

Lest We Go the Way of Vocational Training: Developing Undergraduate Writing Programs in the Humanist Tradition

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Marshall McLuhan once declared that “it’s misleading to suppose there’s any basic difference between education and entertainment” (3). Such a distinction, he says, “merely relieves people of the responsibility of looking into the matter” (3). The entertainment industry helps produce meaning, shape desire, and direct social practices; it educates, wields power, and serves political ends. No doubt, politics entertains too: presidential candidates make appearances on late night television talk shows and answer questions like “do you wear boxers or briefs” just as much, sometimes more, than they answer questions like “what is our exit strategy from Iraq?” While politicians engage in dialogue with citizen/viewers, such exchanges are choreographed to niche markets and packaged as entertainment rather than political deliberation, teaching us that the line between rhetoric and poetics, between production and interpretation, between dialogue and diatribe, is more blurred than either the literary or rhetorical canons would suggest. Yet the recent anxieties among rhetoricians, in communication and in composition both, over rhetorical and cultural theories that stray from the central mission of textual (re)production tend to miss McLuhan’s rather basic point—the world of globalization has indeed imploded upon itself and the disciplinary boundaries that thrived in the industrial era of education simply cannot sustain themselves under the critique of an increasingly interdisciplinary world.

Opposed to such disciplinary gatekeeping, I contend that writing programs, particularly the growing number of undergraduate majors and concentrations, take this sociocultural and historical context into consideration rather than working to train students exclusively in the discrete tasks of

workplace writing. In an interdisciplinary world, writing programs need to interact with the rhetorical functions of politics and entertainment as they emerge in both public and private spaces. For me and the curriculum I will discuss later, this means continually working at the intersections of rhetorical humanism and cultural studies in order to arrive at a writing program that matches the diversity of persuasive symbolism comprising the social and historical world we inhabit. Taking up this subject, this essay outlines the theoretical linkages I see between rhetoric and cultural studies as humanist pursuits that converge at the site of textual interpretation and production, and conjectures that critics of this practice might be more troubled by the thought of using rhetoric to transform the world than they are over disciplinary purity. I use Georgia Southern University's Writing and Culture Area concentration as a model to illustrate how this confluence between rhetoric and cultural studies can be translated into a fully developed undergraduate writing program with its foundation in the liberal, rather than mechanical, arts. Arguing against hitching writing to the practical needs of the university and the workplace, I end with a call to develop more writing programs based on such humanist foundations.

WRITING, CULTURAL STUDIES, AND RHETORICAL HUMANISM: DEBATES AND TRADITIONS

I believe a fundamental congruence between rhetoric and cultural studies stems from the fact that both fields are wedded to political action rather than mere philosophical inquiry. If we move rhetoric beyond its primary definition as civic action—exploring epideictic discourse as Jeffrey Walker advocates or defining rhetoric as an art according to Janet Atwill's revisionist history—we open up rhetoric to inquiry and action within the diverse spaces of our contemporary world. Indeed, the long history of rhetoric and the shorter history of cultural studies understand discourse as an evolving tool necessary for the practical engagement of a world in flux. Perhaps because of this commitment to public engagement, rhetoric and cultural studies have merged in several ways. A decade ago Thomas Rosteck published, "Cultural Studies and Rhetorical Studies" in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, fueling a conversation about the relationship between these two fields. Since then rhetorical studies has expanded to include diverse projects illustrating the interrelatedness of these two academic and political fields. Rhetorical scholarship of myriad texts has been enhanced by attention to cultural analyses and courses in cultural studies have become a standard component of many rhetoric and composition graduate programs. Even debates about academic disciplines have been deepened through this dual

analytics, pointing toward a need to rethink university structures, curriculum design, and classroom pedagogy. Steven Mailloux, for instance, encourages using rhetorical hermeneutics in concert with transnational cultural studies in order “to enter into the ‘philosophical quarrels’ within general debates over the future of higher education” (22). In order to facilitate further inquiry about the role of rhetorical hermeneutics, Mailloux calls for increased dialogue between rhetoricians in communication programs and English studies.

Scholars from both English and communication departments responded with disciplinary histories that explore the institutional role of rhetoric and led up to the inaugural conference of the Alliance of Rhetoric Societies. David Zarefsky, who represented the conference’s working group on “Institutional and Social Goals for Rhetoric,” gave the following summary of rhetoric’s institutional history: 1) rhetoric exists as a subfield in both English and speech communication departments; 2) in English departments, rhetoric focuses on writing and emphasizes pedagogy while its speech communication version focuses on speech and emphasizes civic discourse; and, 3) the speech communication version believes itself more progressive than the conservative field of English from which it broke nearly a century ago (28). What appears to me to be a major omission from Zarefsky’s history is the material and intellectual ghettoization of rhetoric in English departments that results, in part, from rhetoric’s dual subordination as a subfield of composition, which is itself a subfield of English. To clarify Zarefsky’s institutional sketch, I would add that composition programs frequently have a service-orientation, tackling first-year writing, writing across the disciplines, technical writing, and business writing so that other fields can focus on purportedly separate and more important content issues. These various strands of composition primarily rely on Aristotelian methods of rhetoric as understanding the available means of persuasion prior to the production of credible, genre-specific texts. However, new directions in rhetorical studies, both those that revisit ancient rhetorical traditions and those that join the rhetorical tradition to contemporary critical/cultural theories, offer ways of getting beyond the peculiar institutional constraints of writing programs, curriculum design, and administration, all of which are delimited by composition’s institutional ethos as a service to other units and knowledges.

The absence of this writing program history likely contributes to what Zarefsky identifies as a major institutional paradox: while rhetoric could be a powerful interdisciplinary project, it “remains fragmented into subfields of two parent disciplines with limited interaction between them” (28). Writing programs often do not identify with the English departments in

which they are housed for some of the same reasons rhetoricians do not—they see the teaching of literature as secondary to training students in various discourses outside the university. From this perspective, rhetoricians remain fragmented not because we have divergent interests but because communication studies mistakenly assumes rhetoric and composition privileges literature over civic discourse and both groups mistakenly occlude culture from political deliberation, further dividing the field from within. Interestingly, several of the position papers at the conference “argued for the need to transcend the division between English and Communication studies” (30). James Arnt Aune, for instance, called for the establishment of rhetorical centers that embrace pedagogy, placing the teaching of basic speaking and writing courses at the heart of these centers—a proposal eerily reminiscent of writing centers that emerged across the country in the 1980s. Other recommendations from the conference working group centered on increased communication between the two institutional homes of rhetoric, among our like-minded colleagues across the university, with administrators, and with the public—precisely the kind of work in which WPAs have cultivated much expertise. Contrary to those who oppose rhetorical hermeneutics as disciplinary suicide, this working group clearly advocates opening up rhetorical boundaries, rejecting binaries like theory versus practice, transgressing disciplinary divisions, and embracing the complementary notions of *dissoi logoi* and contingency. I believe this gesture provides an opportunity for writing programs to align themselves with rhetoricians in and outside of the English department, placing writing within the thick of both cultural and political interpretation and production, and severing its allegedly exclusive loyalties to literature.

Surely such realignment would be welcomed by the many writing specialists who call for increased attention to rhetoric. Thomas P. Miller, from whom the title of this essay borrows, repeatedly argues that without more attention to rhetoric, English departments will become hopelessly irrelevant (“How Rhetorical are Composition and Communications?”; “Lest We Go the Way of the Classics”). Others argue that besides making our curriculum more rhetorical, we need to become better rhetoricians ourselves. Carmen Werder suggests that the WPA learn to use rhetoric, rather than raw power, to negotiate institutional change (“Rhetorical Agency”). James Porter, et. al., have gone so far as to develop what they call an activist methodology that encourages students and faculty to see possibilities for rhetorical change at the indices of global and local exigencies (“Institutional Critique”). In sum, there exists, within the field broadly construed, a pervasive belief that rhetoric holds the answer to both our curricular relevance and our institutional authority as writing programs. Yet the hope many place

in rhetoric frequently delimits the rhetorical to a political sphere artificially quarantined from the cultural world, and focuses on the reproduction of the status quo rather than the questioning of normalized discourse. These scholars are not alone in their desire to define rhetoric within clearly articulated practices. Composition specialists also advocate a particular form of rhetoric—one that negotiates the political and symbolic terrains but does not redesign the contours of these spaces, one that argues within the boundaries of an imposed civility but does not speak outside those normalized borders, and one that begins with what is while forgetting to imagine what could be.

Just as some communication scholars police disciplinary boundaries against rhetorical hermeneutics some composition theorists also find themselves wary of diverse approaches. For instance, Richard Fulkerson's "Composition at the Turn of the Century" argues, with regret, that composition has become a less unified and more contentious field than it was fifteen years ago. He blames our disciplinary ambiguity on the splintering of a previously more unified field and holds critical/cultural studies, in particular, to task for catalyzing this centrifugal process. Our pedagogies, he says, are divided among critical/cultural studies, expressivism, and rhetorical approaches, arguing that critical/cultural studies methods alone fall short because they are reading-based, hermeneutics; on the other hand, rhetorical approaches, of which he names three, and expressivism, are productive and, therefore, appropriate to the teaching of writing. The three rhetorical approaches to composition, according to Fulkerson, are the teaching of argumentative writing, academic writing, and generic writing. Each of the rhetorical approaches takes an audience and the public sphere as given and teaches students to write persuasively within particular spaces while expressivist approaches use writing to know, reflect, and heal, coaxing a clear and authentic voice from each student without contamination from outside sources and influences. Critical/cultural studies, however, uses heuristics to help students understand, question, and transform such realities through writing—a task he believes falls outside composition's disciplinary expertise. Fulkerson emphasizes that the misplaced critical/cultural studies classroom seeks "not 'improved writing' but 'liberation' from dominant discourse," indicting it with a potential for political indoctrination absent from the other supposed politically neutral approaches (660). That Fulkerson fails to acknowledge the rhetorical base of many critical/cultural studies pedagogies, that he sees division and deliberation as threatening, and that he understands reading/interpreting as separate from writing/producing position his argument squarely within the problematic binaries that those attending the Alliance of Rhetoric Societies are trying to overcome.

Indeed, Fulkerson's attack on critical/cultural studies could just as easily be an argument against Mailloux and others' use of rhetoric to understand cultural production. Both critiques seemingly desire a definition of rhetoric confined to negotiating already agreed upon possibilities without further interrogation—emphasizing the enthymematic and downplaying the dialectic in ways that privilege vocational over humanistic inquiry. But culture and politics are not mutually exclusive spheres and rhetoricians who eschew cultural spaces miss key opportunities for dialogue and deliberation over contemporary politics. What is most clear to me from the backlash against hermeneutics and cultural studies from both sides of the rhetorical divide is that these disputes are not about rhetoric as productive versus rhetoric as interpretive—an impossible binary; rather, they seem to stem from disagreements about rhetoric as reproductive versus rhetoric as disruptive. Hence, this debate forces us to ask whether the role of rhetoric in writing programs is to teach students to be agents of change or simply citizens of empire, to borrow from Robert Jensen's title phrase.

Janet Atwill's work on *technê* and the liberal arts tradition offers an excellent stepping stone into this important question. In condensed form, her *Rhetoric Reclaimed: Aristotle and the Liberal Arts Tradition* argues that there are two distinct traditions in the art of rhetoric—*technê*, which allows for invention and intervention, and a liberal arts tradition that eclipses the political and social functions of this earlier tradition while solidifying disciplinary knowledge and naturalizing the position of its privileged subject. Atwill encourages us to go back to the lost tradition of *technê* in order to harness rhetoric's disruptive and transformative potential. As she states, the goal is to “extricate rhetoric and *technê* from ‘normalizing’ traditions that work against intervention of any kind” (207). This means moving beyond the theory/practice binary, but it also means moving beyond the culture/politics binary. As I said earlier, there is no clear distinction between the political and cultural effects of the entertainment industries and the political and cultural effects of the democratic sphere—both are forms of public pedagogies. Such a principle underlies, in fact, Jeffrey Walker's groundbreaking exploration of the “rhetorical poetics” embodied in Greek lyricism that predates the systematic theories of rhetoric to which most rhetoricians cling (*Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*). Given this and many other studies, the suasive quality of all discourse has become almost universally accepted, yet we are slower (as Fulkerson's assessment of composition illustrates) to endorse programs informed by a notion of rhetoric as disruptive to the imagined line between politics and culture as well as to the world more generally.

Examining the twin anxieties in communication and composition through Atwill's argument reminds us of the rhetorician as dangerous, as one who can compel others to see and act in the world differently, as one who invents new possibilities rather than acquiesces to old regimes. In this sense, the best work currently emerging within rhetorical studies, regardless of its disciplinary home, seeks to open up academic and political conversations, unhinging the dichotomous relationship between rhetoric and poetics in a way that seems much more aligned with the contemporary geopolitical moment. Such work is certainly performed by rhetorical theorists and often taught within graduate programs, but there remains a dearth of this rhetoric at the undergraduate level in both English and communication departments. Communication departments tend to emphasize professional skills—journalism, broadcasting, acting, and public relations—while English departments tend to position rhetoric as a rather straightforward component of writing courses—rhetoric in first-year composition, business writing, or technical writing—or, less often, as a form of literary interpretation. Few undergraduate programs offer a four-year sequence of courses informed by rhetoric within creative and political texts, with an additional emphasis on these texts as pedagogical, as teaching us how to act in the world.

Entrenched disciplinary boundaries and theoretical stakes professionalize us to guard our theoretical and disciplinary divisions rather than break them down. One place where such clear disciplinarity might not emerge, however, are the growing numbers of freestanding writing programs and the undergraduate degrees developing nationwide. According to Jeffrey Grabill, et. al., one way to engage in “dramatic institutional initiatives to improve writing instruction” is to create departments of writing (231). The writing departments that he and his colleagues have created (the Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures at Michigan State University and the Department of Writing & Rhetoric at the University of Rhode Island) engage writing rhetorically in the ways I advocate and are, as they say, “humanities-based departments of writing, focused on teaching writing in socially, culturally, and critically aware ways” (231). These programs are not alone. *A Field of Dreams: Independent Writing Programs and the Future of Composition Studies* offers an impressive collection of possibilities and roadblocks for independent writing programs. Sandra Jamieson in conjunction with Drew University Composition Program has compiled and continues to update a growing list of Writing Majors, Minors, Tracks, and Concentrations.¹ While most of the programs listed focus on technical and professional writing, some do specialize in rhetorical humanist or cultural studies approaches. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, for instance, has a program in Writing and Humanist Studies that includes courses focused

on the intersections of writing and the self as it exists in society, emphasizing issues of race, gender, and identity. Housed in a university known for its technological studies, it shouldn't be surprising that this Writing and Humanist Studies program offers courses in technical communication and science writing. But many other programs retain strong connections to professional work even in liberal arts or humanities colleges.

In fact, among the programs that identify themselves as offering humanities-based writing degrees, few provide a comprehensive curriculum that studies both political and cultural aspects of persuasion. Take, for instance, Michigan State University's innovative Department of Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures. This department appears to see writing, rhetoric, and culture as equally important and connected aspects of humanistic study, but its undergraduate major in writing, titled Professional Writing, exists separately from its undergraduate major in American Cultures even though both are housed in the same department. While I support the work being done in this department, I want to underscore how much writing, even in a humanities-based curriculum, remains tied to business skills such as developing technological literacies, writing grants, editing, and publishing, with proportionally fewer courses connected to cultural aspects of textual production. Nevertheless, Michigan's program does diverge in important ways from its peers which mostly provide vocationalizing majors in writing and rhetoric. Given the institutional and geopolitical context of such programs, it is no wonder we cling to the market logic that equates a university education with job training. And yet this technocratic sensibility in our program development is, as McLuhan points out, both misleading and a renunciation of responsibility for teaching students about the rhetorical possibilities of a world co-constructed by politics and culture.

A more integrated approach, I suggest, would be based exclusively on rhetorical humanism and cultural studies. Such a curriculum would move beyond the professionalizing, reproductive mechanism of traditional rhetorical practices, at least within the domain of composition, and embrace rhetoric as a dynamic that produces the material and textual world through cultural, political, and economic valuations. I rely on Atwill's distinction between reproductive and disruptive rhetorics, when I call for curriculum development in a humanist tradition. My tentative use of humanism, deeply conscious of its many critiques, is likewise indebted to Paulo Freire's conception of humanism as a process of becoming such that history moves forward through the dialectic between the word and the world, textuality and materiality. His seminal work, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, defines humanism as a dialogical engagement with others in order to understand and transform the contradictions that strip individuals of their subjectiv-

ity, making them only objects of others' power. Humanism, in this sense, demands that students learn to take responsibility for their agentic power in a world that is both political and cultural. I am fortunate to have participated in developing what I believe to be one such curriculum in the Writing and Culture Area Concentration at Georgia Southern University's Department of Writing and Linguistics. I turn now to a discussion of this undergraduate concentration as a rhetorically and culturally informed writing program with a humanist, rather than a practical, orientation.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT: GEORGIA SOUTHERN'S WRITING AND CULTURE AREA CONCENTRATION

"Until the inherent structure of American academic institutions changes significantly," Barry Maid argues, "the ideal Independent Writing Unit will be a full-fledged department offering programs which lead to degrees" (454). He contends that such an institutional context would allow faculty to imagine and deliver a wide variety of writing and rhetoric courses beyond the first-year sequence and a handful of well trodden upper-division courses blandly titled Advanced Compositions, Business Writing, and Technical Writing. Sharon Crowley, in the same Writing Program Administrator's Resource, reaffirms her belief that severing the traditional albatross of required first-year composition would free the WPA to do other, more productive, work in writing program development. While I am politically sympathetic to Crowley's position on the elimination of FYC, I see Maid's promotion of an independent writing structure with multiple undergraduate threads as another way to enable faculty the creative space to develop new programs. I certainly doubt that the rhetorical humanist and cultural studies approach I advocate could be achieved through one or two first-year or a upper-level courses, but there is no reason FYC (required or not) couldn't participate within a fully developed undergraduate program.

In the independent writing department at Georgia Southern, for instance, students receive a bachelor's degree in Writing and Linguistics with a concentration in one of four areas. The department chair represents the unit within the college and university while each area is coordinated by one faculty member in collaboration with the faculty teaching in that area. The first-year program is administered by a separate director of composition, also in collaboration with faculty who teach in the first-year sequence. This departmental structure leaves little clearly defined space for what is traditionally called the WPA, perhaps answering Marc Bousquet's call for "working toward a university without a WPA" (518). And, yet, I don't want to idealize this structure as it required faculty to provide unpaid service

toward program development that would in most departments be compensated with reduced teaching loads. After breaking from the English Department, renamed the Literature Department, the independent Department of Writing and Linguistics was initially responsible for first-year composition and for a minor in writing while it worked without remuneration on developing a structure for its undergraduate major. This unpaid labor did not end with the Regents 2003 approval of the major. Although the different Area Concentrations existed in theory when the major was approved, there remained significant work to refine the focus and curricula of each of these Areas.

The department's four different major tracks were in relatively inchoate forms that needed development to achieve national parity with peer programs as well as to better meet the goals and objectives outlined in our accepted proposal for the major. Two of these concentrations (Linguistics and Creative Writing) have long institutional histories with clearly defined and standardized undergraduate coursework, making the development of their areas considerably easier in that they had to align with national standards but did not have to invent those standards. A third Area (Professional and Technical Writing) has less institutional history, but certainly had national counterparts upon which to draw. In fact, few would argue that the most clearly entrenched writing courses, besides first-year composition, are those in technical, professional, and business writing. The fourth Area (Writing and Culture) had a more difficult terrain to negotiate. Like many new programs, an institutional space was carved out for this area, originally titled the Theory and Practice of Writing, before its curriculum was fully developed. This occurred because of an institutional Catch-22—you must have students to fill courses before you can offer them, but you need to have a major before students enroll in courses. What this meant was that I arrived on campus as a member of this Area Concentration with few courses on the books and even fewer courses that genuinely reflected the Area's goals—goals which were as yet unclear to our diverse faculty. But because my department chair assured me that this Area was open to being shaped as I and my colleagues thought prudent, I jumped into curriculum development with both feet. Given my interest in cultural studies as well as the extreme breadth of research interests among the faculty, it made sense that our common ground was an investment in the intersections of writing, rhetoric, and culture. Because "rhetoric," we were accurately told, was a hot-button term for the Communication Arts faculty, we compromised by titling the area Writing and Culture, even though our collective commitment was to delivering a rhetorical curriculum that taught students how to theorize and use writing as a means of negotiating diverse discursive

spaces.² In this way, we wanted the curriculum to be decidedly humanist and not simply applied, technical, or simply intellectual.

The Writing and Culture Area, which I coordinated during its development, met every other week as it collaboratively constructed a focused mission, a four-year curriculum, activities for student groups, potential speakers, and future public programming.³ Although this service required a substantial amount of time, faculty members were dedicated to the work because, as workers in the trenches, they understood this as a unique opportunity to productively shape their working environment. Two of the more important discussions we had as an Area focused on what we wanted to achieve within rhetoric and composition that did not encroach on the other areas—linguistics, creative writing, and professional and technical writing—but offered its own unique focus or slice of the field. For us, that became culture and its relationship to both rhetoric and writing. Our second hurdle was how to offer this curriculum at an undergraduate level when most of our models of rhetoric and composition curriculum came either from graduate-level courses or from first-year sequences. Again, this meant abandoning professionalizing courses intended primarily for future academicians and focusing on the humanist foundations of writing. These two ongoing discussions allowed us to expand our definitions of rhetoric, writing, and culture in order to create something none of us individually could have imagined before these regular deliberations. In other words, we used the rhetorical process we wanted to teach our students to invent the shape and scope of this Area Concentration. After a summer and two semesters, we had what we believed to be a tenable four-year curriculum. At this point, we received department approval and began adding courses to our official program by petitioning the college and university curriculum committees. Not all of the courses I will be discussing have been approved at the university-level, as the curriculum is moving forward in stages; however, the fully drafted curriculum has been approved by both the Area and the department and we anticipate its full university approval in the near future.

Existing in a freestanding writing department, the Writing and Culture Area is not constrained by multiple disciplinary concerns. Its mission is informed by the belief that rhetoric and writing constitute a fundamental power to shape the world and centered on the desire to provide an in-depth exploration of writing practices geared toward rhetoric as both interpretive and productive. Students concentrate on the ways writing systems have shaped and been shaped by the needs of social, cultural, political, economic, and professional communities. Its courses ask students to grapple with the important considerations of identity, power, and persuasion at the same time that they ask them to produce and revise multiple kinds of

texts. Ultimately, the Writing and Culture curriculum hopes to offer students the theoretical and practical tools necessary to engage, negotiate, and transform a world in which textuality dominates our personal and public lives, encouraging a politics and culture of engagement for students on and off campus. This, we believe, is the foundation of a humanist-based, undergraduate education; consequently, we do not have an explicit commitment to clearly “transferable” job-related skills like web design or grant writing. No doubt, these are important aspects of real-world writing, but in our departmental structure they are more appropriately housed in the Professional and Technical Area Concentration, giving our Area the freedom to explore humanistic aspects of writing. Simply, our Area provides students with a space to theorize, analyze, and produce writing in concrete cultural and political locations. These critical thinking and writing activities will certainly help students in their future employment, but our primary goal is to explore how writing affects individuals in society and how those individuals can write back to society.

The undergraduate major who declares him or herself in Writing and Culture has taken a two-semester sequence of first-year composition and has likely taken one or two content-specific courses in writing at the 2000-level. Two of these 2000-level courses are required of all majors in the department and include courses like the Locations of Writing, Everyday Creative Writing, and Writers on Writing, among others. Regardless of their declared concentration, all Writing and Linguistics students are required to take the gateway course from each Area. These common body of knowledge courses are Creative Writing, Foundations in Professional and Technical Writing, Frameworks in Writing Studies, and Language and Linguistic Theory. Frameworks in Writing and Culture, our gateway course, introduces the area-specific content: composition studies, literacy studies, rhetorical studies, and cultural studies. After taking this course, students in our concentration take a course in each of the content areas initially explored. Together, these five courses help students frame the theoretical, methodological, and practical relationship between discursive production of various sorts and the world simultaneous described and called into being *vis-à-vis* that production. It is this basic assumption about the embeddedness of discourse studies within each of these courses that ultimately compelled us to omit an additional course on discourse analysis that existed in earlier drafts of the curriculum.

From these foundational courses, students take what have been divided among service, applied, and outreach courses. These labels exist primarily for faculty to understand how the courses we inherited and the courses we created fit together into a coherent curriculum. They are, at best, arbitrary,

and, at worst, fictive categories that reproduce the precise binaries that the newly established Rhetorical Alliance suggests we consistently and publicly reject. Nevertheless, they help provide a framework and justification for the courses we can legitimately offer in our particular Area Concentration. Even applied and service courses for other units must fit into our conception of writing as a humanist pursuit. Our service courses are aimed primarily at potential teachers—those who might pursue the middle grades and high school as well as those who might teach in various post-secondary programs—as well as at future journalists, editors, and other professional writers. We inherited these courses from both the education and communications departments, but were able to change the courses in dialogue with these departments according to our Area goals, making them appropriate both to our majors and these other students. Courses designed for education majors, for instance, now focus on how to teach writing, linguists, and grammar as politically and culturally inflected practices as well as how to teach writing for social change more specifically. Other courses teach revision and editing within the political and cultural frames of rhetoric. While professionalization has become the normalizing discourse of the university, these courses add a rhetorical lens to such work in order to better understand the complex political and cultural intersections that take place within the often taken-for-granted professional landscape. These changes were viewed positively by the outside faculty and students who came to understand such courses as intellectually engaging with their professional activities rather than as a meaningless hurdles that must be jumped. In my experience teaching one such course, students struggled with the unfamiliar theories they were asked to read and apply, but most found that the rhetorical and cultural perspectives enhanced what they were learning in their home departments.

The applied courses, ranging from *Comic Book Writing in American Culture and Writing to Heal to Argumentative Writing and Writing for Public Forums*, focus on producing texts, but only within specifically defined historical and political contexts. These courses ask students to inquire into unique historical problems, to see themselves situated within the various matrices of these issues, and to produce texts that address, engage, and potentially intervene into social, cultural, and political realities. They especially emphasize the public nature of rhetoric and writing, often requiring students to produce texts in conjunction with local community groups. *Writing for Public Forums*, for instance, allows students to investigate a variety of forums for publication and presentation. Students choose forums that are appropriate to their interests and goals and then produce work tailored to that discursive space. In workshops, student develop, cri-

tique, and revise individualized projects that will ultimately be presented in public settings, which include the university-sponsored television channel and radio station, the local art studio and theater, local print publications, as well as various political meetings. These applied courses provide students both guidance and opportunities to use writing to entertain and persuade the public. Because we want students to understand writing as both politically and personally meaningful, we do not separate the imaginative aspects of rhetoric from its civic nature. We want students to see the value of using creative venues to make important political arguments, as these are some of the most persuasive sites available to us.

Our theoretical courses, all cross-listed as graduate courses, are designed to deepen the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural foundations on which our curriculum is founded. These courses include Non-Traditional Rhetorics; Memory, Writing, and Identity; Writing the Body; and Globalization and the Rhetoric of International Relations. These courses connect the rhetorical work of local sites with larger sociocultural and political exigencies of our contemporary world. They explore how individuals are positioned within multiple and conflicting institutional discourses and work to invent writing that moves beyond these containments. Such theoretical goals connect to the humanist project of understanding and constructing ourselves as well as our place in society. For this reason, students do not simply read and write about theory, but use theory to act in the world. For instance, the Writing the Body course asks students to create experimental writing projects that engage a critical social issue, involve dialogue with the community, and are presented to others with a theoretical explanation of how the text intervenes into that issue. In this sense, the program views theory as a means toward achieving more meaningful engagement with the world and others in it rather than distancing oneself through the purportedly separate work of the mind.

The curriculum also allows for Special Topics courses, which recently have included Studies in Rhetoric and Reality TV; The Language of Imprisonment; and Presidential Rhetoric. As Special Topics, these courses will shift and evolve with changes in students, faculty, and the sociopolitical climate. For example, the Presidential Rhetoric course was offered in the fall semester of 2004 in order to coincide with the much publicized Bush-Kerry race. This course was so popular we opened a second section to accommodate student interest. Such courses serve as an ideal occasion to connect with other faculty by cross listing and advertising to students in other disciplines. Our courses have intersected with communication arts, political science, criminal justice, literature, and art, among other disciplines. Not only does this give us an opportunity to recruit students who

might want to minor in our Area, it also opens up dialogue about writing, rhetoric, and culture with other faculty members, laying the groundwork for possible future collaborations.

Finally, courses from other Area Concentrations in the department are encouraged—Visual Design Studies in the Professional and Technical Writing Area or Language, Power, and Politics in the Linguistics Area, might, for instance, serve students in our track. Currently, courses are more or less housed within the discrete Areas of the department. These Areas are responsible for developing course rotations and for staffing courses. There are a small number of courses that circulate among the faculty in different Areas, but this is rare. However, each Area can encourage and/or require students to take courses from the other Areas. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the work in the Writing and Culture Area, we actively promote student exploration in other Areas. Such connections are fundamental to our understanding of rhetoric, writing, and culture as dynamic processes that seep across arbitrary boundaries. Collectively, the foundational, service, applied, theoretical, and special topics courses, as well as key courses in other Areas form a writing curriculum that we believe unites disparate aspects of our cultural and political worlds, tying them together through an investigation of how writing shapes and is shaped by our struggle to define the human project.

UNDERGRADUATE WRITING AND A FUTURE OF RHETORICAL HUMANISM

At the intersection of rhetoric and cultural studies, wedded to a tradition of change and a commitment to political action, this curriculum hopes to promote action—in classrooms, in departments, on campuses, in private spaces and in public venues. It is the belief of the Writing and Culture Area Concentration that the role of rhetoric, in its broadest sense, enhances the teaching and practice of writing by asking students to make connections among different spheres of public discourse—pushing them to see and participate in the interrelatedness of cultural, political, and economic practices as they converge within textual spaces. We further believe that this focus on writing offers one way to bridge the mythical relationship between rhetoric and democracy because the curriculum constantly returns to the question of how individual and collective identities are rhetorically forged within different institutional parameters at the same time it requires them to produce writing that engages this question with potentially new results.

In many ways, the debates about rhetoric's relationship to culture along with the rich interdisciplinary tradition outlined, for instance, in *Rhetorical Education in America*, edited by Cheryl Glenn, Margaret M. Lyday, and

Wendy B. Sharer, serve as a guide to our curriculum design. *Rhetorical Education in America* offers an array of essays detailing how rhetorical knowledge helps people engage in and change society, a key goal of our program. If this is the direction in which our research is moving, it only makes sense that we attempt to develop programs with similar motivations. Rethinking both our theoretical tradition and our disciplinary boundaries opens rhetoric up to a diverse tradition of engaging political discourse, social change, and classroom practices; it includes traditional and marginal histories; it explores performative, visual, and material rhetorics; and it uses rhetoric to invent future, as yet undiscovered, paths. As an undergraduate writing curriculum that takes the individual and his/her role in society, and not professional work, as its foundation, the Writing and Culture Area Concentration is moving in a direction that uses rhetoric to rethink (rather than reproduce) the world, and I hope other programs will join in this exploration, paving new directions of their own.

NOTES

¹ This list, which began at the University of Utah under the direction of Doug Downs, currently contains links to individual programs and instructions for adding other programs to the list. It can be found online at <<http://www.depts.drew.edu/composition/Cccc2002/majors.html>>.

² Although the Department of Writing and Linguistics broke from the English department, the Writing and Culture Area's biggest institutional struggle has not been with literature but with the Communication Arts department over the definition and uses of rhetoric, reaffirming the pervasive anxiety we all have over controlling rhetorical production.

³ I worked in this department from 2003 to 2006 and acted as Coordinator from 2004 to 2006. While I am no longer at Georgia Southern, the program continues to grow in much the same ways as I am outlining here. In part, I believe this consistency results from the rhetorical and collaborative design process.

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