



**Newsletter of the Canadian Association
for the Study of Language and Learning**

Volume 16, Numbers 3 and 4, Autumn-Winter 1998

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Note: this issue edited by Russell Hunt, St. Thomas University

It is accessible through the Inkshed Web site, at

<http://www.stthomasu.ca/inkshed>

Editorial: the necessity of print

As I was putting this issue of the Newsletter together, I was troubled by the fact that it's been so difficult for the organization -- and for me -- to find time and resources to put out a print Newsletter. Some of the reason is clear: when Jim Reither began the Newsletter in the '80s there were many fewer members, and there was no practical alternative for keeping Inkshedders in touch with each other between conferences. Since then, though, costs have escalated, and so have numbers, and -- though I hate to suggest anybody is busier than we were in the '80s -- it seems that in general Inkshedders, like most academics, have found themselves inexorably doing more with fewer resources, year by year. And perhaps more important, alternatives have proliferated.

Electronic alternatives, in fact, have for many people become their main way of participating in their professional communities. When I asked, on the CASLL list, whether people thought a print Newsletter was still important for the organization, among the responses was this one from Rick Coe:

I am on the CASLL listserv, and to a large extent that now does for me much of what the newsletter used to, including the annual Inkshed call.

Rick wasn't alone in this, but Doug Brent said:

I think that the print newsletter has a place, both for the reasons Russ cites and as a venue for more semi-formal non-refereed articles. . . . I think that they do a good job of provoking a slightly more deliberate set of responses than the quick back-and-forth of e-mail is likely to do. It is, however, more expensive in terms of labour as well as postage. I'd like to see it kept but would be understanding if it folded--we are all stupidly busy these days.

Roger Graves suggested that some kind of halfway house might be a good idea:

My own sense of the state of the electronic versus print world is that we still need a print version of the newsletter, or at least an email version of it that could still be sent to those without web access (or ready web access). I think we still need to be sent something (paper newsletter or email) once in a while.

And he also raised the question of how many readers of the print Newsletter don't have access to, or don't see, any of the electronic communication -- mainly the CASLL listserv. This isn't an easy question. Who knows how many people who technically have access to email actually use it regularly; how many who have Web browsers know about the Inkshed Web site, or have ever visited it? But here's one bit of information: on comparing the print mailing list for the Newsletter and the CASLL subscription list (each has almost exactly 100 addresses), you find that there are 40 people who are *only* on the Newsletter mailing list, and 60 who are *only* on the electronic list. About 50 are on both. Clearly this is a split community, and clearly the lapse -- since last spring -- in publication of the Newsletter has left some of us out in the cold -- for instance, probably having no way to know about the call for proposals for the working conference next spring in Québec (see elsewhere in this newsletter for information about that).

The lesson of the 20th century: the fact that the technology is available doesn't mean it's in place or accessible. We need to stop letting the hype convince us that the future's not only here, but passed our stop long ago. We still need a print Newsletter. I hope we can find a way to keep providing it (while continuing to urge people to use alternatives -- as you've probably already noticed, in line with Roger's suggestion, this Newsletter is available on the World Wide Web; moreover, it's composed in large measure of text that first existed in electronic form). The next print issue will come out of Toronto, produced by Margaret Procter and Mary Kooy, and after that . . . ?

-- Russ

CASLL on the Rhetoric of "Literary Essays"

In July of 1998 there was a discussion, on the listserv of the Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning, aka "Inkshed," of the nature and use of the "literary essay," in and out of the classroom. This is an attempt to make that discussion more easily readable, by eliminating headers and other matter, cutting back on "included quotations," reformatting for readability, and putting the messages in actual chronological order rather than according to the "date stamps," which are not always accurate and which ignore time zones. This edited version will also be available in print form in the *Inkshed Newsletter*.

Participants in the discussion included, in alphabetical order (linked to their email addresses):

[Kathryn Alexander](#), [Neil Besner](#), [Rick Coe](#), [Sandra Dueck](#), [Brenton Faber](#), [Will Garrett-Petts](#), [Russ Hunt](#), [Anthony Paré](#), [Cathy Schryer](#), [Philippa Spoel](#) and [Christine Skolnick](#)

The discussion as it exists unedited is available on [the CASLL Archive](#). Here, it begins with a sort of summary index; each name is linked to the posting it describes, but you can simply page down through the document and read the discussion in order.

I've edited in a similar way the discussion, in some ways begun in this one, on [the nature of professional writing](#), which is archived in the August log of the CASLL list.

Date: Wed, 15 Jul 1998

[Will Garrett-Petts](#) proposes the question: "why, to date, has so little been written about the rhetoric of literary essays?"

Date: Thu, 16 Jul 1998

[Russ Hunt](#) historicizes, distinguishing student essays from professional ones as a form
[Will](#) expatiates, introducing a new question: "how to present the writing of student lit. papers in a more legitimate social context?"

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998

[Brenton Faber](#) questions "literary criticism" and introduces the idea of professional writing in general
[Russ](#) wonders about the peculiarity of "academic" writing
[Cathy Schryer](#) introduces the idea of the essay as a pretext for other kinds of learning
[Russ](#) agrees with Cathy
[Neil Besner](#) questions Russ's attack on the student essay as arhetorical
[Russ](#) goes on about the arhetorical nature of the student essay
[Philippa Spoel](#) argues that student motivation for writing essays isn't inauthentic
[Russ](#) goes on more about the arhetorical nature of the student essay
[Neil](#) argues that the academic essay doesn't have to be arhetorical
[Russ](#) calls for changes in classroom situations

Date: Sat, 18 Jul 1998

[Will](#) registers agreement with Cathy, but disputes Russ's assertion of the necessary "irrelevance" of the

literary essay

[Neil](#) argues that the academic essay is a real genre, with "real" readers

Date: Mon, 20 Jul 1998

[Anthony Paré](#) disclaims responsibility for the definition of "audience," and introduces the idea that the academic reading is a simulation

[Russ](#) goes on about "simulation"

[Rick Coe](#) gives the accurate citation for the definition of audience

[Sandra Dueck](#) presents a rationale for using literary essays as effective developmental simulations

Date: Tue, 21 Jul 1998

[Russ](#) expresses doubts about the effectiveness of simulation for students who most need help

[Kathryn Alexander](#) describes some negative results of the kind of essay writing practiced in English classes

[Christine Skolnick](#) suggests that literary theory is a good way to teach critical thinking

Date: Fri, 24 Jul 1998

[Will](#) wonders how, if the literary essay is so arhetorical, Russ teaches writing in and through literature classes

[Russ](#) describes some alternatives to the literary essay

[Will](#) wonders whether generating a glossary of terms might be an alternative to essay writing, and asks for other suggestions

Date: Wed, 15 Jul 1998

From: Will Garrett-Petts

Subject: writing about literature

Here's a general discussion topic & request for feedback:

I've recently signed a contract with Broadview press to bring out a text on "Writing About Literature: Prose Fiction." It's part of the press' new "writing in the disciplines" series--one designed to give undergraduate readers "insider knowledge" re: writing in various areas.

In my proposal I noted that, unlike creative writing courses, where students read examples of fine poetry or prose fiction as models to be emulated, literature courses ask students to spend most of their time studying forms they will never be asked to write. My text proposes a teaching/studying aid--a cross between a rhetoric & a casebook (Stephen Crane's wonderful short story "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" will be included in the text, & most advice on composition & critical approaches will reference "Yellow sky").

Anyway, here's my question: why, to date, has so little been written about the rhetoric of literary essays? I'm aware of Fahnestock and Secor's provocative piece, "The Rhetoric of Literary Criticism," but there seems little substantive (pedagogical) work in this area. I'll be looking, for example, at the relationship between first-year critical essays & their professional counterparts, & considering what students might learn by via a rhetorical analysis of professional models & methods & institutional contexts.

I'm also interested in what CASLL members might like to see in such a text. Where might the sort of standard resource (I'm thinking of books by Griffith, Barnet, and Roberts) be improved? Do others see potential (as I do) in using contemporary rhetoric & composition theory to explain, interpret, & teach students how to write essays about literature?

Feel free to reply on or off list.

Date: Thu, 16 Jul 1998
From: Russ Hunt
Subject: Re: writing about literature

My first realization that there *was* such a thing as writing theory and writing instruction came from trying to figure out how to generate less dreadful writing about literature from students. The very first Inkshed conference had as its theme "The Troubled Connection" between composition and literature teaching. I've been thinking and reading about this for a long time, and I have one firm conclusion: they ain't no easy answer.

In the last few years, though, I think studies of professional and workplace writing, and genre theory, have illuminated some important issues, for me at least. One of them is raised by the question at the heart of Will's post:

In my proposal I noted that, unlike creative writing courses, where students read examples of fine poetry or prose fiction as models to be emulated, literature courses ask students to spend most of their time studying forms they will never be asked to write.

The way I've said this for some years is just the reverse of that: students in literature courses are asked to write a form they have never, ever read, and never will read. If Aviva's* right about how we learn new genres, it's no surprise students don't learn this one, because they have no opportunity to read examples of it in social context. Examples of it don't *occur* in social context.

Another way to say this is that "the essay on literature" doesn't even exist in the academic journal. The rhetoric (the register, the generic conventions, the patterns of given & new) of the articles and essays which appear in (say) *Critical Inquiry*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, *English Studies in Canada*, or *Canadian Literature* is radically various, and radically different from anything that normally appears in student essays on literature.

Or is asked to appear. The class essay is a genre unto itself, and the only people who ever read them in enough volume to internalize their conventions are English teachers.

So. Will asks:

Anyway, here's my question: why, to date, has so little been written about the rhetoric of literary essays? I'm aware of Fahnestock and Secor's provocative piece, "The Rhetoric of Literary Criticism," but there seems little substantive (pedagogical) work in this area.

Actually, I think there's a tidal wave about of stuff about the *student essay* on literature, all of it pedagogically grounded; I don't know of much on the published literary essay, though, and I'm not so sure about why. Partly because if we looked hard at it we'd see that there's not much connection between what gets published and what students have to do to demonstrate understanding; partly because people who are seriously interested in rhetoric are mostly people who are reacting against the literary essay (both kinds).

I'll be looking, for example, at the relationship between first-year critical essays & their professional counterparts, & considering what students might learn by via a rhetorical analysis of professional models & methods & institutional contexts.

My guess would be that what they might learn would be revolutionary.

*I was reminded yesterday, moving files, that I first heard Aviva's implicit/explicit instruction distinction at Inkshed 4, by the way. Seems like Will's question is right up Inkshed's alley.

Date: Thu, 16 Jul 1998
From: Will Garrett-Petts
Subject: Re: writing about literature

I just read Russ' thoughtful & thought-provoking posting, & I think he frames precisely the dilemma of teaching writing as a component of an undergrad lit. class: the rhetorical situation (if I can use that term) of the first-year lit.

essay is viewed by many as "inauthentic," as occurring only in a classroom context. I'm not sure I'd go as far as saying that the student lit. essay doesn't "exist in a social context"; I would agree that many find the context kind of artificial.

I think the prospect of "inkshedding" as an anodyne to that artificial context--as a way of forming a temporary writing community--has helped me in my own teaching. Also, the construction of online (virtual) communities via listservs has helped make the writing my own lit students do a little less teacher-directed.

I also remain hopeful that, by asking students to engage in some rhetorical analysis of professional critical writing, they can, with guidance, position their own responses with greater confidence. Without that guided analysis, published criticism remains a kind of foreign language, something that others write, something to be quoted but seldom emulated.

Critical collections & cribs (like Coles Notes) tend to provide students with a hearsay version of literary criticism. The students hear about the importance of literary scholarship, and they read the results of such scholarship, but they are seldom invited to participate in hands-on research?

I guess that's why a casebook approach appeals to me for the forthcoming text: by including examples of both professional & student writing on one work (Crane's "Yellow Sky"), I'm hoping to create some semblance of dialogue--one that the students can enter & exit.

The way I've said this for some years is just the reverse of that: students in literature courses are asked to write a form they have never, ever read, and never will read. If Aviva's right about how we learn new genres, it's no surprise students don't learn this one, because they have no opportunity to read examples of it in social context. Examples of it don't occur in social context.

Russ goes further & says that "the essay on literature" doesn't even exist in the academic journal.

The rhetoric (the register, the generic conventions, the patterns of given & new) of the articles and essays which appear in (say) *Critical Inquiry*, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, *English Studies in Canada*, or *Canadian Literature* is radically various, and radically different from anything that normally appears in student essays on literature. Or is asked to appear. The class essay is a genre unto itself, and the only people who ever read them in enough volume to internalize their conventions are English teachers.

I agree with most of this, but I still think that there are elements & examples of critical writing--especially in literary reviews & critical notes--that are both close in form to the class essay & accessible as models.

Russ, you reference a tidal wave about of stuff about the student essay on literature, all of it pedagogically grounded. I was, of course talking about the published literary essay -- but I'd welcome references for any good, rhetorically-based discussions on the student paper as well.

Most of the work I've seen focuses on "reading," not writing; and I found it interesting that two of the reviewers for the press asked for greater emphasis on the range of critical approaches available (deconstructivist, feminist, postmodern, etc.). Terry Eagleton once wrote that English studies lacks any method--& although his *Introduction to Literary Theory* is a highly polemical take, he nonetheless highlights a familiar complaint among students: literature courses & resource texts seldom provide a bridge from reading to writing (apart from a few formulaic comments on thesis statements, finding topics, etc.).

I'm struck by the tendency to substitute discussion of literary theory for methodology; and I'm disturbed how easily some of my 3rd & 4th-year students adopt a deconstructive stance for one essay, a feminist stance for the next...--as if the theories & their attendant methodologies were eminently interchangeable. A recent *College English* essay on literary theory (a well-written essay) showed off 5 or 6 critical "takes" on a work--as if critical response were some kind exercise in role playing.

Anyway, this posting has probably gone on too long.

I wonder, though, if others have ideas on how present the writing of student lit. papers in a more legitimate social context?

Thanks for the feedback.

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998
From: Brenton Faber
Subject: Re: writing about literature

On Thu, 16 Jul 1998, Will Garrett-Petts wrote:

I'm struck by the tendency to substitute discussion of literary theory for methodology; and I'm disturbed how easily some of my 3rd & 4th-year students adopt a deconstructive stance for one essay, a feminist stance for the next...--as if the theories & their attendant methodologies were eminently interchangeable. A recent *College English* essay on literary theory (a well-written essay) showed off 5 or 6 critical "takes" on a work--as if critical response were some kind exercise in role playing.

I remember reading an interview with C. Bazerman where he suggests that literary method is equivalent to someone climbing a ladder to the top of a cathedral, ringing the bells, then kicking out the ladder so no one will see how he/she got up there.

I've had much success with students analyzing literary criticism along side other forms of professional correspondence both academic and non-academic. Viewing professional essays as "transactions" has helped us to de-mystify much of this particularly misty genre.

Yet, as Russ and Will have noted, learning professional genres still doesn't really prepare students for the kinds of writing they will be doing as students. Especially those students in scientific or technical programs. It seems to be an odd contradiction.

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998
From: Russ Hunt
Subject: Re: writing about literature

Brent Faber says,

Yet, as Russ and Will have noted, learning professional genres still doesn't really prepare students for the kinds of writing they will be doing as students. Especially those students in scientific or technical programs. It seems to be an odd contradiction.

I'd tilt that in the other direction. The problem isn't learning professional genres, it's the kinds of writing they will be doing as students. Why are those kinds of writing -- bizarrely arhetorical, unique to one peculiar situation where the only authentic motivation is to produce an example of discourse -- almost the only kinds students ever write?

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998
From: c schryer
Subject: Re: writing about literature

I wonder if the "academic essay" (as if there were only one--and we know that's not the case) is actually used as an excuse to teach other kinds of things like:

- --the reading strategies of different academic fields
- --Toulmin logic --a rhetorical approach to writing and reading
- --an analytical attitude to language.
- (Add some more of your own)

It's struck me for sometime that the academic essay is only a device to get at these kinds of far more important issues. It's like a public relations effort. Students often believe that that they need to write in the genre of the academic essay. I

am not certain that some a singular kind of thing exists, but these other resources--the ability to note conventions, the use of evidence etc--now those just might prove useful. So the essay just might be an excuse to get at these other issues.

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998
From: Russ Hunt
Subject: Re: writing about literature

Cathy's right, I think; the "academic essay" (and she's also right that it's not a homogenous genre) is "an excuse to get at these other issues." What I still wonder is why it's so universal to create situations in which the writing we use to get at other things has to be so entirely without authentic, intrinsic purposes, writing written to demonstrate knowledge or ability rather than to persuade, amuse, engage, inform, etc. And I wonder whether the fact that class essays are so rhetorically peculiar makes it harder to get at things like, in Cathy's list,

- --a rhetorical approach to writing and reading
- --an analytical attitude to language.

She says,

It's struck me for some time that the academic essay is only a device to get at these kinds of far more important issues. It's like a public relations effort. Students often believe that they need to write in the genre of the academic essay.

And it's not only true that they believe it, it's true that they need to. But I'm not convinced that's a good thing, or that it's unavoidable.

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998
From: Neil Besner
Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd)

On Fri, 17 Jul 1998, Russ Hunt wrote:

Cathy's right, I think; the "academic essay" (and she's also right that it's not a homogenous genre) is "an excuse to get at these other issues." What I still wonder is why it's so universal to create situations in which the writing we use to get at other things has to be so entirely without authentic, intrinsic purposes, writing written to demonstrate knowledge or ability rather than to persuade, amuse, engage, inform, etc. And I wonder whether the fact that class essays are so rhetorically peculiar makes it harder to get at things like, in Cathy's list,

Am I reading correctly, Russ, when I understand you to be saying, above, that the academic essay is typically "entirely without authentic, instrinsic purposes"? If that is more or less what you intend, could you elaborate a bit? Or have I misunderstood?

The second part of the sentence is a bit puzzling as well. Are you distinguishing between (inauthentic?) writing that is written "to demonstrate knowledge or ability" and, on the other hand, writing that "persuades, amuses, engages, informs, etc."? As if the two purposes and intentions were mutually exclusive? And the academic essay falls into the first camp? Or have I misunderstood you here again?

My questions are not, obviously, unmotivated. To begin with, an academic essay that is persuasive and engaging, as I understand it, may often also demonstrate knowledge and ability. And it might be a better academic essay if it accomplishes several of these goals.

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998
From: Russ Hunt
Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd)

Anybody who's heard me on about this before should tune out now. Remembering Whitman . . . do I repeat myself? Very well then, I repeat myself; I am large, but I apparently contain only One Big Idea. Here I go again.

Am I reading correctly, Russ, when I understand you to be saying, above, that the academic essay is typically "entirely without authentic, intrinsic purposes"? If that is more or less what you intend, could you elaborate a bit? Or have I misunderstood?

Yes, I think you're reading correctly, that's just what I mean. And the reason I say it is that the academic essay is read only by one person, and that person is not (is certainly not seen by the writer as) in a dialogic relationship with the writer. She's assessing and helping; she's not being informed, being persuaded, being engaged. Nor, even if she were, and even if the student believed it, is she the appropriate *rhetorical* audience for that essay. If a student were writing *to me*, she'd write something *very* different from the essay she actually wrote. If she were writing to inform some general audience, she'd write something else again.

What she's doing is writing an *example* of public discourse, which will never be public (except perhaps as an example). There is no (real) audience for the rhetorical artifact of the student essay.

What we do, of course, is *pretend* there's an audience ("out there in chairs," as Anthony Paré says). The students who get the good marks, and who learn from the exercise, are those who can pretend in effective ways. Those who can't, can't learn from trial and error because the trials and errors have no authentic connections, and because what they're really trying to do (get a good mark) is different from the ostensible rhetorical purpose of the essay.

The second part of the sentence is a bit puzzling as well. Are you distinguishing between (inauthentic?) writing that is written "to demonstrate knowledge or ability" and, on the other hand, writing that "persuades, amuses, engages, informs, etc."? As if the two purposes and intentions were mutually exclusive? And the academic essay falls into the first camp? Or have I misunderstood you here again?

I don't necessarily mean "the academic essay" here, I guess: what I'm talking about might better be called the *class* essay, the essay written as part of an assignment to demonstrate either knowledge of a subject or skill at an analytic activity or discourse form. Such an essay can be *stipulated* to have some rhetorical purpose. "Write an amusing essay," perhaps? No. "Write a persuasive essay." That's better. But no one is going to be *persuaded* by that essay; someone's going to judge it as a successful example of persuasion, or not. So the student never has the experience of having wanted to persuade someone, and succeeding (or wanting to, and failing). She has the experience of having a professor as examiner try to explain why his judgement is that it was, or wasn't, an example of successful persuasion for some third party.

My questions are not, obviously, unmotivated. To begin with, an academic essay that is persuasive and engaging, as I understand it, may often also demonstrate knowledge and ability. And it might be a better academic essay if it accomplishes several of these goals.

"An essay that is persuasive and engaging" can't, if it's an essay for a class, be one that has actually persuaded or engaged . . . but it *can* be one that demonstrates knowledge or ability. I'll buy that last sentence ("it might be a better academic essay if it accomplishes several of these goals"), for sure -- what I'm questioning is whether, given the way academic essays exist, we can ever get past someone's judgement that that essay is or isn't a good example of persuasion.

My students regularly come into my class, never, ever, having had the experience of writing extended discourse in order to inform, persuade, amuse, or present themselves to someone they care about informing, persuading, amusing, or presenting themselves to, and either succeeding or failing. My central aim as a teacher is to offer them that experience. Academic or class essays aren't a tool I can use for that.

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998
From: Philippa Spoel
Subject: Essays

I don't think we should assume that some contexts (e.g., writing to demonstrate knowledge and ability for the teacher

as judge/examiner) are any more or less "authentic" as rhetorical contexts than others (e.g., writing to amuse a friend with tales of student life??). Russ, when a student writes to you or, at least, to me as a representative of a university institution whose job is to judge students' abilities to demonstrate knowledge, I think that they are writing to "me"--it may not be a "me" or a job that I relish, but it is still, authentically, me--just as a student writing a classroom essay for the rhetorical purposes that bother you (and, an other, "me") is also authentically "herself" on that occasion, herself as that student (which doesn't mean that she doesn't find other selves preferable to perform). I'm all for questioning the rhetorical contexts/exigencies/motivations which our educational institutions structure and perpetuate, but precisely for that reason I think we need to acknowledge them as very real--both for ourselves and for our students. We can't just decide to be outside them and, oopla, there we go--we're out of them. For students, as far as I know, the desire to secure good marks by successfully performing a classroom genre is a terribly real motivation, one that so many aspects of the worlds they live in validate above other motivations.

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998

From: Russ Hunt

Subject: Re: Essays

Still trying to make myself clear . . . thanks, Philippa. Let's see. First, writing *to* me is different from writing *for* me. Students *do* write to me (email asking for further explanations or complaining about draconian demands, or asking to set up a meeting or inviting me to sit in on a group meeting as a referee, or even arguing with me about -- gasp! -- a poem). But the rhetorical structures they deploy there are very different from what they'd be expected to use in "an essay." And they use them in the knowledge that any response they get will be a rejoinder, not an assessment or advice about improvement.

when a student writes to you or, at least, to me as a representative of a university institution whose job is to judge students' abilities to demonstrate knowledge, I think that they are writing to "me"--

Well, I don't quite think so, but I don't mean to question the identities or personae involved; I mean to make a distinction between "to" and "for." Were she writing *to* you she wouldn't preface it with a contextualizing explanation of who the author is and why she's important or interesting; she wouldn't offer summary; she'd foreground and background information in a very different pattern. Everything about that essay -- if it's a good one -- will be structured as though she were writing to *someone else* (for you).

I'm all for questioning the rhetorical contexts/exigencies/ motivations which our educational institutions structure and perpetuate, but precisely for that reason I think we need to acknowledge them as very real--both for ourselves and for our students.

I don't for an instant deny their reality. The point I want to make is their peculiar relationship to the rhetorical structure of the essay. And to the difficulties they pose for students who haven't already, somehow, internalized the markers of the academic register.

We can't just decide to be outside them and, oopla, there we go--we're out of them.

It's not that easy, for sure, but I think it can be done.

For students, as far as I know, the desire to secure good marks by successfully performing a classroom genre is a terribly real motivation, one that so many aspects of the worlds they live in validate above other motivations.

No question. But "successfully performing a classroom genre" is a very peculiar, artificial, and complicated thing to do, and one that doesn't foster learning very well. So most of them don't do very well at it, and don't learn to do better in ways that stick. I think there are ways to unhook writing from the poisonous infection of marks, and hook it to the need to be a valued member of a community -- by persuading, informing, amusing, etc. -- and put students in a position to learn language by using it in the service of that more effective need.

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998

From: Neil Besner
Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd)

Thanks, Russ. You're right -- I have heard you argue in this direction before, but I wasn't sure that you were arguing in a similar vein this time. Let me see if I can respond to a few of your points, below --

On Fri, 17 Jul 1998, Russ Hunt wrote:

Anybody who's heard me on about this before should tune out now. Remembering Whitman . . . do I repeat myself? Very well then, I repeat myself; I am large, but I apparently contain only One Big Idea. Here I go again.

Am I reading correctly, Russ, when I understand you to be saying, above, that the academic essay is typically "entirely without authentic, intrinsic purposes"? If that is more or less what you intend, could you elaborate a bit? Or have I misunderstood?

Yes, I think you're reading correctly, that's just what I mean. And the reason I say it is that the academic essay is read only by one person, and that person is not (is certainly not seen by the writer as) in a dialogic relationship with the writer.

That is not necessarily so. The academic essay, either in or out of the classroom, need not be read by only one person; need not be addressed to only one person, rhetorically or otherwise; and need not be written exclusively "to" or "for" one person. Nor can I accept your construction of the writer (in the classroom, I assume) as "certainly" not seeing herself in a dialogic relationship with the instructor. Yes, the classroom is in one sense (but not in all senses, not monolithically) an artificial venue wherein, to be sure, academic essays of the kind you are describing are often written. But that is not the whole story.

More later.

Date: Sat, 18 Jul 1998
From: Will Garrett-Petts
Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd)

I just signed on to the computer again (after a couple of days absence) & found this wonderful discussion brewing.

I'm very interested in Cathy's suggestion that disciplinary discourse may be seen as lobbying for particular (peculiar?) reading strategies--& certainly in the case of lit crit, & despite frequent claims to the contrary, the reading strategies we tend to teach in lit classes are peculiar to the discipline. I think I've been arguing Cathy's position for at least the last 10 years, but I'm not sure I've seen it phrased so succinctly.

My lingering problem with the discussion, though, centres on the assumed irrelevance of the literary essay. I'm not convinced that it need be irrelevant--that student writing about literature needs to be hopelessly imitative, phoney, unmotivated, etc. (I guess the fact that I'm writing a text about the subject suggests my commitment to both writing & literature, eh?)

Russ wrote:

Remember that we're still talking in the context of Will's question about the rhetoric of the essay on literature. That genre (I argue) doesn't have real readers.

Even if we allow that--once we agree on terms such "essay on literature" or "real"-- the student lit paper is seen by many as little more than an exercise, does this make it so very different from other forms of writing assigned in a university setting? And what of the success stories? My own students enthusiastically embrace literary discussion, & many write personally committed, informed, even witty essays. Some of those who have gone on in literary studies have found a wider audience through publication--& like some of your own students, I suspect, many of my students make their essays available to others by placing them in a class binder (usually held on reserve in the library) or by "publishing" them electronically. Isn't this a form of real writing for real readers?

Or am I hearing another argument, one that posits the essay on literature as a form (or genre) which violates rules of good writing?

Let me put the question another way: don't those of us who study & teach writing have some responsibility to bring that expertise to bear on a "genre" that is too easily written off as artificial?

Date: Fri, 17 Jul 1998
From: Russ Hunt
Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd)

Worrying this bone just a minute more . . .

The academic essay, either in or out of the classroom, need not be read by only one person; need not be addressed to only one person, rhetorically or otherwise; and need not be written exclusively "to" or "for" one person.

I agree -- but I'd argue that as soon as it's really read by someone other than an assessor, it becomes something other than that academic essay, and I don't mean only because it's *construed* differently, but also because it will exhibit different textual features. Remember that we're still talking in the context of Will's question about the rhetoric of the essay on literature. That genre (I argue) doesn't have real readers.

Nor can I accept your construction of the writer (in the classroom, I assume) as "certainly" not seeing herself in a dialogic relationship with the instructor. Yes, the classroom is in one sense (but not in all senses, not monolithically) an artificial venue wherein, to be sure, academic essays of the kind you are describing are often written. But that is not the whole story.

I'd never argue it was the whole story -- it's not the whole story in my classroom, I think (hope). But I'm saying that in order to change things we have to make radical changes, not simply minor changes in how assignments are phrased or treated. We need to rethink the social structure of the classroom. Or so I think.

Date: Sat, 18 Jul 1998
From: Neil Besner
Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd)

Hi Russ. Let me worry at the bone a second more as well (below) --

On Fri, 17 Jul 1998, Russ Hunt wrote:

Worrying this bone just a minute more . . . The academic essay, either in or out of the classroom, need not be read by only one person; need not be addressed to only one person, rhetorically or otherwise; and need not be written exclusively "to" or "for" one person. I agree -- but I'd argue that as soon as it's really read by someone other than an assessor, it becomes something other than that academic essay, and I don't mean only because it's *construed* differently, but also because it will exhibit different textual features. Remember that we're still talking in the context of Will's question about the rhetoric of the essay on literature. That genre (I argue) doesn't have real readers.

It may be that part of the difficulty I'm having is understanding what you mean by "real readers." I'd argue that the essay on literature does have real readers (and a number of rhetorical strategies that have evolved to persuade, engage, entertain, AND exhibit knowledge/skills -- back to your previous distinction) and real writers as well. I'd also argue that there are real readers and writers -- of academic essays, among other forms -- in classrooms, although that's another (but closely related) issue.

Nor can I accept your construction of the writer (in the classroom, I assume) as "certainly" not seeing herself in a dialogic relationship with the instructor. Yes, the classroom is in one sense (but not in all senses, not monolithically) an artificial venue wherein, to be sure, academic essays of the kind you are describing are often written. But that is not the whole story.

I'd never argue it was the whole story -- it's not the whole story in my classroom, I think (hope). But I'm saying that in order to change things we have to make radical changes, not simply minor changes in how assignments are

phrased or treated. We need to rethink the social structure of the classroom. Or so I think.

No argument there. But don't you think that such a re-structuring of the classroom is in fact going on? I think that changes, minor or major, in assignments, however conceived, are often the result of just such reconceptions of classroom space, practice, and functions.

But my major point, what got me started yesterday, was the first one: that there is a real genre called the academic essay; that it is practised inside and outside of the classroom; that real writers and readers in a variety of rhetorical relationships find the genre entertaining, instructive, important, etc. And that the classroom we know (including the classrooms we are variously reshaping, all the time) need not be inimical to the practice of this genre.

Sorry if I appear to be beating a dead horse.

Date: Mon, 20 Jul 1998

From: Anthony Paré

Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd) -Reply Comments:

Russ: I'd love to claim the reference to audience as "all those folks out there in chairs," but it was Park (first name?), not me. I think, though, that the academic "audience" (still a totally unsatisfactory metaphor for me) is more accurately perceived as a critic in the theatre - a "reader" waiting to find fault. Can we not agree that there are such things as authentic opportunities for reading, more or less, and that the academic reader is simulating such a reading? The closest authentic reading situation I can imagine that "fits" reading student essays is the one we all find ourselves in as working scholars, and the evaluation we deploy against student writing is a measure of how far that writing falls from the writing we experience (or expect) professionally. I should add that I find Russ Hunt's one BIG idea both very persuasive and very big.

Date: Mon, 20 Jul 1998

From: Russ Hunt

Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd) -Reply

Anthony's article "Ushering Audience Out" is where I first ran across "all those folks out there in chairs," and I don't *care* where you got it, Anthony. I got it from you (there's a Tom Lehrer song about that -- sort of biological multitextuality).

I think, though, that the academic "audience" (still a totally unsatisfactory metaphor for me) is more accurately perceived as a critic in the theatre - a "reader" waiting to find fault.

Yes. My view exactly. That's why I think of them as "in chairs."

Can we not agree that there are such things as authentic opportunities for reading, more or less, and that the academic reader is simulating such a reading?

The thing that bothers me, in fact, is exactly "simulation." The problem with simulation is that it's *thin*. It just doesn't offer the richness of real experience -- the trick of offering a workable substitute for real experience is something that characterizes great writers (it just occurs to me that this is right where literature fits into composition. I'll get back to you on this . . .).

The closest authentic reading situation I can imagine that "fits" reading student essays is the one we all find ourselves in as working scholars, and the evaluation we deploy against student writing is a measure of how far that writing falls from the writing we experience (or expect) professionally.

Thank you. Exactly. Except . . . as a *scholar*, I read "Ushering Audience Out" not to evaluate it, but to learn from it. (Had I been reviewing for *TSC* I might have read it differently, though I hope I'd have noticed, as I read, that I'd stopped being a referee and started being a partner.

I should add that I find Russ Hunt's one BIG idea both very persuasive and very big.

Thanks -- but in large measure I still think of it as an idea I got from Inkshed, so it's not a surprise to me that some inkshedders cotton on to it.

Date: Mon, 20 Jul 1998
From: richard coe
Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd) -Reply

Park, Douglas B. "The Meanings of 'Audience.'" *College English* 44 (March 1982): 24757.

Date: Tue, 21 Jul 1998
From: Sandra Dueck
Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd)

Hi Will

This discussion is very interesting to me. Speaking as someone who neither reads literature nor writes lit crit when she can avoid it, I nonetheless find the skills I acquired from writing lit crit essays as an undergraduate are fundamental to most of my current work, in a variety of ways--as writer, teacher, editor.

Cathy touched on some of the skills that can be acquired from writing student lit crit, but the ones I'm thinking of must be viewed as too common-place and basic to ever grace the pages of any theory-based approach I've read--be it post structural, feminist, grammatical, semantic, rhetorical, or whatever. These skills have not got much to do with either personal growth or socialization (i.e. publication or teaching), but directly with the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake. Specifically what I learned from this apprenticeship is how to represent reasoning processes in written language. Some examples:

What I learned in school:

1. When you introduce a quoted passage, you need to explain why it is significant to your argument. The quote doesn't speak for itself and it requires your intellectual labour to show why it connects to your analysis/interpretation.
2. When you want to compare two passages or concepts, you not only need to explain why the second example is similar to the first, but you also have to account for any residual ideas which are not parallel to the first passage, and say why either they are not significant, or why they are.
3. When you analyse passages, stories, texts, you are looking to make generalizations about patterns and relationships. and conversely, when you make a generalization about a pattern, you are required to support it with evidence from the passage, story, text.

I learned these skills by trial and error, and because I wanted to know them. Perhaps if this information was put to those students who don't "get it," who don't care if they get it, but who are required to take literature courses and who rank "writing lit crit essays" in the same category of desirability as "becoming a professional dishwasher," they might start to understand its relevance to their interests.

They could use these skills in this third-year business communication course I'm teaching,

What I have to tell my students:

1. When you introduce a method or finding, you need to explain why it's significant to your research report. The method or finding doesn't speak for itself and it requires your intellectual labour to show why it connects to your analysis/interpretation.

2. When you want to compare two findings or categories or criteria, you not only need to explain why the second example is similar to the first, but you also have to account for any residual ideas which are not parallel to the first finding, category, criteria, and say why either they are not significant, or why they are.
3. When you analyse data you are looking to make generalizations about patterns and relationships. and conversely, when you make a generalization about a pattern, you are required to support it with evidence from your data.

These are only a few examples, I can think of lots more. The skills required to accomplish these tasks can be transferred directly from lit. crit. courses. It would make it easier for me to demonstrate this connection if I knew students already had the basic conceptual vocabulary in place, which could potentially be provided by a textbook such as you propose--you could show how writers in the lit crit genre use these features of topic structure to demonstrate reasoning processes which are used in other academic genres as well.

Using Kieran Egan's model, outlined in *The Educated Mind* (which is a nifty little tool, actually) you can tell a story about this process: In order to develop the complex reasoning skills required of them, students need to recapitulate the stages of symbolic learning--they need to construct simple narratives (mythic understanding, and not something most adults are comfortable doing), then they need to read and write about the singular and the particular (romantic understanding--acquired from reading stories, among other things), and eventually to make generalizations and draw inferences about these singularities (philosophic--which is probably the desired outcome of such study).

I can't think of a discipline or a genre in a better position to do the work of leading students through this process than English and the lit crit essay. But this approach is about features of the text,, not about personal growth or career development. Perhaps it is a more instrumentalist approach than you had planned to make.

Date: Tue, 21 Jul 1998

From: Russ Hunt

Subject: Learning to write by writing lit crit essays

Sandra Dueck raises an important issue, I think. She begins by saying that she's

Speaking as someone who neither reads literature nor writes lit crit when she can avoid it.

As a literature teacher, my main interest is in creating situations which make it more likely that ten years from now my students will be reading literature even when they could avoid it (though I surely *wouldn't* want them going around voluntarily writing lit crit). I think one of the central reasons why so many people have had literature made unpleasant for them (dislike of it, I think, is mostly an artificial creation) is "the classroom essay" as practiced in every classroom I was ever in, the good ones as well as the bad ones. It may or may not be a good way to acquire skills fundamental to other work, but it seems to me it's as effective a way as I know to turn people off of literature. It isn't sure-fire; it doesn't turn off the people whose interest is unquenchable, and there are those whose interest in literature was pretty well doused but who still find writing extended analytic or academic prose bearable. But in my experience the practice of "writing lit crit" is pretty effective at producing people who detest writing, as well.

It's usually difficult, though, to convince people who are involved in postsecondary language education that that's the case, since it doesn't match their (our) experience. I have a theory about that. I think we're people who came to those lit crit essays with an already pretty fully developed sense of what it's like for a piece of writing to have an engaged reader. But most of my students aren't like that. Writing is, for them, a test, not an opportunity to connect. They don't acquire many skills from writing those lit crit essays, and they mostly learn to detest doing that kind of thing, and doing it to literature. Yes, I know there are exceptions; the exceptions, in my view, are people who don't much need English classes.

So while I certainly agree that the things Sandra says she learned from writing those essays are good things to learn, I'm still convinced that there's only a small subset of my students who are going to learn them that way -- and they're precisely the people that I need to worry about least.

She also says,

I learned these skills by trial and error, and because I wanted to know them.

And I would buy that absolutely, and argue further that trial and error and wanting to know is the best -- even, perhaps, the only -- way to learn this kind of thing, and our job as teachers is to create situations in which it's possible for students to come to want to know this kind of thing. I don't think we do it by having them write lit crit, and I don't think we do it by telling them about it, either.

Date: Tue, 21 Jul 1998

From: Kathryn Alexander

Subject: Re: Learning to write by writing lit crit essays

Russ Hunt wrote in response to Sandra Dueck:

I have a theory about that. I think *we're* people who came to those lit crit essays with an already pretty fully developed sense of what it's like for a piece of writing to have an engaged reader. But most of my students aren't like that. Writing is, for them, a test, not an opportunity to connect. They don't acquire many skills from writing those lit crit essays, and they mostly learn to detest doing that kind of thing, and doing it to literature. Yes, I know there are exceptions; the exceptions, in my view, are people who don't much need English classes. So while I certainly agree that the things Sandra says she learned from writing those essays are good things to learn, I'm still convinced that there's only a small subset of my students who are going to learn them that way -- and they're precisely the people that I need to worry about least.

I guess i have to jump in here - as a kind of novice to the forum and the range of discussions here I agree with Russ that Sandra makes some important points, but my experience is quite a different story - i feel many of us arrived at the University as story tellers, poets, working writers - and still get hamstrung by the lit-crit genre - because there is more occurring there in terms of power and knowledge structures than the 'techne' of 'good writing' - I do believe there are "textual identities " made and un-made in the daily practices of lit classes - despite a student's love of literature - or their best intentions to become teachers of English and pass on that love of literature --

A point I find quite ironic is that "reading" is so undervalued -- in lit classes so much of the discipline is disguised as love of reading - but we place all the emphasis on verbal performance in seminars (genre specific utterances could be taken up in another discussion altogether) and individually writing in the tacit privileged genres of the discipline.

i arrived at the university - as an adult "mature" student with a creative writing diploma under my belt, a fairly successful semester at a wise and challenging community college program, and upon my arrival at SFU got slapped in the chops by some fairly heavy gatekeeping - one memorable statement by an esteemed prof who told me "that I would never be a writer and I would never be a graduate student"because I couldn't instinctively punctuate succeeded in crippling me for years. A lifelong love of writing shriveled into fear and shame, and I managed to finish my english BA - and enjoyed some wonderful lit courses along the way, but the voice rang true - i didn't know how to instively punctuate -I did not know how to instinctively write lit crit essays either - and never learned the meta -textual forms that Sandra speaks of -- so my grades careened from the spectacular to the borderline often in the same semester. I exited the program with the belief that I could never do graduate work in English and sought out Social Sciences/Education - convincing myself that I really wanted to look at the social lives attached to texts - or that and I wanted to understand my own educational experience as an adult female learner -- but truly - English grad studies scared me to death -and I thought - I would never survive the writing demands - because of my obvious genetic grammatical disability.

i still don't punctuate instinctively - and never will -- I am near completion of my dissertation -I still struggle with the meta-textual techniques of argument/ compare contrast, etc. i am a new comer to the genre theory discourse - but appantly have been writing alongside it for years (I love to explore the link between bodies, institutions and texts - so I value the contribution of Foucault, technologies of power / Dorothy Smith textually mediation of identity / Ricouer texts as human action / Atkinson - ethnography and writing stuff)

And I am un-learning some myths about writing (real writing) creative writing , research and academic genres etc. this

year I had the pleasure of working in Janet Giltrow's Writing Centre - and I recognised in many of the students, the fear, the bewilderment, the seemingly arbitrary evaluation of it all -- I admit that while I did have some wonderful instructors in my undergrad years - I am afraid that their positive voices seemed very faint and therapeutic compared to the "truth" and rigor of the gate-keeper voices -- the power of the technologies of text/ the regimes of truth of the English lit-crit genre are deep, historically valid and supported by the very sinews of the general university institutional practices -- very few of us believe we can write, are meant to be here legitimately, can buck the imposter syndrome of valuing of our writing practices -- I disguised as I taught composition and writing courses to teachers that even teachers are terrified to "write real writing" - even as they develop curriculum to teach students composition and creative writing -

Writing is, for them, a test, not an opportunity to connect. They don't acquire many skills from writing those lit crit essays, and they mostly learn to detest doing that kind of thing, and doing it to literature. Yes, I know there are exceptions; the exceptions, in my view, are people who don't much need English classes.

And I would buy that absolutely, and argue further that trial and error and wanting to know is the best -- even, perhaps, the only -- way to learn this kind of thing, and our job as teachers is to create situations in which it's possible for students to come to want to know this kind of thing. I don't think we do it by having them write lit crit, and I don't think we do it by telling them about it, either.

I think talking about the power structures around post-secondary literacy and writing practice regimes are important in every discipline and I think making some of these methodologies/technologies/ genres more explicit is important - i recall taking many lit and poetry classes - rarely being exposed to "theory" or secondary sources and still having to replicate the 'sounds" of the research genre -- i used to thank my "good ears" for the success I did have -

Date: Wed, 22 Jul 1998
From: Christine Skolnik
Subject: Re: writing about literature (fwd)

I've been away on holiday and haven't had a chance to keep up with this conversation though the subject interests me . . . so forgive me if I'm being redundant. Most recently I've been thinking about teaching reading and writing about literature as critical thinking. I taught a junior introduction to critical reading course last year which has recently been taught as "baby critical theory." I like the idea of exposing young undergraduates to contemporary critical theory, but also thought it a great opportunity to teach some rhetorical theory: invention, evaluation, and argumentation strategies for example. It not only helps to demystify academic discursive practices, and lets students be critics rather than parrots, but trains students to think about how value language functions. While I might not want to teach a particular set of cultural values in a literature/writing course, I do see it as a great opportunity to talk about the rhetoric of evaluation. Some rhetoric programs in the States, have a narrow understanding of rhetoric as civic discourse that appears in recognizable political genres--political speeches, newspaper editorials etc. They tend to ignore or even oppose the study of those more literary/cultural genres that also have tremendous political impact. This is not to argue that "everything is political" (I don't want to "go there" right now), but that rhetorics of socio-cultural value permeate a wide variety of genres, and that teaching critical reading, as critical writing, as critical thinking, teaches skills that are transferable to other academic disciplines, various professions, and ethical living. Any takers . . . objectors?

Date: Fri, 24 Jul 1998
From: Will Garrett-Petts
Subject: Re: writing about literature

My thanks to those of you who have replied, both on & off list, to my initial query re: writing about literature. Please continue to feel free to provide feedback on what you'd like to see in a text like the one I'm writing for Broadview Press. Here's a question for Russ: Henry & I were talking over lunch, & we both felt a little puzzled about how you reconcile your position on the "arhetorical" nature of student critical writing with the need to teach writing in literature classes. In other words, what do you do with your own lit. students? Regards from "hot & steamy" Kamloops (it's 40 c. + today). Splashhhhhhh! That's the sound of me jumping into the pool. Will

Date: Sat, 25 Jul 1998
From: Russ Hunt
Subject: Re: writing about literature

I hate to say it, but it's stunningly gorgeous here today: clear, crisp, mid-twenties, stiff breeze. I've only got a minute but I wanted to respond quickly to Will & Henry's question, and promise a longer response to anybody who's really interested.

I don't think there's a *special* need to teach writing in literature classes -- there's a need to teach it in *any* classes -- but because I have observed that conventional writing in all classes is radically arhetorical, I create a situation in which student choose, discuss, and share literature in writing among the class. Writing isn't "turned in" to me, or evalated by me, it's *used* -- to decide what to read, to decide what to do research on, to discuss texts, whatever. The audience for any piece of writing in my class -- and I'll bet my students do more writing than anybody else's, whether teaching writing or "content" -- is always other people in the class, and its purpose is to persuade them to read something, to explain something to them, to report relevant research findings, to organize an activity, or to participate in a publication. Most of it, I don't read at all. If you want to know how this might work in excruciating detail, have a look at the course materials for my 18th century literature course, or for the first year course we did last year as part of the Aquinas Program. They're on the Web; you can get to them through my Web site, by clicking on "Courses and Teaching."

Date: Sat, 8 Aug 1998
From: Will Garrett-Petts
Subject: Discipline Specific Language

More on Writing About Literature

My thanks to Kathryn & Russ for their recent comments. I wonder, though, if there isn't another way of approaching the topic of "writing about Lit." One of the features I'm hoping to include in my text is a "glossary of specialized usage." Instead of defining key literary terms, I think that students would find a listing (& explanation) of critical language useful: here I'm thinking of the specialized way critics use words like "privilege" and "foreground" --& of key words/tropes specific to literary criticism (spatial metaphors about "reading in meaning," or "thick interpretation" seem commonplace, for example). Also, critics tend to engage in genteel exploration, frequently employing rhetorical understatement and words such as "seems" and "suggests."

Are there other examples that might give students some insight into the way lit critics use language--to establish professional ethos? to frame interpretations? etc.

(I'll be happy to credit all interesting suggestions, so please indicate your institutional affiliation when you write--on or off list).

Planning for the Canadian Roundtable in Atlanta

Chair: Graham Smart, Purdue University

At the Canadian Caucus in Chicago, participants realized that most of them taught writing outside of the common American tradition of multiple sections of freshman composition courses. They elected to propose a Canadian roundtable for Atlanta to explore the ways in which writing is central and visible throughout the curriculum in Canadian universities and colleges, although the methods of delivering writing instruction are extremely diverse. From the proposals received, the editorial committee has selected speakers whose ideas and experiences reflect this diversity. Two speakers will present research which examines whether new Writing in the Disciplines programmes have increased students' awareness of the different genres and conventions of disciplinary writing. One speaker will present evidence that the two second-year writing courses offered in her department attract students from a wide variety of disciplines and add to the effectiveness and the visibility of the English department. A team of three speakers will describe a new programme that introduces non-traditional students to academic discourse through a course integrated into the first-year curriculum. And finally, one speaker will argue that Canada should have more writing programs that teach basic composition courses to first-year students.

Aviva Freedman

Julia Carey

Christine Adam

Carleton University's Enriched Support Program: Academic Discourse for Open Admission Students

This presentation will report on the Enriched Support Program (ESP) at Carleton University. Initiated in 1996, the ESP offers students whose high school performance precludes admission to university an opportunity to "prove" themselves within the university context: that is, they take regular university courses (selected for emphasis on close textual reading and written expression) alongside regularly admitted students and are evaluated according to the same standards; but their performance in these courses is "scaffolded" by means of piggy-backed disciplinary workshops which are tied to the program's foundation course, "Academic Discourse and Culture" (ADC).

Framed within current genre theory and Bakhtinian notions of discourse, the ESP offers an environment that integrates generic academic strategies with discipline-specific concepts and patterns of thinking. Integration of the ADC course and the workshops ensures authentic writing tasks, demonstrating the interplay between reading, writing, listening and talking as students acquire the new language of academic discourse. The ESP model also allows students to develop and demonstrate mastery of academic strategies at an individual pace, through flexible modes of instruction that respond to changing needs. A mix of expert and peer consultation and feedback helps students to become aware of their own learning and of the expectations of the academic community.

INKSHED CONFERENCE XVI

Finding each other in a hall of mirrors: negotiating goals and values in language.

May 6-9, 1999

Location: Hotel Mont Gabriel, Québec.
(Laurentian region, one hour north of Montréal)

As usual this year's theme arises from discussions at last year's conference, where the focus on **multiple literacies, ethics and responsibility** led to insights and questions about the goals and values of different educational cultures. This year we want to build on these insights and add other perspectives that will, together, move our understanding forward.

Walking through the **hall of mirrors** of language and literacy education, teachers constantly meet new reflections, surprising as well as familiar views of themselves and of others. Teaching communication (composition, language arts, literature, rhetoric and related subjects) involves an awareness of multiple cultures and contexts. Discussions no longer centre only on academic written language in a North American context; instead they move among many forms of communication: international, technological, intercultural, visual, oral and physical.

As the 1990s draw to a close, certain questions about negotiation among different cultures have become urgent. What misunderstandings can arise between teachers' and students' experience of the classroom and other educational settings? To what extent do teachers try to impose their own goals and values, and to what extent do they accept students' goals and values? Can educators establish a balance between what their teaching and learning have achieved in the past and must achieve in the future?

As usual, the conference will avoid the **talking-head-reading-paper format** by continuing the venerable Inkshed tradition of active participant involvement and unconventional approaches. We will continue with the tradition of built-in reading time. Please start to think about what you would like to bring or send to the reading table.

Conference organizers:

Ann Beer and Jane Ledwell-Brown
Department of Educational Studies
Faculty of Education
McGill University
3700 McTavish Street
Montréal, Québec H3A 1Y2

Phone: (514) 398-6746 extensions 5135 (Ann) or 2472 (Jane)
Fax: (514) 398-4529/4679
e-mail: beer@education.mcgill.ca, ledwell@education.mcgill.ca

Welcome to the CASLL

[This is an edited version of the Web page which introduces people to the electronic mailing list. It's printed it here as an invitation to Inkshedders who haven't yet joined to try it. As is mentioned in the editorial, there are a substantial number of members of CASLL and subscribers to the newsletter who have no connection to the rest of the organization between issues of the print newsletter, and who may not be aware that this is available.]

CASLL is the acronym for the Canadian Association for the Study of Language and Learning. It's also known as "Inkshed," which is the name of the annual working conference which has been held in various locations in Canada since 1984, and which gave rise to the organization.

CASLL / Inkshed maintains a site where you can find current and back issues of the Inkshed Newsletter, information on conferences, and other information, on the World Wide Web at

<http://www.stthomasu.ca/inkshed>

More to the point, there is an electronic discussion forum, run on a LISTSERV situated at the University of New Brunswick, and "owned" (that is, he sweeps the streets) by Russ Hunt at St. Thomas University. The list is electronically archived on the Web, at

<http://listserv.unb.ca/archives/casll.html>

The archive is arranged by months, is searchable, and is complete back to the beginning of 1995.

To subscribe to this list, you send, to LISTSERV@UNB.CA, a one-line mail message saying simply "subscribe CASLL [your name]."

The message will be forwarded to Russ, and he'll complete the process.

Renew your subscription and membership in CASLL

You can do this by sending a cheque, made out to "Inkshed at NSCAD," for \$20 (\$10 for students and the un[der]employed) to the following address:

Kenna Manos
Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
5163 Duke Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3J6
Canada

If you don't know whether your subscription has expired, it almost certainly has. Send the cheque anyway, and Kenna will apply it to the next year's membership -- and CASLL will have money to support attendance at the conference by students and un[der]employed scholars.