

# Feminist Pedagogies

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When I was a junior in college, my writing teacher's pedagogy included collaborative projects, writing journals, cultural critiques, and lots of in-class drafting sessions. The reading material focused on marginalized subjects: sexual abuse, women's poverty and illness, and lesbian identity. Later, in graduate school, another teacher valued collaboration in and outside the classroom, often creating opportunities for students to join her in reading groups and writing projects. She contextualized rhetorical theory within feminist scholarship; she presented herself as both an active scholar and a caring mentor for female students. Another set very high expectations because she felt women students needed to toughen up to survive patriarchal academic culture. She unschooled our deferential curtsies and gender-appropriate hedging, and she delivered devastating feedback on our papers, notably short on sugarcoating.

All were feminist teachers. Their combined approaches valued

- the personal and political
- theoretical, political, intellectual, and emotional understandings of intersectional identities
- systemic analyses of inequality aimed at uncovering the production of knowledge, meaning, power, and belief in particular contexts
- writing as a tool for self-revelation, critique, and transformation
- distributed agency through collaborative practices and alternative classroom arrangements
- content focused on women's experiences and contributions to knowledge-making
- teaching and mentoring as forms of professional activism

Feminist pedagogies, regardless of differences, share a common goal of actualizing social justice through teaching and learning methods. And while "social justice" has, within first- and second-wave feminism, largely concerned itself with gender, sexuality, class, and race, contemporary feminisms, including third- and

fourth-wave manifestations, increasingly address a much wider spectrum and entangled set of interests. These interests emerge from the material, political, corporeal, and emotional effects of living in a globalized economy characterized by a spectacular disparity between wealthy and impoverished people, corporate interests and workers.

Feminist pedagogies in Composition Studies emerge from this wider context and orbit around the idea that pedagogy has the potential, even the responsibility, to interrogate and transform social relations (see Jarratt, "Feminist Pedagogy," for a fuller account). Feminist pedagogies connect local, personal experiences to larger contexts of world-making, harkening back to the familiar second-wave feminist maxim, "The personal is political." Within Writing Studies, activist pedagogical functions are linked to writing and literacy practices broadly conceived, making clear that there is no bracketing the world or politics from the classroom.

The evolution of feminist pedagogies that I sketch herein begins with efforts to develop feminist teaching methods, followed by critical reassessments of those efforts alongside new directions for research and teaching. Feminist pedagogy is a hopeful practice that envisions learning spaces as sites where more just social relations can begin to take root. Increasingly, as will be evident in what follows, feminist pedagogy is not a discrete set of practices but, much like feminism generally, a flexible basis from which to launch intersectional pedagogical projects—projects focused on a dialectic of multiple identity categories rather than, for instance, on gender or sex alone. Feminism's distribution and infusion across areas of study and across pedagogical models (i.e., expressivist, collaborative, and critical pedagogies) make for a rewardingly difficult bibliographic task.

## GENDER DIFFERENCES AND EXPERIENCE

In the nineteenth century, first-wave feminists coalesced around women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery. Second wavers, politicized in the United States by antiwar and civil rights movements of the 1960s, struggled for women's economic, political, educational, and sexual liberties. Fractures within feminism itself led to the proliferation of activism and scholarship by feminists of color as well as lesbian feminists, often excluded from mainstream feminist movement. More recently, third-wave feminism (1988–2010) rejects prescriptive feminist ideology, posits an individualist agenda, and, like sex-positive movements, views sexual freedom as fundamental to women's freedom. Fourth-wave feminism (2010–present) is associated with the strategic use of new media to wage politically motivated campaigns for human rights (Baumgardner). We can see traces of these popular, rather than academic, movements in research described in this chapter, but on the whole I refer to post-second-wave feminisms through the less definitive "contemporary feminisms," seeking to avoid an overly taxonomic plotting. Whatever terms we use, it's clear that since the 1960s feminists have continued to expand struggles for equality as well as objects of analysis and critique; while second-wave feminism began with a focus on gender equity in a variety of contexts (family, workplace, education, religion), feminism has grown to address race, class, age, disability,

queer, linguistic, immigrant, global, and other categories of identification that include and exceed women's issues.

Early feminist pedagogical models in the 1970s focused largely on women students, addressing, for instance, the consequences of gendered differences in various contexts and the effects of glaring inequities within higher education. This focus reflected the influx of female students at U.S. universities that ushered in widespread political and ideological changes in the culture. The ripple effects of this wider movement did not reach Composition Studies until the mid-1980s, trailing feminism's migration to the academy by at least fifteen years. Influenced especially by the feminist movement, feminist literary studies, and developmental psychology, work published during this early phase tended to focus on experience as a legitimate form of knowledge, inherent gender differences and effects on writing, and alternative classroom assignments aimed at encouraging women students to write from positions of power.

Feminists continually return to experience as fraught but powerful territory for female students. In the 1970s Florence Howe expressed concern about female students' "passivity and dependency" (864), and Joan Bolker developed assignments to combat the "good girl" complex. She recommended experimental assignments—"fictional letters to enemies" and "free writing, involving poetry, or playing with words, or even, God help us, with obscenities"—and essays that begin with the personal, "even the selfish" (908; see Pigott for the opposite argument). Pamela Annas, writing in 1985, advocates a pedagogy that values personal experience to "ground [students'] writing in their lives rather than to surmount their lives before they write" (362). To achieve this, Annas assigns process papers in which students examine the material conditions of their own writing (influenced, most notably, by their reading of Virginia Woolf), position papers that ask women to risk a public stance, and an argument essay in which students blend their personal experience with source material. Her goal is to help students discover their own voices while paying attention to the ways in which women's voices have been historically muted by inequitable cultural conditions (see Gannett).

Validating women's experiences is central to Elizabeth Flynn's "Composing as a Woman." Flynn's essay suggests a possible way forward for feminist researchers of pedagogy, helping to encourage a view of pedagogy as practice and object of scholarly inquiry. An examination of four student narrative essays through a gendered lens, Flynn's study suggests that the women's narratives emphasize relational connections and identifications, and the men's accentuate individual achievement. Like others during this early wave of feminist composition, Flynn adopts feminist theories of psychological and social development by Gilligan, Chodorow, and Belenky et al. Based on the gendered patterns she finds in student writing, Flynn advocates for empowering women students "to write from the power of [their] experience" (434). Later research included both efforts to identify gender difference at the level of writing and challenges to the essentialism inherent in this approach (e.g., Brody; Graves; Lamb; Looser; Ratcliffe "Re-Considering"; Ritchie; Zawacki).

Contributors to *Gender Issues in the Teaching of English* (McCracken and Appleby) call for "gender sensitive" teaching keyed to gender differences, awareness of

how listening and interruption are gendered, attention to the gendered nature of reading and responding to literature, consideration of prefab essay forms that forestall women's voices, the importance of adding gender to curricula, and more. Likewise, Karyn Hollis supports "woman-friendly" classrooms in which teachers call on women students more often and "use non-competitive and student-centered activities" like sequencing small- and large-group discussions to help female students move from "private discourse to public pronouncements" (341; see Peterson). Donnalee Rubin's *Gender Influences* features an empirical study, influenced by reader-response theory, of how gender differences shape teachers' responses to student writing. Rubin finds that nondirective conference and process-based pedagogies are the best means for overcoming and suppressing gender bias (96).

Since at least the publication of Flynn's essay, feminists have sought to create a more complex understanding of experience that recognizes the role of narrative, context, and myriad other factors toward producing "experience." Illustrating this point, Min-Zhan Lu develops sequenced, reiterative assignments that offer different ways of seeing and analyzing experience over time (239). Likewise, Candace Spigelman argues for personal academic writing that treats experience as a construct rather than as evidence of an authentic self, clarifying that experience remains valuable to feminist teaching but should be approached critically.

Later feminist work also raised questions about the feminist teacher as facilitator of a cooperative, student-centered learning environment (see Eichhorn et al.). Eileen Schell ("Costs"), for example, argues that this ethic of care obscures a central problem in the field: the preponderance of women in "contingent (part-time and non-tenure-track) writing instructorships" (75). Indeed, images of non-authoritative female teachers have informed characterizations of composition's feminized labor force. Among the vivid descriptors dramatizing the subordinate positions women have occupied throughout composition's history are gypsies, wives, whores, handmaids, daughters, mothers, and "sad women in the basement" (i.e., Miller; Reichert; Schell, *Gypsy*; Tuell).

## DIVERSE DISCOURSES AND PRACTICES

As poststructuralist and postmodernist notions of agency, selfhood, subjectivity, and power have interacted with feminist theory, pedagogical models began to reflect these ideas. One result was a turn to experimental writing and the value of diverse discourses, a natural outgrowth of the emphasis on discursive play and experimentation characteristic especially of French poststructuralist writing, influencing much feminist work in the 1980s and 1990s (i.e., Irigaray; Marks and de Courtivron). In addressing the flexibility of language to render alternative realities and values, feminist pedagogues aimed their sights at a staple of composition classes: the argument essay and its tendency to be taught as a thesis-driven pursuit to legitimize a single viewpoint.

Adopting different modes of argumentation, Catherine Lamb describes a multi-step pedagogy for mediation and negotiation. The mediation assignment sequence asks students to discuss in small groups problems they want to write

about, then to write individually, and finally to take on roles of disputants and mediators in response to one another's written work. The feminist outcomes of this and the negotiation assignment include an awareness of knowledge "as cooperatively and collaboratively constructed" (21), though not without contestation. Sheree Meyer challenges the "confidence game" based on "an illusion of mastery" central to academic discourse (52; see Tompkins). She advocates an alternative model in which students sustain complex positions that permit gaps and confusions rather than propagating writing as "acts of aggression" aimed at annihilating other views and encouraging what she calls the "Imposter Phenomenon" (48, 50). Meyer, borrowing from Ann Berthoff's dialectical notebook, develops an assignment she calls Double Trouble. Students fold a piece of paper in half; on one side, they write one or two sentences culled from a class reading followed by an explanation of what they think is being said, and on the other, they begin with "But something bothers me . . ." and are encouraged to show hesitations, to question claims on the other side, to think about contradictions, and so forth (60). This model resonates with Nedra Reynolds's reclamation of interruption as a feminist writing strategy counter to agonistic forms of academic discourse.

In another effort to circumvent the constraints of academic prose, Terry Myers Zawacki envisions writing as a "means of creating a self," emphasizing the constructive, rather than exclusively reflective or expressive, quality of writing (37). Lillian Bridwell-Bowles finds traditional academic forms inflexible, and so adopts what she calls "alternative," "feminist," or "diverse" discourse options in her writing classes (350). Her essay includes samples in which student writers try out a personal voice, express anxiety about writing that does not strive for objectivity, reveal estrangement from dominant texts, and write from an interrogatory rather than argumentative stance.

More recently, Julie Jung has developed a model of feminist revision "as a process of delayed connection" (*Revisionary* 13). She offers an alternative to well-circulated theories of revision that aim for "clarity and connection," arguing that this approach fails to account for real differences and the "inevitable disconnections that permeate [readers' and writers'] experiences with texts" (11). Rhetorical listening, discussed in this chapter's "Emotion" section, is central to Jung's model, and multigenre texts—"experimental scholarly essays that are marked by the conscious juxtaposition of the academic essay with other genres" (33)—provide spaces where writers can practice rhetorical listening and delayed revision (for more on feminist experimental writing, see Micciche, "Writing"). Spotting the value of alternative feminist genres, Jacqueline Rhodes resuscitates the manifesto, offering a passionate history of its use by second-wave radical feminists and contemporary feminists writing online. The manifesto, a form of radical feminist textuality, creates opportunities for "composition studies to retheorize student writers as active producers of the strategic discourses of resistance" (3).

Technologically mediated genres also create productive opportunities for feminist teachers. Sibylle Gruber's study of Alba, a Latina student from inner-city Chicago enrolled in a basic writing course with an online component, provides a localized view of how one student's written work in electronic forums intersects

with her identity as a nontraditional student. Alba uses the electronic forum to reveal "her 'otherness'" and to "define her position as a nontraditional student" (117). Laura Sullivan describes a class in which she asked students to produce "feminist activist autobiographical hypertexts" designed to create alternative narratives about female subjectivity. In creating these texts, students use hypertext strategies of collage, montage, reappropriation, and recasting of images available in the mass media for subversive purposes. Also highlighting the unique affordances of hypertext, Donna LeCourt and Luann Barnes argue that multivocal hypertexts present students with opportunities to disrupt "textual elements—reader considerations, genre assumptions, and the ideology of a unified 'I'—that feminists indict as the primary mechanisms by which . . . gendered ideology is produced" (59). While such texts are no guarantee that students will discover multiple subject positions unavailable through more traditional forms, their potentiality, particularly in light of long-standing feminist goals to create spaces for marginalized voices and resist the constraints of academic discourse, is cause for cautious optimism.

Feminists have also intervened in classroom arrangements and writing practices, particularly by investigating the value of collaboration. A rich body of rhetorical scholarship (Gere; Logan, *We Are Coming*; Lunsford and Ede, "Collaborative," *Writing Together*; Royster), has convincingly unearthed and argued for the value of collaborative writing and links to feminist practices: sharing linguistic ownership and questioning the idea that anyone can "own" language; distributing agency and authorship, and thereby casting doubt on writing models that enshrine the individual; and connecting writing practices to activism. In feminist pedagogical models, collaboration has been valued for the emphasis it places on interactive learning, writing, and meaning-making as social acts, and self-other relations (Lunsford and Ede, "Collaborative").

Collaboration has also been the basis for critical assessment, however. Evelyn Ashton-Jones, for instance, questions collaborative pedagogies that purport to eliminate hierarchy and create more equitable classroom relations. The politics of gender is alive and well in groups; thus, to forward collaborative pedagogies as inherently feminist is to "perpetuate and collude in the silence that helps to conceal the reproduction of gender ideology" (17; see Stygall). Research on collaboration has recently expanded to account for human and nonhuman interactions—environmental factors, technology, animals, etc.—affecting scenes of composing (i.e., Cooper; *Special Issue*), a topic that will likely get more attention in the coming years.

### CONFLICT AND DIFFERENCE

Increasingly, teacher-scholars in Composition Studies have not only applied feminist principles to pedagogical practices but also to critical stances that affect every aspect of learning environments. Feminist pedagogy, in other words, is more than a set of practices; it is an orientation to learning and knowing charged by social justice commitments. This section describes embracing conflict as a reoccurring orientation for feminist compositionists.

Susan Jarratt's "Feminism and Composition: The Case for Conflict" is an excellent example of the disruptive power of pedagogy. She responds to feminist rejections of argument and renunciations of teacher-authority influenced by student-centered pedagogies, especially expressivism. Drawing from critical pedagogy and Sophistic rhetoric, Jarratt argues that teachers should engage in conflict in order to "negotiate the oppressive discourses of racism, sexism, and classism surfacing in the composition classroom" (106). Dale Bauer, too, supports confrontation and discomfort as central to feminist classrooms: "Political commitment—especially feminist commitment—is a legitimate classroom strategy and rhetorical imperative" (389). Bauer insists on both teacher authority and student agency in her dialogic model of teaching, implicitly identifying limitations of student-centered classrooms that require renunciation of teacher authority. In the same vein, Andrea Greenbaum urges female teachers to practice "bitch pedagogy," an assertive, confident, argumentative stance aimed at modeling how female students can occupy positions of power.

For bell hooks, conflict in the feminist classroom should be viewed "as a catalyst for new thinking, for growth" (113); hooks's pedagogy is informed by the knowledge that, in predominantly white institutions, "the majority of students who enter our classrooms have never been taught by black women professors. . . . I know from experience that this unfamiliarity can overdetermine what takes place in the classroom" (86; see Logan, "When"; Middleton). Cheryl Johnson, an African-American literary critic, comes to a similar conclusion in her study of how students read her body to deauthorize her status in the classroom. She argues that student responses to texts are troubled by their readings of teachers' racial/gendered bodies, in turn inflected by dominant sociopolitical beliefs. In her view, teachers "have no other choice but to allow space in the classroom for such encounters with our students and to confront, finally, the persistent distortions, lies, and mythologies surrounding race, gender, and other kinds of difference" (418).

Indeed, students will always embody homegrown knowledge and experience; thus, feminist teachers must confront rather than overcome this reality. Donna Qualley does so through sustained collaborative research and writing projects based on María Lugones's concept of "world"-traveling, which describes the divided positions that immigrants and outsiders experience as they shift between spaces of foreignness and familiarity. Through ongoing collaborative work, Qualley hopes students will find that "travelling to someone's 'world' is a way of identifying with them . . . we can understand *what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes*" (Lugones, qtd. in Qualley 39; emphasis in original).

Achieving this kind of double vision is slow work because what's required is revised thinking that evolves through talk, reflection, and writing. Emphasizing the rewards of working slowly, Gwendolyn Pough describes how she responds to student resistance produced by her use of black feminist pedagogy and womanist rhetoric coupled with her identity as an African-American woman. While teaching Alice Walker's poem, "Each One, Pull One: Thinking of Lorraine Hansberry," and working with her students' resulting silences, Pough poses questions that interrogate the students' readings of the poem as offensive. When that fails, she turns

to textual analysis, and then continually returns to their resistances through a series of assignments, readings, and class discussions, demonstrating that confrontations with difference are never easy, one-shot deals.

Shifting focus from classrooms to the wider academic system that circumscribes them, Wendy Hesford ("Ye") encourages students to engage in institutional critique through what she calls "a pedagogy of witnessing" aimed at "develop[ing] students' abilities to interrogate those neutral legal principles and conceptualizations of the academy that are based on the imperatives of the white, Anglo, male world" (151). Feminist treatments of technology have similarly questioned neutral and/or egalitarian representations of online spaces. Since the mid-1990s, feminists have been careful to point out that values, political realities, ideologies, social customs and beliefs, and other cultural organizing structures travel into spaces that humans create; thus, there is no purely democratic, utopian space available to us in face-to-face or virtual realities (see Blair and Takayoshi). Indeed, feminist studies of online pedagogies are keenly sensitive to this issue. Donna LeCourt's study of student participation in an online discussion board, for instance, focuses on whether the scene of writing can provide her "female students with any alternatives to culturally available subject positions" ("Writing" 156). And Christine Boese concludes that when electronic forums "illustrat[e] the subtle effects of sexist, racist, and homophobic language," as they will most assuredly do, the formerly "underground" discriminatory beliefs will "serve as proof to counter those who claim that the war is over, that the battle already has been won" (221-22).

Feminist engagements with conflict represent decisive moves to insert dominant ideologies and tools into the arena of critique (see also Hesford, "Documenting"). Critique, however, runs both ways. Feminist awareness of self-critique and its value to the continuation of any social justice project is unmistakably clear, as is self-consciousness about the dangers of occupying positions of mastery (see Desmet; LaDuc; Luke and Gore). Given feminism's critique of patriarchy, heterosexism, whiteness, capitalism, and other systemic forms of oppression, it's no wonder feminists cyclically reexamine their own motives so as to combat self-righteous tendencies to view themselves as already transformed, and others in need of transformation (see Gil-Gomez).

## EMOTION

As the preceding section indicates, the political and social turn that began in the 1980s in Composition Studies called attention to cultural difference specifically, and the politics of literacy generally, as significant elements in teaching and learning. It also made possible an interventionist view of pedagogy as that which produces critical examinations of culture extending far beyond the confines of a classroom, writing assignment, or university setting. In this context, and influenced by interdisciplinary feminist research, compositionists began in the late 1990s to address emotion in teaching environments. They did so not by employing feminized emotions to signal irrationality, an association that has stuck for centuries, but by locating emotion in the realm of the social and political.



Describing emotion as “our primary education,” Lynn Worsham argues that “our most urgent political and pedagogical task remains the fundamental reeducation of emotion” (216). Understood this way, emotion is bound up with judgment, belief, ideology, and social life broadly conceived; it is the grounds of self–other relations and an inescapable element of all cultural institutions. Inculcating ways of feeling, then, is tightly woven into the fabric of all literacies. This embeddedness has become important to feminist pedagogues who seek to transform pedagogy into a site for questioning links between power/control and emotion/embodiment. “Emotions are not simply located in an individual or a personality,” writes Megan Boler, “but in a subject who is shaped by dominant discourses and ideologies and who also resists those ideologies through emotional knowledge and critical inquiry” (20).

Michelle Payne’s *Bodily Discourses* puts these ideas into practice through an examination of unsolicited student writing about sexual abuse and eating disorders. She argues that personal writing will emerge whether we ask for it or not, so teachers need thoughtful response strategies. “Students writing about sexual abuse,” she notes, “are often constructed as both vulnerable and in need of protection (especially from professors) and yet threatening to the ideological purposes a writing class should support” (11). As she notes, social construction has tended to exclude emotions, reproducing beliefs that emotions emanate from within individuals and are privately experienced. In contrast, Payne asks, “Why shouldn’t a student bring her battered body into her written text and learn how her experience is socially constructed, historically situated, and woven through with cultural values and power relations?” (30). She goes on to suggest that students can write critically about their experiences by examining them alongside historical narratives of abuse or eating disorders, thereby locating experience “within a historical, cultural, and ideological context” that wards against pathologizing (58).

Both Boler and Payne address the importance of listening, a guiding ethos for many feminist pedagogies, particularly when investigating power differentials. Listening has received sustained treatment by Krista Ratcliffe (*Rhetorical Listening*; see also Glenn and Ratcliffe; Ronald and Roskelly). She defines rhetorical listening as “a code of cross-cultural conduct” guided by a “stance of openness” (1; see Wallace and Ewald on mutuality, close cognate to rhetorical listening). She is particularly interested in employing rhetorical listening to “hear some of our troubled identifications with gender and whiteness” and to resist narratives of blame and guilt these issues tend to generate among white students and teachers (16). To that end, Ratcliffe asks students to write a nonfiction essay on whiteness as it functions in the culture and in their own lives, an assignment designed to resist dominant efforts to make whiteness invisible and to ground writing in pedagogical listening, which requires students to “recognize resistance, analyze it, and when necessary, resist it” (133; see also Hinshaw).

This approach dovetails with Amy Winans’ study of whiteness as learned affect (“Local Pedagogies”). At her predominantly white university in rural Pennsylvania, Winans practices a stance of openness both by acknowledging the embodied experiences that have shaped her students’ views and misperceptions of racial

differences and by teaching students to “question their own narratives, the standpoints from which they craft those narratives, and the consequences of those narratives” (258). Writing and self-analysis are the primary tools Winans uses to move students toward examining the “strong, often unstated emotions” bound up with race (263). As such, she foregrounds ideologies of whiteness and the emotions that both sustain and threaten to unhinge associated belief systems.

Winans’ pedagogical approach is consistent with the view that emotions are relational and social rather than exclusively interiorized and private. Julie Lindquist begins “Class Affects, Classroom Affectations” from this premise. She focuses on the emotional dissonance that working-class students frequently experience in college classrooms, and the tendency of theorists to treat class as a largely rational experience. Drawing on Ratcliffe’s theory of rhetorical listening, Lindquist writes that teachers can listen to students for help in figuring out “not only how, but who to be with them” (200). Like shape-shifter extraordinaire Frank Abnegale, Lindquist recommends that teachers “stag[e] empathy” to “enable students to locate their own affectively structured experiences of class within more integrated understandings of social structures and identity formation” (201, 188; see also Bean; Micciche, *Doing Emotion*).

### CORPOREALITIES

Because feminist pedagogies have been vital to pedagogical models that foreground bodies, their representations and embodiments, I turn now to a discussion of two important pedagogical projects that attach primacy to bodies: queer and disability studies pedagogy. In addition to positioning bodies as a locus from which to develop praxis, both also address creating safe institutional spaces for students and teachers and for considering the value of “coming out” in the classroom. Brenda Jo Brueggemann and Debra Modellmog note that while coming out has typically referred to “the act of making visible an identity that has been largely invisible, discredited, or actively ignored in the academy” and linked to LGBT people, it has also become important to those interested in “how and why to claim a disability identity rather than remaining silent about one’s body and ability in the classroom” (210). Brueggemann and Modellmog argue that, by revealing an “object identity,” the two fields have effectively “questioned the traditional expectations for the kind of knowledge that can be shared with students, thereby redrawing the lines between the intellectual and the personal, the sanctioned and the taboo, and the academic and the experiential” (210). Feminist, queer, and disability studies pedagogies are interconnected and increasingly engaged with embodiment and performance (rather than identity-based views of the self), personal and political issues, social justice, pedagogy as a site for critical investigation of dominant ideology, and writing as a tool for exploring non-normative beliefs and practices.

Queer pedagogy has expanded feminist pedagogy by creating opportunities to (re)think gender and sexuality through robust frameworks and by emphasizing the value of doing so for *all* teachers and students. Jonathan Alexander (*Literacy*),

for example, calls out the tendency among feminists to exclude sexuality from studies of difference. He notes that queer theory offers social justice advocates a framework for studying not just marginalized sexualities and identities but “*all* sexualities in our culture as sites of identity, knowledge, and power” (14, emphasis in original). Emphasis on the inclusive reach of queer pedagogy is a distinctive refrain in the literature. Amy Winans (“Queering”) puts it like this: “Queer pedagogy challenges all students regardless of their sexual identities because it calls into question the process of normalizing dominant assumptions and beliefs, as it challenges instructors to question and to continue to test their own pedagogy” (106). While feminist pedagogy arguably has a similar effect, practitioners have not made this point as often or with as much shared commitment.

Performativity, particularly as articulated by feminist queer theorist Judith Butler, plays a significant role in queer pedagogies (see Gonçalves). For Butler, gender and sexuality are unstable categories that do not signify identity, which “is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (25). Gender and sexuality performances have the potential to both reproduce, through repetitious instantiations that solidify over time, *and* subvert dominant cultural norms. Reflecting some of this ambivalence is Harriet Malinowitz’s groundbreaking study of gay and lesbian students’ learning processes and interactions within discourse communities. She outlines a pedagogy that acknowledges both the alienating marginality gay students frequently occupy in college classrooms as well as the creative, desirable standpoints marginality makes possible, what Malinowitz calls “sharp vision that comes from living with friction and contradiction” (252). The differences these students embody, in other words, can be assets for the writing classroom, because they expose “modes of making meaning” and “systems of signification” that might otherwise go unchecked (43). Malinowitz argues convincingly that the implications of her study, which focuses on the conditions that affect gay and lesbian student writers’ composing processes, are far-reaching. After all, writing and learning in a homophobic culture affects *all* students (xviii).

More recently, “queering” the writing classroom has received substantial treatment. Jennifer DiGrazia and Michel Boucher, for instance, introduce queer theory in an experimental writing course to help students reimagine identity categories. Others have expressed frustration with identity-based approaches to queering the classroom. Barclay Barrios finds such approaches limiting, offering instead a model of queer pedagogy in which students come to see themselves as agents in the public sphere able to contextualize identity “within a project of critical thinking about rights and responsibilities that benefits all students” (342). This “action horizon” pedagogy informs an assignment for which students explore online pride flags to understand how they function in sociopolitical contexts. Students were able to connect pride to nationalism, differential power relations in American culture, and other wide-spectrum issues not specifically focused on identity or queerness. Noting that one might wonder what’s queer about this pedagogy, Barrio writes that an action horizon pedagogy is deliberately not “inherently queer.” Rather than foregrounding queer *content*, Barrios

harnesses for his teaching *methods* the complex ways of seeing and thinking that queer theory enables.

Offering another way to complicate identity-based pedagogy, Jonathan Alexander (“Transgender”) strives for material, embodied understandings of gender and sexuality through the use of trans theories. To facilitate this, Alexander designs a “paired fiction writing” assignment for which students collaboratively write narratives in response to teacher prompts (59). Working with partners of the same gender, students compose “stories from what they perceived to be the experiences and assumptions of someone of a different gender,” and then share their stories with the larger group and discuss their representations of gender (59). Alexander finds that the student narratives transcribe gender onto characters’ bodies, creating “embodiments . . . slightly beyond the ‘performative’; they seem more ‘transsexual’—the literal crafting of the body to meet certain ‘ideal types’ of gender ‘performance’” (69). The exercise puts into relief the multiple ways to be gendered and the construction of embodiments as political acts of “scrutiny, sculpting, and legibility” (70).

Viewing embodiments as social constructions is central to (some versions of) disability studies, a movement informed by feminist and queer theories of the body. In a description that shares principles with both feminism and queer theory, Cynthia Lewiecki-Wilson and Jay Dolmage contend that disability studies “decenters ableist and normative assumptions: it examines the history and subjugating power of ‘the norm,’ critiques the medicalization and objectification of bodies with differences, makes visible the invisible structuring power of ableism, and resists the standardization of learning that fits only a narrow range of people” (315). By noting that disability studies offers teachers and students opportunities for creating “inclusive and diverse” classrooms, Lewiecki-Wilson and Dolmage put their project in conversation with feminists, queer theorists, multiculturalists, critical and community-engagement advocates, and, more recently, proponents of world Englishes, multiliteracies, and translanguaging (i.e., Horner, NeCamp, and Donahue; Young and Martinez). Striving toward equity and inclusiveness, they note, will require changes to curriculum and pedagogy that foreground learning differences (317). This differs from what Julie Jung (“Textual”) terms an accommodationist stance. Her analysis of composition readers that mainstream disability narratives leads her to conclude that such narratives “locat[e] the responsibility for adaptation within the ‘abnormal’ body rather than within the institutions and ideologies that construct it as such” (161).

James Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson locate the responsibility for adaptation of classrooms with teachers and institutions rather than with students. Drawing from the architectural concept of universal design (UD), they contend that learning spaces should be configured both spatially and pedagogically for the widest possible access. Dolmage and Lewiecki-Wilson also address UD principles in teacher-training and faculty-development workshops “so that hopefully fewer and fewer teachers will proceed from exclusionary normative assumptions” (26). This is particularly important because, as Dolmage points out elsewhere (“Mapping”), “disability is always present. There is no perfect body or mind. And there is no normal body or mind” (17).

In an argument that echoes the expansive importance of queer pedagogy, Lewiecki-Wilson and Brenda Brueggemann contend that including disability content in classes is warranted because students with disabilities are in our classes and a focus on disability improves critical thinking for everyone (4). Pedagogical choices that acknowledge students with disabilities are those typical of a process-based writing classroom (small group workshops, student-teacher conferences, drafting, etc.) as well as audio response methods and Web-based access to class information (Lewiecki-Wilson and Brueggemann 7-8). In addition, teachers can address learning differences with their students and accommodate students' needs "by providing large-print lecture notes, sending notes by e-mail, or allowing students to audiotape classes" (Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson 301). Teachers can also "adapt or codesign assignments" as needed and revise goals and strategies to help ensure student success (301). When it comes to physical accommodations, Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson "offer to meet with students in alternate and more accessible . . . locations," particularly when university conditions like broken elevators create barriers to access (301). By acknowledging diverse learning styles and developing strategies for success based on students' differences, disability studies pedagogy suggests that teachers can practice a more inclusive social justice pedagogy (see Dunn).

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As a student in feminist classrooms, I felt excitement, fear, discomfort, anguish, utter confusion, and worry. I learned how to question much of what I took for granted, to see the world and my role in it freshly, and to read and write with renewed purpose. As a teacher, those classrooms taught me how to be patient, to risk a variety of standpoints, to approach learning holistically as a body/mind pursuit, and to model interrogatory, sometimes combative, modes of delivery. These classrooms also taught me that engaging with intersectional identity could be a portal through which to visualize, encourage, and act meaningfully toward more just social relations in and beyond classrooms. Feminist pedagogies do not strive for "quick, simple, and agreeable" student learning outcomes (Broad 4); depending on their slant, they might solicit active questioning; applied curiosity; rigorous critique of cultural, political, and emotional norms; collaborative knowledge-making activities; innovative forms of intellectual work; analyses and challenges to dominant culture; creative approaches to representing identity and embodiment; new media studies of intersectional identities; and so forth. Learning in feminist classrooms, as I can attest, is frequently emergent, less measurable than is perhaps fashionable in assessment talk. In a way, this inchoateness is its most powerful effect: These classrooms can make you feel differently about the world, creating alternative alignments with others and investments in wild, imaginative, hopeful, unorthodox futures.

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## RESOURCES

- For more on feminism broadly, see <http://www.datehookup.com/content-feminism-resources.htm>.
- For information within the discipline, see <http://www.ncte.org/college/briefs/feminism> and <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/committees/statusofwomen/bibliography>.