

11 Rhetorical Genre Studies

Approaches to Teaching Writing

As we have discussed earlier, Rhetorical Genre Studies' sociological understanding of genre has revealed genre as a rich analytical tool for studying academic, workplace, and public environments, but it has also left RGS researchers with questions about the pedagogical possibilities of teaching genres explicitly in classroom environments, outside of the contexts of their use. The challenge for RGS has been how to develop genre-based approaches to teaching writing that attend to this dynamic—how, that is, we can teach genres in ways that maintain their complexity and their status as more than just typified rhetorical features. As we have described, RGS scholars have for the most part advocated an apprenticeship-based approach to teaching and learning genres, but the challenge, especially for scholars and teachers in composition studies, remains: How can we bring our knowledge of genre to bear on the teaching of writing? In what follows, we focus on RGS pedagogical approaches, with attention to various teaching issues: how to develop genre knowledge that transfers across writing situations; how to teach a critical awareness of genre; how to teach students to move from critique to production of alternative genres; and, finally, how to situate genres within the contexts of their use, whether public, professional, or disciplinary contexts.

RGS PEDAGOGIES AND THE TRANSFER OF GENRE KNOWLEDGE

With the ongoing development of university-wide writing programs and the continued growth of Writing Across the Curriculum courses has come, from within the field of rhetoric and composition studies, renewed questions about the transfer value of writing courses—questions about whether skills, habits, strategies, and knowledge learned in First-Year Composition (FYC) courses transfer to and enable stu-

dents to succeed in other disciplinary and workplace contexts that college students will need to negotiate. Research on writing transfer has begun to shed some light on the challenges students face as they negotiate disciplinary and professional writing contexts (see, for example, Bazerman, "What Written Knowledge Does"; Beaufort, *Writing in the Real World*; Berkenkotter and Huckin, *Genre Knowledge in Disciplinary Communication*; Carroll, *Rehearsing New Roles*; Dias et al, *Worlds Apart*; Dias and Paré, *Transitions*; McCarthy, "A Stranger in a Strange Land"; McDonald, *The Question of Transferability*; Sommers and Saltz, "The Novice as Expert"; Walvoord and McCarthy, *Thinking and Writing in College*), and while this research has generally ranged from mixed to pessimistic regarding the transfer value of FYC, this has only raised the stakes for the need to articulate what transfers from FYC courses and how we might re-imagine these courses in light of such research. As Elizabeth Wardle recently put it, we "would be irresponsible not to engage issues of transfer" ("Understanding 'Transfer' from FYC" 66), a charge that follows David Smit's identification of "transferability" as a primary consideration for writing instruction, in his book *The End of Composition Studies*.

Research in education and psychology identifies meta-cognition as an important component of knowledge transfer, especially across dissimilar contexts of the sort students will encounter between FYC courses, courses in different academic disciplines, and workplace settings. In their well-known research on knowledge transfer, D.N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon distinguish between what they call "low road" and "high road" transfer. Low road transfer "reflects the automatic triggering of well-practiced routines in circumstances where there is considerable perceptual similarity to the original learning context," for example, how learning to drive a car prepares one to drive a truck (25). High road transfer, on the other hand, "depends on deliberate, mindful abstraction of skill or knowledge from one context for application to another" (25). Because knowledge and skills do not automatically transfer across dissimilar contexts, high road transfer requires "reflective thought in abstracting from one context and seeking connections with others" (26). As Perkins and Solomon suggest, the ability to seek and reflect on connections between contexts, to abstract from skills and knowledge, to know what prior resources to draw on, how to use these resources flexibly, and what new resources to seek are all preconditions for effective writing transfer across different contexts.

Some RGS scholars have argued that genre analysis and awareness enable such meta-cognition. In “Genre and Cognitive Development: Beyond Writing to Learn,” Bazerman describes the process of learning new genres as a “cognitive apprenticeship” that can facilitate metacognitive activity:

Genres identify a problem space for the developing writer to work in as well as provide the form of the solution the writer seeks and particular tools useful in the solution. Taking up the challenge of a genre casts you into the problem space and the typified structures and practices of the genre and provide the means of solution. The greater the challenge of the solution, the greater the possibilities of cognitive growth occurring in the wake of the process of solution. (295)

This interest in teaching genres as learning strategies or tools for accessing unfamiliar writing situations (or for solving “problem spaces”) is taken up by Anne Beaufort in her recent longitudinal study, *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*. Throughout the course of her study, Beaufort explores how genre knowledge can serve as a “mental gripper” for students negotiating new writing situations and how teaching genres as learning strategies can provide students with tools that transfer to multiple contexts. As she tracks one student’s (Tim’s) writing experiences across first-year composition, history courses, engineering courses, and post-college jobs, Beaufort acknowledges the centrality of genre knowledge, which plays a prominent role in her discussion of how students apply abstract concepts in different social contexts and writing situations. In her study she found that Tim, despite no explicit instruction in genre, did deepen his genre knowledge, leading her to the question: “What opportunities might there have been for deepening Tim’s genre knowledge if this knowledge domain had been discussed more explicitly in the curriculum? Could it have enabled a more efficient and effective transition to understanding the shifts in genre expectations in the new discourse communities he would encounter?” (53). Her answer is that novice writers would more readily gain access to writing situations and genres if explicitly taught genres in relation to the social contexts in which they function.

To support these claims, Beaufort proposes an approach to writing instruction geared toward positive transfer of learning, a pedagogical approach very much situated in genre theory, as evidenced by the genre-centered teaching apparatus she includes at the end of the book. Providing a pedagogical illustration of teaching students to write an abstract for a journal article or a book, Beaufort begins with the first step—an analysis of genre—and what it tells writers about the participants in a community and the rhetorical occasion, including the subject matter. Writers might discover that an abstract is a genre read by members of several communities—researchers in the field, librarians, and editors—but with a common rhetorical purpose, which is to interest others in the new work. The writer also uses his/her genre knowledge to make decisions about writing process and rhetorical choices: what the required content of the genre is, how best to sequence the content, and what stylistic level of formality to adopt. An approach to teaching writing via genre analysis, then, functions to simultaneously bring multiple knowledge domains—subject matter, rhetorical knowledge, discourse community knowledge, and writing process knowledge—into dynamic interaction. In response to a final question posed by her research—“How can we set students on a life-long course of becoming expert writers?”—Beaufort responds, “Let them practice learning new genres and the ways of new discourse communities . . . and challenge them to apply the same tools in every new writing situation” (158).

RGS APPROACHES TO TEACHING GENRE ANALYSIS

RGS scholars—taking up this challenge to develop students’ genre knowledge in ways that can better prepare them to access, understand, and write in various situations and contexts—have developed fruitful methods for cultivating meta-genre awareness. In the RGS approach to teaching genre analysis, students learn how to recognize genres as rhetorical responses to and reflections of the situations in which they are used; furthermore, students learn how to use genre analysis to participate and intervene in situations they encounter. To illustrate this genre-based pedagogy, we have included below a genre analysis heuristic from our textbook (with Amy Devitt) entitled *Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genres*, a text that features prominently in Beaufort’s proposed “new framework for university writing instruction”:

Guidelines for Analyzing Genres

- 1. Collect Samples of the Genre.** If you are studying a genre that is fairly public, such as the wedding announcement, you can look at samples from various newspapers. You can also locate samples of a genre in textbooks and manuals about the genre, as we did with the complaint letters. If you are studying a less public genre, such as the Patient Medical History Form, you might have to visit different doctors' offices to collect samples. Try to gather samples from more than one place (for example, wedding announcements from different newspapers, medical history forms from different doctors' offices) so that you get a more accurate picture of the complexity of the genre. The more samples of the genre you collect, the more you will be able to notice patterns within the genre.
- 2. Identify the Scene and Describe the Situation in which the Genre is Used.** Try to identify the larger scene in which the genre is used. Seek answers to questions about the genre's situation such as the ones below:

Setting: Where does the genre appear? How and when is it transmitted and used? With what other genres does this genre interact?

Subject: What topics, issues, ideas, questions, etc. does the genre address? When people use this genre, what is it that they are they interacting about?

Participants: Who uses the genre? *Writers:* Who writes the texts in this genre? Are multiple writers possible? What roles do they perform? What characteristics must writers of this genre possess? Under what circumstances do writers write the genre (e.g., in teams, on a computer, in a rush)? *Readers:* Who reads the texts in this genre? Is there more than one type of reader for this genre? What roles do they perform? What characteristics must readers of this genre possess? Under what circumstances do readers read the genre (e.g., at their leisure, on the run, in waiting rooms)?

Purposes: Why do writers write this genre and why do readers read it? What purposes does the genre fulfill for the people who use it?

- 3. Identify and Describe Patterns in the Genre's Features.** What recurrent features do the samples share? For example: What *content* is typically included? What excluded? How is the content treated? What sorts of examples are used? What counts as evidence (personal testimony, facts, etc.)? What *rhetorical appeals* are used? What appeals to logos, pathos, and ethos appear? How are texts in the genres *structured*? What are their parts, and how are they organized? In what *format* are texts of this genre presented? What layout or appearance is common? How long is a typical text in this genre? What types of *sentences* do texts in the genre typically use? How long are they? Are they simple or complex, passive or active? Are the sentences varied? Do they share a certain style? What *diction* (types of words) is most common? Is a type of jargon used? Is slang used? How would you describe the writer's voice?
- 4. Analyze What These Patterns Reveal about the Situation and Scene.** What do these rhetorical patterns reveal about the genre, its situation, and the scene in which it is used? Why are these patterns significant? What can you learn about the actions being performed through the genre by observing its language patterns? What arguments can you make about these patterns? As you consider these questions, focus on the following:

What do participants have to know or believe to understand or appreciate the genre? Who is invited into the genre, and who is excluded? What roles for writers and readers does it encourage or discourage? What values, beliefs, goals, and assumptions are revealed through the genre's patterns? How is the subject of the genre treated? What content is considered most important? What content (topics or details) is ignored? What actions does the genre help make possible? What actions does the genre make difficult? What attitude toward readers is implied in the genre? What attitude toward the world is implied in it? (93-94)

The questions above stress the interaction between genre and context, guiding the students from analysis of the situation to the genre and then from genre back to the situation, in a trajectory that reflects RGS approaches to genre analysis. Students start by identifying the situation from which the genre emerges. Students might explore context through interviews and observations, trying to identify where and when the genre is used, by whom, and why. After that, students ana-

lyze the genre for what it tells them about that situation. Such analysis involves describing the genre's rhetorical patterns, from its content down to its diction, and then making an argument about what these patterns reveal about the attitudes, values, and actions embedded in the genre. In so doing, students revisit the situation through the genre that reflects and maintains it. The idea here is to create a temporary analytical space between the genre and its situation, a space in which students can inquire into and connect rhetorical and social actions. The goal is not so much for students to master a particular genre, but to develop transferable genre-learning skills.

Other RGS textbooks aimed at first-year composition writers effectively use genre as a frame for formulating rhetorical strategies and responding to various communicative situations, reinforcing the transfer value of genre knowledge. John Trimbur's *The Call to Write* integrates a genre approach and begins each unit with a section entitled "Thinking about Genre." This section is focused on explaining the rhetorical and textual features of various genres—such as letters, proposals, memoirs, and reviews—as well as their social functions. Following their reflection on their experience with and the social relationships constructed in the genre in the "Thinking about Genre" exercise, students read sample texts in the genre, analyze the features of the genre and its context, and then produce their own example of the genre.

A similar approach is taken in the *Norton Field Guide to Writing* (Richard Bullock), which also integrates genre considerations, noting how genres frame reading and writing assignments. Students are advised to begin each assignment by identifying the genre they are asked to write. Like *The Call to Write*, the *Norton Field Guide* includes a section on "Thinking about Genre" and integrates the following genre heuristic, which encourages students to consider how the rhetorical features of genres (content, tone, language, medium, design) are linked to the rhetorical actions they perform—the purposes they carry out and the audiences they address:

- What is your genre, and does it affect what content you can or should include? Objective information? Researched source material? Your own opinions? Personal experience?
- Does your genre call for any specific strategies? Profiles, for example, usually include some narration; lab reports often explain a process.

- Does your genre require a certain organization? Most proposals, for instance, first identify a problem and then offer a solution. Some genres leave room for choice. Business letters delivering good news might be organized differently than those making sales pitches.
- Does your genre affect your tone? An abstract of a scholarly paper calls for a different tone than a memoir. Should your words sound serious and scholarly? brisk and to the point? objective? opinionated? Sometimes your genre affects the way you communicate your stance.
- Does the genre require formal (or informal) language? A letter to the mother of a friend asking for a summer job in her bookstore calls for more formal language than does an email to the friend thanking him for the lead.
- Do you have a choice of medium? Some genres call for print; others for an electronic medium. Sometimes you have a choice: a résumé, for instance, can be mailed (in which case it must be printed), or it may be emailed. Some teachers want reports turned in on paper; others prefer that they be emailed or posted to a class Web site. If you're not sure what medium you can use, ask.
- Does your genre have any design requirements? Some genres call for paragraphs; others require lists. Some require certain kinds of typefaces—you wouldn't use Impact for a personal narrative, nor would you likely use Dr Seuss for an invitation to Grandma's sixty-fifth birthday party. Different genres call for different design elements. (10-11)

As illustrated by the above examples, a rhetorical genre approach teaches students how to recognize and perform genres as rhetorical responses to and reflections of the situations in which they are used. As Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway point out in *Learning and Teaching Genre*, "To analyze school writing in light of the recent reconception of genre is a *demystifying* move, in that it affords explanations of conventional forms that previously appeared arcane and arbitrary" (12). In other words, students can access and participate effectively in academic situations by identifying the assumptions and expectations regarding subject matter, their roles as writers, the roles of readers, and purposes for writing that are embedded in the genres. Again, such approaches to genre analysis do not focus so much on the acquisition of a particular

genre as they do on the development of a rhetorical awareness that can transfer and be applied to various genres and their contexts of use.

TEACHING CRITICAL AWARENESS OF GENRE

Just as Freedman and Medway point out that a genre approach can “demystify” writing situations, they also warn that “the slide is easy from the discovery that conventions are not arbitrary or unmotivated to the assumption that they are right and should be acquired” (*Learning and Teaching Genre* 14) by students, which is also a danger. In response, RGS pedagogical approaches have also focused on the need for instructors to be critical in their uses of genre and to teach this critical awareness to students.

To recognize genres as socially situated and culturally embedded is to recognize that genres carry with them the beliefs, values and ideologies of particular communities and cultures. This extends to the genres that instructors assign, emphasizing the importance of teaching a critical consciousness of genres. In their collection of articles exploring the ideological nature and power of genres, *The Rhetoric and Ideology of Genre*, Richard Coe et al. include in their introduction a heuristic for critical analysis of genre that was earlier developed by Coe and Aviva Freedman. While the heuristic above, “Guidelines for Analyzing Genres,” describes strategies for using genre to make sense of and function effectively within communicative environments, the following heuristic asks writers to critique genres for how they both enable and limit access and may privilege certain users:

- What sorts of communication does the genre encourage, what sorts does it constrain against?
- Who can—and who cannot—use this genre? Does it empower some people while silencing others?
- Are its effects dysfunctional beyond their immediate context?
- What values and beliefs are instantiated within this set of practices?
- What are the political and ethical implications of the rhetorical situation constructed, persona embodied [cf., subject positioning], audience invoked and context of situation assumed by a particular genre? (Coe et al. 6-7)

Ideologies are embedded not only in the genres we assign students to write but in the genres we use as instructors, such as assignment prompts, syllabi, and comments on papers. As a result, it is important for teachers to teach critical awareness of classroom genres. Charles Bazerman uses an apt travel metaphor to describe the culture of the classroom and students' knowledge of genres as passports into the academic culture:

In our role as teachers we constantly welcome strangers into the discursive landscapes we value. But places that are familiar and important to us may not appear intelligible or hospitable to students we try to bring into our worlds. Students, bringing their own road maps of familiar communicative places and desires, would benefit from signs posted by those familiar with the new academic landscape. However, guideposts are only there when we construct them, are only useful if others know how to read them. . . . ("Where is the Classroom" 19)

One way to construct useful guideposts for navigating academic culture is through demystifying classroom genres, like the teacher's end comments on student papers, the student-teacher conference, writing assignment prompt, and the syllabus. In "The Genre of the End Comment: Conventions in Teacher Responses to Student Writing," Summer Smith reveals typified moves teachers make within their end comments, arguing that these moves become so habitual that teachers and students inhabit them unconsciously, in ways that render the genre of end comment less effective. Laurel Black has also analyzed the genre of teacher-student conferences in order to show how conferences exist somewhere between talk and teaching. Black calls for more explicit discussion of student-teacher conferences (their purposes, the social roles they invite, and the conventions that carry out these purposes and social relations) so that students can inhabit such a genre more critically and effectively. Likewise, in our textbook, *Scenes of Writing*, students are asked to analyze their course syllabus to uncover the underlying assumptions and expectations of the course. After sharing sample syllabi in groups and analyzing what the rhetorical patterns reveal about the academic scene and its participants, students critique the syllabus using the following questions as a guide:

What is expected of students in college courses? How are they expected to behave, according to the syllabi's assumptions? What kinds of roles are teachers expected to take, as reflected in the syllabus genre? What kinds of things do the syllabi seem to stress, and what does that say about the expectations within the academic scene? (197)

Students then follow this analysis with a critique of the genre of the syllabus, responding to the following questions:

What does the genre enable its users (both teachers and students) to do, and what does it not allow them to do? Whose needs are most and least served by the genre? What limitations does the genre place on participation in the writing course scene and larger academic scene? (197)

The above exercises ask students to analyze the assumptions embedded in the genres participants use within these academic scenes, thus using genres as maps for gaining access to these academic scenes.

Another way students can learn to access and participate effectively in academic scenes is by identifying expectations embedded in writing assignments or prompts. Irene Clark, in "A Genre Approach to Writing Assignments," argues that a genre-based approach to writing prompts can help (both teachers and students) uncover implicit genre expectations or assumptions that might not be explicitly spelled out. Students can discover rhetorical strategies, clues about their roles as writers and the roles of their readers, and the social goals of the assignment. Drawing a comparison to stage directions, Clark points out that "a writing assignment constitutes an invitation, not a set of specific instructions. Helping students understand what is involved in responding to that invitation appropriately will enable them to participate in the performance more successfully."

As Bazerman and others have noted, classrooms are complex spaces that are "always invented, always constructed, always a matter of genre" ("Where is the Classroom?" 26). Students bring with them their own genre histories and, based on the intellectual and institutional context of the writing class, teachers build into the classroom certain generic expectations. As a result, classroom genres are inescapable from power, social difference, and cultural factors. As Devitt has

argued, “The first and most important genre pedagogy, then, is the teacher’s genre awareness: the teacher being conscious of the genre decisions he or she makes and what those decisions will teach students” (“Teaching Critical Genre Awareness” 343).

TEACHING THE PRODUCTION OF ALTERNATIVE GENRES

A teaching approach that develops a critical awareness of genre should, in addition to teaching students to critique a genre’s ideologies, teach them an awareness of how to produce alternatives. One criticism that has been leveled against a RGS approach to literacy teaching is that it focuses on analysis and critique of genres, stopping short of having writers produce alternative genres or practice using genres to enact change. Susan Miller, for instance, draws a distinction between what she calls “a smart awareness of generic power” and “practice in manipulating genres” and argues that “guided hermeneutic tours have not shown students how to make writing result in motivated action” (483). How, then, do teachers work to develop students’ critical awareness to counter potential ideological effects of genres and to produce alternative genres that mediate between constraint and choice? Brad Peters, in “Genre, Antigenre, and Reinventing the Forms of Conceptualization,” describes a college composition course in which students read about the U.S. invasion of Panama from a book that takes a Panamanian perspective. The students were then told to write an essay exam that followed a particular format moving from a summary of the argument, to the three most compelling points for a Latin American reader, to the three most fallacious points for a Latin American reader, and finally the student’s reaction compared to the Latin American reader’s. One student, Brenda—an African American student—opened her essay with an analogy between the racism in Panama and that in the U.S. Peters contends that Brenda had remained silent during class discussions and not until she had a format for framing and expressing her dissent did she do so. Another student, Rita, wrote the essay exam from the fictional perspective of her close friend Maria, a native Latin American and after completing the rhetorical analysis part of the exam, dropped the persona and took up her own in the form of a letter to Maria. Peters identifies this as an “antigenre” but points out that Rita’s response satisfies the social purpose of the genre while reconstituting voice and varying the format of the genre. This dem-

onstrates that even when the writing assignment is fairly prescriptive and students are asked to write a fairly traditional genre, there is room for them to maneuver within (and because of) the constraints of the genre.

Another approach to teaching genres as both constraining and enabling is to have students write critical analyses of genres but also participate in the production of new generic responses. For example, Richard Coe asks students to choose a specific type of writing—storybooks for young children, feature articles for ski magazines, feminist critical articles on Shakespeare—and has students create a mini-manual for people who want to learn to write those particular genres. In this way, students not only gain experience writing a specific genre (the manual) but they also analyze a variety of sample genres and, in their manual, make explicit the features and constraints of these genres (“Teaching Genre as a Process” 164). Students could even investigate and do a critical study of genres before writing these genres themselves. Bruce McComiskey, for example, pairs assignments—having students write a critical analysis of education followed by a brochure for high school students or pairing an analysis of the cultural values of advertisements with letters to advertisers arguing the negative effect on consumers. While students conduct genre analysis in order to identify linguistic and rhetorical patterns and to critique the cultural and social values encoded in the genre (what the genre allows users to do and what it does not allow them to do, whose needs are most/least served, how it enables or limits the way its users do their work), the final step asks students to produce new genres or genres that encode alternative values for the purpose of intervening.

A related approach is to have students read multiple examples of the same genre to discover that there’s more than one way to respond to a situation. In the study cited above, Peters assigns autobiographies in his FYC classes and has students read samples of this genre as well as some “antigenres”—such as an autobiography by a Japanese woman that was composed of a series of testimonies by people who had influenced her, rather than a traditional first person point of view. One of Peters’ students used features of this “antigenre” in his own autobiography. In the same vein, another student—assigned a biography—wrote the biography in the form of a play, which fit with her desire to explore her subject’s life as a dramatic presentation. If we provide students with multiple situations and let them decide how to respond most ap-

appropriately, we might encourage them to see genres not as “forms dictated” but as a “matter of forms to be found,” a genre approach that Ruth Mirtz describes as “part of the form-finding process of meaning-making” (192). In this way, genre analysis can move beyond teaching academic forms to teaching purposeful rhetorical uptakes for social action and can enable students to engage more critically in situated action, the focus of the next section.

TEACHING GENRES IN THEIR CONTEXTS OF USE

The previously discussed pedagogical approaches to teaching genre analysis—including teaching variation and production of alternatives—have been challenged by critics who argue that genre learning cannot take place outside the complex, dynamic sociocultural contexts and set of uptakes that give rise to them (see Chapter 6, for example, where we discuss genre and uptake knowledge). In the well-known and previously cited debate in *RTE* regarding explicit teaching of genres, Aviva Freedman poses the question, “Can the complex web of social, cultural and rhetorical features to which genres respond be explicated at all, or in such a way that can be useful to learners?” (“Show and Tell?” 225). Freedman’s concern is with studying genres outside the contexts that they function for—with abstracting genres from the complex and dynamic social and cultural contexts that shape and are shaped by them. Genre-based pedagogical approaches have been criticized for locating the study of genres outside of the “living situations” of their use (Bleich) and for limiting the understanding of genres to features that writers already recognize (Bazerman, “Speech Acts”). In response to this criticism, RGS scholars have recommended teaching genres within their contexts of use by employing field research or ethnographic methods, following approaches already used in English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

For example, in his genre-based approach to an EAP program, Brian Paltridge includes ethnographic components as students carry out a study of fellow students’ attitudes toward English. In “Genre, Text Type, and the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Classroom,” Paltridge highlights a task that asks students to interview fellow students to find out “their reasons for studying English, and their opinions regarding different varieties of English” (85). He then assigns the following case study: “Observe a fellow student in this course over a

period of several weeks and identify the communication strategies s/he uses when speaking English. Discuss your observations with the student” (85). Similarly, in her book *Text, Role, and Context: Developing Academic Literacies*, Ann Johns casts students in the role of researchers with the objective of getting students to interview professors and investigate the academic and disciplinary settings in which they are writing and to interrogate the values and expectations of the genres they are being asked to produce. Applying a similar approach to more advanced students or teacher-researchers, Bazerman highlights assignments that draw on ethnographic methods in order to situate classroom genres (for example, by examining a set of papers from all students in class and by interviewing students and instructors to discover their understanding of the genre of the assignment). One activity asks students to analyze the genre set of a professional:

Interview a professor or other professional to determine what kinds of texts [they] receive and write in the course of a typical day. If possible, collect samples. You may wish to shadow them for a day to notice what kinds of texts they receive and produce. Write a paper analyzing the genre set you have found. (“Speech Acts” 337)

A genre approach that incorporates field or ethnographic approaches—observations of a group’s interactions, participation in the group, interviews with individuals who read or write in a genre—can situate genre analysis and give students access to authentic contexts for language use.

RGS practitioners have begun to integrate participant/observation research of communities in order to enable students to examine and to see first-hand how communities use genres to carry out social actions and agendas. The following heuristic, “Guidelines for Observing and Describing Scenes,” from the textbook *Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genres*, seeks to provide students with tools for analyzing genres within their contexts of use:

Guidelines for Observing and Describing Scenes

- 1. Select and Gain Access to a Scene.** Once you have selected a scene, determine how you will gain entry into it. Whenever possible, ask for permission from somebody in that scene with the authority to grant it. Tell him or her what you are doing and why you are doing it. Ask also if you could get permission to interview participants in the scene.
- 2. Observe the Scene in General.** With a notebook in hand, you are now ready to begin your observations. Begin by describing the scene in general terms. Ask yourself and, whenever possible, ask the participants in the scene: What sort of place is this scene? What activities take place within the scene? Who participates in these activities? What is it that brings people together in this scene? What are the participants' shared objectives?
- 3. Identify the Situations of the Scene.** To identify the situations within a scene, use the following questions: What sorts of interactions do you see happening in this scene? Are different interactions occurring in different settings? Do different people participate within these different interactions? Are different subjects discussed within these different interactions?
- 4. Observe and Describe the Situations of a Scene.** Once you have identified some of the situations within a scene, you can begin observing some of these situations more closely in order to describe them more fully. In your observation notes, try to describe the participants, setting, subject, and purposes of the interaction for each situation. Keep these questions in mind: Who is participating in this situation? How do the participants seem to be relating to each other? Where exactly is their interaction taking place within the scene? When does this interaction typically take place? What are they interacting about? And what is the nature of their interaction? What sort of language are they using? What sort of tone do they use? Why do they need or want to interact? What is the purpose of their interaction?
- 5. Identify the Genres in the Scene.** To identify the genres of a scene, look for patterns or habits in the interaction within a situation. Ask yourself: What patterns of speaking do you notice in those

situations? What written documents typically appear in and are used repeatedly? Because you might not be able to observe all of the genres in action, interview participants in the situation about their genres, and, if possible, collect samples. Try to get responses to the following questions: What “kinds of texts” do the participants typically write in that situation? What are these texts called? What do these texts look like? Who uses these texts, when, where, and why? (44-45)

These questions guide students through the process of gaining access to a scene, to carrying out ethnographic observations of the scenes’ participants and activities, to exploring and analyzing the genres used within that scene. In addition to collecting samples of the community’s genres, students are urged to interview participants about their uses of the genre as well as take observational notes on the patterns or habits of interaction within a situation. Through their simultaneous participation in ethnographic inquiry and genre analysis—their observation of “meaningful discourse in authentic contexts”—students may come closer to accomplishing what Freedman defines as the two necessary criteria for effective writing instruction: the “exposure to written discourse” combined with “immersion in the relevant contexts” (“Show and Tell?” 247).

TEACHING GENRES IN PUBLIC CONTEXTS

In *Genres Across the Curriculum*, Herrington and Moran argue that students can learn ways of thinking and problem solving by writing in authentic contexts, via participation in public genres (9). This view is backed up by research on the socio-discursive model used in Brazilian pedagogy, which teaches literacy skills through genres such as radio genres (see Baltar et al., “School Radio”) that have a broader reach to audiences beyond academic audiences. In addition, with the recent proliferation of writing courses focused on public or civic rhetoric, a spectrum of pedagogical approaches for public writing have evolved, ranging from rhetorical analysis of public discourse to direct experience and intervention in public spaces—approaches that can promote genre critique, the production of alternative genres, a situated approach to teaching genres in authentic contexts, as well as the transfer of genre knowledge to public writing situations. Public genres allow teachers to focus on academic objectives of analysis and critique while bring-

ing into the classroom genres that function as sites of intervention in public spheres. Richard Coe, for example, has focused on having students write political briefs designed to influence a public decision-making body (“The New Rhetoric of Genre”); Christian Weisser describes a class where students enter into public discourse by generating their own genre on environmental issues; and John Trimbur describes a course in which students write news articles on public health policy and then work in groups to produce an appropriate genre of their choosing—brochure, pamphlet, flyer, poster, video, radio announcement, web site, etc. (“Composition and the Circulation of Writing”). Trimbur’s textbook, *The Call to Write*, also focuses on a range of public genres—from speeches, Web sites, op ed pieces, and letters to listservs, ads, fliers, and newsletters. Teaching these public genres provides students with “the opportunity to inform and influence readers on issues they truly care about” (15), thus potentially creating more authentic contexts for writing or authentic engagement of writers.

The textbook *Scenes of Writing* includes a chapter on public genres (highlighting opinion editorials and letters to the editor) that gives students opportunities to analyze and critique public genres—particularly the ways in which they intervene in publics—while also choosing a public organization and selecting and writing a genre appropriate to the organization’s goals. For example, one of our students researched the living wage campaign on his campus and produced a flier for the United Campus Workers, allowing him to imagine and respond to exigencies different from those of academic genres and to intervene in sites where discourse can have significant effects. Teaching public writing through genre analysis of public discourse includes, as Susan Wells describes it, “an orientation to performance . . . inside and outside of texts” (339). It can teach students that texts do things in the world and that rhetorical features are tied to social practices. Moving from public contexts to professional contexts, the next section focuses on genre approaches that connect rhetorical features to disciplinary practices.

TEACHING GENRE IN DISCIPLINARY CONTEXTS: A GENRE APPROACH TO WAC/WID

Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) programs, since their inception in the 1970s and growth in the 1980s, have focused on two strands:

writing to learn (writing as a tool for discovering and shaping knowledge) and learning to write in the disciplines (learning the specific genres and conventions of a discourse community). Since genres function both as cognitive tools and cultural resources, genre analysis is a useful method to employ in writing courses across the curriculum (for an historical and theoretical overview of WAC, including genre and discipline specific applications, see Bazerman et al, *Reference Guide to Writing Across the Curriculum*). Early on in RGS, scholars recognized genre's pedagogical potential for teaching writing across the curriculum (see for example Bazerman's *The Informed Writer* and *The Informed Reader*). As Elaine Maimon noted, "The configurations that form our surface definition of genre have a heuristic potential. Through a study of genre in all disciplines in the arts and sciences, we can learn more about the varieties of thinking in the academy and in the larger world of professional and public activity" (112).

If genres are ways of knowing and acting within differentiated learning domains, can a genre approach help us re-envision the relationship between writing to learn and learning to write? In "Clearing the Air: WAC Myths and Realities," Susan McLeod and Maimon seek to dispel the myth that writing to learn and learning to write are two competing approaches, arguing that learning to write in the disciplines "is not just an exercise in formalism and technical correctness; to the contrary, it is an exercise in epistemology" (580). If learning disciplinary genres functions both as a process of socialization into the disciplinary community as well a "cognitive apprenticeship" (Bazerman, "Genre and Cognitive Development" 294), an approach to WAC or WID (Writing in the Disciplines) that integrates genre analysis can bridge the gap between writing to learn and writing in the disciplines and can focus on the importance of metacognitive awareness that facilitates the transfer of knowledge from one writing context to another.

In their book *Genre across the Curriculum*, Anne Herrington and Charles Moran identify the complementary nature of these two strands of WAC scholarship and pedagogy, noting the potential for genres to serve as "flexible guides for the invention and social action within a given discourse community" (10). Their book features a number of research studies and pedagogical approaches that apply genre approaches to teaching writing in the disciplines, from an examination of how genres are negotiated in comparative literature, history, and biology to analysis of discipline specific genres such as spiritual autobiographies,

mini-review essays, and resumes (see our discussion of disciplinary genre research in Chapter 7). In addition, Bazerman et al's *Genre in a Changing World*—the volume drawing from the Fourth International Symposium on Genre—broadens the scope of genre-based WAC approaches by including international perspectives, such as a study (by David Russell et al, "Exploring Notions of Genre") that compares the U.S. WAC movement to the British higher education Academic Literacies movement as well as studies of disciplinary-focused writing courses in an Argentinian and Brazilian University context (see our description of Aranha's study of Brazilian graduate courses in the disciplines, Chapter 7).

Ann Johns ("Genre Awareness for the Novice Academic Student: An On-going Quest") has also recently proposed two promising genre pedagogies that engage with WAC/WID approaches. One approach entails the formation of interdisciplinary learning communities and would cast students in roles as researchers in their content classes, with a focus on discourse community analysis and interviews of faculty in the disciplines. Such an approach promotes genre awareness and situates genre learning (thus teaching rhetorical flexibility), encouraging students to consider the complexity of genres and their varied realizations in real world contexts. The second interdisciplinary approach, drawing on work by WAC specialist Michael Carter, organizes disciplinary writing into four "macro genres" of response: Problem-Solving, Empirical Inquiry, Research from Written Sources, and Performance. Rather than simply training students to learn specific text types, this taxonomy, argues Johns, "educates for a broad knowledge of academic disciplines" (Johns, "Genre Awareness" 21), teaching students varied genres of response that illustrate different ways of knowing. In a similar approach in the textbook *Scenes of Writing*, students are asked to compare how two genres from two different disciplines make use of analysis, argument, and/or research and to analyze what these similarities and differences reveal about each of these disciplinary domains (see *Scenes of Writing*, Chapter 8: Writing in Unfamiliar Academic Scenes and Genres). Finally, in her book *Academic Writing: Writing and Reading in the Disciplines*, Janet Giltrow provides a number of exercises that ask students to consider stylistic differences across various domains of academic writing.

WAC pedagogies that integrate genre approaches envision genres as situated actions that function both pragmatically and epistemologi-

cally—both as sites of material interaction within social environments and as tools for understanding and interpreting these interactions. As sites and strategies that locate writers and guide their rhetorical moves, genres are valuable tools for writers entering and navigating disciplinary cultures. A writer's engagement in a disciplinary genre provides access to that community and promotes particular ways of knowing and acting within the disciplinary community.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen in the last two chapters, genre-based pedagogies are adaptable to multiple and varied institutional contexts, as evident by their use within ESL programs, graduate-level writing programs for international students, primary and secondary school writing curricula, first-year composition programs, and writing in the disciplines/writing across the curriculum programs. Genre's range as a pedagogical tool reflects the range of traditions and intellectual resources that have informed its study over the past thirty years. It also reflects the pedagogical goals and conditions from which it has emerged and to which it has responded. How we utilize genre approaches, then, needs to be grounded in the context of this deeper understanding.

We hope this book—with its overview of genre within historical, theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical contexts—has provided readers the kind of breadth and depth of understanding of genre that will inform their work in multiple contexts: as scholars, researchers, writing teachers, and writing program administrators.