Teaching Philosophy Statement

The purpose of teaching is to engage students with new, different, and often challenging forms of knowledge. In order to fulfill this purpose and to ensure that the challenges of learning are ultimately rewarding, my teaching foregrounds the inherent reciprocity of the learning endeavor. The reciprocity that occurs in any educational environment transforms students and teachers into learners. Fittingly, the reciprocity inherent to learning approximates the communicative exchange studied in rhetoric and writing. Like learning, the study of rhetoric and writing reveals how knowledge is co-created and how this process of creation necessarily involves human interaction. Together as rhetoricians, writers, and learners, we motivate each other, hold each other accountable, and respect the unique perspectives that each one of us contributes to our collective knowledge.

In introductory courses such as "Introduction to Professional Writing" and "Thought and Writing," I ask all learners to view writing as a recursive process that entails revision and works to establish reciprocity between readers and writers. From the first invention exercise to the last peer review session, writers learn how, as Martin Nystrand puts it, "the character of discourse is shaped by the premise of reciprocity between writer and reader." For instance, students who have taken my "Introduction to Professional Writing" course note that negotiating the aims of the writer in terms of the needs of the reader—what Paul Anderson might call "reader-centered writing"—constitutes one of the most important take-aways from my course. These students come to understand a number of professional writing strategies, from the global to the local, that will signal the writer's reciprocity with the reader and invite the reader into a text.

Emergent writers also gain an understanding of the reciprocity between genres and situations, as I often ask them to transfer an argument written in one particular genre in response to one particular rhetorical situation to another genre in response to another situation. For example, a writer takes a part of an argumentative paper written for a classroom audience and adapts a kernel of that argument into a letter written to the editor of the *Kalamazoo Gazette*. Writers experience success with these transfers—in the past year, the *Kalamazoo Gazette* published 40% of the letters written by students in my "Thought and Writing" classes. As writers transfer their arguments from one genre and one situation to the next, they not only experience writing as revision, but they also come to see, along with Amy J. Devitt, that the "relationship between genre and situation, as constructed by readers and writers, listeners and speakers, is not unidirectional but must be reciprocal."

My courses, both upper and lower division, further invite learners to bring their own expertise to bear on the study of rhetoric and writing. One such course, "Parody and Rhetoric," positions learners as cultural experts and asks them to investigate parody and rhetoric accordingly. They select a scholarly article from among our course readings and pair that article with a cultural artifact of their choosing. They unpack their artifact and articulate a claim about the artifact's effect on a public. Finally, they write a position paper, craft a handout, and lead a seminar discussion about their argument, artifact, and article. By inviting writers' "knowledge of their cultures and competencies into the classroom for academic discussion and critique," this course enacts what Mary Soliday refers to as a pedagogy of reciprocity.

In other upper division courses, I forward a more complex notion of rhetoric and writing—one where rhetoric and writing are situated in society and are understood as both an art and a skill. My "Proposals and Pitches: Grant Writing for Professionals" course, for instance, acknowledges the grant writing conventions that are expected by many funders, but it further emphasizes the importance of varying contexts behind and multiple readers of grant proposals. I work to situate rhetoric and writing in increasingly complex reciprocal relationships by building a service-learning project into the course. Reciprocity, as Linda Flower and Shirley Brice Heath contend, proves a pivotal and transformative factor in any service-learning initiative. In my classes, we learn by writing for community organizations and considering our community partner's objectives as well as our own.

In addition to considering writing from the more objective-driven view of a community partner and composing more practical documents (like letters, reports, proposals, and manuals), I ask writers to rhetorically analyze popular press books that address topics connected to rhetoric and writing studies (including style, design, grammar, typography, and grant writing) and thereby contemplate writing from the perspective of various writers who are marketed to wide (inter)national audiences. For instance, writers in my "Style, Identification, and Persona in Professional Writing" analyzed *The Elements of Style*, *The Elements of Typographic Style, The Elements of Visual Style*, and the many related spin-offs (*The Elephants of Style, Spunk and Bite*). Similarly, writers in my "Proposals and Pitches: Grant Writing for Professionals" course evaluated various trade books on proposals and pitches, including *Pitch Anything, The Art of the Pitch, Storytelling for Grantseekers*, and *Writing for a Good Cause*. The idea, here, is to emphasize the province of rhetoric: the reciprocity between the experts and novices as well as writers and readers.

Above all else, I want the individuals in my courses to understand learning, rhetoric, and writing as challenging, sometimes risky, exchanges between interlocutors. By emphasizing rhetoric's role in the co-creation of knowledge, I encourage them to recognize that these communicative exchanges—whether written or spoken, verbal or visual—are highly situated and extremely complex exchanges that require awareness, anticipation, and accountability.

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