

ENG 476: Composition Theory

Fall 2016

Dr. Patrick Thomas

M/W: 3pm – 4:15pm

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oh: 12pm – 3pm (or by appt.), HM 263

Description: This course provides an introduction to the theories and issues informing contemporary notions of writing and writing instruction. To begin our investigation, we will place writing theory in a historical context, looking at the way it has been received throughout the history of rhetoric. Most of our discussion, however, will focus upon what contemporary research and scholarship (that is, work published in the last 50 years) have revealed about such areas as the composing processes, revision, the impact of technology, pedagogical approaches, and the reader/writer relationship. Finally, we will discuss the practical implications of these issues with particular attention to the ways various theories help to define, support, and suppress people's practice of written literacy.

Goals: There are four related and conceptually overlapping goals for this course. Students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of major theories of writing that inform the field of composition studies,
2. Articulate the affordances and constraints of those theories for our own conceptions of "writing",
3. Identify the relevance of major theories of writing for the practice of writing and writing instruction,
4. Examine theory in practice through guided observation and interrogation of these major theories.

Design and Approach: What is "writing"? This question functions as the center of our inquiry as we investigate the ways in which scholars have conceptualized, researched, and made claims about the nature and function of written literacy. As a way to address this question, we will read widely on the theories that comprise the field of composition studies, which is by its very nature an interdisciplinary field (borrowing from and speaking to disciplines as diverse as anthropology, psychology, history, biology, art, education, and computer science). Therefore, you will do a lot of reading. Much of our time in class we will be spent dissecting and interpreting the readings, so it is imperative that you do ALL the reading ALL the time. When you come to class, expect to speak first about your understanding of the reading and your interpretation of it. Many times I will provide you with guiding questions to inform your reading and discussion, but I expect you to come with insights of your own and I expect that you will want to share your insights with us.

The design of this course is informed by two related (although sometimes competing) motives: (1) to understand at a theoretical level about the nature and function of writing, and (2) to explore the ways theories of writing inform our teaching of it. Indeed, much of the research and scholarship we will read is situated in studies of classroom teaching; of course, the classroom is only one place in which writing is practiced. And so, as much as possible, the design of this course is aimed at meeting the demands of both motives. In other words, when we talk about theories of writing, I certainly want us to think about the implications of these theories for classroom practices. I *also* want us to think about the implications of these theories for other kinds of practices besides teaching – for example, writing in professions, communities and civic arenas, in digital environments, and the myriad other places where people write (this being a descriptive rather than exhaustive list). And this is why your contributions to the class will be so valuable, as you will be asked to do the work of applying theoretical work to the site of your choosing. This application will be especially important in the design and execution of your final observational project, in which you examine a writing practice and discuss how various theories of the course help to explain what you see.

Assignments:

1. Weekly Discussion: 1 initial discussion thread (at least 350 words) + 2 responses (at least 200 words each) to our course email listserv.

2. Discussion Leads: 1-2 class introductions to the day's readings (approx. 10-15 minutes each, *with handout*).
3. Concept Papers: 2 papers (4-5 pages) examining a concept across a set of course readings.
4. Working Group InfoGraphic: collaborative graphic representation integrating the theories of writing.
5. Composition Project: a final observational study applying the theory of your choice to examine the writing practices of a group/individual/place of your choosing.

Grading:

The Weekly Discussion & Discussion Leads comprise about 10% of your final grade.

The Working Group InfoGraphic will comprise about 20% of your final grade; feedback will be provided throughout.

The Concept Papers will be graded separately, and together comprise about 30% of your final grade.

The Composition Project will make up about 40% of your grade.

Course Schedule:

*note: This schedule is tentative and subject to change.

Date	Readings/In-Class Work	What's Due
8/21	Course Introductions	Begin Course Readings Search
8/26	History of Writing & Rhetorical Foundations Plato <i>Phaedrus</i> , Ong "Writing is a Technology"	
8/28	History of Writing & Rhetorical Foundations Coulmas, Schmandt-Besserat	
9/2	No Class – Labor Day	All Course Readings Posted to DropBox
9/4	Historical Foundations of Composition Studies Nystrand, "Where Did Composition Studies Come From?" Lauer, "Composition Studies: A Dappled Discipline"	DL: _____
9/9	Discourse & Rhetoric in Writing Kinneavy, "The Basic Aims of Discourse" Moffet, from <i>Teaching the Universe of Discourse</i> Porter, "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community"	DL: _____
9/11	Discourse & Rhetoric in Writing Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation" Ong, "The Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction" Ede & Lunsford, "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked"	DL: _____
9/16	The Writing Process Mills, "Writing as Process" Rohrman, "Pre-Writing" Emig, "Writing as a Mode of Learning" Murray, "Teaching Writing As Process Not Product"	DL: _____
9/18	The Writing Process Emig, "The Composing Process" Perl, "The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers" Sommers, "Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Adult Writers"	DL: _____
9/23	Expressivism	

	Elbow, from <i>Writing Without Teachers</i> Elbow, "A Method for Teaching Writing" Murray, "Finding Your Own Voice"	DL: _____
9/25	No Class	
9/30	Cognitivism Flower & Hayes, "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing" Hayes, "A New Framework for Understanding Cognition and Affect in Writing" Introduce the Working Group InfoGraphic	Concept Paper 1 Due DL: _____
10/2	Sociocognitivism Carter, "The Idea of Expertise" Berkenkotter, "Social Context and Socially Constructed Texts"	DL: _____
10/7	Sociocognitivism Geisler, "Toward a Sociocognitive Model of Literacy"	DL: _____
10/9	Technological Cognitivism Haas, "Does the Medium Make a Difference?" Haas, "Composing in Technological Contexts"	DL: _____
10/14	In Class InfoGraphic Work Day	Bring supplies for the InfoGraphic
10/16	Argumentation Toulmin, from <i>The Uses of Argument</i>	DL: _____
10/21	Argumentation Toulmin, continued Fahnestock & Secor, "Classical Rhetoric: The Art of Argumentation"	DL: _____
10/23	Ideology in Composition Introduce the CP Royster, "When the First Voice You Hear is Not Your Own" Holmes, "Fighting Back by Writing Black"	DL: _____
10/28	Ideology in Composition Ashley, "Playing the Game" Flynn, "Composing as a Woman"	DL: _____
10/30	Consequences of Composition Theory/ies Gee, "Literacy, Discourse, & Linguistics" Delpit, "The Politics of Teaching Literate Discourse"	DL: _____
11/4	Literacy Studies in Composition Scribner, "Literacy in Three Metaphors" Brandt, "Sponsors of Literacy"	DL: _____
11/6	Work Day for Collaborative InfoGraphic	2-page Project Proposal Due
11/11	Literacy Studies in Composition Heath, "Protean Shapes & Literacy Events" Heath, "What No Bedtime Story Means" Fishman, "Literacy and Cultural Context"	DL: _____
11/13	Literacy Studies in Composition Vieira, "Undocumented in a Documentary Society" Berry, from <i>Transnational Literate Lives</i>	Concept Paper 2 Due DL: _____
11/18	Literacy Studies in Composition	

	Selfe, "Technology and Literacy" Kress, "Gains and Losses"	DL: _____
11/20	Research Day for the CP	Individual meetings with PT (scheduled)
11/25	Drafting Day for the CP	Bring data for the CP to class
11/27	No Class – Thanksgiving Break	
12/2	InfoGraphic Presentations	Final InfoGraphic Due (w/ reflection)
12/4	Project Peer Review + Course Evaluations	Rough Draft of CP
TBD	Final Exam: Final Project Colloquium	CP Due

Course Bibliography:

Your first assignment is a practice in information literacy. As a group, you are responsible with constructing our course packet. Decide amongst the group who will locate which readings, all of which are available in our library holdings or through databases (like JSTOR or the OhioLink Electronic Journal Center). Each class member should choose 4 of these readings, download or scan them, and upload them using the format, "Author's Lastname_Title of Reading" to our shared Dropbox folder (www.dropbox.com).

While you're searching, pay careful attention to the places where you find these readings. If, for example, you find yourself in the library stacks on the 4th floor of Roesch, note what other books are around the titles you're searching for, what else you see while you search. If you're looking through a journal in a database, check the issue of the journal to see what else was published alongside the article you're searching. And, of course, be prepared to report back to us about your journey through these resources.

Please upload all of your chosen readings in PDF before Labor Day. Choose 4 of the following:

Ashley, H. (2001). Playing the game: Proficient working-class student writers' second voices. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 35(4), 493-524.

Berkenkotter, C., Huckin, T., & Ackerman, J. (1991). Social context and socially constructed texts: The initiation of a graduate student into a writing research community. In C. Bazerman & J. Paradis (Eds.), *Textual dynamics of the professions*, pp. 191-215. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Berry, P., Hawisher, G., & Selfe, C. (2012). *Transnational literate lives in digital times*. Logan, UT: Utah State University Press/Computers and Composition Digital Press. Retrieved from <http://ccdigitalpress.org/transnational/>

Bitzer, L. (1968). The rhetorical situation. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 1, 1-14.

Brandt, D. (1998). Sponsors of literacy. *College Composition and Communication*, 49(2), 165-185.

Carter, M. (1990). The idea of expertise: An exploration of cognitive and social dimensions of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 41(3), 265-286.

Coulmas, F. (1989). What writing is all about. In *The writing systems of the world*, pp. 3-16. New York: Basil Blackwell.

Delpit, L. (2001). The politics of teaching literate discourse. In E. Cushman, E. Kingten, B. Kroll, & M. Rose (Eds.), *Literacy: A critical sourcebook*, pp. 545-554. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Ede, L., & Lunsford, A.A. (1984). Audience addressed/audience invoked: The role of audience in composition theory and pedagogy. *College Composition and Communication*, 35, 155-171.

Elbow, P. (1968). A method for teaching writing. *College English*, 30(2), 115-125.

Elbow, P. (1973). The process of writing: Growing. In *Writing without teachers*, pp. 12-37. New York: Oxford

University Press.

- Emig, J. (1971). The composing process: mode of learning. In *The composing processes of twelfth graders*, pp. 33-44. Urbana, IL: NCTE.
- Emig, J. (1977). Writing as a mode of learning. *College Composition and Communication*, 28(2), 122-128.
- Fahnestock, J., & Secor, M. (1996). Classical rhetoric: The art of argumentation. In B. Emmel, P. Resch, & D. Tenney (Eds.), *Argument revisited: Argument redefined: Negotiating meaning in the composition classroom*, pp. 87-126. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Flower, L., & Hayes, J. (1981). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32, 365-387.
- Flynn, E. (1988). Composing as a woman. *College Composition and Communication*, 39(4), 423-435.
- Gee, J.P. (2001). Literacy, discourse, and linguistics: Introduction and what is literacy? In E. Cushman, E. Kingten, B. Kroll, & M. Rose (Eds.), *Literacy: A critical sourcebook*, pp. 525-544. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Geisler, C. (1991). Toward a sociocognitive model of literacy: Constructing mental models in a philosophical conversation. In C. Bazerman & J. Paradis (Eds.), *Textual dynamics of the professions*, pp. 171-190. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Haas, C. (1989). Does the medium make a difference? Two studies of writing with pen and paper and with computers. *Human-Computer Interaction*, 4, 145-159.
- Haas, C. (1990). Composing in technological contexts: A study of note-making. *Written Communication*, 7(4), 512-547.
- Hayes, J. (1996). A new framework for understanding cognition and affect in writing. In C. M. Levy & S. Ransdell (Eds.) *The science of writing*, pp. 1-27. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Heath, S.B. (1982). Protean shapes in literacy events: Ever-shifting oral and literate traditions. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Spoken and written language: Exploring orality and literacy*, pp. 97-117. Norcross, NJ: Ablex.
- Heath, S.B. (1982). What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and school. *Language in Society*, 11, 49-76.
- Holmes, D.G. (1999). Fighting back by writing black. In K. Gilyard (Ed.), *Race, rhetoric, and composition*, pp. 53-66. Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook & Heinemann.
- Kinneavy, J. (1969). The basic aims of discourse. *College Composition and Communication*, 20, 297-304.
- Kress, G. (2005). Gains and losses: New forms of text, knowledge, and learning. *Computers and Composition*, 22, 5-22.
- Lauer, J.M. (1984). Composition studies: A dappled discipline. *Rhetoric Review*, 3(1), 20-29.
- Mills, B. (1953). Writing as process. *College English*, 15(1), 19-26.
- Moffett, J. (1968). Kinds and orders of discourse. In *Teaching the universe of discourse* (chapter 2). Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook.

- Moffett, J. (1968). Learning to write by writing. In *Teaching the universe of discourse* (chapter 6).
Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook.
- Murray, D. (1969). Finding your own voice. *College Composition and Communication*, 20, 118-123.
- Murray, D. (1972). Teach Writing as Process Not Product. *The Leaflet*, 11-14.
- Nystrand, M., Greene, S., & Wiemelt, J. (1993). Where did composition studies come from? An intellectual history. *Written Communication*, 10(3), 267-333.
- Ong, W. (1975). The writer's audience is always a fiction. *PMLA*, 90, 9-21.
- Ong, W. (1985). Writing is a technology that restructures thought. In Gerd Bauman (Ed.) *The written word: Literacy in transition*, pp. 23-50. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Perl, S. (1979). The composing processes of unskilled college writers. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 13(4), 317-336.
- Plato. (1973). *Phaedrus* (trans. Walter Hamilton). New York: Penguin.
- Porter, J. (1986). Intertextuality and the discourse community. *Rhetoric Review*, 5, 34-47.
- Rohman, G. (1965). Pre-writing: The stage of discovery in the writing process. *College Composition and Communication*, 16, 106-112.
- Royster, J. (1996). When the first voice you hear is not your own. *College Composition and Communication*, 47(1), 29-40.
- Schmandt-Besserat, D. (1986). The origins of writing: An archaeologist's perspective. *Written Communication*, 3(1), 31-45.
- Scribner, S. (1984). Literacy in three metaphors. *American Journal of Education*, 93(1), 6-21.
- Selfe, C. (1999). Technology and literacy: A story about the perils of not paying attention. *College Composition and Communication*, 50(3), 411-436.
- Sommers, N. (1980). Revision strategies of student writers and experienced adult writers. *College Composition and Communication*, 31(4), 378-388.
- Toulmin, S. (1969). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (pp. 94-118 ONLY)
- Vieira, K. (2011). Undocumented in a documentary society: Textual borders and transnational religious literacies. *Written Communication*, 28(4), 436-461.