

Preface

Pedagogy is among the most commonly used, yet least defined, terms in composition studies. In our professional discussions, the term variously refers to the practices of teaching, the theories underlying those practices, and perhaps most often, as some combination of the two—as praxis. This book reflects this varied usage by surveying pedagogy in its many forms. Practical applications can be found interspersed among relatively theoretical discussions of teaching, while the theories underlying classroom strategies are often emphasized. The theory/practice nexus undergirds these essays as it does the discipline. As a result of these complexities and our belief that pedagogical variety is a hallmark of our discipline, we have chosen to use the plural “pedagogies” in our title.

The variety of approaches to the teaching of writing that have developed in recent years hints at the richness of composition studies. Multivocality is not a sign of confusion or uncertainty, but a clear signal that the teaching of writing is grounded in something beyond what colleagues, administrators, and the public often say they want: “good” grammar and correct spelling. The teaching of writing concerns not only technical skills, but the minds and lives of students and teachers and the environments in which writing can exist. Diverse voices invigorate our disciplinary conversations, but can also present a formidable challenge to those just entering the field, those who form the primary audience addressed in these essays.

This guide was conceived specifically to help graduate students and new writing teachers orient themselves within our ongoing discussions. Since the publication of *Teaching Freshman Composition* by Gary Tate and Edward P.J. Corbett (Oxford, 1967), the collection of either reprinted or original essays has become a major genre in the field. Collections of essays about evaluating student writing; issues of class, race, and gender; the politics of teaching writing; the training of graduate students; and so on have appeared over the past thirty years in increasing numbers. But there remains a real need, we think, for a current map of composition pedagogies for the uninitiated. No other book provides such a map. This book is unique in its combining of personal experience and bibliographic information. We encouraged contributors to do two things: (1) mention the titles of books and journal articles that the reader interested in a certain pedagogy should read in order to begin to understand that way of teaching and (2) explain their own relationship to and experiences with the pedagogy. The response of contributors has been varied. Some essays in this book are extremely personal; others are much less so. In their variety of tone

and stance, the essays hint at the range of styles that one encounters in the discipline today.

The breadth of these essays should provide ample material and opportunity to explore the rich complexity of our field. Each of the twelve pedagogies chosen for inclusion in this book was selected because of its importance in the discipline today. Although we would not argue that these are the only major approaches to the teaching of writing at the end of the century in American colleges and universities, we would contend that these are twelve of the most important. The student who begins to understand these approaches to the teaching of writing is well on the way to understanding an important segment of a discipline that continues to grow and change. As perceptions and paradigms are continuously challenged, critical but open and well-informed minds are vital to this sustained growth and change. Our hope is that this book will provide the young teacher/scholar with an introduction to our field that will begin a lifelong process of open-minded, critical, passionate inquiry.

The organization of the book is not strictly historical. Any such attempt would have met with failure because of the ways in which these approaches to the teaching of writing overlap. We chose to begin with process pedagogy because the turn to process represented for many teachers a defining moment in the discipline—and in their lives as teachers. And because process and expressive pedagogies are so closely linked, we decided to pair them before introducing rhetorical pedagogy, which, in a very real sense, underlies all the others. The close ties between critical and cultural studies pedagogies led us to place them together. Finally, the very important role that many writing centers play in writing across the curriculum programs encouraged us to pair these two essays. Of course, many other organizational schemes are possible, and we are confident that teachers and other readers will reorganize the book to suit their needs and will use it as a textbook in a variety of ways.

One of the book's editors has used the manuscript of this book in a graduate seminar in which students were asked to read two essays a week, plus two or three articles mentioned in each essay. The seminar thus worked its way quickly through the book in six weeks. During the remaining eight or nine weeks, each student chose a particular pedagogy to research in more depth and to write about in an extended paper. The possibilities here are almost endless: create a syllabus for a writing course based on one of the pedagogies and then, in an attached essay, defend the syllabus; compare and contrast two closely related pedagogies; write a report to a departmental composition committee, arguing that a particular pedagogy should be the foundation of the department's writing sequence; discuss how rhetorical pedagogy underlies all (or many) of the others, and so on. Shorter papers might be written along the way. One important issue that students might explore in a short essay is this: why do you react positively to some pedagogies and negatively to others? In other words, what is there about your upbringing, your beliefs, your education, and so on that inclines you toward some ways of teaching and away from others? Such a paper might well lead toward that self-understanding that is so essential to the effective writing teacher.

However this book is used, the editors hope that it will provide many new (and some old) students of composition studies with the kind of information and insights that will help them better understand the discipline and the enormous range of pedagogical opportunities that it provides today.

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