for the technocratic workforce? And if we are, then why all this talk of "transforming" students in the literature of composition studies? If our goal is, in fact, along these more humanistic lines, then how can we possibly justify barring creative writing from our composition classrooms?

In discussing some of the ways in which the fiction assignment can be, indeed is, a productive way of spending a couple of weeks in a semester of first-year composition, I have drawn on the WPA Outcomes Statement

for First-Year Composition as a convenient touchstone (Council of Writing Program Administrators, 2000). I say "convenient" by way of acknowledging that there is nothing absolute or unproblematic about the outcomes themselves, even if it is beyond my purview to interrogate them here). The statement breaks down into four main teaching areas: Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing; Rhetorical Knowledge; Processes; and Knowledge of Conventions. The fiction assignment, I want to claim, calls upon each one of them.

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

Michael McClure, at the 1993 Conference on College Composition and Communication, told of a discussion on teaching composition led by a panel of experienced instructors. One of the speakers handed out copies of a short story about a young boy's hunting trip with his father. While most of the instructors hailed the story, one declared that the best she could give it was a B- since it demonstrated "no critical thinking." This is the sort of sentiment, so rife in recent decades, that to my mind cooperates in upholding the century-old bias of "partitioning off 'self-expression' from a concern with the communication of ideas and proficiency of usage" (Myers, 2006, p. 288). I would like to term this the Self-Expression Fallacy, the notion, not at all unpopular (indeed, as Nancy Kuhl [2005] observes, it has spawned a whole industry, viz. Julie Cameron's *The Artist's Way*), that creative writing is by definition a kind of solipsistic, new-agey exploration of self, not as a means of communicating larger truths as it was for the Romantics but as a kind of therapeutic end in itself. This is wonderful, of course, but it has nothing whatever to do with the aims of most college writing programs, and most any accomplished fiction writer would surely bristle at the accusation that his/her writing is more about "self-expression" than "the communication of ideas." Anyone who has ever seen a short story from inception through several drafts to "completion" need not be told that the amount of critical thinking that goes

into the making of an effective short story is typically formidable. The stakes of this misapprehension aren't merely philosophical either. "In romanticizing the role of creative expression," George Kalamaras writes, "the university simultaneously marginalizes the teaching of creative writing and limits its possibilities" (Cain et al., 1999, p. 79).

Here's what McClure had to say about the "no critical thinking" affair:

> I tell this incident because for me that such a comment could be made on the basis of "critical thinking" (a term, like "literacy" and others used to justify institutional practices, kept carefully and purposefully ambiguous by the multiplicity of its uses by different speakers) highlights the need for constant questioning of our assumptions about education practices. Universities, English Departments, and individual classrooms exist to serve particular (if, thankfully, often competing) social, political, and cultural aims, and we need at least to be self-conscious about these aims. I find it disturbing that a committed and otherwise thoughtful composition specialist could so easily dismiss "fiction" as a viable avenue towards thinking critically about issues of importance to students and to writing teachers. (p. 12)

Needless to say, I do too.

An assignment is only as effective as its teacher, of course, and there are any number of ways we might go about incorporating the fiction assignment into the composition classroom—and a correlative number of ways we might go about engaging the critical faculties.

To take just a few examples:

» Dinty Moore has his students write both a short story and a personal experience essay, then, based on peer reviews, choose one to revise for the final grade of the unit (1992).

» Eric Melbye, as part of his pedagogy of "serious play," asks his composition students to compile

a tripartite "casebook," consisting of 1) an original piece of fiction or poetry, 2) the "author response"—a detailed response to the creative writing of one of the student's peers, and 3) the "casebook response"—a recursive essay on the creative process and the casebook project itself (2004).

» Will Hochman, as a way of getting his students "to establish relationships among writers and readers, and to introduce the composition class to an environment of close, textual focusing," has his students do "paired fiction writing," in which students are paired with partners and write to the teacher's prompts, exchanging papers after each segment such that by the end of class each pair has written two working pieces of fiction (2002).

» Heidi D. Rosenberg assigns her students to rewrite their personal narratives as fiction in order that they "play out any number of possible beginnings or endings, allowing for play not only with the structure of the story, but with the language, as well. In turn, this would allow for them to begin to understand what might be the story that is supposed to happen—that is, what is the grand narrative that they might be measuring their own experience with or against?" (2002, p. 10).

I begin my class with a unit on narrative in which students write both a personal and a fictional narrative. In this way they get a sense of how very tenuous that dividing line is. The culminating assignment of the unit is the "portrait" (adapted from LaRene Despain's *Writing: A Workshop Approach*) in which they tailor individual scenes, "mini-scenes," and exposition to the purpose of evoking a particular aspect of a person. I give students the option of writing about a person they have known or an invented person, living or dead, human or otherwise.

I've designed my course such that the focus of the assignments moves steadily from personal experience to the more abstract. As such, the next unit, the collage, borrowed in part from Peter Elbow's *A Community of Writers,* asks students to surround some abstract idea with different pieces of writing. Unlike Elbow, however, I insist that the essay encompass at least five different genres of writing, and very often this includes fiction, poetry, and found poetry as well. I stipulate that 80% of the writing must be original. The other 20% might be cribbed from elsewhere, though it must be properly cited. In my two years of teaching composition, this has tended to be my students' favorite assignment, and it is typically my favorite to read as well.

Following Wendy Bishop's model, I use a contract grading system in my composition course (see Bishop, "Contracts, Radical Revision, Portfolios, and the Risks of Writing" in Leahy, 2005, p. 109-120). If a student satisfactorily completes all course work, participates regularly, and maintains good attendance, he/she has an automatic B for the semester. If he/she wants an A, then some extra work is required, including a significant revision of an earlier assignment, a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine, and a 2-3 page short short story (for models we read several stories from Robert Shapard and James Thomas' anthology *New Sudden Fiction: Short-Short Stories from America and Beyond*).

Some teachers, likely because they're aware of the institutional ambivalence regarding the place of fiction in first-year composition, take pains to yoke the assignments to a critical agenda. The more explicitly didactic the assignment becomes, however, the less successful it seems likely to be. Jean Grace, for instance, assigns her students to construct a fiction around a reading they've done in class ("write a sketch in which characters have a mutually worthwhile conversation about the Perl passage we read the first day of class"). In effect, students are asked to write an old-fashioned allegory about a critical essay they've had no say in choosing. While

certainly it can be instructive for students to try their hands at dialogue, I can hardly think of a less organic way of assigning it. No wonder what she ends up with is "a stack of papers that include discussion of a text in the mouths of lifeless characters in no particular setting, with little attention to details of language" (1993, p. 8).

The most effective approaches seem invariably to be the least apologetic, a move that McClure sees as serving a critical function in itself: "By validating fiction in such sites, we are breaking the limits of traditional academic expectations about the kind of work proper to a 'composition' setting. That is, we free the speaking subject to explore herself and her own significance in new ways" (1993, p. 6). Though McClure veers awfully close to the Self-Expression Fallacy here (to be sure, I do believe that writing fiction can lead to self-discovery, just as I believe that writing playbills and dictionary entries can), I think his basic point is a good one. By disrupting received notions about what's proper to the composition setting, we stand to validate our students in new ways, both by modeling the kind of creative, critical thinking we hope for them to engage in, and by giving them fiction as another tool to think with. To be sure, it is partly a political act I am advocating here. The fiction assignment invites students to produce the kinds of literatures that their institutions have for the past century or so deemed them fit only to consume. And while few of our students may go on to be professional writers, all of them stand to benefit from the kinds of critical thinking engendered by a constructivist approach to literature. Aside from heightening students' sensitivity to the textures and resonances of words themselves—no small achievement in itself—studying literature "from the inside" serves a *de-essentializing* function as well, revealing to students the constructed, provisional nature of all texts, and by extension, of all systems of meaning. So while any critical pedagogy might teach students to ask questions like "What is this?" and "What does it mean?" the constructivist approach encourages students

to augment these with other, more active and dialogic questions like "Why is this the way it is?" and "How might it be made better?"

Rhetorical Knowledge

While the notion of the solitary writer who writes for none but himself/herself may have a certain romantic appeal, I'm not sure such a writer has ever existed. Every writer I know admits to writing to some audience, even if only an imaginary one. Students, in their sometimes capacity as reluctant writers, may in fact *not* want to be read; but if they have to be, they would presumably like it to be with approbation. Wayne Booth, in *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, writes about the unavoidable rhetorical exigencies of the writer of fiction:

> In short, all of the clichés about the natural object being self-sufficient are at best half-truths. Though some characters and events may speak by themselves their artistic message to the reader, and thus carry in a weak form their own rhetoric, none will do so with proper clarity and force until the author brings all his powers to bear on the problem of making the reader see what they really are. The author cannot choose whether to use rhetorical heightening. His only choice is of the kind of rhetoric he will use. (1961, p. 116)

Consciously or not, the writer of fiction, like the writer of arguments, is constantly making rhetorical choices. The more conscious he/she becomes of those choices, the more successful his/her fiction is likely to be, for finally what the writer of fiction strives to do is not only to tell a story, but to register certain tonalities, to effect certain responses, to persuade readers of the relevance, importance, even beauty of what they are reading—at the very least to persuade them that they are not wasting their time. Like a well-crafted argument, an effective fiction anticipates reader responses and plays off of them. That controlling consciousness is of course the author's, though it rarely manifests itself

fully in a first draft; rather it is the layered product of successive revisions, a scaffolding of choices.

As a result of increasing recognition of creative writing's material, ideological, and political ramifications, many recent creative writing theorists have called for a view of creative writing that foregrounds rhetoricity. In a 1999 issue of *College Composition and Communication* that devoted an entire section to discussion of the nexus between composition and creative writing, George Kalamaras argued for merging the disciplines by grounding creative writing classes in "social-epistemic rhetoric" (p. 80). More recently, Paul Dawson has called for replacing the formalist poetics that dominates the typical workshop with a sociological poetics that would "require a recognition that aesthetic or craft-based decisions of a writer are always the result (consciously or otherwise) of ideological or political choice" (2005, p. 211), and Tim Mayers has called for a pedagogy of creative writing that involves "sustained reflection on the very enterprise of creative writing as it relates to larger social, political, and rhetorical trends" (2005, p. 148). A glance at any of the recent anthologies on creative writing theory and pedagogy will yield further examples.

Processes

Obviously no monolithic method of composition can meet the needs of every writer all of the time, and the many methods espoused by compositionists—prewriting, peer work, drafts, etc.—all have their analogues in the discourse of creative writing. Indeed, they are not so much similar as identical.

While the workshop on the Iowa model is easily the most pervasive method of instruction in creative writing programs throughout the United States, some teachers have rightly challenged it for its relative indifference to process. Even as I might defend the virtues of the workshop for experienced writers, its essential captiousness clearly disqualifies it as the best approach to take with undergraduates, particularly in the context of the composition classroom. Eve Shelnutt, in *Creative Writing in America* (1989), outlined an interesting alternative to the workshop that would highlight process by combining the reading of professional essays on the sources of creative writing, mini-workshops on student stories, and student essays on the sources of their stories (p. 151–167), an approach that might easily be adapted to the composition classroom. My own suggestion is that teachers teach the creative assignment just as they would any other composition assignment—for the goal finally is not to carve out a *special* place for creative writing so much as a natural one. In my classes, this usually entails some freewriting, basic lectures on craft (e.g., tense, point of view, sensory detail, dialogue), reading and discussion of published samples as well as samples from some of my former students (with their permission, of course), and finally some form of peer review, though never with more than three or four students to a group.

Knowledge of Conventions

The writing of fiction gives students practice in virtually all of the elements of writing good prose, including, though certainly not limited to, "the study of lists, punctuation, verb tense, sentence length and style, pronouns, detail, and data" (Peary, p. 3); word choice, sentence variety, and paragraphing (Moore, 1992, p. 2). Fiction can also serve as an outlet for students to indulge their more playful inclinations; to use figures; to evoke, characterize, plot; to experiment with transitions, genre, form, rhythm, point-of-view—all skills that can enhance students' expository writing as well. Wallace Stegner speaks to the crossover:

> Expository writing has to contain a body of information. But that body of information doesn't have to be blunt or obtuse. It doesn't hurt any writer of expository prose to try his hand at writing a story, because control of place and character and evocation of sensuous impressions and so on are

all things that can be used in expository writing. (Bunge, 1985, p. 122)

Moreover, creative writing has the added boon of frequently being seen by students as more "fun" than the typical composition assignment, and while this is not unproblematic in its own right, it seems clear to me that a student who becomes engaged in a story is far more likely to continually revise, to double-check grammar and spelling, to read the piece aloud into a voice recorder—even, in short, to inhabit their expanding knowledge, than the student made to feel that certain dimensions of his/her imagination are off limits. Not every student gets more engaged in the fiction assignment than the argumentative one, for instance, but many do, and one would be hard-pressed to show why they shouldn't have the chance.

The Nexus

In contemplating the fractured nature of English studies in the twenty-first century, I keep finding myself thinking back to the first twelve years or so of my education when I used to attend this singularity called the "English class." In English class, I knew I could be expected to study grammar and vocabulary; to read short stories, poems, essays, novels, plays; and to write some of the same. Maybe those courses were more specialized than I ever knew, but they were always of a piece to me. English class was where we studied writing: all kinds, reading it, producing it. In this age of rampant information and specialization, Katharine Haake may well be right that we "have passed the point where the easy commingling and cross-fertilization of discourses and disciplines inside English studies … can occur" (2007, p. 25), but it bears repeating that while Bishop and Moxley might have been naïve in thinking the walls could come down any time soon, their premise at least was unassailable. Those walls are historical, contingent, not at all essential. Moreover, they're made of paper, and a lot of it green. If we really wanted to knock them down, all we'd have to do is huff and puff a little. ◼▬

References

Berthoff, Ann E. (1981). *The making of meaning*. Upper Montclair: Boynton/Cook Publishers.

Bishop, Wendy, & Ostrom, Hans (Eds.). (1994). *Colors of a different horse: Rethinking creative writing theory and pedagogy*. Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.

Bishop, Wendy. (2005). Contracts, radical revision, portfolios, and the risks of writing. In Leahy, Anna (Ed.), *Power and identity in the creative writing classroom: The authority project* (109-120). Tonawanda: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Booth, Wayne C. (1961). *The rhetoric of fiction*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Bunge, Nancy. (1985). *Finding the words: Conversations with writers who teach*. Athens: Swallow Press.

Cain, M. A., Lardner, T., Kalamaras, G., Mayers, T. (1999). Inquiring into the nexus of composition studies and creative writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 51, 70–95.

Cross, Michelle. (2007). Writing in public: Popular pedagogies of creative writing. In Ritter, Kelly & Vanderslice, Stephanie (Eds.), *Can it really be taught?: Resisting lore in creative writing pedagogy* (pp. 67–76). Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook.

Council of Writing Program Administrators. (2000). WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition. Department of English website, Illinois State University. Retrieved from http://www.english.ilstu.edu/Hesse/outcomes.html.

Despain, LaRene. (1991). *Writing: A workshop approach*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Elbow, Peter, & Belanoff, Patricia. (1999). *A community of writers: A workshop course in writing*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Gardner, John. (1991). *The art of fiction: Notes on craft for young writers.* New York: Vintage.

Grace, Jean. (1993). Finding and creating voices through story—Writing in the composition classroom. [44th Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication, San Diego, CA, March 31–April 3.] Retrieved November 18, 2006, from ERIC Document Reproduction Service.

Harris, Judith. (2001). Re-writing the subject: Psychoanalytic approaches to creative writing and composition pedagogy. *College English,* 64, 175–204.

Hochman, Will. (2002). Using paired fiction writing: Transactional creativity and community building in the composition class. Retrieved November 18, 2006, from www.southernct.edu/~hochman/Willsedessay.

Kuhl, Nancy. (2005). Personal therapeutic writing vs. literary writing. In Leahy, Anna (Ed.), *Power and identity in the creative writing classroom: The authority project* (3–12). Tonawanda: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Mayers, Tim. (2005). *(Re)writing craft: Composition, creative writing, and the future of English studies.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

McClure, Michael. (1993). *Composition as fiction: Revising the writing classroom.* [Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication—44th, San Diego, CA, March 31–April 3, 1993]. Retrieved November 18, 2006, from ERIC Document Reproduction Service.

Melbye, Eric. (2004). *Serious play: Creativity in composition and pedagogy.* Retrieved from www.doit.gmu.edu/inventio/past/display_past.asp?pID=spring04&sID=melbye.

Moore, Dinty W. (1992). Narrative is just a fancy word for story: Incorporating a short fiction assignment into the freshman composition syllabus. [Annual Meeting of the College English Association—Pittsburgh, PA, March 27-29.] Retrieved November 18, 2006, from ERIC Document Reproduction Service.

Moxley, Joseph. (1989). Tearing down the walls: Engaging the imagination. In Moxley, Joseph (Ed.), *Creative writing in America* (25-45). Urbana: NCTE.

Myers, D.G. (1996). *The elephants teach: Creative writing since 1880.* Chicago: U of Chicago Press.

Ostrom, Hans. (1994). Of Radishes and Shadows, Theory and Pedagogy. In Bishop, Wendy, & Ostrom, Hans (Eds.). *Colors of a different horse: Rethinking creative writing theory and pedagogy* (xi–xxiii). Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English.

Peary, Alexandria. (2006). How to more than just survive with an MFA. *Poets&Writers, Inc.* Retrieved from www.pw.org/mag/teachersguide/archive/loun0403.html

Rosenberg, Heidi D. (2002). Playing in the intersections: Teaching composition dangerously. [Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication—53rd, Chicago, IL, March 20-23.] Retrieved November 18, 2006, from ERIC Document Reproduction Service.

Shapard, Robert & Thomas, James (Eds.). (2007). *New sudden fiction: Short-short stories from America and beyond.* New York: Norton.

Shelnutt, Eve. (1989). Notes from a cell: Creative writing programs in isolation. In Moxley, Joseph (Ed.), *Creative writing in America* (3-24). Urbana, Illinois: NCTE.

Lessons from Quintilian: Writing and Rhetoric Across the Curriculum for the Modern University
Andrew Bourelle

Abstract

A close look at Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* shows that nearly 2,000 years ago Roman educators were using a teaching approach similar in many ways to modern theories of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC). For Quintilian, rhetoric was not a discipline unto itself. Instead, the elements of rhetoric were important throughout a student's education. Rhetoric was not simply taught in a rhetoric class; it was an element of classes in all subjects. The modern WAC movement, born in the 1970s, functions from the same idea: writing should not be taught only in first-year composition courses; it must be an element of classes in all disciplines as well. Quintilian said that each "species" of writing has its own form and function; therefore, learning writing and rhetoric within the context of a discipline is preferable to the idea of simply learning writing and rhetoric. In this paper, the author will examine current WAC models and argue that paying more careful attention to Quintilian's classical Roman approach to teaching writing and rhetoric could strengthen education in modern universities.

Keywords

writing, Writing Across the Curriculum, WAC, Quintilian, rhetoric

Andrew Bourelle is in his final year working toward a PhD in English, with an emphasis in rhetoric and composition, at the University of Nevada, Reno. His research interests include composition pedagogies, writing across the curriculum, writing centers, and creative nonfiction.

Introduction

The writings of the Roman educator and rhetorician Quintilian hold valuable insights for the modern educational pedagogy of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC). In a time of budget crises at universities nationwide, WAC programs and writing in general may fall victim to cutbacks and cost-saving measures or—just as dangerous—to misunderstandings about the importance of writing to students' education. Writing is integral to learning, and it should be present throughout a student's college career, not just in first-year composition courses or in a few writing-intensive classes. I believe that the future of WAC could be strengthened—as could the education of countless university students—if we looked to the lessons Quintilian outlined nearly 2,000 years ago.

The WAC movement, as we know it today, began in the 1970s as an effort to incorporate more writing into university education (Russell, 2002).

At the time and in preceding years, there was a tre-mendous boom in higher education, with more open-admissions policies and more students going to college. Many of those students came out of public school systems where writing was not strongly emphasized. Previously, college composition had typically centered on literature, but in the 1960s composition education shifted to a more process-based, experiential approach, featuring expressive writing and student-centered classrooms. Teaching writing became different from teaching literature. In the 1970s, however, there was an outcry against "illiteracy"—a similar outcry that had been heard in the 1950s and the 1910s (Russell, 2002) and that we have heard periodically in later decades. This claim that there was a literacy crisis was illustrated by *Newsweek's* famous 1975 article, "Why Johnny Can't Write" (Sheils). WAC programs were founded during that era's literacy crisis and were viewed by some as the "fix" to the problem. At the heart of the WAC move-ment is the argument that writing develops thinking; it is not simply the mechanical act of putting to paper what one already knows. The WAC movement, Russell (2002) says, was a way of "reconceiving writing as a serious intellectual activity" (p. 285). Writing, the WAC movement claimed, had value to other disciplines besides English.

While WAC seemed like a new concept—one that university systems today still have not completely adopted—I argue that educators some 2,000 years ago were using similar pedagogies. Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* summarized the Roman educational system and proposed a curriculum for teaching students from childhood to adulthood. The twelve-book col-lection has been called "perhaps the most ambitious single treatise on education which the ancient world produced" (Murphy, 1987, p. xviii). A close look at *Institutio oratoria*—particularly Book Ten, which focuses on the continued learning of an adult—shows that Roman educators were using a teaching approach

similar in many ways to modern theories of WAC. For Quintilian, rhetoric was not a discipline unto itself. Instead, the elements of rhetoric were important throughout a student's education. Rhetoric was not simply taught in a rhetoric class; it was an element of teaching in all subjects. While Quintilian's pedagogy might be more accurately described as Rhetoric Across the Curriculum—or Writing and Rhetoric Across the Curriculum—the modern WAC movement functions from the same idea: writing is important to thinking and learning, and therefore should be an ongoing part of a student's education.

Roman Rhetorical Education

Completed in 95 CE, Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* summarized the educational system as it existed in ancient Rome. In this system, as Quintilian scholar James J. Murphy (1996) has explained, boys were trained daily from the age of six to about eighteen, going through increasingly difficult exercises. There were two levels of masters who taught the children: the grammaticus, who helped children with imitations and speaking and writing exercises, and the rhetor, who prepared students for the final stage of declamation, when they gave fictitious speeches. The ultimate goal of Quintilian's curriculum was for men to have *facilitas,* which Murphy describes as "facility in devising appro-priate language to fit any speaking or writing situation" (p. 584). A student would strive to become a good man skilled in speaking.

Rhetoric, to Quintilian, was not simply the art of persuasion and certainly was not thought of in a pejo-rative sense as the term is often used today in politics or the news media. Murphy (1986) says, "Rhetoric, or the theory of effective communication, is for Quintilian merely the tool of the broadly educated citizen who is capable of analysis, reflection, and then powerful action in public affairs" (p. xxvii). In other words, the citizen orators he educated, men with facilitas, were criti-

cal thinkers capable of careful analysis and articulate expression. Murphy (1986) explains that Quintilian "aims to develop the minds and talents of young men who can themselves decide their own actions in the public arena" (p. xxvii).

While Quintilian emphasized the importance of writing, the primary goal of his pedagogy was to produce good orators. Writing has since replaced oratory as the primary means of communicating ideas in education, but this distinction between WAC and Quintilian's RAC was not as important as one might think. According to Murphy (2001), whether language was oral or written was less important than its ability to fit the situation at hand. Murphy says, "It is clear that writing and oral language go hand in hand in the Roman educational program" (p. 36). And, further, Quintilian recognized the integral links between speaking, reading, and writing. "[T]hey are all connected," Quintilian says in *Institutio oratoria*,

> so inseparably linked with one another, that it [sic] any one of them is neglected, we labor in vain in the other two—for our speech will never become forcible and energetic unless it acquires strength from great practice in writing; and the labor of writing, if left destitute of models from reading, passes away without effect, as having no director; while he who knows how everything ought to be said, will, if he has not his eloquence in readiness and prepared for all emergencies, merely brood, as it were, over locked-up treasure. (p. 125)

In Quintilian's Roman curriculum, Murphy (1986) explains, "there is a constant interplay between the three types of expression—reading, writing, and speaking—with critical listening an important adjunct" (p. xxiv.) This contrasts with modern universities that seem, at least in large lecture courses, to emphasize listening and reading, with writing and speaking less important or missing altogether.

While Quintilian's goal was to educate orators, he recognized the importance of writing and realized that there were important links between speaking, writing, and thinking. In Chapter Three of Book Ten, Quintilian states, "In writing are the roots, in writing are the foundations of eloquence; by writing resources are stored up, as it were, in a sacred repository, whence they may be drawn forth for sudden emergencies, or as circumstances require" (p. 139). Further evidence for Quintilian's understanding of the interrelationship between writing and oratory can be found in the final chapter of Book Ten when he says,

> I know not whether both exercises, when we perform them with care and assiduity, are not reciprocally beneficial, as it appears that by writing we speak with greater accuracy, and by speaking we write with greater ease. We must write, therefore, as often as we have opportunity (p. 157).

In other words, Quintilian knew nearly 2,000 years ago that writing is important to learning.

Quintilian felt rhetoric was a tool "embedded in the total learning process" (p. 33). His goal was for students to gain facilitas and be able to speak extemporaneously on any subject at any time. The true orator, one who has succeeded under Quintilian's educational framework, would be a generalist knowledgeable about endless subjects. While universities today provide a broad liberal education, students declare majors and work toward becoming specialists within a specific field. Students focus their education in certain disciplines, each of which has its own rhetorical methods and bodies of knowledge. Students may be able to speak and write accurately upon a moment's notice on particulars of their field, but not necessarily on any topic. It would be impossible, I would argue, for anyone to be able to speak extemporaneously on any and every subject in today's modern society. There was a time, perhaps, when educational systems could produce students knowledgeable about many subject areas. But now, with

modern higher education institutions, the need is for more people to become specialized. Certainly there are people quite well educated about many different subjects, but most modern scholars are steeped in one discipline, perhaps knowledgeable about others but truly facilitas in only one.

I would also argue that Quintilian, at some level, recognized that specialization was an essential part of education. In Chapter Two of Book Ten, Quintilian says,

> Thus boys follow the traces of letters in order to acquire skill in writing; thus musicians follow the voice of their teachers, painters look for models to the works of preceding painters, and farmers adopt the system of culture approved by experience. We see, in short, that the beginnings of every kind of study are formed in accordance with some prescribed rule. (p. 132)

Given this model, it is hard to imagine a Roman scholar able to speak fluently and accurately about writing, music, painting, and farming. Further, for Quintilian the goal of achieving true *facilitas* and becoming a good man skilled in speaking well was an unattainable ideal. It was something to strive for but never to achieve, as "[e]ducation for Quintilian begins in the cradle, and ends only when life itself ends" (Murphy, 1986, xxi).

Writing Across the Curriculum

Today, there is an elastic and sometimes confusing definition of WAC within the academy. Most scholars know that WAC stands for Writing Across the Curriculum, but there is little consensus about the meaning of WAC in practice. As Susan McLeod (1990) has said, WAC is a term that has "come to have an aura that is vaguely positive, something that is good for students" (p. 150), but many professors and administrators, inside and outside of English studies, lack a clear understanding of WAC. Writing develops thinking, WAC argues; therefore, for students to learn academic subjects, writing

should have an important presence in college curricula. The implementation of WAC varies widely, however, creating confusion.

As David R. Russell (2002) has outlined, there are three primary models used for WAC. In the first WAC model, writing is not taught across the curriculum at all, but confined to first-year composition courses. In this case, English department instructors are supposed to teach their classes in such a way as to prepare their students to write, regardless of what they study later. Therefore, instructors in other disciplines can breathe a sigh of relief and think, "I don't have to teach the students to write; that's English's job." As Russell says, "Such a program need not require (or even ask for) the active involvement of faculty from across the curriculum" (p. 297). In the second model, other disciplines require one or two writing-intensive courses, in which writing specific to that discipline is the focus. In this case, an engineering or history student would have to take a course in learning how to write engineering or history papers, but writing would be limited to those classes and be absent in the other courses of the discipline. One of the major problems with this model is that departments often recruit English instructors to teach the courses, which defeats the purpose of teaching disciplinary writing (Waldo, 2004). Another problem is that faculty in the departments then do not require substantial writing in classes besides the writing-intensive course (Waldo, 2004). The instructors think, "I don't have to teach the students to write—that's the job of the writing-intensive class." And so Writing Across the Curriculum is reduced to writing in a handful of classes across the curriculum.

In the third WAC model—the one I advocate and the one Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* supports—the program exists to help faculty members develop writing assignments for classes all over campus. WAC administrators help instructors find ways to use cognitively challenging writing assignments in their classrooms.

The ultimate goal is to have students do a lot of writing, in many classes, and in every major. Just as Quintilian argued for rhetoric and writing to be a part of all classes, writing in today's universities should not be restricted to one or two classes. Such an approach takes time and is not as easy as a lecture hall and test format, but this way of teaching has an important pedagogical foundation: writing in a academic field helps students develop their own thinking in that discipline.

WAC scholarship tells us that writing in a discipline requires specialization in specific styles and forms of writing, expertise beyond that of English departments. The work of Charles Bazerman (1986), drawing from Lev Vygotsky's theories of language development, supports this third model of WAC. Bazerman compares a student learning a discipline to a child learning a language, and he characterizes such a student as a "neophyte" climbing a "hierarchy of expertise" (pp. 304, 306). The way people think, work, and communicate in one discipline is different from the next, and, as importantly, so is the way they write. Writing in biology is different from writing in English, writing in history is different from writing in journalism, writing in social work is different from writing in business, and so on. Immersion in a new academic discipline is necessary for students to learn to think and write in that discourse. As Mark Waldo (2004) says, each discipline has its own values, purposes, and forms for writing: "What makes writing good in one discipline certainly does not make it good in another" (p. 6).

David Bartholomae (1985) uses the example of a history student to explain that students must appropriate the language of a discipline by frequent and repeated writing in order to become specialists themselves. There is an important distinction, Bartholomae says, between simply "learning history" and "learning to write as an historian" (p. 145). He says, "A student can learn to command and reproduce a set of names, dates, places, and canonical interpretations (to 'tell' somebody else's

knowledge); but this is not the same thing as learning to 'think' (by learning to write) as an historian" (p. 145). In other words, through frequent and repeated writing in an academic discipline, students can become critical thinkers in those disciplines, able to think and draw conclusions for themselves, rather than simply repeating what they have been told.

To illustrate the distinctiveness of disciplinary languages, Waldo quotes a passage from a chemistry article that showcases the specialized language of that community:

> There is much current interest in large molecule photodissociation dynamics involving many degrees of freedom and multiple electronic potential energy surfaces. The photofragmentation of the nitrosoalkenes provides an experimentally accessible class of molecules for which the influences of structural and electronic complexity can be investigated in a systematic way. The general features of the gas- and condensed-phase photochemistry of alkyl nitroso compounds are well understood [1-5]. Excitation of the S S (n) transition of the alkyl nitroso compounds in the 600-700 nm wavelength region leads to dissociation to nitric oxide and an alkyl radical fragment. The lowest, metastable vibrational levels of the first excited singlet electronic state of the nitrosoalkanes have a high fluorescence quantum yield and are only weakly predissociative; excitation at shorter wavelengths result in dissociation with a high quantum yield. (qtd. in Waldo p. 5).

Even though the words are in English, it might as well be in another language—to me and to countless other readers. Waldo says that one of the writers of the chemistry article and an English graduate student worked together to try to translate the passage in a way that could be understood by a lay audience. It took them eleven double-spaced pages to do the work of the passage, which covered less than a manuscript

page. Waldo says, "They both agreed, after their grueling effort, that the translation did not do the same work as the paragraph" (p. 6). This example illustrates that the specialized language of academic disciplines serves a purpose and that general language does not successfully accomplish the work in such fields. To write in such a language takes an immersion into the specialized discipline, including frequent and repeated writing to appropriate the language of the discipline.

Despite what might appear as a clear need to include writing in multiple disciplines based on those disciplines' values for writing, English scholars sometimes misunderstand WAC in another way: they believe that other disciplines should change their writing to be more like writing done in the field of English studies. Robert Root, co-editor of *The Fourth Genre: Contemporary Writers of/on Creative Nonfiction,* provides an example of this misperception of WAC. In a presentation at the 2000 Conference on College Composition and Communication, Root decried the type of writing that is often produced in the academy. Root argues that "[e]fforts to eliminate the individual writer, especially in disciplinary writing, produce non-discourse" that is "depersonalized, dehumanized, deliberately obfuscational writing." Based on this, one might guess that Root would describe the chemistry passage I just discussed as "depersonalized, dehumanized, deliberately obfuscational"—even though, as I said, one of the authors and a grad student working together could not write an adequate translation for a lay audience in eleven pages.

In that same presentation, Root quoted and praised this passage by physicist and astronomer Chet Raymo, from his book *Honey from Stone*:

> I will sit on this starlit bank and shiver in my ignorance, red blood pouring through my veins, a wind of atoms blowing in and out through my nostrils and the pores of my skin, pummeled with particles from the cores of stars, Vega-drenched, sandstone-lifted, terrified, unconsoled, undefined, ecstatic. (qtd. in Root)

The passage might be worth praising, but I question the way Root praises it. Root says, "I read it and I think, I wish I could write like an astronomer—this astronomer and physicist, at least. It's the sentence I want engraved on the commemorative medal celebrating the meeting of creative nonfiction and writing across the curriculum." This is an excellent example of what I see as a fundamental flaw in many scholars' view of WAC. Root apparently sees WAC as a way for so-called "good" writing to make its way to other disciplines. In other words, Root likes this passage because the astronomer/physicist is writing like someone from the discipline of English. If English scholars with the same misconception of WAC were in charge of administering WAC programs, clearly the writing in those disciplines would be seen as depersonalized and obfuscational. It's a tremendous error when English-based WAC administrators try to get biology, physics, and journalism instructors to write based on the same values used in English departments. Neither Root nor I have climbed the hierarchy of expertise in physics or astronomy to understand these academic languages. Raymo's book is not intended for such a specialized audience, and that is why Root admires the writing. But it is unrealistic to expect that all writing in astronomy or physics be done in the creative nonfiction style of Raymo's book. As Waldo says, a discipline's "values, purposes, and forms for writing are community-based, not universal" (p. 6).

Quintilian says that depending on the purpose, writing requires "a different and distinct style" (p. 136), although as I noted earlier, ancient Roman schools did not have specialized disciplines in our modern sense. However, "Every species of writing," Quintilian says, "has its own prescribed law, each its own appropriate dress" (p. 136). He uses the example that "comedy does not strut in tragic buckskins, nor does tragedy step along in the slipper of comedy" (p. 136); however, he is

talking about more than simply genres within creative writing. Quintilian also refers to writing for different purposes and occasions, and his talk of "different and distinct" styles certainly would have applied to what were considered the three types of rhetoric of the era: deliberative, judicial, and epideictic, or ceremonial. Quintilian would likely have recognized that the two examples I used earlier, the engineering excerpt quoted from Waldo and the Raymo passage praised by Root, were for different occasions and audiences, and had "different and distinct styles." I do not want to be too presumptuous in my assumptions, but it seems that Quintilian and other Roman educators recognized that difference existed in the writing and rhetoric of certain topics and that those differences should not be praised or criticized based on the values of another "species." The fact that writing and rhetoric were important parts of all classes—not just one writing-and rhetoric-intensive class—seems also to support this assumption.

Quintilian and WAC

Writing should be used to help students develop in a new discourse community such as their academic major. How can a neophyte scholar trying to learn a specialization within an academic discipline do so without writing? How can someone learn a new academic language without practicing writing in that language? At its best, WAC is a university-wide effort to have students write, and write often, in whatever discipline they are studying. Writing Across the Curriculum should go beyond first-year composition or a few writing-intensive classes; students should actually be writing across the curriculum.

Quintilian's model for education suggests that modern universities hinder their students' learning if the students are only actually writing in first-year composition courses or perhaps one or two writing-intensive courses. For Roman scholars, "instruction always began with the matter which made all learning possible—that

is, it began with language and the uses of language. The interplay of speaking and writing was an integral part of this instruction from the beginning" (Murphy, 1987, p. ix–x). As I said earlier, for all its emphasis on rhetoric, the lifelong educational curricula in Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* did not contain courses specifically in rhetoric. Instead, rhetoric was used throughout a person's education as needed. If looked at in a modern sense, this would suggest that writing would not be confined to writing classes—it would be an important part of all classes. So in studying different majors, different discourse communities, different—in the words of Quintilian—"species," students learn through writing. This connection between Quintilian and WAC has important implications for teaching writing in a modern context.

Incorporating writing across the curriculum is not a new idea for helping students learn: it's more than 2,000 years old. Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* shows that writing and rhetoric—the interplay of language—are not simply one way of helping students learn; they are essential. Perhaps our modern literacy crises happened because educators moved away from the ancient model. WAC still exists today because it was not the quick fix to a broken system that some thought it would be—WAC should be the system itself.

Further, we might consider that rhetoric—as the study of effective communication, the interplay between reading, writing, and speaking—should be given stronger emphasis in cross-curricular studies, beyond the act of writing typically emphasized by WAC. Instead of WAC, we might consider RAC—Rhetoric Across the Curriculum—or WRAC—Writing and Rhetoric Across the Curriculum. Speaking, reading, and writing are all integrally tied to thinking and learning. Therefore, the interplay of the three could be valuable in all areas of study, not just in a first-year composition class. Modern WAC efforts have increased writing in other courses of study besides first-year English

classes, yet consideration of rhetoric remains largely relegated to first-year composition. Rhetoric, just as writing, differs across disciplines. The way information is communicated, the way scholars debate ideas, and the way knowledge is created are all rhetorical in nature. Roman scholars realized this as rhetoric was important throughout a person's education.

While predicting an optimistic future for WAC in her plenary address at the 2008 Writing Across the Curriculum Conference, Susan McLeod noted that nearly half the universities in the US and Canada have WAC programs—up from 38 percent nearly 20 years ago—and even more have plans to implement such programs. This is positive news, but WAC, despite being decades old now, still has not become a part of the institutional landscape in higher education. In other words, despite the seemingly obvious importance of the relationship between writing and learning, more than half of the universities in the US and Canada still do not have a WAC agenda. Additionally, it is unclear what types of WAC models are used at those universities. The preferable model I spoke of earlier certainly is not used in all of them. And with financial pressures causing universities to cut programs and tighten budgets, there is a good chance that writing—and certainly rhetoric—will be left by the wayside. (For example, at my school, the University of Nevada, Reno, administrators plan to close the Writing Center—and the WAC program with it—in May 2009 as if it were a frill and not a program essential to the cognitive development of the students.) In a time of budget constraints and pressures to have larger class sizes, universities should continue to strive to keep writing and rhetoric a part of education across the disciplines. We must not forget the lessons of Quintilian, that "the interplay of speaking and writing" has historically, and rightfully, been an important part of ongoing education.

Memorizing for multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank examinations cannot replace the educational value of writing about a topic and understanding it well enough not only to write about it but also to make discoveries during writing, to learn while writing. Nor can such examinations replace active discussion, debate, and communication of ideas. The interplay of language—not just listening to a lecture and taking a test on the material, but actually participating in the writing and discussion of course material—is integral to learning. Writing and rhetoric may be the central focus of the field of composition, but scholars across campuses must recognize that writing and rhetoric should not end in first-year composition or in one or two writing-intensive classes. First-year writing classes, with their emphasis on composing and rhetorical skills, are an appropriate place to start, but writing and rhetoric should be emphasized throughout a student's college education. ◼

References

Bartholomae, D. (1985). Inventing the university. In M. Rose, *When a writer can't write: Studies in writer's block and other composing-process problems.* (pp. 134–166). New York: Guilford Press.

Bazerman, C. (1988). *Shaping written knowledge: The genre and activity of the experimental article in science.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

McLeod, S. (2001). The pedagogy of writing across the curriculum. In G. Tate, A. Rupiper & K. Schick (Eds.), *A guide to composition pedagogies.* (pp. 149-164). New York: Oxford University Press.

McLeod, S. (2008). The future of WAC—Plenary address, Ninth International Writing Across the Curriculum Conference, May 2008 (Austin, Texas). *Across the disciplines*, 5. Retrieved October 14, 2008, from http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/articles/mcleod/2008.cfm

Murphy, J.J. (1987). Introduction. In J.J. Murphy (Ed), *Quintilian on the teaching of speaking and writing: Translations from books one, two, and ten of the* Institutio oratoria (ix–xlviii). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Murphy, J.J. (1996). Quintilian. In T. Enos (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of rhetoric and composition: Communication from ancient times to the information age* (581–585). New York: Garland.

Murphy, J.J. (2001). The key role of habit in roman writing instruction. In J.J. Murphy (Ed), *A short history of writing instruction: From ancient Greece to modern America.* (pp. 35–78). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Quintilian. (1987). *Quintilian on the teaching of speaking and writing: Translations from books one, two, and ten of the* Institutio oratoria. (J.J. Murphy, Trans.). Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press. (Original work published 95 CE)

Root, R. (2000). The eye of the beholder in creative nonfiction and academic non-discourse. CCCC April 13, 2000. Retrieved November 2005 from http://www.chsbs.cmich.edu/Robert_Root/background/beholder.html 1

Russell, D.R. (2002). *Writing in the academic disciplines: A curricular history*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Sheils, M. (1975, December 8). Why Johnny Can't Write. *Newsweek*, 92, 58-63.

Waldo, M.L. (2004). *Demythologizing language difference in the academy: Establishing discipline-based writing programs*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Making Reading Visible in the Classroom

Ellen C. Carillo

Abstract

Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines programs have changed the face of instruction. Missing from these programs—both in name and often in practice— is a focus on reading. Writing remains disconnected from reading, its counterpart in the process of composing meaning. This paper addresses the difficulty posed by teaching reading since instructors cannot actually see reading in the way that they see their students' writing. This piece details an assignment that in its focus on the process of reading actually makes reading visible, thus having the potential to help students in all fields become not only better writers, but better readers.

Keywords

reading pedagogy, writing pedagogy, Writing Across the Curriculum, Writing in the Disciplines, difficulty

Ellen C. Carillo is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Connecticut and Writing Coordinator at its Waterbury campus. She has published on feminist pedagogy, and has forthcoming articles on New Critical and other early twentieth-century pedagogies.

Introduction

Robert Scholes (2002) has characterized our attitude toward the teaching of writing as compared to the teaching of reading:

> We normally acknowledge, however grudgingly, that writing must be taught and continue to be taught from high school to college and perhaps beyond. We accept it, I believe, because we can see writing, and we know that much of the writing we see is not good enough. But we do not see reading. We see some writing about reading, to be sure, but we do not see reading. I am certain, though, that if we could see it, we would be appalled. (p. 166)

In this passage, Scholes raises a range of issues—from the relationship of writing to reading to the differing expectations of high school and college reading. Most interesting to me, though, as someone committed to emphasizing the connections between reading and writing in my classroom, is the implicit challenge Scholes poses here: the challenge to find ways of making reading visible so that we can help our students develop not only as writers, but as readers.

While most of us would agree that this development goes hand in hand—students become better writers because they are also becoming better readers and vice versa—we tend to ignore this connection as we continue to privilege writing by devoting more class time to writing than to reading. We also assign projects that allow us to see (or perhaps we only focus on) our students' writing as opposed to their reading. And, despite the fact that our students' writing is comprised of interpretations—readings!— the reading itself seems far more elusive and thus more difficult to comment upon than the writing. We may tell our students that we expect active reading and marked-up texts, and we are often rebutted with concerns about selling books back to the campus bookstore or to amazon.com, neither of which will purchase books that are covered in "scribble" and highlighting. So how can we make our students better readers? What might we do to enable ourselves to see our students' reading so that we can help them achieve this goal? I certainly don't have the answer to this. An answer, though, comes in the form of an assignment that has made reading visible in my classroom and has the potential to make reading visible in classrooms across the disciplines.

I come from an English department, a department like most across the country that is marked by a divide between writing and reading. For us, this divide is represented by the separation of the composing process (writing) and the reading process (literature) in our curricula. Students take either composition courses (writing) or literature courses (reading courses). However, reading is as much a process of composing as is writing, and I have worked especially hard try to bridge this unnatural divide in my own courses. Now, as I work with instructors from a range of disciplines—many of whom are charged with integrating writing into their courses—I try to show them how their teaching and their students can benefit from a focus on the connections between these practices.

Connecting Reading and Writing Through the Passage-Based Paper

I have a range of assignments in class and out of class that attempt to make reading visible, but the one that seems most malleable to most disciplines is one that I call the passage-based paper (PBP for short).[1] The following assignment, which students are given frequently throughout the term, is distributed to them at the start of the semester:

WHAT IS A PASSAGE-BASED PAPER (PBP)?

Throughout the course of the semester, I will ask that you choose a short passage (3-5 sentences) from the text that we are reading and write a 1-2 page passage-based paper on this excerpt. You will be expected to discuss this passage in class and hand in the assignment at the end of class.

Format: Transcribe the passage onto the top of the page (including the page number from which the passage is taken), and then "unpack" the passage, paying close attention to the textual elements, including the passage's language, tone, and construction. Once you have examined the passage closely, conclude your paper by connecting this passage to the rest of the work. In other words, once you have completed a close, textual analysis of your passage, contemplate the meaning of the passage and its place in or contribution to the meaning(s) of the text as a whole.

Purpose: Passage-based papers offer you the opportunity to experience the connections between the interpretive practices of reading and writing. These papers give you the opportunity to engage in close textual analysis and to grapple

---

1   I was introduced to a version of this assignment more than a decade ago by one of my professors, Dr. James Bloom at Muhlenberg College, whose pedagogy continues to inspire my own.

with difficult ideas that come up in the texts that we will be reading. I am concerned primarily with your ability to work closely with the texts that we are reading. We are working with difficult texts, and it is fine if your papers represent an attempt at developing an argument through close analysis of a passage as opposed to a fully-developed argument. These passage-based papers also prepare you for writing formal essays in which you will be expected to attend to textual evidence as carefully as you attend to the passages you choose for your passage-based papers.

Preparation and Support: At the beginning of the term, we will work together on writing passage-based papers. We will discuss strategies for choosing a passage and completing these assignments. You will receive feedback on your PBPs from me, as well as from your peers.

My PBP prompt has gone through multiple permutations over the last eight years that I have been using it. I have revised it to be less directive and more directive, as well as less and more detailed. In some instances, I have tailored it to a specific course and added components that seemed relevant and useful in that particular context. Most recently, I have added the "Purpose" section to make my pedagogy transparent. Just as important, this addition gives students a sense of why they are doing what they are doing, especially because this type of assignment—which they initially read as a response paper—is very foreign to them. While the PBP resembles a response paper in its length and in the frequency with which I assign it, the resemblance ends there. Notice there is no space here that asks students for their opinion, their response, or anything like that. In fact, I usually hold writing workshops at the beginning of the semester in order to look at examples of students' PBPs so that I can emphasize that a PBP is not a response paper that asks students for their opin-

ions, reactions, or feelings about the text. While we could debate the place of students' personal responses in any course, this specific assignment asks students to focus solely on the text and the textual elements therein and has them participate in the act of transcribing the passage in order to emphasize that this—and nothing else—is to be the focus of their inquiry.

A challenge for most students in part because they are far more accustomed to traditional response papers, the PBP gives students the opportunity to offer a sustained reading of a short excerpt, to single out a passage they believe to be rich with meaning and then offer a reading that is based on the elements present in that passage. The passage-based paper allows me to see and comment upon students' reading practices. And, because we are working with a very small portion of text, my comments are necessarily specific in nature as I respond to a student's very local reading. Keeping reading this contained, I am able to see how students proceed in their readings: how they move from looking at certain words and phrases to making claims about them. This assignment makes them slow down and become aware of the process by which they make meaning, and it allows me to see and comment on this meaning-making.

The assignment also allows students to see how their classmates are reading, since their passage-based papers guide our discussions. Often, two or more students will choose the same passage and interpret it differently, yet each interpretation is valid—the students just chose to focus on different textual elements. This allows us to discuss the potential for multiple and even competing readings of the same passage. Sometimes a reading will be completely unsustainable based on the passage or on the ways in which the student has attended to the passage, and that allows us to talk about the limits of interpretation and the importance of connecting evidence to claims.

Adapting the PBP to Disciplines Outside of English[2]

This is all well and good for English, you may be thinking, but how does one make reading visible outside of English and outside of the humanities? How can I make my Biology students better readers?

Notice that the PBP prompt doesn't ask students to address anything particularly "literary" about the passage they have chosen. Instead, the assignment asks students to comment on the relationship between language, style, and meaning, which is relevant in all disciplines, particularly for students who are both learning to recognize and imitate how writers in that discipline write.

If your students read journals within the field they can choose a passage from one of those. In their four-year, cross-disciplinary study of student writers and instructors from across the disciplines, Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki (2006) found that "students can infer style by reading professional writing" (p. 128). While inferring is certainly useful, the PBP asks student to do far more than that. A student in the sciences may pay particular attention to the science-writer's abstract. Students might comment on the tone, style, and/or structure of a passage from the abstract. Students might write about how this passage differs from the article as a whole in terms of style, diction, and structure. Students might choose to focus on the introduction or conclusion to a published laboratory report and write about the textual elements therein, making them aware of the different components of a lab report. You could even use a lab report written by a student to help model the sort of writing you are looking for in the course. While the focus here seems to be on writing rather than reading, it is actually through their close readings of these passages that students learn about the conventions that govern writing within that discipline. Moreover, noticing and writing about these textual elements help reveal

for students their processes of reading and make them aware of the fact that they, as writers, will necessarily need to keep readers in mind.

Another way to tweak the PBP, while keeping its focus on a limited amount of text, is to have students choose a difficult passage and write about it in order to make sense of it, in order to develop a reading. Mariolina Salvatori and Patricia Donahue (2006) have written extensively on the importance of having students dwell on (rather than ignore) the difficulties they encounter while reading. Salvatori and Donahue have described how entering the text through this difficulty (whether the difficulty stems from vocabulary, references, or an unfamiliar concept) can be a productive route for students to take because it makes them aware of the work that readers must do when interpreting a text. In the introduction to their book, they speak directly to students, telling them that the purpose of the book is "to help you inquire into whatever intellectual difficulties you might encounter in your work as a college student. Inquiry into difficulty is an important dimension of both academic work and human understanding—a fact that our students' writing has confirmed over and over again" (p. xxii). Beyond connecting the processes of reading and writing to human understanding, this emphasis on difficulty also helps students, in the words of David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky (1986), "to see difficulty as a condition of adult reading, as a gift that makes reading possible" (p. 18).

Taking the "difficulty paper" beyond the humanities might mean having students locate a passage that creates a set of questions for them, questions that they don't have the means (e.g., data, results from other studies or experiments, and so on) to answer quite yet. Students can use the passage to develop the questions so that they can consider what information it is that they need in order to answer the questions that the passages have raised for them. In the process, students become aware of their difficulties and rather than find-

---

2   Many thanks to Dr. Beth Matway at the University of Pittsburgh for helping me to think beyond English.

ing them prohibitive, they become generative and promote understanding as the student "wrestles"—to use Peter Elbow's term for this type of work—with the text and the concepts therein.

In all of these cases, students are being made aware of their own reading practices by working through a small portion of text and using writing to figure out what's going on in it (or where else they might need to go to figure this out). The length of the passage with which students are working is perhaps the most important element of this assignment no matter how you choose to adapt it for your course. A short passage is important not only because reading and writing—especially if it is a particularly difficult text—seem less overwhelming, but because the limited text demands that student and teacher alike both slow down and become acutely aware of their interpretive processes. For the student, this means becoming aware of what it feels like to actively make sense of something. And, for the instructor, it means the opportunity both to see students' processes and to intervene in productive ways in those processes.

The instructor also becomes responsible for showing students how the PBP is related to the work of the course. Ideally, the PBP is part of a sequence of assignments. The PBP may help students prepare for writing longer works and for the close attention to textual evidence expected in longer, formal papers. Or, the PBP may help students discover what questions need to be answered or what information needs to be collected before they can complete another assignment in the sequence. Alternatively, the PBP can be used to address how students might work closely with sources in preparation for research assignments that will ask them to do this work on a much larger scale. Students should be made aware of the PBP's connections to other assignments and to the goals of the course so that PBPs don't appear as though they are discrete assignments that are

unrelated to—and therefore less important than—the rest of the work completed in the course.

Ultimately, the PBP helps students experience not just writing, but reading as an act of discovery. As they read, not only can students inquire into the content of a range of fields but, through attention to their own reading practices, they can better "appreciate the rhetorical differences that distinguish one discipline from another" (Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006, p. 129). We need to instruct our students on what they might look for when they read in the disciplines so that they can better understand the content, become better writers, and, perhaps most importantly, become better readers in the (sometimes multiple) fields within which they are working. ■■

References

Bartholomae, D., & Petrosky, A. (1986). *Facts, artifacts, counterfacts.* New York: Boynton/Cook.

Elbow, P. (2001). Foreword. In M. Curtis et al. (Eds.), *The original text–wrestling book* (pp. ix-xiv). Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt.

Salvatori, M. R., & Donahue, P. A. (2004). *The elements (and pleasures) of difficulty*. New York: Longman.

Scholes, R. (2002). The transition to college reading. *Pedagogy*, 2.2., 165-172.

Thaiss, C., & Zawacki. T. M. (2006). *Engaged writers & dynamic disciplines.* New York: Boynton/Cook.

Tell Me a Story: Effective Use of Creative Writing Assignments in College Literature Courses

Amy Cummins

Abstract

Creativity and innovation are required in twenty-first century workplaces, and different types of college assignments help diverse learners connect with and retain course material. Creative writing assignments provide opportunities for students to adapt, extend, and respond to literary texts. This essay presents a rationale and strategies for classroom practices using creative writing in college literature courses and includes examples from students' writing. It explains the importance of the writer's statement, a self-analysis that makes the activity both critical and creative, and the peer-sharing process. I address possible pitfalls, propose the cross-disciplinary value of creative writing, and offer suggestions for the incorporation of creative writing activities into a variety of college courses.

Keywords

Creativity, pedagogy, peer sharing, writer's statement, literature, adaptation.

Amy Cummins, PhD, works as Assistant Professor of English at Fort Hays State University, Kansas. Her writing has appeared recently in journals including *Southern Studies*, *Eureka Studies in Teaching Short Fiction*, *The Texas Review*, and *The Rio Grande Review*, and in the books *Styling Texts: Dress and Fashion in Literature* and *American History Through Literature, 1820-1870*.

Introduction

While literary interpretation essays and term papers continue to be mainstays of literature courses and will carry the most weight for grades, valuable writing experiences are provided by creative writing assignments in which students working in groups or individually adapt and respond to literary texts. Rewriting or extending literary texts is a method of fostering creativity that Brenda Greene terms "reinventing" the works (1990, p. 178). Students in college literature courses will benefit from writing creatively and performing self-analysis. Veronica Austen, an English professor who uses creative writing in literature courses, argues that creative writing will remove the distancing "awe of literature" and give students the confidence "to claim an active role in the classroom" (2005, p. 140). When students rework literary texts, they engage more effectively with the texts and the course, and this engagement with course material reinforces what is being learned. Creativity and storytelling are valuable cross-curricular skills worth practicing in college courses. As this report reveals, professors in many disciplines can incorporate both creative writing and the self-analysis component into assignments. There are several reasons to consider the use of creative writing assignments.

» Creativity and innovation are required in twenty-first century workplaces.

» Different types of assignments can help diverse learners connect with and retain course material.

» Literature is perceived freshly when the method of analysis requires both creative and critical responses.

» The importance of literary genre, structure, style, and narrative perspective become clearer when one is crafting narrative, and characters can be comprehended more deeply when one imagines their unstated thoughts.

» Writing in various genres provides practice for students who will write as part of their careers.

» Evaluation of new assignments invigorates the professor, while creative activities provide a variety and change of pace appreciated by contemporary college students.

Creative Writing in Literature Courses

Some college literature courses are already sites for the incorporation of creative writing assignments. As an English professor requiring students to write in one or more of the literary modes they are studying, particularly creative nonfiction and poetry, Lynn Z. Bloom argues that "To be a producer as well as a consumer of texts enables—no, obliges—the writer to understand works of literature from the inside out" (1998, p. 57). On her syllabus for an advanced composition course, Bloom articulates to students the reasons for the creative writing they will do, including her belief "that it is important to read literature, as well as to write it, with an understanding of the writer's craft, the writer's art" (p. 58).

Dan Mills teaches William Shakespeare's *Othello* not only by techniques of close analysis but also by a method of having students compose and perform imaginative "backstory scenes" in sixteenth-century English, projecting explanations for some of the drama's many ambiguities (2008, p. 158). Mills reports that his students respond well to the exercises, which help them to examine the motivations of Othello and Iago and to understand racial bias in the text (p. 159). This activity benefits students during the course because "they force themselves to fill in gaps that Shakespeare cleverly leaves in the dramatic action" (p. 158), and it helps them after the course because they have gained experience in detecting what may be missing (p. 159).

Using the "reinvention" strategy, Brenda Greene has students rewrite scenes from classic novels as dialect scripts that explore "the perspective of an underprivileged character or the hidden agenda of the major characters" (1995, p. 178). She notes that the created dialects help the writers to provide alternate readings, to construct complex instead of stereotypical characters, and to "examine how language affects the meaning of the text" (p. 183). Greene has also worked with an assignment in which students describe what Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* "might have been like if it had been written by a male" (p. 187). Regarding grading, Greene explains that she uses the "imaginative literary texts" either as response papers or as in-class writing activities and evaluates them "in terms of a student's ability to capture a character's language" (p. 189).

Writer's Statement

Essential to the value of a creative writing assignment, the concise writer's statement appears at the beginning of the submission, making the paper both critical and creative. This self-analysis sets up the goals of the individual and shows critical engagement with the writing process. I compare it with statements by artists that are posted at exhibitions in art galleries. If students need to incorporate into their statement terminology such as narrative perspective, conflict, or foreshadowing, such expectations should be made clear in the assignment. The writer's statement could have a word length

of approximately one quarter or less of the creative portion.

In my world literature class, I used the creative and critical writing activity to help teach narrative perspective, asking students to write an adaptation that changed the point of view; I also looked at drafts in conference and was able to help when a few students misidentified the perspective in the original or their own story. Doing a writer's statement helps the creative writer articulate what she wants to accomplish and helps the teacher to assess the work. Austen terms this component an "analytic response" or "critical assess-ment" valuable for "ensur[ing] that the activity of creative writing has in fact accomplished its purpose of deepening one's engagement with course material" (2005, p. 147). Such a self-assessment can help instruc-tors in many disciplines to incorporate and evaluate creative work.

In a core class for English majors surveying early American literature, I required the writer's statement to include commentary on the objectives and themes of the adaptation of a literary text on our syllabus. I wrote to students as follows:

> The first paragraph of your analysis should explain what you chose to do with the creative adaptation; the second paragraph describes the literary effects or thematic implications of your adaptation; the third paragraph describes your writing process and identifies one or more sec-tions of the creative component upon which you worked particularly hard to achieve your desired goals. The paper is incomplete without both com-ponents, the critical and the creative parts.

Two examples demonstrate the value of the writ-er's statement. In a world literature course in November 2007, Sheridan Thompson opened a self-analysis of his retelling of Emilia Pardo Bazán's story "Torn Lace" in this manner:

> *For my literary adaptation, I decided to retell the story from the viewpoint of the husband to be, Bernardo. His perspective in this adaptation is first person limited. However, I took the characteristics that were portrayed when Micaelita ripped the lace and painted a whole different picture of Bernardo using his furi-ous demeanor towards Micaelita. I thought that if he could be so angry at that one point, his anger towards Micaelita had always been building up to that point. If Micaelita could have an epiphany, then Bernardo could have a major change of character. . . .*

The students' self-analytical writing component helped them to articulate how narrative perspective shapes every aspect of a story. Traci Bamber, another writer in the world literature course, demonstrated understanding and control of narrative perspective in her writer's statement, which began:

> *I chose to adapt Julio Cortázar's "End of the Game" from first person limited of the girl's point-of-view to a first-person limited of Ariel B.'s point of view. I chose this because I wondered what Ariel thought and why this older boy was so caught up in the girls' game.*
>
> *I kept the details limited to what he would have seen and known. I had to change the names of the Statues, because Ariel wouldn't know their proper name that the girls gave them until he met and talked to them.*

The writer's statement is essential to the effective-ness of creative writing assignments. It demonstrates self-reflection and makes writers articulate the methods and purposes of their work, contributing also to stu-dents' greater appreciation of writing as a craft.

Peer Sharing

Creative writing assignments have been effective in part because class time was devoted to sharing and responding to the works, encouraging more investment from the class members. In my undergraduate classes, volunteers read aloud their writing in front of the

group, providing enjoyable class periods, usually with a short question-and-answer session at the end. When there is time for peer review in advance, classmates give feedback to one another and dialogue about their work. Nurse educators Carol Picard, Ellen Landis, and Lynn Minnick argue on behalf of group creative work in their essay "Creativity: A Collaborative Process" and describe how "mindfulness" is developed by creative approaches that demand "alertness and sensitivity" and prevent practitioner burnout (2007, p. 73).

When my world literature class did its small group projects, the group members stood to present their work together. I collected responses written by other class members about the presentations, then I shared selections with the groups. Veronica Austen suggests that a process of peer feedback could help with the grading of creative work by "de-centering the assessment process so that evaluation is conducted not just by the instructor but also by the writer's peers and the writer him/herself" (p. 148). Presentations of creative work can also be organized into open class sessions linked with a cross-disciplinary research and creative activities week, National Poetry Month or Women's History Month, or local events related to course content.

In one of my online graduate courses using the Blackboard platform, class members uploaded their creative and critical writing assignment to Digital Dropbox. The following week, the assignment was for each class member to comment on at least four of their classmates' submissions. Interacting with an audience beyond the professor enabled the class members to invest their best efforts in the activity. Peer responses also freed class members from relying exclusively on the professor for discussion of their work. As with other writing assignments, having peer readers or listeners in addition to the professor will make the assignment more personally meaningful for students.

Examples from Students

I have used variations of the creative and critical writing assignment in numerous university English classes including American literature surveys, world literature, nineteenth-century women's literature, and young adult literature. Whether students are given a limited or a wide range of options depends on the course and assignment objectives. The assignment in my general education class in world literature has involved both individual and group projects. The individual writing assignments involve adaptations of stories into new points of view, and the group projects require multimedia presentations. Examples quoted in this essay are from individual writing assignments used with permission of each writer.

In March 2008, one student in an online course, "Nineteenth-Century Women Writers," wrote a creative paper that imagined a letter to her great-grandchildren from Aunt Marthy, grandmother of Harriet Jacobs, author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. Writing this narrative enabled identification and understanding of the historical figures. The creative adaptation was shared and discussed via Blackboard. Class member Gina Woodmansee drew the reader into the religious characterization of Marthy by beginning the letter as follows:

My Dearest Ellen and Benny,

*   What joy my heart feels at the news of my daughter's freedom! For the first time in my life I can lay my head on my pillow and know true peace of mind. My prayers of supplication are now prayers of praise and thanksgiving to my God who has delivered my family from its enemies. Those prayers have not gone unheard, and so I am free at last to leave this earthly life of sorrow and woe and with a joyous heart enter the heavenly kingdom of eternal life. I am old and weary, and I know I shall never see you again in this lifetime, but before I leave this world for a better life,*

I wish to share a small portion of my story with you. . . .

Literary adaptations also provided the basis for the creative assignment in my world literature course in November 2007. Class members were to retell a story from a different narrative perspective and to submit a Writer's Statement expressing their aims. Earl Ruder, a student in this course, adapted "The Guest" by Albert Camus in order to tell a story about an Arab man being held prisoner; the original, a classic existentialist work, gives the man no name and leaves his character a cipher. Ruder challenged himself by writing in the third-person limited perspective about the Arab character he named Salah.

> *Salah awoke from his sleep, if you could really call it that. The truth of the matter was that he hadn't slept in weeks. He lay there on the bedroll that lined the floor of his small, earthen home. The light of the fire cast vague shadows that seemed to point in accusation. His eyes were transfixed on his hands. "I'm not a murderer," he thought, "Am I?" But he had murdered. Just three weeks prior, he had killed his cousin in a fit of blood rage that had since left him confused and increasingly hysterical. He shook his head to dismiss the thoughts. A cold breeze crept in through the shabby cover that was his door. He decided to warm himself by the fire. Salah slowly got to his feet, his bones crackling as he did so. He moved across the room with the grace of some ancient undead thing, his body hunched, his head hung low, and his arms dangling limply at his side. . . .*

Ruder's narrative develops a backstory about the imprisoned man without removing all of the ambiguity in the original by Camus; his story is about Salah as an individual, not about his impact on the life of Balducci. The creative writing assignment can call forth excellent writing abilities that cannot always be made manifest in critical prose. To provide ideas for literary approaches,

the list below is based on a homework assignment prompt for a course in young adult literature.

» Write a dramatic monologue through the perspective of a major or minor character.
» Compose a poem about a character in one of the texts. You could directly address the character or create her unique voice expressing thoughts not revealed in the original text.
» Rewrite a section of a story or do a sequel that projects the futures of characters in the books.
» Write several entries in a diary, journal, or weblog (blog) by one of the characters in the book.
» Imagine and summarize the backstory or prequel to a text.
» Conduct an imaginary interview of one of the characters or of an author.
» Tell the plot of a new story in which characters from different texts interact with one another.
» Write a short newspaper or feature article reporting on an event within a book.
» Rewrite a scene from a book as a play, complete with stage directions and dialogue from characters, then have classmates read it aloud with you.
» Relocate a scene from a book into an entirely different setting.

Response from my own students has been affirmative for all variations of this assignment. I report that students in all majors were favorable to creative writing assignments. I have had students recall the assignment and their subject several years after the class. During the semesters that I have practiced it, sometimes inviting multimedia projects but more often specifying literary adaptations, I have received many memorable submissions from individuals and in small group projects. I list some examples of my students' creative writing assignments:

» A short story that began as a retelling of Robert Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy

Evening" and was later published in the campus literary journal (Rome, 2007, p. 13).

» A retelling of Zora Neale Hurston's "Sweat" as an illustrated children's story with mice instead of human characters.

» A story in which nineteenth-century women characters from four novels are set in the present time and communicate via a weblog (blog) called "The Desolation Club."

» A dramatic monologue and a blog by the protagonist in Fanny Fern's novel Ruth Hall, and a memorial essay by her daughter to be read as an afterword to the book.

» A private diary by Harriet Jacobs, expressing thoughts and fears she did not reveal in her book *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Pitfalls

Five problems can arise with the use of creative writing assignments:

» Submission of creative writing loosely inspired by the material but not meeting requirements of the assignment and expectations of the professor.

» Confusion about correct length and not knowing when or how to stop.

» Difficulty for the teacher in fair and helpful evaluation.

» Resistance by students with less background or interest in creative writing.

» Challenges to the assignment if it does not meet course objectives and college guidelines.

Some of these problems can be avoided by providing examples and a clear writing assignment that outlines expectations regarding purposes, parameters, style, deadlines, and the rubric or grading categories. Displaying examples in advance—not necessarily models but good samples—will help writers at all levels of skill; brainstorming as a full class will also benefit the writers. Expecting or inviting rough draft review and individual conferences can enable the teacher to catch problems with a submission's not meeting requirements

or not going as far as it could in order to be effective. These methods will help both those students who have done little creative writing and those students who do so regularly.

Giving a word length or page range helps writers to know whether they are aiming for two pages or seven and how much length matters to your evaluation of their submission. Providing enough time for students to complete the project satisfactorily depends on how extensive the writing assignment is. Specifying in advance what material is suitable as the basis for the creative response can help to avoid confusion. Furthermore, if the assignment is not identified as creative on the syllabus given at the beginning of the class, it may be necessary to offer a conventional paper as an alternate topic.

Professors wanting to try creative assignments and concerned with the evaluation of creative products should not only provide an explanation of the grading process for the assignment but also make sure that their initial usage of the assignment is not weighted heavily for the course grade. Professors may grade holistically or tailor grading checklists to the assignment by enumerating possible points in categories such as requirements for what must be included, accuracy in relation to content of the original text, use of descriptive language, and editing for conventions and consistency. For any college-level writing assignment and particularly for ones requiring both creative and critical writing, the professor must provide not merely a grade but specific comments responding to the work as a whole. If any creative writing assignment idea cannot be explained effectively and shown as relevant to course objectives or college expectations, such problems suggest it is not applicable or requires major rethinking before usage in the classroom.

Applications for Creativity in Many Disciplines

A recent study (McCorkle et al.) showed that college students in marketing and other business majors "perceived creativity as important to their career" and "believed that creativity is a skill that can be learned," findings that suggest students' receptiveness to faculty efforts "to encourage, develop, and reward" creativity (2007, p. 258, p. 259). The professional workforce shows increasing demand for employees who possess creativity and can analyze a problem from different perspectives, then "seek a solution where no one else has thought of going" (Nebenzahl, 2008, p. G1).

Because people of all ages learn better when they are actively participating, not merely listening, creative assignments that require interactivity and engagement will enhance learning. The creativity and critical thinking skills that develop through practicing storytelling techniques can help teach business theories, leadership or communication styles, and educational methods. Narrative arts can be incorporated into how college instructors convey content through case studies and word problems. In a course described in *Nurse Educator*, students learn to express a "nursing philosophy" through self-selected media: as nursing students use song, poetry, and artwork to present their beliefs to the class, multiple senses are involved, thereby building retention for the individual and the class (Whitman and Rose, 2003, p. 166).

Creativity in writing assignments will result in college students' growing to see writing as a rewarding process. Different types of writing assignments appeal to students who unfortunately often perceive writing tasks "as an unwelcome chore bereft of any creative element" (Parameswaram, 2007, p. 172). Education Studies Professor Gowri Parameswaram describes a semester-long process used in a psychology of developing adolescence course, during which students have the opportunity to "convert their understandings" of their "research journeys" into "a creative product" such as a skit, literature, song, film, or painting" (2007, p. 174). Parameswaram notes that "popular media of expression among students are plays and narratives that weave their research together" (2007, p. 174). Students in the psychology course add continually to their "research project maps" and then have to organize their information "into meaningful sections that hang together and tell a 'story'" (Parameswaram, 2007, p. 174).

Mary Ellen Mallia, now a university director of environmental sustainability, describes how she incorporates creativity when instructing an introductory Economics course. One assignment requires students to use "a creative format" for demonstrating "knowledge of the three macroeconomic indicators": Gross Domestic Product growth, unemployment, and inflation (2006, p. 1). Mallia's assignment includes a rubric describing specific grading criteria for content, writing style, and format (2006, p. 3). Mallia provides examples of her students' work, including "a short story based on the classic Dickens's Christmas story" in which "unemployment, inflation and GDP are the three ghosts who visit Scrooge" (p. 1). Mallia argues that the assignment helps students "synthesize this knowledge" and that they "demonstrate a deeper understanding of the macroeconomic indicators and have the possibility of retaining the information longer" than if measured in conventional ways such as multiple choice tests (p. 1).

Conclusion

I invite college professors to incorporate creative writing assignments into the curriculum in order to build skills in originality and elaboration and to increase engagement with course material. I thank the students whose writing provided the inspiration and basis for this article. Applications across the disciplines will help students practice critical thinking and retain course concepts. The essential components of the author's statement and the peer sharing process must not be neglected if this activity is to succeed. The experiences

in writing both creatively and critically will enhance student learning and provide a memorable academic experience. ◼▪

References

Austen, V. (2005). The value of creative writing assignments in English literature courses. *International Journal for the Practice and Theory of Creative Writing 2(2),* 138-150.

Bamber, T. (2007). Ariel's End of the Game. Paper for English 125, World Literature and the Human Experience. Hays, KS: Fort Hays State University.

Bloom, L.Z. (1998). *Composition Studies as a Creative Art: Teaching, Writing, Scholarship, Administration.* Logan: Utah State U P.

Greene, B. (1995). Reinventing the literary text: Student writers at work. In A. Young and T. Fulwiler (Eds.), *When Writing Teachers Teach Literature: Bringing Writing to Reading.* (pp. 177-190). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

McCorkle, D., J. Payan, J. Reardon, & N. Kling. (2007). Perceptions and reality: Creativity in the marketing classroom. *Journal of Marketing Education 29(3)*, 254-261.

Mallia, M. Using creativity in assessment to teach economics. Poster Session. American Economics Association (AEA) January 2006 Meeting. Retrieved March 1, 2009, from: <http://www.aeaweb.org/annual_mtg_papers/2006/0107_1430_1301.pdf>

Mills, D. (2008). Mind the gap: Teaching *Othello* through creative responses. *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture 8(1),* 154-159.

Nebenzahl, D. (2008, May 31). You can train yourself to be more creative in the way you tackle problems. *The Montreal Gazette*, p. G1. Retrieved June 19, 2008, from http://www.lexisnexis.com.

Parameswaram, G. (2007). Inclusive writing in a psychology class. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 34(3),* 172-176.

Picard, C., E. Landis, & L. Minnick. (2007). Creativity: A collaborative process. In Martha Bradshaw and Arlene Lowenstein (Eds.), *Innovative Teaching Strategies in Nursing and Related Health Professions.* (pp. 71-78). Sudbury: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Rome, T. (2007). Embracing the Darkness: A Retelling of Frost's "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening." *Lines from the Middle of Nowhere (18),* 13-16. Hays, KS: Fort Hays State University Campus Literary and Arts Journal.

Ruder, E. (2007). The Fallows. Paper for English 125, World Literature and the Human Experience. Hays, KS: Fort Hays State University.

Thompson, S. (2007). Adaptation of Emilia Pardo Bazán's "Torn Lace." Paper for English 125, World Literature and the Human Experience. Hays, KS: Fort Hays State University.

Whitman, B. L., & Rose, W. J. (2003). Using art to express a personal philosophy of nursing. *Nurse Educator (28)4*, 166-169.

Woodmansee, G. (2008). To Ellen and Benny. Paper for English 601, Nineteenth-Century Women Writers. Hays, KS: Fort Hays State University.

The Self-Deconstructing Canon:
Teaching the Survey Course Without Perpetuating Hegemony
Randy Laist

Abstract

To teach a survey course in any discipline is, almost by definition, to construct and propagate the kind of grand narrative of history that has been discredited by postmodernism, deconstruction, multiculturalism, and, in fact, by most contemporary theory. Certainly, to perpetuate unthinkingly an authoritarian reverence for "Great Books" is antithetical to the spirit of a humanist education today, yet survey courses with titles like "Masterworks of English Literature" (the class I teach at the University of Connecticut) remain staples of most undergraduate plans of study. A similar pedagogical challenge accompanies introductory courses in philosophy, history, and the sciences. Starting from the assumption that it is possible to teach from the canon without merely promulgating it, I consider three ways in which canonical texts can be employed in a survey course setting as a means of teaching the canon and deconstructing it at the same time.

Keywords
survey course, canon, pedagogy, hegemony, deconstruction

Randy Laist is currently a PhD candidate in American literature at the University of Connecticut, where he is finishing up his dissertation on Don DeLillo. His articles have appeared in *Critique*, *Modern Language Studies*, and *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, and his professional interests include media studies, ecocriticism, and phenomenology.

To teach a survey course in any discipline is, almost by definition, to construct and propagate the kind of grand narrative that has been discredited by postmodernism, deconstruction, multiculturalism, and, in fact, by most contemporary theory. Although survey courses are frequently maligned as hierarchical, exclusive, and reactionary, the persistence in university curricula of classes like the one I teach at the University of Connecticut, "Masterworks of English Literature," attests to a general agreement that, as Glenn C. Altschuler (2000) has argued, "Survey courses are the best way to provide the basic context that in turn permits productive learning in more advanced courses" (p. B24). According to this view, survey courses are necessary to provide students with the "raw data" that will become the subject of more nuanced consideration in more advanced courses. In the field of literary studies, efforts to mitigate the perceived political incorrectness of survey courses by repopulating them with women and minorities represent, as Susan VanZanten Gallagher (2001) explains, "not so much an exercise in the eradication as in the creation of a canon" (p. 56). As a finite list of privileged texts, the syllabus of a literature course is itself unavoidably a signifier and vehicle of canonicity. The question

is not whether the instructor of the course will promote a canonical block of texts, but the style in which she will do so. Beverly Peterson (2001) observes that "In constructing a syllabus, teachers and professors may act as if the choices had been made for them, sanctioned by tradition" (p. 380), but Gerald Graff (1992) and others have explored the possibility of presenting canonicity itself as an arena of conflict. Graff encourages teachers to take pedagogical advantage of disciplinary disputes by "teach[ing] the conflicts themselves, making them part of our object of study" (p. 12). Starting from the assumption that it is possible to teach from the canon without merely promulgating it, I would like to consider the possibility that canonical texts may be employed in a literature survey course setting as a means of teaching the canon and deconstructing it at the same time.

The situation in literary studies is an explicit case of a more abstract problem that haunts survey courses across disciplines. While literature students are assigned a literal collection of texts that constitute the course content, survey courses in history, philosophy, and even the sciences tend to be misleadingly centralized around grand narratives which are more invisible than they are in literary studies and so, perhaps, more cognitively entrenched in the worldviews of both teachers and students. The facts that other disciplines also have lists of canonical texts and that literary studies similarly has an invisible guiding ideology illustrate that problems of canonicity are all-pervasive at many different levels in a wide variety of pedagogical situations. Linda K. Kerber (1997) has lamented the typical American History survey course "in which the lessons already seem to be well laid-out, marching in sequence from Columbus to as close to the present as we can get before the class sessions are used up" (p. 15). Ladelle McWhorter (2000) observes that "Most undergraduate philosophy majors take a course in modern philosophy from Descartes to Kant. However, postmodern philosophers have questioned the practice of turning philosophical history

into a grand narrative as survey courses like Modern Philosophy tend to do" (p. 1). Biology textbooks are commonly organized around an anthropocentric narrative rather than foregrounding ecological diversity, and physics textbooks continue to describe the history of science as an ascent of incremental accomplishments rather than as a succession of Kuhnian paradigm shifts.

Teachers of history, philosophy, and science are generally well-versed in the epistemological and cultural complexities which characterize the discourse of their fields, but when it comes to communicating "the basics" to non-specialists, these complexities tend to be set aside for the sake of pedagogical efficiency. As teachers, we find it easy to convince ourselves that the critique of disciplinary meta-narratives is something "added on" to the core content of the discipline: an eccentric coda to the conventional history. But I think if we are honest with ourselves, it is clear that the challenge represented by the "postmodernizing" of our disciplinary assumptions has genetic implications for our most fundamental attitudes about what it means to think about literature, history, philosophy, or science. Following my explanation of how I address the challenge to canonicity in my literature class, I will suggest possibilities for analogous applications in other disciplines.

Canonicity is not only a list of texts, but a way of thinking about what the list signifies. The limited number of texts that can be reasonably included in a literature survey course constitutes a necessary canon, but it is the pedagogical approach to these texts that will determine the degree to which they will be characterized as transcendent and inviolable or contingent and provisional. There are three interrelated levels at which what we might call the "ontological status"—the aura of metaphysical authority—of texts under study is determined. Most concretely, there is the status of the text itself. The permanence and mass-production of the printed page suggest an apparent authority that we naturally tend to personify as a confident and

decisive speaker, unified in his intentions and unwaveringly deliberate in his speech. Familiarity with close reading accustoms students to conceive of the author as the all-powerful God of the text-world, dexterously manipulating every aspect of the text. But in fact, many of the most conventionally canonical works lack any such relation to this kind of author, and expose in their very existence the mutability and haphazardness of the processes both of creative activity and of textual transmission. More subtly, the ontological status of a text will be determined by its perceived relation to a historical and literary context. In a survey course, where an entire historical period might be represented by a single text, there is a strong possibility that a text may seem to spring up out of nothing as an independent, self-sufficient jewel of disembodied imagination. In the interest of communicating a more accurate understanding of the pervasive significance of literary influence, a responsible pedagogy should take steps to dispel the *sui generis* assumption of literary genius and emphasize the degree to which literary texts partake in a dense interrelatedness to other texts. Finally, there is the level of the syllabus itself and the ontological assumptions it represents. If it is true that you cannot write a survey course syllabus without engaging the canon debate, then it is the intellectually honest thing to do to bring canonicity into the thematic foreground of the class itself. The explicit interrogation of how canonicity has taken shape keeps the syllabus from taking on an aura of self-evidence. In the rest of this article, I will address myself to specific strategies I have employed to de-hegemonize my teaching of canonical texts on these three levels.

Many of the canonical texts which populate survey syllabi have erratic textual histories that are hidden by the apparent order we perceive in their finished form. Although the instructors of survey courses may be aware of these histories as part of their professional expertise, students are frequently surprised and even, perhaps, disturbed to discover the chaos beneath the ordered lines of type. Shakespeare is always at the center of canon studies and Shakespeare's most famous creation, *Hamlet*, is the very personification of the Anglo-American literary canon. And yet, who is Hamlet the character and what is *Hamlet* the play? The famous unreadability of the character finds a fitting metaphor in the obscurity of the play's textual history. Famously, the so-called *ur-Hamlet* has been lost to history. We know it existed, because it was criticized in 1598, but no one knows or will likely ever know how the lost play handled the material or who wrote it. The play that we think we are familiar with is an updated revision of this vanished original. Like Hamlet himself, the script of *Hamlet* has a ghost father, and just as Hamlet has a secret history of what his personality was like before the play begins, so the play's own origins are cloaked in historical obscurity. Furthermore, our *Hamlet* is not only one updated revision of the vanished play, but rather, as the textual scholar Paul Werstine (1995) has called it, "a thing of shreds and patches" (p. 236) stitched together from three different manuscripts of unknown provenance, among which there are only a few hundred lines in common. Most shocking is the wonderfully bad Bad Quarto of 1603, with its ham-handed parody of the famous soliloquy. "To be or not to be, I there's the point, / To Die, to sleepe, is that all? I all: / No, to sleepe, to dreame, I mary there it goes …" (Foster, 1998, 51). In my class, we read the Bad Quarto version of this play side by side with the one in the students' Dover Thrift editions in the interests of speculating on their relative merits and weaknesses. Inevitably, some students maintain that the Bad Quarto version is better, whether because it's more concise or because the less frilly language more effectively conveys Hamlet's bafflement and despair. Such skepticism is vindicated by recent scholarship suggesting that the Bad Quarto is not just a botched pirating of a pristine original, but was in fact a playwright-sanctioned condensation for travel-

ing performances. Shakespeare wrote for the stage, not for the definitive anthology. It is possible that he wrote scenes for some performances of a given play and not for others. He appears to have revised his plays over time, and it seems likely that he composed two completely different versions of *King Lear* and neglected ever to finalize a definitive draft of his masterpiece. This perspective restores a kind of porousness and elasticity to the Shakespearean text that disarms the intimidating quality of the exotic language and famous names.

Another technique for breaking up the surface of a text is to draw attention to the manner in which poets have revised and reconceived their poems over periods of time. In his discussion of teaching " Ode: Intimations of Immortality" alongside Wordsworth's various drafts of the poem, Jeffrey Robinson (1987) observes that "the study of revision … teaches the student that every stage of thought has its own substantive reality" (p. 113). It is easy enough to pass out a photocopy of Milton's Trinity Manuscript draft of *Lycidas* (Patrides, 1983, 12-13) as a way of teaching that literary texts are not vatic pronouncements from disembodied voices, but are the products of struggling individuals thinking in time and space. Milton can sometimes sound as if he writes with the exclusive purpose of intimidating students, but seeing his excisions and rewordings makes him appear less all-knowing and more fathomable.

The glimpse into Milton's mind provided by his drafts has the quality of one of those DVD featurettes that accompany movies these days; an apparently self-sufficient text is re-presented as a series of choices, accidents, and inspirations. In addition to providing the poem with a compositional background, Milton's draft sheds light on the finished poem. The list of flowers, which seems intrusive and indulgent toward the end of the finished poem, turns out to be one of the first passages that Milton wrote, whereas the central movement of the finished poem—Lycidas's deification—comes across in the Trinity Manuscript, as Merritt Y. Hughes

(1957) observes, as an "afterthought" (p. 116). Even more provocative are the minor changes. To ask why Milton (1993) thought that "well-attir'd woodbine" (p. 60) sounded better than "the garish columbine" (Patrides, 1983, p. 13) is to catch Milton in the process of his craft as a wordsmith in a manner that is rendered deliberately impossible by the glossy aura of the finished work alone. It is easy to see that, although there is a rhetorical flair to starting two lines in a row with "Young Lycidas … Young Lycidas" (Patrides, 1983, p. 12), Milton (1993) is right to add a plaintive variation by altering a word to create "For Lycidas … Young Lycidas" (p. 56). On a thematic level, it is interesting to see Milton, in his description of Orpheus's severed head, cross out "divine" and substitute "gorie" (Patrides, 1983, p. 12).

Other canonical staples of the survey course syllabus also have easily locatable revisions and alternate versions. Most famously, Whitman's "Song of Myself" has a number of passages which Whitman removed, revised, and replaced throughout his forty years of reworking his life's work. Whereas Milton would probably want us to consider *Lycidas* as the published draft in and of itself, Whitman would certainly want students of his masterpiece to appreciate the mutability which is the essence of his poetry, and recent Norton editions of the poem obligingly include appendices of passages excluded from the *Leaves of Grass* poems (Whitman, 2002, 544-560). Eliot's (1996) "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" casts a textual shadow known as "Prufrock's Pervigilium," 33 lines of text that Eliot cut from the published version of the poem and then published separately in *Inventions of the March Hare* (pp. 43-44). Awareness of these parallel texts deepens our appreciation not only for these poems as creative objects, but for the nature of texts themselves as human projects as opposed to scriptural pronouncements.

"Prufrock's Pervigilium" is almost as ubiquitous as the original poem these days, thanks to the remarkable

capacity of the internet to reflect exactly the kind of layered-ness which I am suggesting is conducive to the de-hegemonification of canonical texts. Conveniently, as Richard J. Finneran (1996) points out, "The availability of hypermedia technology for the personal computer has coincided with a fundamental shift in textual theory, away from the notion of a single-text 'definitive edition' and toward a recognition of both the integrity of discrete versions of a work and the importance of nonverbal elements" (p. x). These nonverbal elements include not only alternate versions of a text, whether variants or drafts, but also what Jerome McGann (1991) has called "bibliographical codes" (p. 13), the network of extra-textual references which makes up any given work of art. As Virginia Woolf (1981) explains in *A Room of One's Own*, "Masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcomes of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice" (p. 65). The capacity to represent the interconnectedness of texts of all varieties is the most revolutionary aspect of the internet as far as literary studies is concerned. As avid navigators of the World Wide Web, American millennials are uniquely poised to appreciate the workings of influence and allusion. I tell my students that they are probably better equipped to understand a densely allusive poem such as *Lycidas* or *The Waste Land* than any other generation in history, not only cognitively, as members of a generation to whom hypertext is second nature, but also materially, in the sheer fact of their accessibility to hyperlinked electronic texts of canonical works. The internet is a living demonstration of the interdependency of texts, which have the dual capacity to focalize a diverse array of background texts, and to scatter into hyperlinked trains of outward associations.

Examining the device of allusion is central to any reading of either canonical poem, *Lycidas* or *The Waste Land*, but the two poems employ allusion to establish very different moods. In "Lycidas," the poet's grief for his dead friend finds a home in his pastoral allusions. The poet inhabits a poetic world which gives shape and meaning to mortality by folding it into the structures that have been provided by Virgil, Theocritus, Moschus, and Tacitus. The apotheosis Lycidas achieves in the poem is certainly as much, if not more, poetic than Christian. In *The Waste Land*, the allusions generally lack the redemptive potency evident in Milton's poem; rather than merging into a poetic unity, Eliot's references fragment into a disparate collage, constituting not a home so much as an improvised bomb shelter. Eliot's allusions are so central to the structural, thematic, and poetic identity of *The Waste Land* that I have found that whenever I teach it, I wind up trying to teach a few dozen other works at the same time: the stories of Tristan and Isolde, of Philomel, of *The Tempest*, of Galahad, of *Die Götterdämmerung*, of Augustine's *Confessions*, and a laundry list of other things. For the survey course, as a way both of negotiating this formidable background material and of demonstrating the critical relevance of these sub-texts to the poem as a whole, I turn it into a homework assignment. I identify twenty major allusions in the poem for my students, each of whom is then responsible for researching the history of the allusion and speculating on its significance to Eliot's poem. As the students present the results of their inquiry to the class, *The Waste Land* takes on a succession of different shades of meaning with each presentation, as if we are seeing Eliot's poem change progressively through the different perspectives opened up by its allusions. Frequently, these allusions open doors to other allusions and even disclose hyperlinks to one another independently of Eliot's composition. In addition to being a rewarding technique for reading *The Waste Land* itself, this activity opens up the class itself to an examination of other literatures—canonical and non-canonical, English and non-English, Western and

non-Western—as well as providing a vivid lesson in the hybrid referentiality of literary texts.

Finally, and perhaps obviously, the most effective defense against perpetuating a quasi-religious posture in relation to the syllabus is the inclusion of texts which themselves expose the misleading implications inherent in canon-formation. For this purpose, I have found that Charlotte Perkins Gilman's famous short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* make excellent companion pieces for interrogating the relationship between women and the canon. Together these texts support the impression that literary history is as revealing for what it does not include as for what it does.

The self-deconstruction of the canon receives its fullest articulation with the final text on the syllabus, Ishmael Reed's novel *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972), a text which is at the same time staunchly canonical (having famously been included in Harold Bloom's list of the 500 Great Works of the Western Canon (1994, p. 535)), and also one of Western literature's most ascerbic screeds against the Western Canon and canonicity itself. The novel is a kind of tool for excavating the premises of the course in its entirety and generating possibilities for alternate paradigms according to which cultural history might be conceptualized.

According to *Mumbo Jumbo*, Western culture as a whole is afflicted with Atonism, the worship of disembodiment and abstraction along with an active malice toward nature and the sensual body. Atonist writers are apologists for sterility and death. Hemingway, we are told, loved bullfighting because it is a traditional Atonist sport to torture and kill the Bull God, a symbol of fertility. Milton is also cited as an exemplary Atonist, a judgment that is used to explain his solid place in English studies: "that's why English professors like him, he's like their amulet" (p. 172). After a semester of talking in more or less reverent tones about Hemingway and Milton, in the midst of a course of study which

seems to take for granted the inherent value of these authors' writing, it puts both instructor and student into a pedagogically interesting position to suddenly have our interest in these authors challenged as a symptom of a foundational racism. Reed's critique is leveled not only at individual authors, but at the logic of the survey course itself. In the novel, Hank Rolling, the Guianese art critic who specializes in Vermeer, speaks for Atonist educators generally when he tells the Vodou priest-lecturer Papa LaBas that he "must come clean with those students. They must have a firm background in the Classics. Serious works, the achievements of mankind which began in Greece and then sort of wiggled all over the place like a chicken with its neck wrung" (p. 217). Rolling's framing of cultural accomplishment as a European venture with a Hellenic origin erases the African roots of European traditions, perpetuating an ahistorical understanding of "the Western tradition" as an upsurge *ex nihilo* in which Homer and Socrates play the roles of the Great White Autochthonous Fathers. Reed's critique of the Eurocentric assumptions underlying canon formation extends finally to the university itself and the informational meta-canon it represents. College student Abdul Hamid's university experience taught him that "the knowledge which they had made into a cabala, stripped of its terms and the private codes, its slang, you could learn in a few weeks. It didn't take 4 years, and the 4 years of university were set up so that they could have a process by which they could remove the rebels and the dissidents" (p. 37). The hierarchy of knowledge inherent in canonicity and in university curricula generally is indicted as a system of obfuscation and mystification designed to distinguish insiders from outsiders, to disguise racism as culture, and to secure ideological consistency. In evaluating the legitimacy of these accusations, student and teacher alike are necessarily involved in a very personal degree of self-interrogation.

The ontological destabilization of texts which the pedagogy of the self-deconstructing canon attempts to achieve may be similarly brought to bear on the grand narratives which undergird the survey course syllabi of other disciplines. If *über*-canonical literary texts like *Hamlet* and *Lycidas* exemplify the arbitrary nature of canon formation, central ideas in philosophy and history such as postmodernism and globalization compel us to recognize the fallacy of disciplinary grand narratives themselves. Of course, the language and worldview of this very article is radically involved with ideas which contemporary philosophy has made available, including the entire discourse of Lyotard's "grand narratives" (1984, p. xxiii) and the understanding of why they are problematic. Any survey-course philosophy student who does not come away with a functional understanding of postmodern epistemology has missed an overwhelmingly prominent aspect of contemporary philosophical discourse.

The historical condition of globalization poses an analogous challenge to any historical narrative which privileges Western history or indeed any model of historical narrative structured in a line rather than as a web. To understand the historical significance of globalization is simultaneously to recalibrate the priority of any particular branch on the historical bush. In the same way that *The Waste Land* is best understood as a network of linked texts rather than as, to borrow Woolf's phrase, "a single solitary birth," so may the narratives of history best be apprehended from within the context of the social sciences. Kevin St. Jarre (2008), responding to the challenge that globalization poses to conventional narrative-based history instruction, proposes "rebuild[ing] the scope and sequence for the social studies around the social sciences, which have long been neglected" (p. 665). In St. Jarre's model, the content-based pedagogy of linear history would be absorbed into an instructional strategy that privileges various analytical frames such as economics, civics, and the behavioral sciences. Rather than teaching a non-contextual narrative of the Civil War as a free-standing historical incident, students in St. Jarre's program would consider the event of the Civil War from a sociological perspective in one semester, from an economic perspective in another semester, and from a legal perspective in a third. Such a technique is analogous to my lesson in which students of *The Waste Land* consider the poem progressively from the perspective of each of its various literary and historical allusions.

In the same way that I employ *Mumbo Jumbo* to allow the canon to speak against itself, it would be appropriate for science teachers to incorporate that canonical work of science writing, Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), into their syllabus in the interest of bringing to light the teleological bias which inevitably finds its way into the classroom discourse. In the life sciences, the almost equally canonical book by Stephen Jay Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin* (1996), presents a readable and accessible deconstruction of anthropocentric evolutionary narratives.

The fact that survey courses are frequently directed toward non-majors makes them an ideal arena for considering the nature of our disciplines from a critical perspective. In intra-disciplinary contexts, we can always assume that our engagement with our field of study has an in-built justification that never needs actually to be spoken to lend legitimacy to the entire enterprise. But faced with an audience of non-specialists, the instructor of the survey course is challenged to articulate the rationale for studying her discipline at all. In order to keep from looking like a buffoonish museum curator keeping jealous guard over an inventory of dusty relics or like a hero-worshipping sycophant spreading the gospel of Sacred Stories, it is incumbent upon the survey course instructor to present the meta-narratives which constitute her discipline as living, breathing, unstable, and even dangerous entities. I try to encour-

age my students to think of the literary canon not as some kind of crystal cathedral, but as an insatiable meat grinder that spares nothing, devouring nothing more ruthlessly than its own claims to authority. ◼◼

References

Altschuler, G. C. (2000). Cultural literacy depends on survey courses. *The Chronicle of Higher Education, 47(13),* B24.

Bloom, H. (1994). *The western canon.* New York: Riverhead.

Eliot, T. S. (1996). *Inventions of the March Hare.* (C. Ricks, Ed.) New York: Harcourt Brace.

Eliot, T. S. (1998). *The waste land, Prufrock, and other poems.* New York: Dover, 1998.

Finneran, R. J. (1996). *The literary text in the digital age.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Foster, M. E. (1998). *The play behind the play:* Hamlet *and Quarto One.* Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Gallagher, S.V. (2001). Contingencies and intersections: The formation of pedagogical canons. *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, and Composition, 1(1),* 53-67.

Gilman, C. P. (1997). The yellow wallpaper. In *The yellow wallpaper and other stories.* New York: Dover.

Gould, S. J. (1996). *Full house: The spread of excellence from Plato to Darwin.* New York: Three Rivers.

Graff, G. (1992). *Beyond the culture wars.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Kerber, L. (1997). The challenge of "opinionative assurance." *National Forum: The Phi Kappa Phi Journal,* Summer, 15-17.

Kuhn, T. S. (1962). *The structure of scientific revolutions.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lyotard, J.-F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge.* (G. Bennington and B. Massumi, Trans.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

McGann, J. (1991). *The textual condition.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

McWhorter, L. (2000). Can a postmodern philosopher teach modern philosophy? *Teaching Philosophy, 23(1),* 1-13.

Milton, J. (1957). *John Milton: Complete poems and major prose.* (M. Y. Hughes, Ed.). New York: Macmillan.

Milton, J. (1993). Lycidas. In *John Milton: Selected poems.* New York: Dover, 56-60.

Patrides, C.A. (1983). *Milton's* Lycidas*: The tradition and the poem.* Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.

Peterson, B. (2001). Inviting students to challenge the American literature syllabus. *Teaching English in the two-year college, 28(4),* 379-82.

Reed, I. (1972). *Mumbo jumbo.* New York: Scribner.

Robinson, J. (1987). *Radical literary education: A classroom experiment with Wordsworth's "Ode."* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Shakespeare, W. (1992). *Hamlet.* New York: Dover.

St. Jarre, K. (2008). A member of the supporting cast. *Phi Delta Kappan, 89(9),* 664-666.

Werstine, P. (1995). The textual mystery of *Hamlet.* In D. S. Kaston (Ed.) *Critical essays on Shakespeare's* Hamlet. (pp. 210-240). New York: G. K. Hall.

Whitman, W. (2002). *Leaves of grass and other writing.* (M. Moon, Ed.) New York: W. W. Norton.

Woolf, V. (1981). *A room of one's own.* Orlando: Harcourt.

Current Clips & Links

A list of links to interesting, non-commercial websites related to teaching and learning. *Currents* invites reader recommendations and will assume responsibility for seeking permissions as necessary.

1. *Ideas on Teaching*: Each volume of *Ideas on Teaching* is a collection of short papers written by practising teachers (based on their own experiences in university teaching) that discusses specific topics and issues. The aim is to generate further thought and discussion, share tips, and encourage improvement in teaching. Published by the Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning (CDTL), National University of Singapore. http://www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/ideas/

2. Digital Ethnography: A Kansas State University working group led by Dr. Michael Wesch, Assistant Professor of Cultural Anthropology and Digital Ethnography, dedicated to exploring and extending the possibilities of digital ethnography. "A Vision of Students Today," their 2007 video produced in collaboration with 200 students at KSU, has more than 3 million hits on YouTube, and "The Machine is Us/ing Us" (Winner, Wired magazine Rave Award for Video, 2007), has more than 9 million. http://mediatedcultures.net/ksudigg/

3. Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET), University of Southern California: offers a variety of online resources and events. In particular, see the resources in the following sections: Materials from CET Faculty Fellows, Teaching and Learning, and CET QuickTime Video Project. http://www.usc.edu/programs/cet/

4. The Teaching and Learning Commons, Carnegie Foundation:
An intellectual community space provided to enrich and encourage exchange of knowledge about teaching and learning, developed by the Knowledge Media Laboratory of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. You are invited to: create representations of effective teaching practice; share these representations with the community; read and comment on others' work; build on the work of other community members; and re-create new representations to contribute to the commons. http://commons.carnegiefoundation.org/

5. Spanish Language and Culture: a website of useful, usable, and culturally saturated Spanish grammar exercises and activities created by Professor Barbara Kuczun Nelson of Colby College in Waterville, Maine. The Study Modules teach verb tenses through art, photographs, audio and video clips from Spain, Central and South America, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. *Recommended by Professor Patricia Marshall, Department of Languages and Literature, Worcester State College.* http://www.colby.edu/~bknelson/SLC
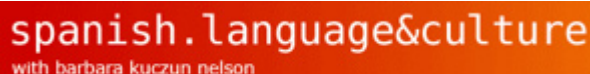
Seeking Submissions

Announcements of Work in Progress

If you or your institution has a study or research project in the works, you may want to announce it here for a number of reasons.

» If your project is in the conception stage, you may still be conducting literature reviews and seeking input from others who have conducted research in this area, as to focus and methodology. In that case, the *Currents* Work-in-Progress page would be a good place to announce your intentions and invite early input as you design your study.

» If your study is a long-term one in several stages, you may want to announce preliminary findings on the *Currents* Work-in-Progress page.

» If you are working in an area that is currently "hot," (such as problems with student attention due to "multi-tasking" in the classroom), you may want to announce it while it is underway, to generate interest and inquiries from scholars working on related projects.

Calls for Collaborators

If you are planning a study that will require data from more than one class-room or academic institution, the *Currents* Work-in-Progress page would be an excellent place to call for individual or institutional collaborators.

From the Book Review Editors

Catherine Wilcox-Titus and Matthew Johnsen

Book reviews for this issue of *Currents* include: a classic in teaching and learning, Parker Palmer's *The Courage to Teach;* a book that provides practical advice on online learning, Robin Smith's *Conquering the Content: A Step-by-Step Guide to Online Course Design*; and a review of a book of particular interest to new faculty, James Lang's *On Course: A Week-by-Week Guide to Your First Semester of College Teaching*. These reviews continue to balance general philosophical approaches to education with practical advice for teachers in higher education that applies across disciplines.

If you are interested in reviewing books for *Currents*, please send inquiries to cwilcoxtitus@worcester.edu or matthew.johnsen@worcester.edu.

Staying 'On Course'

Sean C. Goodlett

On Course: A Week-by-Week Guide to Your First Semester of College Teaching. By James M. Lang. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008, 336 pp., $26.95 (HC), ISBN 978-0-674-02806-7.

Readers may already know James Lang from his regular contributions to *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* In the fall of 1999, when I was just beginning to write my doctoral dissertation, Lang began writing a column on the vicissitudes of the academic job market. Like many graduate students of the time, I followed Lang's articles faithfully, shared his anxieties while worrying over my own prospects, and cheered when he eventually landed a plum position. From the fall of 2000 until the spring of 2006, Lang wrote a second series of articles for the *Chronicle* that charted the course of his tenure-track career at Assumption College. These eventually became the basis for his well-known autobiographical work, *Life on the Tenure Track: Lessons from the First Year* (Johns Hopkins, 2005).

I confess to being a fan of Lang's *Chronicle* pieces, and in the interest of full disclosure I should reveal that last fall, as the Faculty Director of Fitchburg State College's Center for Teaching and Learning, I invited him to my campus as a paid speaker. We teach at neighboring colleges in Central Massachusetts, and Fitchburg State had just embarked on an ambitious new faculty mentoring program. It was only natural to have him kick off the academic year, especially as the Center had distributed complimentary copies of *Life on the Tenure Track* to all incoming faculty. In the event, I found him as gracious and generous in person as he is thoughtful and engaging in print.

I only wish this latest offering by Lang had been available in the fall. *On Course: A Week-by-Week Guide to Your First Semester of College Teaching* is a "how to" guide for those just beginning to teach at the college or university level. As with *Life on the Tenure Track*, the present volume came out of a similarly titled set of articles in the *Chronicle*. A handful of "On Course" entries from the fall of 2006 served as rough drafts of chapters in the book, and, along with nearly a score more, they have provided the basis for what Lang calls "a modest and realistic approach to teaching" (xi). He suggests that new faculty read the book before the first semester gets underway and then mine it as a reference guide throughout their early career.

Sean C. Goodlett is an Associate Professor of History and the Faculty Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Fitchburg State College in Massachusetts. He is currently revising a manuscript on the cultural and social history of eighteenth-century European newsprint.

The seventeen chapters of the volume roughly correspond to the fifteen weeks of a semester with the addition of a prologue and epilogue. Lang downplays this structural "conceit," and it doubtless derives from the strictures of writing for a periodical. In any event, each chapter treats a discrete topic, offering analysis of methods or approaches, occasionally some firm "dos" and "don'ts," and a brief annotated list of mostly print resources. New faculty will appreciate the thoughtful advice on syllabus development (in the Prologue), the in-depth analysis of the particular virtues of lectures and discussions (Chapters 3 and 4), and the frank treatments of such subjects as students' personal lives (Chapter 8), cheating and plagiarism (Chapter 9), and student evaluations of faculty (Chapter 13). As an experienced instructor, I found Lang's recommendations for "first days" (Chapter 1) and for battling the end-of-semester "doldrums" (Chapter 11) most enlightening. On balance, though, the book really is targeted to junior faculty.

Other legacies of the constraints of writing for the *Chronicle* do crop up. One or two chapters present topics in a clunky, reference-manual style. This is especially the case with the chapter on classroom discussions (Chapter 4), which ends awkwardly with an FAQ, while the chapter on "common problems" (Chapter 12) is entirely given over to the same format. In other instances, Lang privileges methods that are most applicable for Humanities courses. Indeed, his focus is sometimes so narrow that he can neglect methods which do not stress writing (e.g., in Chapter 6), and he seems shy about fully exploring examples from the sciences. In one example from a typical science course, I found myself wanting Lang to explain exactly how students cram the post-Newtonian conceptualizations of motion that are taught in the modern physics classroom into an Aristotelian "mental model," because it would have allowed him to flesh out the problem of student biases (pp. 158-163). But in the end both the organizational

oddities and the overemphasis of the Humanities seem natural here: in the former case, Lang *intends* the volume to serve as a reference manual, and in the latter he writes from his own experiences and leaves instructors to discover their own discipline-specific applications.

Other teaching guides have their virtues. Wilbert J. McKeachie's venerable *Teaching Tips* (now in its twelfth edition; Houghton Mifflin, 2006) has a more comprehensive bibliography of teaching and learning scholarship and probably treats more topics at a higher level, while Linda B. Nilson's *Teaching at Its Best* (second edition; Anker, 2003) is more inclusive of non-Humanities disciplines. However, *On Course* surpasses these with the fullness of Lang's analysis on the subjects he treats and the charm of his relaxed, almost conversational prose. In short, Lang has drawn from his considerable classroom experience to think through the practical consequences of his advice, and he has done so without the usual soporific and technical style of the earlier guides. This engaging book should be required reading for all new college and university teachers. ▪▪

Comprehensible Online Course Design

Vicky Gilpin

Conquering the Content: A Step-by-Step Guide to Online Course Design. By Robin M. Smith. Jossey-Bass, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008, 153 pp., $27.00 (PB), ISBN 978-0-7879-9442-6.

Today's economic climate has encouraged many nontraditional students to begin their paths toward higher education with online courses. Professionals seeking continuing education credits are also increasingly served in this growing field. The flexibility of asynchronous education is seductive to adult learners needing to juggle academics with already-overloaded schedules. The increasing popularity of online programs, courses, and supplementary information for hybrid and synchronous courses has created the need for increased research on and information about teaching in the online world. Specifically, there is a deficit of practical advice for instructors on designing online courses. As part of the Jossey-Bass Guides to Online Teaching and Learning Series, Smith's (2008) *Conquering the Content: A Step-by-Step Guide to Online Course Design* takes major strides in making up this deficit. Instructional design specialist Robin M. Smith, Associate Professor of Educational Development and Coordinator of Web-based Learning at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, provides expert advice without condescension or pedantry.

For a slim volume with a conversational tone, *Conquering the Content* packs a scholarly punch. Although easily accessible for online instructional "newbies," the format of the work may inspire a wry chuckle from aficionados from both sides of the virtual desk, as each chapter opens in a conscious echo of a well-designed online module, complete with learning goals/outcomes, learning resources, additional resources, learning activities, self-assessment, and lesson evaluation. Smith models exactly what she discusses in the work: tight construction, relevant examples, and the creation of elements designed to encourage as well as challenge the student.

The seven concise chapters direct educators through the steps necessary to make the transition from face-to-face, synchronous instruction to online asynchronous instruction. The chapters include strategies for the instructor to use in preparing his or her courses for the transition to the online environment. As *Conquering the Content* delves into the nuts and bolts of implementation, Smith provides time estimates of how long aspects of each step might

Vicky Gilpin, EdD, is an instructor of English at Richland Community College and Cerro Gordo High School in Illinois. Dr. Gilpin has presented conference papers at the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association, the Illinois Association of Teachers of English, and "Walking the Walk of Diversity," Richland Community College, and she has recently been named one of Phi Delta Kappa International's Emerging Leaders, Class of 2009-2010.

take and hints on how to make the instructor's life easier from the start by anticipating the need to change textbooks or adjust objectives in future offerings of the course. In Chapter 1, "Design with Learning in Mind," Smith introduces the educator to altering course content for Web-based learning, emphasizing how to "see" the course from the students' perspectives while aiming instruction toward multiple learning styles. She emphasizes the importance of reframing the focus from what needs to be taught to what needs to be learned, providing research-based strategies for creating a learner-centered environment. One of the strengths of the book, as evidenced by this first chapter, is the inclusion of succinct lists aimed toward continuous instructor success. One example is a list of instructional design applications based on M. David Merrill's First Principles of Instruction (p. 7). Another strength of the book is that Smith elaborates these lists. For example, she presents and discusses five elements of the learner-centered online environment: self-selected, time, place, pace, and around-the-clock-access (pp. 13-14). *Conquering the Content* is not recommended as a single read-through before instructors move on to the next model or text; it is a thorough reference work for educators to consult throughout the initial design process as well as during course implementation.

Chapter 2, "Design with the Future in Mind," keeps an eye on flexibility and ease of alteration to the course in the future. One integral directive is "never to embed textbook page numbers or chapter references within course content, quizzes, assignments, discussions, feedback, or any other portion of the course. Textbook page numbers and chapter references should appear only on the learning guides" (p. 27). By putting textbook-specific information in the learning guides only, the instructor is preparing for an easy transition to different textbooks or later additions of supplementary material. Smith also outlines how to begin developing modules and learning guides early in the book in

order to prepare the instructor for the future creation of modules and guides. Like any effective facilitator, she uses both global and sequential methods to provide her reader with an awareness of future goals in order to limit surprises and encourage time management.

Authentic assessment methods are explored in Chapter 3, "Design with Assessment in Mind." Instructors must remember the importance of allowing students the freedom of assessments that provide the opportunity for students to make, and learn from, their mistakes. Smith compares and contrasts the limitations and advantages of various types of assessment within the online environment. One of the many useful strategies is for the potential online instructor to reflect on how to begin "teaching for the long term" (p. 38). Smith recommends that instructors analyze their course's goals, the skills necessary to achieve those goals, and whether or not the assessment is appropriate. Instructors must ask if the assessment provided actually measures what the instructor wants his or her students to know or be able to do.

Conquering the Content is a model of good organization whose basic strategies are laid out in Chapter 4, "Design with Organization in Mind." This chapter elaborates upon learning guides, the course development map, and prioritization in online learning. Smith reminds the educator to continue viewing the course from the student perspective by defining the elements of the learning guides in student-centered language. For example, she notes that Learning Goals or Outcomes are "What You Need to Know" while Learning Resources are "Tools to Help You Learn" and Learning Activities are "What You Need to Do." She further elaborates on how one should break down each assignment into necessary parts to ease the students into the online experience and create opportunities for success in the course. She warns against "gratuitous use of technology" and suggests strategies for instructors to reflect on how to use the online environment

to remove personally irritating aspects of face-to-face learning, such as constant requests for grade updates. The hands-on aspect of this chapter is designed to be comforting to the novice online instructor. Chapter 4 continues to stress the importance of taking the time to prepare before the course begins rather than continually scrambling to stay ahead of the students.

Throughout the book, the instructor is encouraged to think of one specific course to transition to the online environment; this approach, described in Chapter 5, emphasizes the need for the instructor to "Design with Content in Mind." Chunking course content and layering multiple styles of activities are the focal points of this chapter. Smith emphasizes that online course content must have the ability to: present short, directed learning segments, or "chunkability"; repeat and review content, or "repeatability"; stop and resume without having to start all over, or "pauseability"; and offer clear, direct instructions, or "understandability" (pp. 64-65). In order to assist in the creation of the most effective "chunking" methods, she presents brain-based learning research, strategies to maximize learning, and a format to create bridges between informational elements. The reader is encouraged to be realistic when planning an online course. Smith notes that cutting-and-pasting or scanning old lecture notes is not an effective method for approaching online instruction and preparation.

Chapter 6, "Design with Process in Mind," guides an effective transition from synchronous learning to an asynchronous online format. This chapter offers a variety of best practices to increase effectiveness and student learning opportunities. Smith reminds the educator of the importance of easy navigation from a student's point of view and provides strategies to assist with the perspective shift. One of the primary characteristics of successful online courses is consistency. Instructors must be consistent about when assignments are to be turned in, where they are to be turned in, what method to use in order to contact the instructor, and even with the

physical design connected to the navigational elements of the site. Each of the strategies given throughout the book is concise but relevant, allowing the instructor to recognize and appreciate those with which he or she is familiar and become introduced to those with which he or she is not. Again, the conciseness and relevance of the information within the chapters is demonstrative of the best practices modeled throughout the book.

In the final chapter, "Design with Navigation in Mind," Smith describes elements essential to maintaining the integrity of the online course and sketches paths for the future. The activities within this chapter encourage successful implementation of elements discussed throughout the book. They also serve as reminders for the instructor to look ahead to "continuous improvement" of the course. Smith provides approaches to use throughout the course in order to document possible future revisions. She does not minimize the role that students can play as stakeholders; she encourages instructors to see student comments as useful information to make the course more effective, and she emphasizes the importance of instructor reflection and journaling throughout the experience to provide a record of personal growth.

Each of the seven chapters contains a goldmine of information; although the book is a "quick read" when read from cover to cover, it offers little nuggets on which the reader can ruminate. Despite the wealth of practical advice in it, what makes *Conquering the Content* outstanding are the resources provided, both in internet links and in twenty-two pages of applicable forms for design practice and reflection. *Conquering the Content: A Step-by-Step Guide to Online Course Design* is a necessity for any instructors who anticipate even the slightest possibility of designing or teaching an online course in the future. Its real-world applications, conversational style, strategies for effective design and instruction, and rich resources are essential for those familiar as well as unfamiliar with the intricacies of online instruction. ▪▪

Teaching with Integrity

Jeffrey W. Cohen

The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life. 10th *Anniversary Edition.* By Parker J. Palmer. Jossey-Bass, 2007, 248 pp., $27.95 (HC), ISBN 978-0-7879-9686-4.

Let us begin with what Parker Palmer's book is not. It is not a how-to guide for teachers, nor is it a recipe book for those who wish to put together a repertoire of specific techniques for use in the classroom. Rather, *The Courage to Teach* is an invaluable book for anyone who is interested in exploring the intersection of their identities as teacher and as human being. With great humility, Parker Palmer draws upon decades of experience to discuss the importance of considering both the individual and the community in establishing a successful classroom experience. One of his fundamental points is that teaching can (and perhaps should) be seen as deeply personal. His exploration of the inner self and its relationship to teaching emphasizes the benefits of combining self-awareness with an awareness of the context within which one teaches, including an understanding of and true compassion for students.

According to Palmer, there is a very real and deep connection between our own identities and the world around us. Therefore, it is difficult to teach successfully in a manner that contradicts our personal identities. In effect, Palmer suggests that successful teachers use techniques in the classroom that fit with who they are. In support of his claim, he discusses the implications of disjunctions between the way we teach and our inner selves. Two case studies of individual teachers provide readers with eye-opening examples of how things can become difficult, if not altogether impossible, if we do not honor our own identities. By not working to connect our teaching with our inner selves, Palmer argues, we risk becoming detached from our work, confrontational with students, and altogether disjointed as individuals. This theme is carried over into a discussion of how faculty mentors may spark curiosity and provide models for teaching behaviors that both honor and conflict with their mentee's personal identities.

Something that will resonate with most educators is Palmer's contention that the great teachers many of us had in our lives provided us with the nourishment we needed to become engaged with them, with our discipline, and with a general thirst for knowledge. Importantly, mentors connect with us on a

Jeffrey W. Cohen is currently serving as Instructor of Criminal Justice at Worcester State College in Massachusetts. His areas of interest include Gender Studies, Integral Theory, Offender Re-entry/Reintegration, Research Methodology, and Pedagogy/ Androgogy.

deeply personal level, regardless of their specific teaching style. Many of us have had, and continue to have, mentors with whom we disagree a great deal in terms of approaches to teaching. Even these mentors, however, provide us with an opportunity to engage actively with our disciplines. This dynamic echoes Palmer's urging that we honor not only our inner selves, but the communities in which we live and work. This seeming paradox, of honoring self as well as community, is one of many discussed throughout this book.

Paradoxes are often new and frightening for many people. This is partly because we live in a world that is based on dichotomies. We are often afraid to venture into the gray areas of life. We feel safe and secure when we "know" right from wrong. Palmer suggests, however, that higher education should provide students and teachers with opportunities to dwell in paradox. To this end, he describes six paradoxes that he tries to explore in his own courses. His discussion offers important insights to all who wish to situate their students' learning in the context of curiosity, cognitive dissonance, and transformational experiences.

For example, Palmer's paradox of simultaneously honoring both the "little" and the "big" stories may help those who wish to provide students with an outlet to safely explore their own meanings or "truths" within the context of what is already known or thought to be objectively "true." Through an exploration of disciplinary content and its resonance for each individual (i.e., honoring the "big" and the "little" stories), students may become better prepared to incorporate new and important concepts into their studies and their lives. As Palmer later suggests, one way to explore these paradoxes is through the construction of a "subject-centered classroom."

Palmer's discussion of the subject-centered classroom introduces a thoughtful perspective on how to simultaneously honor ourselves, our students, and our subject. To summarize, in a subject-centered classroom,

students are given time to experience the subject matter personally and then to discuss their experiences with a community of peers who have also had time to experience the subject matter. This provides an opportunity for students to see how abstract disciplinary concepts can be applied to their own lives and the experiences of others. This, again, is an example of how Palmer promotes the weaving of the inner self with the learning community for both students and teachers.

The themes touched on in this review are only a few of the many important contributions to the literature on teaching found in this book. Palmer offers strong support for the idea that teachers should honor their own identities, take lessons from those around them, challenge their students to dwell in the less familiar and more frightening world of paradox, and strive to connect the student, teacher, and subject in an interlocking web of discovery and passion. He makes it clear that teachers should be comfortable with who they are, express that comfort to their students, and help their students become more comfortable with themselves, while remaining cognizant of their own propensity to fail in these noble pursuits. Perhaps most importantly, Palmer's book provides readers with an opportunity to assess their own vision of teaching and find ways to better align that vision with a genuine understanding of self and community, one that honors our individual strengths and forgives us our weaknesses. This is not the book for those who seek answers. If, however, it is the questions that excite you, I believe this book will feed your hunger and generate thoughtful introspection.

In this 10th Anniversary Edition, Palmer reflects on the process through which his original work was created. In this reflection, presented in a new Foreword, Palmer describes the genesis of *The Courage to Teach* and its development over the ten years leading to its original publication in 1998. In a new Afterword, Palmer presents a beautifully articulated vision for the future of education. This vision includes a call to action addressed

to educators who are willing to weave his prior emphasis on individual authenticity into a movement leading to more thoughtful, dramatic, and far-reaching institutional change. The 10th Anniversary Edition also includes a CD recording of Palmer's conversations with colleagues regarding his and their work towards a more integrated and self-aware educational system. ◼◼

About Us
Currents in Teaching and Learning is a peer-reviewed electronic journal that fosters exchanges among reflective teacher-scholars across the disciplines. Published twice a year, *Currents* seeks to improve teaching and learning in higher education with short reports on classroom practices as well as longer research, theoretical, or conceptual articles, and explorations of issues and challengesfacing teachers today. Non-specialist and jargon-free, *Currents* is tended for both faculty and graduate students in higher education, teaching in all academic disciplines.

Subscriptions
If you wish to be notified when each new issue of Currents becomes available online, and to receive our Calls for Submissions and other announcements, please visit http://listserv.worcester.edu/scripts/wa.exe?A0=CURRENTS_SUBSCRIBERS and click on Join CURRENTS_SUBSCRIBERS

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS
Volume 2, Number 1, Fall 2009

Currents invites submissions for its Fall 2009 issue, including:

Short reports from different disciplines on classroom practices (2850-5700 words).

Longer research, theoretical, or conceptual articles, and explorations of issues and challenges facing teachers today (5700-7125 words).

Announcements of work-in-progress and requests for collaborators.

Book and website reviews.

We welcome both individual and group submissions.

EXTENDED Submissions Deadline: June 1, 2009.
Submissions received after this date will be considered for future issues.

Submissions and Contact Information
Please address all submissions and inquiries to Josna Rege via e-mail: currents@worcester.edu
For further information and submissions guidelines see our website: www.worcester.edu/currents.

Please address all postal inquiries to
Josna Rege
Editor, *Currents in Teaching and Learning*
Department of Languages and Literature
Worcester State College
486 Chandler Street
Worcester, MA 01602-2597
U.S.A.