

for its institutional commitment of Amy's developmental leave, we are grateful to NDSU's administration.

Most significantly, we are indebted to the contributions of our authors and the many scholars whose work they have synthesized. That so much has been thought and said about composition pedagogy is a testament to our field's commitment to teaching and learning.



# What Is Composition Pedagogy?

## An Introduction

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### “Pedagogy”

1. A place of instruction; a school, a college; a university. Also *fig.* Now *hist.* and *rare.*
2. Instruction, discipline, training; a system of introductory training; a means of guidance. *Obs.*
3. The art, occupation, or practice of teaching. Also: the theory or principles of education; a method of teaching based on such a theory.

—*Oxford English Dictionary*

We came to this subject, years ago, as graduate students sitting in a circle with Gary Tate at Texas Christian University, questioning composition pedagogy—what it is, how many ways there are to do it, and to what extent our talking about it matches our doing it. Tate pushed us, as relatively new writing teachers, to play “doubting and believing games” with each pedagogical theory we encountered (Elbow), encouraging us to consider our personal investments and how those intersected with the theories. As we explored a variety of approaches, each of us had moments of spark and moments of panic. For example, like Ann George in this collection, each of us at one time or another discovered that critical pedagogy is deeply important—but also deeply challenging to implement. Over time, we made tentative allegiances and found focus and direction in approaches that suited our understanding of writing and its role. Kurt leaned toward teaching argument and aligning with writing centers while Amy started with community-engagement and genres and Brooke gravitated toward community-engagement and new media. As we reflect on Tate's course over fifteen years later (now ourselves teachers of composition pedagogy), what we value most is the way its combination of mentorship, focused reading, and critical self-reflection helped us understand the complexity and wisdom of each pedagogical area. It helped us become more comfortable with the fact that there is no single correct way to teach writing, nor even one unified set of goals all writing teachers need to help students achieve.

teaching and learning informed by a particular set of writing principles and knowledge. The distinction between writing *theory* and writing *pedagogy* can be confusing, in part because the difference is not simply that one is theoretical and one practical. Writing theory deals with text production, circulation, and reception, while writing pedagogy explains the teaching and learning of writing. Pedagogy draws attention to the underlying philosophies, theories, and goals of teaching practices. Further, there is a difference between *teaching* and *pedagogy* as functioning terms. Teaching is the practice while pedagogy almost always also draws attention to its underlying philosophies. As James Berlin explains:

To teach writing is to argue for a version of reality, and the best way of knowing and communicating it—to deal, as Paul Kameen has pointed out, in the metarhetorical realm of epistemology and linguistics. And all composition teachers are ineluctably operating in this realm, whether or not they consciously choose to do so. (“Contemporary Composition” 234)

It is in the conscious attention to worldview and goals that teaching becomes pedagogy. Teachers ask themselves: *What goals and principles inform my teaching decisions each day and across the course, program, and curriculum?*

To illustrate the relationship between theory and pedagogy, consider how genre theory, a production and reception theory, suggests that types of writing emerge out of social conditions to meet communicative needs (see, e.g., Miller). Those genres are then circulated by people who need to solve some communication problem, broadly conceived, and received by those who might participate in solving the problem. So when a teacher needs to create a frame for her course and communicate it to students, the teacher develops a syllabus. Genre theory helps us to understand why and how such documents exist, as well as how to challenge and question existing patterns and practices in textual use. If patterns and practices around a genre have become orthodoxy, a genre theorist might identify the control exerted over users and provide insights into changing social practices for the better. What genre theory *does not do* is explain how to help students or novice writers understand and write genres better. It is genre pedagogy that must fill in that gap, drawing together the twin strands of learning theory and genre theory and bringing them to inform classroom and extracurricular practice. Given the close relationship between writing theories and the pedagogies that draw on them, it is perhaps unsurprising that pedagogical categories wax and wane in response to theoretical (and other research) trends in the field. Theory, research, and pedagogy push and pull each other.

Though both writing theory and writing pedagogy have theoretical dimensions, and though both are brought to practical applications, theory or “pure” theory has historically been valued over the teaching and learning arm in higher education generally and in English departments in particular (this belief is advanced by writing specialists at times, as well). We join Ernest Boyer in arguing that theory, research, and pedagogy are complementary, not hierarchical, ways of knowing. The chapters in this volume exemplify that complementarity.

## PEDAGOGY IS RESEARCH BASED

Theories shape our thought and give it direction. Our research tests those theories. To differentiate the relative values of theories and practices, it is important to draw on the data and tested knowledge of the field, and by tested knowledge we mean a range of things, including the accumulation of classroom practice and teacher research but also including more social-scientific approaches. In a 2008 article, Chris Anson issued a clarion call explaining the deep importance of research to good pedagogy:

My point is this: if we continue to rely on belief in our pedagogies and administrative decisions, whether theorized or not, whether argued from logic or anecdote, experience or conviction, we do no better to support a case for those decisions than what most detractors do to support cases against them. Instead, we need a more robust plan for building on the strong base of existing research into our assumptions about how students best learn to write. In the process, we may discover that some of our own beliefs fail to stand the test of inquiry, prompting further research into the foundations of success in student learning and development and further modifications of our dominant pedagogies. (11–12)

Anson pushes against our tendency as humanists to rely on narratives of experience and theoretical formulations, important knowledge to be sure, but incomplete if we do not seek other kinds of data.

The cognitivists provided an early model of this kind of data-driven research with their think-aloud protocols regarding writers’ processes (Flower and Hayes, among others). Current researchers, such as the members of the Consortium for the Study of Writing in College (2008–present), draw on large bodies of National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) data to better understand how writing instruction impacts students over the course of their undergraduate careers. Together with myriad classroom studies and theoretical analyses, we build significant pedagogical knowledge.

## PEDAGOGY IS RHETORICAL

When teachers first attempt to teach two sections of the same course or to teach the same course twice across semesters, they quickly discover that no two instances of a class are the same. The lesson on analyzing advertisements that seems to activate and enhance students’ knowledge of the rhetorical appeals so well at 11:00 a.m. falls like a rock at 1:00 p.m., not because the lesson has changed but because the situation has. Such shifts happen at all levels, from class period to class period, instructor to instructor, room to room, institution to institution, region to region. Like other communicative situations, teaching is *rhetorical*, meaning that it inevitably depends on the particulars of specific audiences, purposes, occasions, and constraints.

As expert communicators, teachers detect patterns and ways to draw on previous experience in particular situations, but teachers need a range of theories,

embodies specific ways that we construct students—for example, as communicators, as scholars, as disenfranchised citizens, or as future professionals (Tate).

### Pedagogy as a Heuristic to Create New Practice

In our own classrooms, we have used pedagogical theory to create new practices, often in those moments when something just didn't seem to be working well enough. For example, Kurt's overlapping experiences as a composition teacher and as a writing center consultant helped him begin to address a common teaching challenge: engaging students earnestly and productively in peer review.

Students often hesitate to participate in classroom peer review because they lack confidence to solicit and use constructive feedback and because, subsequently, they don't trust their peers' advice. As Neal Lerner discusses in this volume, writing center pedagogy can help by emphasizing social writing skills. Tutors model how to engage productively in the give and take of collaboration. Students can begin to feel more empowered as they learn from writing tutors how to talk about their writing with others, and how to solve problems for themselves by using editing and revision techniques that are commonly practiced in tutorials. As Kurt has discovered, importing writing center pedagogies, either by sending students to the center or by partnering with writing center faculty, can complement any of the other approaches presented in this book.

### Pedagogy as an Evaluative Tool to Check Practice

Genre pedagogy has helped Amy to check practice, reminding her of the importance of moving students through genre performance to genre critique. The writing program Amy directed has been largely informed by genre pedagogy. For almost a decade, teachers and program directors at North Dakota State University have applied principles of genre pedagogy: using models for understanding and analysis, exploring a range of genres with differing audiences and purposes, and so on. Simultaneously, they examine their practices through the lens of genre pedagogy.

Even upon reading Amy Devitt's contribution to this edition, Amy was reminded of the importance of getting students to critique genres, a challenge in the first-year classroom. Reading the pedagogy chapter allowed her to think again about the role the vertical writing program (general education courses at both the first and third year) played at her institution and the ways she and the other program director could think about explicitly emphasizing aspects of genre pedagogy in the courses at the first-year and third-year levels. Emphasizing understanding and analysis of genres in the first-year program, Amy and her colleagues feel they should find ways to get students in the third-year courses to critique genres. Even further, reflection on genre pedagogy and its goals can help shape lower- and upper-division assessments. When NDSU instructors read portfolios for a "Communicating effectively in a variety of genres for a range of audiences, purposes, and situations" goal, they might need to add a layer to the rubric for upper-division assessment that more directly looks for evidence of genre critique. Thus, pedagogy helps us to check practice at all levels: daily plans, units or assignments, courses, and programs.

### Pedagogy as Critically Reflective Practice

Browsing composition scholarship, new teachers quickly find that reflection is part of our culture; it's a component of writing and learning activities, assessments, and research and teaching narratives. Much of this work exhibits the characteristics of *critically reflective practice*, as described by Stephen Brookfield:

[R]eflection becomes critical when it has two distinctive purposes. The first is to understand how considerations of power undergird, frame and distort so many educational processes and interactions. The second is to question assumptions and practices that seem to make our teaching lives easier but that actually end up working against our own best long term interests . . . (8)

Community-engagement pedagogies typically emphasize the use of critically reflective writing to help students contextualize and personalize their learning experiences. This commitment to critical reflection extends to the instructor as well.

For over a decade, much of Brooke's teaching has centered on museum-based service-learning projects involving the digital preservation of artifacts and oral history. As Laura Julier, Kathleen Livingston, and Eli Goldblatt explain in their chapter, sustainability is a key challenge for community-engaged writing pedagogies. So in the early years Brooke drew upon the insights of community literacy pioneers such as Linda Flower to pursue a handful of long-term, mutually beneficial relationships. As these partnerships deepened over time, some unexpected challenges emerged. For example, at one museum her partners are so personally committed to the project that they sometimes sacrifice too much of their own time, streamlining work to accommodate the students in ways that protect students from potentially frustrating but pedagogically valuable pitfalls. In a similar vein, the students—and at times Brooke herself—are so deeply invested in the partnership and in the museum's mission that extra scaffolding is needed (such as weekly debriefings, orally and in writing) to help them maintain a critical perspective on the museum's complex role(s) in the community and on their own complex roles as they both narrate and critique the museum's stories (Hessler, "Identification"). Brooke and her students tap into the lore and scholarship of other community-engaged writers to get a sense of how their experiences connect to larger issues of civic identity and discourse.

### Pedagogy as a Heuristic to Create New Writing Theory

Just as writing pedagogy is informed and complemented by writing theories, discussions of and experiments with pedagogy can influence our understanding of how writing gets done, by whom, why, with which tools, and so on. Thinking about how writing is learned can shed light into corners of our theories that are not sufficiently explanatory. For example, in the 1960s, as Composition Studies was emerging as a field of study in the United States, we came to acknowledge that writers had processes that were more complicated than our previous, broadly labeled, current-traditional pedagogies had made apparent. For about two decades, as they used process approaches in the classroom, scholars sought something like an ideal process that could be taught and would ensure success. Think-aloud protocols and

presence in the pedagogical literature. We also added a chapter on second language writing, since non-native writers represent a relatively large population in writing classes, with needs and strengths different from those of native writers.

As we rethought the chapter formerly titled “Technology and the Teaching of Writing,” we concluded that in 2014 all pedagogies would likely be augmented and enhanced by technologies other than just the computer, from online and database research to content management course shells to new media delivery to collaborative authoring tools. So, while we created a New Media Pedagogies chapter to highlight the exciting work done by the technological specialists in our field and a chapter on Fully Online and Hybrid Writing Instruction to address the particular issues of going more fully online with courses, we also encouraged the authors to consider any discussions scholars were having about the roles of technologies in accomplishing the particular goals of the pedagogy.

A final new area of emphasis in this edition that crosscuts the chapters is the question of assessment. While the assessment research is less connected to pedagogical subfields, the chapter authors were tasked with considering the particulars of assessing writing in these pedagogical areas. If each pedagogy has at least a segment of unique goals, surely there would be implications for assessment. It seems that there is more work to be done in this area.

While all chapters have been significantly updated, several chapters remain the same in terms of title and general focus: Expressive Pedagogy, Collaborative Writing, Cultural Studies and Composition, Critical Pedagogies, Feminist Pedagogies, Writing Across the Curriculum, Writing Center Pedagogy, and Basic Writing. Most of these areas have vibrantly evolved in the ensuing ten-year period.

In his response to the *Guide*'s Rhetorical Pedagogy chapter in the first edition, Richard Fulkerson suggested expanding the presentation of rhetoric from one chapter to three—covering argument, genre, and procedural rhetoric (“Composition in the Twenty-first Century”). Rhetoric informs most chapters in this collection, but we reimagined the original chapter as Rhetoric and Argumentation and added a new chapter on Genre Pedagogies. In his essay on Rhetoric and Argumentation, David Fleming surveys theories and practices of argumentation from classical times through the modern era, introducing major rhetorical frameworks from Aristotle and Isocrates to Kenneth Burke, Stephen Toulmin, and Chaim Perelman. Fleming's chapter culminates with practical suggestions for integrating rhetoric into writing instruction. Amy Devitt's chapter on Genre Pedagogies takes as its leaping-off point the types of writing in the world and how they are used to get things done—genres as windows into the rhetorical situation. Genre-based pedagogy is deeply rhetorical in nature and used increasingly in textbooks and classrooms nationwide, as well as figuring prominently in the discourse of the discipline, connected as it is to scholarship on discourse communities, activity systems, and genre theory.

In the first edition, we included one chapter addressing students with unique needs. In their chapter on Basic Writing Pedagogy, Deborah Mutnick and Steve Lamos situate developmental writing instruction in its historical and social context. They describe how pedagogical goals define the major approaches (“error-centered,”

“academic initiation,” and “critical literacy”), then discuss exemplary programs and address future concerns for teaching basic writers in higher education. Paul Kei Matsuda and Matthew J. Hammill's new chapter on Second Language Writing Pedagogy adds a much needed discussion of the linguistic and cultural challenges that second language writers face, with particular attention to issues of mechanics and source-based writing. The authors provide both strategies for differentiating instruction and additional resources for learning more about how to support language development in the writing classroom.

Expressive Pedagogy and Literature and Composition Pedagogy are noteworthy because they are closely tied to ways many of us originally came to the profession of composition—as passionate writers and readers—and yet both pedagogies have, over time, been contested in our field, as the chapters in this collection indicate. Our professional scholarship distanced itself from expressivism and from the teaching of literature in composition classrooms. That underlying tension was manifested in Burnham's bibliographic essay on expressivist pedagogy in the first edition of our book, where he both explains and defends that pedagogical heritage. Indeed, literature pedagogy was deliberately omitted from the first edition because a too-common practice in the preceding decades was to teach composition classes as literature classes, rather than using literature to teach composition; further, there was little scholarly literature that really spoke to using literature in the writing classroom. Even now, this focus is less robust than we might expect given the long relationship between literature and writing rooted in English departments. Both pedagogical approaches continued to be employed widely within composition classrooms despite these debates.

Several chapters in the previous and current edition share a vision for the classroom as a site for social action and change: critical pedagogy, cultural studies approaches, community-engagement, feminist, and even at times basic writing pedagogies. The sociopolitical pedagogies tend to envision writing and language use as always socially enmeshed; therefore, according to many of these thinkers, teaching writing without helping students understand the implications of what the writing does for and to people, how it does it, and how to craft language for social purposes (wide-ranging, not just activist) is central to teaching writing. Laura Micchiche suggests this hopeful, social-change-oriented outlook might be the primary factor uniting feminist pedagogies. Feminist approaches, not just “women's issues” themed approaches, involve questioning, challenging, and seeing the world differently; a feminist teacher may find himself or herself exploring intersections of power, norm, and privilege. Linked originally to social class oppression, critical pedagogies value questioning and even a decentering of authority, and Ann George suggests that the tools of critique so powerful in a critical classroom may even be turned on the teaching itself so it never becomes unquestioned or unquestioning. Community-engagement approaches often seek change or awareness, typically through direct, local action. Laura Julier, Kathleen Livingston, and Eli Goldblatt discuss ways university and community partners are working together, as well as issues that affect the sustainability of those partnerships, such as institutional and individual power relationships, material resources, the physical (and metaphorical)

pedagogies take as central to their purpose teaching students to produce “texts that exceed the alphabetic and may include still and moving images, animations, color, words, music and sound” (Takayoshi and Selfe 1). Although the use of digital media is not essential for the production of multimodal texts, many teachers experimenting with multimodality gravitate to digitally generated end products, such as audiovisual essays and the various social media projects (e.g., blogs, YouTube videos, digital activism) increasingly appearing in composition textbooks. The popularity and visibility of such projects are perhaps why the terms *multimodal* and *multimedia* are sometimes conflated. Recent scholarship is working to clarify multimodal composition as a matter of process (and cognition) as well as product, of pedagogical perspective as well as praxis, and of media that are physical as well as digital (see, e.g., Fleckenstein; Lutkewitte; National Council of Teachers of English; Palmeri). In the present edition, several authors discuss the evolving presence of multimodal composition in our field—in particular, Collin Brooke (“New Media Pedagogy”) and Diana George, Tim Lockridge, and John Trimbur (“Cultural Studies and Composition”). Readers will observe multimodal principles and practices in many of the pedagogies featured in this collection.

## CONCLUSIONS

Composition Studies distinctly emphasizes pedagogy, perhaps more than any discipline outside of colleges of education. We publish about pedagogy, build careers around the pursuit of pedagogical knowledge, host conferences focused in large part on issues of teaching and learning, and take up the work of training future generations of teacher-scholars in our graduate curricula. We have even made arguments, through such organizations as the Council of Writing Program Administrators, that program administration, curriculum reform, and assessment should be considered as “intellectual labor” akin if not equivalent to conventional scholarship. The hard sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts—even applied disciplines such as engineering and business—focus on producing specialized knowledge first, then teaching that knowledge to students. Though we all have colleagues across the disciplines who are exceptional teachers, and though faculty conduct scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in other departments, we have noted in our interactions with colleagues across campus and at SoTL conferences that our pedagogical expertise is somewhat unusual and that knowledge about teaching and learning we virtually take for granted seems very new to others.

Our attention to pedagogy seems to come from a number of sources, the first of which is history. Worldwide, the teaching of writing and the scholarly specialization in Writing Studies remains concentrated in English-speaking countries, mostly heavily in the United States. The process movement and the emergence of the Conference on College Composition and Communication as a place for people to talk about teaching shaped a distinctive historical trajectory. Further, the field’s desire to become a legitimate scholarly field like others in higher education led to the development of serious pedagogical scholarship involving theoretical and

qualitative methods and even empirical research. The goals of our courses have also influenced this unusual focus on pedagogy. While many fields convey their subject matter first *before* asking students to generate new knowledge, composition classes typically aim for young scholars to create new understandings for themselves by practicing writing and critical thinking—not simply as a means for them to do well in their majors (though that’s certainly part of what happens) but as complex modes of making sense of the world and communicating that sense to others. Thus, though Writing Studies clearly teaches a body of knowledge, many of us agree that much learning about writing must come through experience, practice, and something that looks more like apprenticeship.

So, yes, we value pedagogy and give it a kind of attention one might expect only from educational specialists, because we believe it must be learned at least in part through practice and because we learn so much about writing from studying developing writers in action. We are not certain that pedagogy always makes us better teachers. But it helps us become more self-aware teachers, able to situate our practices and understand what else exists, and why. We share Berlin’s commitment to continuous improvement, because “Not doing so can have disastrous consequences, ranging from momentarily confusing students to sending them away with faulty and even harmful information” (234–235). Teaching is hard enough with good role models and operating principles to inform practice. We hope the chapters that follow will guide readers to rhetorically sensitive, philosophically grounded, experientially (and experimentally) tested practices.

## SUMMARY OF CHANGES TO THE SECOND EDITION

- The new introduction to the collection defines the central term *composition pedagogy* in depth to provide a disciplinary frame for the rest of the chapters and for readers new to the field of Composition Studies.
- Throughout the collection, contributing authors have given increased attention to issues of diversity in the classroom and to the assessment of teaching and learning.
- All of the original chapters retained in the collection (Basic Writing Pedagogy, Critical Pedagogies, Collaborative Writing, Community-engaged Pedagogies, Cultural Studies and Composition, Expressive Pedagogy, Feminist Pedagogies, Process Pedagogy and Its Legacy, Writing Across the Curriculum, and Writing Center Pedagogy) have been revised and their bibliographies updated.
- Three of those chapters (Feminist Pedagogies, Process Pedagogy and Its Legacy, and Writing Center Pedagogy) have been completely rewritten by new authors.
- The original chapter on Technology and the Teaching of Writing has been removed, and that subject has been distributed across all chapters, with more in-depth coverage in the chapters on New Media Pedagogy and Fully Online and Hybrid Writing Instruction.

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to  
Composition  
Pedagogies



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