Our beliefs about the teaching and study of writing have over the years taken on a special status: they are no longer corrigible, they have become, to borrow Wittgenstein's words 'how things are.' When this happens our assumptions tend to take on a certain formulaic quality. . . When this happens, not only do we have trouble conceiving of any alternatives that are tenable, we have trouble conceiving of any alternatives at all. (161-62)

--Richard E. Young “Tracing Round the Frame”

Course Description, Rationale and Goals:
Composition Studies provides an introduction to the landmark works in and various competing theories of composition that shape scholarly and pedagogical practices in the contemporary field of rhetoric and composition. To help us construct a map of the complex theoretical terrain, we will consider the historical, cultural and political contexts in which particular practices and theories have emerged and been valued. Further, we will consider questions such as:

• How do theoretical assumptions lead scholars and teachers to adopt particular practices, reject others, and appear to be blind to still others?
• Conversely, how do certain kinds of literate, composition, and pedagogical practices give rise to, support, challenge or undermine certain theories?

One of the goals in this class will be to understand that our beliefs and those of others concerning the study and teaching of composition are corrigible. That is, theories are contingent, working explanations. Theorizing is a dynamic process. Understanding theorizing in these terms will help us to heed Richard Young's warning in the opening epigraph. Exploring landmark studies in composition studies beside and against each other and imagining alternative explanations will help us on this rich, theoretical journey.

Required Texts and Supplies:
All required texts for this course are available used online:

• Heilker Paul, and Peter Vandenberg, eds. Keywords in Composition Studies. Portsmouth, NH : Boynton/Cook, 1996. (Keywords)
• An MNSU email account
• Continuous access to a computer with Microsoft Word
• Desire2Learn UserID and password to access our course shell
• A jumpdrive
• A spiral notebook

Recommended Reading:
The Public Nature of Writing:
Please consider every piece of writing you do for this class to be "public property." Part of becoming a critical reader and writer is learning to appreciate the ideas and criticisms of others, and in this course our purpose is to come together as a writing community. Remember that you will often be expected to share your writing with others, so avoid writing about things that you may not be prepared to subject to public scrutiny, or things you feel so strongly about that you are unwilling to listen to perspectives other than your own. This does not mean that you are not entitled to an opinion but that you adopt positions responsibly, contemplating the possible effect on others.

Course Policies:

Attendance:
A significant portion of your grade is made up of class participation and the best way to participate is to attend class. Do so regularly and come prepared to discuss the day’s reading or work through a writing topic.

Grading: All work done for this course is graded on a 4.0

Late Work:
In the event of an emergency, late work will be negotiated with the instructor, however, as a rule, I do not accept late work. If you know that you cannot meet a deadline set in the syllabus, come and talk with me immediately and I’ll be happy to accommodate you fairly.

Assignments and Percentages:

Assignments (All assignments are included below in the Syllabus packet):
- Keyword Scholar’s Journal 25%
- Reflection on Keywords 15%
- Presentation on Keywords 10%
- Proposal for Bibliographical/Review of Lit. Essay 10%
- Peer Responses 10%
- Bibliographical/Review of Lit. Essay 30%

Paper Format:
All papers are to be typed, and posted using Microsoft Word, 12-pont font, one-inch margins, double-spaced. On the first page of the paper, in the upper right hand corner, place your name, my name, course title, assignment name, and date.

Example:
MSU Student
Professor Cole
ENG 113
Assignment 1: Proposal
June 1, 2004
When you submit your assignments make sure that you save your ORIGINAL FILE in the following format: yourlastnameprojectnumber.doc. It is imperative to use the file “.doc” or “.rtf”, not “.docx.”

**Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments**
This schedule is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class, so be sure to keep up with them.

Keywords: “composing/writing,” “process,” “revision,” “students” |
|---|---|
Keywords: “audience,” “essay,” “form/structure,” “grammar,” “style” |
Keywords: “academic discourse,” “basic writing/writers,” “error,” “pedagogy” |
Keywords: “collaboration,” “discourse community,” “multiculturalism,” “social construction” |
Week 6: Theorizing Process: The Social Turn  
Keywords: “marginalized/marginalization,” “power,” “self/subject”  
Due: Proposal for Bibliographical/Review of Literature Essay

Week 7: Theorizing Composition: Politics  
Keywords: “cultural studies,” “feminism,” “ideology”

Week 8: Theorizing Composition: Gender, Race, and Class  
HW: “Post-Process Pedagogy” pp. 97-125 in X-Talk; Chapters 1-6 (pp. 7-95) in Post-Process Theory  
Keywords: “paradigm”

Week 9: NO CLASS: SPRING BREAK!!!

Week 10: Theorizing Composition: Post-Process Theories I  
HW: Chapters 7-13 (pp. 96-214) in Post-Process Theory

Week 11: Theorizing Composition: Post-Process Theories II  
HW: Chapters 1-5 (pp. 10-61), 11-13 (pp. 129-154) in Composition  
Due: Peer Response

Week 12: Theorizing Composition: Past, Present and Future  
HW: Chapters 17-22 (pp. 193-262) in Composition

Week 13: Theorizing Composition: Post-Process III  
HW: Chapters 1-4 (pp. 3-110) in Situating Composition  
**Presentations on Keywords BEGIN NEXT MONDAY**

Week 14: Theorizing Composition: Locating the Field PRESENTATIONS  
HW: Chapters 5-7 (pp. 113-222) in Situating Composition

Week 15: Theorizing Composition: Locating the Field II PRESENTATIONS

Week 16: Wrapping Up  
DUE: Keyword Scholarly Journal with Reflection on Keywords  
Your Bibliographical/Review of Lit Essay is due during the Final Exam Period on Monday, May 4th between 6-8pm in AH 201G.
Assignments

**Keywords Scholar's Journal**

Because the ways in which scholars define, treat, attend or not attend to, key terms in rhetoric and composition studies offers insights into their theoretical positions, you'll want to pay particular attention to the use of, or silence on, key terms in our readings. To that end, you will keep a keyword scholar's journal where you will record definitions, quotations, and your impressions of how a scholar treats two keywords of your choosing.

- Skim Keywords in Composition Studies and select two key terms that interest you.
- As you read assigned pieces, take note of how the author(s) define, use, ignore, challenge, extend, etc. your key terms. Enter your observations in your journal.
- Periodically (every 3-4 weeks), reread your entries and write a reflection on your observations so far.

You might find it useful to jot down questions as you read, or make other observations on the readings and the class discussions, draw connections among assigned and out-of-class readings. Your journal should serve as a valuable resource for grappling with the readings.

- Bring you Keyword Scholar's Journal to each class. We'll use these at times as a jumping off point for discussions and activities.
Proposal for a Bibliographical Essay or Review of Literature

Wisdom begins in wonder.
--Socrates

This assignment gives you an opportunity to begin to develop a research problem or question(s) that will guide you in your review of the relevant scholarship in the area and that will lead you to write either a bibliographical essay or a review of literature.

Description: You will write a brief (no more than one-page) proposal that outlines:

1. your research problem or question
2. a brief discussion of what led you to this problem or question(s)
3. what your assumptions are concerning the problem or question(s) (what do you expect to find in the scholarship?)
4. a reflection on why you are interested in this problem or question(s)

DUE: Monday, February 16

Suggestions for Identifying a Research Problem and Drafting Research Questions

At the heart of any scholarly endeavor is a good question(s). Constructing good research question(s) or defining good research problems is a challenging task. The following heuristics are meant to help you get started. As you read the relevant scholarship in your research area, you may well find yourself revising those questions or problem statements. Stay loose. Revising these is all par for the course!

1. Identify a research area. What area relates best to your current interests and future professional goals?

   • Jot down what type of work you want to do after graduate school as well as which specific aspects of that work interests you

   • Jot down graduate courses, topics, problems and readings have caught your attention?

   • Keep a notebook for listing ideas, questions, and problems that emerge from your readings and class discussions in various courses.

   • Review calls for papers and editorial policies in current issues of scholarly journals related to your field of interest to get an overview of the hot topics and methods in your field of interest

   • Examine the conclusions of sections of other scholarly essays for calls for “further research needed”

   • Don't seize on the first research problem you encounter; give your choice careful thought and study. Be open.
2. Build a preliminary knowledge base. Read sources (prior literature or scholarship) in your research area to get an overview of what is known and what questions need further exploration. As you read, look for gaps in the literature. That is, look for aspects of the problem or question that have not yet been addressed or that have been questionably explored. (This information may provide good fodder for your conclusion.)

Examine reviews of literature or bibliographical essays relevant to your area of study as models and/or as starting points for your own review. (To locate these, look for the phrase “Review of the Literature” or “Literature Review” or “Bibliographical Essay” in the title of sources. Is there a review that was done over ten years ago that could be updated?) Also search for annotated bibliographies in your area to direct you to sources you might not have found otherwise. (You can find lots of these now on the web; do a keyword search for these. Also, some journals such as Rhetoric Society Quarterly regularly publish annotated bibliographies. See, also, the Bedford Bibliography for Teachers of Writing which is available both in print and online.)

3. Write a problem statement or research question(s). Consider what your focus of study will be (what object or phenomenon are you interested in). Why is this problem or question important? The characteristics of a good research problem or questions are that it is: a) limited in scope so that it is manageable in one study; b) carefully fitted into a broader context of current theory and research; c) is phrased in such a way that readers have a sense of what is needed to address it; is written in clear, non-technical language that stimulates readers' interest.

4. For your proposal: Remember—this is a proposal. You are writing it early so that you can receive feedback that will help you in your larger project. Be flexible. Research and writing is not nearly as orderly as any discussion or assignment suggests is may be. You'll find yourself working back and forth between your question(s) and your review of the literature. Share your questions and problem statements with colleagues to help you shape them. And most of all—Enjoy the process.
Peer Response:

Goals: This assignment serves a dual purpose:

1) to provide you with an opportunity to practice conducting a peer review and writing a reader response—the kind of activity professionals are called to by journal and book editors, conference organizers, granting agencies, and so on—and

2) to practice working with a reviewer's response to help you revise a manuscript. Both goals contribute to professional development.

Description: As models, you have been given the evaluation criteria used by rhetoric and composition journals, book publishers and a conference to assess submissions. Notice that regardless of the professional organization the three main qualities of a scholarly project—significance, contribution and doability—are explicitly addressed in some fashion. Also typical is an assessment of “readability.” Notice also, however, that while some editors provide very detailed evaluation questions, other (such as Theresa Enos of Rhetoric Review) merely ask for comments to be directed to the writer in an “anonymous evaluation.”

For your reader's report, use the criteria you and your partner agreed on from your in-class analysis of the review criteria sheets. Include these criteria on a separate sheet you hand in with your reader's report. (As a model, you might use one of the reader report guidelines from one of the publishing outlets.)

Write a one- to two-page reader's report on your partner's bibliographical essay or review of literature. Make two copies of your report: one for your partner and one for me.

Work with your partner to determine where and when you will exchange drafts and your reader's reports. Decide whether you prefer to meet in person or over email to discuss the responses. You will turn in a copy of your Reader's Report Evaluation Guidelines and your Reader's Report in class on March 23 but you may negotiate with your partner to return comments earlier.
Bibliographical Essay or Review of Literature Assignment

Knowledge separates the educated from the common people. Neither knows. But the common person claims to know, while the educated person knows that [she] he does know.
--Vico

This assignment—to craft a bibliographical essay or review of literature—will give you an opportunity to read in depth in one focused area related to your own scholarly interests within the large, amorphous discipline of composition studies. Although there are subtle differences between a bibliographical essay and a review of literature, both aim to review the lay of the scholarly land, so to speak, in one area. That is, both present what other scholars and researchers have addressed, discovered, constructed, theorized, reported, and argued concerning the focused scholarly area. Further, although both genres can stand alone and are published as such, the review of literature also often appears as a section in larger projects (e.g., a part of an MA thesis, dissertation, prospectus, grant application, and so on). Hence, a secondary purpose of this assignment is to provide you with important immersion in a professional genre that you will be expected to master as a graduate student as well as in your career.

Divergences and Convergences: The distinctions between a bibliographical essay and a review of literature are fine but worth making. First, bibliographical essays tend to be authored by those in the humanities and some in social sciences whereas reviews of literature are more often authored by those in the sciences and social sciences, especially those who do empirical research. Second, a bibliographical essay is meant to offer a detailed snapshot of the state of scholarship—our current understandings—on a particular area of research. This snapshot helps to identify gaps in our understanding that other scholars can use to create their own scholarly projects. In essence, the bibliographical essay says: here's what we know right now about this area and here's what we need to know or do. By contrast, the review of literature presents a discussion of the most important research and theoretical work relating to the research problem/objective that a given scholar is studying. That is, it provides a context within which that scholar can insert her work.

Where these two genres converge is that both address the following kinds of questions: What have others said about this area(s)? What theories address it and what do these say? (These theories may be in competition with each other, and thus, offer conflicting explanations.) What research has been done (or not done) previously? Are there consistent findings or do past studies disagree? Are there flaws or gaps in the previous research that other scholars should attend to (bibliographical essay) or that your study will seek to remedy (review of literature, especially when it appears as a section in a larger piece)? (Note: for a thesis committee, the bibliographical essay and the review of literature serve an additional function, namely, as a demonstration of your knowledge and understanding of relevant scholarship and, thus, a demonstration of your ability to undertake a given research project.)
Assignment Description: This assignment is sequenced as follows:

**Informal Proposal:** Write a brief (no more than one page) proposal in which you identify your research area, your question(s) about that area, and a reflection on your research area and question. (See separate handout on the proposal.)

Informal Proposal is due: Monday, February 16

**Essay:** You will write a 15- to 20-page paper (either a review of literature or a bibliographic essay) that addresses at least 15 sources. (You will undoubtedly find many more sources and may include as many as you wish but be realistic. Ask yourself: how much can I read closely within the time limitations of the semester.)

Bibliographical Essay or Review of Literature is due: During the Final Exam Period

**Peer Response:** You will conduct a peer review of one of your colleague's manuscripts. I will assign you a partner for this task. This assignment serves a dual purpose: 1) to provide you with an opportunity to practice writing the kind of response you may be called on to do as a thesis advisor, grant evaluator, or manuscript/book proposal reviewer, and 2) to practice working with a reviewer's response to help you revise a manuscript. Both goals contribute to professional development. You will receive a detailed assignment sheet for conducting this review that will be modeled on the evaluation criteria used by several publishing houses.

Peer Response is due on or before Monday, March 23

**Models of Bibliographical Essays and Reviews of Literature**

Before planning and writing this essay, it may be helpful to examine models of bibliographical essays and reviews of literature. In addition to doing key word searches for either “bibliographical essay” or “review of literature” in titles of pieces (essays, books, or journals) in your research area, you might look at one or more of the following:


Review of Educational Research (journal that publishes reviews of literature in education)