UNDERSTAND AND ACT: CLASSICAL RHETORIC, SPEECH ACTS, AND THE TEACHING
OF CRITICAL DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

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ABSTRACT

My research seeks to reconceive the idea of a classic rhetoric, with political concerns informed by speech-act theory and critical theory, to invigorate student writing in English composition and in writing-intensive courses in the humanities and social sciences. Current-traditional practice in composition—the dominant pedagogy today—creates a situation of unreality for students by treating their work as practice for later use outside the academy. This study claims that students do their best work when their learning is connected to their vital civic and political interests. Students should be given the opportunity to explore their vital interests as active agents—critical democratic participants—in a polis. This study demonstrates a method of engaging students through critical reading and responding to political texts written by and for the Presidents of the United States.

The study first seeks a necessary connection between language use and democratic participation by accounting for the role of rhetoric in a revised theory of speech-acts. Following from this connection, the study charts the history of civic participation by speaking and writing in ancient Greece. This civic participation and political application of rhetoric is then contrasted with the history of belletrism in English studies in America from the eighteenth century. This history
demonstrates how the concerns of rhetoric in education moved from the civic to the literary, or from the polis to the personal.

The study suggests that current practices informed by critical theory fall short of civic engagement. A new model of critical literacy and a related pedagogy, integrating speech-act theory, political analysis, and critical language study, is demonstrated.

Empirical research includes textual analysis of current textbooks to demonstrate how belletristic concerns continue to dominate current pedagogy. Classroom research and textual analysis of student writing—including lexicon analysis by computer—demonstrates how the use of political texts, and assignments that ask student to engage the polis, may lead to more effective and engaged writing by students.

The study concludes with an analysis of presidential rhetoric focused on autobiography, campaign promises, and apologia to demonstrate the richness of these texts for reading and analysis in the proposed pedagogical model.

This abstract of 345 words is approved as to form and content.
The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, have examined a dissertation titled “Understand and Act: Classical Rhetoric, Speech Acts, and the Teaching of Critical Democratic Participation,” presented by Andrew R. Cline, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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For we neither possess nor do we honestly seek to obtain a polity which can properly deal with our affairs. And yet we all know that success does not visit and abide with those who have built around themselves the finest and strongest walls, nor with those who have collected the greatest population in one place, but rather with those who most nobly and wisely govern their state. For the soul of a state is nothing else than its polity.

--Isocrates, "Aeropagiticus"
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 1874, the faculty of Harvard University was annually shocked to discover that incoming freshmen could not write well, at least according to the evidence of newly instituted entrance exams. More than half failed. The news media of the day sounded the alarm (Connors, Composition 11). This was the first “Why Johnny Can’t Write” scare in the fledgling American culture. Another scare happened in 1976. And still others, involving reading, literature, history, and the classics, happened during the so-called Culture Wars of the 1990s.

The commonality among these events is the idea that students are either poorly prepared for college by grade schools or that college fails to teach necessary skills and/or cultural knowledge. And this leads to hand-wringing among journalists and pundits and calls to correct such a sorry state of affairs from aggrieved culture watchers.

The history of the last 120 years of higher education in America is littered with the pedagogical experiments of those who would “correct” the problem. I wish to add this study to the detritus.

In the news media, the problems of literacy in the United States often do not get the in-depth treatment necessary to a fuller understanding of what higher education is about today and how it got to be that way. It is safe to say that higher education today is primarily about preparing students to take places in the current socio-economic order, i.e. to get jobs. In 2002, part of what it means to provide such an education is to teach students to write well. What is often not discussed in the news media is that this concern has changed very little since English became a subject of study in the
Dissenting Academies of Scotland in the early 1700s. One might think that, having been at it so long, educators might have finally figured out how to teach Johnny to write. But, as the news media dutifully points out from time to time, American students seem to be poor writers today—quantified by checking their ability to reproduce standard academic English—compared to students of some golden past.

Whether or not Johnny can write I cannot say. The evidence from my own teaching demonstrates the unremarkable fact that students come to college with a wide range of writing skills. They also come with a wide range of experiences and interests. They come with a wide range of goals and dreams. And to my way of thinking, none of this can or should be separated from a concept of literacy in education. A single test cannot tell us whether Johnny can write. It can only give us a snapshot of a single, decontextualized performance by a complex human being. So writing cannot be separated as a skill from all that the individual is, all that his/her situation is, or all that their interaction with the academy (or any institution) is. Yet, for most of the last 120 years, English composition has been taught as a discreet skill in concert with the purpose of academic institutions by the practitioners of the most successful composition practice of the period—current-traditional rhetoric. I will use the term “current-traditional practice” in this study because I contend that what the term identifies is not a rhetoric but a set of practices for teaching and then demonstrating competence in a privileged dialect. I use the word “successful” in much the same way a biologist might: to identify the fittest survivor, the longest survivor.

Current-traditional practice evolved from middle class, Anglo-American economic concerns. From roughly 1730 to 1870, the teaching of
rhetoric came to be the teaching of English composition and speech. The hallmarks of current-traditional practice are concerns with personal voice, correctness in usage, grace in style, and objective detachment in attitude toward the subject of discourse. Acceptable topics are those that may be treated objectively rather than emotionally. Truth is found in an objective reality understandable by direct observation of the individual through the five senses. Those observations may be articulated in language in such a way that the auditor is able to reproduce the knowledge or experience of the speaker. Breakdowns in voice, usage, or style hamper this transfer of truth.

S. Michael Halloran refers to the freshman composition class taught using current-traditional practice as a “wasteland” (College Curriculum 245). He contrasts the concerns of current-traditional practice with the concerns of the rhetorical tradition of antiquity, which “gives primary emphasis to communication on public problems, problems that arise from our life in political communities” (College Curriculum 246). The rhetorical tradition is interested rather than disinterested. It accepts that truth may be contingent and social. And truth may not always be easily transferable in language. Instead, language persuades more than it indicates the existence of a transcendent truth. In his essay from 1982, “Rhetoric in the American College Curriculum: The Decline of Public Discourse,” Halloran asks: “How did we get from the rhetorical tradition to current traditional rhetoric” (245)? He and others, such as Robert J. Connors, Sharon Crowley, Thomas P. Miller, and James A. Berlin, have explored and answered this question. I will review their work and then add my voice to those who now ask: What can we do about it?
Many scholars have attacked current-traditional practice. Historians of rhetoric have charted its formation. Theorists have attacked its assumptions. Practitioners have dismissed its pedagogy. But still it lives. This study will review the history and attack from a different flank. I will not concede that Johnny cannot write. Instead, I will claim that Johnny could write better if we could find a way to let him do so.

This dissertation is the result of a decision I made in August 1996 during the graduate teacher training session prior to the start of classes at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. At the time, the composition program emphasized cultural studies as its preferred context and content for first-year composition. I had been assigned a section in the computer-mediated classroom. Because that venue was still new to the English department, the training materials and the sample syllabus did not cover how to make use of that unique environment in the context of cultural studies. It was part of my job as a new teacher to figure it out. I made a snap decision that had more to do with my own comfort than sound pedagogical theory or practice. Because the computers would allow the class immediate access to the news through the Internet, and because of my own interest in political science, I decided to use the presidential election that year as the context and content for my class. In the semesters that followed, I kept using this interdisciplinary approach as the focus of many of my classes as I refined my theory and practice.

What I had done, quite by accident, was introduce civic concerns to my composition class, which demanded that students concern themselves with the interplay among subject position, texts, audience, and institutions. In many ways, that first class was an initial stab
at offering students a rhetoric class as classically conceived. I thrust that first class into the middle of one of the biggest problems of the larger American political community: choosing a president.

I have come to believe that my initial, hasty decision was a lucky break because it led me to a line of thinking about how the classical concerns of rhetoric faded from the American academy and why that change has been detrimental to our students’ abilities to think critically, write effectively, and act politically. This dissertation is my attempt to demonstrate how and why we might return to some classical concerns.

I contend that writing courses might be better (re)conceived as rhetoric courses. Further, I contend that writing-intensive courses in the humanities and social sciences might be better conceived as discipline-specific rhetoric courses. As rhetoric courses these writing and composition courses could have rhetorical motivations rather than institutional motivations for writing. These courses could be about the ancient and traditional subject of rhetoric: the civic.

In the past 20 years, the critical literacy movement has advanced the content of writing courses within English departments by making them points of political and social interaction among students, teachers, institutions, and the public sphere. These courses typically help students understand their world in terms of power relationships and the historical circumstances that have shaped those relationships. I propose to show how we might further the concerns of this movement by making the typical composition course (and writing-intensive courses in the humanities and social sciences) more overtly civic in its concerns. After exploring these relationships, I think students should be encouraged to explore their relationship to the polis and
its institutions and then act upon their civic goals for the purpose of encouraging greater engagement, eliciting more effective writing, and promoting critical democratic participation.

To get the best writing from students across disciplines, I contend that they should find personal and rhetorical motivations to speak to an audience that could be larger than the teacher and the class--ideally the public. So the content of a writing course might include, if not be entirely about, (disciplinary) issues of public importance in which the student comes to terms with his/her own subject position and negotiates that position among his/her classmates and the polis. Students, I believe, are better served and better taught by engaging them in the public sphere as active agents coached by teachers who consider themselves, and indeed act as, public intellectuals.

**Defining Rhetoric**

A universal feature of any treatment of rhetoric is a definition differentiated from among the many definitions that have held currency since the ancient Greeks first coined the term. This study will be no different in that regard but with one exception: I will define and use the term rhetoric complexly throughout this study as (1) an academic discipline; (2) as a socio-political skill in language use; (3) as persuasive, stylistic features in language use, and; (4) following George Kennedy, as a form of “energy” in language (Hoot 106). None of these ways of defining rhetoric is exclusive. The term has multiple denotations and connotations, and I will not attempt to settle on any particular one. Rather, I will try to be clear which of these definitions I am using.
I will attempt to situate the importance of rhetoric throughout much of this study in terms of speech-act theory. Dictionary definitions of rhetoric most often describe it in a typical dualism: as the effective use of language to persuade or as the study of the elements of style and structure in writing or speaking. These typical dictionary definitions clearly point to a dualistic nature of rhetoric as understood for much of the past 2,500 years. On the one hand, rhetoric is a skill with a socio-political purpose: to persuade. On the other hand, rhetoric is the study and application of style and structure. These two definitions are not necessarily exclusive. Beginning my study by accounting for the role of rhetoric in speech-act theory will show how the parts of this dualism may be thought of as two parts of the same object.

Rhetoric for the Greeks was not a concept without conflict. Plato’s early conception of rhetoric called it a “knack” that could be used to make poor arguments seem the better. For Plato, a proper rhetoric was a skill, used in the service of philosophy, to help mankind arrive at transcendent truth. His antipodes, the Sophists, maintained a position much like the social-epistemic rhetoricians today, that rhetoric identifies and creates contingent truths. Aristotle compartmentalized rhetoric into distinct subsets of skills and called it “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” (1355b). These are just three of the many ways the Greeks conceived of rhetoric. All three share a concern with the polis, moral philosophy, and politics. To varying degrees, the concern with the polis has never left a rhetoric defined as a socio-political skill in language use. It is this concern from Greek
practice that I will demonstrate is useful to us today in reinvigorating the discipline of rhetoric.

So I posit four working definitions for this study. As an academic discipline, rhetoric is the theory, practice, and critique of effective written and oral communication. As a socio-political skill in language use, rhetoric is the use of certain discourses in certain contexts with certain audiences for the purpose of persuasion. As the persuasive features of language use, rhetoric is the theory, practice, and critique of the persuasive effects of language features, i.e. how various features persuade. As the energy of language, rhetoric is the ever-present, pre-linguistic source of our ability to understand the persuasive (perlocutionary) intent of a message.

The Research Question

My research demonstrates one way we might return the discipline of rhetoric to openly political concerns and engage students in meaningful writing as opposed to writing that simply asks them to demonstrate decontextualized competence in the dialect of standard academic English. My research includes: (1) library research to bolster my theory of rhetoric beginning with a consideration of its role in linguistic expression, the historical/political background of current-traditional practices in the teaching of composition, current challenges to the dominant practices, my integration of rhetoric, political science, and critical theory; (2) critical discourse analysis of current textbooks; (3) critical discourse analysis of student writing produced under my pedagogical model; and (4) critical discourse analysis of presidential texts to demonstrate professional application.
My goal is to answer a question I have developed following from the concerns of Richard Ohmann, James A. Berlin, S. Michael Halloran, Thomas P. Miller, Sharon Crowley, and Susan Jarratt: How might we effect a return to the academy of a classical discipline of rhetoric, with a civic (rhetorical) motivation rather than an institutional motivation, that promotes the desire and talent for civic engagement and critical democratic participation in our students? This question and this study presuppose that civic engagement is a virtue in a democratic republic and that students are active agents in its polis.

Answering this question requires an interdisciplinary integration of the concerns of classical rhetoric, linguistics (speech-act theory), critical literacy/theory, and political science. In that regard, I posit a tripartite critical literacy that includes integrating: (1) critical discourse analysis, or critical language study, as inspired by Norman Fairclough, (2) a revised formula of the speech-acts that accounts for the role of rhetoric in illocutionary acts, and (3) an understanding of how the political "spectacle," as described by Murray Edelman, creates our political experience. I will show how these three parts combine to create a better understanding of how we might further the project of critical literacy by extending its concern with students’ historical/social/political situatedness into civic action. The general understanding of critical literacy I am working from comes from Ira Shor: Critical literacy is learning to write and read to become aware of one's experience as constructed within certain power relationships (1). I would add to this, however, that one’s experience is not entirely so constructed. Much of these three parts necessarily include a broad range of rhetorical contexts proper to an education for an enlightened democratic citizenry and
encouraging their participation in understanding, and perhaps challenging, the power relationships inherent in their lived experience.

My study focuses on the pedagogical use of texts generated by the U.S. presidency because of its unique position in American politics and the public consciousness. The president is both head of state and leader of the nation. This bifurcation creates unique tensions for both the executive branch and citizens looking to the executive for leadership. We may, for example, revere the president as symbol of the nation while at the same time bitterly question the policies of the man who is head of state. As scholars such as Roderick Hart, Mary Stuckey, Martin Medhurst, Carol Gelderman, and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell have shown, the essence of presidential power and leadership is rhetorical. Presidents use public address to hold this bifurcation together and present a unified concept of themselves and the office. I intend to show how we might use the texts of the presidency to further engage students in public writing and to further understand the unique rhetorical position of this office.

The Question of Subject Position

What kind of possibilities does this tripartite critical literacy make possible? This integration could make possible not only reflection and analysis of personal and political experience, it also seems to demand civic action on the part of the students and the teacher, which begins to suggest an answer to my research question.

This brings me to Susan Jarrett, William Rice, and Donald Lazere. All three, in different ways, advocate a kind of civic engagement by
students and teachers that is important to my understanding of critical literacy and its political possibilities.

Jarrett claims that we need a more rhetorical composition theory in order to negotiate political conflict. She takes as her model for this theory the thinking of the Sophists of ancient Greece. From the Sophists we get the ideas that knowledge is socially constructed, that truth is contingent, that a democratic society demands civic engagement, and that rhetorical conflict is a natural part of the political process. Further, Jarrett contends that rhetoric teachers should act more like the Sophists by embracing the idea of being public intellectuals, i.e. engaging the public sphere with writing as we should ask our students to do. As she explains: “The sophists’ ‘practice,’ not confined to the classroom, made them into the pre-eminent public intellectuals of their era -- a role that should, I believe, be sought by composition teachers today” (95).

This leads me to Rice who critiques the current state of academic writing in terms of audience. To be a public intellectual means that scholars must be prepared to write for a general audience and be encouraged by the academy to do so. He would prefer to see more books like Neil Postman’s *Amusing Ourselves to Death* published by academics. This, he says, would re-connect us with our students and with an audience eager to understand the knowledge the academy produces (3-5). Jarrett sees possibilities for students, Rice sees possibilities for teachers.

Finally, Lazere is unafraid to posit an autonomous subject position for students and teachers within his concept of critical literacy. He claims we must develop critical thinking skills in students, specifically within English departments, in order to combat
what he believes is the political illiteracy of our day and instill in students the ability and willingness to make autonomous judgments about their lives and circumstances. He suggests bringing political issues into the classroom with a rhetorical purpose: to understand. I will add to this the idea that we must also encourage students to act on their understandings. Rhetoric once was the foundation of education and could be again if we reconnect the concepts of understanding and action. My combining study in English and political science is meant to show how this might work in an informed way.

Rhetoric scholar Sharon Crowley privileges the idea that students should understand and act/write within a context that is "real," i.e. not manufactured simply as a means for a teacher to assess competence. As she explains:

   Ancient rhetoricians knew that students learned to speak and write most efficiently when their work was motivated by some compelling cultural or professional urgency. Contemporary research confirms that, outside of the freshman classroom, writing always occurs within some motivating context . . . Anyone who has taught the first-year composition course . . . knows that its central challenge is to provide students with occasions and contexts for writing that are sufficiently specific and interesting to engage them with the process. But even the most inventive assignments cannot entirely disguise the fact that in the universally required composition class, the primary motivation for composing is to supply teachers with opportunities to measure student performance. In other words, the fact of the requirement provides first-year composition with an institutional motivation rather than a rhetorical one. This makes for a highly artificial writing situation that may explain, at least in part, why such instruction never seems to stick. The writing done in required writing classes is an imitation, or better, a simulacrum, of the motivated writing that gets done elsewhere in the academy and in the culture at large. (Composition 8)

It is my contention that combining the historic concern with civic engagement from the discipline of political science with the rebirth of a classical rhetoric will help teachers and students create
classrooms that are more sites of civic engagement and less sites of simple demonstration of academic competence—dynamic rather than static. Note that I have used the indefinite article “an” in referring to classical rhetoric. I do not mean to suggest an easy correspondence between the political/social/rhetorical situations of twenty-first-century Americans and ancient Greeks of the fifth century B.C.E. Instead, I will draw from certain essentials of classical rhetoric that I believe will help further political engagement and effective writing in our context.

Who is the student? A central agreement among scholars of critical literacy appears to be that the student is an unenlightened being in need of political awareness. Just as Ohmann accused current-traditional textbooks and teachers of treating students like pre-people, the whole critical literacy project appears to do the same thing from another angle. James Sosnoski accuses some critical theorists of seeking a return to the teacher-centered classroom. The project of critical literacy as currently articulated seems to fall apart as soon as you remove the teacher. Even the liberatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire appears to me to suffer this fate: politically, students are pre-people. Ohmann would remind us that students arrive at the university with agendas. Edelman would remind us that they are committed to them.

Who is the teacher? Clearly, some critical teachers are disturbed by the potential to indoctrinate students. Patricia Bizzell, for example, is clear that she wants to encourage a left political agenda. But she just as clearly wants teachers to be open about their politics. Others, such as Lazere, believe it is possible and desirable to teach politically without pushing "one true faith" (259). I applaud
his desire, but he misunderstands the formation of ideology—intensely personal and based on cultural myths, as Edelman would explain. Shor, on the other hand, appears to have no problem using his agenda as fodder for his classes because, as he explains, no pedagogy is politically innocent (23). So where does education stop and indoctrination begin? I do not know. Ohmann might claim that the two are quite possibly identical in purpose if not in method. Like our popular understanding of the Sophists, I hope to posit not a politically innocent critical theory but a theory and practice that allow the adult students of the academy to use rhetoric to challenge and change the world in effective dialectic with the polis.

Sosnoski profiles three types of critical teachers that I can see compete for answers to the questions "Who is the student?" and "Who is the teacher?" They are: (1) the reflexive teacher, (2) the facilitating teacher, and (3) the subversive teacher (209-10). Such neat categories are never really so neat. Obviously the lines are blurred. But I think he is on to something here in identifying what teachers think critical literacy is and what roles they play and students play within such a pedagogical project. The reflexive teacher tries to change students into assumption-challenging intellectuals. The facilitating teacher tries to help students mediate between home discourses and privileged discourses. And the subversive teacher encourages students to embrace their lived (counter-)experiences. What I think we see here is how views of the student, teacher, and their purposes differ even within a project in which most would agree that the purpose is to teach students to situate themselves and engage in social change.
Generally, I think the reflexive teacher is one who believes that critical literacy is something like a skill to be put to use by the student in the conduct of his/her life. These teachers (and I think I place myself mostly in this category) seem to believe that once a student is enlightened to the process/skill of critical thought, he or she will quite naturally want to engage the public sphere for socio-political purposes. What I like about this category is that it seems to fit John Dewey's idea, from The School and Society, that education should not be divorced from civic engagement. He believed that composition in particular suffered when the students' "vital interests" were left out of the classroom (qtd. in Shor 10).

Dewey had a Greek-like concept of vital interests as civic interests. Without vital interests, there is no purpose. Without purpose, there is no motivation. And a lack of purpose and motivation contributes to a myriad of faked-up devices to fool students into believing there are good reasons and good audiences in composition courses or writing-intensive courses in the humanities and social sciences. Current-traditional practice has led us down this path. Its faked-up pedagogy has destroyed the idea within the modern university that rhetoric is itself a vital interest because it is the creator and mediator of the public sphere and the contingent truths that arise there.

The facilitator seems most concerned with the institutional constraints on students becoming critical thinkers. These are mediators between the discourse of standard academic English and home discourses. But it is more complicated than merely the study of language use. These teachers are negotiating among the social and political conventions that create, and are created by, language differences. Once that is done, the hope is the student will be able
to use the privileged discourse to think critically and act politically—as characterized by Bizzell's early work. With much refinement—especially her struggle with the contention between her espousing a political point of view and her countering antifoundationalism—I think the bulk of Bizzell's thought remains in this category.

The problem I have with this category of critical pedagogy is that it appears to me to lack any clear route to civic engagement. And engagement is certainly implied in all the definitions of critical literacy that I have read. To state that students are situated historically and need to question their situations and power relationships is to suggest, by implication, that something be done. The facilitating theory seems to be content with negotiation as intellectual exercise, leaving activism and engagement to the gumption of the student at some later time. Now, does this suggest that I think engagement should be forced? No. I think, instead, the route to engagement needs to be clear and inevitable, otherwise the motivation to write is purely institutional instead of rhetorical. Critical literacy without civic engagement is merely an academic exercise that becomes open to appropriation by the academy as a decontextualized skill to be exploited in the way composition is exploited today.

The subversive is in us all to a certain extent. I would even go so far as to claim that the subversive is essential to critical theory because it is exactly this pushing against established power that defines critical literacy. I see two dangers in emphasizing this particular branch. First, I think subversive teachers who attempt to re-educate create a situation similar to the facilitators in which the idea of civic engagement is lost. They create it, however, in a
different way: by assuming that changing your mind necessarily changes your life. Bruce Herzberg demonstrated that a service learning project in his class did elevate social consciousness among students, but natural student resistance created a situation in which some students could not get away from their personal responses or, worse, faked up personal responses to give the teacher what he wanted (248). Second, because some marginalized students come to the academy quite well aware of their status (often seeking to change it), they do not necessarily need to be encouraged to use home discourses to fight the privileged discourses. They may already be doing that and, instead, need a facilitator to help them negotiate among discourses and the conventions of cultural and political institutions. I think some marginalized students actually become pedagogical fodder for teachers who use them as examples, thus magnifying classroom conflict in an artificial way. I think the danger of treating students as pre-people is most acute in the case of marginalized students.

Positing a role for a classical concept of rhetoric, one that encourages civic engagement, opens me to charges of positing and promoting a stable modernist subject that is able to positively account for social ills, transparently engage an audience, easily negotiate the institutions of the public sphere, and directly effect change on the culture. Many critical theorists reject such easy notions, as do I. John Clifford, in his essay “The Subject in Discourse,” explains the structuralist position as maintaining that writers do not simply express themselves or reflect unique social realities . . . but rather mirror a general and systematic pattern of oppositions common to all narratives, myths or languages. Writing does not directly express an individual’s ideas; it transmits universal codes. (40)
Clifford further explains the poststructuralist position, in which meaning is situational and relational. He writes that everything depends on the specific institution where the discourse takes place; in varying contexts the same words are radically transformed to mean one thing and then another. Poststructuralism, then, decenters writing as well as the self, seeing both not only as the effect of language patterns but as the result of multiple discourses already in place, already overdetermined by historical and social meanings in constant struggle. (40)

Later in the same essay, Clifford outlines how the modernist assumptions of current-traditional practice manifest in a current, popular textbook, _The St. Martin’s Guide_. He says that like most current textbooks,

> St. Martin’s creates the illusion that we can transcend ideology with three well-developed paragraphs of evidence, that we can somehow change the minds of others in a rhetorical vacuum freed from the pollutants of prior social alignments. This thinking is more than naïve; it denies identity, represses class conflict, negates the way ideas originate in specific social configurations. It asks writers to believe that by adopting and carefully orchestrating an objective, rational argument, they can win the day and bring Jesse Helms to his senses. (44)

I am in complete agreement with Clifford. I think many scholars assume, however, that current-traditional practice springs from the classical tradition. It did from certain aspects of the tradition, and it most certainly did not from other aspects of the tradition. In fact, the classical tradition is as conflicted about subject position as our contemporary theories. Rather than choose sides, which I consider counter-productive and, possibly, in error, I prefer to posit a subject position of maximum complexity. Modernity and postmodernity do not create a dichotomy. The situation is not as simple as one being a correct concept of the subject and the other being a mistaken concept of the subject. Instead, each of us experiences and displays
aspects of the modern and postmodern subject. I will situate this study in regard to that observation.

**Classroom Research**

For the past four years, I have been formulating, testing, and refining a rhetoric pedagogy that attempts to bring the classical, political concerns of rhetoric back to the classroom and to encourage civic engagement in my students. This pedagogy combines two of the four major composition philosophies as identified by Richard Fulkerson: expressive, mimetic, rhetorical, and formalist (4). He acknowledges that, while distinct, these four philosophies do overlap in various ways depending on the teacher.

My pedagogy places expressivism at its foundation because experience begins with personal apprehension. Later in this study, I ground this choice in the “embodied” philosophy of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson coming out of cognitive science. And my pedagogy relies on the rhetorical because the desire to change hearts and minds (exigence, kairos, rhetorical situation) is an expression of self (complexly understood). My pedagogy relies on the writing of essays to encourage student engagement with their situations, the situations of others, and the polis and its institutions.

It has always struck me as odd and ironic that many of the critical theorists eschew the essay because it is a personal form that calls attention to the individual while at the same time they argue that teachers should be helping students situate themselves in society. But, actually, this apparent disconnect is not so odd, nor is it really so disconnected. The reason is that the situatedness many of the critical theorists privilege is not individual at all; it is
social, i.e. identity by group. This is a political choice. For example, if I were to be sitting in Ira Shor's class as a student, I would be expected to begin situating myself not as Andrew R. Cline, but rather as privileged white suburban male. I would be expected to start from this point, this identity by group, on my journey to understanding my situation in relation to "others."

Kurt Spellmeyer is correct that part of our task is to call attention to the writer's situatedness. He is defining "writer" as a unique individual when he suggests that the essay form is a proper genre for calling such attention. The essay in its very essence is a genre of unique voice (110). As Marianna Torgovnick says, the essay develops within the writer a voice that wants "to be heard" (qtd. in Atkins 105). This is not just, as in my case, the voice of privileged white suburban male; this is the voice of Andrew R. Cline, a person certainly complexly situated and multiply influenced (written, created), but a discussable entity nonetheless.

What Spellmeyer recognizes, correctly I believe, is that in order to help students understand their situatedness we should not deny them the foundation of their situation, which is their complex individual selves. It is this complex individual self that, for example, feels the sting of racism or the struggle of class conflict. Outside of the individual experience lies only a theoretical mass experience that lacks the pathos to arouse culture-changing action.

Certainly, the critical theorists make some cogent points in their critique of expressivist pedagogy, long the domain of the essay (as opposed to the article or expository paper) in the first-year writing course. If the assignment does not encourage a movement from self to other, then it may not help students situate themselves at
all. Rather, such an assignment encourages them to add more crust to their intellectual cocoons.

I would argue that any expressivist writing assignment or pedagogy that does not encourage the student to move from self to other is not essayistic and is not producing essays. From the moment Montaigne created the form, it has been defined in part by a personal look inward that eventually looks outward. And, I would argue, it is this outward look--this mid-part of the journey--that is the locus of connection between reader and writer. To write an essay as essay is to situate one's self for the edification of self and others. The essay hardly makes sense as a genre or a purpose outside of this movement. Note that the first essayist published and continually revised his publication. Montaigne was not producing Dickensonian tidbits to be later discovered left in a drawer neatly tied with yarn. Montaigne was communicating with self and other, as were Bacon, Steele, McPhee, and Didion who followed.

I find it interesting that Spellmeyer sees an "absence" of an "alternative public forum" outside the classroom. He believes the classroom should be a site in which teachers call attention to students' situatedness--something "the essay takes as its central concern" (111). I would argue that the classroom is, and should be, a public forum. I would argue further that the essay as a popular art form provides an entrance to the larger public sphere (a forum that is certainly there), where it is a privileged form. Teachers and students who do not envision a wider readership for students' essays are not assigning or writing essays; they are assigning or writing exactly that "degraded variant" Spellmeyer mentions (111). It is the idea of a public forum that moves the writing from degraded variant to essay.
Robert Scholes demonstrated how a set of three dichotomies defines the current English apparatus, including a differentiation between literature and non-literature, between production and consumption of texts, and between a so-called real word and the academy. Within this apparatus, the consumption of literary texts with an academic audience sits atop the intellectual hierarchy. The production of “pseudo-non-literature” for no real audience but the teacher sits at the bottom. In English studies today (and, to a certain extent, in the social sciences) we ask students to do two distinctly different things. We ask them to read and interpret privileged texts and we ask them to create texts of their own that can never be privileged. Indeed, we ask them to produce texts that will not address any exigence, any audience, or any real socio-political need they may have. Teachers who imagine the classroom as a public forum presuppose that students have something to say and someone to say it to. I believe my research demonstrates that they do. We get the degraded variants because we too often treat students as pre-people and ask them to produce degraded variants. We treat them this way by imagining no audience for them outside ourselves (teachers) and no purpose outside of passing the class. This is the infection caused by the disease of service to the university that has turned the venerable discipline of rhetoric into its degraded variant we call composition.

Much time is spent in my classroom discussing purpose and audience with the underlying metaphor that the classroom is a site of civic engagement. If Lakoff and Johnson are correct that our conceptual system is “fundamentally metaphoric,” then this seemingly simple shift of emphasis is not so simple after all (Metaphors 3). Instead, such a shift in the current-traditional paradigm may be more
fundamental than the so-called paradigm shift from product to process pedagogy during the 1960s and 1970s. This shift also affects more traditional types of assignments. For example, when the classroom is a site of civic engagement, then assignments that ask students to narrate, expound, analyze, or essay take on a greater meaning than is possible in current-traditional practice, in which student writing is most often thought of as practice by pre-people for later use once they leave the academy. To analyze a presidential speech, for example, becomes a public and political act. To compare the fiction of a political novel with the reality of a political campaign becomes a public and political act.

I believe the critical theorists who will make a difference in the coming years will be the ones who believe that students are real people who have something important to contribute even before they get to our classrooms. A big part of our jobs should be to help them situate, complicate, and disseminate their contribution.

Conclusion

For much of the past 2,500 years, rhetoric has been central to Western education. It was the meta-discipline of the classical curriculum as well as the knack by which men engaged the public sphere. In its degraded variant we call composition, we have kept the idea of writing as a knack but lost the idea that rhetoric informs our learning and our civic actions. This study attempts to demonstrate how to return the discipline of rhetoric to political/civic concerns and engage students in meaningful writing as opposed to writing that simply asks them to demonstrate decontextualized competence in the dialect of standard academic English.
In his famous work, *How to do Things with Words*, J. L. Austin outlined his theory of speech acts and the concept of performative language, in which to say something is to do something. To make the statement “I promise that p” (in which p is the propositional content of the utterance) is to perform the act of promising as opposed to making a statement that may be judged true or false. Performatives cannot be true or false, only felicitous or infelicitous. Austin creates a clear distinction between performatives and constantives, statements that attempt to describe reality and can be judged true or false, but he eventually comes to the conclusion that most utterances, at their base, are performative in nature. That is, the speaker is nearly always doing something by saying something.

For Austin, what the speaker is doing is creating social realities within certain social contexts. For example, using an explicit performative, to say “I now pronounce you man and wife” in the context of a wedding, in which one is marrying two people, is to create a social reality, i.e. in this case a married couple.

Austin described three characteristics, or acts, of statements that begin with the building blocks of words and end with the effects those words have on an audience. Locutionary acts: “roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain ‘meaning’ in the traditional sense.” Illocutionary acts: “such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, &c., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force.” Perlocutionary acts: “what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading,
deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading” (109). Austin focused on illocutionary acts, maintaining that here we might find the “force” of a statement and demonstrate its performative nature. For example, to say “Don’t run with scissors” has the force of a warning when spoken in a certain context. This utterance may be stated in an explicitly performative way, e.g., “I warn you, don’t run with scissors.” This statement is neither true nor false. Instead, it creates a warning. By hearing the statement, and understanding it as a warning, the auditor is warned, which is not to say that the auditor must or will act in any particular way regarding the warning.

My goal here is to demonstrate a connection between speech-act theory and rhetoric for the purpose of grounding the contentions of this study. I believe it is not satisfactory to simply assert that rhetoric is social and epistemic, that rhetoric is central to meaning-making and truth-making, that rhetoric properly informs all academic disciplines, and that the implications of these assertions is that the proper sphere of rhetoric is metadisciplinary. The ground for these assertions may be found in speech-act theory.

In the fragmented academic discipline of English studies, scholars often identify themselves in one of three groups: linguists who study the structure of language, compositionists who study the creation of texts, and literary historians who study the reading of texts. These boundaries are certainly problematic and not without crossovers and exceptions. For example, Sandy Petrey uses speech-act theory from linguistics to inform his readings of literary texts. Austin denies that literary utterances may be performative. Petrey argues that Austin is mistaken on this point. What is important here is that a literature scholar, using Austin, argues that the
“constantive/performative and literary/illocution distinctions are equally irreconcilable with recognition that what language says is as much a speech act as what it does. Like saying and doing, writing performs” (56). Austin outlined certain rules that must be met in order for a statement to be performative. First among these is: “There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having certain conventional effect, the procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances” (26). Petrey argues that this rule recognizes the social nature of communication. When applied to the reading of literary texts, Petrey argues, Austin’s position attacks structuralist readings and recognizes the role of the reader as the same as the role of the author despite the fictional nature of the text.

That speech-act theory privileges a social concept of language is important to this study of rhetoric because it accepts that, to be meaningful, language must be understood in a context. Kent Bach and Robert M. Harnish believe that much goes into using a language besides knowing it and being able to produce and recognize sentences in it. Exchanging words is a social affair, usually taking place within the context of a fairly well-defined social situation. In such a context we rely on one another to share our conception of what the situation is. With people we know, rather than spell everything out we rely on shared understandings to facilitate the process of communicating. (xiii)

That language is social, that communication requires a speaker and an auditor, that language use is always contextual and (within discourse communities) conventional, that language acts, that language creates social realities, are assertions recognizable to rhetoric scholars, at least to those who identify themselves with the social-epistemic rhetoricians. It is my contention here that rhetoric scholars take
these positions as self-evident, or see the evidence existing in social interaction. I suggest we may begin grounding these assertions in speech-act theory.

Austin maintained that once “we realize that what we have to study is not the sentence but the issuing of an utterance in a speech situation, there can hardly be any longer a possibility of not seeing that stating is performing an act” (139). This conclusion stated his belief that studying words or sentences (locutionary acts) outside of a social context tells us little about communication (illocutionary acts) or its effect on an audience (perlocutionary acts). Speech-act theory and its critiques are often articulated using imagined examples, in which the context of the utterance is erased to make a linguistic point and later added to demonstrate the true complexity of even the simplest statement. To show how statements (performatives) work, linguistic scholars have reduced the illocutionary act to the symbolic expression $F(p)$, in which $p$ is the propositional content and $F$ is the illocutionary force.

John Searle claims the illocutionary act is “the minimal complete unit of human linguistic communication. Whenever we talk or write to each other, we are performing illocutionary acts” (Mind 136). Illocutionary acts are performed with intentionality. As Bach and Harnish explain, people “don’t speak merely to exercise their vocal cords.” Some reason always exists, and this reason is called the communicative presumption: the mutual belief that whenever one person says something to another, the speaker intends to perform an illocutionary act (7). Further, an “illocutionary act is communicatively successful if the speaker’s illocutionary intention is recognized by the hearer . . . This is what communication is about;
anything more is more than just communication” (15). But more does exist because “illocutionary acts are all intentional and are generally performed with the primary intention of achieving some perlocutionary effect” (17). For example, a speaker may say “Shut the window” intending for the auditor to understand this communication as an order and further intending that the auditor should shut the window. According to Searle, a speech act may have any number of effects on the auditor other than those intended by the speaker. For example, the speaker might say “Shut the window,” and the auditor might respond by saying “Shut it yourself.” From this, Searle claims that the “fact that illocutionary acts are essentially intentional, whereas perlocutionary acts may or may not be intentional, is a consequence of the fact that the illocutionary act is the unit of meaning in communication” (Mind 137). This position eliminates intended effects from communication, which, from a rhetorical perspective, is odd. I would argue, in agreement with Bach and Harnish, that it is exactly the perlocutionary effect that drives speaker intention. What is the proper unit of data in communication? What is the unit of meaning? For some speech-act theorists it is F(p), in which the auditor understands the illocutionary force of a statement linked to its propositional content.

While the number of uses for language is “enormous,” Searle believes that there is a limited number of things we can do with language. In the structure of the illocutionary act F(p), the potential propositional content is limitless. But Searle asks: “How many types of F are there?” This is the same as asking: How many things can be done with language? And this immediately sets us to thinking of the number of verbs that identify illocutionary acts or
describe the effect of the illocutionary act on the auditor. So how many Fs there are would be limited to the number of verbs and open to the vagaries of language use and change. To “overcome” this problem, Searle posits the notion of “illocutionary point,” which is the “point or purpose in virtue of its being an act of that type” (Mind 147). In other words, the illocutionary point is the intention behind the illocutionary act, which is stated in a verb that describes the work the sentence is doing. Austin created such a schema, but I am in agreement with Petrey that Searle’s “most serviceable refinement” of Austin’s work is his five-part schema of illocutionary force (59).

Searle posits five illocutionary points: 1) Assertives: statements that may be judged true or false because they purport to describe a state of affairs in the world; 2) Directives: statements that attempt to make the auditor’s actions fit the propositional content; 3) Commissives: statements which commit the speaker to a course of action as described by the propositional content; 4) Expressives: statements that express the “sincerity condition of the speech act”; and 5) Declaratives: statements that attempt to change the world by “representing it as having been changed” (Mind 148-50). That is, when we speak (or write) we are doing one or more of the following: asserting, directing, commiserating, expressing, or declaring. As Sadock explains, the “illocutionary force of an utterance is always interpreted as having been intended” (10). This statement recognizes the pragmatic contention of Bach and Harnish that people do not speak simply to “exercise their vocal cords.” They would add that speakers have primary intentions that are perlocutionary. The very act of speaking (or writing) rhetorically presupposes an intention, and intentions of a certain kind may be found in the
Illocutionary force of a statement as it affects the propositional content. If the auditor understands our intended illocutionary point (illocutionary force) in its relation to the propositional content, we can be said to have communicated.

But where does this leave the perlocutionary act? Few linguists appear to be interested in the link between the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act, perhaps because the unit of data becomes terribly complex when we begin to consider human reactions to statements made in complex situations. Bach and Harnish state unambiguously that perlocutionary intentions are generally primary, but they do not specifically link this intention to illocutionary acts or show how these intentions follow from, or link to, perlocutionary acts. Some tacitly deny a connection by asserting that one “cannot produce effects on an audience by an utterance without issuing an utterance, but I can issue an utterance without producing effects on an audience” (Alston 30). How can this be? Intention must precede the locutionary act or there would be neither reason for, nor force behind, the propositional content of the illocutionary act. Indeed, there would be no illocutionary act without perlocutionary intention.

I suspect much of the trouble linguists have with the perlocutionary act is the complicating factor of human reactions that cannot be easily classified or predicted. In other words, we may be able to classify five illocutionary points that form the basis of a workable theory of language use, but the potential reactions of the auditor may be infinite. Plus, it may seem that the perlocutionary act is the proper area of study of other disciplines such as rhetoric or any number of the social and behavioral sciences in which other sets
of data are chosen for review that neither conflict with nor challenge
the linguistic data.

It would be rather easy to assert that rhetoric is the proper
disciplinary domain for the study of perlocutionary acts. This
assertion would find safe harbor in many classical and current views
of rhetoric. But, like George Kennedy, I think rhetoric may have
deeper roots. For example, I intend to show how we might further
understand F(p) by exploring the idea of illocutionary force and
Kennedy’s concept of rhetoric as a form of “energy” in language.

Kennedy appears to accept a linguistic definition of
communication in that rhetoric is “apparently present in communication
... [b]ut rhetoric should not be identified with communication,
since there seem to be various degrees of rhetoric among
communications: ‘zero grade’ rhetoric may be approached but never
quite achieved” (Comparative 106). I take this to mean that there is
no utterance so devoid of intention, and energy driving that
intention, that it would have no effect on an audience. And, perhaps,
there is no utterance at all that would have no effect. Kennedy
identifies rhetoric with the “energy inherent in communication: the
emotional energy that impels the speaker to speak, the physical energy
expended in the utterance, the energy level coded in the message, and
the energy experienced by the recipient in decoding the message” (Hoot
106). What Kennedy brings to the study of illocutionary acts is the
idea that one definition of rhetoric places it prior to speech and
intentionality. Rhetoric exists and is in play before we reach F(p).
At first, Kennedy’s “energy” and Austin’s “force” seem as if they
could be the same. But this is not the case. If rhetoric comes before
speech and intention, then it exists somewhere in the speech act prior
to the speaker formulating $F$ or $p$. As Kennedy asserts, rhetoric, as energy

has to exist in the speaker before speech can take place. It is prior in biological evolution and prior psychologically in any specific instance. Speech cannot take place without some force or motivation to articulate an utterance. The originator of a communication has to experience an exigence . . . Speech would not have evolved among human beings unless rhetoric already existed. (Hoot 107)

This sounds much like the pragmatism of Bach and Harnish. Kennedy takes it a step further by claiming that, for speech and the organs that help produce it to even exist, there must exist prior to speech something that makes speech necessary and effective (Hoot 107). Rhetoric exists first. Exigence follows. Danger precedes the warning call given by a herbivore to members of its herd when a carnivore is detected nearby. The ability to make an effective warning sound (locutionary act), and knowing what that warning should be to create the desired result (perlocutionary act), comes before intentionality. It is exactly such necessities that, as Kennedy claims, caused the biological structures that support speech to evolve. The line of communication, then, looks something like this: rhetoric, exigence, intention, speech act, communication, and effect.

Kennedy’s concept of intention and the linguistic concept of intention from speech-act theory are similar but emphasized differently. Kennedy, typical of a rhetorical point of view, sees intention as effective communication of $(p)$ through $F$ connected to a concomitant and desired perlocutionary effect. With his tongue firmly planted in his cheek, Kennedy suggests that we might try to discover some “quantitative” units of “rhetorical energy—call it a rheme—analogous to an erg or volt, by which rhetorical energy could be
measured. I leave that to the experimentalists” (Hoot 106). Whether this is possible is certainly debatable, but the larger point here is that this energy might be accounted for in speech-act theory to more closely connect illocutionary acts to perlocutionary acts and effects. According to Kennedy’s concept of rhetoric, some rheme exists in F(p) because no use of language is devoid of rhetoric. We might begin to represent it this way: F(p)'->PE (in which ' represents the rheme and PE represents the perlocutionary effect). The rheme indicates that a perlocutionary intention exists because it is the energy applied to language for the purpose of changing the landscape of being. And if this energy exists, I think we should try to account for it in speech-act theory at the point of the illocutionary act where it first emerges in verbal or written form for the purposes of communication and persuasion.

It might appear that a rheme, being a unit of rhetoric, which precedes exigence and speech acts in the line of communication, should be considered part of the locutionary act. I think the rheme should be thought of as a unit of rhetoric more complexly understood. For example, as energy, a rheme could be a voice inflection. The speaker might, for example, raise his/her voice in an attempt to urge action on the part of his/her auditor. Kennedy would argue that volume exists as a persuasive method prior to language or exigence. This suggests that rhetoric is foundational to language use but not necessarily language formation (locutionary act) by the speaker. I would not place this rheme at the site of the locutionary act because it is not crucial to forming the words or statements within the given language; it is added on based on, perhaps, a biological or cultural imperative that determines what is persuasive. So the rheme might be properly
considered in the illocutionary act. Further, an illocutionary act may carry several rhemes that Kennedy might consider energy in language but that another scholar might simply identify as a structural or stylistic element. For example, the speaker might combine biological and cultural rhemes when he/she raises his/her voice and repeats the F(p) several times.

Let us examine a sentence in context. Suppose a politician wishes for citizens of his country to defend liberty in “its hour of maximum danger.” For this politician, such a task is a great “endeavor” that requires “devotion,” “faith,” and “energy.” John F. Kennedy, the newly elected president speaking to the people on the occasion of his inauguration, says: “Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country” (157). Immediately we can see that this example is far more complex than those such as “Shut the window.” But I suggest this example allows us to more fully explore the connections between linguistic and rhetorical intention.

What does Kennedy want? What are his intentions? One might examine the entire speech and be able to garner evidence to answer these questions in multiple and complex ways. Whereas some linguists strip away all contexts to consider just the semantics and syntactics of an utterance, I will strip away only some context to shorten the analysis of this sentence for the purpose of demonstrating the necessity of considering a speaker’s perlocutionary intentions as part of the illocutionary act.

This statement was made as part of an inaugural address. This address is delivered by the newly elected president on the occasion of his inauguration at the swearing-in ceremony. This address is delivered by tradition, not by law. Most presidents have used the
address to begin reuniting the country behind a single leader following a divisive election and a transfer of power. Presidents also use the address to express shared national-cultural values and outline political principles (Campbell 15).

It would be terribly simplistic to assume or to posit that Kennedy had a single audience or a single perlocutionary effect in mind when he approved this sentence as written prior to his inauguration or when he delivered the sentence on 20 January 1961. But, in general, his inaugural speech was addressed to the American people and the theme of the address is typical of Cold War anti-communism at the time: We must fight the communists on many fronts to preserve our liberty. As he says in the famous fourth paragraph:

Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty. (155)

It is to these endeavors that the sentence in question is focused.

The sentence maps this way. The illocutionary force F is directive. Kennedy is directing. The propositional content (p) directs the auditors to ask what they can do for their country (in regard to defending liberty) rather than to ask what their country can do for them (in regard to exercising liberty). According to speech-act theory as articulated by scholars such as Searle, communication happens when the auditors understand this sentence as directive of the propositional content, i.e. understand that the new president is directing them to ask what they can do for their country instead of asking what their country can do for them.

What is it that the audience understands? As Searle might assert, they may understand the sentence as a directive: an utterance
that tells them to act a certain way in the world. A fuller understanding of its directiveness seems to me to require an understanding of the context in which it is directive (a new president giving an anti-communist speech during the Cold War) and the rhetorical energy employed to ensure a certain perlocutionary act.

This more complex understanding cannot come from a simple correspondence theory of the truth. The statement is far too abstract and complex. Instead, I suggest we can begin to grasp auditor understanding in the way Lakoff and Johnson posit understanding in their “embodied” theory of truth, which relies heavily on advances in cognitive science. According to Lakoff and Johnson, a “person takes a sentence as ‘true’ of a situation if what he or she understands the sentence as expressing accords with what he or she understands the situation to be” (Flesh 106). Here we begin to see why Austin may be correct in his idea that utterances are performative. Kennedy’s statement cannot be true or false in the way we understand these terms regarding a correspondence theory of truth. But that is not point. What Lakoff and Johnson demonstrate is that truth requires a complex understanding of the statement and context together (indeed they cannot be separated). The truth of Kennedy’s statement is surely that it is a directive in that he proposes that citizens act a certain way in a certain context. And here we begin to understand how to connect perlocutionary intent with an illocutionary act. The illocutionary act is directive in a context, and it is within the context of that directive that a fuller understanding of the statement might be achieved. A fuller understanding includes understanding the context of the directive, therefore, it also includes an understanding of the perlocutionary intent of the directive. The embodied theory of truth
leaves open the possibility for auditors to interpret a statement in ways not necessarily intended by the speaker thus creating the situation that troubles linguists trying to map clear routes between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. The way is tangled, but this generally does not bother rhetoricians.

Illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts are different. I have hinted at a connection between them coming from the embodied theory of truth. Now, what is the role of rhetoric in that connection? As demonstrated above, I believe that we must begin to account for context and intentionality in the speech act across the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary boundaries. To make an utterance requires exigence and rhetoric, which presupposes intention. Notice that this does not require an auditor outside the self. To make an utterance is to make an utterance in context, which includes the language used, the discourse community addressed, the exigence, and many other social/political/historical factors. So to represent the illocutionary as F(p) is to omit much of what makes a statement work, i.e. what completes the illocutionary act and leads to the perlocutionary act and effect.

I suggested above that we might begin a further understanding of the illocutionary act as F(p) → PE in which the added → stands for the rheme and suggests a perlocutionary intention leading to a perlocutionary effect (intended or otherwise). From the political example above, even this representation appears inadequate because the sentence was spoken in a context that certainly affects the meaning of the sentence. In other words, Kennedy is not talking about planting trees on Arbor Day. He is talking about something far different. And while the sentence could be fully understood in the context of Arbor
Day, it is fully understood in a different way in terms of an inaugural address focused on Cold War anti-communism. We must add context, and the language of the discourse community, to the model. Now we get $C^L(p)^R -> PE$, in which $C$ is the context (or rhetorical situation) of the speech act and $L$ is the language of the speech act and the discourse community.

How might the rhemes of Kennedy’s statement signal his intent within the context of his speech? Setting aside the ethical appeal for the moment as rather obvious, the statement relies on two rhetorical schemes: antithesis and anastrophe. Antithesis is a common scheme in political speeches, in which the speaker sets in opposition two ideas. In this case, Kennedy is setting in opposition two ideas about the relationship of a citizen to a democracy, i.e. does the citizen work for the democracy or does the democracy work for the citizen? Kennedy makes clear his choice by the illocutionary force of his statement. He is directive; he is telling his auditors what to do. So the antithesis rheme makes it possible for Kennedy to create the opposition and makes clear his intention which of the relationships to democracy he wishes his auditors to choose.

Kennedy reinforces his ethical position with the anastrophe rheme, a scheme in which the natural word order is changed, in this case, to elevate the sound of the sentence from a middle style to a grand style. This scheme not only reinforces his ethical stance as a new leader speaking to his people, it also reinforces the importance of the political context of a struggle to defend liberty in “its hour of maximum danger.” In the context of the Cold War, the anastrophe sounds grand. In the context of Arbor Day, it would sound ridiculous and pompous. To say “Don’t ask what your country can do for you,
instead ask what you can do for your country” in the context of the Kennedy inaugural is to fail to meet the proper tone of the occasion and to invite attention to a questionable choice in the relationship of a citizen to a democracy. By masking the choice in grand language, the rheme reinforces Kennedy’s choice and promotes his perlocutionary intent.

Because auditors understand statements through an embodied theory of truth, every statement is open to interpretation as it is filtered through the personal, ideological, cultural, and historical biases of the individual auditors. And, to further complicate matters, statements are open to reinterpretation. A statement from the George H. W. Bush’s speech to the Republican National Convention in 1988 provides a telling example. Bush created a promise when he said: “Read my lips. No new taxes” (A14). The illocutionary forces are directive and commissive. The central rheme is a metaphor, i.e. Bush’s lips are a tableau upon which can be easily read his intention (and his authority) that no new taxes should be passed. A further rheme might be identified as an image; this statement is reminiscent of tough-guy talk from American films made popular by actors such as Clint Eastwood and John Wayne. I think we can identify at least two perlocutionary intents in this statement. First, Bush wants citizens to vote for him based on his stand and the implicit promise not to create new taxes. Second, Bush wishes for Congress not to pass new taxes. As I will show later in this study, Bush achieves his first perlocutionary intent. One perlocutionary effect of this statement is that enough Americans were convinced (perlocutionary act) to engage in the act of voting for Bush. But Bush’s failure to keep his promise, and make the directive portion of his statement stick, played a role in his losing the
election in 1990. The perlocutionary effect was reversed. And the perlocutionary act was reversed; the voters became unconvinced.

We cannot know perlocutionary intent in the same way we can know illocutionary intent. Austin and Searle identified categories of verbs that signal illocutionary point. If we accept their categories, all one must do to discover illocutionary intent is to match the force of a statement with the propositional content. As I have argued, while this is interesting, this tells us little about how we get from illocutionary act to perlocutionary act. Discovering that is more difficult than considering the list of performative actions for illocutionary acts. It requires looking carefully at the context of the statement, which Austin suggested. And it requires considering the role of rhetoric in illocutionary acts. Therefore, in order to make fuller use of the illocutionary act as a useful tool in understanding human communication, I think it necessary to expand the formula to CLF(p)->PE in order to assert that the illocutionary act, while distinct, is not an isolated phenomenon, or, rather, it is a complex phenomenon. We do not speak for no reason. And we do not speak merely to communicate. We speak to do. And this presupposes a perlocutionary intent that may or may not lead to an intended perlocutionary act.

At this point I think the concept of do must expand. In illocutionary acts what we do is perform one of the five illocutionary points. The question arises for me: What are we doing when we do those five things. In the example of the Kennedy inaugural address we discover many illocutionary acts. What are we doing when we combine illocutionary acts into an entire discourse?

This is what I think we are doing: George Kennedy contends that rhetoric comes before speech; in other words, the means of persuasion
within a given language and culture exists before one decides to communicate. Exigence creates a rhetorical situation, which creates a communicative intention and a persuasive intention demanding that one speak-act in order create a desired perlocutionary effect. The building blocks of language help the speaker create the locutionary act of structuring sentences. Propositional content employing conventional force (illocutionary point) performs the illocutionary speech act. The perlocutionary effect of the communication, I would argue, depends heavily on the context of the situation, the illocutionary force of the statement, the rhemes used to create its persuasive appeal, the individual contexts of the auditors and their understanding of the communicative and persuasive intents of the speaker. This process happens again and again as one builds a discourse or encounters a discourse. What we doing is attempting to change the landscape of being by persuading our fellows to do what we want them to do (or not do what we do not want them to do). So, if to speak is to do, then to speak is necessary to the functioning of a social unit.

It is common to speak of the disaffected and the oppressed as having no voice, i.e. being unable to effect change for their own good by speaking because they are not heard by those in power. In a very real sense, then, to be unable to speak is to be unable to do in a larger socio-political or cultural sense. This study accepts two concepts of do. The concept following from speech-act theory locates the first do in the illocutionary point or force of a statement. By accounting for rhetoric in speech acts, we discover a second do in the construction of discourse to achieve some perlocutionary effect. We use an illocutionary force to effect the first do and we use discourse
built from illocutionary acts $C^iP(p)^r \rightarrow PE$ to effect the second do. In this study, I will question what it is we ask students to do in writing classes and outline the social, political, historical, rhetorical, and linguistic circumstances that have effectively robbed college students of their individual civic voices.
CHAPTER 3
GREEK DEMOCRACY, RHETORIC, AND SPEECH ACTS

To assert that to say is to do is to so assert for all human use of spoken and written language. If to say is not to do in any particular language, then speech-act theory would be merely a cultural phenomenon and not a human phenomenon. J. L. Austin did not question whether speech acts were universal in doing; he assumed it. Obviously, there are great cultural and cognitive variations across languages. But speech-act theory holds because when humans speak they mean to affect the world in the ways described by Searle’s five illocutionary points; they mean to make some change in the landscape of being in the future. George Kennedy demonstrated how other cultures do things with words in his comparative study of rhetoric, in which he concluded that rhetoric is a “universal phenomenon, one found even among animals, for individuals everywhere seek to persuade others to take or refrain from some action, or to hold or discard some belief” (Comparative 3). Because for Kennedy there is no “zero-grade” rhetoric, inherent in all utterances is an “energy” directed toward a perlocutionary intent. If such is the case, then the theory of speech-acts must be universal.

Greek Democracy and Rhetoric: A Short Overview

We cannot know if scholars or philosophers from our prehistory pondered the idea of speech acts or wondered about how language works. We do know, however, within the Western tradition, that the ancient Greeks did wonder about language. And what caused their wonderment was the realization, coming from collective political arrangements, that language spoken or written at certain times and in certain circumstances had very real effects on the polis.
Prior to Solon’s reforms circa 590 B.C.E., the Greeks had lived since about the ninth century B.C.E. in feudal-tribal units governed by aristocratic, land-holding families. The families cooperated economically and politically to a certain extent across the Greek and Ionian peninsulas. But such cooperation was often strained by economic competition and war. During the seventh century, Athens was ruled by its aristocracy through the Council of Areopagus (appointed aristocrats) and the archons (appointed executives within the Council). Various intrigues and infighting among the families kept Athens and the region of Attica from progressing economically and politically to the point where Athens was far more a backwater of the Greek world than its cultural and political center. Realizing that reforms were needed in order to promote economic growth and political strength, the Council appointed one of its archons, Solon, to draft a new political plan. The Council agreed to abide by his reforms for a period of ten years. This was the beginning of Athenian democracy.

Solon made substantial changes in the economic and political structure of Athens. His economic reforms--an early program of industrial expansion--included forgiving all debts, which had the effect of returning land to farmers who had heavily mortgaged their property to the aristocratic families in order to pay taxes and other tributes. Solon also ended enslavement as a method of paying off debt. Other reforms included standardizing weights and measures and encouraging craftsmen from outside Attica to settle in the region to ply their trades in exchange for Athenian citizenship (Robinson 47-49).

Solon’s political reforms, while hardly democratic in any traditional sense, had the effect of bringing a broader range of
citizens into the process of governing and of restricting the aristocratic families from dictating to the emerging polis. Solon created four distinct, economic classes of citizens, each with certain duties and certain political privileges. Each of the four Ionic tribes, corresponding roughly to the main ruling families, could send 100 representatives to a new Council of 400 that was charged with most of the executive and legislative duties of government. Of the four classes of citizens, all could be represented on the Council of 400. The Council of Areopagus approved the reforms (Thorley 11-17).

Solon’s reforms, however, “did not resolve the problems as he had hoped” because the families continued to fight for power and control (Thorley 16). But what the reforms did do, off and on for nearly 100 years, was let the Greeks get used to the idea that a broader range of citizens could and should govern Attica. As farmers and craftsmen (an emerging middle class) became “thoroughly disillusioned with aristocratic control of the state,” the political conditions became conducive to further reform (Thorley 22). As Alvin W. Gouldner explains:

The Solonic reforms laid the groundwork for a new conception of the community, permitting larger numbers to participate ever more fully in its affairs and to think of it as being ‘their’ community. In short, these reforms laid the basis for Athenian democracy. (19)

Cleisthenes’ reforms of 508 B.C.E., following an increasing clamor from the rising middle class for further political power, created the radical democracy associated with Athens. He “simply abandoned the old Ionic tribes as the basis for any political activity,” and in its place he cobbled together a gerrymandered system of ten districts from which would come representatives for a new Council of 500, more commonly known as the Boule (Thorley 23). This council ran the state
by “carrying out the policies of the Assembly” (Thorley 27). The Assembly was the democratic, policy-making body made up of all male citizens of Attica over the age of twenty. A judicial system of citizen jurors opened the way for citizens and non-citizens to seek justice for civic or criminal wrongs. And, finally, a group of ten generals was annually elected for single terms, one from each district.

The adoption of this political system created the new democratic polis. For the Greeks, the term “polis” did not correspond to our understanding of city. Instead, the term identified a community in which it was expected that civic affairs were the business of all citizens (Kitto 71). An increasing sense of community and political participation coming from Solon’s reforms helped lay the socio-political foundation for the reforms of Cleisthenes. These changes were nearly 100 years in the making. Gouldner describes these changes and their effects this way:

These societal changes were accompanied by important shifts in the nature of individual personality and in men’s self-images. Men came to think of themselves as being not only of a given family or lineage but from a specific city or [township] . . . . By the fifth century B.C., civic and [township] identification had become a salient part of the individual’s self image. (20)

This civic-mindedness created a new attitude about participation in civic affairs. The Assembly did not go wanting for participants. The courts did not go wanting for jurors. Athenians came to see their radical democracy as a community trust and participation in its business as a duty. Those of lesser means could certainly participate by attending the Assembly. From those of greater means, more was expected. As C. E. Robinson explains:
Men of large fortune, including even resident-aliens, were required to undertake various public duties, to fit out a state-galley . . . or to finance the training of a choir or the production of a play as the dramatic festivals. But there is good evidence that they took a pride in the performance of their duties. They boasted of their public spirit in the Law Courts, and, if their choir or play won a prize in the competitions, they would even put up a monument to record it. (90)

The nature of the system demanded participation. And the nature of the system demanded that citizens speak. It rapidly became apparent that the primary political skill of the age was the ability to speak effectively for one’s interests. The Greeks developed the concept of rhetoric to describe the art and process of effective public speaking. As Kennedy explains:

Rhētorikē in Greek specifically denotes the civic art of public speaking as it developed in deliberative assemblies, law courts, and other formal occasions under constitutional government in the Greek cities, especially the Athenian democracy. As such, it is a specific cultural subset of a more general concept of the power of words and their potential to affect a situation in which they were used or received. (History 3)

In other words, the Greeks accepted, on an intuitive level, that citizens speak with perlocutionary intents and that perlocutionary acts and effects follow from speech.

John Thorley sums up the situation this way:

The new system worked all too well, and the power of the archons was soon to be an anomaly. The leaders who emerged in the democracy gained their positions, not from the support of aristocratic families . . . but from their ability to persuade the . . . tribal assemblies, the Boule, and the Assembly, and this is just as true of Pericles . . . as of anyone else.” (50).

The importance of effective public speaking is illustrated in much Greek literature and philosophy. We can begin to see Cicero’s concept of “the good man speaking well” in Greek works such as Xenophon’s Memorabilia and Plato’s Phaedrus. For example, in Phaedrus, Socrates
helps the young Phaedrus to understand the structure of a proper rhetoric, including having specific knowledge of a subject and understanding of one’s audience. By the time of Pericles in the fifth century, “the word rhêtor (‘orator’) seems to have been becoming what it remained throughout the fourth century, the regular term for what we would call a ‘politician’” (Stockton 118). The reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes helped the idea of polis to develop in the minds of the Greeks, in which participation in public affairs was expected and cherished. The institutional structure of Athenian democracy demanded participation, and, structurally, that participation had to be verbal: citizens had to speak to participate. They had to speak to do.

David Stockton contends that “such a system made no formal provision for what we should call ‘political leadership’. But Athenians had to have, and did have, their political leaders” (122). All of these leaders were known as great orators or generals of great military distinction and rhetorical ability, such as Pericles. These men

applied themselves to hard work to achieve the ambitions, making themselves at least competent public speakers, mastering constitutional, legal, and procedural detail, keeping their ears to the ground, building up circles of associates and supporters, acquiring expert knowledge of public finance, international affairs, military and naval matters, and so on. (123)

In other words, they followed the advice of the Sophists and sought education to help them speak with authority. This education was sought by members of all economic and social classes who could pay for it.

The first teachers of rhetoric in the Greek world were the “itinerent lecturers” of the fifth century known as the Sophists, or wise men. Sophists “sought to teach techniques of success in civic life” and were “philosophical relativists, skeptical about the
possibility of knowledge of universal truth” (Kennedy, History 7). The Sophists taught a broad range of subjects with rhetoric and philosophy at the core of their curriculum. The goal of this education was singular. As Jarratt says,

> the first sophists were the first to offer systematic instruction in the arts of speaking and writing in the West. The emergence of democracy in fifth-century B.C. Athens, demanding broader participation in government and legal affairs, created the need for a kind of secondary education designed to prepare young men for public life in the polis ... This skill was the most important measure of success in public life in fifth-century Athens.” (xv)

There was “no sharp division between philosophy and rhetoric in the fifth century and all sophists explored the themes of truth and opinion, nature and convention, and language and reality” (Kennedy, History 20). The Sophists explored a wide range of human experience within the Greek culture. The breadth of their curriculum was made possible partly by their position as foreigners in Attica. They came to Athens from across the Greek world and brought with them outside perspectives that often clashed with the cultural and philosophical norms of Attica. They “evinced a special interest in human perceptions as the only source of knowledge in all fields, including nature, and emphasized the significance of language in constructing knowledge” (Jarratt xviii).

**Speech Acts and the Polis**

Why did both Solon and Cleisthenes create large, democratic assemblies as part of their political reforms? Scholars such as Thorley, Stockton, Gouldner, and Robinson speculate based upon results. In other words, they look to what happened for clues to the political intents of these leaders. And, for the most part, their speculations led them to believe that Solon and Cleisthenes each
sought to expand the concept of political participation to include a broader range of citizens because this would lead to economic expansion and political strength through community. For the most part, I think these speculations are accurate. It seems clear that the reason for making such reforms was the failure of Attica to progress economically and politically because of infighting among the aristocratic families. That the Council of Areopagus gave Solon and, later, Cleisthenes, the power to make reforms suggests that the aristocratic families believed that such reforms were in their best economic and political interests. And so they were. Athens flowered in the soil of its democracy, enriching not only a growing middle class but the aristocrats as well.

Further, the concepts of assemblies and voting were cultural norms as portrayed in Greek mythology and literature and well-established political facts by the time of Solon’s reforms. For example, the Homeric poems portray the workings of councils and assemblies. And a mythic account of voting appears in Eumenides by Aeschylus. The existence of the Council of Areopagus among the aristocratic families suggests “the existence of a group of individuals with equal status and an equal claim on participation in decision making” (Kennedy, Comparative 201). It is difficult to imagine how an assembly might run, or voting might work, absent the right of the participants to speak.

It seems clear that Solon or Cleisthenes intended some role for public speaking in their political systems following at least from its role in Greek mythology and the Council of Areopagus. Did these men intend, however, for the skill of public speaking to become the primary political skill that it became? Kennedy says that “Greek
society was characterized by a contentiousness that is expressed in mythology, poetry, athletics, democratic government, and public address” (Comparative 211). Notice the order in which he lists these items; they move roughly from Mycenaen prehistory to the fifth century B.C.E. In other words, it may be that contention was an enduring social value for the Greeks from the earliest moments of their civilization through the period of radical democracy. The Greeks lived and operated in a mostly oral culture. That culture was ancient by the time the Council of Areopagus first began pondering the need for political reform. The very existence of the Council of Aeropagus speaks to a long history of oral performance within large political assemblies. The Greeks were used to working out their political differences orally. That the reforms of Solon and Cleisthenes would continue such arrangements is not surprising.

It is interesting to note that formal language appears to be a primary feature of rhetoric in all cultures, especially in oral cultures. Formal language is a form of the vernacular used only by a select group within a culture. As Kennedy explains:

> Both ritual and the language of formal oratory have to be learned; knowledge of the right forms is not available to everyone; to be able to perform in the approved way confers status on the practitioner. Conversely, the requirement of formal language is a form of social control of others exercised by those who occupy positions of power in the society. (Comparative 68)

If Kennedy is correct, then we may suppose that the Council of Areopagus used some form of formal language. Or, what might be more accurate in the Greek context, they favored verbal skill that manifested in well-ordered speech spiced with effective use of tropes and schemes. The historical record is full of examples of the pleasure Greeks derived from skilled verbal performance. We can see examples of
this in the Homeric poems, in which “persuasive, eloquent speech is highly valued.” Even different styles of speech are “recognized and compared.” We can see in the speeches, such as Odysseus’s address to Achilles from the Iliad, the “parts [of rhetoric] later standardized as proemium, narration, proof, and epilogue” and using “techniques of logical, ethical, and pathetical persuasion” (Kennedy, Comparative 195).

It is further interesting to note that the first teachers of verbal skill were itinerant foreigners who taught anyone who could pay their fees--the Sophists. This included students of modest means from the emerging middle class. Plato’s reaction to the Sophists, branding them as moral relativists who sought not truth but gain, makes political sense as a tactic. The Athenian democratic system would remain aristocratic and conservative only so long as the chief political skill remained elusive to lower classes. The Sophists’ teaching helped expand political participation by empowering the lower classes to fully participate in the democracy. Plato’s overt objections to the Sophists may be seen in Phaedrus, in which he portrays an example of how one might use rhetorical techniques to make the worse case seem the better. Kennedy argues, however, that Plato’s objections are also political because the Sophists, by teaching all comers the techniques of effective public speaking, were converting a “conservative force transmitting and enhancing traditional values . . . into rhetoric as a tool of change” (Comparative 207). And this process was made possible partly by the political structure of Athenian democracy. So we see the primacy of speech as a political skill built up over several centuries of Greek cultural and political practice.
For the Greeks, the practice of rhetoric was the practice of political science. From the structure of Greek political practice, I think we can say that the Greeks saw politics as a multifaceted, social process for making the polis work. We may define work in the Greek context as promoting economic expansion, ensuring security, and promoting civic virtue and participation. At each point in the process, some body of citizens was charged with the duty of making decisions. And those decisions were made through deliberation and voting--both speech acts. For the Greeks, to speak was to govern. If this is the case, then a Greek rhêtor would recognize a necessary connection between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. Let us examine one of those acts: Areopagiticus by Isocrates.

The Peloponnesian War (431 to 404 B.C.E.) represented a failure in Athenian diplomacy and foreign policy. Athens was finally invaded and sacked. The Spartans could have sold the citizens of the city into slavery, but chose for cultural reasons not to do so. Instead, they appointed a committee--The Thirty Tyrants--to run the city in 403 B.C.E. By 402 B.C.E., a rebellion of exiled democrats overthrew the Thirty Tyrants and restored the democracy. Athens’ buildings and political institutions remained intact, but its citizenry suffered from “apathy” after the loss of the war (Thorley 76). It was difficult to raise much enthusiasm for participation in the Assembly. While the city remained a cultural center, it lost its position as a political or military power. Athen’s democracy was turbulent and contentious until Antipater, successor to Alexander, imposed property restrictions on citizenship in 321 B.C.E. and brought the age of Athenian democracy to an end (Thorley 77).
Isocrates (436-338 B.C.E.) was a Sophist who, after losing the family fortune in the Peloponnesian War, made his living writing speeches to be delivered by others in the Assembly and the law courts. In 393 B.C.E., he opened a school of rhetoric in Athens. Many of his own political speeches were written to be read rather than spoken to an audience, and “he is considered responsible for making oratory a literary form” (Covino 61). In Areopagiticus, circa 355 B.C.E., Isocrates writes to the Assembly, in the style of an oration, about the decadent social and political situation of Athens. He argues, as Norlin writes, that the “strength of a state . . . consists, not in the walls which gird a city, but in the quality of its citizenship and in the spirit which animates its polity” (Isocrates 100).

Specifically, Isocrates glorifies the pre-war democracy in a time when the old Council of Areopagus still held moral sway if not complete political power. His speech asks the Assembly to seek the virtues and institutions of that earlier time in order to return Athens and her citizens to their former greatness.

After citing many examples of the moral/political/social failings of Athenians, Isocrates writes:

Nothing of the sort happened when the Areopagus was in power; for it delivered the poor from want by providing them with work and with assistance from the wealthy, the young from excesses by engaging them in occupations and by watching over them, the men in public life from temptations of greed by imposing punishments and by letting no wrong-doer escape detection, and the older men from despondency by securing to them public honours and the devotion of the young. How then could there be a polity of greater worth than this, which so excellently watched over all the interests of the state? (139-141)

How might we map these two sentences according to the new formula for illocutionary acts $C^\ell F(p) i \rightarrow PE$. I have been discussing $C^\ell$ throughout this chapter. Isocrates is writing to the Assembly, as is his right to
do, to urge them to consider the moral values that he claims were held
by the political institutions of Athens following Cleisthenes’
reforms—especially the Council of Areopagus before it fell into
irrelevancy. He is speaking to a political body that has the power to
make such reforms as necessary. His propositional content of the two
sentences may be described this way: The old regime took certain acts,
and expected certain behavior, that fostered a healthy polity; could
any arrangement be better than this?

What, then, is the illocutionary force of Isocrate’s statement?
It is assertive; Isocrates is attempting to commit his audience to the
truth of his statement and to the truth of the answer to his
rhetorical question: Can there be a polity of greater worth than that
under the guidance of the Council of Areopagus? Does Isocrates merely
hope that his audience will understand that he has made an assertion
regarding his propositional content? This seems unlikely considering
C\(^{L}\); he operates in a socio-political context in which to speak is to
govern. Isocrates has a perlocutionary intent that we may understand by
considering his rhemes. We may begin to connect Isocrates’
illocutionary act to a perlocutionary act by considering his use of
antithesis and the rhetorical question.

Following the opening clause, Isocrates sets up a series of
juxtapositions between decadent and immoral behavior and what the
Council of Areopagus did to prevent such behavior. Each successive
clause creates an antithesis, such that “want” is contrasted with
“work,” “excesses” is contrasted with “occupations,” and “temptations”
is contrasted with “punishments.” These clauses set up a listing of
inappropriate social behavior and appropriate political action leading
to appropriate behavior. By setting up his speech act in this way,
Isocrates suggests that a cause-and-effect relationship exists between certain political acts and certain social consequences. This statement follows a listing of current negative social acts and is introduced with the idea that these acts did not occur under the previous political order. After juxtaposing wrong behavior and right action, Isocrates ends with a rhetorical question.

In the rHEME of the rhetorical question we are asked to answer, but the answer is already supplied by the antithesis rHEME in the previous sentence. The rhetorical question guides the auditor to the inevitable answer: How then could there be a polity of greater worth than this, which so excellently watched over all the interests of the state? There cannot be a polity of greater worth.

The answer to the rhetorical question is not meant to be merely understood as a communication nor pondered as an idea. Instead, it is Isocrates' intention, by his own words, that the assembly should "imitate our ancestors" in order to "deliver ourselves from our present ills" (157). Isocrates speaks for a reason and that reason is perlocutionary.

Conclusion

Speech acts are universal. So it is not my suggestion that the Greeks hold special significance in that regard. Rather, the Greeks gave birth to our Western political traditions, in which to speak is to govern. The example of the Greeks also demonstrates a necessary link between speech and political action. When the aristocratic families took power and created an assembly, we begin to see civic participation through speaking emerge in the mythology and the literature. With the flowering of democracy, we see effective speaking
becoming a political skill and a discipline of education. For the Greeks, that education was, as Jarratt explains, “designed to prepare young men for public life in the polis” (vx). There was no separation between this education and the polis. The skills that were taught led directly to civic participation. And, as we have seen, the open nature of the Greek political system worked against a conservative restraint in the exercise of political power. As Kennedy explains:

rhetoric was at times a greater liberalizing force in ancient intellectual life than was philosophy . . . The basic principle of humane law [the right to present a case in the best light possible] . . . is an inheritance from Greek justice and Roman law. Political debators under democracy in Greece and republican government in Rome recognized the need to entertain opposing views when expressed with rhetorical effectiveness. Finally, linguistic, philosophical, and critical studies in the twentieth century have pointed to the conclusion that there is no such thing as nonrhetorical discourse . . . In the first chapter of On Rhetoric Aristotle presents reasons for concluding that rhetoric is useful; we can go beyond that to say it is necessary and inevitable. In speaking, writing, hearing, and reading, we are better off if we understand the process. (History 9-10)

The Greeks were better off because teachers taught the skills of rhetoric to a society for which to speak was to govern. I argue that the link between speech acts and rhetoric demonstrates that not only is rhetoric necessary and inevitable in speech acts (i.e. perlocutionary intents are necessary and inevitable), but we can say further that the theory of speech acts demonstrates that the civic use of language is necessary and inevitable.
The purposes of rhetoric have always been fluid, culturally bound, and politically driven. At any given time, there exist competing rhetorics, competing ways of understanding how to (and who may) move hearts and minds within the given socio-political context. Usually, one rhetoric dominates and others fight on the margins of society for recognition. One factor remains constant: as explained by the theory of speech acts, all human use of language is active and used to do something. This concept of “do” is complex. In terms of illocutionary acts, it means performing one or more of the five illocutionary points as outlined by Searle. Following from my account of the role of rhetoric in the illocutionary act, the concept of do expands to include the socio-political act of engaging the world through speech and writing for the purpose of persuasion. It follows, then, that privileged rhetorics do more than less privileged rhetorics. The study and practice of rhetoric has always been, to varying extents, the study and practice of how to move from exigence to illocutionary acts that may have certain and intended perlocutionary effects. In this chapter, I explore what happened when what we began asking students to do with language changed from active engagement in the polis as civic agents to the cultivation and production of polite, disinterested, and cultured discourse as private agents. In other words, the academy stopped asking students to engage in illocutionary acts for perlocutionary intents and asked them instead to engage in locutionary and illocutionary acts to prove their competence in reproducing the privileged dialect.
From its beginnings in ancient Greece, and until the imperial period of Roman rule, the study, purpose, and practice of rhetoric was inherently political. The theory of speech acts demonstrates that for any use of human language there is a necessary line of intention and communication beginning at exigence and moving through rhetoric, locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. To speak is to do. And while people do many things with language, as social animals one of the most important things they do is politics. In the Greek context, citizens applied rhetorical skills to the issues of the day in order to persuade their fellow citizens. They spoke to make changes in the landscape of being. The politics was democratic only in procedure in that it applied to just a fraction of the populations of Greece, namely male citizens. The more important point here, however, is not the politics of the day but the emphasis on persuasion in rhetoric and its role in political, social, and cultural action by individuals and groups who saw themselves as members of a polis. The politically engaged rhetoric of the ancients, due to its emphasis on persuasion in civic discourse, was applied to the political ideals of the Enlightenment to fuel the discourse leading to the American Revolution. Then something interesting happened. As Thomas P. Miller explains in *The Formation of College English*, Americans abandoned this rhetoric in favor of a “politically unaware” rhetoric of cultural assimilation that de-emphasized persuasion in favor of belletrism and polite topics. Americans learned this rhetoric from the treatises and textbooks of the Scottish Common Sense Realists, particularly Hugh Blair, who created it for the purpose of cultural assimilation (19-29). Blair’s legacy haunts us to this day.
Miller uses the term “politically unaware” to describe a certain attitude toward civic discourse—a privileging of belletrism—arising from Scottish Common Sense Realism and the textbooks of Hugh Blair and Richard Whatley. I am uncomfortable with this term because it seems to suggest that belletristic concerns are not rhetorical and, therefore, are not political. Miller demonstrates, however, that the move toward belletrism and its illocutionary concerns are certainly rhetorical and political. He uses the term to suggest that the movement to belletrism makes students unaware of the rhetorical maneuver and its underlying politics. And it is this sad state of affairs that he critiques.

It is exactly the modern manifestation of this politically unaware rhetoric that Ohmann decries in his critique of rhetoric textbooks from the 1970s in his book *English in America*. From his critique we begin to see the gulf that exists between the rhetorical motivations of the citizens of the Greek polis and the institutional motivations thrust upon students in modern universities. Ohmann studied textbooks as a point of understanding what it is we ask students to do with language. Ohmann concludes that the textbooks he examined demonstrated a lack of political awareness by constructing a student with no interest in writing beyond fulfilling an assignment for class. Such students as these textbooks envision come to the university without sexual, racial, political, cultural, or class differences. The writing they are asked to do is meant to demonstrate skill in standard American/academic English for personal and professional gain within a political and social status quo. Indeed, as Ohmann says, the books present writing as a socially neutral skill. Ohmann claims that constructing students with no vital interests in
the issues of the day, and giving them assignments meant only to
demonstrate worthiness for admittance to the educational elite,
creates politically unaware students unable to think critically or use
writing for anything but socially or politically approved purposes (as
well as creates dull writing). These features come directly to modern
textbooks from Blair beginning in the early 1800s. American students
in the 1700s, however, while perhaps never highly skilled in so-called
standard English, did write and speak publicly about vital issues of
the day (even asking and answering dangerous questions about the
legitimacy of monarchy and the rights of mankind) when higher
education was classical and rhetoric was at the center of learning.

Ohmann called on Wallace Douglas to historicize his critique of
freshman rhetoric textbooks in a chapter entitled “Rhetoric for the
Meritocracy.” In this chapter, Douglas sketches the history of how
freshman composition became a fixture at Harvard in the mid 1800s. He
charts the influence of rhetoric theorists such as Blair and George
Campbell. He details the history of the Boylston Professorship of
Rhetoric and the scholars who directed the composition program in that
post from its beginnings in 1803. And he attempts to put the social,
political, and economic spin of the day into perspective: a growing
middle class looking for cultural acceptance and economic advantage
and finding a ticket to both in so-called correct English usage in
composition and the study of belletristic texts in literature. As
Douglas states, speaking of the situation in the mid 1800s,

the purposes of composition, as it came to be conceived in
the latter days of rhetoric, was the acquisition of
certain linguistic forms of relatively narrow currency,
which today would be said to represent good or appropriate
English, without apology, as signs of social rank. (Ohmann
110)
For Americans, displaying signs of social rank was important to a rising middle class eager to separate itself from a century-long wave of immigration that began in the mid 1800s.

In the next chapter, “Freshman Composition and Administered Thought,” Ohmann explains his now-famous critique of rhetoric textbooks. One of his first criticisms, about the aims of such textbooks, is that the authors “assume writing is a socially neutral skill, to be applied in and after college for the general welfare” (145). Freshman composition and the textbooks written for this course help students get ahead in society and also helps preserve society itself in its American form. The authors see their craft functioning within the status quo. They see the users of that craft as pursuing mainly individual goals against an unchanging social backdrop. And they see students (future people, one could say) as undifferentiated, except by personality and personal goals. In short, the textbooks operate without a stated analysis of literacy in technological society and without politics. (146-147)

Ohmann’s book, through Douglas, leaves readers with the clear impression that the changes in American education in the early to mid 1800s lead to this sorry state of affairs. But Douglas fails to account for what I believe are far more important changes (in society, politics, education, and rhetorical theory) that took place in the 1700s and led directly to the modern rhetoric textbook Ohmann criticizes.

The course that we often refer to today as Freshman English was a fixture in the classical curriculum in America beginning with the founding of Harvard in 1636. This course, however, had very different purposes in the classical college. From the following description parallels may be drawn to Greek practice. First, rhetoric/composition was not a single, first-year class in way we understand it today. Rhetoric was a part of the
entire curriculum and was often given the special attention of the presidents of the universities. In a sense, rhetoric was a metadiscipline that informed all that a student did in college. Second, writing and speaking were conflated. Students wrote to declaim. Third, writing and declamation were public events. Students performed their speeches in public on various occasions. Fourth, the subject matter of these oral and written texts “displayed their grasp of civic and moral issues” (Crowley, Composition 49-50).

The period critical to understanding how our current practice and textbooks evolved are the years between 1730 and 1803 when rhetoric in America shifted from a classical model to the “New rhetoric” of the day based on the thinking of the Enlightenment and the Scottish Common Sense Realists and their rhetoric of belletrisim. Classical rhetoric, with its emphasis on argument and persuasion, combined with the political neglect of the colonies by Great Britain to create a rhetoric of revolution that appeared in American universities through the 1780s. Students declaimed political topics, often challenging British rule and questioning monarchical government, as a regular part of their studies.

Halloran cites a list of topics declaimed at Harvard College commencements between 1730 and 1776. The topics of these speeches became more pointedly political and radical as the date of the Revolution neared, including such topics as: “Is the voice of the people the voice of God?” (1733); “Is it lawful to resist the Supreme Magistrate, if the Commonwealth cannot otherwise be preserved?” (1743); “Does civil government originate from compact?” (1743, 1747, 1761, and 1762); “Is civil government absolutely necessary for men?” (1758); “Is an absolute monarchy contrary to right reason?” (1759); “Is a just government the only stable foundation of public peace?” (1769); “Are the people the sole judges of their rights and
liberties?” (1769); “Is a government despotic in which the people have no check on the legislative power?” (1770) (From Rhetoric 158-159). These were not simply exercises of the sort we see today, in which students might be asked to take a position on gun control based on a exercise from a textbook. These topics were of vital interest to the public and were debated publicly as serious contributions to civic discourse.

After the Revolution, a curious shift occurred according to Miller: Americans, following the Scots, sought cultural validation by aping the norms of European culture in general and British culture in particular. Our perceived cultural inferiority led us to abandon, rather than transform, the very rhetoric that fed the Revolution in favor of a politically unaware rhetoric. Blair’s textbook codified this politically unaware rhetoric, and this codification led to the rhetorical and pedagogical features of modern textbooks that Ohmann criticizes.

A rhetoric may be labeled politically aware or unaware, I believe, based on its function in the given society and the features (the five canons) allowed it under the political conditions of the day. In democratic ancient Greece, for example, all five canons were important to a functioning rhetoric whose purpose was to actively engage the polis. Compare this to Roman rhetoric near the end of the empire—a time of dictatorship and oppression. Rhetoric was reduced to stylistic flourish because there was no democracy, i.e. there were no courts or legislatures before which to practice a fully functioning rhetoric of persuasion. Over the 2,500-year history of the study of western rhetoric, I see this pattern repeated: In times of democracy and/or freedom (or struggle for the same), persuasion is the point of rhetoric and the five canons function to serve this end; in times of oppression or cultural stress, style is the point of rhetoric and rhetoricians recognize fewer of the canons (for example, by
separating invention from rhetoric and placing it under logic). As James A. Berlin writes:

A rhetoric is a social invention. It arises out of a time and place, a peculiar social context, establishing for a period the conditions that make a peculiar kind of communication possible, and then it is altered or replaced by another scheme. A rhetoric is the codification of the unspeakable, as well as the speakable. (Writing Instruction 1)

The social context of the Enlightenment led to the shifts in rhetoric from classical to Scottish Common Sense Realism to, finally, the dominant practice in universities today that we call current-traditional. The Enlightenment “is marked by revolutions in science, philosophy, and politics . . . [and] altered long-cherished notions about the physical world, about knowledge and truth, about human nature, and about society” (Bizzell, Rhetorical Tradition 637). In science, induction, the cornerstone of scientific method, defeated deduction as a method for finding truth (thus creating an instant antagonism with the deductively based rhetoric of Aristotle). In philosophy, reason battled faith for the same ends. In politics, reason maintained that all men shared the capacity to think and act for their own betterment, which led to a rebirth of democracy in a more pluralistic form, but also shifted the burden for social and economic failure onto the individual. In society, the middle class began to expand because of increased opportunities in education and an emerging industrial society in which to use that education to produce wealth.

These circumstances of the Enlightenment create its unique noetic field, which, in turn, affects the rhetoric. And, as Berlin explains,

the noetic field underlying a particular rhetoric determines how the composing process is conceived and taught in the classroom. What goes into the process—the way in which invention, arrangement, and style are undertaken—is determined by the assumptions made, and often unexamined, about reality, writer/speaker, audience, and language. (Writing Instruction 2)
Two systems of rhetoric, with two distinctly different noetic fields, were prevalent in eighteenth and early nineteenth century America: (1) Classical rhetoric based on Greek and Roman models, and (2) Psychological-epistemic models based on the developing scientific-rational philosophies of the Enlightenment. A third form, a Romantic model, grew out of the transcendental movement (Berlin, Writing Instruction 3-4). Romantic rhetoric, however, never became a force in colleges and universities and made little impact outside of transcendental literature. Rhetoric and composition scholars in the 1960s, however, did appropriate some of these ideas for the emerging social-epistemic theories, today’s “new rhetoric” that still challenges current-traditional rhetoric for supremacy in composition classrooms today.

Berlin begins classifying a rhetoric’s noetic field based on its assumptions about reality. He writes that classical rhetoric “defines the real as rational.” The rules of reason run the universe and the human mind, so knowledge is found through the “formalization of these rules of reason—in Aristotelian logic.” Aristotelian logic is deductive and relies on the syllogism and enthymeme to discover immutable truth. While induction is a part of the system, deduction is the most important to this rhetoric because “truth must always be derived through a set of prior, nonempirical principles, found through the rules of deductive logic” (4). We can easily see this rhetoric at work in the Declaration of Independence with its appeal to the rights of man based on self-evident truths. Toward the end of the document the authors list, inductively, the specific injuries suffered at the hands of King George III.

For Aristotle, rhetoric is the discovery of the available means of persuasion, and so one of his chief concerns is invention. Because his
rhetoric is primarily deductive, “the search for the available means of persuasion amounts to exploring what one already knows, and then applying it to the situation under consideration” (Berlin, Writing Instruction 5). To achieve this, Aristotle has his students study commonplaces of ethical, emotional, and rational appeals. As Berlin concludes:

In Aristotle, we discover a noetic field in which the world is made up of a finite set of truths, logically arranged and discovered through logical principles. The knower is attempting to act in conformance with the rules of reason. (Writing Instruction 5)

Scottish Common Sense Realism, its noetic field embraced by Blair, Campbell, and Whately, diverts from this classical model by locating reality in both the objective (material) and subjective (spiritual) realms and “posits a set of separate . . . mental faculties” capable of comprehending each (Berlin, Writing Instruction 6). The spiritual realm was most important largely because the adherents to this philosophy were primarily Presbyterian clergy. To these thinkers, each person can perceive spiritual (Christian) truth, although the matter is one of conscience—a private dialogue between individual and maker. Like the spiritual realm, the material realm exists independently of mankind, although man can apprehend it through the five senses and by use of reason. Berlin adds that:

Reliance on the observation of others, especially those from the past, leads to distortion. It is the realm of sense data and the logic that arises out of it—the inductive logic of science—that concerns the Common Sense Realists and the rhetoricians who call upon them. (Writing Instruction 6-7)

In this system, the knower discovers reality through observation and induction without regard for the wisdom, truth, or knowledge of the past. This thinking has a distinct impact on the sign-signifier relationship in language. As Berlin explains of Scottish Common Sense Realism:
In communicating, the individual matches up the sign with the idea—the impression (literally) sense data has made on the mind... In using language to communicate, furthermore, the speaker or writer (both are important) attempts to appeal to the faculties of the auditor, to reproduce through language the original experience of the observer. (Writing Instruction 7)

Why Ramistic rhetoric gave way to classical rhetoric in America in the late 1600s is not difficult to understand. Contrary to the scientific (inductive) thinking of the Enlightenment, invention in Ramistic rhetoric relies on ten topics, which is essentially a deductive model. But, Ramistic rhetoric relies on dialectic to discover truth, not just probable truth as in the classic model (Bizzell, Rhetorical Tradition 559). Enlightenment thinkers, especially colonists in North America, needed the power of persuasion to move their political agenda and assert their economic and social power. Ramistic rhetoric, with its reliance on dialectic, could not handle the job. But classical rhetoric, despite its focus on persuasion, could not survive the shift from privileging deductive reasoning to privileging inductive reasoning because of the supremacy of induction in the emerging scientific/industrial world. Rather than adapt the classical model to the times, Americans abandoned it in favor of Scottish Common Sense Realism, which, while politically unaware (in the way Miller uses this term), fit the scientific reasoning of the Enlightenment and created a feeling of cultural acceptance the emerging nation desired.

The reasons for the shift from Ramistic rhetoric to classical rhetoric in America were, as Berlin states, “in large part economic” (Writing Instruction 13). The colonies, despite some political neglect by the mother country, were tied economically to England. This resulted in the establishment of the “English tradition” in education in America’s colleges between 1730 and 1803. This tradition was decidedly classical: rhetoric as persuasion to be used in a public sphere. Berlin says that, for instruction
in rhetoric, “this meant a shift in thinking, moving from rhetoric as ornament to rhetoric as persuasion” (Writing Instruction 13). It was exactly this classical rhetoric, once used to persuade democratic assemblies in ancient Greece and Rome, that the colonists used to address the issues that began the Revolution. Berlin claims one of the reasons this rhetoric, useful to men such as Jefferson and Franklin in fermenting a revolution, became anathema after independence was because it was “closely aligned with the government now overthrown” (Writing Instruction 13).

I contend Berlin overstates this point. It makes no sense to give up a rhetoric that helped win a revolution simply because a former enemy used the same model. Instead, I think Miller’s recent scholarship in this area demonstrates that Americans gave up classical rhetoric because it no longer fit the growing desire to cultural elitism—to eliminate feelings of cultural inferiority in an emerging nation with little history or few traditions of its own. Berlin correctly maintains that classical rhetoric was just not suited to the age; it did not fit the noetic field of the Enlightenment. But it did fit the political goals of Americans and, I believe, should have been adapted to the scientific thinking of the day rather than abandoned out of feelings of cultural inferiority.

How America came to feel the sting of cultural inferiority can been seen by charting the history of Scotland’s relationship with England in terms of culture, education, and rhetoric. The move away from classical rhetoric began in Scotland in the early 1700s while America was entrenched in the classical model. America followed Scotland’s lead in the early 1800s after the publication of treatises and textbooks by Blair, Campbell, and Whately. These books became widely used in Scottish, British, and, finally, American universities. Campbell’s book, Philosophy of Rhetoric, appeared in 1776. Blair’s Lectures on Rhetoric and Belle Lettres appeared in 1783.
Whately’s *Elements of Rhetoric* appeared in 1828. Campbell’s book was a treatise and not specifically meant to be used as a textbook. Blair’s and Whately’s books were written from lectures and were meant to be used as texts in high schools and colleges.

Americans did not give up the classical tradition until the early 1800s. The last gasp for classicism was John Quincy Adam’s appointment as the first Boylston Professor of Rhetoric at Harvard in 1806. The failure of his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* is directly related to the rise of Scottish Common Sense Realism and its contributions to the rhetoric of the Enlightenment. His *Lectures*, according to Berlin, were “comprehensive in every sense” and relied on the classical foundation of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. The book was published in 1810, got three reviews, and quickly disappeared. It was not printed again until the 1960s. Berlin says that it failed because it was “no longer suited to the age” (Writing Instruction 13). In colleges across America, the rhetorics of Blair, Campbell, Whatley and their imitators were already becoming fixtures by the time Adams’ book was published. As Berlin concludes:

> Adams’ rhetoric was associated with an epistemology that was being assaulted on all fronts in America and abroad in the nineteenth century. For Aristotle, dialectic, the area of learned discourse, was governed by strict logical procedures . . . Aristotle’s rhetoric . . . did not share [the Enlightenment] commitment to [inductive] logic. (Writing Instruction 13)

Instead, as Berlin writes:

> The new rhetoric of the eighteenth century was wholeheartedly embraced by Americans in the nineteenth century. It was compatible with the materialistic bent of the economic expansion taking place in the country, with its emphasis on technology. It was compatible with the dominant American literary theory of mid-century. Finally, since it included traditional Protestant doctrine without imposing dogma, it was amenable to the religious diversity of the age. (Writing Instruction 9)
Americans modified this new rhetoric in the late 1800s (putting supreme emphasis on correctness) and it became the dominant model for writing and speech instruction in American colleges throughout the twentieth century known as current-traditional rhetoric.

To understand why this chain of events occurred (which, eventually leads to a better understanding of Ohmann’s critique), it is important to chart the history of the rise of the “new rhetoric” in Scotland in the early 1700s. There was a big push to codify the rules of grammar, style, and usage in the eighteenth century. As Winifred Bryan Horner explains:

The eighteenth century was . . . a period of upward mobility, and ‘good English’ became a rung on the ladder . . . In response, the school teachers and grammarians, with a strong belief in rational rules, set out to standardize the language, firm in the beliefs that change was a sign of deterioration and that Latin was the standard by which all languages should be measured. (122)

This push was fueled by the desire of the Scottish middle and upper classes to differentiate themselves from their own culture. Speaking and writing “correct” English was viewed as a ticket to economic success within the British empire. This emphasis on correctness was a new phenomenon. Great writers in the English language from the 1500s to the early 1700s, such as Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, and Swift, did not create their works under anything like the rules of correct English that became the fashion after 1750. For example, in the 1600s, only 17 textbooks on grammar were published in English. But there were 217 published in the 1700s, and all but 35 of those were published after 1750 (Miller, Rhetoric 1).

The middle class put these textbooks to use in the Dissenting Academies of Scotland where young men across wide socio-economic backgrounds went to educate themselves to fit into the culture of the emerging British empire and participate in the expanding industrial and mercantile economy. As Miller says, the “Scots were the first to teach
English composition, literature, and rhetoric at the University level because they spoke to an audience that was politically and economically motivated to study the language and culture of the emerging empire.” This statement appears to contradict Crowley’s observation that rhetoric was a fixture at Harvard in the early 1600s. But notice that there is a difference between a discipline called “English” in the dissenting academies and a discipline called “rhetoric” in classical education. The Scots learned English to fit into the growing British empire. The Americans learned rhetoric to engage the public sphere. The British owned the markets and raw materials of the colonies and so “gaining their acceptance meant gaining access to power and wealth on a global scale.” So, many educated Scots “refashioned their language, their dress and deportment, and their very social identities” (Miller, Rhetoric 4) to fit the norm of British culture. Note that, after the Revolution in the early 1800s, Americans followed the Scots’ lead in this.

Through much of the 1700s, British universities continued to teach a classical education, based on classical rhetoric, to a student body of the upper class and nobles. As Miller demonstrates, the departure from classicism came at the borders and not the centers of English culture because the classical curriculum maintained the cultural authority of the traditional elite by limiting access to the learned culture... [T]he Scots studied English for the same reasons that the English studied Latin (and the Latins studied Greek): it was the language with authority because it was removed from the popular culture of their society. (Rhetoric 2)

That the departure from classicism began at the fringes of British culture should lead us to question the idea that culture trickles down from “elite intellectuals and institutions” to the hoi polloi. Instead, institutions that are more open to the middle and lower classes are “more often responsive to broader social changes.” Miller specifically compares this
situation in Scotland in the 1700s to the situation we find ourselves in today: that open-enrollment institutions are more responsive to social change “becomes clear when we consider the ‘New’ rhetoric that founded college English beside the ‘New’ rhetoric identified with the reemergence of rhetoric and composition in English departments two centuries later” (Rhetoric 2). While the noetic fields of these two rhetorics are profoundly different, the purpose was the same: to create political and cultural power for the powerless. The difference being, unstated by Miller, that today’s “New rhetoric” has yet to unseat current-traditional rhetoric as the dominant model.

Miller claims this situation led to a “literacy crisis in the educated culture,” specifically educational institutions that found it difficult to maintain classical standards as the middle class expanded and its children flooded into the colleges. This expanding middle class, however, still looked to nobility and the upper classes for cultural guidance. As Miller concludes: “In both the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, the study of rhetoric was renewed to teach students who were judged to be poorly prepared to study classical literature and learned languages” (Rhetoric 2).

The ethos of the Scots at the time was to fit in and make money, not rebel. To fit in meant aping the British middle class that aped the cultural norms of its own upper class. Political rhetoric fell away in favor of politically unaware, belletristic models presented by Blair and Whately. As Miller writes:

Whereas classical theorists defined rhetoric as a political art, Blair . . . and the other rhetoricians who institutionalized English subordinated political rhetoric to belletristic literary studies, and the widespread adoptions of Blair’s Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres (1783) meant that college English was founded on the paradigm of belles lettres and rhetoric. The
deemphasis of political rhetoric is readily apparent in the fact that Blair gave far less attention to political oratory than he did to belletristic essays from the Spectator. (Rhetoric 3)

The Spectator was one of many literary publications of the mid to late 1700s popular with the middle class in England and Scotland (at the time North American students were still studying classical rhetoric and declaiming pointedly political topics). There also arose at the time literary societies that promoted the enjoyment of belletristic texts to an emerging population of readers. These journals and societies helped define taste in literature, teach elocution, and promote British culture. The Select Society (founded in 1754) and other literary societies “connected the public interest in English elocution with the institutionalization of college English” (Miller, Rhetoric 7). In other words, public interest in proper elocution (and correctness in writing) led directly to these becoming values in education. The middle class wanted its children to learn the “right” way to speak and write. Blair’s textbook would codify these desires by 1783 and be influential in this endeavor for more than 100 years.

The literary societies would invite speakers, such as Irish actor Thomas Sheridan, to demonstrate their learned skills. Sheridan’s “consuming interest” was “correcting the language.” This led him to give up his acting career and become a “proselytizer for elocution.” He published Lectures on Elocution (1762) based on these talks. Of Sheridan’s work, Miller points out that when “one envisions an Irish actor lecturing the Scots on how to speak like the English, the ironies of this educational project become painfully apparent” (Rhetoric 7). Miller further states that these literary groups excluded politics and religion from discussion as unfit for maintaining the “decorum of polite society” (Rhetoric 8). From these groups
and journals grew the genre of the belletristic essay: a polite essay that
demonstrates the writer’s skill in English usage and the writer’s arm’s-
length, objective attitude toward the subject (and outright avoidance of
the controversial). Topics were mostly literary or lightly philosophical.
Blair’s theory of rhetoric is “founded on the style and taste of the
belletristic essay” (Miller, Rhetoric 8).

Blair makes his position clear in this statement from the
introduction (Lecture 1) to Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, a
statement that is remarkably similar to statements made in some current
rhetoric textbooks [spelling corrected to modern usage in all Blair
quotes]:

In an age when works of genius and literature are fo
frequently the subjects if discourse, when every one
erects himself into a judge, and when we can hardly mingle
in polite society without bearing some share in such
discussions; studies on this kind, it is not to be
doubted, will appear to derive part of their importance
from the use to which they may be applied in furnishing
materials for those fashionable topics of discourse, and
thereby enabling us to support a proper rank in social
life. . . . The exercise of taste and of found criticism,
is in truth one of the most improving employments of
understanding. To apply the principles of good sense to
composition and discourse; to examine what is beautiful,
and why it is so; to employ ourselves in distinguishing
accurately between the specious and the solid, between
affected and natural ornament, must certainly improve us
not a little in the most valuable part of all philosophy,
the philosophy of human nature. (11-12)

The belletristic essay has been the focus of English education from
the formation of English as a discipline/department in the late 1800s to
the present day. Its pedagogical purpose is to prepare students for
academic discourse and to introduce them to the “domain of learned
culture”:

If one places Blair’s Lectures beside current textbooks,
one will find clear continuities in the concern for the
personal voice, the concentration on stylistic
proprieties, and the tacit assumption that controversial
issues must be viewed from a disinterested perspective if discussed at all. (Miller, Rhetoric 9)

The damage done here is clear, according to Miller, in that the emphasis on the belletristic essay combined with the ethos of disinterested observer, fostered by the ethos of Enlightenment science,

helped teach the reading public how to maintain a disinterested perspective on 'public discontent’ . . . Such diversion directed public attention away from politics to literature, which was deemed more appropriate for the polite society that educated readers were taught to envision for themselves. (Rhetoric 10)

The Scottish move away from classical rhetoric was complete before the American Revolution. The first texts (Campbell in 1776 and Blair in 1783), based on two generations of cultural assimilation, appeared shortly thereafter. While the social, political, and economic desires of the Scottish middle class had a formative impact on teaching college English in Scotland (and, thus, the production of Blair’s textbook), Blair’s book had a “formative impact on college English [in America], an impact perhaps unequaled by any other single text”(Miller, Rhetoric 3.) The book was published in 26 editions in England and 37 editions in the United States. Fifty-two abridged editions were produced and 13 translations into Spanish, French, Italian, and Russian (Golden 25).

Initiating themselves into the common culture away from their status as a marginalized group was exactly what the Scots had in mind and their fellow countryman, Hugh Blair, helped them achieve it to a limited extent. As Miller explains:

Blair . . . helped undermine the [classical] rhetorical tradition by deemphasizing its political function. . . . While Blair uses some of the traditional language, it is clear that public controversy was for him an area best avoided. The social function of rhetoric is not so much to prepare men for controversy as to confer on them the marks of gentlemen so that they might ‘fit in.’ (7)
The study and practice of so-called correct English thus became involved in self-improvement—fitting in—and self-improvement meant, for Scotland, conforming to the dominant culture and, for America, conforming to a perceived superior culture. As Miller explains: “Like Scotland in the 18th century, America in the 19th century sought cultural legitimacy, and the perceived rudeness of our manners and language was an obstacle to overcome” (Rhetoric 8). This mission fit the ideals and goals of a rising middle class by setting them apart from the lower classes and helping ensure economic, political, and cultural success. Teaching belletristic literature, and correctness in composition, in turn, fit the mission of self-improvement. As colleges emphasized the study of belletristic texts, the traditional civic role of rhetoric fell away, and rhetoric became a skills course in the proper use of standard English. In other words, what academia asked students to do with language changed from active participation in the polis to demonstrating a decontextualized, disinterested skill.

The change away from classical rhetoric in America to Blair’s belletrism happened rapidly. The failure of Adams’ textbook in the first decade of the nineteenth century marks the end of the emphasis in classical rhetoric in American education. By the middle of the century, Blair’s text and rhetoric had become fixtures in first-year writing courses. Thus, we lost a rhetoric of social and political purpose and gained a rhetoric of unawareness. But this does not mean Blair’s rhetoric was not political. Miller says “the belletristic rhetoric that founded college English was both apolitical in theory and profoundly political in practice” (Rhetoric 15). In other words, this rhetoric preserved the status quo and gave students no tools for argument or persuasion necessary to effect change, especially if their voices came from outside the polite society; it could
be used by institutions—education in particular—to preserve society in its current state—one of Ohmann’s criticisms of modern rhetoric textbooks.

It is interesting to note that classical rhetoric is also often criticized as a culturally bound system meant to preserve society in its present form. If, as Kennedy has argued, rhetoric is a conservative social-political force, then we may so criticize any dominant rhetoric of any age. At this point the value of understanding rhetoric in terms of speech acts becomes clear. We may criticize rhetorics based upon what they ask students to do, or what students may do with them, rather than merely point out the obvious fact that dominant rhetorics attempt to preserve the socio-political status quo. Classical rhetoric, as understood by the Greeks, asks students to be active agents in a polis. Current-traditional rhetoric asks students to be accurate reproducers of a dominant discourse.

I believe, as Holloran does, that classical rhetoric “might have been adapted to the needs of the changing American culture and served as an art of political competency for the widening enfranchised public.” But that did not happen. “Simultaneously, and perhaps in consequence, our political discourse grew increasingly artless and irrational” (Holloran, From Rhetoric 177-178). I believe if we are to bring artful discourse and rationality back to the public arena, we must abandon textbooks and pedagogies based on the politically unaware rhetoric of an eighteenth-century Scottish clergyman and create rhetorics and pedagogies that will encourage students discover and use the power of writing and speaking in public settings for public good.

**Hugh Blair and the Illocutionary Act**

Hugh Blair’s popular *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* played an important role in the movement away from classical rhetoric,
and its concern with civic discourse, to current-traditional practice, and its concern with personal voice and correctness, in American colleges during the nineteenth century. This movement had the effect of removing the political from student discourse and replacing it with a concern for the literary. The emerging current-traditional practice was political in that it served to promote and reproduce a certain subject position for the student. Further, I have maintained that the concerns of current-traditional practice, which find their roots in Blair, remain the same today in most undergraduate composition textbooks. Like Ohmann, I believe we need look no further than our composition textbooks to see that the ghost of Hugh Blair continues to haunt modern students by creating a concern with literary voice, a concern for polite topics, a concern for an objective or disinterested point of view, a concern with correctness in grammar, and a concern with taste in style.

The so-called paradigm shift, from product to process pedagogy in the 1970s, did nothing to alter these concerns because process pedagogy can, and does, fit well into the scheme of current-traditional practice. The so-called paradigm shift from product to process did not alter the assumptions we bring to our teaching about what rhetoric is and how it and our students fit into our social, economic, and political institutions (Crowley, Current-Traditional 64).

It is my goal to effect a return to the concerns of the classical tradition in rhetoric in American colleges, to see the level of civic discourse rise, and to see students engaging contemporary issues in a public way. My pedagogical assumption undergirds this entire study: Students learn to write better, and indeed do write
better, when their work springs from their own rhetorical motivations and is addressed to a real audience—in a sense much like the goals of the Sophists and their students. The classical tradition in rhetoric portrays the orator as one who "embodies all that is best in a culture and brings it to bear on public problems through eloquent discourse" (Halloran, College Curriculum 246). Indeed, the purpose of the classical tradition for education was to produce learned and eloquent leaders for a democratic society. As an art of communication and leadership,

the tradition of classical rhetoric gives primary emphasis to communication on public problems, problems that arise from our life in political communities. The many other sorts of problems that might be addressed through an art of communication—problems of business and commerce, of self-understanding and personal relationships, of science and philosophical investigation, of aesthetic experience, for example—are in the tradition of classical rhetoric subordinate. (Halloran, College Curriculum 246)

The history of the demise of classical rhetoric, and the effect this has had on instruction, textbooks, and student writing, is well known and has been cogently stated by scholars such as Halloran, Crowley, Berlin, and Miller.

Hugh Blair and his text stand as a synecdoche for a middle-class movement that regarded instruction in English usage as economically and socially valuable. While Blair does not specifically address political issues, his text creates a subject position that he would have the public adopt and that was privileged by the middle class. This subject position espouses a number of characteristics of language use that appear politically innocent because Blair does not question his own treatment of the subject. Instead, Blair is espousing a certain socio-political position for language use couched in the terms
of objective observation. He either cannot, or will not, see that his pronouncements in many cases are culturally and historically bound.

The contents pages in the two volumes of Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres demonstrate that, for Blair, discourse is an object constructed from parts. The first chapters—on the sublime in writing and the pleasures of good taste—introduce Blair’s project, what he proposes to do: To instruct students on how to write and speak well as defined by eighteenth-century middle-class culture. From here a foundation is built in the first volume, and a structure begins to develop. Blair discusses the progress and structure of language in four lectures, the structure of sentences in three lectures, figurative language in five lectures, and matters of style in six lectures. Volume two builds further on this foundation with lectures on various genres of writing and examples of, and lessons to be learned from, each kind.

In the introduction, Blair says that the “study of arranging and expressing our thoughts with propriety, teaches to think, as well as to speak, accurately. By putting our sentiments into words, we always conceive them more distinctly” (Vol. 1 7). Later, in Lecture VI, Blair sets out his linguistic evidence for the idea that thought precedes language. He says that language, “in general, signifies the expression of our ideas by certain articulate sounds, which are used as the signs of those ideas”. Further, language is transparent for Blair. He believes “the most delicate and refined emotions can be . . . transfused into another [mind]” (Vol. 1 98). This theory of the relationship between thought/emotion and language is important to understanding Blair’s influence on current-traditional practice. While we have certainly refined and challenged such language theories as
Blair posits, it is what Blair does with this theory that created a foundation for current-traditional practice.

If Blair’s text could be reduced to a single word, that word would be “taste” which Blair defines as the “power of receiving pleasure from the beauties of nature and of art.” He further defines taste as the “faculty which is always appealed to in disquisitions concerning the merit of [in this case] discourse and writing” (Vol. 1 15-16). His project is to teach his audience how to refine themselves into tasteful readers, writers, and speakers. Taste does not equal reason. But it may be “enlarged” by reason. And it may be enlarged by study, specifically by practice. Culture and nature, however, play important roles in one’s ability to recognize beauty and produce it. Blair wonders if taste has a universal standard, and he discovers that it does: “That which men concur the most in admiring, must be held to be beautiful” (Vol. 1 16-30). Taste is to be found in the sublime, which is detected by those objects that exhibit “grandeur,” “boldness,” and “passion.” Taste in writing is to be found in the proper expression of the sublime. Such expression of the sublime “must be set before us in such a light as is most proper to give us a clear and full impression of it; it must be described with strength, with conciseness, and simplicity.” In Lectures IV through IX, Blair argues that, compared to the ancient and learned languages of Greek and Latin, English is superior in strength, conciseness, and simplicity. Blair also argues that such transgressions as overly figurative language, rude gestures, loudness, and passion (of a rude sort) are signs of a lack of taste and refinement. He specifically ascribes these transgressions to primitive or uneducated people.
Blair’s theory of language allows him to attach the idea of taste to language use after the generation of thought. To state one’s thoughts clearly and tastefully, then, earns one social capital by proving that his/her thoughts are worthy of admittance to social discourse. And this social discourse is limited to the literary or philosophical so as not to admit the rudeness of those who would press for social change from a lower or primitive social standing. As Blair says:

In an age when works of genius and literature are so frequently the subjects of discourse, when every one erects himself into a judge, and when we can hardly mingle in polite society without bearing some share in such discussions; studies of this kind, it is not to be doubted, will appear to derive part of their importance from the use to which they may be applied in furnishing materials for those fashionable topics of discourse, and thereby enabling us to support a proper rank in social life. (Vol. 1 9)

He adds that the “public ear is become refined. It will not easily bear what is slovenly and incorrect. Every author must aspire to some merit in expression . . . if he would not incur the danger of being neglected and despised” (Vol. 1 7). So beginning with Lecture X, Blair attempts to show how to express thoughts tastefully. He begins with the structure of sentences and eventually uses most of his Lectures to discuss examples of tasteful discourse from literary or essayistic texts. He confines much his inquiry to the illocutionary concerns of structuring tasteful sentences that display strength, conciseness, and simplicity—the very concerns that form the foundation of current-traditional practice.

Blair’s language theory demands that he confine himself to style because thoughts are formed before words. He attempts to demonstrate that English is a language of strength, clarity, and conciseness. So
one who cannot marshal these stylistic characteristics is not speaking or writing in a manner fit to be heard in society. To avoid this fate, one must study how to write proper sentences. Blair provides the route to learning this crucial skill. While he does believe that "natural genius" plays an important role in spoken and written eloquence, he also believes that natural ability can be refined through systematic study. And language itself, for Blair, is systematic. As he explains, the "structure of language is extremely artificial; and there are few sciences, in which a deeper, or more refined logic, is employed, than in Grammar" (Vol.1 137). The structure of language being logical and systematic suggests that if thoughts (and delicate, refined emotions) are put into the proper word containers and arranged in a proper manner then communication happens--and not just communication, but eloquent communication that transfuses meaning into the minds of others and saves the speaker/writer from social derision. Notice, then, that Blair accepts some connection between illocutionary acts and perlocutionary acts. There is a direct correspondence between how one speaks/writes and the perlocutionary act/effect of social acceptance. Blair’s goal is not to win hearts and minds, it is to win social acceptance.

For Blair, discourse is clearly something built from parts (words and sentences forming illocutionary acts) and his Lectures is a manual for putting the parts of discourse together correctly--with taste, style, and eloquence--to build what amounts a socially acceptable sentence, not to engage a polis. Lectures is based on the idea of raising the level of a student's ability to support a proper rank in social life. What I think this analysis demonstrates is that Blair’s project fits the noetic fields of the Enlightenment, twenty-
first-century America, and current-traditional practice. It may be that to counter this rhetoric and its noetic field we must sensitize our students to language use through discourse analysis as understood by Fairclough. We should discuss, for example, illocutionary acts in context building toward a discourse. We should unpack the perlocutionary intent to reveal its political uses. We should demonstrate how what is politically possible is revealed in how institutions speak to us and we speak to institutions.

Our culture remains stuck in a noetic field much like that of the Enlightenment. We are not, however, stuck with the Enlightenment concept of the individual (nor does this suggest we must accept a postmodern concept of the individual as the only, or natural, alternative). We may see how the emerging noetic field of the Enlightenment views the individual by asking: What is Blair asking students to do? And the answer is that he is asking them to construct a personal, moral self that may objectively stand outside of reality, observe it, judge it, and then transmit that judgment to an auditor in a culturally-bound tasteful expression. Those who can do this earn a certain rank in society. Those who cannot, by implication, have no voice that may be heard by the rational individual.

Richard Harvey Brown argues that “personal identity is shaped through a language of the self that is embedded in contemporary political economy” (1). That contemporary political economy shares a philosophical foundation with the political economy of the Enlightenment. Despite technological differences between the nineteenth century and the twenty-first century, we operate in a noetic field similar to Blair’s. Shifts occurred in the concept of the individual as Western civilization moved from the classic period to
the Middle Ages to the Renaissance to the Enlightenment: Our selves moved from being a part of a polis to being a discreet modern entity able to operate outside of a polis. This self now appears to be postmodern in that it is constructed differently by race, class, ethnicity, and gender. But in all cases it shares the "constant characteristic" of a

loss of positive linkage between person and polity, a bifurcation between a public self defined as a functionary guided by positive, instrumental reason, and a private, affective self that is the locus of arational feelings, values, and emotions. By limiting moral action to the purely private sphere, and by restricting the public sphere to purely instrumental behavior, this bifurcation has engendered a crisis of citizenship, legitimation, and political obligation. (Brown 1)

It is exactly this bifurcation that the noetic field of the Enlightenment encourages and that Blair’s text codifies by positing students who wish to express themselves with taste and refined sentiments, but who do not wish to participate in the vulgarity of a polis.
In the previous chapter, I argued that the move from politics to belletrism in the nineteenth century had the effect of shifting $C_{il}$ in the formula of illocutionary acts from the civic and political to the personal and literary. John Trimbur describes this shift in terms of literacy claiming that it “increasingly came to be seen not as a practical tool for everyday affairs or an intellectual resource against injustice but as a measure of the person” (291). It is interesting to note that what we have perceived as a shift might have been perceived as a separation by the Greeks. They would not have understood a socio-political situation in which everyday affairs were separate from the measure of a person as part of a polis. As Miller explains, this shift or separation first occurred on the cultural borders in the Anglo-American experience as a rising middle class sought cultural validation and economic success (Formation 19-29). The middle class became convinced that skill in the use of a codified standard English would help lead to the success it sought, and this is one of the reasons why literature and composition became fixtures in higher education under a discipline known as English, or what Scholes has called the English “apparatus.” In this apparatus, $C_{il}$ is either literary (the study of the human condition as portrayed in enduring texts by great authors) or non-literary (the production of practice texts as preparation for later economic advancement). The idea that $C_{il}$ includes a real world of civic affairs and that students are active agents in that civic world has been virtually lost because rhetoric has been absorbed by this English apparatus. Concern with civic
affairs is now the purview of political science departments. Concern with rhetoric in something like its classic form, if not its classic concerns, is the purview of communications departments. Rhetoric devolved into composition in English departments. There no longer exists a discipline of rhetoric as understood in classical education.

Scholes demonstrated how a set of three dichotomies defines the current English apparatus, including a differentiation between literature and non-literature, between production and consumption of texts, and between a so-called real world and the academy. Within this apparatus, the consumption of literary texts with an academic audience sits atop the intellectual hierarchy. The production of pseudo-non-literature for no real audience but the teacher sits at the bottom. In English studies today we ask students to do two distinctly different things. We ask them to read and interpret privileged texts and we ask them to create texts of their own that can never be privileged. Indeed, we ask them to produce texts that will not address any exigence, any audience, or any real socio-political need they may have.

The history of composition textbooks, as portrayed by Connors, demonstrates that they evolved from treatises on rhetoric (e.g. George Campbell’s *Philosophy of Rhetoric*) meant for the study of rhetorical theory. These treatises evolved into textbooks containing practical tips for composing, guides to correct grammar, guides to style, and sample writings to compare and imitate. It is important to distinguish between textbooks and readers. For this study, “textbook” refers to texts used specifically to teach writing process and may include grammar guides, research guides, and readings. Connors claims the first textbook of the sort we would understand today is the edition of
Blair’s Lectures edited by Abraham Mills in 1829. The edition included analysis of Blair’s chapters followed by questions for students to answer. The point of Connor’s history is to suggest that textbooks are “absolutely central” to the development of current practice in composition-rhetoric because of the “dialogic relation between textbooks and teacher training” (Composition 69-70). As Connors demonstrates, textbooks evolved as much to show teachers how to teach composition as to show students how to compose. As the middle class flooded into the academies in the late 1800s, teaching composition became essential to the schools to maintain standards in the face of a so-called literacy crisis (a crisis manufactured in a way similar to the “Why Johnny Can’t Write” crisis of the mid 1970s). As Connors explains, with the increasing numbers of students came increasing demands on teachers. Class sizes grew. Professors moved toward teaching literature, leaving the labor-intensive job of teaching writing to graduate students and junior faculty who were often poorly trained in pedagogy if trained at all. The emerging textbooks became just as much guides to teaching as guides to learning (70). And mechanical correctness became installed as a paramount measure of writing success not only because the middle class sought this as a skill but also because scanning for error made large numbers of student essays easier to grade than reading closely for content. David Bleich criticizes textbooks for attempting to teach a “normal” way to write that “removes the use of language from living situations . . . Most textbooks, especially when used by inexperienced teachers, reinforce socially coercive constraints” (19). Connors suggests that today’s textbooks, while many offering pedagogy based on current theory or classical norms, continue to serve this function, claiming
that “the St. Martin’s Guide to Writing is probably today the most influential transmitter of composition knowledge for both students and teachers” (Composition 110).

Almost thirty years ago, Ohmann suggested we may discover in our textbooks the source of a problem that continues to plague composition: disengaged students producing disengaged writing. He further suggested that textbooks give us a sense of pedagogical practice, i.e. what the books are doing is what the teachers are doing, and students are doing what the books tell them to do. In this chapter, I will update a portion of Ohmann’s critique and show what it is textbooks do and what it is textbooks ask students to do. For my critique I have chosen four popular texts: three comprehensive textbooks and one guidebook. Each of the three comprehensive textbooks is of a kind used in standard two-and four-year college programs. Two of the comprehensive texts—The St. Martin’s Guide to Writing and The Bedford Guide for College Writers—combine a grammar handbook, a research guide, a reader, and a composition guide in one volume. The other comprehensive textbook, Writing: A College Handbook, combines these elements minus a reader. Each of these textbooks has reached at least a fifth edition, attesting to its popularity among teachers. The Everyday Writer, second edition, is a typical guidebook meant as much for classroom use as for use in the public and private sectors as a guide to writing and usage.

A Narrative of Discovery

Alex and Brie, two 18-year-old freshmen from my first composition class, caught me in the hall shortly after the final class of the fall 1996 semester. Although they did not say so specifically, I could tell
from the way they called to me, and reached as if to snag me, that
they were excited about the impending transition in their lives--they
were no longer first-semester freshmen. Soon, they would begin a new
semester with new classes and new instructors. But their experiences
in my class had been good enough to make them want to cling, if for
just one moment more, to what had just passed. We spent several
pleasant minutes reminiscing.

Before leaving them to their futures, I asked them a practical
question merely to help me as I, too, began a transition from first-
semester neophyte to second-semester veteran.

“What did you two think of the textbook?”

Alex hung his head a moment in the affected manner of James
Dean. “It really sucked,” he said with a nervous laugh. Brie smiled
and nodded in agreement.

I asked them this question because they were two of my ‘A’
students--both of them creative in their use of language and able to
think critically. So the word “sucked” was not spitting from the lips
of malcontented dullards. I did not question them further as I would
have in class (“What exactly do you mean by ‘sucked’?”). Instead, I
also nodded in agreement. I had asked the question hoping that
something I had been thinking for many weeks was not true: that,
indeed, the textbook sucked.

At the time, I had no tangible evidence or theoretical framework
for this evaluation. I had no background or experience to make such a
claim. All I had were feelings that this book was not helping me do my
job of teaching composition in the way I wanted to teach it, the way I
thought it should be learned.
The English Department scheduled only a few sections of Freshman Composition in the computer-mediated classroom each semester, and I was one of two new graduate teachers assigned to use it. None of the training materials for new GTs covered computer-mediated pedagogy. I remember the advisor of graduate teachers telling me: “You’re on your own.” Because it was the autumn of 1996 and I was interested in politics (much of my B.A. in liberal studies consisted of political science and journalism courses), I crafted a course based upon following the presidential election that year. I did not realize it then, but that focus quite naturally caused me to resist certain features of the textbook because I assumed that the students would at least be interested in the election and perhaps even engaged at some level in the political process.

The textbook did not help my students learn what I was trying to teach, nor was it helping them find themselves as students and civic agents, which my pedagogy, in its infant stage, was asking of them. The following semester, I read Richard Ohmann’s *English in America*, which contains his critique of composition textbooks from the mid 1970s, at a time the profession was struggling with a so-called paradigm shift from product to process pedagogy. From his critique, I began to focus and validate my feelings about not only the textbook I used but composition textbooks in general.

It seemed to me that the textbook I used that semester, *Circles of Influence* by Michael Vivion, tried to engage students, to make writing seem both personally and professionally important. Vivion even admits that writing is not a “tidy, sequential activity,” and that this makes “teaching writing difficult” (xvii). Such statements seem to me an attempt to connect with students and teachers, to let us know
that the entire class—including the teacher—is in this thing we call composition together. But in it for what exactly? I had the vague notion at the time that we might be in it as a way to engage the presidential election.

Ohmann has an answer. He made many pointed criticisms of rhetoric textbooks that I contend are valid today. Among the most damning, because it goes directly to the heart of connecting with students and encouraging their civic participation through writing, is the way these textbooks construct who the student is. Ohmann says the student is:

preparing for a later social role and for the exercise of some power, though the conditions of his apprenticeship dictate that he be powerless now. And though these writers see the student as moving toward a place in society . . . they do not locate him in society now. They see him as newborn, unformed, without social origins and without needs that would spring from his origins. He has no history. Hence the writing he does as the skills he acquires are detached from those parts of himself not encompassed by his new identity as a student. With all good will, the authors of the textbooks cannot generate much engagement out of so abstract a student and so ahistorical a situation. (148-149)

Further, Ohmann criticizes composition textbooks for presenting a false narrative of the writing process—one that divorces the student from his own ideas, experiences, and goals. Writing is simply a task to perform, a hoop to jump through, to get from being a student—a nobody—to a somebody. That somebody is institutionally defined. That somebody is expected to fit into society and the corporate economy. That somebody is not expected to generate and implement personal, social, and political goals outside the mainstream.

I was excited the summer day I came to campus to choose my textbooks for the very first time. Sitting in the office of the advisor to graduate teachers, I held the two choices in either palm
and studied the covers almost reverently. The thoughts that ran through my head make me blush today. I actually caught myself thinking that I was holding in my hands the accumulated wisdom of 2,500 years of study in rhetoric. It was only later that I realized that other new teachers often have these same thoughts and these same disappointments. Xin Liu Gale, for example, tells a similar story of reverence lost in her early teaching experience, saying that perhaps “I should be ashamed of my ignorance, but then I was only a teaching assistant, and The Bedford Guide, like other guides and most composition textbooks, was written for the writing teachers untrained in rhetoric and composition” (187). I was ignorant. And I had to choose.

My initial soaring feeling quickly plummeted. I had no way to make an informed choice between Circles of Influence and Sylvia Holladay’s The Bedford Guide for College Writers. In surface features, the books appeared very different. Bedford attempts to be several books in one: a rhetoric with grammar/style manual and model essays. Circles, on the other hand, is a rhetoric with a few models. Purely from my own aesthetic sense, Circles seemed the better choice because it appeared less ponderous. Moreover, after a quick review of the tables of contents, Circles also appeared to be more in line with my early thinking at the time about writing process and expressionist rhetoric. In other words, Vivion broke the process into manageable steps that included plenty of advice on pre-writing techniques. Plus, his book seemed willing to allow students a wide latitude in their personal expression (less privileging of standard rhetorical forms and niggling correctness). And, coming off a summer of discovering James Miller’s expressionist text Word, Self, Reality and my annual reading
of Robert Pirsig’s *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, I readily chose Vivion over Holladay. I did not realize at the time that I was heading for a pedagogical collision between my early thinking on expressionism and my class topic.

I thought no more about it until midway through the semester when my class began balking at reading the book and doing the assignments. Because the class was culturally diverse (half male and female, four races, and a wide range of socio-economic levels), I felt that the text was failing in a broad way. Or, perhaps, I was failing in a broad way, failing to make the material interesting and relevant to the presidential election or their lives. I discarded the latter hypothesis, perhaps foolishly, because I felt these students reacted well to me as a teacher. They also reacted well to lessons of my own creation, which were for the most part specifically geared toward the class topic. By “reacted well” I mean that they completed these assignments and rarely complained about them. Whether or not my students learned more from my exercises as opposed to the exercises in the textbook is certainly debatable. In any case, I was quick to blame the textbook.

Because I was teaching in the computer-assisted classroom, I decided that perhaps I needed a textbook that specifically dealt with computer issues and the Internet. Maybe such a book would relate better to my students. After searching the stacks of free samples in the Composition office, I came up with Maxine Hairston’s *The Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers*. Again, personal aesthetics were my guide. The book presented loads of information with colorful tabs, checklists, and tip boxes. It had a pleasant, helpful feel to it. And, what seemed an added bonus, there was an extensive grammar/style
section and the essay models were all student writing. And the final hook for me was this sentence in the preface to the students: “Many people who write professionally find that they work best if they don’t worry about grammar, spelling, or usage while composing a first draft” (xxxii). Colorful, helpful, relaxed. How could I lose?

My students related no better to this book than the last. Again, they seemed to react in a more interested way to lessons and exercises of my own design. My “topic” that semester followed more closely the cultural studies curriculum of the composition program.

It was during spring 1997 semester that I read English in America and was struck by Ohmann’s criticisms in chapter six, “Freshman Composition and Administered Thought.” The chapter begins with a critical memo Ohmann wrote to a textbook publisher about the state of rhetoric textbooks in 1965. The balance of the chapter elaborates on these criticisms based on his analysis of 14 contemporary textbooks. My evaluation: Little has changed.

At the dawn of process pedagogy in 1965, in the memo to Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, Ohmann complained that conceiving freshman English as a course in writing concentrates attention on those stages of the activity most nearly adjacent to pen-moving: thinking up transitions, choosing a sentence structure, ordering the contents of the paragraph, finding the word with the right connotation, framing an argument clearly, unmixing a metaphor, and so on. (136)

Further, he found that “textbooks [were] about tidying up and transcribing thought, not thinking” (136). This is a succinct statement of the problem process theorists have had with product pedagogy. It teaches a standard form of structure and correctness that forces students into a narrow conception of writing. What these books
do, Ohmann found, is enforce certain cultural and political norms through a narrow focus on illocutionary acts.

The process movement surely seemed irrational by comparison to the product orientation of current-traditional practice. Process pedagogy found one of its first proponents in Jerome Bruner, a Harvard psychologist, who in 1960 wrote *The Process of Education*, which became influential to early process models of composition (Berlin, *Rhetoric* 122). Bruner contended that students should “engage in the act of doing” the work of the particular discipline and not “simply ... rely on the reports of experts” (Berlin, *Rhetoric* 123). In other words, students were not simply to follow instructions from a book, but, rather, coaching from an instructor. Berlin writes, the “implications of Bruner’s thought for writing instruction are clear: Students should engage in the process of composing, not in the study of someone else’s process of composing” (Rhetoric 123). He continues:

> The product of student writing, moreover, is not as important as the process of writing. (The emphasis in *The Process of Education* is on intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic rewards—not grades or honors as a motivator, but the sheer joy of discovery.) Writing involves discovery, a process requiring intuition and pursuing hunches—in short, acting in the way that mature writers do. (123)

But notice that what Bruner is asking students to do is not what classical education asked students to do: engage the polis, i.e. move from the illocutionary act to the perlocutionary act. Rhetoric and its political concerns have become so divorced from language use that the act of composing correct English has now become the thing that textbooks and teachers ask students to do. The idea that the texts students produce might do something more than perform five illocutionary points has been lost. Or, rather, what the textbooks ask
students to do is something entirely different: prove they belong in college and productive society by producing a simulacrum of its privileged discourse.

While I agreed with some of the general advice in the two textbooks I used in my first two composition classes, I found myself discussing many contradictions and exceptions to the so-called rules of pre-writing and composition—from both the product and process areas of the books. At first, it was difficult to pinpoint from where this dissonance arose. Ohmann’s critique provided some answers. The problem, it seems, is not rooted so much in the writing advice—although this is a problem sometimes—but in the way the books construct the student. Who the student is, what the students wants to do, or should be doing, is narrowly defined in the texts Ohmann critiques. He says the books assume that the student has no compelling interest in his initial subject but wants, primarily, to write a theme. They imagine a situation in which a subject collides with a writing requirement, not with a mind. Thus, they make no allowance for the essentially creative process of exploring a topic under the impetus of a genuine intellectual need, according to the topic’s own structure. (138)

Did students come to my class with issues of their own to explore? Did I give them credit for being thinking, caring human beings? Did I consider them agents in charge of their own actions or agents acting in concert with others toward their own goals? I believe I can answer yes to these questions even if, in hindsight, the answer is truthfully no. With the limited understanding I had, I tried. But the two books were giving my students a different answer. Ohmann struggled with the same dilemma, saying “Perhaps I was asking students to be free, critical, and creative in a situation where society was asking them to
be of service, docile, and limited” (142). The books represented society and what it wanted. I was trying to be hip and relevant by bringing politics, the actual presidential election, into the classroom. And I agree with Ohmann’s assessment that the textbooks I used “do tell us what many English teachers think writing is and that they show us a good deal about how teachers present the subject to their students” (143). I would make one clarification to this last statement: The textbook tended to direct my presentation of the subject. I worked to the book, despite its clash with the class topic, because I entered the classroom trusting it to be my guide.

The Speech Acts of Composition Textbooks

In her critique of composition in the university, Crowley charges that such courses offer only institutional motives for writing rather than rhetorical motives. She concludes, powerfully, that academia should stop forcing students to take required composition courses and offer them only as electives. The idea being that students will take such courses once they perceive a need for them, i.e. exigence provides them with the motivation to learn to write effectively (Composition 244-46). Such a situation, at first, appears to mirror the motives of Greek students who flocked to the Sophists for instruction when it became apparent that skill in speaking would lead to political choice and political power in the context of Athenian democracy. Crowley may be correct to call for abolishment because, as she argues, required composition courses exploit teachers and students and have negative effects on the climate of the classroom, the curriculum, the discipline, the institution, and the profession of teaching writing (Composition 241-43). I would argue,
however, that a required rhetoric course, as offered in the classical curriculum, did not have these particular effects because its purpose was civic and political; its purpose was rhetorical as well as institutional. As classically conceived, rhetoric is a tool of socio-political engagement with a polis and not a decontextualized skill used as a tool of class demarcation or individual economic success.

Ohmann demonstrates that the textbooks he studied did not imagine a civic purpose for student writing. Instead, by

abstracting ‘the student’ away from society and history, and in treating composition as an activity apart from politics, the textbooks very narrowly fix the student’s imagined circumstances and possibilities for action there. (147)

In other words, rather than become a facilitator of civic action, the textbooks Ohmann studied hindered students’ engagement with society. Any system of language use that so hinders a student may not be called a rhetoric. And Crowley has indeed made that charge, claiming that current-traditional rhetoric is not a rhetoric at all (Composition 94). Her reasoning relied on her understanding of rhetoric as a skill/art of persuasion and knowledge making, with which I agree. My claim, however, while in agreement with Crowley, is that current-traditional practice is not a rhetoric because of what it does, or rather fails to do. It fails to make the necessary movement from the illocutionary to the perlocutionary. It fails to connect performative language with perlocutionary intents in real contexts. As I have demonstrated so far, as understood through speech-act theory, rhetoric may be understood as a form of action or energy in language employed by the speaker to ensure the greatest probability that the speaker’s perlocutionary intent as expressed in an illocutionary act (performative language) will lead to a certain perlocutionary act.
Speech acts are necessarily social and, therefore, as I have argued, necessarily civic. Any system of discourse production that can neither imagine nor facilitate civic action by students is not a rhetoric.

One of the easiest ways to see this disengagement is in how textbooks conceive the rhetorical situation and the topic of student discourse. In other words, what these textbooks do is imagine a very limited sphere of student engagement and, thereby, argue that the student is merely an ahistorical, non-political, pre-person with the intention of passing a class. According to Ohmann, the textbooks he studied created an “alienating situation. First the assignment, then the purpose” (148). Students as these books conceive them are people in search of an idea—a theme—because they do not have one of their own. So they must find something to say. To this current-traditional way of thinking, experience and language separate and come together when the student first finds a topic and then decides what to say about it. Ohmann posits that if

English 101 is outside history and the student without qualities, then, at its inception, writing must involve locating the self on some system of coordinates. A journey has to start somewhere, and the student seems to be nowhere. Hence the characteristic way that the textbooks talk of ‘finding,’ ‘selecting,’ ‘discovering,’ or ‘choosing’ a topic, and making it the right size. (149)

Ohmann found that all 14 books he studied address the problem of finding something to say in the same way: The student must first find a topic and then find something to say about it. Ohmann observes that so “natural is this order to a situation in which people write at other people’s bidding, that its oddity only appears when you widen the context” (153). The oddity, I would argue, is that the textbooks, and the pedagogy they encourage, remove $C^L$ from the illocutionary act. And as I demonstrated in Chapter 2, without $C^L$ the illocutionary act
merely becomes the utterance of a sentence whose meaning is understood, if understood at all, from the syntax, semantics, and illocutionary force. It is understood as communication, as defined by Searle, as the auditor understanding the illocutionary point in relation to the propositional content. Bach and Harnish, however, cogently argue that humans do not speak for no reason, and it is exactly this oddity that current-traditional practice asks students to perform, i.e. students speak for no reason because current-traditional practice focuses on institutional motivation and illocutionary acts divorced from context, intention, or effect.

The typical paradigm of topic-then-purpose, Ohmann believes, leads to alienated writing—the kind students hate to produce and instructors hate to read. As he says:

Textbook writing begins in the nowhere of the assignment, moves into the unbordered regions of the student’s accumulated experiences, settles on one region—the topic—and then looks around for feelings and beliefs to affix to that topic, with supporting details to be added afterward. (153)

I argue that people do not have topics; instead, people experience exigence within a C^L. The word “topic” as used in the textbooks hides any real reason to communicate—as if all writing comes from an external motivation divorced from a C^L. (Certainly, many writing situations come to us this way. Professionals in corporate and government institutions are daily asked to write in response to institutional exigence. And it has been seen as part of the duty of writing teachers to make sure that students can enter these institutions ready to produce texts in the standard dialect.) Exigence is an interaction between the speaker and C^L and may indeed include reasons to speak/write that are institutionally mandated. The key
here, I suggest, is to help students discover ways to take ownership of mandated writing--to make the exigence of the assignment real in a socio-political sense--and to encourage writing with purposes that spring from a student’s experience with C^L.

Early in the introduction to Bedford (Holladay 5), the authors claim the “first activity in writing--finding a topic to write about and finding something to say about it--is often the most challenging and least predictable.” Finding a topic is “half the task” of writing, and once finished “words will flow.” The need to find a topic does not follow from any need to communicate that the student may have, rather it comes from an assignment in class that imagines no other purpose than simply fulfilling the assignment. And the reason to fulfill the assignment is to prove oneself worthy to the institution. This is exactly why finding a topic is “half the task”: an assignment of the kind Holladay imagines separates C^L from the illocutionary act and any intended perlocutionary effect. Exigence certainly exists in any assignment, but it is the student’s lack of connection to C^L in current-traditional practice that makes finding a topic half the task of writing.

Holladay imagines an inchoate process of “finding” or “generating” ideas that includes brainstorming, freewriting, and journal writing separate from a process of planning, in which the writer discovers a thesis. Once an idea is found and a thesis discovered, the writer then organizes ideas by any one, or all, of a number of processes, including grouping, clustering, and outlining. Following current-traditional practice, Holladay separates the classic topics of invention from this process and uses them instead as methods of paragraph organization in the chapter on drafting. With classical
invention, what the speaker attempts to do is discover all there is to say about a topic that is assumed already to be familiar to the speaker because of an exigence. In current-traditional practice, the disconnected exigence of the classroom assignment (because there is little connection to a real context) is flawed by unreality.

Topic and thesis are related elements and acquire meaning by an individual or group experience with an exigence within context. So in the line of communication—rhetoric exigence, intention, speech, speech act, communication, and effect—topic and thesis may be assumed under intention. A class assignment exigence disconnected from a socio-political context experience creates intention confusion for the student.

Is the purpose of writing to create real discourse that connects with a real audience, or is the purpose to get a passing grade, to please the teacher, to avoid appearing incompetent, or to get through a required class as quickly and painlessly as possible? The process of finding a topic and discovering a thesis that Holladay posits imagines no perlocutionary intent on the student’s part arising from any socio-political need or desire. Further, the textbooks, and the pedagogy they encourage, teach students that they can/should have no other intention than to perform in certain ways for the isolated phenomenon of a college class.

In some cases, the student is completely eliminated from the rhetorical situation so that a topic becomes doubly difficult to imagine. For example, Axelrod and Cooper, in The St. Martin’s Guide to Writing, imagine that what written texts do is somehow separate from the perlocutionary intent of the writer. To be sure, texts may be used and interpreted by readers in any number of ways, but writers do have intents and at least try to manifest their intentions through written
discourse. For Axelrod and Cooper, however, texts do the work. As the authors write: “How a text works depends on what and who it is written for--its purpose and audience” (5). True enough, except that only people may have purposes. The passive construction in this statement obscures that fact that an inanimate object cannot work or intend, but writers and readers certainly do within contexts that may be vitally important. Can a writer so divorced from intention hope to develop a topic? The entire section on “How Writing is Learned” in St. Martin’s personifies the text, the textbook, and the writing process as working to achieve various goals.

The Heffernan and Lunsford texts do not offer readings for student response. Instead, the authors assume that teachers using these texts will offer a program of reading separate from the textbook. While this might suggest that the attitudes of these authors toward the selection of topics will be, or can be, different from what is presented in the other textbooks, such is not the case. Heffernan offers roughly one page of advice on finding a topic, divided between choosing a topic in the case of an open-topic assignment and taking ownership of an assigned topic. Under the heading “Choosing a Topic,” Heffernan offers five suggestions, including using personal experience, exploring culture, remembering a moving moment, exploring an area of personal curiosity, and surfing the Internet. In none of these five suggestions does Heffernan imagine, as Ohmann does, that students might come to class with issues and ideas already an integral part of their beings. In a short paragraph entitled “Making An Assigned Topic Your Own,” Heffernan merely suggests that the student write from personal experience (21).
Despite offering no thematic content or readings for a writing class, Lunsford, like Heffernan, offers advice on finding topics. Such advice follows sections on considering the assignment, purpose, audience, rhetorical stance, and genre of the assignment. How is it possible to adequately consider these issues before having a topic for discourse? Lunsford does not say, but she does offer the standard heuristics for choosing a topic, including brainstorming, freewriting, looping, and clustering (30-33).

Once a topic is found, one of the next important tasks is “deciding” upon an audience for a particular theme. And Ohmann retorts: “Decide? What kind of writing have ‘we’ undertaken to do, that we have not conceived an audience as integral to it?” (164). The answer is, obviously, academic theme writing as understood in current-traditional practice. Holladay is remarkably honest about this, saying the audience for student writing is “yourself, your classmates, and your instructor” (8). And so it is most of the time in current-traditional practice. Further, she is unable to conceive of a wider audience for student writing. There is no polis to address as there was for students in a classical system. Instead, Holladay says that writing for this limited audience gives the student “practice that will benefit [them] in writing for less sympathetic audiences in other settings” (8). Notice that she assumes even an audience as limited as classmates and teachers is neither complex nor political, as if all students will be sympathetic readers and no teacher will challenge the content or ideas of a student theme. For Holladay, the composition classroom exists in an academic sanctuary outside the polis.

St. Martin’s is organized around ten writing activities, such as remembering events, arguing a position, and explaining a concept. Each
section treats the writing activity as a discreet process: assignment, invention, planning and drafting, critical reading, revising, and editing and proofreading. This process is explained in a “Guide to Writing” section that follows introductory material about each writing activity. Each “Guide” section includes discussion about writer purpose and audience beginning with over-generalized advice such as this example from the guide on writing arguments: “Write several sentences describing the readers to whom you will be addressing your argument. Begin by briefly identifying your readers; then use the following questions to help you describe them” (268). The questions that follow ask such general things as: “What position . . . will my readers take on this issue?” and “Why would I want to present my argument to these particular readers” (268). At this point in the “Guide” section, a student has apparently discovered and explored an issue without considering an audience as integral to it. In other words, Axelrod and Cooper imagine a student generating a topic for an argument divorced from an audience that is supposedly to be persuaded, as if arguments exist in the absence of any C and prior to perlocutionary intent. I agree with Ohmann’s assessment that the textbooks “don’t imagine the writer and reader as already related to each other, socially and dynamically” (165), which further alienates students from their writing.

The upshot for Ohmann is that these textbooks homogenize students, show them a narrow range of possibilities, and send them into society prepared only to uphold the status quo. That cultures and political institutions are reproduced by an education system, and by a conscious effort by those in political power, is no great revelation. And, I would argue, that such reproduction is one of the important
functions of education. A democratic culture/society, especially a worthy one, should reproduce itself. A democracy, however, cannot long endure without the dynamic, and often radical, participation of its citizens. Democracy demands a critically literate citizenry that, in the aggregate, is able to situate itself in history, able to understand the existing power relationships, able to mediate discourses and cultures, and able to engage the polis through speaking and writing.

Ohmann’s conclusion, how he would change textbooks, seeks exactly this state of affairs:

How would we have to write our composition manuals to escape this kind of criticism? Each book would have to define its audience in quite unaccustomed terms: working class black students, upper middle-class white students heading for the professions, etc. Each book would have a clear social aim, with a twofold job of raising social and rhetorical awareness (theory) and teaching composition as social and political practice, seeing the English classroom and the university as arenas of struggle. As things stand now, few colleges and few commercial publishers could accommodate such a conception. (171)

The problem here is not Ohmann’s idea, but the utopian notion such textbooks might actually be produced by a commercial press. The current bestsellers, such as Bedford and St. Martin’s, do tell us much about what teachers want and what current classroom practice is. The books will not change until the teachers change their thinking and pedagogy.

I think Crowley accurately identifies the reason Ohmann’s criticisms remain pertinent: There has been little real change following from the so-called paradigm shift from product to process pedagogy because process can, and does, fit well into the scheme of current-traditional practice (Around 64). To realize Ohmann’s vision would require, in my opinion, a profession-wide move to social-
epistemic theories in rhetoric, classical sophistic rhetoric in practice, and an abandonment of composition textbooks as a pedagogical tool until these books meet something like Ohmann’s criteria. This is not likely to happen soon because, as Crowley points out, current-traditional practice “is still a dominant feature of contemporary composition instruction” (Around 64). The so-called paradigm shift from product to process pedagogy did not change the “epistemological and rhetorical assumptions” teachers bring to the classroom. Current-traditional practice remains the dominant pedagogy because it fits the dominant idea of what writing is, what writing in the academy is, and what education is for.

The use of current-traditional textbooks and the production of current-traditional texts creates an absurd learning situation because current-traditional practice creates intention confusion by divorcing students from their history, politics, and social status, thus imaging for them no purpose to write other than being forced to do so by a teacher in order to pass a class. In the next chapter, I develop a theory of teaching writing and rhetoric that follows from my understanding of rhetoric and its use in speech acts. With this pedagogy, I begin developing an answer to my research question: How might we affect a return to the academy of a classical rhetorical practice, with a rhetorical rather than institutional motivation, that promotes the desire and talent for civic engagement in our students?
I have argued that so-called current-traditional rhetoric is not a rhetoric because of what it fails to do. As I have demonstrated so far, as understood through speech-act theory, one way to understand rhetoric is as a form of action or energy in language employed by the speaker to ensure the greatest probability that the speaker’s perlocutionary intent, as expressed in an illocutionary act, will lead to a certain perlocutionary act. Rhetoric is always present in speech acts. Speech acts are necessarily social and, therefore, as I have argued, necessarily civic and political.

I have argued in the context of a critique of textbooks that people do not have topics; instead, people experience exigence within a \( \text{C} \). The word “topic” as used in the textbooks hides any real reason to communicate—as if all writing comes from an institutional motivation divorced from a \( \text{C} \). Exigence is an interaction between the speaker and \( \text{C} \) and may indeed include reasons to speak/write that are institutionally mandated. The key here, I suggest, is to help students discover ways to take ownership of mandated writing—to make the exigence of the assignment real in a socio-political sense—and to encourage writing with purposes that spring from a student’s experience with \( \text{C} \). This situation, however, should not merely be faked up as a way to fool students into thinking of their writing as civic engagement. Instead, I am suggesting that the academy and its classrooms actually be sites of civic engagement. I do not mean to suggest, however, that this move is easily accomplished or presents no practical or theoretical problems. The academy as an institution in
concert with, or opposition to, other institutions creates certain constraints for teachers and students. Whether or not a classroom becomes part of the public sphere depends upon whether public institutions allow it and how they allow it.

In this chapter, I will explain the theory and practice of my pedagogy for critical democratic participation through rhetoric. And in the next two chapters I will describe classes taught using this theory and practice and analyze student writing produced in these classes. It is my intention to present a philosophy of teaching for consideration and not to posit a final solution to any particular problem.

**Definitions and Dichotomies**

In this section I will consider definitions of two important terms: “classical rhetoric” and “rhetorical approach.”

To this point, I have privileged something called “classical rhetoric.” Its use in contemporary pedagogy has been hotly debated from many theoretical and practical perspectives. What does this term identify? Too often I think the term “classical rhetoric” conjures images of Aristotle offering a culturally and historically bound systematic scheme of persuasion of dubious value to students in our epoch. Certainly the successful career of Edward P. J. Corbett helps fuel this perception. His famous textbook, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, was first published in 1965 and is still in print in its fourth edition. Corbett’s book is based on the systematic rhetoric of Aristotle to the exclusion of all other classical rhetoricians except those who follow the Aristotelian path. The contentious Greeks were no more in agreement about what rhetoric is and how it works than
scholars of the twenty-first century. It is common to argue that three
theories of rhetoric and its pedagogy emerged from ancient Greece as
embodied by Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates. Plato sought a moral
type of rhetoric. Isocrates’ pragmatism sought to affect the polis.
Aristotle sought to join theory and practice more closely in a
comprehensive, systematic rhetoric that argues for the guidance of
type leading to practice without moralizing. Corbett’s choice seems
to make perfect sense. Indeed, Corbett has argued that rhetoric is an
“enabling discipline” that “empowers a man to interact effectively
with other men through the expenditure of words” (Rhetoric 28).

This three-part view leaves out the thinking of the Sophists--a
group of divergent thinkers who are most often characterized as of one
mind concerning social and ethical relativism. Jarratt has helped
situate and complicate this thinking by demonstrating the links
between Sophistic theory and the social-epistemic theories of today.
Isocrates was a Sophist, but, because he opened a school and ended his
itinerant ways, he is often considered a third leg in Greek rhetoric--
antipode to both Plato and Aristotle. In a sense, however, Isocrates
won the day in terms of pedagogy. His thinking influenced rhetorical
education from the classical period to our own time. But it is the
systematic rhetoric of Aristotle that most often comes to mind when
one speaks the term “classical rhetoric,” despite the fact that
Aristotle’s influence did not blossom until the Renaissance. And we
see within his treatise, Rhetoric, the basis for the system of our own
twenty-first century textbooks. While there is much to admire in
Aristotle’s integration of theory and practice, his book is most often
used as a source for the names of the tools of rhetoric or as a model
by which to understand rhetorical performance. I will not argue that

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Aristotle is mistaken on any given point. I simply mean to suggest that approaches to rhetoric based on his thinking appear to posit a rhetoric that stands outside of history and culture. Thus, the problem.

I use the term “classical rhetoric,” however, to identify more than classical practice in its various forms. The term also identifies something that all of the factions of ancient Greek rhetoricians shared: an attitude of civic engagement. Despite their varied theories, one common characteristic of classical rhetoric from the Greek perspective is its concern with civic discourse following from the political needs of the polis in Greek democracy. The Greek debate about rhetoric was also a debate about civic virtue and individual excellence (arête). While discussion of individual excellence is outside the scope of this study, consideration of civic virtue is not. The entirety of the critical literacy movement, and its foundation in critical theory, rests on the notion that we can and should understand the cultural and historical forces that shape power relations in society and shape our experiences. We should understand these forces for the purpose of changing our circumstances for the better. How “better” is defined depends upon the critical thinker. But there is no shaking off the idea that critical theory is, in this way, concerned with civic virtue.

As I argued earlier, the Greeks understood in some way the notion of speech acts I am positing in this study. For them, to speak was to govern. It seems American citizens have all but lost a direct notion of this because our democracy manifests in republican form and is massive by comparison to a Greek city-state. For the Greeks, the political experience was more social than individual because, as
argued earlier, they experienced a polis in which citizens perceived a moral duty to participate as part of a socio-political unit that defined their individual identities. Arête was a social virtue. Civic virtue was individually cherished and its various manifestations were publicly celebrated by individuals through public displays. This political experience was made possible by a direct democracy among a small cultural group.

With the Renaissance came the first rise of the individual as a discrete entity who began to claim rights from the state. By the eighteenth century, democratic systems developed in which individuals both claimed rights from the state and asserted economic independence within emerging capitalist systems. By the dawn of the nineteenth century, democracy was on its way to becoming broad-based, pluralistic, and massive. Political experience became personal. In the years between the end of the Civil War and the reform movements of the early 1900s, America experienced its highest rates of political participation as quantified by voter turn-out. As Michael Shudson says: “Americans of that era enjoyed politics. They found it simultaneously serious and entertaining, both intellectually and emotionally satisfying” (28). Part of the satisfaction and seriousness may be explained by the patronage system of that era. Participation could affect one’s livelihood. The reform era changed Americans’ experience with politics, turning it from something social to something professional and individual. The reformers helped transform voting from a social to a civic act, rationalizing electoral behavior and and depriving elections of most of what made them compelling. The meaning of the human act of casting a ballot changed. Correspondingly . . . the act of reading a newspaper and the process of political education changed; the discourse of citizenship and citizenship ideals was transformed.
outcome was a world in many respects more democratic, inclusive, and dedicated to public, collective goals, and, for all that, less politically engaging. By the close of the Progressive Era, the cultural contradictions of democracy would reach a point of mournful clarity. (Schudson 147)

These changes happened at the same time that the concerns of belletrism finally eclipsed the concerns of rhetoric in English education. For all these reasons, the political experience of an American of the twenty-first century is profoundly different from the political experience of a citizen of Athens in the fifth century B.C.E. Considering how different these experiences are, what of classical rhetoric is possible to bring forward that would make sense to students except the practice of decontextualized skills as listed in Corbett’s textbook?

What I intend to bring forward from that time is not a particular practice, although my theory/practice closely resembles Isocrates’, but instead I intend to bring forward the idea, following from the Greek political context and speech-act theory, that rhetoric is civic, social, epistemic, and political, and we must, therefore, help students understand and act within the public sphere in our own twenty-first century political context. To do otherwise is to engage in the kind of unreality that current-traditional practice fosters and leads to disengaged students producing disengaged simulacrums of the privileged discourse. Despite the differences between the Greek and American contexts, speech-act theory, social-epistemic theories of rhetoric, and critical theory argue for a renewed vision of civic participation within the institutions of our own context following from a civic virtue of critical democratic participation. Classical rhetoric, as I use the term, is still useful in this regard.
The next term I wish to discuss is “rhetorical approach” because I use it differently from some critical theorists and practitioners. The term surfaces in discussions of certain classroom practices. For example, Shor specifically refers to “rhetorical approach” in the headnote to Lazere’s essay “Teaching the Political Conflicts: A Rhetorical Schema” (258). The term could also be applied to Herzberg’s “Community Service and Critical Thinking” from the same volume.

Lazere describes a composition course that uses political texts to engage students in socio-political critique. I will return to this essay later in this chapter. For now I wish to consider this statement by Lazere, in which he says his concept of teaching is studying political conflicts:

introducing as explicit subject matter the issues of political partisanship and bias, as examples of the subjective, socially constructed elements in perceptions of reality and of the way ideology consciously or unconsciously pervades teaching, learning, and other influential realms of public discourse, including news reporting, mass culture, and of course political rhetoric itself. (By addressing these issues, through a distinctly rhetorical approach, writing courses can also become a vital part of the reorientation of English toward cultural studies.) (259-60)

I find much here to applaud, and I will make use of this later in the chapter. Now let us consider this statement by Herzberg, in which he summarizes his goals for a service learning course centered on having students work in an urban homeless shelter:

The effort to reach into the composition class with a curriculum aimed at democracy and social justice is an attempt to make schools function . . . as radically democratic institutions, with the goal not only of making individual students more successful, but also of making better citizens, citizens in the strongest sense of those who take responsibility for communal welfare. These efforts belong in the composition class because of the rhetorical as well as the practical nature of citizenship and social transformation. (255)
Again, this excerpt describes much of what I believe and what I am arguing for in this study. But where is the rhetoric, understood as a socio-political skill in language use, in the pedagogy of these two teachers? Like much of the theory and practice of the critical literacy movement, these practices stop short of the very thing I am arguing for: civic engagement. The “rhetorical approach” of these two scholars is still mired in the last vestiges of belletrism. They are talking about rhetorical criticism, not rhetorical performance. They are talking about reading and interpreting texts—even the live texts of a homeless shelter in which a student completes a service learning project. I have no problem with assignments that ask students to engage in rhetorical criticism. Some of the analysis in the following chapters is based on student writing from exactly these types of assignments. But what about asking these students to write publicly in response to political conflicts or the needs of people who live in homeless shelters? What about writing to help the shelter? Or writing to challenge such programs? These critical theorists stop short of asking students to engage the polis. In that regard these theorists continue to be haunted by the ghost of belletrism and continue to treat students like pre-people.

I will collapse the dichotomy of “rhetorical approach” created here and privilege a more comprehensive view of this term. Like Herzberg and Lazere, I believe the consumption and interpretation of texts through rhetorical criticism is certainly important to any attempt at thinking critically. But this project is incomplete without the production of public texts, without civic engagement. A rhetorical approach to teaching should stress both consumption and production.
A New Model of Critical Literacy

In the Greek political experience, individuals displayed their civic virtue and arête through participation in the Brule and the juries of the law courts. And their effectiveness depended upon their ability to display through rhetoric, because, for the Greeks, style played an ethical role in persuasion. Further, the wealthy could display their civic virtue and arête by funding civic projects. These displays were often celebrated by further ceremonial displays, such as erecting statues and commissioning plays. For the Greeks, to speak was to govern and to govern was to display one’s civic virtue and arête.

The American civic experience in the twenty-first century does not offer the average citizen a similar political or social situation for display following from political changes in the nineteenth century leading to the Progressive Era. For the Greeks, politics was social and display was personal. For Americans, politics is personal and display is social. A critically literate Greek displayed in order to affect the polis by participating directly in the Brule, juries, or celebrations. A critically literate American, on the other hand, splays the displayed by opening the spectacle of American politics to scrutiny and acting to critique that display and thereby affect the socio-political reality.

We have called such understanding “critical literacy.” Among its various definitions is:

Critical literacy can be thought of as a social practice in itself and as a tool for the study of other social practices. That is, critical literacy is reflective and reflexive: Language use and education are social practices used to critically study all social practices including the social practices of language use and education. (Shor 10)
Its practice and purpose are as wide open as this definition. But I think Shor cogently states the civic virtue critical theorists seek when they attempt to apply critical theory to pedagogical practice. Shor follows John Dewey’s contention, from *The School and Society*, that education must link to the student’s vital interests. As Shor writes:

> With vital interests disconnected from classroom discourse, the students lose touch with the purpose of human communication. When they lose touch with purpose in speaking or writing, they struggle to mobilize their inherent language competencies. They lose their articulateness along with their motivation. (10)

I fully agree with Shor on this point. What I bring to the effort is the argument that understanding must then lead to civic action. The civic action I propose to encourage is engagement through writing and speaking because the theory of speech acts, as revised in this study, demonstrates a necessary link between language use and socio-political engagement. My disagreement with much of the current practice following from critical theory is that it stops short of the Greek ideal of civic engagement through rhetoric.

I posit a three-part model of critical theory that leads from understanding to action. The model begins with speech-act theory. The second part requires an understanding of the polis and its political spectacle. Part three is critical language study, as articulated by Norman Fairclough, in which the citizen critique the spectacle in a public act of advocacy. This integration recognizes a pedagogical theory espoused by Isocrates who believed that subjects should be taught as a “unified program”:

> When taught separately as descriptive sciences such studies as ethics, politics, logic, and literature may become just something to know. When properly integrated
with rhetoric . . . they are more likely to find useful application to private and public affairs. (Clark 55)

My model attempts to integrate concerns from rhetoric, linguistics, and political science into a unified program that may lead to useful application by students and politicians in public affairs.

Speech-Act Theory

Chapter 2 of this study outlines my revision of the theory of speech acts, in which I more closely link the illocutionary act and the perlocutionary act by accounting for the role of rhetoric in speech acts. In this section, I will further, but briefly, discuss the role of $C_l$ in the revised formula of illocutionary acts $C_lP(p) \rightarrow PE$. This discussion is necessary here because it is the socio-political context and language that helps create, or is created from, that context within which citizens personally experience the civic and the political.

I also think of $C_l$ in much the same way that Bitzer thinks of "rhetorical situation." I would argue with Bitzer's contention that "it is the situation which calls the discourse into existence," because I think language use and situation often arise together. Language mediates our experience and language often creates our experience so that external situation and internal apprehension are constantly negotiated within ourselves and among ourselves. But I largely agree with Bitzer's regarding the

rhetorical situation as a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance; this invited utterance participates naturally in the situation, is in many instances necessary to the completion of situational activity, and by means of its participation with situation obtains its meaning and its rhetorical character. (303)
In this case, I take the invited "utterance" to mean that one continues to participate in the situation through a speech act that naturally arises because of the exigence. C, then, represents a personal experience even in a situation in which the exigence involves groups. For example, if a racist lashes out at member of a minority group, viewing that person as merely a representative of a group, the two agents still experience this situation personally. C in my revised formula of illocutionary acts argues against a detached or objective examination of the rhetorical situation. This is not to say that academic ways of understanding a situation are not possible. Instead, even scientific inquiry is experienced personally and is often a reaction to a personal curiosity or quest. C argues for essayism as the privileged form of discourse. It is for this reason that I write this study in the first person as opposed to a third-person treatment typical of much academic work.

Imagine for a moment a crowd of protestors marching down the street and shouting in unison: "No justice, no peace." While this socio-political experience manifests in a group, the individual agents still experience the protest personally. The message is communal. The form may be institutionally appropriated and sanctioned. The group is engaging in a speech act that we may explicate in the way I demonstrated in Chapter 2. In the C of the group and the rhemes of the utterance, we may tease out a perlocutionary intent. I would argue, however, that each person in that group, while united in group purpose and voice, still has an individual perlocutionary intents and experiences of C because each person comes to that group experience with a different set of backgrounds that may include differences in sex, race, creed, culture, and socio-economic status. It is in exactly
this way that political display in twenty-first century America is social. In a mass democracy it often takes a mass message to engage the polis.

This observation creates a daunting challenge for my contentions in this study because I posit a possibility for individual as well as group display through writing. When Halloran seeks a remedy for political discourse that he believes has become “artless and irrational,” he is looking to the composition course to teach students civic engagement (From Rhetoric 178). This experience is personal and collective. When Shor seeks to develop an “oppositional discourse” to “remake ourselves and our culture,” (1) he is looking to political influence in the classroom as a way to promote social change. This experience is personal and collective. Many critical theorists are content to move a mass mind, i.e. changing the hearts and minds of many students will eventually lead to social change through critical democratic participation. And this hope is a big reason why, I think, so many of these theorists do not take the final step from understanding to acting, from consuming to producing. They posit, explicitly or not, social action taking place in the future because of changes in thinking supposedly taking place in the present. In the meantime, there are conflicts that need resolution now. There are school boards considering censorship. There are neighborhood associations considering beautification. There are state legislatures considering medical insurance for the poor. And there are congressmen considering how to “save” Social Security. Students, being adults and civic agents now, should be dealing with these situations now. And each of these situations, and hundreds like them that arise every day
in the normal course of living in a republic, require individual as well as group understanding and action.

The Political Spectacle

Murray Edelman uses the term “political spectacle” to refer to something like the “public sphere” of Jürgen Habermas except that Edelman does not posit a sphere in which rational talk and action, open to all, follows from a set of shared facts or experiences. Habermas’ concept of the public sphere has been called “utopian” and “bourgeois” by various critics because it “was never realized in practice (Fraser 77). In Constructing the Political Spectacle, Edelman describes how an interaction among the public, news media, and politicians creates a spectacle that we understand as political experience. This spectacle is largely created by the language we use to talk about the conflicts and leaders who emerge as part of our public talk about issues. For Edelman, politics is profoundly personal, experiential, and created/mediated by language.

Edelman would challenge a premise that this study takes for granted: That critically literate individuals and groups may have a positive impact on their socio-political situations and the public good through effective writing and speaking. Instead, Edelman says that

response takes for granted a world of facts that have a determinable meaning and a world of people who react rationally to the facts they know. In politics neither premise is tenable, a conclusion that history continually reaffirms and that observers of the political scene are tempted to ignore. (1)

The spectacle, the display of twenty-first century political experience, is “constituted by news reporting” that “constructs and reconstructs social problems, crises, enemies, and leaders.” These
constructs provide the data for “historical and analytic political studies” and play a “central role in winning support and opposition for political causes and policies” (1). In other words, Edelman sees a spectacle in which the speech acts of an institution—the news media—creates the C^L of our experience with politics. Despite what Edelman sees as the “ambiguity” of issues, values, and leaders in this spectacle, the fact remains that the news media, politicians, and the people talk within something like a public sphere in order to govern. It is not the utopian public sphere of Habermas. It is a jumble of conflicting socio-political forces and institutions that often seem too confusing and daunting to the individual. Whether the facts are determinable, or the meanings of politically significant signs are up for dispute, does not, in the end, negate that a polis exists in which political agents and groups speak to affect their situations and public good. Instead, the condition of postmodernity requires that we understand our situations as created by both personal experience and socio-political forces beyond our individual control.

What is important about Edelman’s thinking for this study is his idea that the circumstances of our political experience are contingent upon political talk, and remain open for discussion, within a structure of social and political values. Indeed, he posits that political consensus leads to political destabilization. Like the Sophists, he takes a relativist position, and, again like the Sophists, he rejects the notion that relativism is the immoral position, saying: “Final conclusions, like final solutions, are for dogmatists” (5). If so, then one must listen to do as well as speak to do in politics. Further, Edelman’s understanding of C^L fits with my own as posited in this study. He says:
My references in this book to language or actions or objects that evoke meanings always presuppose that the 'evocation' takes place only as a function of a specific material and social condition. Idealism and materialism are dichotomies as abstract concepts, but in everyday like they are facets of the same transaction. Every sign exercises its effects because of the specific context of privilege, disadvantage, frustration, aspiration, hope, and fear in which it is experienced. (9)

This is also a cogent statement explaining why the move from the illocutionary to the perlocutionary is alien territory for linguists. As soon as we add human context to the mix, the sets of variables and data become infinitely large. But, as I have argued, we cannot properly understand the illocutionary act and its relationship to the perlocutionary act without considering C. But, as I have argued, we may discover the link between these two acts by accounting for the role of rhetoric in speech acts. And by accounting for the role of rhetoric we account for the contingent in human affairs.

If students are to engage the polis then they must learn to situate themselves and their groups historically and politically within the polis and be able to read the texts of the polis using their understanding of their situated selves to critique the spectacle. I opened this study suggesting that composition courses might be thought of as rhetoric courses. It is within the concept of a classical rhetoric course, as understood by the Greeks and early Romans, that such engagement may be possible. Such a course requires that the teacher be a rhetorician in the Greek sense: The teacher should be a public intellectual capable of dealing with a wide range of socio-political issues, i.e. offer the integration of the humanities and social sciences once espoused by Isocrates. We may see a good example of this in Lazere’s model course, in which he uses partisan political texts as a way to
broaden the ideological positions of students’ critical thinking, reading, and writing . . . to empower them to make their own autonomous judgments on opposing ideological positions . . . and on specific issues. (259)

Lazere answers critics from English studies, who fear that such classes will become political science courses, by assuring them that the level of engagement and analysis (vocabulary) is similar to what is already available in the political spectacle through the news media, speeches, and other means of public engagement. This is fine for a composition course within an English department. I would argue, however, that English should not own rhetoric as a sub-discipline.

Critical Language Study

One of the main contentions of critical literacy is that we may begin to discover and understand our historical and political situations within the power relationships of a society or state. Explicating these relationships leads to critique. Critique leads to change. Fairclough argues that “sociolinguistic conventions have a dual relation to power: on the one hand they incorporate differences of power, on the other hand they arise out of--and give rise to--particular relations of power” (Language 1-2) Fairclough developed a system he calls “Critical Language Study” to “explain existing conventions as the outcome of power relations and power struggle” by emphasizing analysis of “common-sense assumptions” in public discourse. While Fairclough’s term identifies his particular type of critique, I choose to appropriate his term as a catch-all phrase describing socio-political critique that focuses on language use as the source of political power and experience. He allowed for his system being one of many types of discourse analysis useful in critiquing the spectacle. Although Fairclough was uncomfortable with
the individualist notion of language as social “action,” he came to understand that his idea of “language use as a form of social practice” implied “that discourse is a mode of action, one form in which people act upon the world . . . as well as a mode of representation” and that there is a “dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure” (Discourse 63-64).

Fairclough emphasized questioning common sense assumptions as they arise in civic discourse because within these types of statements we may discover how ideology, and thus power, is created and maintained. He says:

Ideology is most effective when its workings are least visible. If one becomes aware that a particular aspect of common sense is sustaining power inequalities at one’s own expense, it ceases to be common sense, and may cease to have the capacity to sustain power inequalities, i.e. to function ideologically. And invisibility is achieved when ideologies are brought to discourse not as explicit elements of the text, but as the background assumptions which on the one hand lead the text producer to ‘textualize’ the world in a particular way, and on the other hand do lead the interpreter to interpret the text in a particular way. Texts do not typically spout ideology. They so position the interpreter through their cues that she brings ideologies to the interpretation of texts--and reproduces them in the process! (Language 85)

Notice that this excerpt provides an excellent argument for analysis and interpretation of the kind sought by Herzberg and Lazere. But also notice that Fairclough suggests a route to civic action when he situates his critique in terms of his reader’s understanding of their situations as reproduced, or created, in civic discourse. This skill is particularly needed now, he argues, because of the changes in politics that have occurred as the relationship between citizens and the political parties have changed. These changes have multiple and complex causes, but certainly two important factors in these changes have been the professionalization of the bureaucracy during the
Progressive era and the rise of the importance of the mass media in electoral politics. These two, among other factors, have decreased the power of political parties in American politics. And this decrease in party power has led to the American political experience becoming less social and more individual. This situation, Fairclough argues, makes the skill of critical language study all the more crucial. He says:

Party politics, in becoming increasingly conducted through one-way public discourse in the media, with advertising as its model, is increasingly retreating from two-way, face-to-face discourse. Door-to-door canvassing, political debate and argument, and political meetings, are decreasingly significant elements of the discourse of politics. Under the impact of the generalization of the economic relationship of consumption, party in politics is losing its base in people’s lives. People’s involvement in politics is less and less as citizens, and more and more as consumers; and their bases of participation are less and less the real communities they belong to, and more and more the political equivalents of consumption communities, which political leaders construct for them. (Language 211)

Fairclough suggests this process may be reversed. And I would suggest the place to start is the college classroom in which the teacher and students understand themselves to be participating at a site within the public sphere, or, rather, the political spectacle.

Part three of my model of critical literacy, then, completes a circle of sorts because I suggest that one technique of Critical Language Study is the explication and analysis of illocutionary acts in civic discourse. My revision of speech-act theory, accounting for the role of rhetoric in illocutionary acts, argues that language use necessitates civic action. But the formula may also be used as a rubric for the interpretation and analysis of civic and political texts. In other words, we may encourage the type of language study Fairclough espouses by introducing C\(^F(p)\)\(^r\)\(->PE\) to students as a way to
begin understanding what speakers are doing when they speak. The formula then suggests that the analysis lead to some civic action.

The formula may now appear to be another way to state Aristotle’s various categories of rhetoric. I will not argue with that observation. The formula wraps the canons of rhetoric around the illocutionary act. Understood in this way, however, the formula removes the sting of Milton’s criticism that a rhetorician’s rules do nothing but identify his tools because it demonstrates a way to understand how and why the tools are used by a given speaker in a given context. Although it is outside the scope of this study, I suggest further research into the formula may help us begin to make positive statements about how and why the tools of rhetoric persuade.

**Pedagogy**

A pedagogy, like a rhetoric, exists within a noetic field and posits a noetic field. Sometimes these fields are the same, i.e. the noetic field of a rhetoric matches the noetic field of a society. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, a noetic field much like that of the Enlightenment still dominates our society despite encroachment by competing fields--most notably postmodernism. Current-traditional practice still dominates English composition and its teaching because it fits the assumptions of the current noetic field. What is important to note here is that my theory and pedagogy stand outside the current noetic field, meaning that its effectiveness is mitigated by its marginality. Current-traditional practitioners outnumber critical theorists and probably will for the foreseeable future. The only way I see my theory and pedagogy making a difference is in incremental adoption by teachers looking for new techniques to engage students.
This has been the way that most pedagogical practices have been adopted in English studies for the past 100 years, i.e. adoption by unit practice rather than theory. And this may even make matters worse because, if Richard Fulkerson is correct, far too many marginalized teachers in marginalized positions are guilty of “mindlessness” in that they unconsciously adopt a practice without investigating the theory. This leads to the sorry state of affairs in which “teachers either fail to have a consistent value theory or fail to let that philosophy shape pedagogy” (7). They end up asking students to do one thing and then grading them on another. I think this situation most often appears with teachers who make expressive assignments and then grade in terms of formalism. And this, I believe, accurately describes current-traditional practice.

A pedagogy should articulate: (1) a noetic field; (2) what it asks students to do; (3) the reason why students should do it, (4) the goals to be achieved by students and teachers; and (5) a criteria for evaluation that matches what students are asked to do. I will now consider each of these five.

The noetic field of my pedagogy most closely resembles the noetic field of social-epistemic rhetoric as cogently explained by Berlin:

Epistemic rhetoric posits a transaction that involves all elements of the rhetorical situation: interlocutor, audience, material reality, and language. The most significant difference [from other transactional theories] is that language enters into the transaction and is present in every instance of its manifestation. The reason for this is that the interlocutor, audience, and material world are all regarded as verbal constructs . . . In epistemic rhetoric there is never a division between experience and language, whether the experience involves the subject, the subject and other subjects, or the subject and the material world. All experiences, even the scientific and the logical, are grounded in language, and
language determines their content and structure. And just as language structures our response to social and political issues, language structures our response to the material world. Rhetoric thus becomes implicated in all human behavior. All truths arise out of dialectic, out of the interaction of individuals within discourse communities. Truth is never simply ‘out there’ in the material world or the social realm, or simply ‘in here’ in a private and personal world. It emerges only as the three—the material, the social, and the personal—interact, and the agent of mediation is language.

(Rhetoric 16-17)

Using my revised formula of the illocutionary act as a critical-pedagogical tool fits this noetic field because it takes into account the primacy of language in the human experience.

As I have been explaining to this point, in general my pedagogy asks students to engage the public sphere, or participate in the spectacle, through writing. Specifically, I set up a kind of progymnasmata that begins with personal responses to civic/political situations or texts. I encourage essayism in these responses. I expect students to work out their thinking and not necessarily come to grand conclusions because grand conclusions suggest a world of positive knowledge and actions; I resist and challenge grand conclusions that cut off dialogue and exploration. Next, I usually ask students to analyze a civic/political text based on my explanation of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts or one or more of the schemas of classical rhetoric. I ask them to read closely and dig deeply to discover intent and how relations of power manifest. I may also focus this assignment more closely if the class theme warrants such treatment, e.g. in a class in which I focused on historical changes in American citizenship, I asked students to analyze the recent Bush inaugural address to discover how the new president constructs citizenship. A third type of assignment that I give asks students
specifically to engage the public sphere by writing an opinion column for the local newspaper. Depending upon the course, I may have to assign a standard academic research paper. I usually leave the topic open to students as long as it addresses the focus of the class. In all of these assignments, I stress the public nature of their writing. I demonstrate how each of these assignment types is privileged through essayism in the public sphere.

The reasons that I have students do these things have been the focus of this study so far. I will not elaborate further here except to say that if to speak is to do, and if language use is a form of social practice/action, and if our socio-political experience is mediated by language, then one must speak in order to affect the socio-political environment. As stated earlier, I assume for this study that critical democratic participation is a civic virtue.

The effect I wish to achieve with this pedagogy is to help students write more effective and engaged texts as current active agents of the polis. I believe, as John Dewey explained, that students learn best when education is connected to their vital interests. The adjective “vital” is important to consider in this statement (qtd. in Shor 10). I do not mean to suggest making education fit students’ popular interests as so many composition pedagogies have attempted to do. Rather, the term “vital,” as Dewey meant it, suggests an importance that transcends immediate self-interest of the popular kind, i.e. music, movies, food, and friends. Without these vital issues, Dewey suggested the student loses motivation and a sense of purpose. I do not suppose that one semester in my class turns students from apathetic teenagers into polis-engaging Übermenschen. Indeed, they struggle to realize that they come to school with issues. They
struggle with the idea that someone might be interested in what they have to say. They struggle with the fear of public display. And they struggle with their ignorance of how the institutions of the public sphere work for and against them. I am satisfied if I can at least provide a beginning for a life-long willingness and ability to be critical participants in American democracy--a willingness to try.

Fulkerson makes a strong argument for matching pedagogical theory with evaluation criteria in order to create a coherent writing environment for students. If a teacher’s pedagogy stresses expressive discourse, then that teacher must grade student performance based upon the features of expressive discourse. For example, expressive writing is usually personal, reflective, and subjective. Students often forget or ignore certain conventions of standard academic English when engaged in producing a highly personal text. It is then both unfair and inexcusable to grade such writing by formalist standards as if the expressive content of the essay meant nothing more that an opportunity to prove to a teacher that the student can reproduce a certain type of discourse. I ask students to engage the spectacle, through the writing of essays and short opinions, as active agents of the polis. Many students find this a difficult task because they have rarely been asked to assert themselves publicly or had teachers treat their written musings as anything more than exercises toward a future literate being. My progymnasmata helps them develop a personal concept of, and experience with, civic engagement as they move through the course in much the same way I imagine the Sophists may have done. I evaluate each assignment based on what I have asked the student to do. By the end of a semester, I would hope to see in student writing a willingness to engage polis personally and critically. According to
Fulkerson’s categories, most of my assignments cross the boundary between the rhetorical and the expressive. So I attempt to evaluate students based on their ability to create a strong personal voice that seeks to engage a real audience and, perhaps, achieve some perlocutionary intent.

From this brief consideration of the five characteristics of a pedagogy, one can see that a pedagogy is itself a speech act with a context, a discourse community, a language, and rhemes creating a perlocutionary intent.
CHAPTER 7
COURSE DESIGN, ASSIGNMENTS, AND RATIONALE

As I have argued to this point, when we ask students to create simulacrum of discourse, disconnected from any relevance to the socio-political conditions of their lives, we create a situation of unreality that leads to disengaged students producing disengaged writing. If to speak is to do, and if speech-act theory suggests a necessary socio-political engagement through language, then I contend that what we should be asking students to do is engage their socio-political situations in public ways. This leads me to believe that at least some component of composition courses, including writing-intensive courses in the humanities and social sciences, should foster engagement with the polis. In this chapter, I will explain the features and assignments of several courses I designed in order to move student writing away from simulacrum to something like real engagement with a polis. I qualify that statement because, as much as I wish to break down the walls that apparently separate the academy from the polis, cultural, social, and political barriers exist between students in a classroom and institutions in a polis. Classrooms can be terribly complex and political sites even before any thought of moving outward. In addition, the institutions of the polis often present barriers that challenge my pedagogy and the attempts of students to engage in meaningful discourse outside the classroom. The academy, across disciplines, treats students as pre-people and their work as training for later economic application. The classroom in such a context often sits outside, or, perhaps protected from, the public sphere. What I describe here is an evolutionary process that remains
in progress. I do not posit that I have achieved the one true answer to my research question, nor do I suppose that what I describe here is the only route to an answer. Instead, I suggest that I have begun discovering one effective way to engage students in civic discourse that encourages their participation in the polis through writing produced in composition classes and writing-intensive courses that could be offered in political science or other social sciences. I begin to show how the classroom might become a site of engagement in the polis and a player in spectacle.

It seems that much pedagogical theory in English studies centers on the so-called freshman or first-year composition course as taught across many types of institutions of higher learning. I will resist this trend. Instead, the courses I describe here cover a range from first to fourth year as taught by me at two institutions: the University of Missouri–Kansas City (UMKC), an urban, state institution, and Park University (Park), a small, liberal arts institution. The classes and descriptions (taken from the UMKC and Park course catalogs as of December 2001) include:

1. EN106 Writing Purposes and Research: “The course teaches students to write effectively for various purposes and audiences. It also helps to develop further skills in critical thinking and reading. Special emphasis is given to information retrieval and writing a research paper.”

2. E225 Composition II: “The study and practice of expository writing and analytical and critical reading. The writing focus is on kinds of organization, diction, style, etc. more sophisticated than those practiced in Freshman English I. Frequent research papers.”
3. E301 Writing and the Academy: “This course examines social and ethical issues raised by academic reading and writing. While some attention is paid to the formal aspects of academic prose within specific disciplines, the main emphasis of the course is on the cultural consequences of the different ways that academic knowledge is created and taught. In addition to studying the language and structure of academic reading and writing, the course explores the various rhetorics of the academy in terms of a broad range of subjects including economics, gender, education, history, and myth.”

4. E305 Theory and Practice of Composition: “A course in expository writing for the student with superior writing preparation and ability. The work of the course will include readings on the nature of language, the writing of frequent short essays and a long paper.”

5. E351: (Special Readings) The Rhetoric of Contemporary Political Campaigns: “Readings in a period, genre or theme to be selected by the instructor with attention to the needs of students who are interested in literary topics not covered in regular offerings.”

6. E403 Writing in Cultural Contexts: “This course focuses on writings that evolve from cultural, intercultural, and natural environments and offers development of students' critical reading, writing, and thinking skills by focusing on rhetorical situations and the more global contexts of writing. Students enhance their understanding of leadership and cooperation through synthesizing their knowledge and abilities of written communication with knowledge they have gained in other courses.”
Without dwelling on the rhetoric of course descriptions in college catalogs, these descriptions offer instructors much latitude in designing classes that appear to meet a vague litany of department standards while possibly meeting more specific concerns and standards of individual instructors. Fulkerson suggests that composition instructors avoid “mindlessness” in pedagogy by ensuring that we match our grading criteria to what we ask students to do (4). He outlines four philosophies of composition--the expressive, the mimetic, the rhetorical, and the formalist--in terms of what each asks students to do. Expressive philosophies ask students to use the self and personal experience as the source of understanding. Mimetic philosophies ask students to make clear connections between reality and writing by emphasizing broad knowledge as a source of understanding. Rhetorical philosophies ask students to understand and engage readers for the purpose of persuasion. Formalist philosophies ask students to conform to standard models of coherence, unity, and correctness, i.e. current-traditional practice. Fulkerson understands that these categories, while appearing distinct, overlap each other in various ways depending upon the values of the instructor. My own thinking and pedagogy crosses the boundary between the expressive and the rhetorical. Unlike many critics of expressive pedagogies, I contend that personal experience is the point of contact between self and polis. In other words, as Edelman has argued, politics is an intensely personal experience. Group identity is also an intensely personal experience. Political exigence is a personal experience, therefore perlocutionary intent arises out of complex personal experience for the purpose of affecting the world in a way that will be felt and understood personally.
In the courses described here, I generally move through a sequence of assignments that begins with a personal writing task asking students to think about how the class topic affects their own lives. If political experience arises from personal experience, then a personal, exploratory essay about the class topic helps students begin to situate themselves with the issue. I contend this personal, essayistic writing is a necessary first step in developing a strong, personal voice to engage the polis. Here is one point of current-traditional practice that I appear to accept: strong personal voice. My acceptance of this as a feature of effective writing differs from current-traditional practice in that I believe that voice is more than personal; it is also civic based on my conclusions about speech-act theory and rhetoric. In courses in which I do not assign a personal essay, I have students write personal response papers to help them engage the readings and class discussions. Some assignments in the courses represented here are designed to encourage the type of analytical essay often seen published in the consumer press, especially the editorial pages of newspapers, news weeklies, partisan political magazines, and culture magazines such as The Atlantic or Harper’s. In nearly all the classes described here, I ask students to produce a short editorial much like those published in the opinion columns of major newspapers. An important component if this sequence is my encouraging students to write for a public audience and to understand that these assignments have clear analogs in the polis. Indeed, I try to help them understand the classroom as a site of connection with the polis. Following from Dewey’s observations in The School and Society, I believe it is this connection between writing and the public sphere in the classroom that helps students connect
their own vital interests with language use and leads to more effective writing.

My pedagogy attempts to identify or create exigence beyond the onus of the writing assignment so that students may engage personally with their writing and personally with an audience beyond the instructor--preferably an audience within the polis. There is nothing politically innocent about this maneuver. It is my intent to encourage a critical engagement within the polis among my students, to promote democratic participation, which means that my own politics and civic engagement become examples for discussion and critique. As Herzberg claims:

The effort to reach into the composition class with a curriculum aimed at democracy and social justice is an attempt to make schools function . . . as radically democratic institutions, of making better citizens, citizens in the strongest sense of those who take responsibility for communal welfare. These efforts belong in the composition class because of the rhetorical as well as the practical nature of citizenship and social transformation. (255)

The influence of the ancient Greeks is clear. Herzberg’s attitude toward the classroom helps break down the walls of the so-called ivory tower and return the work of the academy to the rough-and-tumble cacophony of the polis. This attitude returns to the modern academy the classical idea that the work students do here is public and can and should affect the public.

Countering the concerns of scholars who claim that to introduce political topics in a composition class is to venture outside of the English instructor’s field of expertise, Lazere says:

The level at which these issues are analyzed in a course like the one I describe . . . is that at which they are addressed, not in scholarly studies, but in political speeches, news and entertainment media, op-ed columns, general-circulation journals of opinion, and other realms
of public discourse to which everyone is exposed every day. The political vocabulary and information covered here are no more specialized than what every citizen in a democracy should be expected to know, even before taking a college argumentative and research writing course. (261)

While I agree with Lazere, I believe his thinking concedes to the critics the notion that politics is, and perhaps should be, outside the expertise of the rhetoric/composition instructor. I agree with Jarratt, however, that composition teachers and rhetoric scholars should conceive of themselves, indeed act as, public intellectuals— and not merely for the purpose of being an example to students (95). If, as classically conceived, rhetoric is a metadiscipline, then it is not so strange to suppose that composition teachers and rhetoric scholars can and should be lay experts in politics or any number of other disciplines as recognized in the modern academy. And political science scholars can, and perhaps should be, well trained in rhetoric and writing pedagogy considering the public importance of that discipline. The great strength of the critical literacy movement, I believe, is how broadly it conceives the role of teacher and student.

**Courses and Writing Assignments**

In this section I will describe several courses I designed using the pedagogical theory outlined in the previous chapter. The institutional intents for these courses vary greatly. Often these intents conflict with my own and must be dealt with openly in the classroom. The intents that I bring to each course are these: (1) encourage students to write at least one essay for a public audience; (2) promote critical literacy and democratic participation through analysis (language and politics) of political—specifically presidential—texts; (3) demonstrate to students my commitment to this
pedagogy by acting as a public intellectual—specifically by writing publicly and using that writing as part of the class. Of these three intents, the first two are features built into the designs of each class and written into the syllabuses and assignments (see APPENDIX A). My third intent must necessarily be demonstrated in class. What I am asking students to do would be recognizable and understood by an Ancient Greek teacher such as the Sophist Isocrates: (1) engage the polis; (2) think critically about political texts, i.e. issues of the day as portrayed in these texts and the language used to portray them; and (3) imitate me or some other, perhaps more worthy, example of civic engagement.

EN106 Writing Purposes and Research and E225 Composition II

EN106 and E225 are typical of a second-semester composition courses in a two-semester sequence in that it focuses on the production of a research paper. I use the research assignment as an opportunity to explore the rhetorical similarities and differences among personal writing, public writing (articles, editorials, speeches) and academic or expository writing. In this way, I fulfill the institutional intent of teaching students “to write effectively for various purposes and audiences.”

The courses, as conceived by Park and UMKC, is flexible enough to allow for a wide range of texts and issues. In the three classes I discuss here, the primary texts were: (1) Joe Klein’s novel Primary Colors, used for a class focused on the 2000 presidential election and its representation in fiction and non-fiction; (2) Neil Postman’s Amusing Ourselves to Death, used in a class focused on how technology affects the polis and creates the spectacle of the public sphere; and
Michael Schudson’s The Good Citizen, used in a class focused on the evolution of American citizenship. I assigned Andrea Lunsford’s The Everyday Writer for one of these classes as a help text. This particular class was a small, summer section with seven students, three of whom had previously failed the course. No assignments were made from this text. In the classes that followed the presidential election, I assigned my own web site, Presidential Campaign Rhetoric 2000, as a required text and an example of one of the many ways to use writing to engage the polis. This site contained my own rhetorical analysis of campaign speeches and political commentary based on that analysis.

E225 Summer 2000

I used a four-assignment sequence for the class focused on the presidential election. In the first assignment, I asked students to write a personal essay exploring their own relationships to the political process. The idea behind this assignment was to set the stage for their thinking about the novel, the campaign, and their own public essay written to engage the polis.

In the second assignment, I asked students to explore the intersection between “real life” and the fiction in Primary Colors. I used this assignment to demonstrate that such analysis is not merely an academic exercise. Instead, I intended to demonstrate the public nature of such an assignment based on reviews of the novel, which also tried to explore the book for some measure of truth or reality undergirding the fiction.

In the third assignment, I asked students to write a public opinion column about the campaign, or another civic issue of their
choice, as if to be published in the “As I See It” column of the
Kansas City Star (a 500-word op-ed column open to the public in
addition to the Letters to the Editor). I had the students format
their essays to conform to the Star’s submission guidelines, a
necessity if they were to be heard by this institution. And I placed a
grade incentive on getting published if students chose to submit their
essays. I used the grade incentive in three classes and did not use it
in the other classes. It seemed to make no difference in the number of
students who made the extra effort to submit their essays. The
students were far more motivated to submit after a classmate was
published. In four years of making this type of assignment in most of
the classes described here, the number of students who have been
published averages about two per class.

The final essay was an open-ended, expository research
assignment asking students to respond to any “topic, situation,
person, or idea” from the novel.

EN106 Summer 2001

I used a three-assignment sequence for this class focused on
technology and the polis. In the first assignment, I asked students to
write a personal essay about the influence of television and the
Internet on their lives. The purpose of this assignment was to get
them thinking about how technology, specifically information
technologies, affect the way they interact with the world. This
assignment was also intended to demonstrate how such personal essays
may be used to think out loud with a public audience over issues of
cultural relevance.
In the second assignment, I asked students to read and watch (on video tape) the president’s inaugural address and then analyze the differences between a textual presentation of the address and a television presentation. The purpose of this assignment was to demonstrate how a single text might differ in affect and meaning depending upon the technology that delivers it and to demonstrate one of the ways in which a commentator might critique the speech for a public audience.

The third essay was an expository research assignment in which I asked students to apply Postman’s critique of television to the Internet. The purpose of this assignment was to demonstrate how a critical stance might translate across topics, situations, and time.

EN106 Fall 2001

I used a four-assignment sequence in this class focused on the evolution of citizenship in America. For the first assignment, I asked students to write a personal essay in which they explore what ‘citizenship’ means to them. The due date for this assignment was 13 September 2001. All but three students in a class of twenty-three chose to write about the events of 11 September 2001. The outpouring of personal essays in the popular press surrounding the terrorist attacks provided students with ample proof that the personal essay in response to news events and issues is a privileged form of public discourse in America.

For assignment two, I asked students to analyze how President George W. Bush constructed citizenship in his inaugural address and comment on his constructions based on their own views from their first essays. The purpose of this assignment was to have students learn to
deconstruct cultural myths as portrayed by the president and discover their own relationship to those myths.

Assignment three asked students to write a public essay on any topic of civic concern as if to be published in the “As I See It” column of the Kansas City Star. There was no grade incentive offered for this assignment.

In assignment four, to demonstrate the differences and similarities between public and academic rhetoric, I asked students to write an expository essay on the same topic they chose for assignment three.

E301 Writing and the Academy

E301 is one of the junior-level writing courses that students at UMKC may choose to fulfill their third-year writing-intensive requirement. The “main emphasis of the course is on the cultural consequences of the different ways that academic knowledge is created and taught.” This institutional purpose certainly fits with the goals of the critical literacy movement. In addition, “the course explores the various rhetorics of the academy in terms of a broad range of subjects including economics, gender, education, history, and myth.” While these purposes are certainly worthy, there is nothing in the course description saying what it is UMKC expects students to do beyond noting the “consequences” and exploring the “rhetorics.” These are important intents, but I suggest that making the class a point of contact with the polis, emphasizing civic connections between the academy and other institutions, creates a fertile ground in which these institutional intents may sprout.
For this class, I created a two-assignment sequence around a class theme of “Quality of Life in Kansas City in the Next Decade: Areas for Improvement.” Students were asked to produce a class report made up of individual, academic essays grouped by theme concerning quality-of-life issues in Kansas City. The purpose of the assignment was to show how academic writing connects with the polis and its institutions by creating a document that the class would distribute to city leaders. The second assignment was a 500-word opinion essay, as if to be published in the “As I See It” column in the Kansas City Star, based on each student’s project. The purpose was to demonstrate the similarities and differences between academic rhetoric for a professional/institutional audience and popular rhetoric aimed at a general audience. There was no grade incentive for this assignment.

As a class, the students chose four themes for the project: education, transportation, the arts, and health care. Students were given their choice of themes and their choice of specific topics within those themes. Students, for the most part, chose themes and individual projects that reflected their professional study. For example, students from the medical school chose health care and students from the Conservatory of Music chose the arts. I asked students to write weekly reports on their progress. I conducted the class as a workshop, in which students worked in their theme groups to research, write, and edit their particular sections of the class document.
requirement. It is a course in “expository writing for the student with superior writing preparation and ability.” The course description further states that the “work of the course will include readings on the nature of language, the writing of frequent short essays and a long paper.” In a sense, this course is a junior-level extension of typical first- and second-year writing courses that takes a self-conscious look at the process of composition, voice, language use, research, and audience-appropriate style. The course I designed asked students to engage in critical discourse analysis in group projects that studied language use in political texts, institutional texts, culture-bearing texts, counter-culture texts, subversive texts, advertising texts, and mass media texts.

For this class I created a two-assignment sequence plus a series of response papers written to engage the textbook and the texts used in their group presentations. The two main assignments asked students to produce a conference-length scholarly essay and a 500-word companion essay targeted for the “As I See It” column in the Kansas City Star. The purpose here was to demonstrate the similarities and differences between academic rhetoric aimed at a professional/institutional audience and popular rhetoric aimed at a general audience. There was a grade incentive placed on this assignment.

I taught this course three times between the 1998 fall semester and the 1999 winter semester. While I made a few changes to the syllabus each time, the syllabus and assignments represented in APPENDIX A accurately describe the content and focus of all three classes. This class represents my first attempts at using something like Fairclough’s concept of critical discourse analysis in a
pedagogical technique that asked students to engage current texts from the polis as more than simply bearers of content. In other words, what I asked students to do was to think about language choice and what it means to the meaning of a piece of discourse. I chose Roderick Hart’s *Modern Rhetorical Criticism* as the textbook to help students find ways to engage a discourse on the level of illocutionary acts leading to perlocutionary effects. From here, I hoped they would then critique their own texts as public expressions written to create perlocutionary effects.

E351 The Rhetoric of Contemporary Political Campaigns

E351 is one of the junior-level writing courses that students at UMKC may choose to fulfill their third-year writing-intensive requirement. Unlike the courses mentioned so far, E351 is a temporary special readings course. The class followed the presidential campaign during the 2000 fall semester. I designed this course as a crossover between English and political science. From a political standpoint, students learned the process of political campaigns and how campaign speeches and debates operate within, and indeed create, the political process. From an English/rhetoric standpoint, the class studied the rhetoric of campaign speeches to uncover what politicians do and how they do it.

Textbooks for the course included Hart’s *Modern Rhetorical Criticism* and Steven Wayne’s *Road to the White House 2000*. In addition, I assigned all major addresses given by the various candidates as published on the website of the *Washington Post* and on the websites of the various candidates. The class also watched campaign coverage and political debates on television. The students
also read my essays, commentary, and critiques published on my Presidential Campaign Rhetoric 2000 website.

I created a four-assignment sequence (plus response papers) for this course. In the first assignment, I asked students to write a short critique of any campaign address of interest to them using one of the critical techniques they learned from Hart. In the second assignment, I asked students to write a longer, more detailed critique of either the Bush or Gore acceptance speeches from the party nominating conventions. We compared and contrasted their critiques with the critiques of the pundits in the news media.

In the third assignment, I asked students to write a 500-word opinion essay about any issue of interest to them involving the election. There was no grade incentive placed on this assignment. In the fourth assignment, I asked students to write either a conference length research paper or synthesis essay on any topic of interest to them arising from their readings or class discussion.

I taught this class with the attitude that what we did in that room had public importance. All of the twelve students sent their third assignments to the Kansas City Star, and two were published. I continued to write both for the Star and for my web site. In addition to these displays of public rhetoric, I also appeared three times on local television as an election commentator based on my study of presidential rhetoric. The doubt created by the re-count controversy in Florida provided another way to study the election. The class paid particular attention to how Gore and Bush presented themselves as presidential during this period in order to suggest a foregone conclusion. The dynamic discussions of this class drew the attention of the local news media. The NBC affiliate, channel 41 KSHB, visited
the class to do a story on what the students thought about the recount, thus providing them dramatic evidence that their class was truly a site of engagement with the polis.

E403 Writing in Cultural Contexts

E403 is one of the senior-level writing courses that students at UMKC may choose to fulfill their third-year writing-intensive requirement. This course focuses on “writings that evolve from cultural, intercultural, and natural environments and offers development of students' critical reading, writing, and thinking skills by focusing on rhetorical situations and the more global contexts of writing.” The course is offered as the writing-intensive requirement for students in the Bloch School of Business and Public Administration. The class is also popular with students studying education and the social sciences. So, I further focused the institutional intention by asking students to read, synthesize, and write about issues of culture and (re)presentation in education, business, and politics. I assigned *Between Borders*, by Henry Giroux and my Presidential Campaign Rhetoric 2000 web site.

I used a two-assignment sequence (plus response papers). In the first assignment, I asked students to write a 500-word opinion essay as if to be published in the Kansas City Star. I placed a grade incentive on this assignment. Unlike the other classes described here, I constrained their choice of topics in a way to highlight the institutional intents of the course as I interpreted them. I asked students to address an issue of cultural, social, racial, sexual, economic, institutional, or religious (re)presentation as it occurred in the presidential campaign. The purpose of this assignment was to
move these advanced students beyond thinking in terms of policy issues and begin thinking in terms of how these policies are (re)presented in political campaigns.
CHAPTER 8
AN EMPIRICAL LOOK AT STUDENTS’ TEXTS AS A CLASS

I will offer my analysis of student texts in two parts. In this chapter, I will offer analysis of the “As I See It” assignments as a class of texts using the computer application DICTION 5.0, written by communications scholar Roderick Hart. Included in this section is a specific analysis of two student texts within this class chosen because they were published in the *Kansas City Star*. I will consider a third text that was rejected by the newspaper. In the following chapter, I will do a more traditional analysis of student texts based on assignments that specifically asked students to engage presidential texts. Before proceeding to my analysis, I will briefly discuss my use of DICTION 5.0.

**Computer-assisted Analysis Using DICTION 5.0**

To this point, I have taken a decidedly contextualist position in terms of speech-act theory, rhetoric, and my integration of these in an expanded revision of what constitutes the illocutionary act and how it works. My position should be easily recognizable to transactional rhetorical theorists, such as the classicists and the social-epistemics. I place my own thinking between these two theoretical perspectives. I am not about to change that position here. Despite a computer’s inability to account for context, I see great potential for contextualist understandings of texts based on computer analysis because the computer helps us back away from texts and see a different landscape, a different context. As Hart claims,

> Computers detect continuities and discontinuities. If properly coached, computers can track associations across semantic space, note situational changes . . . distinguish
the characteristic word choices of one person from those of another. Computers can also detect stabilities in language behavior, the things that never change . . . They are important because they point—to speakers’ feelings and to the situations in which they find themselves. Words are shaped by cultural experiences, and they point back to those experiences. (Redeveloping 44)

Further, DICTION 5.0 “assumes that all texts are entwined within a community of discourse, and it makes that assumption part of its empirical results” (Redeveloping 48). Much textual analysis of student writing focuses on individual writing performances. This study will be no different in that regard. Before I embark on that analysis, however, I want to consider what students are doing when they produce texts of certain kind, texts that would fit a genre called personal opinion. In other words, before analyzing what three individual students have produced for the “As I See It” assignments, I want to consider what all my students have done and if what they did fits what is expected by the polis. If one asks students to produce texts meant to engage a public audience, then one should try to determine if those students, producing a class of texts, are indeed addressing the audience in a manner recognizable as civic engagement. Computer analysis helps us make this type of observation and analysis.

DICTION 5.0 counts words based on 31 separate dictionaries (such as familiarity, human interest, tenacity, and self-reference) and two sets of variables and creates numerical frequencies and standard scores for these lists of words. Included with the dictionary scores are scores for five master variables and four calculated variables. The calculated variables include: (1) insistence, a measure of “code-restriction” that indicates a “preference for a limited, ordered world”; (2) embellishment, a measure of the ratio of adjectives to verbs; (3) variety, a measure of conformity to, or avoidance of, a
limited set of expressions; and (4) complexity, a measure of word size based on the Flesch method. The master variables include: (1) certainty, a measure of language “indicating resoluteness, inflexibility, and completeness and a tendency to speak ex cathedra”; (2) activity, a measure of “movement, change, [and] the implementation of ideas and the avoidance of inertia”; (3) optimism, a measure of “language endorsing some person, group, concept or event or highlighting their positive entailments”; (4) realism, a measure of language “describing tangible, immediate, recognizable matters that affect people’s everyday lives”; and (5) commonality, a measure of language “highlighting the agreed-upon values of a group and rejecting idiosyncratic modes of engagement” (Hart, DICTION 5.0 n.pag.)

One of the strengths of DICTION 5.0 is that it can compare texts to several sets of norms based on Hart’s research over the past 17 years. The norms are based on the analysis of 22,027 texts of various sorts written between 1948 and 1998. For my analysis, I’ll be comparing student texts with two sets of norms: 1) letters to the editor (n = 6,126) and newspaper editorials (n = 65). I chose these norms because they most closely fit what I ask students to do for the “As I See It” assignments. I have split the student texts into two sets; the first set I will call “freshman texts” (n = 51) taken from EN106 and E225, and the second set I will call “junior texts” (n = 34) taken from E301, E305, E351, and E403. The number of examples is somewhat less than the total number of students attending the classes described in chapter 7. I asked all students in those classes to submit their essays on computer disk at the end of the semesters. I informed them that their work would be used as part of this study. A few students failed to hand in disks. And a few disks were unreadable.
Otherwise, the sample of student texts represents all students who completed the “As I See It” assignments, including ESL and non-traditional students. In order to contextualize the data for the two sets, I also analyzed a semi-random set of “As I See It” columns (n = 85) taken from the Kansas City Star between 1999 and 2001. I chose these columns by searching for local and national issues similar to the issues students engaged, e.g. race, religion, drugs, health, and culture. And, finally, because I posit a role for the professor as public intellectual, I analyzed my own “As I See It” columns (n = 3) and web commentary (n = 8) published between 2000 and 2001.

The data produced by DICTION 5.0 includes scores compared to a "normal range" and standard scores that indicate standard deviations from the norm. Hart's use of the term "normal range" is somewhat idiosyncratic. It does not refer to the range of plus or minus two standard deviations from the mean, encompassing 95 percent of the data, as the term is typically used in statistical analysis. Instead, Hart uses the term to indicate the range of plus or minus one standard deviation. This normal range encompasses 68 percent of the data. Any score outside the normal range is considered statistically significant in DICTION 5.0. The standard score of an observation is the number of standard deviation units it is above or below the mean; the larger the standard score, the farther it is from the mean.

I do not wish to overstate any claims about DICTION 5.0, computer-assisted analysis in general, or my use of it here. I am not positing that my results speak beyond the confines of the courses that I taught. Instead, I hope to show that, in this limited set of texts, that students are producing discourse that has the semantic feel of what passes for public discourse in newspapers. Further, I should note
that I am not claiming that this semantic feel would be recognizable to any particular audience independent of the institution of American newspaper journalism. The norms in DICTION 5.0 are taken from newspaper sources. The assignments that I consider here asked students to write with the newspaper and its so-called general audience in mind. The computer comparisons are based on showing how closely a particular text or class of texts fit the norms. So the data is heavily influenced by the prevailing attitude of what proper public discourse should be according to the institution of American newspaper journalism.

The data generated from DICTION 5.0 allows a researcher to step back from the texts and take a global view. This does not suggest, however, that DICTION 5.0 approaches a text without assumptions. Hart built his assumptions into the program, and the first important assumption is that quantifiable data taken from language use can help researchers make some limited claims about texts. I accept this assumption. Included in APPENDIX B are the data collected from DICTION 5.0. The texts of the individual essays I consider here may be found in APPENDIX C.

**Computer Analysis of Student Texts: What Students Do**

I begin this analysis by first considering the “As I See It” columns and my own writing before considering student writing in comparison to these texts and the norms.

The “As I See It” column is a daily column set aside on the editorial page of the *Kansas City Star* offering citizens an expanded venue for discussing public issues. Unlike letters to the editor, this column offers more space (400 to 500 words), a photo of the author,
and a short biographical statement at the end of the column. The column is mostly displayed at the bottom center of the page just below the letters to the editor and just to the right of the newspaper’s editorials. The “As I See It” column is the only op-ed column to run on the editorial page.

DICTION 5.0 analysis found writing in this column differs from the letters norm in several significant ways. The columns scored within the normal range for the four calculated variables. Of the master variables, the columns scored below the normal range in “certainty,” suggesting that the writers of this column are more flexible in their thinking than writers of letters to the editor. This may be due to the expanded authorial identification with the “As I See It” column, in which the writer’s picture and bio are displayed. Further, the length of the column may allow for a more thorough consideration of an issue compared to a typical letter to the editor.

The standard dictionary scores show that the writers of the “As I See It” column for the most part are more concerned with a sense of place and the core values of groups than are writers of letters to the editor. The columns scored .73 deviations from the norm in spatial terms, suggesting concern with place. The columns scored low in human interest (-1.41) but high in diversity (+1.06) suggesting an emphasis on groups. The columns also scored high in centrality (+.82) suggesting an emphasis on core values. Unlike letters to the editor, the writers of the “As I See It” columns tend to place more emphasis on place and group values. These scores also suggest to me that the “As I See It” column is often a site of civic boosterism. And an examination of the topics and biographies of the writers bears this out. Amid the host of average citizens who submit are well-known
business and civic leaders who use the column to promote their interests.

The columnists scored within the normal range for all calculated and master variables compared to newspaper editorials. They varied only in two standard dictionary variables, including .35 above the norm in self-reference and 1.23 above the norm in satisfaction. So I conclude that, in the main, the “As I See It” column tends to be far more like newspaper editorials, produced by professional writers, than it is like letters to the editor.

My own public writing fit within the norms of both editorials and letters for the master and calculated variables. But there were several significant differences in the standard dictionary scores compared to letters. My writing scored high in praise (+1.03) suggesting that my public writing is somewhat more positive in my willingness to affirm people, groups, or ideas. While I scored low in concreteness (-1.07) suggesting that I am dealing with abstract topics, I scored high in rapport (+1.21) suggesting that I am concerned with similarities among groups of people. Compared to both letters and editorials, I scored high in the use of communication terms (+1.69), which is to be expected because all the examples of my public writing in this study (n = 11) concern topics of language use in the mass media or by politicians campaigning for public office.

The freshman texts, while displaying no unexpected variances from either the letters or the editorials, did display some interesting differences with the norms. The freshman texts scored within the norms of the standard dictionaries for both letters and editorials with the single exception of self-reference compared to editorials (+.68), which is to be expected because newspaper
editorials most often speak in an unexpressed institutional “we.” The freshman texts did, however, score outside the range for the calculated variable insistence (+1.05) and variety (-.16) suggesting that the freshman writers as a class tended to speak more stridently about a more limited set of concerns compared to writers of letters to the editor. In addition, the freshman texts scored outside the normal range for certainty compared to newspaper editorials, further suggesting stridency. These data suggest that in these lower division classes, students may be producing texts that have the feel of beating a dead horse. They may not be producing the kind of thoughtful engagement I had hoped for. The junior texts, on the other hand, demonstrate more maturity in regard to thoughtful engagement, perhaps suggesting that it takes time for students to develop an engaged and thoughtful civic voice.

The junior texts differ from the letters to the editor in several interesting respects. The junior texts display an exceedingly high score in self-reference (+3.74), which could indicate a selfish stridency to rival the freshman texts. But the junior texts score high in cognition (+.51) and low in concreteness (-.41) suggesting to me that the juniors are concerned with abstract concepts and issues that affect the self. And they stick to the point, as seen in the low variety score (-.39) among the calculated variables. But they tend not to be as strident as the freshman as seen in a lower certainty score among the master variables, suggesting flexibility (45.88 for the juniors compared to 51.62 for the freshmen).

The junior texts do not differ markedly from the editorials except that these texts scored low in complexity (-1.14). These data suggest to me that the juniors are writing more thoughtful and
engaging texts compared to letters to the editor, and these texts are less strident and deal with more abstract topics than do the freshman texts. Further, the low complexity score suggests they were trying to make themselves understood to a general readership. I believe all of these observations are born out in close analysis of the student texts. I will consider two texts, one freshmen text and one junior text, to see how these global observations fit specific performances. Both texts were published in the “As I See It” column of the *Kansas City Star* (see APPENDIX C) between 1999 and 2000. I will first consider these performances based on their scores in DICTION 5.0 and then based on my own reading. I will base both analyses on the texts as written and not as published. The *Star* versions vary slightly as the editors made some minor stylistic or copyediting changes to both texts.

**Baby Boomer as Bio-political Mother**

Sharon Valleau took E225 at UMKC during the 2000 summer session. The text for this class was *Primary Colors* by Anonymous (Joe Klein). Valleau was a non-traditional student in her early 40s. She wrote “Young Generation has Many Reasons to Vote,” which was published by the *Star* on 31 July 2000. Her text may best be described as an exhortation; she is rather stridently urging her younger classmates to vote in the coming election. The Valleau text scores low in ambivalence (-1.51), exceedingly high in satisfaction (+14.19), very high in inspiration (+3.48), very high in familiarity (+4.09), and low in concreteness (-1.58) compared to the letters, editorials, and the “As I See It” columns. Among the calculated variables, she scores exceedingly high in variety (+6.60) compared to both norms. She scores
low in complexity (-1.39) and high in optimism (68.84) compared to editorials. Valleau is beating a drum for the political franchise.

This short essay has two distinct parts, including an opening apostrophe with a series of ethical descriptions of her audience to set the ethical scene followed by a series of directives leading to a concluding statement. Valleau begins her column (see APPENDIX C) with an apostrophe:

Attention: Young Americans--Generation X, Y, NEXT--whatever the label you've been assigned, you know who you are. You are my children because I am a baby boomer Mom with a child your age. You are my cohorts because I am studying with you on a university level. And you are supposed to be my hope for the future as a generation of America's best and brightest.

She speaks directly to her classmates and young Americans in general. She establishes her ethos as a non-traditional student and the ethos of her audience as a group, however named, that is supposed to be America’s “hope.” She uses this long, attention-getting maneuver to set up the point of her column as written in the first line of her next paragraph: “Yet I am alarmed to hear in conversations with you that because you are disinterested in politics you don’t intend to vote.” Not so hidden in her expression of alarm is her concluding statement: “You are the stuff of the future, find a reason, and for the love of America--VOTE!”

Valleau follows her first section with several descriptive assertions about her audience to set the ethical scene and set the perceived political apathy of her audience in a different socio-political context. She writes:

Your entire lives have been in preparation for you to step into the roles of change agents. You are the latchkey children come of age. You have lived a more mature sensibility than your parents did by nature of societal changes brought about by your parents. You just said "no"
on a wholesale basis. More of you are projected to graduate from higher grades than ever before in history. You toddled, walked, and ran in pace with the growth of technology. You are the information age. By birthright you are destined to redefine communication—especially political discourse—in this country. You have no excuses.

She continues to address her audience directly and place them within a context of her own creation much as one might imagine a parent doing, as she so described herself in the first paragraph. This is also the voice of the coach before the big game. She sets up who they are in her eyes and then tells them what to do.

Next, Valleau begins a long series of exhortative statements beginning with imperative verbs. She writes:

Recognize that human beings—especially those whom we hold in the highest esteem—are complex, and we must measure each by the same standard of perfection, or not, by which we should be judged. Take control by becoming a new breed of critical consumer who questions labels, hype, and "news" instead of blindly accepting what you're told. Be the generation that won't be duped by spin-doctors who insult your intelligence by telling you what you think. THINK! Tell politicians who work for you what you demand of your government. Prove wrong all the prognosticators who say you're self absorbed and apathetic.

Valleau is not ambivalent; she is certainly trying to inspire, and she is certainly optimistic. Her discourse is off the scale compared to the norms of letters to the editor, newspaper editorials, and recent "As I See It" columns. It reads far more like a speech, a rant, than an op-ed piece for the local newspaper. So why was it chosen for publication? We need to consider it as a speech act to answer that question.

Is Valleau merely fulfilling an assignment for class? This is a crucial question for me because I posit the classroom as a site of engagement with the public sphere. My position is complicated by the fact that any particular student may imitate discourse they believe is
civic in order to please the teacher. The assignment certainly creates 
an institutional motive to write. But Valleau did engage the polis by 
sending her column to the Star and seeing it published. Further, she 
eagerly read her text to the class after I asked her to do so. I 
suggest that Valleau was doing something more than simply fulfilling 
an assignment for class.

What did Valleau do? Let us consider the series of exhortations 
within the context of this text, the class, and the presidential 
campaign. Notice that all of these factors are important to 
considering the C\textsuperscript{L} of Valleau’s column. Her illocutionary acts make 
little sense unless we consider them. For example, what meaning does 
this statement have outside of C\textsuperscript{L}?: “Prove wrong all the 
prognosticators who say you’re self absorbed and apathetic.” In the 
former way of understanding illocutionary acts, this statement has the 
force of a directive and a propositional content that directs the 
auditor to challenge certain assertions. If the auditor understands 
the statement as directive of the propositional content, then 
communication has happened. As I suggested in Chapter 2, this is not 
very satisfying because of the roles that context and rhetoric play in 
the illocutionary act. Are we to suppose that such communication is 
all that Valleau intends? We might be forced to answer “yes” if this 
were a text produced in a class where the instructor taught current-
traditional practice. But Valleau has gone beyond those concerns by 
taking ownership of this assignment. If we consider her directive in 
the expanded sense of speech acts, we see that she is doing far more 
than fulfilling her assignment.

The C\textsuperscript{L} of the former statement, and all of her directives, 
includes a class in which the teacher presented students with a novel
about political campaigning in a course focused on engaging a political process in full swing at the time of the class, i.e. the presidential campaign of 2000. Valleau provides further context that we can see at work in the opening of her column. She calls herself a “baby boomer Mom” to establish her position as an older person compared to her audience--parent to child. But the “boomer” label is more than a generational moniker; it is also a socio-political position. Valleau says her auditors have “lived a more mature sensibility than your parents did by nature of societal changes brought about by your parents.” In other words, the social changes credited to the baby boom generation created a socio-political context for Valleau’s audience. She is not only mother in the biological sense, she is a synecdoche: Valleau as bio-political mother of Generation-X. She has passed on her genes and her politics and expects her offspring to survive, thrive, and out-do. Further, Valleau also compares herself as a peer--student to student. She is their “cohort” and not simply a fellow student, which suggests a connection deeper than the transient comings and goings of students taking classes.

Valleau’s ethos and context are complex.

Valleau’s language, as shown by DICTION 5.0, is decidedly unambivalent and inspirational. This is the voice of the true believer. This is the sound of a marching drum. This is a writing performance that cannot be faked up at a moment’s notice to fulfill an assignment. At times Valleau is in complete control of her syntax and rhythm, such as when she says: “Be the generation that won’t be duped by spin-doctors who insult your intelligence by telling you what you think. THINK!” At other times, she loses her control: “Recognize that human beings--especially those whom we hold in the highest esteem--are
complex, and we must measure each by the same standard of perfection, or not, by which we should be judged.” She drifts in and out of various political, social, religious, and generational lexicons. But, in all, the discourse hangs together because of her strong sense of purpose and in her strong sense of C and r. Apostrophe is the controlling rheme of this column; it is the energy of her discourse. Nearly every sentence in this column relies on it. Valleau has auditors far beyond her teacher, and she means for them be know that she is speaking directly to them. She is directing them.

Valleau’s intent may be read in the last word of her column, a word-sentence that conflates the entire formula of the speech act C→F(p) r→PE: VOTE! This, I contend, is the reason this off-the-scale discourse was published by the Star in the “As I See It” column: Valleau demonstrates a clear intent aimed at encouraging democratic participation among a group often ignored by the political process, and she is urging them despite appearances to take part in that process. Valleau’s perlocutionary intent is that Generation-X should vote.

Arguing for Religious Diversity

Amy Zeh took E305 at UMKC during the fall 1999 semester. The students in this class, working in groups, chose the texts to be read and presented within these genres: media texts, institutional texts, political texts, subculture texts, and subversive texts. As part of the work of this class, students analyzed the rhetoric of these texts based their reading and discussion of Hart’s Modern Rhetorical Criticism. Zeh was a non-traditional student and English major in her mid 30s. She wrote “Star Should Offer Quotations from Varied Sacred
Texts," which was published in the "As I See It" column of the Star on 11 December 1999. The column argues that as a self-described "paper for the people" the Kansas City Star should reflect the diversity of the community and offer quotations from various religious texts on the editorial page and not confine the "Today’s Bible verse" feature to just the Christian Bible.

Compared to letters to the editor, Zeh’s column scored outside the norm in just one category of the calculated and master variables. She scored high (+.88) in variety. But her standard dictionary scores are more revealing. Zeh scored very low in tenacity (-2.18), high in collectives (+1.28), high in cognition (+1.73), very high in rapport (+2.06), and very high in diversity (+2.89). The high cognition and collectives scores suggest abstract categorical thinking. The high rapport and diversity scores suggest that she is attempting to appeal to a wide audience, or at least champion the concerns of a wide audience. Zeh’s column scores within the normal range of newspaper editorials for calculated and master variables. Two standard dictionary scores point out an interesting difference. The column scores very high in diversity (+2.89) and high in cooperation (+.47), suggesting that Zeh is both championing her cause for religious diversity on the editorial page and seeking cooperative ways to make it happen.

Zeh writes a well-structured, tightly argued column supporting the idea that the Kansas City Star should publish quotes on its editorial page from a wide selection of religious traditions, not just the Bible. Her audience is clearly the editorial board of the Star, but Zeh is also addressing the readership to gain support. She eschews the verbal, exhortative style chosen by Valleau in favor of a more
traditional argumentative style. Whereas Valleau organizes her column on the basis of a string of directives, Zeh organizes her column by classical precepts. Her introduction states her concern and is followed by a narration that explains the problem. She anticipates and counters objections. She marshals support from a knowledgeable source. And she concludes with a statement calling for action to solve the problem. Her tone and lexicon, as quantified by DICTION 5.0, and her style and organization, combine to create a discourse recognizable to the editors of the Star as a concerned, literate citizen writing about a topic of civic concern. What makes Zeh’s column stand out for this study, however, is that its perlocutionary intent led to the perlocutionary act Zeh sought. Shortly after the publication of Zeh’s column, and the publication of several letters to the editor supporting her cause, the Star changed its editorial policy concerning the Bible verse. Today, the paper publishes a quote from a non-Christian tradition on the Saturday editorial page.

The exigence of Zeh’s speech act is purely personal. Unlike Valleau, she is not reacting to a political event. Instead, Zeh is reacting to how the newspaper (re)presents the community. She specifically sets in opposition the newspaper’s motto—“A Paper for the People”—with its practice of publishing quotes from a single religious tradition. Zeh establishes her ethos as a Christian concerned with diversity. She presents a logical argument and leaves the pathos understated, demonstrating her understanding that a rant in the context of moving the hearts and minds of newspaper editors will not help her achieve her perlocutionary intent. Zeh is operating well within the bounds dictated by the institution of American newspaper journalism.
The perlocutionary intent of Zeh’s column may be seen in her concluding statement: “I challenge the editorial board to take this small step toward tolerance: move the paper’s (and public’s) spiritual perspective out of the 1880s and into the year 2000.” The illocutionary force of the proposition is directive; Zeh creates a challenge for the editorial board. The context of this challenge, however, is much more complex that simply the desire of one reader to see the newspaper change its policy. Kansas City wrestles constantly with race relations and diversity issues. One of the Star’s senior columnists focuses almost all of his attention of issues of race and diversity. Zeh is not speaking in a vacuum. Instead, she is one of many local voices expressing concerns over issues of diversity on the editorial and op-ed pages of the Star. And she demonstrates her understanding of this by not centering her argument on what she wants, instead she centers her argument on what she posits is best for the community. Zeh’s self-reference score is low compared to the sample of junior texts and only .21 above the normal range for newspaper editorials. She refers to herself just four times in 500 words. A perlocutionary intent is a personal intent in the sense that, if one speaks for a reason, one speaks to do according to the expanded theory of illocutionary acts. In Zeh’s case, she understands that to do requires an ethical stance of personal subordination to the community and her topic. Zeh’s is reasoned, thoughtful, and self-subordinating.

Zeh’s column offers an expanded view of my understanding of in the revised formula of speech acts C\(^{\text{F(p)}}\)\(^{\text{r}}\)\(^{\text{PE}}\) because, to this point, I have only considered in terms of tropes and schemes. Its position in the formula as the final multiplier between illocutionary act and
perlocutionary effect, however, would suggest that it is far more
important than simply a last tacking-on of figurative language to add
energy to the propositional content. Zeh’s column demonstrates that
the four modern canons of rhetoric are conflated in (leaving the
fifth canon of memory to public speakers). Zeh’s column shows evidence
of vigorous invention. She questions the Star’s definition of
community and redefines it in light of her argument. She anticipates
and counters two objections the Star’s editors might pose. She cites a
scholarly source. She presents arguments by enthymeme and example.
Zeh’s column is a textbook example of classic arrangement. Her style
fits the expectations of editors and audience. Among the tropes and
schemes she employs are the rhetorical question, antithesis, and
apostrophe. And her delivery fits the needs of the column. She gets to
the point. She avoids belaboring the issue. She meets the expected
word count. She submitted the required bio and photograph. All of
these rhetorical maneuvers are conflated in ².

An amoral rhetoric of the type Plato despised is the rhetoric
that works, i.e. the rhetoric that creates the desired perlocutionary
act no matter what that act may be. In other words, Plato could not
accept that good rhetoric is any rhetoric that works. Aristotle and
Isocrates complicated Plato’s searching for a moral rhetoric by
posing in their different ways that the arête of speaker was crucial
to any understanding of rhetoric and its use. I think we may see in
Zeh’s column a synthesis among these Greeks’ understandings of
rhetoric and its use. I do not mean to hold Zeh up as a lone example
of reasoned civic virtue or in contrast to Valleau and her passion.
This type of civic virtue is displayed every day on the editorial page
of the Kansas City Star and in the letters to the editor columns of
nearly every newspaper published in America. My focus on Zeh’s column has far more to do with the fact that it worked than whether or not she displayed arête. But her civic virtue certainly played a role in her success, and I would conflate this with r, too.

Let us further examine her concluding statement: “I challenge the editorial board to take this small step toward tolerance: move the paper’s (and public’s) spiritual perspective out of the 1880s and into the year 2000.” This statement follows a largely moral argument, classically arranged and logically argued. Zeh expands the definition of community to include all religious traditions and sets that in opposition to the newspaper’s motto. She conflates her desire for religious diversity with national issues of tolerance for “race, gender, and creed.” She demonstrates that representing other religious traditions is right from the moral view she espouses, and she demonstrates that such a change in editorial policy would not be difficult to make. She ends by issuing a challenge, with a directive illocutionary force, which might seem more strident than prudent. But she carefully deploys her rhemes. She is issuing a challenge to the Star, not its editors directly. This bit of personification diffuses the challenge and places the onus on an institution rather than on individuals. Further, she challenges this institution to make a “small step,” displaying her understanding that institutional change is incremental. She punctuates the first clause with the code word “tolerance,” i.e. who could possibly be against tolerance? The colon further punctuates--highlights--the first clause as it introduces the second clause that begins with the imperative verb “move.” She calls attention to the institution’s responsibility for its own spiritual perspective, but adds to that burden with the parenthetical “(and
public’s)," which highlights the moral responsibility Zeh would posit for a public trust such as an American newspaper. She ends with an antithesis between the metonymic dates 1880s and 2000, suggesting a clear preference for her view of the coming new century as a more enlightened and tolerant age.

Institutionalized Silence

Gina Campbell took E351 at UMKC in the fall of 2000. This was a special readings class that I designed to study the rhetoric of political campaigning. The focus of the class was the presidential campaign of that year. Campbell was a junior and a political science major. She came to the class a committed Democrat and Gore voter. She came from a politically active family and readily accepted its politics and willingness to engage in the political process as more than voters. She came from a family of party workers and volunteers. So Campbell also readily accepted one of the main assumptions of my courses and pedagogy: That individuals may engage the polis through writing and speaking and thus may effect positive change in the socio-political landscape. Campbell’s experience with the Kansas City Star, however, points out that this assumption appears to ignore the institutional forces that may dictate and limit individual voices. I do not offer this assumption without qualification or mean to suggest an easy correspondence between the student’s position in the academy and his/her position in the polis. Campbell’s story provides a telling example.

Campbell wrote about how people in their 20s were left out of the healthcare plans and the debate over those plans. She wrote from the perspective of a young person with multiple sclerosis who is just
as interested in survival as a retiree on Medicare. She uses the example of her own experience to question the debate, the policy, and what leaving a segment of the voters out of the debate and policy says about who those voters are. Despite a few moments of bumpy syntax, her column was powerfully written, well argued, and seemed to fit all the requirements necessary to be published. She submitted the required biographical statement and photograph. She met the word count. She also met other criteria the Star uses to judge fitness for publication. According to editorial page editor Miriam Pepper, other criteria the Star uses to choose what to publish in the “As I See It” column includes: (1) The issue should be topical; (2) The person should have knowledge or personal experience in the topic; (3) The column should be competently written (n.pag).

Of the three additional criteria mentioned, Campbell met the first two. In October of 2000, when she wrote her column, the healthcare debate was certainly one of many important issues being discussed by the candidates. Campbell’s purpose was to call attention to a lack of consideration of the healthcare needs of young adults. Her affliction gave her the necessary personal experience to speak to that issue. While opinions may certainly differ in regard to her writing style, my experience as a journalist and teacher of writing told me that Campbell’s work was more than just competent. Further, the scores for Campbell’s work show that she was producing discourse with a semantic feel well within the norm for newspaper editorials. She scored within the normal range for the master and calculated variables. Her self-reference score was very high (+3.30) owing to the fact that her text represented an individual author as opposed to the institutional authorship of newspaper editorials. Two other dictionary
scores indicate she was producing a text that should have been privileged. She scored low in aggression (-1.25) and high in familiarity (+1.40) suggesting that she is cajoling more than ranting.

Campbell’s argument compares her circumstances with those whom the debate and policy seem to privilege--the elderly. She pointedly takes both candidates to task for not being able to see her and, by proxy, those of her generation in need of financial assistance for medical care. She criticizes the attitude that she can wait because she is young, saying:

But simply put, just because I'm not eating macaroni three times a day, or still telling stories about storming the beaches at Normandy, doesn't mean I should have to "wait my turn" as some people have told me. And who or what is going to keep me alive as I wait?

Here Campbell demonstrates that the debate and policy recognize a limited set of players. While elderly people in medical need may be fighting for their lives, Campbell shows that the need also applies to her. Youth is no defense against multiple sclerosis.

The Star declined to publish her column. I urged Campbell to press the issue, feeling that her contribution was important. In the end, the representative of the Star told her that the column as too personal. Just as the political establishment cannot see Gina, the Star cannot see Campbell. While the press plays an important role in the polis, providing one of the access points to the public sphere as described by Jürgen Habermas, we see in Campbell’s example the trouble a utopian vision of the public sphere creates. The access points are not uniformly open to all. In the debate over health care, only certain types of people are visible, which means only certain types of people have a voice. This observation, however, is further complicated by the fact that the elderly poor have limited voices and are mostly
used by the press and political institutions to create the spectacle of a healthcare crisis. An afflicted young adult upsets this image and introduces complicating issues. Campbell’s experience provided the class a chance to dwell on issues of voice and who is allowed to speak. Such complicating issues must be introduced in order to keep from suggesting to students that civic engagement is easily mastered or that everyone has an equal opportunity.

Conclusion

Zeh’s and Valleau’s columns are typical of their samples according to their scores from DICTION 5.0. Their essays are not typical, or, perhaps, I should say Zeh and Valleau are not typical, because they were published. In other words, Zeh and Valleau took the time and trouble to submit their work. Other students in their classes did, too. Three other students in Valleau’s class published columns. Two other students in Zeh’s class published columns, including one student who managed to get published twice that semester (once under his own name and once ghostwriting for a friend). A few students in each class were rejected. More than half of the students in each class did not submit their columns to the Star. These results are typical across all the classes I have taught in which I assigned a 500-word essay for the “As I See It” column. There is no way to determine if this level of participation is to be expected, or is high or low, based on my pedagogy. Any comments I make based on these results must be classified as lore.

My purpose in this chapter was to demonstrate that, within the courses I taught, the texts produced by students had a semantic feel appropriate to what is expected in the public forum of a newspaper. I
also wished to show how this semantic feel manifested differently in two published works. I do not wish to make any further or universal claims based on these data. These students were confined within the bounds of an assignment for class and confined within the bounds of what a public institution expects a civic voice to be. This intersection among student, assignment, and the institutions of academia and journalism must be openly discussed in class because these forces constrain the students’ voices. In a sense, while I encourage this type of civic action, I realize that it also creates a constraint that may have adverse affects on some students.
CHAPTER 9

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF STUDENT WRITING

In this chapter I will take a further look at some of the work produced by students in classes based on my pedagogical theory and practice as described in chapters six and seven. In this chapter I will discuss texts written to engage presidential and other political texts. I will ask: What did students do? The answer to this question is complex but necessarily confined to the few classes this study considers and the examples I choose to discuss. I do not offer this pedagogy or analysis as universal answers to either my research question or general questions in academia about how to teach writing more effectively or questions about how or if we should teach critical democratic participation. Realizing that every class is different, every student is different, every teacher is different, and every situation is different, I offer this analysis as a glimpse into what students can and may do when asked to write publicly about issues of their own concern or asked to write about issues involving politics and the president. In a real sense, this textual analysis falls under the rubric of “lore” in pedagogical research as described by Stephen North (23). The difference I offer is that I will ground my observations in my revision of the theory of illocutionary acts. If language is a social phenomenon, and if to speak is to do, then one must speak in order to fully participate in social and political life. Since I posit that the academy is a site of engagement in the polis, and that an important part of education is teaching engaged and critical democratic participation, I believe what we should ask students to do is engage the polis from the classroom.
Students Writing Publicly

I have observed that, in classes in which I stress public writing, one or more students use the opportunity of the class to write publicly outside the structure of the class. I have never had a student do this in classes in which I did not stress public writing. The forms of these public performances vary, from letters to school administrators to songs. In each case the student brought the work to class, and we used class time to discuss the purpose and audience of the writing. In each case the student’s spontaneous public writing provided the class an opportunity to work with a student text not written to fulfill an assignment, but instead written to meet an exigence outside the requirements of the course.

Allyson Smith took E351 during the fall 2000 semester. She was a senior and an English major. The class was a special readings course focused on the rhetoric of the 2000 presidential campaign. During the wrangling over vote counting in Florida following the general election, Smith saw an account on television about senators from the Florida legislature having a pizza lunch delivered at public expense while debating how to resolve the issue of who won the election. She was disgusted by what she described as their jovial attitude in the face of a serious public issue. In response to her emotional reaction, Smith wrote a song (see APPENDIX C): “Florida State Legislature Song.” She asked to perform it in class. I gladly agreed.

I used DICTION 5.0 to compare Smith’s lyrics to the norm for song lyrics in the program (n = 128). She scored very high in variety (+3.03) and high in complexity (+.87) among the calculated variables. And the song had a high commonality score (53.30) among the master variables. Her standard dictionary scores showed very high rapport.
(+2.91), exceedingly high present concern (+4.95), and very high inspiration (+3.81). I believe all of these scores are indicative of the political, topical nature of Smith’s lyrics. She is writing a song about the here and now, about her own exigence resulting from her emotional reaction to a news item on television. Her scores seem to indicate that this is a message song, a political song.

The song is a satire juxtaposing the seriousness of the vote recount with the lighthearted treatment in the news of senators eating pizza at public expense during their extra-legislative duties. The first stanza sets the tone (see APPENDIX C):

Let's get together we could have some fun
And we'll re-write the constitution.
Let's get together we can all have lunch
And it's paid for by the people.

The rhyme of this context is lyrical. And we may begin understanding the rhemes of this speech act in terms of the conventions of song writing, which is essentially the writing of poetry. Smith sets up her stanzas in four lines of two couplets. Each couplet juxtaposes a jocular attitude by the senators with a serious political context, i.e. fun versus re-writing the constitution and lunch being paid for by the people. Smith sets up a changing chorus that comments on the previous stanzas and repeats a punctuating expression. She follows the first stanza with:

Oh, how we love to eat lunch!
We're such a silly bunch—of senators.

What cannot be adequately portrayed here is her most important rheme of the song coming from the canon of delivery. Smith strums her guitar during a dramatic pause before delivering the lilting and punctuating “of senators.”
The propositional content of the song is indirect and creates a problem that led both Austin and Searle to confine the theory of speech acts to non-literary discourse. Petrey, however, offers a convincing argument that literary performances also act and are, therefore, performative. We may observe that many artistic performances attempt to engage an audience with a specific message and a perlocutionary intent, such as Picasso’s “Guernica” or Orwell’s Animal Farm. Smith does not come out and say specifically that we should revile the Florida state senators for taking a cavalier attitude about public funds or the public trust. Instead, she offers us an artistic expression in which the performative must be interpreted. That is not to say the performative is hidden any more than it is hidden in Animal Farm or “Guernica.” We may discover Smith’s perlocutionary intent in the Cl and in the rhemes unique to poetic expression. The overall context has been discussed. But we may put a sharper point on it by noting, again, that Smith performed the song in class at her own request. And we may see and hear in her antithetical juxtapositions a satiric condemnation of the jocular attitude of the Florida senators.

What does Smith want her audience to do; what is her perlocutionary intent? It seems that she wishes to invoke an emotional response in her audience similar to that which she felt when she watched the television news account: amused disgust. In Smith’s case, she is not urging action that would require a complex set of actions and thoughts to achieve the perlocutionary act. She is not trying to get young voters to the polls. She is not trying to change the editorial policy of a newspaper. She is, instead, trying to provoke an emotional response to events such that these emotions might lead to
some political action, but such political action is not necessarily
the perlocutionary intent.

I will add to the lore this qualitative suggestion: Such public
expressions, taking unique forms, are exactly the kinds of behavior
that education for critical democratic participation should promote
and produce. Valleau, Zeh, and Smith, in their various ways, came to
see themselves as civic agents and came to see writing as a way to
express that agency. They felt empowered to speak to a generation,
counsel the masters of an institution, and make critical, satirical
fun of elected government officials.

**Writing About the President**

The idea of writing publicly should not be confined to
describing an act that overtly attempts to engage the polis in the way
that the “As I See It” assignment encourages students to do. The “As I
See It” assignment fits the typical argument paper of current-
traditional practice except that I present this assignment as an
opportunity for real engagement. It also opens the opportunity to
discuss the polis as a site that students inhabit and as a site where
institutions promote and constrain their actions, that write and re-
write who they are and what they can be.

Much time is spent in the classroom discussing purpose and
audience with the underlying metaphor that the classroom may be a site
of civic engagement. If Lakoff and Johnson are correct that our
conceptual system is “fundamentally metaphoric,” then this seemingly
simple shift of emphasis is not so simple after all. Instead, such a
shift in the current-traditional paradigm may be more fundamental than
the so-called paradigm shift from product to process pedagogy during
the 1960s and 1970s. This shift also affects more traditional types of assignments. For example, when the classroom is a site of civic engagement, then assignments that ask students to narrate, expound, analyze, or essay take on a greater meaning than is possible in current-traditional practice, in which student writing is most often thought of practice by pre-people for later use once they leave the academy. To analyze a presidential speech, then, becomes a public and political act. To compare the fiction of a political novel with the reality of a political campaign becomes a public and political act. These acts are not safe because they are public and because the individual student must negotiate the institution of academia and the institutions of the polis. I would argue that the difficulties and constraints that my pedagogy presents better serves students than the insular safety of current-traditional practice.

I have given many assignments involving writing and thinking about presidential texts, but each of them may be classified as one of two types: (1) assignments that ask students to analyze a speech and (2) assignments that ask students to compare texts and/or situations. I try to craft assignments (see APPENDIX A) that allow students maximum flexibility in deciding what they want to say and how they wish to approach their own writing in terms of style. Because of the political nature of the texts, and the fact recognized by Ohmann that students come to our classrooms already as political agents, each assignment opens the classroom to the possibility of trite, ideological, or polemical reactions of a kind that some instructors find annoying and counter-productive. In a very real sense, such assignments are paradoxically good at providing students with an opportunity to develop a public critical consciousness or allowing
them to simply rant from narrow subject positions. As I explained in Chapter 6, while I certainly wish to promote critical democratic participation, I am not comfortable pushing students in any particular political direction (recognizing, however, that by privileging democratic participation I am privileging, to a certain extent, an approved participation in the American system). Overt indoctrination of the kind Shor is comfortable with (20-24), I think, destroys the rich variety of reactions and texts a class might produce. Such practice hampers what students do.

Analysis of Speeches

I have generally given two types of assignments that ask students to analyze a speech: (1) assignments that ask students to analyze based on rhetorical performance or (2) assignments that ask students to analyze in light of a context or concept. In the first part of this section, I will discuss how students in EN106 analyzed the inaugural address of George W. Bush in terms of how the new president portrayed “citizenship” and the student’s own thoughts on the topic as espoused in an earlier personal essay assignment. In the second part of this section, I will discuss how students in E351 engaged in rhetorical criticism of addresses of their own choosing from the 2000 presidential campaign.

EN106

It is difficult for me to imagine how one might create an assignment impervious to shallow treatment by some students. Political assignments of the kind I advocate seem particularly susceptible to such treatment because students, like other socio-political agents, filter messages through ideological lenses. The goal of critical
education should be to help students add to their lens cache. But, if politics is both symbolic action and spectacle as Edelman has suggested, then expanding the student’s view of political realities and myths is no easy task. For some students, the world is what it is and may never be anything different.

Terra Van Diune offers a good example. In her attempts to analyze how Bush creates citizenship in his inaugural address, she never leaves the safety of her own beliefs and her comfort with authority. She writes:

Bush states, ‘To serve your nation, beginning with your neighbors.’ This part of his quote screams that Bush wants the support of all citizens, as he should. It also makes it evident that United States citizenship is a honor and privilege and along with the honor and privilege comes a responsibility to serve our country. Serving our country can be done in many ways; serving in the armed forces to defend and protect our country and our countries interests, taking advantage of the opportunities that arise in your life, and maintaining civility. I believe that respecting your neighbors and fellow Americans daily means that you are serving your country. If it makes one person feel better about their day then you’ve helped our society. Lending a helping hand or saying a kind word can go a long way. I especially enjoy making kids and the elderly smile.

For Van Diune, Bush’s comments about serving the nation beginning with one’s neighbors offers nothing more than a chance to demonstrate her own validation of the president’s comments by pointing to her own participation. She claims she believes that “respecting your neighbors and fellow Americans daily means that you are serving your country.” Notice that she lapses into the second-person voice, indicating that perhaps this is more an idea she has embraced because of presidential authority than a lived experience. In this case, she participates by “making kids and the elderly smile”—trite, nebulous, and difficult to fault as a neighborly gesture. Despite my urging, Van Diune would not
even consider thinking/writing about how the concept of “neighbor” allows Bush to constrain citizenship in political ways. She would not consider that just asking the question “Who is, or gets to be, a neighbor and why?” might help her begin to engage the president in interesting and productive ways. For such students as Van Diune, presidential texts are doubly difficult to engage critically because they resist critical thought in general and seem cowed by the authority of the office.

Students such as Van Diune do not perceive the dual nature of the office when they feel an ideological affinity with the president. For these students, head of government and head of state reside quite comfortably in one man. Many students, even those willing to engage the president critically, demonstrate that the image of the head of state and the authority of the head of government combine to cow them into submissive statements.

Kelly Dahl was also persuaded by presidential authority, but she did not simply use that authority to validate her ideology. Instead, Dahl pointed out that a particular point of Bush’s construction of citizenship helped her expand her own thinking. She says:

Compassion is the next topic broached by Bush. I have always believed that a good person should be compassionate, but I have never before thought compassion a necessary quality for a good citizen. Bush felt that “Americans in need are not strangers, they are citizens, not problems, but priorities and all of us are diminished when any are hopeless.” This, in my opinion, is the most powerful statement in his address. The feeling of patriotism returns and I am suddenly silent in thought while reading this. My definition of a good citizen stressed the informed, patriotic citizen. If one American citizen is not willing to help another, then I am unsure of exactly what we are defending and promoting to future generations. The last phrase particularly expanded my view on citizenship to include compassion. In the military, if a fellow soldier is injured or dies, the group is weakened. If one citizen is hopeless, then we are weakened.
as well. However, if a soldier is injured, he will be carried to safety and if a citizen is hopeless, we too should carry them to safety.

Dahl’s entire essay was more complicated than Van Diune’s in that she critically engaged Bush on several points. On this particular point, however, she found herself convinced by stirring words, saying the “feeling of patriotism returns and I am suddenly silent in thought while reading this.” She does not question whether or not Bush’s statement fits actual policy initiatives enacted or proposed by Republicans. She is, instead, reacting to the rhetoric of this statement—its skillful use of antitheses in juxtaposing strangers versus citizens, and problems versus priorities. She is reacting to the pathos of “diminished” and “hopeless.” For Dahl this statement becomes an aphorism, a principle for deductive logic that set up her analogy at the end of the passage. In other words, she is persuaded, and we may witness in her text a perlocutionary act. But it is, I would argue, a self-conscious one.

Anthony Unterreiner demonstrates that for some students their ideology intrudes on any attempt at critical thinking. He questions Bush about the role of the citizen in government:

The address, though, dealt more with what we should be expected of as American citizens, instead of what improvements Bush had planned for our country. Although the demands that were expected of us, according to Bush, would improve the country immensely. He said, “What you do is as important as anything government does.” I do not believe this to be entirely true, because the government imposes its will on us, while we have little say in their proceedings other than voting. Once politicians are voted in, we give our will to them for however long their term is. Sure the government is, in a roundabout way, us, but much is required of us in order to take part and manipulate their proceedings.

Is this statement evidence of critical thinking or simply a moment in which the student perceives an ideological clash with the Bush
inaugural address? Critical thinking is not simply contrary thinking. Unterreiner disagrees with Bush on a particular statement because he believes, ideologically, that government “imposes its will on us.” To a certain extent and under particular circumstances, this is a true statement. Bush’s comment is far more abstract than Unterreiner’s response and speaks to a different set of actions for government and people. Unterreiner, instead, reads the statement as a suggestion of equivalence between what the people do and what government does. It is quite possible he misunderstands how a republic works. But Anthony begins to move toward critical thought in the final sentence of this passage. He acknowledges that we the people are the government, but in a “roundabout” way. In other words, while the people and the government have different roles, we should not kid ourselves about who (what institutions) has the power. And Unterreiner demonstrates in this statement that he understands that the American system of government puts a heavy cognitive load on its citizens in order to participate. Just the seemingly simple matter of voting in the United States presents citizens with a daunting task because we do participate in a daunting selection process from our local communities to the national community. Unterreiner did not elaborate on what is required to “manipulate” the system or how the structured ways might constrain political outcomes.

Brenda Gardner-Napoli, like Anthony, showed moments of critical thought in her willingness to do more than simply disagree with the president. In this passage, Gardner-Napoli tries to unpack what she identifies as a contradiction:

Civility, he states, compels “good will and respect, fair dealing and forgiveness”. While I agree with that statement, I disagree with his comment that if our country
does not “lead the cause of freedom, it will not be led.” My interpretation of that is that the cause of freedom must be facilitated by the United States throughout the world. Our country must guide other countries, rebel groups and new democracies working to create a system similar to ours. Yet those statements seem contradictory to me. That we should act with good will, respect, fairness, and forgiveness while impelling the rest of the world to follow in our footsteps seems rather presumptuous to me.

Gardner-Napoli demonstrates that she is working out her criticism in this passage. She sets two comments in opposition based at first on her own agreement and disagreement. Some students would move on to their next issue without further thought. Gardner-Napoli, however, self-consciously offers her interpretation of the statement with which she disagrees. She apparently feels no interpretation is necessary for the first statement, perhaps because it is loaded with feel-good abstracts. After her interpretation, Gardner-Napoli demonstrates that the feel-good terms of the first statement contradict the antithesis of the second statement. And she leaves open the debate by saying that the suggestion of the second statement in light of the first “seems rather presumptuous.”

Here Gardner-Napoli demonstrates a critical behavior that I try to promote in class. She is dealing with ideas; she is dealing with how those ideas are expressed. Rather than simply making an ill-informed pronouncement based on ideology, Gardner-Napoli is working it out for herself. She is thinking in writing. She is engaging the president.

Amber Bixler began to see the classroom as a site of civic engagement early in the semester. She brought to the class a fully developed activism in AIDS education. Bixler grew up on a small, rural community with conservative values. Those values are very much a part
of who she is at age 18 and attending Park University in the Kansas City metropolitan area. In high school, Bixler became interested in AIDS education and worked for three years, against the will of the school board and the community, to institute a condom-distribution program at her high school. In the end, she failed. She arrived at Park University a student already engaged in community affairs and willing to go public to affect changes in the polis. Her activism provided an excellent example for her fellow students.

Bixler needed very little prodding to critically engage the president and use the circumstances of the classroom to ground her engagement:

President Bush wants to believe that we, “are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests, and teach us what it means to be citizens.” Don’t most Americans learn what they believe to be their ideals from their backgrounds? The parents, family members, friends, and teachers help to mold these children into exactly what they want them to be. We learn most of our “moral ideals” before we graduate from high school. How can citizens move beyond their backgrounds when it is their backgrounds that teach them who they are?

What President Bush is trying to do here is tap into a common myth that Americans have been fed since the day they were born. Our leaders want us to believe that we can choose our own destiny like the American promise, but is that true? Very few people can say that no obstacles have ever gotten in the way of them achieving all their goals….

In English class the other day Brenda, a fellow student, illustrated perfectly how many Americans are forced to give up on their dreams once reality sets in. When asked by the professor if she was going to school to be a teacher she replied, “I’d love to be a teacher, but that isn’t going to happen because I need to find a job that pays good so I can support my kids. That is the reason I’m going to school.” The American dream says Brenda should follow her dream and become a teacher, but reality says taking care of her kids takes priority over her dreams. This dilemma is the reality of America today.

Bixler demonstrates she understands that history and circumstances play into one’s exercise of personal and political power. She directly challenges the “myth” of the melting pot and the American Dream, but
she goes beyond mere challenge to juxtapose the underlying philosophy with lived experience. Without saying so explicitly, Amber highlights the vacuousness of the Bush statement with a few well-stated rhetorical questions. But Bixler is not content to end her discourse at this challenge in the way Van Duine and Unterreiner fail to move beyond pronouncement to civic engagement. Within the classroom Bixler sees a polis. Many students specifically refer to classroom activities and discussions in the papers they write. And often the point of view waffles between first-person and second-person in that they speak directly to the teacher demonstrating that they do not conceive of any audience other than the teacher. Bixler uses the classroom anecdote as a local example of her main point. She eschews the second-person voice, thus creating a discourse more oriented toward outward engagement. In this text I am simply “the professor” instead of “you.” My role in this passage is merely to help move along the narration of the anecdote. But more, that moving along suggests engagement. I am important to the narrative as the institutional authority who exposes Brenda’s dilemma. Bixler plays the role of critical thinker who considers what the dilemma means independently of any thought or point I had to make in questioning Gardner-Napoli.

While I could conclude that this assignment was only a marginal success in getting students to think critically about a presidential address, student performance on one assignment does not make or break a pedagogical theory or practice. Instead, this assignment was one of four in this class, all of which were designed to move the student through certain stages of engagement: (1) personal response; (2) analysis with personal response; (3) civic engagement; and (4) academic engagement. While there are certainly many types of texts
that provide rich opportunities for engagement and critical thinking, presidential speeches offer students a chance to engage a writer that they know on several levels. They know the president as, among other things, an authority, an enemy, a compatriot, a celebrity, and a politician. Students will situate themselves differently depending upon their backgrounds (as Bixler cogently pointed out), their ideology, and their perception of authority. And this creates a wide range of student texts for the class, as a polis within a polis, to consider.

E351

As described in Chapter 7, this class was a special readings course focused on the rhetoric of political campaigns, especially the presidential campaign as it unfolded in the fall of 2000. In addition to an “As I See It” assignment, I asked the students to analyze a campaign speech of their choice, analyze one of the convention acceptance speeches, and write a research essay on a topic of their choice involving political campaign rhetoric. The following excerpts are taken from the three analytical assignments. Some differences in the writing-thinking performances of the two classes I discuss in this section may be due to maturity, interest level, and the nature of the assignments. In some ways, the texts students in E351 produced are far more sophisticated and engaging than the texts produced in EN106. In some ways they are less so. The most noticeable difference, however, is that these excerpts deal with rhetorical analysis, or discourse analysis, because that was the intellectual focus of the class.

Despite increased maturity and interest, these juniors and seniors could be just as unthinkingly ideological as freshmen. Gina
Campbell provides a good example. She is a committed democrat and self-described liberal. She is a competent writer and is willing to engage the public. In fact, Campbell was published twice in the “As I See It” column in 2001 writing on her own after graduation. Her excerpt here demonstrates that skill and willingness do not always lead to complicated, critical thinking. Of the Bush acceptance speech she says.

But just when it appears that Bush is mapping out his own strategy, he is fooled into delivering a sloppy infringement of his father’s rhetoric. Let the sentence fragments begin.

As biting commentary of the kind we might read in a newspaper column, her flourish here is certainly competent. But Campbell spent most of the semester writing in this manner. She had hearts and minds to move. She had a Republican to defeat. And while this excerpt, and much of her performance, did not demonstrate a willingness to think critically about her topics, it certainly demonstrates her civic engagement.

Campbell used the class as one of her means of working for the Democratic Party to elect Al Gore president. She engaged in many lively exchanges with other students with the clear perlocutionary intent of creating a class full of Gore voters.

Campbell clashed most often with Allyson Smith, a Republican and committed Bush voter. Smith’s critiques were often as shallow as Campbell’s but just as often a little wittier in their biting sarcasm.

Here, Smith considers a moment from the Gore acceptance speech:

Another thing Gore has to do in this speech is support his “fight” rhetoric. He does this by using the verb “stand” repeatedly as he tries to show the audience that he is a person who will “fight” for them. He achieves this in statements like, “we changed things, to help unleash your potential” and “I’ve taken on the powerful forces… I’ll stand up to them, and I’ll stand up for you.” This creates the image of a Mega Al Gore, standing before the
storehouse of potential and “unleashing” it with his terrible, swift sword. And then later, “The power should be in your hands. The future should belong to everyone in this land.” If he had a hammer, he’d hammer in the morning, he’d hammer in the evening, all over this land.

If nothing else, it is clear that Smith is having fun. Many of the students in this class had such fun. More often than not, they chose to critique the speeches of their political rivals. As demonstrated in this passage, Smith is applying, to a certain extent, the critical techniques she is learning, and she is applying them for rhetorical purposes. What Smith is doing is the same thing that Campbell is doing: stumping for her candidate in the time-honored manner of running down the opposition. And this demonstrates that the use of presidential texts can create a situation in class in which the student’s perlocutionary intents and the intents of critical pedagogy split because of the very nature of speech acts and the very real political context. \( \text{CLF}(p) \rightarrow \text{PE} \) demands, as previously argued, that people must speak to affect the socio-political environment. We are compelled to do so. As teacher, my perlocutionary intent is to foster in students the willingness to engage in critical democratic participation and the skills to do so. And that is exactly what Campbell and Smith are doing from their own perspectives as students who, as Ohmann suggests, came to class with political differences and agendas. In other words, while I may want to help Smith and Campbell complicate their thinking, they are in fact doing the very thing that my pedagogy encourages.

All three parts of my critical literacy triad are evident in their work. Both students attempted to “splay the displayed.” Let us further consider Smith’s passage in terms of the critical literacy triad. First, she is clearly engaging in a speech act. We can see
evidence in her rhemes that this act is real for her and not simply an exercise. Smith displays perlocutionary intent. Second, Smith is operating within a polis and within layers of a recognized system of institutions. The last sentence of her passage demonstrates a cultural connection with a cross-generational audience—her Gen-X peers and baby boomers—using the cultural language of her parent’s generation, i.e. a take-off on the lyrics of a 60s-era folk song. Third, the passage offers an attempt at critical discourse analysis. Smith is making an observation about, and comment upon, who Al Gore is based on his own illocutionary acts and Smith’s perceptions of his perlocutionary intent.

The final sentence in this passage sums her critique. Recall that Smith is the student mentioned above who wrote a song in response to a news item she saw on television. Song writing and music form a large part of her illocutionary interaction with her environment. She pulls from this personal resource to form a concluding statement in this passage. The perlocutionary effect she seeks may be described this way: Smith wants her readers to chuckle at the image Gore’s language creates. Al Gore is a baby boomer and the son of a former U.S. senator. Smith is highlighting a contrast she perceives between his populist rhetoric and his life-long status as a member of a privileged class. She uses the cultural reference to the Lee Hays and Pete Seeger song, “If I Had A Hammer,” to highlight the dissonance she perceives. Smith makes a complicated formula of C^F(p)^r->PE. Her C includes a cross-generational cultural reference whose L stands on the border between institutionalized political discourse and institutionalized popular art. To understand her statement in the context of this passage requires the reader to consider Smith’s
connection between the image Al Gore’s rhetoric creates (for Smith) and the image the Hays and Seeger song connotes for baby boomers and Gen-Xers. The quality of the chuckle Smith seeks will be different for both groups. Baby boomers, perhaps, snickering because they might think the Creedence Clearwater Revival song “Fortune Son” a truer comparison with Gore’s background. Gen-Xers, perhaps, snickering because they sense a phony.

The F of the statement is assertive. The assertion, however, is complicated by her rhemes. Smith is not asserting that Al Gore would hammer in the morning and evening all over this land if he had a hammer, even though that is exactly the propositional content of the assertion. Instead, the rhemes of her illocutionary act work in concert with the C to create a PE that cannot be understood or explained by the previous formula F(p). Smith piggybacks on the hammer metaphor created by Hays and Seeger. In a sense, this is not one of Smith’s rhemes. The hammer metaphor is not what makes her statement work, although she relies on it as part of the cultural allusion. The cultural allusion itself, working as a metaphorical-cultural comparison, is her main rheme. She ensures this allusion will be understood by using a textual rheme: Smith represents the rhythm of the song textually by splitting the syllables of “mo-orning,” “ev-en-ing,” and “la-and.” This technique forces the reader to pay particular attention to the statement because the non-standard textual representation is a sign of a deeper understanding, a meaning beyond F(p).

Some students in this class, with varying degrees of success, attempted to do more academic analysis based on the techniques of rhetorical criticism we discussed. The charged atmosphere of the
campaign and the subsequent re-count in Florida added a dimension of reality that is difficult to achieve with texts from sourcebooks. The very fact that our class was studying the campaign became local news; the NBC affiliate visited class during the re-count to do a story on student interest in politics.

Eric Shimimoto, a pre-law student, embraced a more academic-analytical approach to his assignments based in part on his interest in language use as a source of power. In his first analysis, he considered General Colin Powell’s ethos in his speech to the Republican nominating convention:

Powell’s personal credibility is significant, stemming from his military career and his unique position as a prominent black Republican born of immigrant parents. The possibility that his life can be used to illustrate a common Republican narrative (the bootstrap story) clearly makes him an appealing personality to many party members. Since the theme of this year’s Republican Convention was “multiculturalism,” it was inconceivable that Powell not be invited to speak… Powell’s authoritative style probably comes naturally to a former army general, and it is not difficult to imagine him in the role of commander-in-chief. This, perhaps, is the biggest difficulty to overcome when asking him to support George W. Bush—the support invites an unfavorable comparison.

In this passage Shimimoto demonstrates his ability to describe the ethos of the speaker. But he goes beyond this simple demonstration. He explains why Powell’s ethos is important to the Republican convention. This would be the point at which most students would end their analysis and move on to the next topic. Shimimoto, however, detects a problem in this seemingly neat situation that allows him to further complicate his analysis and to subtly push his own political agenda. Eric is thinking critically and rhetorically. He asserts that Powell’s support for Bush “invites an unfavorable comparison.” Shimimoto’s set-up suddenly becomes clear. A cogent consideration of ethos suddenly
takes a rhetorical turn. To use Powell to boost the Bush image is crass and dangerous.

Shimimoto’s passage demonstrates that the rhyme of an illocutionary act may not be connected to the statement under consideration. Put another way, an illocutionary act may be far more complicated than a single statement. Indeed, discourses are made of many illocutionary acts that move from do understood as illocutionary point to do understood as the perlocutinary intent of the entire discourse. The final clause of Eric’s passage carries no easily identifiable rhyme, although one could argue that its rhyme is a litote. This does not suggest that the formula $C^F(p)^r\rightarrow PE$ is situational. Rather, Shimimoto’s statement demonstrates that a paragraph may be periodic in the same way a sentence may be periodic. So we must back away from the sentence as illocutionary act in this case and consider the paragraph as illocutionary act. And its periodic nature becomes the controlling rhyme of the final clause with the litote providing understated emphasis.

Eric also did a sophisticated analysis of Gore’s subjects from his acceptance speech. He resisted the urge to simply stump for his candidate as he questioned Gore’s populist rhetoric. He writes:

For a populist, Al Gore talks about himself a great deal. Fifty eight percent of the sentential subjects in his presidential nomination acceptance speech are first person pronouns . . . This self-referential pattern is deliberately and obviously broken one third of the way into the address by his introduction of four “average Americans” in a series of brief narratives. Even then, however, each narrative is introduced with the sentence, ‘I met (insert American’s name here) in (insert American city here).’ And each narrative ends with, ‘I say/tell/promise him/her/them, I will fight for (insert issue here).’ Even though the candidate has directed his audience’s attention away from himself and toward others, he brackets these stories within his own experience and action. Even as his narratives focus on issues and third
parties, his syntax remains focused on the candidate himself.

Despite Shimimoto’s misuse of the word “syntax,” he did a credible job in this essay explicating the personal nature of even the most populist rhetoric in terms of a political campaign. In other words, even though the politics is about the people, the campaign is always about the candidate. Shimimoto’s analysis ably demonstrated this feature of American campaign rhetoric.

Comparisons of Texts and Situations

During the 2000 summer session at UMKC and the 2000 fall semester at Park University, I taught E225 and EN106 using the novel Primary Colors as the class text. The novel tells the story of a campaign for president by a southern governor, and it is loosely based on the 1992 presidential campaign of Bill Clinton. What makes this novel interesting for use in a research-writing course is the author’s unique relationship to the topic. Joe Klien wrote the novel under the pseudonym “Anonymous” in order to disguise his identity, at least temporarily. Klein was a reporter for Newsweek and covered the Clinton campaign. His insider knowledge as a political journalist opens questions about how fact and truth manifest in a work of fiction. I used this novel as a way for students to explore the presidential campaign by comparing what they read/saw in the news and what the novel taught them about the behind-the-scenes workings of a campaign. The excerpts from student texts I will consider here come from an assignment (see APPENDIX A) that asked students to “explore the intersection between ‘real life’ and fiction in Primary Colors.”

Jonathan Foster represents a typical response to this type of comparison. He was a freshman at Park University in the fall of 2000.
I would describe him as generally interested and hard-working—a student who was engaged in the class. But his performance on this assignment showed either an unwillingness or inability to “explore.” He writes:

There are also a lot of truths about the Clinton campaign described in this novel. The way that Klein describes the fight between the Stantons about inspirational leaders and education gives some insight into how Bill Clinton was into policy and wanting to make a change. The fact that they could both cite cases studies also gives the reader a pretty good idea that both Stantons are, or at one time were lawyers, which both Bill and Hillary are (23-25). Also, the way Klein describes the houses where the campaign party stayed kind of gives it away. His description of the refrigerator at the house in Manchester is irrelevant to the story, but it shows that there is probably some reason for him to talk about it (25).

This is a type of writing I call “schooly” because the student has chosen to demonstrate that he can fulfill what he believes the assignment is asking for rather than truly engaging the assignment in a personal way. This is a voice the student thinks is academic: detached and objective. Foster has not taken ownership of this assignment; instead, he is trying to show that he read the book and understood the assignment—-at least on a surface level. This is a student looking for a pat on the head.

Tanya Essex completed the same assignment in E225 at UMKC. Her essay showed a greater willingness to explore, and she accomplished this by writing a personal essay. Although she has a few schooly moments in her essay, for the most part Essex is trying to work out what she thinks without simply touching all the imaginary bases. She writes:

Primary Colors has given me a view of the possible other side of what I am presented by the media. Now when I hear about the campaigns or the candidates in any way I can’t help but picture “the crew” behind the scenes. I wonder what they had planned or hoped to happen. I wonder if they
said what they meant to say, how much the press has cut
out or embellished and what the real point of the speech
or the news article is. I get an anxious feeling and I sit
back and scrutinize the whole picture. Is this real? Is
this supposed to be what they think we want to hear or is
it really what they want to tell us? I still do not know.
I think Klien meant to leave us, like Henry, hanging and
constant questioning but never really knowing an answer.

One could certainly argue that Essex is just as schooly as Jonathan;
she simply chooses to receive her pat on the head for an alternative
writing strategy. And I will not argue against such a criticism
because asking students to be critically literate is asking them to
jump through a different set of hoops. Those of us who privilege
critical literacy and public engagement may simply value our hoops
more highly than other hoops. But I would further argue, based on my
revision of speech-act theory, that I can at least demonstrate that
Essex’s performance is more engaged as a public act. Jonathan is
writing for me the teacher. Essex certainly is too, except that her
personal treatment of the topic and her open exploring allow for the
possibility of a wider audience, including herself, her classmates,
and even the polis.

In this passage Essex is exploring how the novel has complicated
her readings of the news. She dwells on this complication with a firm
self-image as a consumer of campaign news. Her “I wonder” anaphora
sets the tone for the balance of a passage that never breaks free of
the wondering except to suggest that this is exactly the mental state
the author intended to induce in his audience. Note further how this
inducement has affected her perceptions: “Is this real?” Essex
stresses the demonstrative pronoun rather than the adjective
suggesting that she is concerned with the negotiation of reality among
alternatives that the novel has taught her to consider. In other
words, she is not cynical; she is questioning, wondering. And in the last sentence she makes a positive statement, but tempers it with the specific referral to how the author treats Henry. Essex resists the schooly assertion by suggesting that a relationship exists between Henry and the reader. This is essayism.

Kevan Doran was Essex’s classmate in E225. He was a pre-law, political science major who took great interest in the class because it had clear connections to his professional goals. He used the assignments as vehicles to explore issues of his own concern. In some ways, Doran’s treatment of this essay assignment does not follow the instructions. In other words, Doran does not do what I ask him to do in the conventional sense. Unlike Foster, Doran does not care to prove to me that he has read and understood Klein’s novel in an approved way. Unlike Essex, Doran has a clear picture of his expository purpose and goal. Doran has his own agenda. In that way, he fulfills the spirit of the assignment. Doran used the Klein text as a route into a discussion of the merits of direct voter participation in policy through such devices as special elections. He writes:

Klein, through his examination of the fictional presidential candidate, Jack Stanton, crafts a pessimistic portrait of the political process, which seeks to realistically reflect the current state of American politics, but it is important to note that Klein essentially limits his literary examination of the political process to the traditional avenues of political participation, which are unquestionably dominated by the two major political parties. However, because these traditional means of political participation are no longer responsive to the needs and desires of the citizenry, for reasons, which Klein admirably documents, a shift is occurring away from forms of political participation seeking to elect a representatives as a means to achieve a set of policy goals, to a more direct form of participation, which seeks to have the public vote directly on issues of policy. Although political observers are relatively divided about the advisability of this trend to more direct citizen participation, most seem to
agree that such a shift is occurring. Lars-Erik Nelson in his article, “Watch Out, Democrats!,” in the 7/20/00 issue of the New York Review of Books, notes that commentators such as David Broder and Dick Morris attribute this phenomenon to the public’s perception that government and politicians have failed them.

The assignment told Doran to explore a relationship. Instead, he uses the novel as a cultural artifact to begin making a larger point about voter participation. The novel is socio-political evidence. Once introduced as evidence, once the point is made, Doran is free to leave it behind as his exposition moves relentlessly toward a conclusion. He over-achieves in this essay by writing twice as much as he was asked to deliver. He cited numerous sources even though such citation was not part of the assignment. His tone and treatment were expository and academic. But Doran has taken ownership of this essay.

Conclusion

No student learns to write from a single class. So the examples I have offered here are meant to demonstrate what is possible within the confines of a single semester. While confined in time, the results are not confined by subject. Students left my classes every bit as different from one another as when they arrived. Their differences in ability remained intact. What I believe I have demonstrated, however, is that they began to see themselves as civic agents. Some, such as Van Duine, merely began the first rudimentary steps toward engaging civic texts and a civic audience. She took the first rudimentary steps toward dealing with her own reluctant involvement. Others, like Zeh, embraced the opportunity and actually changed the landscape of being within the polis. Still others, like Campbell, saw their excitement dampened by institutional indifference and blindness. In other words, their classroom experience was a lot like life. I contend that my
four-year experiment has been successful in that students in my classes have, at the least, been introduced to the idea that they can write for their own reasons within an institution that would have them write for other reasons.

How might we effect a return to the academy of a classical discipline of rhetoric, with a civic (rhetorical) motivation rather than an institutional motivation, that promotes the desire and talent for civic engagement and critical democratic participation in our students? It takes a shift of metaphor to effect a shift of paradigm. Our students are people, not pre-people. Our subject is a metadiscipline, not a service. Our classrooms are forums, not garrets in an ivory tower.
In Chapter 6, I argued that texts produced by the executive branch of the U. S. government, specifically texts written by and for the President of the United States, provide students with a rich source of text-based critical engagement with the polis. The president’s unique position in the polis, as head of state and head of government, creates many opportunities for students to study and react to a wide variety of language-based issues in addition to the political content of individual speeches or remarks. The tensions inherent in the presidency create a fertile opportunity for textual analysis that is engaged in civic affairs and may be used as a basis for public writing by students and teachers in classes ranging from English composition to writing intensive courses in political science. In other words, studying what presidents do when they speak is relevant to historical and contemporary understandings of our political experience. Further, the president today has achieved, for good or ill, celebrity status in our culture because of the changes in our political experience caused by television. As Donovan and Scherer explain:

Television news has been an irresistible force for change in the conduct of the presidency. Because of television, the task of managing the White House is more complex. Presidents must act in a much greater glare of public attention than they did forty years ago. Day after day the White House is the big story. Gerald Rafshoon, communications director for Jimmy Carter . . . , aptly described the presidency today as ‘an ongoing series for television.’ (163)

The glare of television highlights the tensions between the president’s roles as head of government and head of state and adds the
heretofore unconsidered element of personal celebrity. For these reasons, political and cultural, the presidency generates texts that allow students to critically engage the polis in multiple ways, from celebrity to politics and from myth to metaphor.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate a few of these possibilities by considering myth-making in presidential autobiography, performative standards in constructing campaign promises, and essayism in political apologia. In the first part of this chapter, I argue that in presidential autobiography, despite inaccuracies and fabrications, we may begin to discover some meaningful sense of these texts as part of continuing social-political myths about presidents and American citizens, and that within these texts we may discover some stable concept of the lives and nation they (re)present. In the second part of this chapter, I will consider campaign promises as speech-acts and suggest ways in which presidential candidates might better frame promises based on political circumstances. In the third part of this chapter, I will discuss how former President Bill Clinton used personal presence, as displayed through essayism, to create a more effective apology following his grand jury testimony in the government’s investigations of his affair with Monica Lewinsky.

**The American Myth in *An American Life***

An autobiography is like a concentric maze with multiple entry points: the route to the truth, even the truth itself, is different for each reader depending upon how they approach it. This multiplicity creates numerous problems for the reader trying to discover (create) some meaningful sense of the text, or, rather, trying to discover (create) some stable concept of the life it (re)presents. Further
complicating a reading, autobiography lacks the scholarship of biography because the subject is writing about itself. It lacks the disinterest of objectivity for the same reason. It may lack academic, even journalistic, credulity because it often does not rely on sources or experts. And, to make the genre all the more obnoxious, autobiographers seem universally disposed to telling us all how to live properly using the subject, themselves, as prime examples.

Publishers are compelled to publish presidential autobiography because of the prestige in being known as a president’s publisher. The public seems indifferent to them; most are money losers for publishers (Korda 88). But I find the presidential autobiography worthy of study because within the office and the man we see embodied one of the essential conflicts of America. In one person we embody the head of government and the head of state. These roles often conflict because we may disagree with the actions of the head of government while we support, even revere, the symbol of president as head of state. This inherent conflict in our political system makes presidential autobiography, such as Ronald Reagan’s _An American Life_, doubly upsetting. Readers expect these texts to display a high regard for facts because of the vast public record available to check the veracity of the events as portrayed. But a presidential autobiography, like any such text, is far more than a sorting out of historical events and so by its very nature complicates our notions of facts and the public record. Further, autobiography is, as William Berry claims, a “narcissistic enterprise” in which the subject gazes inward and “discovers a landscape of surpassing depth and beauty” (610). This is a fanciful expression of the desire to make one’s inner life and thoughts known and the concomitant desire of the readers to tap into
those inner thoughts. I would argue that we look to presidential autobiography to celebrate the public record of the head of state while at the same time we hope it will reveal the inner person behind the public policy, the head of government, thus illuminating and, possibly, unifying both. And, in the process of this analysis, I would suggest we the people learn something of ourselves—who we are as a nation.

This illumination and unification only becomes possible, I think, in an ex-president’s autobiography because it is, or at least is thought to be, unmediated by news organizations, pundits, and political aides. In the public record, the president is head of government—what policies he supported, what victories he won, what results he achieved or failed to achieve. But it is within the context of America’s myths, and the related stories a president tells about himself, that he reveals the man who was head of state. Perhaps we desire this revelation because our national myths are the narratives of our national symbols, and the president is a national symbol incarnate linked to a history of famous man-symbols. Our head of state should be honest because George Washington supposedly chopped down a cherry tree and told the truth about the deed. Our head of state should be a man of the people because Andrew “Old Hickory” Jackson was born in a log cabin. Our head of state should be eloquent because Lincoln composed the Gettysburg address on the back of an envelope. The myths an ex-president creates, and/or taps into, are the narrative vehicles that help blur the distinction between president as head of government and president as head of state—allowing the ex-president in retirement to become one person (at least within the context of the narrative, if not within the context of history or politics).
Depending on the critic, the critic’s politics (as surmised from the politics of the publishing journal) and to some extent the critic’s academic discipline, Reagan’s autobiography is either a vacuous account of an unreflective man who stumbled into the ultimate American success, or it is the portrait of one of the century’s most able politicians. For example, Bert Rockman, reviewing the text for *Political Science Quarterly*, concludes that Reagan as president was “a man of exceedingly limited range and curiosity” (717). But, John O’Sullivan, writing in *The National Review*, comes to a very different conclusion:

Mr. Reagan, then, is a somewhat different political leader from the bumbling idiot of liberal myth—in private a kind and gentle man, in politics a charming Machiavellian, economical in his use of power, manipulative in his use of people, and modest when it comes to sharing credit. In short, a master politician. (48)

On the surface this merely tells us that, possibly for political reasons, the scholar and the editorialist disagree. In either case, I would argue, the text reveals truths about Reagan and our society. Instead of claiming some polemical territory for myself (while understanding I cannot escape the political), I will attempt to demonstrate how we might better understand what happens when ex-presidents write autobiographies by considering how they create myths of themselves that tap into larger American myths about who we are as a people, who gets included, who gets left out. I will resist O’Sullivan’s apparent definition of “myth,” by which he seems to mean fabrication or falsehood, and forward the idea that myths, while often not factual, are indeed truthful. They are truthful in the sense that the lies, fabrications, amplifications, distortions, or fantasies a
president creates about himself can be as revealing as the facts. By looking at the myths Reagan creates and the myths he taps into, and somewhat despite the troublesome generic nature of autobiography, I contend we can begin to discover (create) some meaningful sense of the text and to discover (create) some stable concept of the life and nation it (re)presents.

I say “begin to” in the previous sentence because, from the start, the genre and the political position of the writer create a critical-political quagmire even before opening An American Life. How might we view this text differently if the title had incorporated the definite article instead of the indefinite article? This question highlights an important American myth, which is the foundation of Reagan’s book. If the topic of discussion is “the” American life, that suggests achievement of an ideal that stands above all other achievements in the American context. The president is the head of government and the head of state, and, because of America’s position as the world’s lone “superpower,” the president is popularly called the leader of the free world. “The” would seem the proper choice in this context. But there is another more powerful myth operating here, the “power of the democratic idea in America--rags-to-riches--that ordinary people...can achieve extraordinary results” (Rockman 717). The writer, I think, could have just as easily substituted “myth” for “idea.”

Throughout the book, Reagan highlights the myth that ordinary people can achieve extraordinary results--an idea that plays well with
American audiences used to such stories as Abraham Lincoln schooling himself, reading borrowed books by candlelight, and eventually becoming not only president but savior of his country. While the editors of Reagan’s book hoped for an opening line similar to Nixon’s (“I was born in a house my father built.”) that taps into the log cabin myth (Nixon 3), following a 5-page prologue Reagan opened with the ordinary man-extraordinary achievements myth: “If I’d gotten the job I wanted at Montgomery Ward, I suppose I would never have left Illinois” (19). Interestingly, he complicates this myth by ascribing his extraordinary results to two distinctly different causes that in themselves tap into other myths. First, he claims that “God has a plan for everyone and that seemingly random twists of fate are all a part of His plan.” Two pages later he claims that “all men and women, regardless of their color or religion, are created equal and that individuals determine their own destiny; that is, it’s largely their own ambition and hard work that determine their fate in life” (20-22). Critic Hendrick Hertzberg concluded that Reagan is “untroubled by the stark incompatibility of these two conceptions of will and destiny” (n.pag.). The body politic, however, should be troubled because this conflict in Reagan’s mind had serious political repercussions.

The myth of individual achievement is strong in the United States and, to some extent for the lucky few, it is truth. Individuals with talent have risen to prominence in business and politics from modest beginnings. Many of the early presidents, including Jackson and Lincoln, grew to prominence and power from humble roots. Starting with
Jackson, who is largely responsible for the pluralist turn in American government in the early 1800s, it became fashionable for presidential candidates to claim having been born in a log cabin to prove they were men of the common people. The log cabin myth was long established by the time Lincoln, who actually was born in a log cabin, ran for office in 1860.

Reagan’s title plays into this myth; indeed the title sells it before the reader ever cracks the cover. And the reader is not disappointed because Reagan, like many earlier presidents, comes from a modest background and achieved the American dream. As Hertzberg explains:

On the surface is the golden personification of the American dream: the small-town lifeguard who saved seventy-seven people from drowning, the movie star who saved the girl and the day in many a B picture, the citizen-politician who saved the conservative movement from sullen irrelevance, the triumphal president who saved his country from drift and decline. (n.pag.)

Hertzberg qualifies his statement with “on the surface” because he maintains there is another story in the text of “stunning narcissism and unreflectiveness.”

For William Berry, the autobiographer must display self-reflection and cannot help but display the narcissism (610). In many of the reviews of An American Life, critics both scholarly and popular agree with Hertzberg: Reagan tells the story of his life but fails to reflect in any meaningful way about what it means—his impact on the country and history, his influence on policy, his effect on the people, or his relationship with his family. Many reviewers claimed,
quite accurately, that Reagan reveals nothing in the text that is not otherwise available in the public record. One reviewer says the text reads like "a pile of yellowed press clippings" (Clift 36). It is left for readers to pick through the clippings and do the reflective thinking about what it means that Reagan did what he did and that we elected him twice to do it.

Susan Balee suggests that American autobiographers in general have had a dual task: "constructing themselves and building a national identity" (40). And for an ex-president, this dual construction seems to require fidelity to the yellow press clippings of the public record where we popularly assume is written the first rough draft of history and the daily record of our national identity. The model for the American autobiography, she argues, the one that clearly shows an American constructing self and national identity, is The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin precisely because it creates the myth of the self-made man in conjunction with an emerging (self-making) country. As she explains:

Franklin’s autobiography not only outlived him by hundreds of years, it provided the template of the American dream as it would continue to be imagined until midway through the twentieth century. The rags-to-riches tale of the self-made man which Franklin originated in his autobiography has become a staple of American literature, both in fiction and nonfiction. In fact, revealing the secret of his material success is the reason Franklin gives for this book at all. (55-56)

It is certainly all right to have been born in a log cabin (humble beginnings), but it is certainly not all right to remain in that condition. The American autobiography, as Balee suggests, is the narrative of personal and national success told mostly in material
terms. For ex-presidents, the material becomes the political, but the movement from humbleness to notoriety (political success) remains the same. But Reagan plays both sides of the coin, claiming that success comes through destiny and will. Will the motto of the Reagan years become “God helps those who help themselves”?

Berry’s thinking mirrors Balee’s in that they both see within American autobiography the dual idea of self and national construction. As Berry claims,

American autobiography has been political and didactic, inextricably tied to and expressive of what the country meant to the people who were making it. That stemmed in part from the very nature of autobiography. It presents in vivid, individual terms images of particular communities, ideal and otherwise. (610)

Berry concludes that, since Franklin, American autobiographers have mostly identified with America for some fundamental idea(s) commonly thought to be American. This identification “supplies the basic theme and narrative shape of personal writing,” and so the autobiography tends to celebrate the ideal and rarely to “denunciate” it (616). With Franklin as a guide, and the political, personal, and social investment one would surely have in the office of the President of the United States, it is no great leap of logic or faith to understand that presidential autobiographies fit Balee’s and Berry’s paradigms.

To summarize, as I begin to consider the opening myth in the Prologue to An American Life, the text should reveal Reagan’s attempts to construct himself and a national identity in political ways within the context of what America means personally to Reagan. Constructing this identity will shape the narrative. The didactic purpose should be
to demonstrate the efficacy of following (mimicking) Reagan's values in order the tap into a concept (in this case political) of success. To this emerging definition of presidential autobiography, I would add that the narrative must include the mythic; it must include myths of the author that tap into and blend with standard American myths—the narratives that help blur the distinctions between president as head of government and president as head of state.

The lead editor of Reagan's book for publisher Simon & Schuster was Michael Korda. In an article he wrote for The New Yorker in 1997, Korda describes working with Reagan, and ghostwriter Robert Lindsey, to prepare the final text. Korda opens his article by claiming that "few categories are so littered with expensive failures as that of the Presidential memoir." A notable exception, however, is Grant’s text which "remains among the all-time American bestsellers" (88). Korda attributes the popularity of Grant’s text to a content that deals far more with the Civil War and far less with his presidency. In addition, Grant actually wrote his own book, pen in hand, sitting on his front porch, while in great pain dying from throat cancer. And he had an extra incentive to make his memoir memorable: he was broke and needed the revenue from his book to keep his family financially stable. Korda claims that, with rare exception, presidential memoirs have been "largely ghostwritten" since Grant. Eisenhower, Johnson, and Nixon used staff researchers to gather information and write portions of their books. Nixon, however, would re-write most of what his staff produced, and so he avoided the "unmistakable flatness" of ghosted...
prose that Korda claims is a main reason why these texts do not sell well. Indeed, publishers “usually lose money on Presidential memoirs, but the glamour of the White House and the prospect of being a President’s publisher are apparently all it takes to make book publishers go weak in the knees.” Simon & Schuster believed Reagan’s autobiography would be different and would sell well enough to justify the $6 million advance, the largest given to any author at that time (88).

Despite Reagan’s glowing praise of Robert Lindsey in the acknowledgments, Lindsey complained to the editorial group that Reagan was good-natured and pleasant, but difficult to work with because he is “not a very introspective man and thus not an easy interview” (qtd. in Korda 90). Korda and Lindsey quickly discovered that in editing and consultation sessions, Reagan handled the project like he governed the country: “He would deal with the big problems, then go and play golf. We could settle the rest” (92). But Reagan did have two requests for his book. First, he wanted no mention of his first wife, Jane Wyman. The editors flatly refused to allow this request, so a single paragraph in the book covers the marriage.

Second, Reagan wanted to open the book with a prologue about his first meeting with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, in which Reagan achieved the notable diplomatic goal of agreeing to two summits—one in Moscow and one in Washington D.C. The prologue deals with the Reagan-Gorbachev summit at Lake Geneva in 1985. The opening scene shows Reagan and wife Nancy looking out over the lake on a cold,
gray morning, wondering what the events of the day would lead to. Reagan wrote in his diary that morning: “Lord, I hope I’m ready.” (11).

A few sentences later, Reagan tells his readers that nothing much was expected by Secretary of State George Schultz who told the president “that if the only thing that [comes] out of this first meeting...[is] an agreement to hold another summit, it [will] be a success.” Reagan ends the paragraph simply: “But I wanted to accomplish more than that” (12).

Reagan says he went to Geneva with a “plan” to “establish a personal relationship between the leaders of the two most powerful nations on earth.” That plan was to speak to Gorbachev alone, man-to-man. He told his team he planned to ask Gorbachev to go for a walk to a nearby boat house on the lake and there speak to him directly without the interference of professional diplomats and aides. When Reagan first told the story to Korda and Lindsey, he said he met alone with Gorbachev in the boathouse—a fabrication or, perhaps, a lapse of memory because Reagan spoke no Russian and Gorbachev spoke no English. Translators had to be there, and the text as published does reflect this.

At Reagan’s suggestion, the two men walked to the boathouse and did have a personal conversation, which Reagan relates as two men doing the honorable thing of speaking man-to-man and speaking in realistic terms. Reagan relates far more of his words than Gorbachev’s. The dialogue portrays an American president speaking softly and carrying a big stick, as Reagan says to Gorbachev: “We have
We can agree to reduce arms—or we can continue the arms race, which I think you know you can’t win. We won’t stand by and let you maintain weapon superiority over us. But together we can try to do something about ending the arms race” (15). Reagan pointedly states that he has been an ardent opponent of communism all his life and that he had “gone head to head with Communists who were intent on taking over our country and destroying democracy” (14).

When the two men came back from the boathouse, Reagan announces they have agreed to two more summits. Of the gathered diplomats and politicians, Reagan says they “hadn’t dreamed it was possible,” but “I had extended my hand with warmth and a smile to its highest leader” and this made the impossible breakthrough possible. As Reagan concludes: “Yet I knew I hadn’t changed. If anything, the world was changing, and it was changing for the better” (15).

This story taps into a powerful American myth that Berry describes: “Proud, inviolate stands the mythic American: uncontaminated by institutions and innocent of history” (613). Here we see the lone American cowboy extending his hand to the enemy, able to do so because beneath his quiet exterior is the threat of force. And while the world changes around him, he strides confidently into the sunset, sure of his actions, motives, and results.

Korda described Reagan’s telling of the tale, prior to Lindsey’s writing, this way:

Reagan told this story as if it were a scene from a movie, with vivid detail and real feeling—indeed, his sincerity was so obvious that all of us were touched. He was right: it was the perfect way to start the book. It was indeed a
major breakthrough, for which the President deserved (and has since failed to get) full credit. There were only two problems . . . The first was that I wasn’t sure whether either Reagan or Gorbachev was a grandfather at the time. The second was that, since Reagan spoke no Russian and Gorbachev spoke no English, they could not have been alone, ‘man to man,’ for a discussion. (92)

The published version corrects the notion that the two men were alone and eliminates the inaccurate statement about the men being grandfathers. A Reagan aide confirmed the two had not been alone, rather “[t]hat’s just the way the president likes to remember it” (qtd. in Korda 92). Korda concludes that Reagan “had a tendency to place himself in the foreground of events, and to confuse fiction and reality” (92). He even told stories from old movies he had acted in as if they were true because “he was simply one of those born raconteurs who tell the same stories over and over again until they become truth” (93).

What is the truth of the Prologue? Indeed, the entire text? Reviewers disagree. Rockman, the political scientist, maintains that Presidential memoirs typically produce self-serving pabulum. Ronald Reagan’s are no exception . . . we learn little about the eight years of his administration other than what Reagan and his writers want us to know. Nor do we gain startlingly new insights about the person who occupied the presidency for the longest stretch of time since Dwight Eisenhower . . . Among U.S. presidents, Ronald Reagan is the least mysterious on the personal level. What he stood for and how he operated were not in the realm of state secrets. He was a president with simple, but ardently held goals. These deep convictions, however, reflect thinking that skims along the surface of first and often unshakable impressions.” (716).

Should a presidential autobiography reveal “startlingly new insights?” I would say not. To be startling is to move outside the social mythos and that is just not the purpose of presidential autobiography. To be
startling is to operate outside any unifying narrative that might reconcile the head of government with the head of state. “Self-serving pabulum” it may be, but it is mythic American pabulum and telling of who we are as a people at that particular moment in history. For this reason, I do not believe that the much anticipated Clinton autobiography will deal in any scintillating or revealing way with the Monica Lewinsky affair.

To review my earlier contentions, the text first should reveal Reagan’s attempts to construct himself and a national identity in political ways within the context of what America means personally to Reagan. From the myth of the Prologue we see Reagan acting as guardian and savior of American democracy against an enemy he believes is out to destroy it. And he is only doing what any good American in his position would do, going head to head with the enemy and praying to the Lord that he is up to the challenge. Constructing this identity shaped the narrative by pre-positioning Reagan as American hero before his stories about saving 77 people as a youthful lifeguard. The didactic purpose is to demonstrate the efficacy of following (mimicking) Reagan’s values in order the tap into concepts of success. In this case, the concepts conflict. Does Reagan enjoy his success because it was destiny or because he worked hard to achieve it? We never learn because Reagan never questions this dichotomy in the same way Americans do not question it (and did not in the rough-and-tumble 1980s). The narrative includes the mythic; it includes myths of the author that tap into and blend with standard American myths--the
narratives that help blur the distinctions between president as head of government and president as head of state.

Michael Daumer sensed this social portrait when he complains, in his review for Harvard International Review, that in more than 700 pages “Reagan has little to say about homelessness, poverty, AIDS, or hunger and death in the Third World. Is this ignorance or negligence on Reagan’s part?” The text reflects the American psyche of the 1980s. From this perspective Ronald Reagan is more interesting as a phenomenon than as an individual . . . Without admitting it, we all envied him and his simplemindedness, his ability to translate difficult issues into simple solutions. (58)

And this, negatively stated, is exactly the myth of the Prologue.

While the Prologue does tell the story of an important diplomatic breakthrough, its focus on Reagan as lone cowboy, its marginalization of Gorbachev’s role, and its simple, wondering conclusion, reveal the truth about Reagan, America, and Americans in the 1980s. The 1980s have been over-generalized, even stereotyped in the popular media as the decade of greed, when the rich got richer and more powerful. Lone-wolf investment bankers and arbitrageurs became both culture heroes and social villains in much the same way the cowboy is a conflicted American icon, alternately savior and savage depending on the circumstances.

We elected a cowboy-actor president in 1980. As head of government, he stood aloof—the cowboy silhouetted on the mountaintop—and watched governing happen as he delegated power and responsibility. But as head of state, he was the strong, self-assured
cowboy riding into town to face the enemy man-to-man, with strong,
even-measured words and a friendly smile if possible and with the
threat of force if necessary. This same cowboy, like his townspeople,
could prosper in a wide-open west because success was God’s plan for
the industrious—destiny and will in uneasy concert.

Constructing and Presidential Campaign Promises

In one of the classes described in Chapter 7, I had the students
read the novel Primary Colors, by “Anonymous,” a.k.a. Joe Klein, a
journalist with Newsweek magazine at the time of publication. The book
chronicles the presidential campaign of a southern governor and is
loosely based on the 1992 Clinton campaign. That a journalist writes a
novel about a fictionalized presidential campaign offers several
interesting entry points into discussions of (re)presentations of
political behavior. In this section, I use the novel as a way to enter
into an investigation of the construction of campaign promises.

Midway through the novel, Henry Burton, a political aide for
presidential candidate Jack Stanton, despairs for his candidate’s
campaign because of allegations of sexual impropriety. Stanton is
slipping badly in the polls a week before the New Hampshire primary,
and there seems little hope that he can recover. Burton plays the role
of the true believer as opposed to the campaign professional. He is
captured emotionally in the campaign moment rather than the politics
of the moment. In other words, he believes in Stanton’s policies and
personal commitment, but he has difficulty dealing with the strategy
and maneuvering behind the scenes. This is in contrast to character
Richard Jemmons, the political professional, who lives for the
maneuvering and strategy rather than policy or personality. From the
depths of his emotional despair, a single moment from a Stanton speech to unemployed shipyard workers lifts Henry’s spirits and boosts the campaign.

Stanton speaks extemporaneously about the plight of the workers. He suggests that the other candidates in the primary will promise them that they will get their jobs back. But Stanton claims that no politician will be able to keep that promise because the “muscle jobs” are moving to places in the world where labor is cheap. What Stanton tells them is that the political and economic structure—the context—does not exist to allow politicians to keep such a promise. Instead, he says, the shipyard workers must learn new skills. He and the workers must act with, and within, a different context. Then he makes some promises of his own:

This whole country is gonna have to go back to school. We’re gonna have to get smarter, learn new skills. And I will work overtime figuring out ways to help you get the skills you need. I’ll make you this deal: I will work for you. I’ll wake up every morning thinking about you. I’ll fight and worry and sweat and bleed to get the money to make education a lifetime thing in this country, to give you the support you need to move on up. (162)

This moment begins to turn the polls in Stanton’s favor and, for a while, eases Burton’s conscience about his candidate’s personal failings.

Part of what is interesting about this literary moment is that journalist Joe Klein chose to portray an honest political moment using non-specific promissory language. He clearly creates a dichotomy between a specific and less-than-honest promise that cannot be kept (yet is what the audience wants to hear) and a non-specific and more honest promise that can be kept because it does not rely upon results for its successful completion. Clearly, this is the kind of language
character Henry Burton, the true believer, wants to hear. Klein also portrays the audience reacting favorably to such language. It is not too great a risk to suggest that Klein, one of the reporters who covered the 1992 Clinton campaign, also reacts favorably to such language because he chose it to portray a critical point in the campaign and in the development of his main character.

The quality of Stanton’s central promise, that he will “work” for the people, is different from the type of campaign promise made by candidate George Bush in his convention acceptance speech in 1988—the now famous “read my lips” promise not to create new taxes. Linguistically, all promises are performatives, in which to say something is to do something. But not all promises are alike in quality. For the purposes of this analysis, I will define “quality” as the rhetorical appropriateness of the promise, rhemes that matche C^p, in which the audience perceives intent by the one making the promise, i.e. C^pF(p)→PE. This appropriateness has two modes: 1) the linguistic structure of the promise that creates its illocutionary force as discussed in Chapter 2; and 2) the political structure of the promise, i.e. C^p, the possibility that the promise may actually be kept within the context of what is politically possible.

The examples cited here represent two different styles of political promises. The Bush promise represents the promise of specific political performance. The politician promises to take a specific action, i.e. raise or lower taxes, “save” Social Security, or create new jobs. There is a one-to-one correspondence between promise and action such that little ambiguity exists in the minds of the audience. In the Bush promise, the audience understood him to say: “I promise no new taxes.” To keep such a promise, the context has to
allow the promise to be kept (be within the power of the politician to perform and within the political context of the moment), and the politician must then achieve the outcome. The Stanton promise, however, represents a style of political promise based on quality of performance rather than specific performance. In the Stanton promise, the audience understood him to say: “I promise to work for you.” The character may indeed “work” for the betterment of his constituents, but, unlike the former promise, he may fail and still have kept his promise. Robert E. Goodin refers to this type of promise as “vague” because it does not promise specific action. He says politicians “are easily discredited when promising something specific and failing to deliver. Keeping promises vague, they run fewer risks” (137). I would amend this assertion to: Keeping promises rhetorically appropriate to, they run fewer risks.

Campaigns would not be campaigns without political promises. The whole media-political structure of a campaign is created to deliver promises to the electorate who then partially base their voting decisions on those promises. Carolyn Shaw claims that because voters pay attention to campaign promises candidates must “carefully consider” the promises they make and the obstacles to keeping their promises. A study she conducted of Clinton’s promises from the 1992 presidential campaign confirms the literary observations of Joe Klein. Shaw writes:

In order to gain support at the margins, he had to make less specific promises to avoid alienating the many different constituencies to which he was trying to appeal. Clinton’s strong use of “expressions of concern” also helped him to appeal to many different groups... Recognition of these concerns, however, was not a promise to correct them or to act on them in the future. (n.pag.)

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Shaw identifies three constraints presidents have in fulfilling campaign promises: (1) the need for detail in actual formation of policy is greater after taking office; (2) the need to build consensus in making policy; and (3) the need to deal with unpredictable events. A president has two advantages in the effort to fulfill campaign promises: (1) ready access to the public to defend his actions; and (2) claims of public mandate for his actions. She concludes that the “nature of campaign promises may be an advantage or disadvantage for the president depending on how the pledges are framed” because it is “possible for presidential candidates to make promises that are impossible for them to fully meet because of the wording or proposed course of action” (Shaw n.pag.).

I contend both wording and course of action in a favorable political context must be matched in order to create rhetorically appropriate promises: promises that move the hearts and minds of the electorate and that are within the power of the candidate to keep. These would be promises in which the illocutionary force and rheme(s) of the illocutionary act match what is possible in C and, therefore, have a greater chance of seeing that the speaker’s perlocutionary intent leads to a certain perlocutionary act. We saw the dichotomy between the two styles of promises at work in the last election campaign. George W. Bush, like his father before him, made a specific promise during a debate before the New Hampshire primary about cutting taxes. In contrast, Al Gore’s “stay and fight” slogan led to his making many non-specific “I will fight for” promises that gained the attention of the news media and voters (although he also made many specific and, in some cases, unsupportable promises). Presidential candidates must balance their promissory language between specific and
non-specific promises to carefully match context with linguistic structure. Failure to do this leads to exactly the kind of problems caused by the senior Bush’s “read my lips” rhetoric.

The mistake George Bush made in 1988 was combining language meant to make him sound tough—to combat the image of a weak leader—with a promise of specific political performance. These are two very different rhetorical goals. The tough talk rheme had the effect of heightening the illocutionary force of a promise that was not within his power to keep, nor within the bounds of the politically possible given the economic circumstances in 1988.

During the Reagan presidency, the syndicated political cartoonist Pat Oliphant often portrayed Vice President George Bush holding a purse. It was his way, visually, to question Bush’s political strength. Prior to the 1988 presidential campaign, Republicans began to wonder how candidate Bush could overcome the “wimp factor” these images and others helped create. The job fell to speechwriter Peggy Noonan, a veteran of the Reagan White House on loan to the Bush campaign. She had written several important campaign speeches for Bush that year, but just before the convention Bush hired her as his senior speechwriter. To her would fall the job of writing the convention acceptance speech (Fineman 16).

In a news story a week before the convention, The Washington Post reported that “Bush trusts Noonan and that she has been able to capture what he wants to convey better than any other speechwriter. It is to Noonan Bush has turned in the tough spots” (Schwatz A8). And Noonan apparently came up with the goods in the short term. Her “read my lips, no new taxes” line has become one of the most famous political statements in recent history, made all the more sensational
because it played on the toughness of pop-culture movie heroes such as those portrayed by Clint Eastwood. It was a perfect sound bite for the television age—promising what people wanted to hear without straining the public’s critical faculties. Some pundits and political scientists have credited the line with helping get Bush elected in 1988, Bush’s perlocutionary intent, and then helping him lose to Bill Clinton in 1992 because he broke such a powerfully stated promise, ultimately a failure of perlocutionary intent.

The voting public takes campaign promises seriously as promises. But are they, or should they be, useful predictors of presidential performance? As Michael Krukones says:

> Political campaigns have come to be regarded as useless exercises by many members of the electorate. The public hears the candidates speaking one way during the campaigns and then acting another way in office. If voters believe that the candidates will alter their campaign statements once elected, the electorate can thus dismiss political campaigns as lacking in information needed to make rational choices in elections. (Krukones vii)

Krukones’ study from 1984 maps the campaign promises of presidential candidates to actual performance in office from 1912 to 1976. He concludes that presidential candidates actually have a good record of keeping promises. Presidents over this period kept 75.6 percent of campaign promises and 82.1 percent when “good faith” efforts are taken into account (125). He concludes that campaign promises help the electorate make informed decisions and are useful predictors of presidential performance.

The weakness in Krukones’ argument, however, is that he treats all promises as contextually equal. In other words, a promise (from the 1976 Carter campaign) to reorganize the White House (within the direct power of the president) is treated the same in his statistics
as a promise (from the 1928 Hoover campaign) to “abolish poverty” (not within the direct power of the president). Krukones does make a list at the end of each chapter of promises accomplished and promises not accomplished. But he makes no comparisons between the two lists for each candidate. After studying Krukones’ lists from the presidents between 1912 and 1976, I find that while some accomplishments were outside the direct power of the president (demonstrating ability to work with Congress), all of the promises not accomplished were outside the direct power of the president to accomplish (with the exception of Wilson’s promise to keep the U.S. out of World War I). Further, Krukones’ study does not take into account very real changes in electoral politics brought on by the electronic media age—specifically television coverage of politics. While television has been involved in covering politics since the late 1940s, its influence has grown far beyond any expectations. This influence began to change with the 1976 campaign, well beyond the time frame of Krukones’ study.

One of the biggest changes caused by television coverage is that presidential candidates, as the influence of political parties decline and in an effort to keep up with a 24-hour news cycle and sound-bite culture, make increasingly more promises than in the past (Patterson n.pag.).

Instead of being predictors of performance, too often it seems promises are sources of cynicism for the electorate. As Joseph Bensman explains:

One of the most obvious hypothetical reasons for the failure of belief in society, its leaders and its institutions is that modern political audiences, the public, have perceived too often that they are the objects of lies, deceit, and fraud, of unfulfilled and unfulfillable promises, rip-offs and post election neglect. (Bensman 15)
Politicians must make promises. Journalists must report them. Journalists and the electorate must learn to interpret them. Understanding how promises work would help politicians formulate better promises, in which the illocutionary force and rheme(s) of the promise meet the political context and creates a rhetorically appropriate promise that may have a better chance of fulfilling the speakers perlocutionary intent.

Austin used promises to illustrate his theory of speech acts. For example, to say “I promise that p” is to perform the act of promising. To say “I promise that p” and not mean it is to engage in a form of fraud one might call cheating on reality, or, simply, a lie. Austin is working from the correspondence theory of reality, which posits that a statement is true if its meaning fits reality in a positivist sense. For example, if one makes the statement “It is raining,” then the statement may be checked in a metalanguage with an if-and-only-if statement, i.e. “It is raining if and only if it is raining.” Further, in the case of promises, Austin claims one must know he is capable of keeping the promise. As Austin says, “in the case of promising I must certainly intend: but I must also think what I promise feasible (must intend to do it, not merely try to do it) and think perhaps that the promisee thinks it to be to his advantage” (41).

Austin does not specifically address politics in his book. But his attitude toward the failed or broken promise has clear implications for politicians and the journalists who cover them. He says:

'I promise' entails 'I ought' . . . to say 'I promise' but not to perform the act is parallel to saying both 'it is' and 'it is not.' Just as the purpose of assertion is
defeated by an internal contradiction . . . , the purpose of a contract is defeated if we say ‘I promise and I ought not.’ (51)

Can we link the concepts of promise and contract? Surely. Can we link the concepts of political promise and contract? I believe Austin, from a philosopher’s or linguist’s perspective, would say we can and should. Stephen D. Sencer, writing in the Michigan Law Review, claims that in political campaigning “honesty is not necessarily a virtue.” He continues saying that “voters want to hear good news from their prospective leaders. When a candidate’s honest thoughts will not be well received, there is an incentive for the candidate to lie to gain the public’s favor.” Some promises, he says, will be made with no intention of keeping them and, therefore, are lies (and, according to his research, legally actionable at some levels of government) (429).

Austin maintained that in order for the performative to have a "happy" outcome, the speaker must not "sin" against any one of several "rules." These include:

There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, that procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances, and further...the particular persons and circumstances in a given case must be appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked ... . The procedure must be executed by all participants both correctly and . . . completely. Where . . . the procedure is designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant, then a person participating in and so invoking the procedure must in fact have those thoughts and feelings, and the participants must intend so to conduct themselves, and further . . . must actually so conduct themselves subsequently. (14-15)

In other words, the rhetorical situation C^ constricts the speaker. A presidential candidate, speaking before an audience, automatically fulfills most of Austin's situational rules. But this begins to break
down as we get to the part about having "certain thoughts or feelings." If the candidate either does not intend to carry out the promise, or knows that he cannot, he will create what Austin calls an "unhappy" outcome.

In plainer language, and in some interpretations, these euphemistically "unhappy" endings are lies. The public, in an intuitive way I believe, understands and appreciates Austin’s contentions. For example, the American idiom is full of metaphors that speak to this, such as: “A man’s word is his bond.”

Performative language, however, is not always so transparent nor easily labeled a lie. While to make the statement “I promise that p” is straightforward enough, other performative statements are less obvious because they rely on verbs not specifically classified as performative—such as the Bush read-my-lips promise. He makes the actual (implicit) performative statement in the second of the three sentences when he uses the structure “I will.” The explicit performative “I promise” is strongly implied. So, in effect, the public heard Bush say “I promise that I will rule out raising taxes” and heard him punctuate it with the emphatic sound bite rhyme “read my lips, no new taxes.” This statement acts in concert with the illocutionary force F of the prepositional content p and creates the intention of performance by the speaker and the expectation of performance in the minds of the audience.

John Searle claims that performative utterances are always declarations. Declarations are speech acts in which the illocutionary point is to “change the world in such a way that the propositional content matches the world, because the world has been changed to match the propositional content” (Performatives 546) For example: “The
meeting is adjourned.” This declaration both changes the world and matches its content by having the effect of adjourning a meeting. In this way, to make the statement “I promise that p” changes the world by creating the promise of performance and must then be matched by performance.

But for Searle, this “must” is a problem with regard to promises. To adjourn a meeting assumes a context in which the person making the declaration has the power to make it. Upon being made, the meeting is indeed adjourned. A promise, however, is made in the same way but the performance is mortgaged against an intention to perform. Searle questions the link between performance and intention:

The intention to assert self-referentially of an utterance that it is an illocutionary act of a certain type, say a promise, is simply not sufficient to guarantee the existence of an intention in that utterance to make a promise. Such an assertion does indeed commit the speaker to the existence of the intention, but the commitment to having the intention doesn’t guarantee the actual presence of the intention. (Searle, Performatives 546)

But Searle ultimately finds intention in the same place Austin finds it: in the rhetorical situation, what Searle calls an “extra-linguistic institution.” He adds, in a statement remarkably like Austin’s rules:

What we find instead are human conventions, rules, and institutions that enable certain utterances to function to create the state of affairs represented in the propositional content of the utterance. These new facts are essentially social, and the act of creating them can succeeds only if there is successful communication between speaker and hearer. Thus the connection between the literal meaning of the sentence uttered and the institutional fact created by its utterance. ‘I promise’ creates a promise; ‘The meeting is adjourned’ creates an adjournment. (Searle, Performatives 555)

Whether Bush “intended” to keep this promise or not is only part of the analysis. As Austin suggests, one must also be able to keep the
promise in addition to intending to keep the promise. Bush could not
keep his “read my lips” promise for two reasons: the promise is not
within the direct power of the presidency to do so, and the economic
conditions of the time made keeping such a promise difficult at best.
A president can create a budget. A president can lobby for that
budget. A president may even veto a budget. An American president
cannot, however, directly and positively affect the outcome of such
policy beyond what the structure of the office and his persuasive
talents allow.

Presidents cannot deliver on many specific promises because they
are not in control of the Congress and barely have control of the
bureaucracy. While a president does, through precedent, have certain
prerogative powers, these powers are rarely enough to create the kind
of outcomes that are the fodder of what speechwriters and policy aides
seem to consider rhetorically effective political promises. For
example, it is easy to keep a promise of re-organizing the White
House--that's within the president's direct power. But it is not very
sexy in terms of wooing voters. Not so easy to deliver is a sexy
promise to eliminate the inheritance tax--that takes working with
Congress, where the idea will meet 535 different ideas.

Further, the pressure to get elected can lead to making the
types of promises voters want to hear but that are not necessarily
possible to keep. Sissela Bok states the obvious when she claims that
going to get elected is the first priority of a candidate. While the out-
of-context promise may be contrary to the public interest, the
politician sees his own election as in the public interest because
"the sizable bias resulting from the self-serving element (the desire
to be elected, to stay in office, to exercise power) is often clearer
to onlookers than to the liars themselves” (174). Perhaps this was at work in the case of Bush’s “read my lips” promise. Pundits and the public, however, are not often so charitable. As Hobart Rowan wrote in a column for The Washington Post during the budget crisis of 1990,

Bush’s ‘no new taxes’ pledge at the Republican convention was sheer demagoguery—words crafted by Noonan on orders from Bush’s campaign managers for the sake of politics, not for the sake of good government. Everybody knew it was a promise that eventually would have to be broken. But it served the political goal of helping get Bush elected. (Shaw n.pag.)

In other words, political promises are rhetorically powerful. Shaw has pointed out, in her study of Bill Clinton’s campaign promises, that two important theories of voting behavior—rational choice theory and oriented voting theory—suggest that voters do react positively to campaign promises, i.e. they take positive political action based on promises (Shaw n.pag.).

From pop-culture the line sprung and back to pop-culture it returned. During the budget battles of 1990, the line was much lampooned on television and caused Newsweek to wonder: “Are there really any more tired, hackneyed and irritating clichés than plays on George Bush’s “Read my lips” line? Since the 1988 Republican convention, the media and politicians have never tired of this device” (Stop It 4). The effect of such treatment is to remove the line from serious discussion and analysis. And removing it from serious discussion, as can be seen 10 years later, haunts George W. Bush in his bid for the presidency.

While it is simplistic to peg one phenomenon as the cause for Bush’s loss in 1992, experts in the media and political science generally agree that breaking his “no new taxes” promise contributed
greatly to his demise. A column by David S. Broder during the 1992
convention foreshadows Bush’s fall. Broder said that based
on his history, you can make two guesses about the
acceptance speech President Bush will deliver to the
Republican National Convention and the nation Thursday
night. It will be well-written, effectively delivered and
will give him a boost in his uphill battle for re-
election. And it will give the country scarcely a clue of
what he would really do if he wins. (C5)

In early December 1999, Sara Fritz wrote:

It was evitable that people would want to know whether
Texas Gov. George W. Bush intends to repeat his father's
famous promise never to raise taxes. After all, it was
then-Vice President George Bush's ‘read my lips’ anti-tax
pledge that was largely responsible for electing him to
the White House in 1988. And it was that same pledge that
precipitated his defeat four years later after he had
agreed to a tax increase. But if you were expecting a
categorical statement on this subject from the younger
Bush, forget it. It seems he has learned from his father's
misfortune. (13A)

About one month later, George W. Bush and his handlers seemed to
prove they indeed had not learned from the elder Bush’s mistake. In
early January, at the GOP debate in Durham, New Hampshire, George W.
Bush not only repeated his father’s big political mistake, he did him
one better. After mentioning his tax plan, a reporter on the panel
asked Bush if he were making a no-new-taxes pledge. Bush responded:
"This is not only 'no new taxes,' this is 'a tax cut, so help me God'"
(Fritz 13A).

The performative we can extract from this statement is: “I
promise to cut taxes.” The rheme that drives the illocutionary force
is supplied by “so help me God,” which operates in the same way “read
my lips” operates in his father’s performative statement. Much of the
reporting surrounding this statement compared the two promises and
reminded voters of the damage the first one caused the former
president. Austin would call both promises fraudulent because they
cannot be kept; they are outside the president’s power to keep. In the case of the younger Bush, presidents cannot cut taxes. There is no legal mechanism, no Constitutional provision, that allows a president to cut taxes. The promise works on the assumption that voters do not understand this point of politics and that reporters will, perhaps, ignore this point as uninteresting.

Does this mean that George W. Bush was dishonest? Not at all. The C\textsuperscript{L} allowed Bush to make such a promise. Both major candidates and both major parties were talking of cutting taxes. The only real battle was about how much to cut them. This situation points out, however, that politicians today are trapped by two important and related changes in American politics: television coverage of campaigns that demands the pithy sound-bite and the declining influence of political parties. Kelly Patterson charted the decline of party influence and the rise of television’s influence, and one of their conclusions states that “more campaign promises are made by presidential candidates as the influence of political parties declines” (n.pag.). And many of these promises are, necessarily, made in short, rhetorically powerful sound bites that play well on television and before live audiences in such venues as town hall meetings or question-and-answer sessions on college campuses. It seems candidates cannot help tossing out an audience-pleasing promise when given the opportunity.

Just such a situation trapped Bill Clinton in 1991. Anthony Eksterowicz and Glenn Hastedt say that candidates must be careful of “haste, hubris, and naïveté.” As they explain:

At a 1991 campaign stop at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, presidential candidate Bill Clinton indicated that if elected, he would lift the ban
on homosexuals in the military. Clinton’s statement was made in response to a student’s question and, according to Clinton, was offered without prior consultation with campaign aides or consideration of the broader issues involved. That promise soon became a staple on the campaign trail. (n.pag.)

Eksterowicz and Hastedt go on to explain the policy morass this off-the-cuff promise caused the new president in terms of the transition period for new presidents. They say problems such as those caused by Clinton’s proposed action for homosexuals in the military are a result of a “misreading of Washington.” Clinton was “slow to grasp two fundamental political realities”: the imperial presidency is an “illusion” because success “requires consensus building” and “electoral victories are not endorsements of their position by a wider electorate.” I would argue that, in addition, the problem was caused by how Clinton made the promise. He was too specific. Instead, he should have matched the illocutionary force and rheme of his promise with the political context. In this case, he did have the power to keep the promise. But having the power does not necessarily mean it is appropriate or advisable to use it. This situation demonstrates that of the two modes of rhetorical appropriateness—context and wording—context is by far the most complicated.

What is the balance between letting candidates be themselves and being completely programmed? What does this suggest about the possibility of political scientists offering useful advice to politicians based on a “science” of rhetoric as William Riker began to envision toward the end of his career? Politicians do not have to make promises that they cannot keep. Performative language exists that allows politicians to make even the most boastful promise without lying. In the recent election campaign, Al Gore made this discovery in
his use of the verb “fight.” In September 1999, when he moved his campaign headquarters to Tennessee and began concerted attacks on Bill Bradley prior to the Democratic primaries, campaign aides started salting the crowds with the chant “stay and fight.” The chant refers to Gore’s criticism of Bradley for quitting the Senate and declaring the political process in America broken beyond repair. Gore used this chant to bolster his claim that he had stayed and fought for the ideals of Democrats. The chant played well with Democrats because the verb “fight” soon began showing up regularly in Gore’s stump speeches, his primary victory speeches, and his acceptance speech at the Democratic Convention in August 2000. He would begin long strings of promises with the anaphora “I will fight,” e.g. “I will fight to save Medicare.” We see this language at work in a speech at Morgan State University in February 2000, in which Gore said:

> With your help, I'll do more than fight to keep our prosperity going. I'll fight to bring in all who stand outside it today. I'll fight for an America in which the doors of opportunity are truly and finally open to all our people. (Morgan State n.pag.)

Notice that it is not within a president’s power to “keep our prosperity going,” but it is certainly possible to “fight” for it.

Gore’s victory speech after the 2000 Super Tuesday primaries was salted with “fight” language. He says at one point:

> But while we are here to celebrate great victories, I say to you tonight: and hear me well, you ain't seen nothing yet. Our fight has just begun. Our fight for the working families of this country has just begun. (Super Tuesday n.pag.)

He ended the speech with this line: “I will work my heart out to earn your trust. And if I am entrusted with the Presidency, I make you this promise: I will fight for you.” Note that this quote is nearly identical to the excerpt of the Stanton speech from *Primary Colors*. 238
Al Gore’s fighting attitude quickly became news. For example, The Denver Post reported in late February 2000, after a speech at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, that the ‘new’ Al Gore may dress in casual earth tones, but the vice president figuratively donned a boxer’s gloves Monday, promising a Denver crowd of 1,000 that he would fight for them and everything they care about. 'The presidency is a day-by-day fight for real people,' he said.” The crowd apparently agreed. A former state party official said: “I think he’s looking for a fight. (A1)

Another audience member said: “There’s a lot more fire in him.” Still another said: “He really roused up the crowd.” The Gore campaign used a rhetorically powerful performative that appears not to carry negative political baggage because such language does not promise specific outcomes in exactly the way Clinton’s “expressions of concern” rhetoric did not.

I have argued that both wording and political context must be matched in order to create rhetorically appropriate promises; the linguistic structure of the performative language—its illocutionary force and rheme—must match the political context C. To say “I promise that p” and know you cannot perform, either because performance is outside the power of the office or not justified by the political context, is to tell a lie because the statement does not correspond to reality in either a positivist or “embodied” sense. But to say “I will fight for p” or “I promise to fight for p” is within the power of the candidate actually willing to fight. This performative statement does not promise success, it merely promises one will try to perform p. As long as the politician does indeed fight for p, he will have fulfilled the performative contract. If the p fails, the president then may rely on the two advantages Shaw identifies: the president has ready access

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to the public to defend his actions, and he may claim a public mandate for his actions.

This conclusion suggests that speechwriters and policy aides must review speeches carefully to make sure the linguistic structure matches the political context. When the proposed policy or course of action is within the direct power of the president to perform, and is justified by the political context, the structure “I promise that p” is the most rhetorically powerful performative for this situation. When the proposed policy or course of action is outside the direct power of the president to perform, or not justified by the political context, speechwriters and policy aides should opt for less specific performative structures, such as “I will work for p” or “I promise to fight for p.” In situations in which candidates will speak extemporaneously, or field questions in a public forum, candidates should use only less specific performative structures. This suggests no loss of rhetorical or political power.

Further, my analysis suggests that speechwriters and policy aides should have clear and separate rhetorical goals. Noonan’s mistake, compounded by the lack of understanding oversight by Bush’s aides, was to mix rhetorical goals (i.e. she was confused at the C↓): the image goal of making Bush appear tough with the policy goal of holding the line on tax increases. The mix proved costly indeed. My analysis suggests that Noonan should have chosen an issue within the direct power of the president, or justified by the political context, to spin a few tough-talking lines. She should have used “fight” language to talk about taxes. Both moments could have been rhetorically appropriate because both could have matched the illocutionary force and rheme(s) with the political context.
Presence in the Political Apologia

Current events have been central to many courses across the disciplines. The President of the United States is daily at the center of current events and the public discussion of issues of civic importance. Television keeps the president constantly in the public eye as politician and celebrity. It is not difficult to find ways to bring presidential texts into the classroom using the rubric of current events. The conflicts between politics and celebrity, and between the roles of head of government and head of state, often create situations in which the president himself, his personal actions, become issues of civic importance. And, quite often, the president’s use of language is that very issue. A significant recent example of this is Clinton’s handling of the Monica Lewinsky affair, specifically his two apology speeches delivered after his video-linked testimony to the grand jury in August of 1998. In terms of speech-act theory, the performative apology is “I am sorry that p,” in which p describes the events or situation caused by the speaker and necessitating contrition. To utter “I am sorry that p” is to perform the act of apologizing. As I have argued, this simple F(p) formula is inadequate to understanding all that is going on in the speech act because such analysis does not take into account rhetoric, i.e. does not take into account a perlocutionary intent that may be discovered in C^L, F, and r of the formula C^L F(p)^r->PE. Clinton’s two apology speeches demonstrate how different perlocutionary intents create very different apologies. In the following analysis, I identify an interesting combination of CL and r as an “it” that Clinton finally understands when he delivers his second apology and his audience then
understands his illocutionary intent and believes his intention to apologize, thus completing the performative and attaining the desire perlocutionary effect.

The short speech Clinton made to the nation on 17 August 1998, directly following his video-linked testimony, was the first in a series of apologias, delivered to various political groups, that spanned a period of nearly 30 days. In a final apologia (referred to as the “second apologia” here), delivered before the annual White House prayer breakfast on 11 September, Clinton finally got it right.

This “it” I am referring to is more than a mastering of the complicated set of parameters that define the genre of political apologia and the rhetoric necessary to deliver the apologia in an effective way. “It” is something else entirely.

Time columnist Lance Morrow experienced “it” while watching Clinton’s prayer breakfast speech on television, but missed “it” in his commentary. He writes:

Clinton performed miserably in his first public ceremonies of repentance, but last Friday, at the White House prayer breakfast, delivered at last a persuasive peccavi, mea culpa. It was fascinating to watch the President’s speech with a window at the bottom of the television screen showing the Dow Jones average moving like an electrocardiogram. The Dow was losing territory when Clinton started speaking, and rose steadily into the plus column as he went on. (n.pag.)

The president speaks, and something happens. Morrow finds the persuasive power of the prayer breakfast address in the president’s delivery, which he would call performance and characterize as persuasive. Other commentators second this judgment, noting that in the first apologia Clinton appeared haggard and sounded angry (perhaps not surprising after several grueling hours of testimony), but at the prayer breakfast, Clinton “bit his lower lip repeatedly during his

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remarks...in his trademark gesture of powerful emotion. He spoke quietly and haltingly...in stark contrast to the defiant, even angry tone of his brief talk to the nation on Aug. 17" (Bennett n.pag.). These comments, centering on rhetorical canon of delivery, are the products of our television age, in which Clinton’s actual statements must be reduced to sound bites (even in print), and the observations of commentators and columnists define content and effectiveness of public address.

Generally, there are two ways to judge the effectiveness of any rhetoric. From a stylistic point of view, for example, we may judge a work of rhetoric by how well, and to what use, the rhetor employs the five canons, including: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. While such analysis is certainly important and often interesting, it also often misses the point of any rhetoric: to work, i.e. to change hearts and minds or to spur people to action, or, just the opposite, to keep hearts and minds from changing or promote inaction. For example, in the formula for speech acts, rhetoric can fail at \( L \) through the inappropriate use language or other symbols, and it can fail at \( F \) through the application of inappropriate energy. I would claim that any rhetoric that does not work, no matter how finely crafted, is failed rhetoric. And failed rhetoric for a president becomes failed leadership.

I want to ignore this equation of rhetoric and presidential leadership here because it has already been well argued by scholars from the fields of political science and communications that the essence of presidential power is rhetorical leadership. Instead, another interesting question arises for me: If rhetoric can be finely crafted in a stylistic sense and not work, then what is it that makes
the rhetoric work? I realize I am scooting away from Kenneth Burke’s contention in *Counter-statement* that arguments are not functionally different from stylistic patterns (157), which I take to mean that stylistic patterns create arguments and vice versa. Instead, I want to scoot up to Gordon Harvey and his idea of “presence” in writing, which he claims is “necessary not only to truth, but to persuasion” (651). Now Harvey is writing about the genre of the personal essay, not the genre of political apologia. Presence for him is the “concept we invoke when we feel life in writing, when we feel an individual invested in a subject and freely directing the essay” (650). I contend that his concept of presence is one answer—an answer among many—to what this “it” is that makes rhetoric work—in this case presence is what makes Clinton’s speech at the prayer breakfast succeed where his first apologia failed. I will argue that this concept of presence shows itself in the second apologia because Clinton’s composition process, different from the composition process of the first apologia (indeed different from most modern presidential address), allowed his presence to show through. This speech blurs the boundaries between political apologia and personal essay, and it suited the rhetorical situation—C

Clinton flatly denied any wrong-doing following accusations that surfaced in early 1998 of his having “sexual contact” with a young intern in the White House. These accusations were made in the course of a civil lawsuit against the president for an alleged act of sexual harassment committed while he was governor of Arkansas. Clinton was accused of lying in a deposition and before a grand jury about his sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky—a relationship he subsequently admitted having. Being caught in a series of lies about a tawdry
personal affair demanded a public response that took the shape of an apologia—the two most important having been delivered on 17 August and 11 September, respectively.

As defined by Campbell and Jamieson, effective apologias are “single, unified responses to a series of charges that shift the focus from the attacker(s) to the defender and present the character of the accused in ways that are appealing to the audience” (129). This is a workable definition, although the adjectives “single” and “unified” present problems, especially when analyzing a series of apologias in which the postures and approaches—and even the process of composing—may change, as happened in Clinton’s case.

In an update of Lawrence Rosenfield’s definition of the genre of apologia, Sherry Butler identified several constants in the organization of the form, including: (1) Ethical appeals precede logical appeals; (2) Offensive remarks follow defensive remarks; (3) Most evidence appears in the middle third of the apologia; and (4) The argument of the apologia resembles previously used arguments (283-285). From Campbell and Jamieson, add a fifth constant: The apologia ends with appeals for the audience to proceed with more important business than the object of the controversy (132). These constants mark the organizational pattern of political apologia, a pattern that follows common and political sense. First, establish your ethos. Next, present your evidence. End with statements that ask the people to transcend the moment, to look beyond this minor altercation to the larger problems of the republic. Clinton’s apologias follow this well-worn path.

Campbell and Jamieson argue that presidents have two choices in their modes of response: forensic or the personal apology (an
epideictic form). A forensic response, as defined by Aristotle, “either attacks or defends somebody....The political orator is concerned with the future: it is about things to be done hereafter that he advises for or against.” An epideictic response “either praises or censures somebody....The ceremonial orator is...concerned with the present, since all men praise or blame in view of the state of things existing at the time” (1358b 32). Further, notice that the division Campbell and Jamieson suggest is not clearly delineated. Apologia, instead, blurs the lines between forensic and epideictic address as defined by Aristotle. Despite the Greek philosopher’s penchant for creating neat categories for pigeon-holing the subjects and objects of his inquiry, no such clear boundary exists between forensic and epideictic forms in the apologia. Like many rhetoric scholars, I prefer to classify apologia as epideictic. But classification is hardly the point. Perlocutionary effect is. Campbell and Jamieson err by creating a false dichotomy that limits our understanding of what is an effective apologia. As B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel demonstrate, the genre of apologia, an epideictic form, relies on certain forensic features for its effectiveness. Their construct of the genre is comprehensive and useful.

Ware and Linkugel argue that the genre of apologia consists of four postures of verbal self-defense and four modes of resolution. The postures are: (1) Absolution, which seeks acquittal and relies on the modes of denial and differentiation; (2) Vindication, which seeks to preserve character relative to others and relies on the modes of denial and transcendence; (3) Explanation, which seeks to make motives clear and relies on the modes of bolstering and differentiation; and (4) Justification, which seeks understanding and approval and relies on the modes of justification and transcendence.
on the modes of transcendence and bolstering. The four modes of resolution are: (1) Denial, which attempts to change the meaning of the thing in question; (2) Bolstering, which attempts to identify the accused with something positive; (3) Differentiation, which attempts to separate something from its larger context; and (4) Transcendence, which attempts to join something to a larger context. Denial and bolstering are reformative modes that attempt to alter the perception of the object or subject of discussion. Differentiation and transcendence are transformative modes that attempt to completely change the form and context of the object or subject of discussion (273-283). Each posture relies on a reformative and a transformative mode of resolution. In other words, it is important to effective apologia to reform the concepts of some subjects and objects of inquiry and to transform the contexts of others. At least one of each type of mode is necessary to present a unified posture.

These postures, and the modes that support them, operate within a three-part structure of political legitimacy as described by Jackson Harrell (in association with Ware and Linkugel). These include structural, ideological, and personal legitimacy. Structural legitimacy derives from the office held. A president, for example, commands a great deal of political legitimacy merely by holding that office. Ideological legitimacy derives from the perceptions by the people that the politician’s values and principles are similar to their own. Personal legitimacy derives from ethos—the quality of the politician’s character. While these political considerations are beyond the scope of this study, what is important here is Harrell’s contention that it takes a convincing rhetorical persona to form the foundation of these three structures of political legitimacy (241).
This persona, I think, is something like Harvey’s concept of presence in the personal essay.

First, I want to briefly analyze these two apologias in terms of rhetorical style and adherence to the genre. I think the force of my contention about the composition process--presence--and the blurring of genre boundaries is strengthened by the fact that, in terms of style and genre, these two apologies are very similar. I will follow this analysis with a more detailed study of how the composition process of the second apologia creates this concept of presence and becomes the more effective apologia, i.e. creates the perlocutionary effect that Clinton intends.

Clinton’s first and second apologias fit well-established models of the genre. Both display verbal/textual characteristics--tropes, figures, and schemes--long identified with Clinton. And, indeed, many of these characteristics have been long identified with presidential address in general because of the rhetorical nature of the office. Presidents create themselves and establish their power through rhetoric, so tropes of power and schemes reinforcement are characteristic of presidential speech, especially: anaphora, antithesis, epistrophe, and parallelism. For example, the first apologia relies on the reinforcing power of parallelism, anaphora, and epistrophe. In the middle of the speech, shortly after shifting the focus from himself to the Starr investigation, Clinton says: “The independent counsel investigation moved on to my staff and friends, then into my private life, and now the investigation itself is under investigation. This has gone on too long, cost too much, and hurt too many innocent people” (n.pag.) In these two sentences it is easy to see a typical use of parallelism and epistrophe (similar to anaphora
except the repetition happens toward the end of the clause). The 17 August speech is built on these types of constructions. So is the 11 September speech, only not to the same extent. A more contrite posture, stylistically, would dictate less repetitive and power-enforcing constructions, i.e. would use less rhetorical energy. When Clinton does use such language in the final apologia, he uses it to reinforce social values that he claims to share with his audiences, such as when he says: “I am profoundly grateful for the support of so many Americans who somehow through it all seem to still know that I care about them a great deal, that I care about their problems and their dreams” (n.pag.). By the stylistic criteria of the genre, these two apologias are similar, but the former is more strident than the latter because of the choice Clinton makes at C^i.

According to Ware and Linkugel’s defining characteristics of the genre, the apologias employ familiar postures and modes of resolution: the first employs the explanation posture (attempting to gain understanding) and the final employs the justification posture (attempting to gain understanding and acceptance). Both employ the bolstering mode of resolution as the reformative mode. The first employs differentiation as the transformative mode, and the final employs transcendence as the transformative mode. So, in the first apologia, Clinton is explaining himself and hoping to remove his actions from a larger context by portraying them as the reasonable actions of an ordinary man. In the second apologia, Clinton is justifying himself and hoping to link his actions to a larger, positive context. Let us consider how this works.

In the first apologia, Clinton engages in a subtle form of bolstering. Because he had just finished testifying about lewd sexual
encounters with a woman half his age, he could not bolster himself (identify himself with something positive) in a brash way. Instead, he creates an image of himself as one of the people who would not want to, nor should have to, submit to questioning about personal affairs. As Clinton says: “I answered their questions truthfully, including questions about my private life--questions no American citizen would ever want to answer.” In the final phrase, he equates himself with the people and suggests he has suffered a kind of persecution the average American should not have to suffer. He continues this line of bolstering throughout the speech. For example, he invokes family when he says: “I can only tell you I was motivated by many factors: first, by a desire to protect myself from the embarrassment of my own conduct. I was also very concerned about protecting my family.” He attempts to separate his actions from their context by attacking the investigation against him, throwing the scent off the socio-political meaning of having sex with a young woman in the Oval Office. He tells the people:

The fact that these questions were being asked in a politically inspired lawsuit which has since been dismissed was a consideration, too. In addition, I had real and serious concerns about an independent counsel investigation that began with private business dealings 20 years ago--dealings, I might add, about which an independent federal agency found no evidence of any wrongdoing by me or my wife over two years ago. The independent counsel investigation moved on to my staff and friends, then into my private life, and now the investigation itself is under investigation. This has gone on too long, cost too much, and hurt too many innocent people. (n.pag.)

By invoking “innocent people” is Clinton suggesting his own status as victim? Perhaps it is an attempt at innocence by association. Clinton follows this section with an ending typical of the genre: a call for stopping “the pursuit of personal destruction and the prying into
private lives” and moving on to “repair the fabric of our national discourse” (n.pag.). Clinton moves the issue of his infidelity and alleged perjury away from the context of proper and legal behavior for a president to a fight against a possibly wrong-headed investigation.

An answer to the important question--did it work?--appears to be a qualified “yes.” A New York Times and CBS News poll taken after the speech showed a continued desire by the public to move on to other political business. According to a report in the New York Times shortly after the first apologia, “[s]ixty-three percent of the respondents said the Lewinsky matter should be dropped...now that the president has testified to the grand jury and addressed the nation” (Verhovek n.pag.). I say a qualified “yes” because Clinton’s polls held steady rather than moved up, although pundits generally were unconvinced. For example, consider Lance Morrow’s evaluation that Clinton “performed miserably” in the first speech (Morrow n.pag.).

In terms of the genre of apologia, Clinton made one change in the final speech. Instead of using differentiation as his transformative mode of resolution, he chose transcendence. He begins bolstering himself by identifying with the clergy gathered for the annual White House prayer breakfast. He welcomes them, saying that this is an occasion “which Hillary and the Vice President and I look forward to so much every year” invoking his own religious orientation. Like the first apologia, he continues to identify himself with the common American when he thanks “ordinary citizens” for writing to him with “wise counsel” in regard to the further handling of his job (n.pag).

By the structure of the genre, it is in the choice of transcendence that this apologia differs from the first. Clinton sets
himself in a religious context. He says he must “have God's help to be
the person that I want to be.” He concludes his speech, saying:

I ask once again to be able to love my neighbor—all my
neighbors--as my self, to be an instrument of God's
peace; to let the words of my mouth and the meditations of
my heart and, in the end, the work of my hands, be
pleasing. This is what I wanted to say to you today.

With these words, he moves himself beyond a man in trouble to man,
almost Christ-like, whose troubles may actually be used for good in
the service of God and country.

Combining the purpose of the apologia as identified by Campbell
and Jamieson with the organizational pattern as identified by Butler
and the posture of argument as identified by Ware and Linkugel, a
genre of apologia emerges--a genre that clearly includes the two
Clinton speeches. Both, then, are apologias. While both speeches fit
the genre, the two are quite different in a way that the genre cannot
explain. It is simply not satisfying to claim that merely switching
from differentiation as the transformative mode of resolution to
transcendence explains the difference that many commentators detected
in the two speeches.

Typical of the commentary following the first apologia was this
analysis offered by Caryn James of the New York Times:

Bill Clinton looked exhausted and sounded as defiant as a
regretful man could in his four-minute speech last night. It was not the familiar, soulful Bill Clinton who turned up, not the one who knows how to look a camera in the eye, but a far more reluctant-sounding person. But every poll in the last week had told the president that he had to make this speech, and he appeared as reluctant as if the American people had subpoenaed him.

While James makes some attempt to analyze what Clinton actually says,
her commentary centers on the image and ethos and comparing these to
Nixon's "Checkers" speech from 1952--the first televised political

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apologia in the United States. What James is looking for is the "familiar" and "soulful" Bill Clinton. But if she expects these traits to reveal themselves in the text, she never explains. Instead, she expected this “familiar” and “soulful” Clinton to show himself in the way he looks "a camera in the eye." For James, Clinton's appearance of reluctance speaks loudest. James clearly wants to experience "it" while watching Clinton's speech on television, but she is missing "it"--and identifying "it" with Clinton’s ethos or appearance rather than what he says and how he says it.

A “soulful” Clinton apparently did show up at the White House prayer breakfast. According to Time reporter Chris Taylor, the “stony mask he wore during the 17 August speech to the nation was gone; in its place, glistening eyes and a cracking voice” (n.pag), again reinforcing delivery as the focal point of the president’s rhetoric. But Gustav Neibhur of the New York Times ignores the president’s performance and concentrates on his specific use of religious language for an audience of religious leaders. He claims Clinton demonstrated his remarkable fluency with religious language. He frankly admitted to having ‘sinned’ in his relationship with the former White House intern Monica S. Lewinsky, spoke of the need for repentance and renounced pride and anger, two of the Seven Deadly Sins. But the most resonant moment for clergy members may have come when Clinton said the process of forgiveness demands ‘what my Bible calls a broken spirit.’ (n.pag.)

Indeed the language issues resonated for the assembled clergy. The Reverend Fred Davie says Clinton “could not be more contrite.” Rabbi Edward Cohn gushes “I love this man” (Taylor n.pag.). Rabbi Paul J. Meinhoff compares Clinton’s apology to the kind of statements required for Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement: “a candid admission of wrongdoing, an apology to those wronged, a plea for forgiveness and a
pledge to avoid such behavior in the future” (Bennett n.pag.). Says Time Managing Editor Walter Isaacson without elaboration: “It’s one of the most remarkable speeches ever given by a president” (Taylor n.pag.). Did Clinton do as television news commentator Ted Koppel cynically suggests and engage in a “new strategy” of remorse couched in religious language (Kakutani n.pag.)? I would say yes, but I would hesitate to apply the cynical spin. As a rhetoric scholar, I am far more concerned with whether the strategy worked, and how and why it worked, than if it is simply a dodge to avoid the political consequences of his actions (and if a dodge works, so be it). I suggest that this use of religious language—the presence of the “soulful” Bill—does work, and did work, for Clinton in that he has gained some amount of political currency for the effort. Despite 30 newspapers calling for his resignation in the week before his second apologia (Barringer n.pag.), Clinton’s job approval rating stood at 62 percent on 16 September 1998 a week after the second apologia, “which is impressive by any reckoning” (Berke n.pag.).

Clinton’s specific use of religious language is not surprising considering an important aspect of the rhetorical situation: a speech before religious leaders. It is not surprising that commentators and audience members picked up on Clinton’s religious language. But, as I have suggested, this language also plays a crucial role in Clinton’s move from differentiation to transcendence for his transformative mode of resolution. From the standpoint of the genre and the rhetorical situation (his immediate audience), what other language and mode of resolution would have been as effective? The short answer is: None.

Changing his vocabulary, or biting his lip, may be outward manifestations of a rhetorical posture, but they do not explain “it.”
Clearly, the visual and lexiconal aspects of rhetoric and the rhetorical situation are important to the meaning of any speech act. That Morrow or James is looking for “it” in how Clinton appears or sounds is certainly not shallow commentary in the age of television. But I would argue that part of what drives the visual and aural qualities of speech are the features of the text. That Bill Clinton did not appear “familiar” or “soulful” in the first apologia has much to do with the text he is reading. As I will show later in this essay, Clinton is not the only presence in that first apologia, which means his is not the only perlocutionary intent. It also bears the mark of Hillary Clinton. In a sense, she and the other advisors are fighting for their own presence in that speech. Presence, a single personal presence, is the “it” these commentators are looking for—the second apologia has it, the first does not. This presence manifests in the text because Clinton’s composition process for the second apologia more closely resembles the composition process of the personal essay: one author working alone to capture and share personal observations or experience. I want to consider the personal essay as genre, and then show how the second apologia fits. Finally, I will discuss the composition process that I contend makes this presence possible.

Wendell V. Harris identifies two types of essay: the personal essay and the programmatic essay. The personal and programmatic essays are nearly opposites. This is best illustrated by example. Harris points to E.B. White’s “Once More to the Lake” and Alice Walker’s “I Am Blue” as examples of personal essays versus the programmatic which would include what he calls “articles” such as those found in newspapers or magazines and some academic journals (936).

As Harris writes, personal essays
implicitly appeal to the reader’s own experience and common sense not so much for validation as for an active response comparing the author’s experiences and insights with the reader’s own. But their most important quality is that they strongly suggest an authorial personality or character, or, more accurately, an undeniable persona. (936)

And it is the creation of an effective rhetorical persona that Harrell argues is important to the effectiveness of any presidential apologia (241). So a defining characteristic of the personal essay fits one of the crucial components of political apologia.

Harris used Gordon Harvey’s idea of presence as a cornerstone of his paradigm of the personal versus the programmatic essay. The term presence is useful, Harvey says, because we “can use it to mean a certain feeling in the reader, subjective but discussible, caused by something in the writing” (650). I think this “something” is the basis for “it” and has six manifestations, including: (1) Detectable motive—a reason for the writer to be writing, a “why an essay needs writing”; (2) Development by twists and turns—a “willingness to pursue” the topic in multiple directions; (3) Control of detail—a “careful choosing” of events and descriptions; (4) Intimacy by awareness—an assumption of shared knowledge; (5) Broadening experience—an implication of the larger issues; and (6) Judgments and reasons—a sense of caring about making more than simplistic statements of approval or disapproval (650-653). To varying degrees, all six of these somethings are present in the second apologia in a way they are not present in the first apologia. This difference will become clear, I hope, as I discuss the differences in the composition process toward the end of this chapter. For now, let us examine how these somethings fit the two speeches.
Campbell and Jamieson make it clear why Clinton would deliver these apologias. The Office of the Independent Counsel made formal accusations, and the House of Representatives were considering passing one or more Articles of Impeachment. Obviously, there were several other possible motives, even sub-motives, working here. But clearly, I think, Clinton’s overriding motives were to answer his accusers, reform his actions, and transform his persona as fits the genre of apologia.

This something also includes the development of voice and of argument in a fashion unlike the programmatic essay. Presence, Harvey contends, is a broader concept than ‘voice,’ which denotes those qualities of a formal prose style that keep it in touch with conversation, but which wouldn’t necessarily be manifest in an essay’s structural unfolding. The presence that is manifest in unfolding is what Montaigne refers to in saying, repeatedly, that in his essais he let his mind go freely its own way, since his aim is to reveal himself.

(650)

While the two apologias share the first something—motive—they begin to diverge at this second something.

Clinton’s remarks in the first apologia seem tightly controlled and void of any sense of exploration or wonder about where his remarks might lead himself or his audience. This control manifests itself in his heavy use of the tropes and schemes of power as I outlined earlier. Clinton shows no willingness to let his mind, or his audience, wander freely around the topic when, after denouncing the investigation against him, he declares: “This has gone on too long, cost too much, and hurt too many innocent people. Now this matter is between me, the two people I love most—my wife and our daughter—and our God” (n.pag.). True to the organizational pattern of the genre,
Clinton supports this statement with the assertion that the investigation found no wrongdoing on his part in the Whitewater affair so it moved on (wrongly as he would have us accept) to "my staff and friends, then into my private life, and now the investigation itself is under investigation" (n.pag). Again, true to the genre, Clinton concludes by asking the American people and their elected representatives to get on with more important affairs, saying:

Now it is time--in fact, it is past time--to move on. We have important work to do--real opportunities to seize, real problems to solve, real security matters to face. And so, tonight, I ask you to turn away from the spectacle of the past seven months, to repair the fabric of our national discourse and to return our attention to all the challenges and all the promise of the next American century. (n.pag.)

This speech is programmatic in the sense that we the audience are clearly meant to listen to the speaker. These are instructions. We must do rather than think. Clinton is charging us to "move on" away from a "spectacle" in much the same way as the cliché of the police officer moving onlookers away from the scene of an accident with the old deception of: "Nothing to see here."

But in the second apologia, Clinton explores his topic more fully by asking questions of his own discourse and inviting his audience to follow him as he wanders along on his "journey" to find the "rock bottom truth of where I am." His twists and turns begin with his admission that he was

up rather late last night thinking about and praying about what I ought to say today. And rather unusual for me, I actually tried to write it down. So if you will forgive me, I will do my best to say what it is I want to say to you--and I may have to take my glasses out to read my own writing. (n.pag.)

This journey across his hand-written pages takes his audience through several twists and turns quite unlike the strict, linear argument of
the first apologia. Clinton says “genuine repentance” comes from a desire to “repair the breaches of my own making” and by courting a “broken spirit” that renounces the “pride and the anger which cloud judgment, lead people to excuse and compare and to blame and complain.” Then, unlike the first apologia, Clinton encourages himself and his audience to wander freely over the subject by asking “what does all this mean for me and for us?” rather than telling us what it means. In the next lines he tempers his desire for a “vigorous defense” with a pledge that this defense should not “obscure the fact that I have done wrong.” From here he wanders through two anecdotes about how various citizens have helped him wrestle with his repentance by offering “wise counsel.” And it is here, calling attention to what others have done for him (rather than to him), that Clinton offers one of his few schemes of power, saying: “I am profoundly grateful for the support of so many Americans who somehow through it all seem to still know that I care about them a great deal, that I care about their problems and their dreams” (n.pag.). Just by using anecdotes, Clinton opens the door for his audience to wander in their own directions. While he clearly wants the audience to interpret his stories his way, an anecdote also leaves the audience free to critically question the moral of the story because the moral is suggested, not prescribed.

These two anecdotes—about a little boy in Florida who wants to be president and about a friend who gives him a liturgy book on repentance—also operate to manifest the third something of presence Harvey identified as “detail,” the careful choosing of events. Clinton uses these anecdotes as part of his transcendence mode of resolution; he is placing himself in a larger context with his use of detail. The anecdote about the little boy in Florida illustrates how Clinton would
have his transgressions transcend from the ill-considered lusts of a middle-aged man to a lesson in “integrity” for America’s youth. He claims:

The children of this country can learn in a profound way that integrity is important and selfishness is wrong, but God can change us and make us strong at the broken places. I want to embody those lessons for the children of this country—for that little boy in Florida who came up to me and said that he wanted to grow up and be President and to be just like me. (n.pag.)

The first apologia offers no anecdotes, no details of any kind that might be associated with narrative although it certainly follows a timeline; it moves from point A to point B. But it would have its audience move as a train moves: constrained by the tracks of its argument and compelled to go along a fixed route to a known conclusion—a call for his audience to turn away from “spectacle” in the first apologia as opposed to Clinton’s wish for himself to become “an instrument of God’s peace” in the second apologia.

Any time a president speaks there is always a manifestation of the awareness of the intimacy in shared knowledge, the fourth something of presence. Presidents embody our national ideals—all the shared knowledge and traits that define us as a nation. This is an imperfect embodiment to be sure as the Clinton case so readily attests. This awareness manifests itself in the mythic terms presidents use to invoke national experience. When Clinton calls on the people in the first apologia to “seize” “real opportunities,” to “solve” “real problems,” and to “face” “real security matters,” no matter what our individual politics we understand what he is talking about and what he is telling us to do; we know to what issues these words refer even if we do not agree on the courses of action. When Clinton asks us “to repair the fabric of our national discourse and to
return our attention to all the challenges and all the promise of the next American century,” we know what he means. The big difference in this something between the two speeches is that Clinton transcends the national to reach the spiritual. He uses far less nationalistic language in favor of religious language, yet we still know what he is talking about when he asks us (quoting the liturgy book given to him by the friend in the preceding anecdote) to turn “from callousness to sensitivity, from hostility to love, from pettiness to purpose, from envy to contentment, from carelessness to discipline, from fear to faith” (n.pag.).

Clinton’s religious language also plays into the fifth something of presence in that his language broadens, even universalizes, his experience from the concerns of one man to the concerns of the faithful. This fifth something of presence allows readers/listeners to go beyond the mere experience of a text and to go into its theory—a journey from the surface of things to the “why” of things. The text of the second apologia does not just “mean” that a man is apologizing for his behavior, it also “means” that mankind is sinful and the act of repentance of one is a reflection of the experience of all; the act of forgiveness by one is a reflection of grace for all. Clinton, almost Christ-like, asks for divine help to recover a “clean heart,” to find the wisdom to “walk by faith and not sight” and for guidance to be “an instrument of God’s peace.” Such broadening hardly exists in the first apologia guided as it is by the programmatic paradigm. In this speech we are told, even commanded, what to think. In the latter we are cajoled, certainly, but Clinton’s reliance on religious themes and language broaden his experience to something like another Fall of Man.
Finally, we find the sixth something of presence in Clinton’s second apologia in his grounding of his argument in religious philosophy. He is not simply arguing right and wrong as he sees it, rather he is arguing right and wrong as prescribed by the long tradition of Judeo-Christian thought with all of its nuances, complexities, and contradictions. In this apologia Clinton juggles the judgments of his wrong-doing, his repentance, and his hope for forgiveness. He admits his first apologia was “not contrite enough” and that, contrary to the verbal contortions of his testimony before the grand jury, there is no “fancy way to say that I have sinned.” He admits “the sorrow [he feels] is genuine.” He hopes to manifest the “broken spirit” of the truly repentant. Two passages are particularly telling in regard to the sixth something. In each, he asserts himself in a way similar to the first apologia, but then he undercuts the assertion, complicates it, by calling attention to his former behavior. He says in his own defense of the charges before the House of Representatives: “I will instruct my lawyers to mount a vigorous defense, using all available appropriate arguments. But legal language must not obscure the fact that I have done wrong” (n.pag.). In the following paragraph, he pledges to “intensify” his “efforts to lead our country and the world toward peace and freedom . . . in the hope that with a broken spirit . . . I can be used for greater good, for we have many blessings and many challenges and so much work to do” (n.pag).

When Clinton makes such assertions in the first apologia they carry the weight of prescription. He asserts that he has “real and serious concerns” about the Starr investigation and damn's its move
from the Whitewater affair into his personal life with an enthymeme that leaves no doubt about his judgment of the matter:

I had real and serious concerns about an independent counsel investigation that began with private business dealings 20 years ago—dealings, I might add, about which an independent federal agency found no evidence of any wrongdoing by me or my wife over two years ago. The independent counsel investigation moved on to my staff and friends, then into my private life, and now the investigation itself is under investigation. (n.pag.)

In this first apologia, Clinton is a man under attack. His judgments are black-and-white, right-and-wrong. He admits no room for alternate opinions and will consider none. What statements of contrition he makes are separate from statements such as the one quoted above. In the second apologia, he tempers each of his judgments with contrite remarks.

All six of Harvey’s somethings manifest themselves in Clinton’s speech at the White House prayer breakfast. Is this the work of some clever speechwriter or policy aide cynically seeking what Koppel called a “new strategy” of remorse? I would argue personal essays cannot be manufactured by committee, and this speech manifests the presence, the “it,” that makes the personal essay a unique and powerful form of written and spoken expression. I am not privileging the idea of a lone author unaffected by outside agents or the socio-political contexts of history. Such a thing does not exist. I am not privileging the author god. Instead, I am suggesting that presence in the essay, indeed Clinton’s presence in his second apologia, can only manifest itself by a single, complicated, conflicted person writing alone in an attempt to connect, to communicate, with an audience.

Much has been written on the typical composition process of presidential address. Since the beginning, presidents have relied on
friends, aides, and finally, professional speechwriters to help them craft public address. In the modern era, the White House employs a staff of writers to generate public addresses with the help of senior advisors and with the final approval of the chief executive. Clinton’s first apologia was composed in a standard way.

Todd S. Purdum, reporting for the *New York Times*, explains that the draft began in Clinton’s “own backward-slanting handwriting” and was “annealed with the iron-willed anger of his wife.” Senior aides reported that Clinton “was determined to vent his frustration at what he sees as Kenneth Starr’s unjustified investigation, an approach strongly seconded by the first lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton, but by virtually none of the White House staff.” Purdum reports that when policy advisors read the first draft they “exploded” and called it “full of mean words” and a “diatribe.” A subsequent draft prepared by advisor Paul Begala “struck a softer, elegiac tone of regret.” Thirty minutes before the address, debate continued about which draft to use. As Purdum reports:

> On one side, Mrs. Clinton, adviser Sidney Blumenthal and lawyers Kantor and David Kendall wanted to make their point against Starr, a man they consider a zealot hell-bent on bringing Clinton down. Kendall didn't like any words of apology. On the other side, political advisers such a Robert Squier, Ann Lewis, Rahm Emanuel and Begala were urging Clinton to highlight the apology. (n.pag.)

The Begala draft was used to soften the Clintons’ draft, but many of the attacks on the Starr investigation were left intact because “David Kendall and Mrs. Clinton pressed for a steelier tone.” And so at 10:00 p.m. EST on 17 August 1998, Bill Clinton delivered his first apologia. Several others followed over the next thirty days, delivered to various political groups.
Most Americans know the story/myth of the composition of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, written on the back of an old envelope as he rode the train to the dedication of the battlefield in the fall of 1863. Whether or not he was consciously tapping into the power of that American narrative only Bill Clinton can say, but, Lincoln-like, Clinton wrote his second apologia by hand, by himself, and refused to show it to his advisors or to the First Lady before delivering it.

Clinton refers to his composition process in the second paragraph of the speech after a short welcome to the assembled clergy. He says:

I may not be quite as easy with my words today as I have been in years past, and I was up rather late last night thinking about and praying about what I ought to say today. And rather unusual for me, I actually tried to write it down. So if you will forgive me, I will do my best to say what it is I want to say to you -- and I may have to take my glasses out to read my own writing.

Mike McCurry, the president’s press secretary, confirmed this at a press conference later that day, saying Clinton “worked on [his speech] until early this morning--I don’t know how late. But he wrote it out himself on three pages of White House note paper.” In answer to a question about who may have seen his remarks prior to the prayer breakfast, McCurry says: “He did not discuss with anyone on the staff before he made [his speech]” (n.pag.).

There are textual clues that Clinton composed this speech by hand, late at night, and without the help of his advisors. While the speech is powerful in its use of religious language and imagery, it lacks the polished tone, the smooth syntax, of a well-worked presidential address in which speechwriters craft sound bites and bits of rhetoric meant for the ages. In the narrative of the little boy who wants to be president there is a good example of meaning break-down
because of a vague pronoun reference in an obvious stab at making a profound statement. I quoted part of the selection above, but here is the entire paragraph:

The children of this country can learn in a profound way that integrity is important and selfishness is wrong, but God can change us and make us strong at the broken places. I want to embody those lessons for the children of this country—for that little boy in Florida who came up to me and said that he wanted to grow up and be President and to be just like me. I want the parents of all the children in America to be able to say that to their children.

Say what to their children? What is this “that” Clinton refers to? Are parents supposed to tell their children that the president embodies integrity? Are they supposed to tell their children they themselves embody integrity or they, the parents, do? Are they supposed to tell their children to be like Bill Clinton? The point is simply this: no competent speechwriter would have left that last sentence unedited. But a man writing on three sheets of note paper alone in the middle of the night did.

Such slips as this give the second apologia a human touch, much like the minor variations in a hand-ground grill of a Rolls Royce give that luxury car a crafted, human feel. Machines grind grills perfectly. Men grind grills beautifully. And there is a very big difference. Unlike his first apologia, Clinton’s second apologia does not show the characteristics of machine perfection achieved by the painstaking editing and content revision of a staff of speechwriters and policy aides. Instead, it shows the minor imperfections of a lone man making a stab at profundity. This is the “it” of personal writing that connects with the audience and makes the rhetoric work. Effective political rhetoric happens when the personal intrudes on the programmatic. I think this holds especially true for the apologia. A
strict programmatic approach, and composition by committee, leads to
the kind of rhetoric of Clinton’s first apologia: strident, power-
enforcing, linear, and rigid. This is a politician telling us how it
is. But when the personal intrudes on the programmatic, when the
writer writes alone, “it” works.
English 106 Writing Purposes and Research

Poets priests and politicians
Have words to thank for their positions
Words that scream for your submission
And no-one's jamming their transmission
'Cause when their eloquence escapes you
Their logic ties you up and rapes you

--Sting

MWF 10:45 a.m. to 12:25 p.m.
26 Mackay

Instructor: Andy Cline
E-mail: acline@mail.park.edu
Phone: 741-2000 x6331
Office: Academic Support Center

Required texts:
Amusing Ourselves to Death by Neil Postman
The Everyday Writer by Andrea Lundsford

Recommended texts:
A college-level dictionary

Objective of this Course

The objective of this course is to improve your critical thinking, writing, reading, and research skills. You will complete three essays for this class and engage in numerous discussions, which may lead you to a better understanding of: 1) your own purposes for writing, 2) the power of effective writing to inform and persuade, 3) the techniques of critical thinking and argument, and 4) basic techniques of academic research.

Drafts/Essays

Because this is a writing course, I will ask you to write at least two drafts of each of the three essay assignments. All drafts must be typed and follow MLA style. For a font, please use 12-point Times Roman or 10-point Courier (no sans serif fonts such as Helvetica or Geneva). Hand in all drafts at the beginning of the class on the due date. Staple your pages before coming to class.

Attendance and Class Participation

You cannot successfully complete this class without excellent attendance. If you are absent more than 5 times (unexcused), I will
insist that you drop the class. You must contact me on the day you are absent to be excused. Even if you are absent, excused or otherwise, I expect you to come prepared for the next class. Contact me, or a classmate, if you have questions about the content of missed classes.

EN106 is a writing course, but it is also a discussion course. I will not give lectures. Instead, I expect the class, as a community of learners (including me), to engage in intelligent discussion about the topics listed in this syllabus and other topics as they may arise based on your interests.

I expect you to participate in class discussions and complete all assignments on time.

Conferences

Getting help from a writing coach in a one-on-one conference can improve your writing ability. I am always happy to meet with you outside class as time permits. All you have to do is ask, and we'll agree on an appropriate time and place to meet on campus. I also encourage you to use the Academic Support Center. Meeting regularly with a tutor is an excellent way to improve your writing.

Grading

The requirements as outlined in this syllabus describe the minimum/average workload for this class. Average performance (i.e. 'C' performance) is completing the workload and meeting the requirements on time.

You must complete all work. Essays are due at the beginning of class on the due date. I will grade you for the course in these areas:

- Class participation (discussion, attendance, quizzes): 33%
- 2 Short essay assignments: 33%
- 1 Research essay: 33%

I have designed this course to allow you maximum flexibility in choosing your own topics and/or choosing your own direction within assigned topics. In some ways, for some students, this is more difficult than being handed a set topic with a set grading criteria for that topic. But I do have minimum criteria. For example, I expect your final drafts to have a point, to develop/argue your point in a convincing way, to be organized in a logical way, and to be largely free of errors of grammar, syntax, and documentation. Beyond that, I am looking for what I consider a very important component of writing (whether in an academic, professional, or personal setting): personal engagement in the topic, i.e. interest in your own voice and what you have to say. Do not ask me what I want. My stock answer will be to ask back: "What do you want?"

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: To borrow the words or thoughts of another person and pass them off as your own is plagiarism. Especially egregious is stealing/buying/copying an essay from the
internet. Thankfully, we now have tools to catch this kind of dishonesty. If you attempt to pass off a plagiarized essay in this class, I will catch you, and I will flunk you.

Syllabus (subject to change)

Week 1
Read: Chapter 1
W 5/30 Introduction to the course, syllabus, and assignments.
F 6/1 The Medium is the Metaphor

Week 2
Read: Chapters 2 and 3
M 6/4 Media as Epistemology
W 6/6 Facts and the truth (essay #1 due)
F 6/8 Typographic America

Week 3
Read: Chapters 4 and 5 (EW: sections 10-12)
M 6/11 The Typographic Mind
W 6/13 Research: Sources
F 6/15 Peek-a-Boo World

Week 4
Read: Chapters 6 and 7 (EW: section 13, review sections 48-51)
M 6/18 The Age of Show Business
W 6/20 Research: Quotes, paraphrases, transitions, and documentation
F 6/22 “Now…This” (essay #2 due)

Week 5
Read: Chapters 8 and 9
M 6/25 Shuffle Off to Bethlehem
W 6/27 Invention: Audience, topoi, and issues
F 6/29 Reach Out and Elect Someone

Week 6
Read: Chapters 10 and 11
M 7/2 Teaching As an Amusing Activity
W 7/4 Fourth of July!!!
F 7/6 Arrangement: Induction, deduction, organic, and classic

Week 7
M 7/9 The Huxleyan Warning
W 7/11 Style: Tropes, figures, and schemes
F 7/13 (essay #3 due)

Week 8
M 7/16 Delivery: Editing for style and grace
W 7/18 Delivery: Editing for correctness
F 7/20 Happy Hour Friday / Final Discussion

Week 9
M 7/23 Class evaluation (portfolios due)
Assignments

Your life is now,
Your life is now,
Your life is now.
In this undiscovered moment
Get your head up above the crowd.
We could shake this world
If you would only show us how.
Your life is now.

--John Cougar

Essay #1

Write a personal statement about the influence of television and the internet on your life. Some questions to get you started thinking about this assignment (you do not need to answer these questions):
Can you imagine life without television or the internet? How might your life be different if you were to give up these media? To what extent do these media control your commercial and political choices? Can you resist their influence? What do you like or dislike about these media? Do these media carry quality content, and how do you know?

This is a personal essay. Resist the urge to generalize about the experiences of others. What are your experiences?

Length: 4 pages / 1,000 words

Essay #2

I’ve given you a copy of the President’s inaugural address. Read it carefully. Go to the library and watch one of the tapes of the address (on reserve for this class). What differences do you discover in the two addresses? Yes, the “text” is the same. So the “differences” I’m referring to are to be found in your experiences of these two media: text versus television. How does reading the text differ from watching it in terms of: What is your understanding of the President’s thoughts? What aspects of the speech are privileged in reading versus watching? Does the meaning change from one medium to the other? How active is your role in creating the meaning of this text from reading to watching?

Resist the urge to deal with obvious differences such as the fact you can see gestures and facial expressions on TV and can’t see them in print (unless you are prepared to deal with surface features on the level of “meaning,” i.e. how do gestures and facial expression change the meaning of the text from written to oral?).

Length: 4 pages / 1,000 words
Essay #3 (research essay)
When Neil Postman wrote Amusing Ourselves to Death, the personal computer was just becoming a useful tool for business. Widespread home use of these machines was still a few years away. And the internet, in the form we understand it today, did not exist. So Postman could not have taken this technological innovation, and communications revolution, into account when he wrote his book. Write a research essay in which you apply Postman’s critique of television to the internet.

This assignment requires careful reading of the Postman text and a more-than-surface understanding of his critique. We will spend significant amounts of time in class discussing his critique.

Which specific critique you apply and how you apply it is entirely up to you. There is no right or wrong way to handle this assignment in terms of choosing and applying a critique (assuming you’ve read and understood Postman).

You must cite at least two “paper” sources in addition to Amusing Ourselves To Death. Sources found on electronic databases, such as EBSCO Host or findarticles.com, count as paper sources as long as there is a paper analog. You may cite as many internet sources as you please.

Length: 8-10 pages / 2,000 to 2,500 words

Hand in all work (your portfolio), including drafts, at the end of the semester. Include a disk (either Mac or IBM format) with all of assignments clearly identified, e.g. essay1.doc, or researchessay.doc.
English 106 Writing Purposes and Research

Poets priests and politicians
Have words to thank for their positions
Words that scream for your submission
And no-one's jamming their transmission
'Cause when their eloquence escapes you
Their logic ties you up and rapes you

--Sting

TR 8:00 a.m. to 9:15 a.m.
232 Copley

Instructor: Andy Cline
E-mail: acline@mail.park.edu
Phone: 741-2000 x6331
Office: Academic Support Center

Required texts:
The Good Citizen by Michael Schudson
A college-level dictionary

Objective of this Course

The objective of this course is to improve your critical thinking, writing, reading, and research skills to put to use for your own personal, economic, social, civic, and political goals. While you will learn many valuable skills that may be useful in successfully completing writing assignments in other courses at Park University, such use is neither the point nor the objective of this class. You will complete four essays for this class and engage in numerous discussions, which may lead you to a better understanding of: 1) your own purposes for writing, 2) the power of effective writing to inform and persuade, 3) the techniques of critical thinking and rhetoric, and 4) basic techniques of academic research.

Drafts/Essays

Because this is a writing course, I will ask you to write at least three drafts of each of the four essay assignments. All drafts must be typed and follow MLA style. For a font, please use 12-point Times or 10-point Courier (no sans serif fonts such as Helvetica or Geneva). Hand in all drafts at the beginning of the class on the due date. Keep all drafts. Staple earlier drafts to the back of newer drafts. Staple your pages before coming to class.

For each assignment, the first draft will be read among your classmates; the second draft will be read in a one-on-one conference with me or a professional tutor at the Academic Support Center; and the third draft will be read by me for a grade. You must complete
all three drafts for each assignment. Part of your grade will depend upon your diligence in making substantive revisions. You may, at your option, write fourth drafts of all four assignments to be handed in as a portfolio at the end of the semester.

Attendance and Class Participation

You cannot successfully complete this class without excellent attendance. If you are absent more than 4 times (unexcused), I will insist that you drop the class. If you are absent more than 6 times (unexcused), you will fail the class. You must contact me on the day you are absent to be excused. Even if you are absent, excused or otherwise, I expect you to come prepared for the next class. Contact me, or a classmate, if you have questions about the content of missed classes.

EN106 is a writing course, but it is also a discussion course. I will not give lectures. Instead, I expect the class, as a community of learners (including me), to engage in intelligent discussion about the topics listed in this syllabus and other topics as they may arise based on your interests.

I expect you to participate in class discussions and complete all assignments on time.

Grading

The requirements as outlined in this syllabus describe the minimum/average workload for this class. Average performance (i.e. ‘C’ performance) is completing the workload and meeting the requirements on time.

You must complete all work. Essays are due at the beginning of class on the due date. I will grade you for the course in these areas:

- Class participation (reading, discussion, attendance): 33%
- 3 Short essay assignments: 33%
- 1 Research essay: 33%

The prerequisite for this class is EN105 or its high-school equivalent. So I assume you have learned, and can apply, at least some rudimentary forms of paragraph coherence and overall organizational structure developing from a point you wish to make or thesis you wish to “prove.”

I have designed this course to allow you maximum flexibility in choosing your own topics or choosing your own direction within assigned topics. I am looking for what I consider a very important component of writing (whether in an academic, professional, or personal setting): personal engagement in your topic, i.e. interest in your own voice and what you have to say. Do not ask me what I want. My stock answer will be to ask back: "What do you want?"

Earning a B or an A depends as much on your behavior as on your skill or improvement throughout the semester. Students who wish to
earn the higher grades must act like A and B students by adding value to the class. This may be accomplished in numerous ways, and these ways are limited only by your own ambition and imagination. Certainly a big part of B and A behavior is a willingness to “think outside the box” on the essay assignments and a willingness to make substantive changes during the revision process.

I will speak more extensively in class about grading criteria and the theory/practice of triadic mediation, which I will use to evaluate your essays.

I hope that you will focus less on grades and more on learning. If you approach this class with enthusiasm and view it as an opportunity to learn, your grade will take care of itself.

A NOTE ON ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: To borrow the words or thoughts of another person and pass them off as your own is plagiarism. Especially egregious is stealing/buying/copying an essay from the internet. Thankfully, we now have tools to catch this kind of dishonesty. If you attempt to pass off a plagiarized essay in this class, I will catch you, and I will flunk you.

Syllabus (subject to change)

Week 1
T 8/28 Introduction to the course, syllabus, and assignments.
R 8/30 “What is the teaching doing and why”?

Week 2
Read: Introduction and Chapter 6
T 9/4 What is a “good citizen”?
R 9/6 The Age of Private Citizens

Week 3
Read: Chapter 1
T 9/11 Origins of American citizenship
R 9/13 Facts and the truth (Essay #1 due)

Week 4
Read: Chapter 2
T 9/18 Birth of a nation/state
R 9/20 Research: Sources

Week 5
Read: Chapter 3
T 9/25 Transition to democracy
R 9/27 Library visit

Week 6
Read: Entr’ Act I
T 10/2 Debates and public discourse—then and now
R 10/4 Research: Quotes, transitions, and documentation (Essay #2 due)
**Week 7**
Read Chapter 4
T 10/9 The second transformation of citizenship
R 10/11 Invention: Audience, topoi, and issues

**Week 8**
Read Chapter 5
T 10/16 Civil religion
R 10/18 Invention: Ideas and proofs

**Week 9**
Read: Entr’ Acte II
T 10/23 The second great debate (Essay #3 due)
R 10/25 Arrangement: Induction, deduction, organic, and classic

**Week 10**
Read: Conclusion
T 10/30 Issues
R 11/1 Style: Tropes, figures, and schemes

**Week 11**
T 11/6 Memory: Using a computer and the internet effectively
R 11/8 Delivery: MLA Style and documentation

**Week 12**
T 11/13 Issues
R 11/15 (Essay #4 due)

**Week 13**
T 11/20 Writing Workshop

**Week 14**
T 11/27 Delivery: Editing for style and grace
R 11/29 Delivery: Editing for correctness

**Week 15**
T 12/4 Final discussion
R 12/6 Class evaluation. (Disks due; Optional portfolios due)
Assignments

Your life is now.
In this undiscovered moment
Get your head up above the crowd.
We could shake this world
If you would only show us how.
Your life is now.

--John Cougar

Reading Assignments

In addition to the reading The Good Citizen, you should be generally familiar with the news of the day from the Kansas City Star, and you should read the “As I See It” column on the editorial page every day. If you do not subscribe to the paper, you can read it online at kcstar.com.

“Reading” means more than simply looking at all the words. I expect you to come to some understanding of what you read. It is not acceptable to say: “I read it, but I didn’t understand it.” That’s not reading. Often, understanding requires you to read something more than once.

Revision procedure for all essay assignments.

1) We will read first drafts in class for peer review. You should expect to read and respond in writing to your classmates’ essays. Please make substantive comments on your classmates’ papers, including a signed end note.

2) I will read second drafts in a one-on-one conference with each of you. You are responsible for making an appointment to see me. I can easily be found in the Academic Support Center after class until 12:30 p.m. If you find it difficult to make an appointment with me, you may substitute a conference with one of the professional tutors at the Academic Support Center. See me for details.

3) I will read your third draft for a grade.

4) You have the option of re-writing all four essays a fourth time and submitting them to me at the end of the semester as a portfolio.

Essay Assignment #1

You are a citizen.

Write a personal essay in which you explore what “citizenship” means to you. You may use the following questions to help you get started
(you do not need to answer all, or any, of these questions): What is a citizen? Does the term “citizen” hold any special significance for you? What does it mean to be a “good citizen”? Does this term apply to you? Why or why not? What does citizenship suggest in terms of rights and/or responsibilities?

Resist the urge to generalize about the thoughts and/or experiences of others. This is a personal essay. I want to know what you think about your own relationship to the idea of citizenship.

You may not have thought about citizenship before. That’s okay. Use this essay as a way to work out your thoughts and feelings. Resist the urge to make some grand or profound conclusion.

For ESL/foreign students: Please feel free discuss citizenship in regard to your own homeland.

Length: 1,000 words

Essay Assignment #2

Since the first inaugural address delivered by George Washington, presidents have used this speech as a way to establish their leadership by enlisting the help of the people in creating that leadership. In a profound way, the president does not become president until after giving this address. The quality of the address and the weight of its ideas can have a serious impact on the President’s term of office. When the President speaks to the people in this address he speaks citizen to citizen.

Carefully read the inaugural address by George W. Bush. For another perspective, I have placed tapes of the address on reserve in the library. What is Bush’s view of citizenship? Who does he think we/you are? Do you “see” yourself in this address?

Write an analysis of the inaugural address in which you explain how the President views citizenship and what that view means to you. You should quote specific examples from the speech and show how these examples (ideas, words, images, etc.) relate to, conform with, or change your own thoughts and feelings. Resist the urge to generalize about the meaning of the address for others. What do you think?

Length: 1,000 words

Essay Assignment #3

As a citizen of a republic, you have a voice in government and civic affairs at all levels. Use that voice.

Write a short opinion about a civic issue of your choice as if to be published in the “As I See It” column of the Kansas City Star. Cite one or two outside sources. You should cite “journalistically” rather than “academically.” We’ll discuss the differences in class.
Here’s your chance to make a difference.

For ESL/foreign students: Please feel free to write about an issue that concerns your own homeland.

Length: 395 to 400 words (I will hold you to the word count on this one.)

Research Assignment #4

Write a research paper based on your civic topic from assignment #3.

Assignment #3 is an exercise in civic rhetoric. Assignment #4 is an exercise in academic rhetoric. I want you to discover the differences in audience, purpose, and voice between the genres of short opinion essays and expository essays. Like your effort in assignment #3, this essay should be persuasive. Unlike assignment #3, your audience is “academic.”

You must cite outside sources as necessary. You may not use more than two sources from the internet. You must use at least two “paper” sources from scholarly or professional journals (as opposed to popular newspapers and magazines). Articles that you find on electronic databases, such as EBSCO Host or findarticles.com, count as paper sources so long as the article has a paper analog.

This paper must conform to MLA style.

Length: 2,000 to 2,500 words

At the end of the semester, hand in a computer disk (either Mac or IBM format) with all of your assignments clearly identified, e.g. essay1.doc, or researchessay.doc.
Poets priests and politicians
Have words to thank for their positions
Words that scream for your submission
And no-one's jamming their transmission
'Cause when their eloquence escapes you
Their logic ties you up and rapes you

--Sting (1980)

MTWR 5:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.
215 RH

Instructor: Andy Cline
acline@teacher.com
Phone: 235-2563 ext.#1
Office: 108 Cockefair Hall

Required texts:

Primary Colors: A Novel of Politics by Anonymous (Joe Klein)

Presidential Campaign Rhetoric 2000: http://clik.to/rhetoric

Recommended texts:

A college-level dictionary

Other required materials:

An e-mail account (address) with the capability to receive attachments in text or HTML. If you have a CCTR address, you will want to use a mail reader such as Eudora or MS Outlook. If you do not use CCTR, or if you do not use a mail reader, I suggest getting a free web-based mail address at www.mail.com.

Objective of this Course

The objective of this course is to improve your critical thinking, writing, reading, and research skills. You will complete four essays and an overview essay for this class and engage in numerous discussions, which may lead you to a better understanding of: 1) your own purposes for writing, 2) the power of effective writing to inform and persuade, 3) the techniques of critical thinking and argument, and 4) some techniques of scholarly research.

Drafts/Essays

Because this is a writing course, I will ask you to write at least two drafts of each of the four essay assignments. All drafts must be typed and follow MLA style. For a font, please use 12-point Times Roman or 10-point Courier (no sans serif fonts such as Helvetica or Geneva). Hand in all drafts at the beginning of the class on the due date.
Attendance and Class Participation

I expect you to attend class. If you are absent more than 6 times (unexcused), I will insist that you drop the class. Even if you are absent, excused or otherwise, I expect you to come prepared for the next class. Contact me or a classmate if you have questions about the content of missed classes.

E225 is a writing course, but it is also a discussion course. I will not deliver lectures. Instead, I expect the class, as a community of learners (including me), to engage in intelligent discussion about the topics listed in this syllabus and other topics as they may arise based on your interests.

I expect you to participate in class discussions and complete all assignments on time.

Conferences

Getting help from a writing coach in a one-on-one conference can improve your writing ability. I am always happy to meet with you outside class as time permits. All you have to do is ask, and we'll agree on an appropriate time and place to meet on campus. I also encourage you to use the UMKC Writing Lab. Meeting regularly with a tutor is an excellent way to improve your writing. Call 235-1146 for an appointment.

Grading

The requirements as outlined in this syllabus describe the minimum/average workload for this class. Average performance (i.e. 'C' performance) is completing the workload and meeting the requirements on time.

You must complete all work. Essays are due at the beginning of class on the due date. I will grade you for the course in these areas:

- Class participation (preparation, discussion, and attendance) 33%
- Essay assignments 33%
- Overview essay 33%

I have designed this course to allow you maximum flexibility in choosing your own topics and choosing your own direction within assigned topics. In some ways, for some students, this is more difficult than being handed a set topic with a set grading criteria for that topic. But I do have some criteria. For example, I expect your final drafts to have a point, to develop/argue your point in a convincing way, to be organized in a rhetorically effective way, and to be largely free of errors of grammar, syntax, and documentation. Beyond that, I am looking for what I consider a very important component of writing (whether in an academic, professional, or personal setting): personal engagement in the topic, i.e. interest in your own voice and what you have to say. Do not ask me what I want. My stock answer will be to ask back: "What do you want?"
Syllabus (subject to change)

Week 1
Read: Chapter 1 of Primary Colors.
M 6/5 Introduction to the course, syllabus, and assignments.
T 6/6 “What is the teacher doing and why?”
W 6/7 Civic (civil?) discourse in the U.S.
T 6/8 Introduction to the novel.

Week 2
Read Chapters 2 and 3.
M 6/12 Discussion on the novel. (Essay #1 due)
T 6/13 What is research?
W 6/14 MLA Style and Documentation
R 6/15 Campaign Week in Review

Week 3
Read Chapters 4 and 5
M 6/19 Discussion on the novel.
T 6/20 Facts, fiction, and truth.
W 6/21 Sources
R 6/22 Campaign Week in Review

Week 4
Read chapters 6 and 7
M 6/26 Discussion on the novel. (Essay #2 due)
T 6/27 Ethos, pathos, and logos (the artistic proofs).
W 6/28 Quotes, paraphrases, and transitions.
R 6/29 Campaign Week in Review

Week 5
Read chapters 8 and 9
M 7/3 Holiday
T 7/4 Independence Day!
W 7/5 Discussion on the novel.
R 7/6 Campaign Week in Review

Week 6
M 7/10 Discussion on the novel. (discuss Overview essay) (Essay #3 due)
T 7/11 Induction and deduction.
W 7/12 Editing for clarity and grace.
R 7/13 Campaign Week in Review

Week 7
M 7/17 Discussion of the novel. (Essay #4 due)
T 7/18 Tropes and schemes.
W 7 19 Editing for correctness.
R 7/20 Campaign Week in Review

Week 8
M 7/24 The political campaign and civic discourse.
T 7/25 A citizen’s role in a democracy.
W 7/26 Writing workshop.
Assignments

Four short essays

Each essay should conform to MLA style. Length: 3 to 4 pages, except for Assignment #3 which should be no more than 500 words.

1- Explore your own relationship with the political process.
Questions to get you started (Do not attempt to answer them all; use one or more as starting points for your own thoughts): Are you interested in politics? If so why, and if not why not? Do you identify with a particular political party or ideology? Do you feel connected to the political process? Do you have power or voice? No matter how you might answer these questions, how did your political thinking evolve? What are your political roots?

2- Explore the intersection between “real life” and fiction in Primary Colors.
As you may be aware, Newsweek reporter Joe Klein wrote the novel. He covered the Clinton campaign in 1992. Where does reporting end and fiction begin? Are there truths in the novel about the American political process in general or the Clinton campaign/administration in particular?

3- Write an argument of your own choice as if to be published in the KC Star.
Choose an issue from the campaign and make your voice heard! I do not require that you send your essay to the Star. But, if you do, you’ll earn an automatic ‘A’ for the class if the Star publishes it in the “As I See It” column. I’ll also consider for the ‘A’ publication in another reputable publication or newspaper (except the U. News).

4- Respond to any topic, situation, person, or idea from the novel.
Cite additional sources to bolster your response.

Overview Essay

We’ll discuss this in class during week 6. Length: 4 pages.
Hand in all work (your portfolio), including drafts, at the end of the semester. Include a disk (either Mac or IBM format) with all of assignments clearly identified, e.g. assignment1.doc, or researchessay.doc.
Class Theme

Quality of Life in Kansas City in the Next Decade: Areas for Improvement

Objectives of the Course

This course will present you with several opportunities. You will have the opportunity to polish your academic writing by learning more about systems of research and composition and forms of presentation. This class will give you the opportunity to come to some understanding of the value of academic writing, in its many forms, within the academy. But more, I hope this class will give you the opportunity to discover the value of academic writing outside the academy. And this last opportunity will be both the focus and objective of this course. You will produce a class project with the goal of affecting the decisions of city leaders in Kansas City.

Attendance and Class Participation

I expect you to attend class. If you miss five classes (unexcused), I will insist that you drop the course. Even if you are absent, I expect you to come prepared for the next class. I expect you to participate in class discussions, to read any assigned materials on time, and to complete written assignments on time.

My theory of teaching/learning is based on the idea that much knowledge is socially constructed. In other words, what is "real" and what is "true" are constructed, discovered, or revealed through dialectic (discussion) and are nearly always social as opposed to transcendent or absolute. You will notice that this class is based on discussion. What material I will present will emerge from the work we do in class. So your participation is crucial to our success.

I’ve set up a class website at aroundcampus.com. Please register at that site. You’ll find links and other information that will help you with our class project. There’s also a forum and live chat area, which I expect you to use to interact with me and your classmates outside of class as necessary.

Grading

You must complete all work. I will grade you for the course in these areas:
Class Schedule

I prefer to work in an informal classroom. This does not mean that class time is unimportant. It means that you share responsibility with me for making class time productive. We will discuss issues, themes, techniques, etc. as they arise from the work we do.

Basically, our weeks will evolve this way:

Mondays: Nuts n’ bolts—the how-to stuff of academic writing
Wednesdays: Theory—the thoughts and justifications behind academic writing
Fridays: Workshop—doing the work of academic research and writing

Due dates:
1/24: What three (more? fewer?) areas will we cover?
1/31: Prospectus due: 1-or 2-page summary of your proposed contribution to the project.
2/7: 1-to 2-page list of initial sources and contacts.
2/14 Revised prospectus (if necessary)
3/7 Rough Draft of project
3/21 Second Draft of project
4/9 Final Draft of project
4/18 Public Essay
5/4 Disk (portfolio)

Assignments

Written updates: Each Friday you will hand in a 1-to 2-page update of your progress for the week on the class project. This is an informal assignment. I understand that some weeks will be more productive than others. The purpose of this assignment is to keep you on track, help your thinking unfold and evolve, and allow me to intervene with help as necessary.

Class project: You will write a 10+ page research essay for the class project. As a class, we will choose two or three areas in which we feel Kansas City needs improvement. These areas might include such topics as education, transportation, race relations, etc. Your part of the project will be to produce an essay, based on academic research, that attempts to address one of the areas from your particular discipline. For example, a history major working in the race relations area might produce an essay that highlights some historical aspect of race relations in Kansas City to show how the past affects the present. Or, an engineering major working in the area of transportation might produce an essay showing how a lightrail line might best be routed across the Missouri River without disrupting
automobile traffic. Only your interests and curiosity limit the possibilities for this assignment. As part of this effort, you will hand in ideas for the coverage areas of the project, a prospectus for your part of the project, a list of initial sources, and two rough drafts prior to the final draft. All the final drafts will be compiled into one document, bound, and distributed to such venues as the Mayor's office, the Mid-America Regional Council, the Kansas City Area Development Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the news media, and any other audience we think might make use of our work. We will discuss this assignment extensively in class.

Public essay: You will write a 500-word opinion essay based on your research. Think of this essay as a contribution to the "As I See It" column in the Kansas City Star. While I do not require you to send your essay to the Star, you will earn bunches of extra credit and brownie points if you do and it gets published.

Please hand in a disk (IBM or Mac format), with your project and public essay, clearly marked in individual files, by 5 p.m. on May 4.

English 305 Theory and Practice of Composition

Section: V0A
MWF 11:00 a.m. to 11:50 a.m.
315 Haag Hall
Instructor: Andy Cline  
acline@cctr.umkc.edu  
Office: 215 Cockefair Hall  
Office Hours: 9:00 to 10:00 p.m. MW  
Phone: 235-1150

**Required texts:**

Modern Rhetorical Criticism by Roderick Hart

The Craft of Revision by Donald Murray

**Recommended texts:**

Easy Writer by Andrea Lunsford

A college-level dictionary

**Additional required materials:**

e-mail address on the UMKC CCTR system

**Objectives of the Course**

The first objective of this class is for you to learn more about your own composing process so you may develop your own theory of composition. In other words, your first objective is to better understand why you do what you do when you write. The second objective of this class is for you to become sensitive to the persuasive tactics of the Information Age and use those tactics in personal or political ways in the composition of your own texts.

There is good reason to call this epoch the Information Age. Unlike any other period in human history, we are presented daily with a staggering blizzard of information from a wide variety of media aimed at getting us to think certain ways, do certain things, feel certain emotions, or buy certain merchandise. In the scholarly profession of Rhetoric/Composition, we often refer to this information collectively as “texts.” In a sense, all of it is written in some fashion before it is presented to you: the consumer of information. This class will present you with two opportunities. First, you will have the opportunity to become a more skilled critic of persuasive texts so that you can recognize and, perhaps, resist their persuasive appeals. Second, you will have the opportunity to use your critical skills to hone your writing skills as you compose eight, short response papers and two closely related texts: an expository essay on a topic of your choice and a persuasive companion essay.

**Conferences**

Getting help from a writing coach in a one-on-one conference can improve your ability to write. I am required to hold at least one conference with each of you during the semester—preferably by the halfway point. One conference, however, is not enough to help you
improve. So I encourage you to come see me anytime you want help. I further encourage you to seek help at the UMKC Writing Lab at 5201 Rockhill Road. Call 235-1146 for an appointment. I think it is a good idea to go early in the semester and find a tutor you like who will help you with your writing from brainstorming to polishing the final draft. The Writing Lab is not just for remedial writers; it is for all writers.

**Attendance and Class Participation**

I expect you to attend class. If you miss more than six classes, I will insist that you drop the course. Even if you are absent, I expect you to come prepared for the next class. I expect you to participate in class discussions and complete assignments on time.

**Grading**

You must complete all work. Essays are due at the beginning of class on the due date. I will grade you for the course in these areas:

- Class participation and group work: 33%
- Response notebook: 33%
- Expository and persuasive papers: 33%

**Syllabus (subject to change)**

MRC = Modern Rhetorical Criticism
COR = The Craft of Revision

**Week 1**

M 8/24  "Language is never innocent."
W 8/26  Syllabus, assignments, class introductions.
F 8/28  "What is the teacher doing and why?"

**Week 2**

Read MRC chapters 1 and 2
Read COR chapters 1 and 10
M 8/31  Introduction to Rhetoric
W 9/2   Discussion: How do "real" writers (re)write?
F 9/4   Discuss group work, choose groups.

**Week 3**

Read MRC chapter 3
W 9/9   Reading response / group work
F 9/11  Response discussion: The rhetorical situation.

**Week 4**

Read MRC chapter 4
M 9/14  Reading response / group work
W 9/16  Response discussion: Analyzing the structure of ideas.
F 9/18  Group 1 presentation (prospectus due)

**Week 5**

Read MRC chapter 5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M 9/21</td>
<td>Reading response / group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 9/23</td>
<td>Response discussion: Analyzing the structure of arguments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 9/25</td>
<td>Group 2 presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 6</strong></td>
<td>Read MRC chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 9/28</td>
<td>Reading response / group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 9/30</td>
<td>Response discussion: Form and structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 10/2</td>
<td>Group 3 presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 7</strong></td>
<td>Read MRC chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 10/5</td>
<td>Reading response / group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 10/7</td>
<td>Response discussion: Syntax and imagery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 10/9</td>
<td>Group 4 presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 8</strong></td>
<td>Read MRC chapter 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 10/12</td>
<td>Reading response / group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 10/14</td>
<td>Response discussion: Word choice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 10/16</td>
<td>Group 5 presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 9</strong></td>
<td>Read MRC chapter 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 10/19</td>
<td>Reading response / group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 10/21</td>
<td>Response discussion: Analyzing media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 10/23</td>
<td>Group 6 presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 10</strong></td>
<td>Read MRC chapter 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 10/26</td>
<td>Reading response / group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 10/28</td>
<td>Response discussion: Role criticism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 10/30</td>
<td>Group 7 presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 11</strong></td>
<td>Read MRC chapter 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 11/2</td>
<td>Reading response / group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 11/4</td>
<td>Response discussion: Cultural criticism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 11/6</td>
<td>Group 8 presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 12</strong></td>
<td>Read COR chapters 2 and 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 11/9</td>
<td>Response discussion: Information and focus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 11/11</td>
<td>Workshop / discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 11/13</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 13</strong></td>
<td>Read COR chapters 4 and 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 11/16</td>
<td>Response discussion: External and internal order.</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 11/18</td>
<td>Workshop / discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F 11/20</td>
<td>Workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 14</strong></td>
<td>Read COR chapters 6 and 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Week 15
Read COR chapter 8
M 11/30      Response discussion: Editing.
W 12/2       Workshop / discussion
F 12/4       Workshop

Week 16
M 12/7       Reflection
W 12/9       Class evaluation (response notebook, expository/persuasive essays due)

Assignments for: Theory and Practice of Composition

Response Notebook

Each week, over the 10-week period covering the readings in Modern Rhetorical Criticism and our group presentations, you will write a short response paper. In this paper you will respond to anything from the reading, presentation, or class discussion that you find interesting and/or provocative. The idea is for you to discover what is valuable to you in the work we do for class.

Response papers should be personal in the sense that you try to come to some understanding or accommodation with the material. You may use the material as a springboard to your own ideas. You may use your personal experiences in class and elsewhere to engage the readings, presentations, or discussions. You may explore anything of interest to you so long as it responds in some way to the readings, presentations, or class discussions.

A good response paper is more than a summary of the material. In other words, the purpose of a response paper is NOT to prove you read the material or were listening in class. I assume that you will read the material (and your class participation will certainly demonstrate whether you did or not). Instead, a good response paper attempts to integrate what you are learning with who you are and come to an understanding or accommodation with how learning changes who you are.

Response papers are due on Mondays for group work. Please read all the papers in your group and discuss them among yourselves (I’ll often have a prompt to help get you started). I expect you to annotate the papers you read. You will hand in the original annotated copies for my reading on the following Friday. While there are 10 weeks of material for responding, you may skip any two weeks you wish. So your response notebook will consist of eight response papers. You may do the other two for extra credit if you wish. Response papers should be 1-page long, typed single-spaced in block paragraphs (like this assignment sheet).

You will hand in your 8 response papers, plus an overview (we will
discuss this in class), in a folder at the end of the semester as your response notebook.

**Group Project**

You'll notice that I've not assigned an anthology of essays for this class. That is because you will help determine what the class reads this semester. Soon we will form 8 groups of about 3 students each. You can form your own groups or I can form them for you. We’ll discuss this in class. I will assign each group a broad category and a presentation date. Your responsibilities are:

1. Find an important text in your category. How you define “important” is up to you and your group. Make enough copies of the text for the entire class and distribute them no less than 1 week before your presentation.

2. Your presentation should analyze the rhetorical situation of the text, the historical and social situation of the text, the author and his/her intentions, the audience and its situation, and other factors we'll consider as we move through the textbook. Your presentation should last at least 20 minutes and no more than 30 minutes. Each person in the group will present. How you divide the work is up to you.

3. Lead the class discussion following your presentation.

   - Group 1: political text
   - Group 2: political text
   - Group 3: institutional text
   - Group 4: culture-bearing text
   - Group 5: counter-culture text
   - Group 6: subversive text
   - Group 7: advertising text
   - Group 8: mass media text

**Expository Paper and Persuasive Paper**

Write a 6- to 8-page scholarly/serious essay on a topic of your choice. This will be an expository essay. In other words, you will attempt to explore a topic from an “objective” point of view. This means being fair to the various factions that contend within your topic. You must use MLA style and cite at least five primary and/or secondary sources. No more than one source may come from the World Wide Web, although you may use any source from the electronic databases available through the Miller Nichols Library.

Choose a topic of personal or political interest to you or about which you have strong positive or negative thoughts or feelings. Is there an issue that you care about strongly? Is there a social/political/economic/institutional situation that you would like to change? If you had one chance to make a difference in the world, what issue would you tackle?

You will also write a persuasive companion essay in which you will
attempt to persuade people to your point of view on your issue. While sources are always helpful, it is not necessary to cite them by MLA style in this essay. Instead, you will cite any sources you happen to use as journalists would (we’ll cover this in class). This essay should be at least 500 words long but no more than 600 words long (roughly 2 1/2 pages). Use MLA manuscript style.

We will work on both texts extensively in class to polish them into fine essays and to learn the differences and similarities between expository essays and persuasive essays (and to help you hone your personal theory and style of composition). As part of this assignment, each of you will submit your persuasive essay to the Kansas City Star for possible publication in the “As I See It” column on the editorial page.

If you get published, you earn an automatic A for this class (with a few strings attached, namely: you must continue to attend class and finish your other work in a satisfactory manner--publication guarantees you an A; it doesn’t excuse you from any work). If you do not earn an A and sometime after the class ends the paper publishes your essay, contact me and I’ll change your grade.

351WI Rhetoric of Contemporary Political Campaigns

Poets priests and politicians
Have words to thank for their positions
Words that scream for your submission
And no-one's jamming their transmission
'Cause when their eloquence escapes you
Their logic ties you up and rapes you
Overview

The focus of this class will be the presidential campaign following the political conventions. The major texts for the class will come directly from the campaigns, i.e. current speeches/texts from the candidates plus accounts of the campaigns from popular and academic sources. In addition to texts generated by the campaigns, we will also read two books (a textbook on rhetorical criticism and a scholarly study of presidential campaigns) to help integrate and analyze the campaign texts.

Because the class will rely on gathering and analyzing texts produced daily, we will make heavy use of the Internet--especially the news sites such as those published by The Washington Post, The New York Times, and the Associated Press. We will also use government databases and official campaign web sites that archive current political texts.

Required Texts:

1- Various texts from the 2000 campaign, plus hand-outs
2- Modern Rhetorical Criticism by Roderick Hart (1997)
3- Road to the White House 2000 by Steven Wayne (1999)

Resources:

I've created a web site for my own research that you will find useful for this class. You will find my own analysis, comments, and essays. You will also find important links to official campaign web sites, news sites, and other political sites.

Presidential Campaign Rhetoric 2000
http://cctr.umkc.edu/~acline/c2000/page1.html

Other required materials:

An e-mail address and the capability to receive HTML documents and attachments.

I expect to base this class on reading, discussion, and writing with the goal of having you discover how politicians construct images of themselves, images of the public, and a social mythos in which those images operate. We will work with current campaign texts to unpack the rhetorical techniques and discover how those techniques create
political discourse and the political experience. Within this framework, I expect you to learn rhetorical techniques (and criticism) and to exercise and improve your critical thinking ability. And I hope to encourage you to engage in critical citizenship through writing. We will use peer reviews to encourage you to write for a broad audience, to explore the diversity of thought and opinion within the class, and to polish your writing into publishable work. Assignment #3 should be written with the "As I See It" column (Kansas City Star) in mind. You may choose to submit your column (or any other assignment from this class) to the Star. If they (or another approved newspaper or magazine) publish it, you earn an automatic ‘A’ for the course (with some strings attached).

Class work:

Write 8, 1-page conversation papers based on the readings.
Write a 3-page critique of one text/speech of your choice.
Write a 5-page, detailed critique of a selected major speech.
Write a 500-word persuasive essay for publication in local media.
Write a conference-length (8 pages) research paper or synthesis essay.

Conferences

Getting help from a writing coach in a one-on-one conference can improve your ability to write. I am required to hold at least one conference with each of you during the semester--preferably by the halfway point. One conference, however, is not enough to help you improve. So I encourage you to come see me anytime you want help. I further encourage you to seek help at the UMKC Writing Lab at 5201 Rockhill Road. Call 235-1146 for an appointment. I think it is a good idea to go early in the semester and find a tutor you like who will help you with your writing from brainstorming to polishing the final draft. The Writing Lab is not just for remedial writers; it is for all writers.

Attendance and Class Participation

I expect you to attend class. If you miss more than 6 classes (unexcused), I’ll insist that you drop the course. You must contact me on the day you are absent to be excused. Even if you are absent, I expect you to come prepared for the next class. I expect you to participate in class discussions and complete assignments on time.

Grading

You must complete all work. Essays are due at the beginning of class on the due date. I will grade you for the course in these areas:

- Class participation: conversation papers, discussion, and collaborative final: 25%
- 500-word essay: 25%
- Two critiques: 25%
- Research paper or synthesis essay (plus presentation): 25%
The requirements as outlined in this syllabus describe the minimum/average workload for this class. Average performance (i.e. 'C' performance) is completing the workload and meeting the requirements on time.

I have designed this course to allow you maximum flexibility in choosing your own topics and choosing your own direction within assigned topics. In some ways, for some students, this is more difficult than being handed a set topic with a set grading criteria for that topic. But I do have some criteria. For example, I expect your final drafts to have a point, to develop/argue your point in a convincing way, to be organized in a rhetorically effective way, and to be largely free of errors of grammar, syntax, and documentation. Beyond that, I am looking for what I consider a very important component of writing (whether in an academic, professional, or personal setting): personal engagement in the topic, i.e. interest in your own voice and what you have to say. Do not ask me what I want. My answer will be to ask back: "What do you want?"

**Schedule** (subject to change)

MRC = Modern Rhetorical Criticism  
RWH = The Road to the White House

**Week 1**

Read: MRC chs. 1 & 2  
M 8/21 Introduction/syllabus/assignments  
W 8/23 "What is the teacher doing and why?"  
F 8/25 A quick introduction to 2,500 years of political rhetoric.

**Week 2**

Read: RWH chs. 1 & 3  
M 8/28 Overview of the office of President of the United States  
W 8/30 Head of government/head of state, or why we love and hate the president  
F 9/1 Campaign week in review

**Week 3**

Read: MRC ch. 3 and RWH ch. 5  
M 9/4 Labor Day Holiday  
W 9/6 Review of the party conventions  
F 9/8 The rhetorical situation / Campaign week in review

**Week 4**

Read: MRC ch. 4 and RWH ch. 6  
M 9/11 Campaign tactics  
W 9/13 Is there an idea in that speech?  
F 9/15 Campaign week in review
Week 5

Read: MRC ch. 5 and RWH ch. 7
M 9/18 Role of the news media in campaign politics
W 9/20 Arguing isn’t necessarily argument
F 9/22 Campaign week in review (Essay #1 due)

Week 6

Read: MRC ch. 6
M 9/25 Structure and form of campaign speeches
W 9/27 Campaign promises, part 1
F 9/29 Campaign week in review

Week 7

Read: MRC ch. 7
M 10/2 Syntax and imagery in campaign speeches
W 10/4 Campaign promises, part 2
F 10/6 Campaign week in review

Week 8

Read: MRC ch. 8
M 10/9 Words create the political experience
W 10/11 Defining: The most powerful political tool
F 10/13 Campaign week in review

Week 9

Read: MRC ch. 9 and RWH ch. 8
M 10/16 Exercises in punditry: Three weeks to go...who will win?
W 10/18 Analyzing media
F 10/20 Campaign week in review (Essay #2 due)

Week 10

Read: MRC ch. 10
M 10/23 Roles candidates and presidents play
W 10/25 Roles candidates and presidents would have us play
F 10/27 Campaign week in review

Week 11

Read: MRC ch. 11
M 10/30 American culture / political culture
W 11/1 Epideictic rhetoric and political culture
F 11/3 Campaign week in review (Essay #3 due)

Week 12

M 11/6 Last-minute campaigning
Tuesday is Election Day. Exercise your right to VOTE!!!
W 11/8 Winners and losers

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F 11/10 Denouement

Week 13

M 11/13 Campaign review
W 11/15 Campaign review
F 11/17 Campaign review

Week 14

M 11/20 (Draft of Essay #4 due for peer review)
W Thanksgiving Holiday
F Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15

M 11/27 Student presentations based on essay #4
W 11/29 Student presentations based on essay #4
F 12/1 Student presentations based on essay #4

Week 16

M 12/4 Collaborative final
W 12/6 Class evaluation (Portfolio due)

Hand in your portfolio at the beginning of class on 12/6. Your portfolio should contain your 8 conversation papers and all drafts of your four essays. Include a disk (Mac or IBM) with all your work in ASCII files, e.g. essay1.doc, etc.

Assignments for: 351WI

Conversation Papers

About every other week you will write a short conversation paper—8 in all. In this paper you will respond to anything from the readings in the textbooks, handouts, or speeches that you find interesting and/or
provocative. Conversation papers should be personal in the sense that you try to come to some understanding of the material. You may use the material as a springboard for your own ideas. You may use your personal experiences to engage the readings. You may explore anything of interest to you so long as it responds in some way to the readings and demonstrates your understanding of the readings.

A good conversation paper is not a summary written to prove that you read the assignments. Instead, a good conversation paper attempts to integrate what you are learning with who you are and come to an understanding of how learning and language changes who you are.

Conversation papers are due on Mondays and should be about 1 page long, typed single-spaced in block paragraphs (like this assignment sheet). You may write as much as you wish.

We will use the conversation papers as an entry point for our discussions. Be prepared to either read aloud from your paper or paraphrase it for the. I will not grade individual conversation papers. Please don’t try to figure out “what the teacher wants.” Instead, ask yourself what you want. I will be looking for personal engagement in your work and some demonstration that you understand (with a depth appropriate to a junior-level course) what you’re reading and writing about.

I hope you will relax and have fun writing these conversation papers (minor mistakes of grammar and spelling are okay). I do not require that you conform to any particular style. In fact, I encourage you to approach these papers with just as much a sense of play as a sense of serious inquiry.

**Essays**

I’ll give you more specifics for each assignment in class. Generally, you should conform to MLA style. Please staple your papers before you come to class.

1- Write a 3-page critique of one text/speech. Choose a text/speech that interests you and analyze it based on one or two of the techniques presented in Modern Rhetorical Criticism. Your analysis should illuminate the text beyond a surface reading.

2- Write a 5-page, detailed critique of a selected major speech (one of the campaign acceptance speeches from the party conventions). Same as above--only more detailed and illuminating.

3- Write a 500-word persuasive essay for publication in local media. Do not write more than 500 words. Choose a topic of your choice pertaining to the election, or a local issue, and write to persuade the public.

4- Write a conference-length (8 pages) research paper or synthesis essay. Each student will also give a short presentation to the class
based of his/her work for this essay. I will provide details on this assignment later.

Keep everything! You will hand in all drafts and conversation papers in a portfolio at the end of the semester.

English 403 Writing in Cultural Contexts

Poets priests and politicians
Have words to thank for their positions
Words that scream for your submission
And no-one's jamming their transmission
'Cause when their eloquence escapes you
Their logic ties you up and rapes you
Section: VCD  
MW 4:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m.  
213 Royall Hall  

Instructor: Andy Cline  
acline@cctr.umkc.edu  
Office: 108 Cockefair Hall  
Office Hours: 3:00 to 4:00 MW  
Phone: 235-2563 (mailbox #1)  
The best way to contact me is by e-mail.

Required text:  
Between Borders by Henry Giroux

Recommended texts:  
A college-level dictionary

Objectives of the Course

The first objective of this course is that you become more confident and competent in your ability to read, synthesize, and write about challenging texts and issues of contemporary relevance (in this case, issues of culture and (re)presentation in education, business, and politics). Further, I hope you’ll become sensitive to the politics of language use so that you may use language effectively for your own purposes or resist the purposes of others who might try to impose their will on you. A final and important objective is that you gain an understanding of how language frames/creates reality (re)presentation.

Conferences

I encourage you to come see me anytime you want help or just want to talk about class. I further encourage you to seek help at the UMKC Writing Center at 5201 Rockhill Road. Call 235-1146 for an appointment.

Attendance and Class Participation

I expect you to attend class. If you miss six classes (unexcused), I will insist that you drop the course. Even if you are absent, I expect you to come prepared for the next class. I expect you to participate in class discussions, to read the assigned materials each week, and to complete assignments on time.

My theory of teaching/learning is based on the idea that much knowledge is socially constructed. In other words, what is “real” and what is “true” are discovered or revealed through dialectic
(discussion) and are nearly always social as opposed to transcendent or absolute. You will notice that this class is based on discussion. I will present no material. Instead, we will read many interesting and challenging texts. You will think/write about them. And you will talk about them with your classmates.

**Grading**

You must complete all work. Conversation papers are due at the beginning of class on Mondays. I will grade you for the course in these areas:

- Class participation (and collaborative final): 25%
- Public essay: 25%
- Response notebook: 25%
- Individual project: 25%

**Syllabus (subject to change)**

**Week 1**
- M 1/11  “Language is never innocent.” / Syllabus, assignments, class introductions.
- W 1/13  “What is the teacher doing and why?”

**Week 2**
- Read: Handouts and Introduction to Between Borders
- W 1/20  History, politics, and the English language.

**Week 3**
- Read: Essay 1
- M 1/25  Response discussion
- W 1/27  Discussion:

**Week 4**
- Read: Essay 2
- M 2/1  Response discussion
- W 2/3  Discussion:

**Week 5**
- Read: Essay 3
- M 2/8  Response discussion
- W 2/10  Discussion:

**Week 6**
- Read: Essay 4
- M 2/15  Response discussion
- W 2/17  Discussion:

**Week 7**
- Read: Essay 5
- M 2/22  Response discussion
- W 2/24  Discussion:
Week 8
Read: Essay 6  
M 3/1 Response discussion  
W 3/3 Discussion:

Week 9
Read: Essay 7  
M 3/8 Response discussion  
W 3/10 Discussion:

Week 10
Read: Essay 8  
M 3/15 Response discussion  
W 3/17 Discussion:

Week 11
Spring Break!

Week 12
Read: Essay 9  
M 3/29 Response discussion  
W 3/31 Discussion:

Week 13
Read: Essay 10  
M 4/5 Response discussion  
W 4/7 Discussion:

Week 14
Read: Essay 11  
M 4/12 Response discussion  
W 4/14 Discussion:

Week 15
Read: Essay 12  
M 4/19 Response discussion  
W 4/21 Discussion:

Week 16
M 4/26 Reflection  
W 4/28 Collaborative final / Class evaluation

Your notebook and individual project are due on May 3.

Assignments for: Writing in Cultural Contexts

Conversation Papers

Each week you will write a short conversation paper—10 in all. In this paper you will respond to anything from the readings in the textbook that you find interesting and/or provocative. Conversation papers should be personal in the sense that you try to come to some understanding of the material. You may use the material as a springboard for your own ideas. You may use your personal experiences
to engage the readings. You may explore anything of interest to you so long as it responds in some way to the readings and demonstrates your understanding of the readings.

A good conversation paper is not a summary written to prove that you read the assignments. Instead, a good conversation paper attempts to integrate what you are learning with who you are and come to an understanding of how learning and language changes who you are.

Conversation papers are due on Mondays and should be 300 words long, typed single-spaced in block paragraphs (like this assignment sheet). Use either 12 pt. Times or 10 pt. Courier for a font. You may write as much as you wish, but you should write at least 300 words.

We will use the conversation papers as an entry point for our discussions. Be prepared to either read your paper aloud or paraphrase it for the class each week. I will not grade individual conversation papers. Please don’t try to figure out “what the teacher wants.” Instead, ask yourself what you want. I will be looking for personal engagement in your work and some demonstration that you understand (with a depth appropriate to a senior-level course) what you’re reading and writing about.

I hope you will relax and have fun writing these conversation papers (minor mistakes of grammar and spelling are okay). I do not require that you conform to any particular style. In fact, I encourage you to approach these papers with just as much a sense of play as a sense of serious inquiry.

You will hand in your 10 original response papers (with any revisions or applications you care to make), plus an overview of 5 to 6 pages (MLA style), in a folder at the end of the semester as your conversation notebook. We will discuss the overview in class later in the semester.

Public Essay

Write a 500-word essay on a topic of your choice that addresses an issue of cultural, social, racial, sexual, economic, institutional, or religious (re)presentation as it occurs in the presidential campaign. Write for a public audience; write to persuade. Imagine you are writing for the “As I See It” column in the Kansas City Star. I encourage you to submit your essay to the Star, but I do not require it. If you get published, you earn an automatic A for the class (With these strings attached: you must still attend class and finish all work).

Individual Project

Please use MLA style. No sans serif fonts. Use 12 pt. Times or 10 pt. Courier. Include a works cited page (not counted in the total page count) and proper in-text documentation. An academic voice/style is not necessary for this project. Your work should, however, conform to the conventions of standard English. I will not grade your project.
until the end of the semester. You will find it helpful to start early and share drafts with me along the way.

Write a 15-page synthesis paper. A synthesis paper is a cross between a personal essay and a research paper. Choose one idea from the readings and expand on this idea using your personal experiences and, perhaps, outside sources. Trace the roots of this idea; follow it to its conclusions; situate yourself in relation to this idea. This paper should integrate some of the class texts and conclude with a personal statement of how encountering this idea has changed who you are.

**Final Portfolio**

At the end of the semester (see your syllabus for the date) you will hand in a portfolio for grading. This portfolio will include your conversation notebook, your public essay (including drafts), and your synthesis paper. Please put all of this neatly into some kind of folder. In addition, please submit your portfolio in text-only files (ASCII) on a 3.5-inch disk (either Mac or DOS format). Mark the files clearly, e.g. synthesis.txt, public.txt, etc.
Andrew R. Cline results

Total Words Analyzed: 6363

Normative Values
Class: Journalism
Type: Letters to the Editor

Standard Dictionary Totals

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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Class: Journalism  
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Star “As I See It” results

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Class: Journalism  
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Freshmen “As I See It” results

Total Words Analyzed: 23289

Normative Values
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- **Class:** Journalism
- **Type:** Newspaper Editorials

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Junior "As I See It" results

Total Words Analyzed: 16951

Normative Values
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Sharon Valleau results

Total Words Analyzed: 506

Normative Values
Class: Journalism  
Type: Letters to the Editor

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- **Class:** Journalism
- **Type:** Newspaper Editorials

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Total Words Analyzed: 476

Normative Values
Class: Journalism
Type: Letters to the Editor

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- **Class:** Journalism
- **Type:** Newspaper Editorials

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Gina Campbell results

Total Words Analyzed: 469

Normative Values
Class: All
Type: All Cases

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**Type:** Letters to the Editor

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Class: Journalism
Type: Newspaper Editorials

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FL State Legislature Song results

Total Words Analyzed: 126

Normative Values
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   Type: Music Lyrics

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| Commonality   | 53.30 | 45.71        | 51.46        | *
Sharon Valleau

Attention: Young Americans - Generation X, Y, NEXT - whatever the label you've been assigned, you know who you are. You are my children because I am a baby boomer Mom with a child your age. You are my cohorts because I am studying with you on a university level. And you are supposed to be my hope for the future as a generation of America's best and brightest.

Yet I am alarmed to hear in conversations with you that because you are disinterested in politics you don't intend to vote. I've heard your reasons before: My vote doesn't make a difference; all politicians are corrupt; or I don't like any of the candidates. Well, excuse me, but I hereby hold you to a higher standard. Your entire lives have been in preparation for you to step into the roles of change agents.

You are the latchkey children come of age. You have lived a more mature sensibility than your parents did by nature of societal changes brought about by your parents. You just said "no" on a wholesale basis. More of you are projected to graduate from higher grades than ever before in history. You toddled, walked, and ran in pace with the growth of technology. You are the information age.

By birthright you are destined to redefine communication -- especially political discourse -- in this country. You have no excuses. Understand that our history has been shaped by individuals whose solitary acts made a difference in its course. Know that the electoral vote elected a U.S. President who did not win the popular vote only twice in this country's history: in 1876 and in 1888.

Recognize that human beings - especially those whom we hold in the highest esteem -- are complex, and we must measure each by the same standard of perfection, or not, by which we should be judged. Take control by becoming a new breed of critical consumer who questions labels, hype, and "news" instead of blindly accepting what you're told. Be the generation that won't be duped by spin-doctors who insult your intelligence by telling you what you think. THINK! Tell politicians who work for you what you demand of your government. Prove wrong all the prognosticators who say you're self absorbed and apathetic.

Go to political sites like (click on youth & family) for links to other sites, and band with others like yourselves on issues that affect you. Scrutinize that information and hold each other accountable by critical analysis of "the facts." Do it because you deserve to be taken more seriously than a label that lumps you all into one collective attitude. Do it to show all the critics of your generation that you are a serious social force to be reckoned with. Do it to reform corruption and establish a new moral standard.

Hold our public servants to that standard to ensure that government of, by, and for the people will not perish. You are the stuff of the future, find a reason, and for the love of America - VOTE!
Amy Zeh

The editorial page of The Star provides opportunity for our community to respond to events which concern our lives. These responses reveal a diverse heritage striving to improve its condition. This community includes people of many religious perspectives. So why is the Bible the single religious text endorsed by The Star on a daily basis?

Shift your focus to the bottom right-hand corner of this very page to consider "Today’s Bible Verse." Now, look to the bottom left-hand corner of this same page, and scan the paper’s motto, as defined in 1880 by its founder: "A paper for the people." In considering the two quotations, diametrically positioned on this editorial page, I question The Star’s definition of the community it serves. Do these daily biblical quotations speak to "the people" as a community, or subtly reinforce the theology of the majority?

I appreciate the daily verse because the quest for spiritual fulfillment is a daily discipline. It gives me (a Christian) inspirational words which give perspective to the harsh realities of our world as reported in the paper’s previous pages.

As our nation struggles toward tolerance (concerning race, gender, and creed), the editorial page is missing a great opportunity. Why not quote verse from other spiritual texts in addition to the Bible? These might include: the Bhagavad-Gita, Qur’an, Tao Te Ching, Upanishads, and Native American spiritual reflections, to name a few. To whom are these texts sacred? I’d venture to say to a percentage of "the people" served by this paper who are literate, taxpaying citizens in the Kansas City area.

Yes, the Saturday edition of The Star offers an extensive "Spiritual Section," which explores belief systems that are not necessarily Christian. But, this survey is a weekly observance, rather than a daily occurrence on the page noted for being the voice of The Star. Offering quotations from varied sacred texts would, not only include minorities, but would help to educate our community as a whole. We may gain an understanding of the similarities within our chosen faiths.

Selecting verses from sacred texts unfamiliar to an editor, though well-intentioned, might prove disrespectful. It is necessary that religious leaders and/or textural experts be involved by providing short passages from their faith’s specific texts. These quotations would serve the public of diverse religions with the respect and consistency deserved, as they too would appear daily on the editorial page of The Star.

Bolivian religious scholar, Oscar Ichazo, said: "Everybody can now achieve a higher degree of consciousness. The vision of humanity as one enormous family, one objective tribe, may once have been utopian. Now it is a practical necessity." I challenge the editorial board to take this small step toward tolerance: move the paper’s (and public’s) spiritual perspective out of the 1880s and into the year 2000.
After listening to the health care rhetoric of the two major party presidential candidates, it's become clear that apparently no one grows old anymore. Some people must just be born that way because politicians seem to be forgetting that it takes young people to eventually create the elderly voting block.

I suppose there's a simple reason for this. I'm twenty, and, apparently, I'm supposed to be under the impression that there is some new revolution out there left over from my parents' generation making me apathetic, cynical or "Green," causing my generation to be missing from the campaign rhetoric surrounding important issues.

I've sat waiting, months now, for George W. Bush or Al Gore to explain their health care plans, but Bush avoids me because I wasn't born in the "greatest generation," and I'm not eating enough macaroni and cheese to be important to Gore. After all, I'm just some 20-year-old kid that gets sarcastic looks from people for taking an elevator to the second floor. Those people look at me just like both of the candidates: as some lazy kid who doesn't understand life. Well, I understand this: if you're over 65 you get life options presented to you daily. And if you're a 20-year-old college student with multiple sclerosis, you have to do your own research. Senior citizens aren't the only people crossing their fingers in drug stores, hoping their medication will be covered.

Every time I visit my doctor I get prescribed new drugs that I need to function. And what does the doctor tell me every time he writes the prescription? "Don't worry if these aren't covered, we'll just apply for assistance," he says in a matter-of-fact tone. But what if that doesn't work and I still get denied assistance? But simply put, just because I'm not eating macaroni three times a day, or still telling stories about storming the beaches at Normandy, doesn't mean I should have to "wait my turn" as some people have told me.

And who or what is going to keep me alive as I wait? That is a question I should not be asking. There are thousands of people being lost in the shuffle of issues such as health care. And the point isn't that Bush or Gore should forget about seniors, or make me into one of their sympathy stories instead.

The point is that, buried deep in all of this recycled campaign rhetoric there are two very different health care plans. And for some people, including me, looking at the plans on your own might mean realizing where you are or aren't included. All I ever hear the candidates talk about is, "the future of our seniors." Leaving me to wonder: what about mine?
FLORIDA STATE LEGISLATURE SONG
By Allyson Smith

Let's get together we could have some fun
And we'll re-write the constitution.
Let's get together we can all have lunch
And it's paid for by the people.

CHORUS
Oh, how we love to eat lunch!
We're such a silly bunch...of senators.

Who cares about the president
Or how long it takes us.
And if the people start to whine and fuss,
We'll just make it look like we're doin' stuff.

CHORUS
Let's have a meeting about lunch.
We're such a hungry little bunch...of senators.

Well all this talk about counting votes
Has made us so very hungry.
Somebody call and order pizza
Who wants pepperoni?

CHORUS
Cause it's all about lunch.
And we're such a crazy bunch...of senators.
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_____.


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“Stop It.” Newsweek. 28 May 1990, 4.


VITA

Andrew Richard Cline was born on 10 December 1956, in Greenfield, Indiana. He grew up in Wilmington, Delaware and was educated in the public schools there. He graduated from Brandywine High School in 1975. He attended the Rochester Institute of Technology, in Rochester, New York, where he earned an Associate in Applied Science in Photographic Arts and Sciences in 1977. He transferred to the University of Delaware and graduated in 1980 with a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies degree.

Cline spent 15 years working in journalism, first as a news photographer and then as a freelance writer, editor, and photographer. In 1995, he began his master’s program in English at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. He was awarded the Master of Arts degree in English Language and Literature in May 1998. During that time, he served as a graduate teacher for the English department. Cline began work on his Ph.D. in English and Political Science at the University of Missouri-Kansas City in August 1998. During that time, Cline served as a graduate teacher and as a research assistant for the UMKC Writing Across the Curriculum program. He was awarded the Preparing Future Faculty Fellowship in 1999 and twice awarded the Chancellor’s Interdisciplinary Fellowship in 2000 and 2001. Upon completion of his degree requirements, Cline plans to pursue a career as a professor in post-secondary education.

Cline is a winner of multiple awards for feature writing, news photography, and fiction writing. He is a former member of the American Society of Journalists and Authors and the Outdoor Writers Association of America. He is currently a member of the Rhetoric Society of America.