COLLEGE WRITING AND BEYOND

A New Framework for University Writing Instruction

ANNE BEAUFORT

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APPENDIX A
From Research to Practice: Some Ideas for Writing Instruction

Here I briefly lay out a few of the teaching strategies I and my graduate student and collaborator, Dana Driscoll, have developed and tested in the classroom to put into practice the principles laid out in Chapter 6—principles that enable writers to become more flexible and learn writing requirements in new contexts more readily. I also draw on the excellent work of Amy Devitt, Mary Jo Reiff, and Anis Bawarshi in *Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genres* (2004). And if ideas I think are mine were in fact borrowed from others but I no longer remember, I trust those individuals will let me know so that I can express gratitude and give proper acknowledgement.

TEACHING FOR TRANSFER

As I explained in Chapter 6, writers will not automatically bridge, or bring forward, appropriate writing strategies and knowledge to new writing situations unless they have an understanding of both the need to do so and a method for doing so. In other words, writers, if they want to gain expertise in multiple genres and discourse communities, have to learn to become lifelong learners. The developmental process for writers never ends.

So teachers and tutors who teach for transfer are doing a great service to their students. I would encourage all to read the articles I have cited by Perkins and Salomon (1989) for a deeper understanding of the research on transfer of learning. Keeping in touch with one or several students over the course of the students' education and entry into the work world to see what writing situations and difficulties they encounter and how they handle them can also enrich one's perspective on teaching writing. The ideas presented here will also guide teachers and tutors to aid their students in developing what Smit (2004) calls "rhetorical flexibility" and I would refer to as multiple writing expertises.

1. Teach learners to frame specific problems and learnings into more abstract principles that can be applied to new situations.

> Expert knowledge is not just a head full of facts or patterns, a reservoir of data for the intellect to operate upon. Rather, it is information so finely adapted to task requirements that it enables experts to do remarkable things

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with intellectual equipment that is bound by the same limitations as that of other mortals (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1993, p.30).

The model of writing expertise (see Figure 1, page 18) as well as the concepts within the framework that are specific to writing situations—discourse community, genre, and rhetorical situation, are the kinds of "abstract principles" that can be taught explicitly and may help writers to frame their knowledge in ways that aid transfer to new writing situations. Generally, I begin with the concept of genres, and then, after students have read, discussed, written in several genres and we have talked about the nature of each, I bridge to the discourse communities students know and participate in. These "meta" discussions and activities are interwoven with the normal course activities of reading, discussing, and analyzing core readings and working on writing projects. Here are just a few of the ways these concepts can be introduced:

Ways to Teach Genre Awareness

- Type up a horoscope in poem format (short lines/verses). Ask a student to read this "poem." Ask for comments on the features that make it a "poem." Then reveal the true genre and discuss how one's mental schema for a genre influences the way one reads and interprets texts.
- Ask students to make a list of 10 genres they regularly read. Have them pick three and describe how they read them differently. Do the same exercise with 10 genres students regularly write. Then hypothesize how the genre prescribes or influences the processes entailed in reading or writing them (from *Scenes of Writing*).
- Collect multiple samples of a short, simple genre: for example, obituaries, wedding announcements, news briefs, postcards, abstracts of journal articles. Using a matrix like the one on the next page (acknowledging its simplified format for describing genres), ask students to identify key genre features. Then discuss the social actions and values represented in these genre features.
- Give students a short reading selection without disclosing the source. Ask them to infer the genre, then discuss its properties and how that influences the meaning of the text. Some possible sources: newspaper or magazine editorials, song lyrics, advertising copy.

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GENRE FEATURES

	obituaries	journal abstracts
Rhetorical purpose(s)		
Typical content		
Structural features		
Linguistic features		

- Assign a brief topic and a genre students will use to write on the topic (for example, an ad to sell something in the newspaper). Then assign the same topic to be written in a different genre (a bulletin board notice? a listing on eBay?). Compare treatments of the subject in the two genres and how rhetorical purpose, content, structure, and linguistic features change (or not) in each genre (from *Scenes of Writing*).
- After students have collected multiple examples of a genre, analyzed the genre, and have written in that genre, have small groups write a "how to" guide for composing in this genre that other writers can use (Coe 1994).

Ways to Teach the Concept of Discourse Community

- Introduce the concept with a definition such as this: "A discourse community is a social group that communicates at least in part via written texts and shares common goals, values, and writing standards, a specialized vocabulary and specialized genres." Then present numerous examples of texts from very divergent discourse communities and ask students if they can discern which discourse community "owns" or uses the text (for example—the baseball scores reported in the daily newspaper, or lyrics from a rap song). Based on these text samples, students may speculate on what the features of the discourse community are, using the definition as a heuristic.
- For a given discourse community the students know (one's major, or a social group one is associated with), brainstorm a list of all of the genres one uses in the discourse community.

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For each genre, ask students to identify common elements that are found in all of the genres that reflect on the discourse community's goals, and norms for good writing. Have them compare the relationships between the genres.

- Ask students to bring to class sample texts from discourse communities they are members of. Remind them of the definition of discourse community. Have them do a brief freewrite on the ways that discourse community defines itself via its shared texts. Discuss their examples.
- Do a matrix such as the one below for the discourse communities of different academic disciplines. Have students who are familiar with (or majoring in) the different disciplines complete the matrix for their discipline. Have a whole group discussion of similarities and differences in the features of different academic discourse communities.

	Natural Sciences Discourse Community	Social Sciences Discourse Community	Humanities Discourse Community
Discourse community goals & values			
Typical genres (oral and written)			
Norms for genres (standards for good writing)			
Writers' tasks/roles in the discourse community			

- Show students two texts on the same topic, but written for different discourse communities (for example, a science report in *The New York Times* and one on the same topic in a scientific journal such as *Nature*). Ask them to list the differences they see. Refer back to the definition of discourse community and ask students to infer what the discourse community that "owns" each text values, based on features of the sample genres.
- Have students join a listserv or newsgroup and "lurk" for two weeks (a virtual discourse community). Observe special terminology used, or common terms that are given special meaning.

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Observe who the members are. Answer these questions about the discourse community: What do you think the goals of the community are? How do the community's goals and values shape what they write? What else do you notice about the writing of this group? What content is important to this group? What themes are expressed across multiple texts? Are there dissenting voices? (from *Scenes of Writing*)

- Assign an ethnography of communication for a discourse community of the student's choice (an academic community, a social organization, a volunteer group they work for, a workplace setting, etc.). Teach the skills for taking field notes and conducting interviews and gathering written artifacts. Assign a library research component as well—what others have written about this discourse community. Discuss ways of parsing the definition of discourse community for analysis of the data. Have students prepare a final report on their research to describe the discourse community to an outsider. For examples of ethnographies of discourse communities, see Beaufort (1991), Fishman (1988), Heath (1983).

2. Give students numerous opportunities to apply abstract concepts in different social contexts

> If knowledge is just items in a mental filing cabinet, then it is easy to acknowledge that an expert must have a well-stocked filing cabinet, but that is like saying that a cook must have a well-stocked pantry. The pantry is not the cook, the filing cabinet is not the expert. What counts with cooks and experts is what they do with the material in their pantries or memory stores (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1993, p.45).

Once students understand the frameworks for analyzing writing in different social contexts, they can be given tasks that invite comparisons, and using the concepts to "decode" what is happening in new writing situations. For example:

- Have students compare texts assigned in a given course they are taking for genre features and relationship to the discourse communities represented.
- Ask students to collect writing assignments from different

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courses and different professors. Students can analyze the assignments for genres assigned and inferences in the assignment about the discourse community represented.

- Assign students a writing task in a given genre for a given discourse community. Then ask them to write about the same content for a different discourse community. Afterwards, ask them to reflect on the differences in how they approached the tasks (writers' roles), what values and goals of the discourse communities they had to keep in mind, and what norms for genres they needed to change for a different discourse community.
- Assign a community service project or an internship in a field related to the subject matter of the course. Prepare students to analyze the social context using the theoretical lenses of discourse community knowledge and genre knowledge and rhetorical situation as they are working on the assignment. Bridge back to the academic context with a discussion of differences between the academic discourse community and the discourse community of their field work.

3. Teach the practice of mindfulness, or meta-cognition, to facilitate positive transfer of learning

> In its fullest sense progressive problem-solving means living an increasingly rich life—richer in that more and more of what the world has to offer is taken into one's mental life. But that increasing richness, because of its time and cognitive demands, requires the judicious reduction of peripheral problems. Sages like Henry David Thoreau have been telling us that for a long time (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1993, p.).

This principle is an extension of the familiar step in the writing process of reflection after the project is completed. What is important for transfer is constantly connecting new and already-acquired knowledge. Here are some suggestions for fostering meta-cognition about writing knowledge that will also aid transfer of learning.

- In the write-ups for writing assignments, make explicit to students the ways in which the new work connects to skills already practiced.

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- Have students keep a process journal. At the end of each writing project, they can answer a series of questions such as these:

    1. *What did I learn in doing this writing project about writing itself?*
    2. *How did I learn what I learned in this project?*
    3. *How does this new knowledge about writing connect to what I already knew about writing?*
    4. *What do I want to remember to apply to the next writing project or situation?*
    5. *How did this project add to my understanding of the concepts of discourse community and genre?*
    6. *Which knowledge domains did I struggle with the most in this writing project: discourse community knowledge? subject matter knowledge? genre knowledge? rhetorical knowledge? writing process knowledge? What could I do better in the next project in one of these knowledge domains?*

- Have a general discussion with students after all have completed their process journal for a project—a meta-discussion about process. At the end of the discussion, have students add to their process journal anything else they want to remember for the next project as a result of the discussion.
- Midway through a new writing project, encourage students to look at their process entry for the last project to see what they need to remember to do in this project.
- When students receive written feedback on their work, have them respond to that feedback in their process journal.
- Format grading rubrics in ways that highlight the specific concepts about writing you want to reinforce with students. Use the same rubric consistently on multiple assignments. At the end of the course, ask students to analyze these feedback rubrics for changes/growth in their writing skills.

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BUILDING DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNMENT SEQUENCES

> Expertise is not simply about problem-solving. Experts, we propose, tackle problems that increase their expertise, whereas non-experts tend to tackle problems for which they do not have to extend themselves (Bereiter and Scardamalia 1993, p.78).

Bereiter and Scardamalia conclude, after extensive research on the nature of expertise in many domains of knowledge, that the single most distinguishing characteristic of those who gain expertise in a variety of skill domains are those who continually assign themselves more and more complex problems to solve. For educators, this translates to a need for students to experience sequenced writing assignments within and across courses in which skills required to complete the task build upon previously acquired skills.

Berryman (1992) reminds us of the multiple dimensions of knowledge and skill in which teachers must simultaneously foster increasing complexity: domain knowledge (conceptual and factual), problem-solving strategies, cognitive management strategies (how to get the writing done), and learning strategies (how to cope with new challenges in a project). In addition, Berryman offers these *principles for sequencing:*

- global skills before local skills (developing an overall sense of the terrain before moving into details),
- increasing complexity,
- increasing diversity.

The five-part model of writing expertise used in this study is another good guide for considering all dimensions of writing expertise that must be built into a curriculum.

For those writing center administrators responsible for training tutors and writing tutor-training guides, I would suggest considering a series of more detailed heuristics, based on materials I have presented here, for global revisions of texts that could aid tutors and their students in thinking through the multiple dimensions of any piece of writing. The materials presented here would also assist tutors working in a campus writing center in generating, with their clients, more awareness of context-specific features of a particular writing task either in the pre-writing or revising stages of work.

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For those responsible for developing curricula for writing intensive courses in the disciplines, I would suggest developing heuristics for thinking through the subject matter, genre, discourse community, rhetorical, and writing process aspects of the discipline. Such heuristics could serve to guide faculty as they design writing projects for their students. In addition, department chairs and deans would do well to fund faculty initiatives to think through and design a sequenced writing curriculum in given majors or concentrations. Some of the teaching suggestions offered below, for writing courses, could be adapted to discipline-specific writing courses as well.

For those responsible for developing curricula for general writing courses, I offer the following outline of a writing curriculum, with its associated assignment sequence, as an example of such a curriculum. In addition to a careful scaffolding of skills from one assignment to the next, there are feeder assignments that develop the sub-skills needed in each major writing project.

The course is also theme-based, so that a cohesive intellectual content is built along with practice and instruction in basic writing skills. While some may counter that students bring a subject matter with them—their lived experiences—this curriculum is based on the assumption that a focused theme and joint intellectual inquiry can facilitate creating a community of learners, a temporary discourse community, that in some small way approximates other discourse communities (Jolliffe 1995). For this particular course, the theme "Writing as Social Practice" serves the dual purposes of a topic for investigation and as a reinforcement of fundamental principles about the nature of writing. (David Smit, in *The End of Composition,* also proposes a similar theme for a first-year writing course.) In what follows, I designate which pieces of the curriculum are shared with students and which are for the teacher's benefit.

COURSE OVERVIEW: WRITING AS SOCIAL PRACTICE (FOR STUDENTS)

Who do you write for: self? family? partner? friends? teachers? social or political groups? colleagues? And why do you write: to handle emotions? to think? to connect with others? to gain some course of action or a specific result?

For all of these audiences and all of these purposes, we write. Some of our writing is private, some is public. Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist who wrote in the early 1900s, argued from his studies on language

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acquisition that even "inner speech" is social in the sense that we internalize the language around us and re-appropriate it for our selves.

So, the premise of this course is that writing is a social act—an act of connecting with others and with our worlds for multiple purposes. Together, we will explore how our writing is shaped by and shapes these multiple social worlds. We will examine the literacy practices that thread through our lives and the ways in which our social relationships are maintained or extended through what we write (or do not write). And we will examine the ways in which we can expand our social networks through writing.

Here are the *essential questions* that will guide our inquiry in this course. They have no "right" or "wrong" answers. We will revisit them on a frequent basis as the course progresses. And, we may add new questions to our list.

- How does writing change from one social context to another? How can we explain those changes?
- What's at stake in one's ability to express thoughts well in writing? How does writing skill impact social relationships? Power relationships?
- What practices can best help us in learning to add new writing skills to our repertoires?

COURSE OUTLINE (FOR TEACHERS)

The curriculum consists of five interconnected units intended for a 15–week semester. Each unit focuses on a different aspect of writing within and about a discourse community or multiple discourse communities. In Unit 1, students will be introduced to discourse community theory and explore their own literacy practices, as well as receive coaching in managing the writing process. They are also introduced to the genre of the autobiographical essay. In Unit 2, students will complete a textual analysis of two pieces of writing on the same topic written in different genres for the same or different discourse communities. They gain a working understanding of how to think of texts as genres and genres as social acts that embody discourse community values, goals, and norms, and learn the norms for an academic essay as it would appear in most discourse communities in the humanities. In Unit 3, we add ethnographic research into the mix, having students collect and analyze texts from a discourse community to reinforce and deepen the learning

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in Units 1 and 2 about these key concepts, as well as beginning to do both field and library research in a university setting. They again write an academic essay, with a rhetorical purpose of either informing or persuading their audience of some key finding in their research.

Unit 4 is an optional unit (depending on pacing of the course and student needs) to extend research skills. Topics for the second research project may vary, but we encourage continuing to build on the theme of the social dynamics in writing practices. Students might extend their ethnography from Unit 3 or pick related themes: exploring another discourse community, or a topic such as censorship, intellectual property issues, language policy issues, language and identity, propaganda campaigns, political rhetoric, etc. Unit 5 is a short unit focused on revision, in which students will be asked to revise their essay from either Unit 2 or Unit 3. This final project, a major revision after students have gotten some distance from the earlier draft, enables them to deepen and affirm what they have learned in the course about all five aspects of expert writing knowledge: discourse community knowledge, subject matter knowledge, genre knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and writing process knowledge.

Here are the assignments for Units 1, 2, and 3, feeder assignments that lead up to the major essay, and readings for the units.

Unit 1: Literacy Autobiography (for teachers)

The literacy autobiography is a way for students to get their feet wet with writing a literary essay, using subject matter they are familiar with. At the same time they are introduced to key concepts that frame the course: meta-cognition of writing processes, discourse community theory, and genre theory. Rather than just a recounting of events, the assignment will require that they analyze their own literacy practices using discourse community and genre theories. The assignment will also facilitate their understanding how their past experiences have shaped who they are as writers now. Teachers are encouraged to share their own literacy histories and writing practices with students as well. In addition to using the feeder assignments below, teachers can use any of the activities described in the "Teaching for Transfer" section that precedes this section.

Focus Skill Areas

Discourse Community Analysis: Understanding of discourse community concepts; analyzing one's own membership in various discourse communities.

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Meta-cognition: Reflection and analysis of individual writing practices, how those practices were formed, and how those practices were shaped by the social context in which a writer is situated.

Autobiography as a Genre: Learning the literary genre of the autobiographical essay.

Unit Readings

(Note: all readings except for one reading in Unit 2, the McCloud piece on comic strips, are taken from the essays available in the Bedford/St. Martins Custom Reader package)

"How to Tame a Wild Tongue" by Gloria Anzaldua

Anzaldua's autobiographical piece reflects on her struggles with language and identity as a bilingual of English and Spanish (and several other cross-varieties she identifies). It is a very interesting piece of writing in that "how" it was written is almost as important as "what" is being said. So this can do double duty in terms of both a look at language/literacy and a piece for rhetorical analysis.

"Why I Write" by George Orwell

In this piece, Orwell talks about how historical events he witnessed and took part in helped shape himself as a writer. He analyzes the reasons that people write, finally ending with his own political motivations. The essay has strong connections to writing as a social practice and the evolution or stages that each writer goes through as he or she is developing.

"Mother Tongue" by Amy Tan

In this piece, Tan describes her mother's "broken English" and struggles with the notion of cultural identity as it relates to language. Tan's essay truly demonstrates the struggle of assimilation of generations of Chinese immigrants in terms of language acquisition.

"Power of Books" by Richard Wright

Another type of literacy autobiography, this piece brings in how much culture has an influence on the literacy practices of the author. As a struggling American in the early part of the 20th century, Wright demonstrates how books gave him a sense of power and authority. With this piece one can make greater connections to how literacy itself is a social act determined not only by an individual writer but that individual's larger culture.

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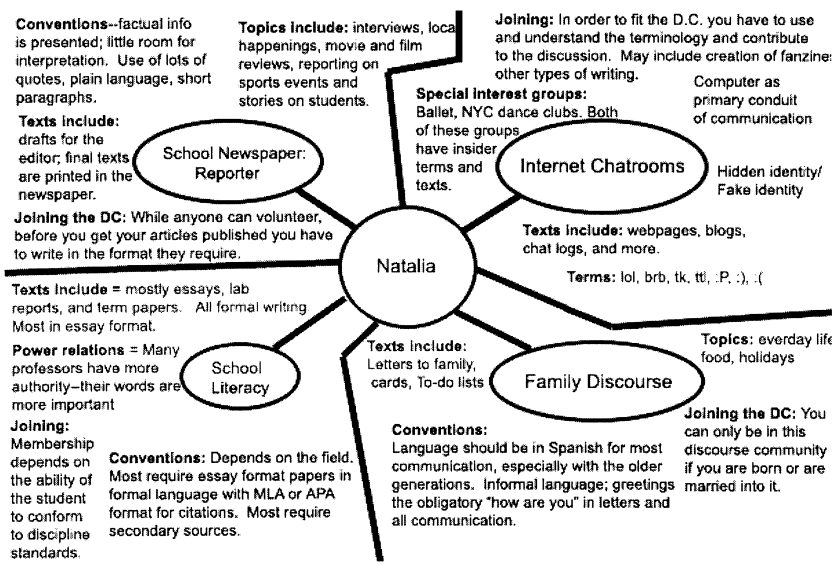
Feeder 1.1 Discourse Community Map adapted from *Scenes of Writing*

Using a large piece of paper, construct a discourse community map that outlines the different discourse communities you belong to and the different literacies you must have in order to be a member of each discourse community. Use posterboard or tape several smaller pieces of paper together.

Consider the following areas when creating your map:

- What are the conventions of this discourse community? i.e. What are the purposes and goals of the community and norms for "good writing?"
- Texts: what are the typical genres use by members of this discourse community
- Topics: what subjects are written on in this discourse community?
- Terminology/lingo: what specialized language is used and why is it used? Provide examples.
- Joining the discourse community—how does one become an insider? What are the writing activities and roles of discourse community members?

Here is an example:



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Feeder 1.2 Writing Rituals adapted from *Professional and Public Writing*

Each writer develops a set of "rituals" when she writes (even if she does not realize she's doing it!). These rituals can be helpful and effective (such as organizing your notes before you write or finding a quiet place) or not as helpful (such as stopping writing every 15 minutes to check your email). It is very important to help develop rituals that maximize your effectiveness as a writer. This journal entry will help you start become aware in a meta-cognitive way of your own writing process, i.e. how you get writing done.

Task: In your class journal, write a page on your own writing rituals answering some of the following questions:

- What rituals do you practice when you write?
- How do you think these rituals started?
- Have they changed over time or do they change in different places or when doing different kinds of writing?
- For example, has your use of a computer formed or changed your rituals?
- Have your writing rituals changed since you have come to college?

Feeder 1.3 Genre Features of an Autobiographical Essay

For the first essay assignment you will be asked to write a literary essay on your own literacy practices. In this unit, you have read literacy autobiographies by several authors, each with his or her own style, but each also following genre conventions of the literary essay. Go back to the literary essays we have read, and pick out at least six key features that define the genre of literary essay (and the sub-genre of personal essay) from other genres.

Here are some suggestions for discovering the genre features:

- Rhetorical purpose: what seems to be the author's purpose in writing about these experiences, in this genre? What do you think the author intended the reader to experience?
- Content: What types of evidence are used? Examples? Quotes? Hypotheticals? Primary research? Secondary research? What seem to be typical themes in these essays about literacy?

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- Structure: How is the text organized? (in terms of paragraph organization, overall organization). How does each piece begin? How does it end? Are there any consistent conventions regarding structure among the autobiographies?
- Linguistic features: Think about what types of language are used in the texts—is it formal or informal? Is there any specialized vocabulary used in the texts?

Create a two-column chart similar to the example below. Be sure to correctly cite page numbers and authors for the provided examples.

Genre features	Examples
Rhetorical purpose (s):	
Content: The first person is used frequently in Autobiographical works	"I remember being caught speaking Spanish" (Anzaldua, 658) "I weighed the personalities of the men on the job" (Wright, 1622)
Structure:	
Linguistic features:	

Literacy Autobiography Essay Assignment

Overview and Purpose

Throughout this first unit, we have been exploring different aspects of personal writing—ourselves as readers, as members of a larger discourse community, and as writers and responders to texts. It is now time to put the pieces together and examine our larger literacy practices through a literary essay that takes the form of a literacy autobiography. This assignment will allow you to examine yourself as both a reader and writer of texts in multiple contexts. This will deepen your understanding of how you have been a member of, or influenced by, various discourse communities. It will also give you an awareness of the genre of a literary essay (in contrast to an academic or scholarly essay) and the rhetorical skills associated with the genre.

Task

Write an autobiographical essay (four pages minimum) using the conventions of the literary essay we have studied in the unit readings and Feeder 1.3. For this essay, focus on those turning points or most meaningful events that have shaped who you are today as a reader and writer. Consider the discourse communities you described in Feeder 1.1

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as they bear on your literacy autobiography. Analyze how those discourse communities have shaped you as a writer and analyze your writing rituals (Feeder 1.2) in order to gain greater insight into the things that have influenced your development as writer/reader.

As you shape the overall point of your essay, keep in mind your rhetorical purpose in writing this piece in this genre. Look for the theme in your experiences and analysis that will surprise, stir, delight, or educate the reader. Shape the details of your essay around this theme once you have discovered it. Note: If you are literate in more than one language, feel free to discuss your literacies in multiple languages! Do not feel that you must only discuss literacy practices in English! But for the sake of your English-speaking readers, write your final draft in English.

Getting Started

Here are some things you can do in addition to reviewing the feeder assignments as you prepare to do your first draft:

- Expand your mind map of discourse communities you belong to, now that you have greater understanding of the concept of "discourse community." Include in your mind map specific literacy events that were turning points for you as a reader and writer.
- Were there individuals important in these critical events/moments that shaped you as a reader/writer? Make a list of those people. Pick three. Mind map specific memories associated with those individuals related to your development as a reader/writer.
- Try writing ten sentences, rapidly. Start each sentence: " I am . . ." Finish the sentence with a few words that describe you as a reader/writer. What do you discover?
- Go back through memorabilia—old papers? Journals? Early drawings? Old favorite books? Letters sent or received? Ask your parents or siblings if they have any of this memorabilia they can share with you. Go thru these artifacts and see what memories are stirred, what you learn from them.
- Pick the autobiographical essay from our readings that you liked the best. Read it again and see what writing techniques you can borrow from this writer as you write your essay.

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Tips for a Successful Essay

Organization

- You should organize your essay thematically rather than give an account strictly based on a chronology. Look for the overarching point/theme that ties two or three prominent experiences together. Then develop each experience, thru anecdote, rendering, story-telling to subtly support your overarching point.
- Do not begin your essay with a thesis statement laying out your overall point. The literary essay as a genre depends on extensive descriptions and details to build to the point, which is usually revealed at the end of the essay.

Rhetorical Strategies

- Specific examples are always better than generalizations. If you are going to generalize, be sure you provide specific evidence and examples to support your generalization. Thru careful selection of telling details, put your reader in the scene, i.e. able to form a visual image of what you describe.
- No four- or five-page essay can tell a person's entire history (even in a select area such as literacy). Therefore, you will have to be selective and choose only the most memorable experiences. Make your words count.
- I encourage you to include other types of media in your literacy autobiography. These types do not count toward the four pages, however. (In other words, if you include photocopies of your first short story, you still have to write four pages of text.)

Evaluation Criteria

Rhetorical Purpose

- Essay shows a clear focus—answers the "so what" question for the reader
- Essay fulfills reader's genre expectations

Content

- Essay shows ability to apply theories of discourse community and genre to a concrete situation, as tools for analysis
- Essay shows insight, creates interest through descriptive and narrative rhetorical skill

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Structure

- Essay parts follow a logical, thematic sequence that lead up to the overall point of the essay
- Essay's point is either implied or stated at the end of the essay
- Paragraph breaks are logical and facilitate easy reading of the essay

Linguistic Features

- Essay shows careful choice of language appropriate to its intended audience
- Essay is virtually free of sentence-level errors (spelling, grammar, etc.)

Unit 2: Genre Analysis (for teachers)

The second unit introduces the students to genre analysis. While traditional writing classes often assign textual analyses, having students look at texts in terms of genres and how they are written allows them to build more transferable skills to carry into other writing environments. The comparison of two texts should be less difficult than analyzing a single text. In addition to the feeder assignments that follow, the activities for teaching genre awareness in the "Teaching for Transfer" section can be used.

Focus Skill Areas

Critical Thinking: Ability to compare and contrast genre feature of two texts.

Discourse Community: Deepening understanding of discourse community concepts by looking at two texts within or across discourse communities.

Genre Analysis: Understanding the concept of genre; being able to recognize different genres; being able to recognize the features that differentiate one genre from another.

Rhetorical Analysis: Understanding of the different rhetorical devices, ability to recognize and interpret how those devices are functioning in a piece of writing

Unit Readings

"Setting the Record Straight" by Scott McCloud

McCloud's essay, in the genre of a comic, is a textual analysis and his-

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torical overview of the world of comic books and should provide a solid foundation to begin to discuss "genre" within this unit.

"Rewriting American History" Frances Fitzgerald

An historical analysis of the changes of history texts (mostly content, but some rhetoric) over the last 50 years. She challenges the notion of "history" and "truth" and demonstrates that both are socially constructed. She also addresses the notion of tokenism within history textbooks. This will give students an example of one type of textual comparison, although these texts are all within the same genre. Should provide a very interesting class discussion as well!

"Journalese as a Second Language" by John Leo

This is a great "insiders" look into the specialized language of journalism as a genre focusing on the way which journalists use language to distort or pacify readers. This would be a good piece to introduce genre analysis or the concepts of genre and can serve as a bridge to bringing in other types of genres with their own specialized discourses.

Feeder 2.1 Images in advertising

Choose two genres in advertising that include visual and verbal images (magazine ads, billboard ads, ads on product packaging, etc.) The two ads should be for the same product, or general category of product (i.e. do not compare ads for wrist watches and cars; rather, compare ads for one of these products in two different print media). Write a two-page analysis after you have used the genre matrix chart to describe the key genre features of each ad. (Note: you may need to look at several examples of each genre in order to see clearly what features are typical of the genre.) You can use the following questions to guide your analysis, but your analysis should be written in standard paragraph form, with transitions between paragraphs, an overall point, etc. (Note: include copies of both ads—Xeroxed or snapshot images of the ads are fine.)

- What are the key features that define each genre you have chosen?
- What are the assumed audiences for each genre?
- Are there any specific conventions used in one genre that isn't found in the other?

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- How are the two genres similar?
- What are the reasons for what is conveyed visually? For what is conveyed via text? How do the visual and verbal texts in the ad interact?

Feeder 2.2 Context of Meaning

In "Learning the Language," Peri Klass discusses (see p.200) her transition to learning a new language in a discourse community. Locate an article from your chosen field of study or in a discourse community you are a member of. Choose one word in the article and investigate its meaning within your field or discourse community. Now, go outside of your discourse community and see if the word (or similar renditions of the word) is used elsewhere. What are the differences in meaning? How do these change based on the genre?

Example: In the field of linguistics, there is a term called "grammar." This term refers to the unconscious knowledge that individuals have about language. In the general sense, however, "grammar" refers to specific rules you have to learn in English class or can even imply issues of sentence-level written competence. While the two terms may seem similar on the surface, they are used for very different purposes. Grammar in linguistics is innate, unconscious knowledge that every native speaker of a language has and uses. Grammar in the general sense is the prescriptive rules that you have to study, learn, and apply so that your own language more closely fits the accepted standard.

Feeder 2.3 Says/Does Chart for Rhetorical Analysis

By this time, you should have chosen the two articles you will be analyzing for the second unit. Construct a says–does chart (about a page each) for each of the two articles. In the "Says" column, briefly summarize the key point of each paragraph. In the "Does" column, describe what or how the writer is rhetorically moving the reader through the piece—the use of logic, repetition, transitions and other organizational strategies, etc. (for more information on the says/does exercise see Elbow and Belanoff, *Sharing and Responding*).

Genre Analysis Essay Assignment

Overview and Purpose

In this unit, we have been working on analyzing texts in different genres. For this assignment you will be finding and comparing two or

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more texts written on the same subject in different genres. The purpose of this essay is to allow you to gain a better understanding of the importance of genre and discourse community knowledge to writers. It will allow you to better understand the ways writing differs among genres and allow you to strengthen your skills in writing in the genre of a textual analysis (a form of academic essay).

The Task

Locate and photocopy at least two texts on the same subject from different genres (see the examples passed out in class). For example, you could find an article within a scholarly journal (whose audience will be knowledgeable in the field) related to your major or field of interest and then find an article on the same topic that was written for a general audience. Alternatively, you could look at an editorial on a political issue, a government report on the issue, and several message board posts or letters to the editor in response to the editorial.

After you have analyzed each text, do a comparison of the texts considering each of the four genre features we have been analyzing with sample genres. Once you have done the genre analysis, consider how you could generalize your findings about these genres in a five- to six-page academic essay. Include the two articles you are analyzing and bibliographic citations to these articles in your completed project.

Getting Started

- Create a matrix that shows the similarities and differences of each of your texts considering the four areas of genre analysis we have discussed in class. Use the heuristic below to aid you in developing your matrix.

Heuristic for Analyzing a Genre

Rhetorical Issues: Audience and Purpose Questions

- Who is the intended audience?
- What discourse community (or communities) is this audience in?
- What are these readers likely to know? want to know? Why?
- How much time will this audience want to spend reading this document?

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- What is the writer's purpose?
- What does the writer want the reader(s) to do after reading?

Content Questions

- How does the writer select content material to achieve his/her purpose with this particular audience?
- What types of information are considered appropriate in this genre?
- What types of information would be considered inappropriate in this genre?
- What types of evidence are acceptable to support claims?

Structure Questions

- How much information is considered appropriate?
- What is a typical sequence for information in this genre?
- How is the structure serving the audience's needs and the writer's purpose?

Style/language Questions

- How formal or informal is the language?
- What specialized vocabulary is used?
- How long/short are sentences and paragraphs?
- What other language features do you notice?

Evaluation Criteria

Your essay should follow the conventions of an academic essay in the humanities, with a clear focusing thesis in the introduction and supporting points developed in the remainder of the essay. The structure will follow a logical, thematic progression from the thesis statement. Paragraphs will generally begin with a transition word or phrase to provide continuity with the previous paragraph, and have a summarizing topic sentence at the start of the paragraph. The conclusion to the essay should summarize key points and point the reader toward something to ponder, or what "next step" might be called for in relation to your subject.

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Unit 3 Ethnography of a Discourse Community (for teachers)

The third unit allows students to build on their analysis skills from the previous two units while introducing a new type of research—ethnography. Not only will students gain valuable experience in learning more about discourse communities, which will translate to their own academic fields, but they will also gain an understanding of how one type of primary research is done.

Focus Skill Areas

Discourse Community Analysis: being able to identify, understand and analyze discourse community conventions.

Research Skills: Primary research skills—observational data, collection of text samples, interview skills, ethics of research, library research.

Analysis Skills: Learning how to integrate different types of raw data into a written format.

Unit Readings

"Boring from Within: the Art of the Freshman Essay" by Wayne Booth

This essay is an analysis of the freshman essay from a teacher's perspective. This kind of piece will be a great opportunity for students to analyze their own past works and perform an overall meta-analysis of what freshman writing is or isn't. It also gives advice to writing students on how to make their own essays come alive. In using this essay in class, students can also analyze whether their writing class constitutes a discourse community.

"Sex, Lies, and Conversation" by Deborah Tannen

Tannen addresses in this work how speech and gender roles themselves are socially constructed and hold power. Teachers can extend this concept into the realm of discourse communities as well.

"Learning the Language" by Perri Klass

This is the short reading on learning the language of the medical profession and can be used concurrently with the Journalese piece. It makes powerful connections to the political nature of language and vocabulary choices and how new members in the medical professions must learn a new way of speaking and behaving in order to be accepted in the medical discourse community.

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Feeder 3.1 Who Do I Want to Study?

Write a page on two potential discourse communities you are interested in studying. Be sure to answer the following questions:

- What discourse community you are interested in studying?
- Why you are interested in studying it?
- Your biases and assumptions surrounding the discourse community (i.e. what opinions do you have about them.) Do you see them in a positive or negative way and why?
- How you plan on gaining access to the discourse community and their written texts?

Feeder 3.2 Research Question

Most research starts with a question (or in the sciences, a hypothesis). Formulate at least three key questions about the group you are interested in studying. The questions should be open-ended (not simple yes or no questions). These questions will help you better organize your own observations and research findings. Here are some sample questions:

- How do the particular writing practices of this discourse community reinforce and achieve the group's goals and purposes?
- Why does this particular discourse community place more value on _____ than on _____?
- What are the most common genres used by the discourse community and why are these particular genres the ones utilized?
- What roles to writers take? What social status do writers have?
- How do individuals gain entrance to this discourse community and achieve "insider" or "expert" status?
- What about this discourse community would be of interest to people who are not members of the community?

Feeder 3.3

Once you have chosen your discourse community to research, decide how you will gain access to the group if not a member. Collect samples of as much of the writing in as many of the genres the community uses as possible. If the group meets in a physical space and in a time frame in

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which you're doing this assignment, do at least one observation of the group or a few group members in order to begin to shape your research question(s). During the observation, use a double-entry method of note-taking. If you cannot have face-to-face contact with the discourse community, contact several of the group's members by email or telephone and do preliminary interviews in order to find out something about the community and begin to refine your research question(s). Bring your results to class and be ready to give a short report of your results.

Feeder 3.4

Use the library's online databases and/or stacks to locate two articles that provide background on the discourse community you are researching. Be as specific as possible, but understand that there are limitations to the articles available. For example, if you are going to conduct a discourse community analysis of the local poetry club, it is very unlikely that you will find articles on that specific club. But you certainly will find articles on the larger poetry reading movement. Note: if you cannot find any references that talk about the discourse community (and you have consulted a reference librarian for help), then find two published documents from the discourse community and, based on what you observe about these texts, further refine your research questions.

After you locate your two articles, write an annotated bibliography of the two articles. In the annotation, summarize the articles and state what you have gleaned from them to help you further refine your research question(s). Bring your annotated bibliography, along with the two sources you found, to class.

Unit 3 Essay Assignment

At this point in the course, we have explored ourselves as writers (Unit 1) and the texts from two different discourse communities (Unit 2). It is now time to take this exploration a step further where we further our research and analysis skills by looking at a discourse community as a whole.

Skills you will learn in this assignment:

- Collecting primary observational data or interview data
- Synthesizing research into a written format
- Categorizing raw data and looking for themes

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- Writing in a new genre (ethnographic report)
- Ethics of research involving human subjects
- Genre analysis skills

The Task

In this assignment, you will be conducting an ethnography of a discourse community. Ethnography is essentially a study of a group of people and is a methodology and genre used typically in anthropology. In doing ethnographic research, you observe a group, take notes, and report on your findings. For this ethnography, you will be observing and analyzing a discourse community that you belong to or one that is new to you. In other words, you will be focusing primarily on the writing practices within a specific social group. The focus of this research should not be solely on social dynamics or oral discourse, but rather on how written texts work within the group.

What types of discourse communities can you observe? The possibilities are endless, but here is a short list to get you thinking:

- Any sort of club or organization that produces written texts: for example: a non-profit organization that produces a weekly newsletter; a club that has weekly meetings and produces information on their website; or an online group that produces fan fiction.
- A group that regularly attends a particular type of event, such as convention or concert or theatre performance. There are lots of these happening on campus; alternatively, you can find tons of things happening in the place where you live—you could observe an environmental group protesting at city hall and then look at their "texts" at their website, or you could attend a conference in your field of interest and then also look at the written products, handouts, abstracts, etc.—of the discourse community.
- A group associated with a particular job or profession that produces some sort of written product: groups such as teachers, contractors, journalists, public relations people, an advertising agency, or the executive board at the local bank.
- A group related to your field of study—graduate students in a lab, professors, people working in the industry, etc.

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Getting Started

- Be sure to collect written texts and other "artifacts" from the group for further analysis.
- If you are not a member of the group, contact a group representative to arrange your visit. Explain your purpose—this research assignment. Reassure the group that anything which is confidential you will either write about using pseudonyms or not reveal. You may want to put your agreement in writing to the appropriate member(s) of the group.
- If it is not possible to observe or have a face-to-face meeting with the group, arrange for several interviews with group members by phone or email.
- Be careful to separate your actual observations from information you assume or your opinions and reactions to what you observe. To help you facilitate this type of "objectivity," use a double-entry notebook. We will be discussing the double-entry notebook more in class.
- Some observers interact more with the group they are observing than others. If you plan on having some interaction, be sure you still have time to write and take notes.
- Give people some time to get accustomed to you before starting your note taking. Individuals who know they are being watched will behave differently than those who are in their natural environment without observers. But they tend to forget their observers after a while.
- Revisit your notes and organize as soon after as possible. Or, if you did an interview in which you were not able to take notes, write up the conversation as soon as possible afterwards.
- Be sure to pay special attention to the speech and literacy practices and language use of the group members that you observed.
- Look for patterns in language, behavior, writing practices. Also, consider people who don't fit the pattern or the norm.

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What to Observe?

When you are observing, it is impossible to focus on everything. For the purposes of this assignment, you should focus your observations on the discourse community's writing practices. You may also note what gets communicated through other channels—oral? visual?

- For what purpose(s) are texts produced?
- How important is writing to the group as a whole?
- What genres are used in the discourse community?
- How are texts produced within the discourse community?
- Who produces texts? Do all community members produce or just a select few?
- What guidelines does the community have for what counts as "good writing" in the community, i.e. what are the norms for genres?
- How are individual genres related to each other in the discourse community?
- How do the genres and the purposes for the discourse community relate?
- What types of specialized vocabulary or "jargon" do they use?
- How do this group's writing practices fit into what we have conceptualized as a discourse community? How is oral discourse used to complement written discourse? Or vice versa?

Assignment Requirements

The essay (six pages minimum) will present your findings as a research report or researched argument. Here are some guidelines for a successful essay:

- You should organize your essay thematically, not chronologically. Do not give a report of what you did while researching—instead, group your data and focus on reoccurring themes of interest in your data that give answers to your research questions.
- You should also utilize some of the data you have collected directly in the essay—direct quotations or observations make great examples!

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- Regardless of format or organization, each essay should have a primary focus on the writing practices, written texts and language of the group in question.
- Your research should include appropriate primary or secondary sources to support or amplify your field research. You may use sources from popular magazines, newspapers, non-scholarly Internet sites, or other sources, but you need to include at least three scholarly sources, as this is an academic essay.
- Use American Psychological Association (APA) citation guidelines for in-text citations and the works cited list at the end of your essay. (APA is generally the citation style used in the social sciences.)

Submit all field notes, interview notes, and library or on-line sources you are including in your works cited list in your project folder.

A SUMMARY OF APPROACHES

These, then, are some resources for applying the theoretical framework and principles that I argue for here for developing effective writing instruction at the university level—in writing centers, in discipline-specific courses, and in general writing courses. Of course, I'm sure there are other approaches that would embody the principles for teaching for transfer and for teaching to all five skill domains beyond the ones I have outlined here. In addition to considering the activities and assignment sequences here, I encourage readers to review the articles by Kiniry (1985), Rose (1998), and Beaufort (2000) for other examples of sequential learning. Also Kovac's (2001) sample curriculum for chemistry majors is an excellent example of moving majors through the different levels of critical thinking in Bloom's taxonomy and for introducing them to the range of genres chemists use in developmental fashion. Smit's (2004) broad outline in Chapter 9 of *The End of Composition* for three linked writing courses that build disciplinary writing expertise systematically can also serve as a guide for sequential curriculum building across several courses.

Teaching writing is one of the most complex tasks I know of, because multiple cognitive and social factors must be taken into account at once. For teachers and tutors, then, the dilemma is what to work with students on first, second, third, etc., as tasks must in some ways be broken down

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into manageable chunks. The old models for writing instruction broke the task down by units within a text: vocabulary/spelling; sentence patterns; paragraph structure; essay structure, etc. These, we know now, are not the most useful building blocks either for learning or for motivating learners. The urge to communicate, to solve meaningful writing problems, as Bazerman (1997) says, is the most powerful motivator for learning to write better. The best curricular approaches, then, give students meaningful intellectual challenges and provide the scaffolding (Applebee and Langer 1983) for them to achieve success in the lifelong path of learning. I would hope others will build on the ideas presented here.

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