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GRADUATE PROGRAMS FOR TEACHERS OF BASIC  
WRITING:  
THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE'S PH.D. IN  
RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

BACKGROUND

Five years ago, at a time when the teaching of basic writing and reading skills was being "rediscovered" and reestablished as an important part of the undergraduate curriculum in American universities, colleges, and secondary schools, the English Department at the University of Louisville began to develop a Ph.D. program in Rhetoric and Composition. Our program's goals were to provide the following:

- An integrated concentration in rhetoric, linguistics, literature, and pedagogy for students who wished to enter the secondary and college teaching professions
- The opportunity to combine academic work in these areas with practical experience in teaching and administrating in college and secondary writing programs
- Access to recent research in the disciplines of cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, discourse theory, and sociolinguistics to students doing research in the composing process
- The opportunity to learn how to conduct empirical studies in composition and its teaching
- The kind of integrated training and experience in composition and literature that would enable students to synthesize the two in English Department curricula without sacrificing the integrity of either discipline.

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The program we have developed to achieve these goals reflects the situation and specific needs of our institution. The University of Louisville is a public, urban university of approximately 20,000 general and professional students. Like many public universities across the country it has grown enormously over the past fifteen years and in ways that its English Department was not traditionally prepared to accommodate. Many of Louisville's new students, for example, are open admissions students who formerly would not have been admitted to college. They hold high school diplomas, but very few of them have had the background in reading and writing that was traditionally expected of college students. Some have never written formal papers in high school; very few have recently taken literature surveys; even fewer have done the critical analyses of reading material that freshman English teachers used to assume their students had experienced in high school. Older than traditional college students, many have been employed for years, and they continue to hold jobs and raise families as they attend college. Most are, in other words, less well trained; they usually read much less than moderately motivated traditional college students, and they are often not highly motivated to learn to read and write precisely because exactness in reading and writing has not been emphasized.

This profile of the new student at Louisville accounts for many of the particular and subtle changes in emphasis that have occurred over the past five years in the development of our graduate program in rhetoric and composition. Graduate students in that program are the teachers who have shouldered most of the responsibility for teaching writing to this large number of new students at Louisville, usually about twenty percent of the entering freshman class. They have tutored and taught basic writers in the University's Writing Clinic, which provides supplementary tutoring and course training (in English 100, required of all students who score below a designated level on the ACT and the Department's English Placement Examination) for the majority of the University's basic writers. They do most of the administering and grading in the complex testing program that the Department has developed to regulate the flow of students into different writing courses. And they have gradually become the most active of the composition staff in revamping English 101 to meet the needs of these new students. The basic writing teachers have come to function as the English Department's pedagogical conscience, alerting the composition and literature staffs to the weaknesses of the traditional curriculum in serving non-traditional and poorly prepared students.

Because of the important role they play within the Department, basic writing teachers have helped shape the courses they take as graduate students in the English Department's Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition.

First, they have helped define the integration of rhetoric, linguistics, literature, and pedagogy within the Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition. Second, they have helped define the nature and kind of practical teaching experiences needed to develop the skills required of basic writing teachers as they face new students. Third, they have helped the Department understand that traditional methods of teaching and evaluating writing had to be supplemented by useful strategies and methods growing out of recent composition theory and research—strategies for defining the rhetorical contexts within which basic writers write and more valid and reliable methods of measuring and evaluating growth in writing skill. Fourth, and finally, basic writing teachers who are also graduate students in the rhetoric and composition program are helping the composition staff understand what has recently come to be called the *developmental* or process approach to teaching writing. In fact, the concept of developmental learning serves as an effective way of generalizing all the contributions basic writing teachers have made to the evolving Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition.

Developmental learning must first be distinguished from remedial learning. Developmental describes an approach to teaching that applies generally to all learners. When applied to writing, developmental learning is characterized by six basic principles:

- Teachers are able to make both general and specific approximations of their students' cognitive abilities
- Teachers understand writing as process, as a sequence of interdependent stages in which thinking and writing interact to produce a final product
- Teachers can combine their understanding of students' cognitive abilities and their understanding of the composing process
- Teachers approach the problem of error from an empirical basis and with a systematic methodology that has been drawn from recent research in learning theory—having studied systematically and having understood the patterns of error in student texts, the theories that best explain the reasons behind these patterns of error, and the teaching strategies that can be used to teach students to diminish error naturally, as they learn to make the transition from oral to written language
- Teachers respond to student writing in ways that are similar to the responses that writing would get from different audiences in the real world, that is, bound to and defined by rhetorical considerations that are functional and realistic as well as good preparation for academic discourse
- Teachers and program administrators clearly distinguish between

*evaluation* for placement and matriculation and *measurement* of student progress, so that students' sometimes dramatic improvement can be taken into account when they fail to meet standards for passing a course and so that writing programs can shape and reshape curricula to reflect the ways basic writers acquire skills.

These developmental principles account for the University of Louisville's approach to training basic writing teachers in its rhetoric and composition doctoral program.

#### A GENERAL THEORY FOR TRAINING BASIC WRITING TEACHERS

Rhetoric, linguistics, and literature function as core course areas for all graduate students in rhetoric and composition at Louisville. The history, the methods of teaching and analysis, and the subjects of each of these areas are represented by groups of English Department courses. Permeating every graduate course in rhetoric and linguistics are three more general concerns: how these disciplines can help a teacher of writing apply theory to teaching; how these disciplines can draw on information from other disciplines to inform the teaching of composition; and how these disciplines can help potential writing program administrators develop the skills necessary to construct curricula that will serve both basic writers and traditional students. The program was constructed with the following questions in mind: What should basic writing teachers be able to do? What do basic writing teachers need to know? What kinds of practical experience should basic writing teachers have as they complete graduate degrees? I shall now consider each of these questions from three general perspectives—theory and practice, interdisciplinary contributions, and curricular concerns—to establish a foundation for the training of basic writing teachers.

#### **What Should Basic Writing Teachers Be Able To Do?**

First, a basic writing teacher must know how to teach developmentally. That means, as I briefly indicated before, knowing how, generally and specifically, to define the cognitive abilities of basic writing classes of different levels and kinds. Accomplishing this end requires background in several related areas of research and theory, most of which are represented in recent composition theory. All the remaining functions are essentially subsumed under this first.

A basic writing teacher must be able to diagnose individual writing problems, usually on several levels at once. A student's problems with

syntax, error, conceptual patterns and organization, and attitude are equally important. Diagnostic and evaluative skills must be developed through both theoretical study in courses and practical experience in administering tests, devising new instruments for placing and evaluating basic writers, and teaching and tutoring basic writers of different backgrounds and abilities.

Basic writing teachers must be able to help construct curricula—to shape courses, supplementary teaching aids, tutorial strategies, and peer workshops and teaching models that will provide basic writers with consistent and appropriate emphases in content and learning strategies.

Almost every basic writing teacher who makes a career commitment to the field will need to conduct empirical studies of writing, the writing process, student behaviors, classroom techniques, and other teachers' methods. These studies may use longitudinal or case-study methodologies, and they will most often be used to measure the success or failure of competing methodologies, to articulate the need for new course materials or emphases, to evaluate the effectiveness of program strategies, and to evaluate teaching.

In many institutions, basic writing teachers take on primary responsibility for creating needed supplementary programs. They may be asked to develop writing centers that provide walk-in tutoring, mini-courses in the writing process, review courses, and diagnostic packages; they may also coordinate peer and professional tutoring programs, individualized learning packages in composition, and traveling workshops for agencies, businesses, and corporations that wish to improve basic writing skills. In these areas basic writing teachers often become administrators who must be familiar with different learning theories and their practical implications, and who must be able to help select materials that are consistent with program philosophy and goals.

Finally, those who become leaders in the basic writing field will increasingly be called upon to teach other teachers of writing, to help traditional English professors who have taught only literature seminars return to composition to develop writing center and clinic staffs who can teach basic writing using a variety of instructional formats and models, and to help regular composition staff learn skills that will enable them to teach non-traditional students.

This very general outline of what basic writing teachers will need to do assumes two basic needs at the Ph.D. level: first, a grasp of theory that can provide a base for comprehensive program planning, teacher training, and professional leadership in a new field and, second, numerous opportunities to apply aspects of that theory to actual programmatic and

pedagogical situations. A basic writing teacher synthesizes disciplinary theories, learning technologies, and pedagogical methods. M.A., M.Ed., or M.A.T. programs in basic writing may be more completely practical and technical, particularly in the study of linguistics and empirical research methods, than a doctoral program.

### **What Do Basic Writing Teachers Need To Know?**

*The Composing Process.* Above all, basic writing teachers must understand current theories of the composing process. This understanding should result in several teaching skills:

- The ability to develop a conceptual model that can account for the writing habits and behaviors of professional and successful student writers
- The ability to explain the differences among thinking, speaking, and writing—particularly as these differences explain the problems that are experienced by students who are not accustomed to using language in academic or written contexts.
- The ability to intervene in the basic writer's writing process to accommodate it to more effective strategies for directing the processes of prewriting, revising, editing, and proofreading
- The ability to draw from different theoretical models for explaining the writing process and to perceive when cognitive approaches to writing as a particular mode of thought are appropriate and when behavioral approaches to writing as a set of defined and arranged skills are appropriate
- The ability to recognize and analyze writing anxiety and writer's block, and to devise strategies for relieving both
- The ability to examine a series of writings and diagnose both the structural problems that appear in the product and the potential causes of those problems in the student's writing process

A small number of courses in composition research, theory and practice should provide at least a base for developing these skills.

*Rhetorical Theory and Practice.* Basic writing teachers also require a good deal of training in rhetorical theory and practice. They must be sensitive to the different demands various types of discourse put on inexperienced writers. They must help basic writers establish a sense of audience for their writing since most basic writers are unable to "read" an academic audience's expectations. Showing basic writers, for example, how to include detail or evidence in a piece of writing does nothing to

explain why the detail or evidence is necessary, why most academic readers expect it, and how it functions in helping student writers accomplish their purposes. Finally, basic writing teachers must use formal and informal methods of rhetorical invention to help students discover and use content and structure. Basic writing teachers need model sets of heuristic questions to guide prewriting and more formal sets of procedures to help basic writers arrange their material once they have discovered it and given it preliminary shape. Another small group of courses would provide basic background in these areas of rhetorical theory and practice.

*Linguistics.* Linguistics, particularly theories and methods of analyzing syntax that are especially relevant to teaching the writing process, should provide the third area in the basic writing teacher's program. Generally, basic writing teachers must first know how to use basic syntactical units and patterns as heuristic devices that will help students shape thoughts on paper. They must also be able to describe deviations from written syntax in jargon-free terms and to teach methods of correction that will enable basic writers to perceive deviations from expected forms with their own eyes. But most important, the teacher of basic writers must be able to "read" disjointed syntax well enough to predict what the writer wanted but failed to express.

Several areas of linguistic research help accomplish these ends. Syntax-as-heuristic-device is represented in recent research on sentence combining, in the work of stylistic critics such as Richard Lanham, Walker Gibson, and Francis Christensen, all of whom develop rhetorical approaches to composition, and in the work of conceptual theorists such as Frank D'Angelo, Linda Flower, and Ross Winterowd, all of whom posit using common or new modes of thought as methods of controlling and directing the flow of sentences and paragraphs.

Mina Shaughnessy's *Errors and Expectations* establishes a base for describing patterns of error. She has developed workable broad categories of patterns of syntactical errors that relate to the basic structure and flow of sentences, and she has provided a systematic and functional method of describing and explaining common usage and surface grammatical errors in basic writers' texts. Both approaches derive from structural and transformational theories of grammar; basic writing teachers require an understanding of both if they are to understand and apply these approaches in their own teaching.

Two additional areas should supplement basic writing teachers' understanding of applied linguistics. As a result of open admissions

policies in many urban public universities, many students who speak English as a second language have entered the colleges. Training in English as a second language, in contrastive linguistics and error analysis, and in sociolinguistics provides a basic writing teacher with both the cultural-linguistic understanding and the empirical-analytical skills to develop more effective writing programs for such students. In addition, all writing teachers should receive training that will provide them with theory and methodology for helping these beginning writers, whether native or foreign speakers of English, who need to make the transition from primarily oral to primarily written cultures. Even students who do not come from oral cultures often experience similar writing problems simply because they are not fluent readers and have not fully perceived or used the technology of formal, written discourse. They are learning new codes, if not totally new languages.

Several types of linguistics courses will help basic writing teachers teach writing skills. Theory courses in structural and transformational grammar should provide models for applied work in syntax. Courses in sociolinguistics, history of the English language, and teaching English as a second language will prepare teachers for the cross-cultural and dialect-interference problems their students have when they write academic English. Finally, one or two courses in which linguistic theory is applied to the writing process, as in recent sentence combining and syntactic measurement research, can help basic writing teachers apply linguistic research to the classroom, for example, to alert inexperienced readers to the cues that fluent readers follow as they decode written language. A course reviewing current discourse theory and research as it pertains to composition can be indispensable in helping writing teachers teach coherence and sensitivity to rhetorical context.

*Cognitive Psychology.* Basic writing teachers need to be familiar with recent research in cognition in order to apply learning theory to the teaching of composition. General cognitive research of the type done by Piaget, Bruner, Vygotsky, and Luria might be combined with basic research in psycholinguistics (George Miller, Frank Smith, Kenneth Goodman, Walter Kintsch, and recent work in memory theory) in one bellwether course that would give basic writing teachers a foundation in developmental-cognitive psychology or incorporated in existing rhetoric, composition, and literature courses whenever appropriate. Further work in cognition and writing could then be done in elective courses and independent research for comprehensive examinations and dissertations. Some familiarity with research in cognitive styles, right and left brain



theory, and cognitive mapping can supplement general work in cognition, but these fields, as experimental and new as they are, should be directly applied to the composing process only after careful consideration. But certainly anyone training to teach basic writers should be familiar with the work suggested—and now being conducted—by Janet Emig at Rutgers.

*Reading Theory and Practice.* Most basic writers are not experienced or skilled readers. Basic writing teachers must know enough reading theory and practice to create workable models of the fluent reading process, and they must be able to diagnose the reading skills of their students. Psycholinguistics provides a consistent and useful model of the reading process, and in its practitioner's use of cloze and miscue-analysis tests, psycholinguistic research has begun to produce practical and relatively accurate methods of diagnosing reading skills. Recent work in composition theory is also helping to shape a composition pedagogy that integrates writing and reading in the composing process. Graduate programs training basic writing teachers need not require particular courses in reading; they should, rather, include segments on psycholinguistic methods such as cloze and miscue-analysis procedures to the reading process in courses in cognitive psychology, psycholinguistics, the composing process, and current literary theory.

*Literary Theory and Practice.* The place of literature in training programs for basic writing teachers has been and will most likely continue to be a controversial issue in the profession. Certainly, extensive and appreciative studies of literature for its own sake are less appropriate for teachers who will be teaching inexperienced readers and writers, most of whom are unable to take the types of objectified stances toward written literature that the academic world requires. The more obvious abuses of literature by specialists who foster highly abstract academic-critical introductions and overly formalist perspectives, however, should not be used as reasons to keep literature and literary theory from the professional training of basic writing teachers. Rather, the English profession must clearly perceive those ways literary study can be a useful part of a basic writing teacher's broader more functional knowledge.

Literature—particularly narrative literature—may prove to be the most appropriate reading material for basic writers from primarily oral cultures. Stories drawing on basic human themes, well-taught, provide basic writers with an effective transition from writing about personal experience to writing academic-informative and analytical prose in the

highly objectified manner called for in most college courses. Basic writing teachers, familiar with developmental learning and current composition theory, may be best prepared to broaden the profession's approach to literature, to make it an effective basis for learning to read and write as well as the underpinning of refined forms of cultural criticism.

In addition, two perspectives on literature should prove useful in training basic writing teachers to use literature effectively in these functional contexts. First, current discourse theory should help basic writing teachers understand the different stances required of readers as they read different types of discourse, and to understand how these different stances affect writers who wish to produce a particular type of discourse. Rhetorical considerations of audience and purpose, as they have recently been treated in work by James Kinneavy, James Britton, Walter Ong, Wayne Booth, and current re-applications of classical rhetorical criticism in the work of critics such as Edward Corbett, Richard McKeon, and others can help basic writing teachers mark the general boundaries of discourse and, subsequently, lead students to more subtle and specific perceptions of audience and purpose. Literature, in this more general context, becomes another type of discourse, with its own intrinsic definitions and functions, useful as a means of contrast to expressive, informative (referential), and persuasive discourse.

Current literary theory, however, provides a second and even more potentially useful perspective on literature. A great deal of current literary theory can contribute to a writing teacher's understanding of what Wolfgang Iser terms the "act of reading." This perspective, combined with psycholinguistic reading theory, provides a more precise description of what actually happens as we read than new or traditional rhetorical criticism with their emphases on analysis of the internal features of a literary work. The act or process of reading literature has pedagogical implications of various kinds for basic writing teachers who wish to explain and use certain writing techniques with their students. Indeed, the current literary theorists' attention to the processes of readers—the effects of the text and the author-reader transactions that surround and permeate the text—is beginning to provide understandings as potentially useful to writing teachers as recent researches into the composing processes of writers.

Literary understanding, to summarize, can be a potentially effective way of selecting and approaching reading material in a basic writing class; it can provide useful insights into reading theory; and it can become an extremely useful way of integrating writing and reading in the teaching of the composing process.

*Basic Learning Patterns in Disciplines Other than English.* Basic writing teachers are usually the first to confront the basic writer's lack of orientation to conventions of academic discourse. These conventions are not shared or even recognized by students who come to college from predominantly oral backgrounds. Basic writers from oral backgrounds have problems that have both practical and theoretical implications for any basic writing program. Above all, the lack of shared expectations hinders basic writers as they attempt to imagine the audience and its expectations when they write for college courses; as a result, complex rhetorical problems compound the basic writer's structural and surface problems. The lack of shared conventions also creates attitude and motivational problems for basic writers. Learning to write analytical, objectified, and abstract academic prose is characterized by endless mystery and disappointment for students who do not understand why particular conventions, skills, and styles are expected in college writing.

Basic writing teachers who have done research in cognition, linguistics, rhetoric, and discourse theory will be prepared for these problems on a general, theoretical level. But they will have to have these cognate areas supplemented by practical inquiry into how other disciplines shape writing assignments, the kinds of audiences and purposes they implicitly or explicitly construct for these assignments, and the expectations they have about student writing when they evaluate it. This research should be translated into strategies for preparing basic writers for entry into academic worlds of discourse.

Aside from concerns with these specifically rhetorical matters, research into the methods used by other disciplines as they construct writing exercises should include some analysis of learning models in those disciplines. Do the social sciences incorporate case study and quantitative methods in their exercises? Do art classes apply processes of learned visual perception and representation in their writing assignments? Is the scientific method applied to writing laboratory reports and analyses in the natural sciences? Even general answers to these questions would help basic writing teachers construct particular structural models for teaching composition, and develop heuristics for inventing and revising that would enable their students to use these structural paradigms in their writing.

General familiarity in these six general areas—composition theory, rhetorical theory and practice, applied linguistics, cognitive psychology, reading theory and practice, and literary theory—combined with practical research into writing as it is assigned in other disciplines, would serve as general background for the basic writing teacher's more specialized research and writing toward the close of a Ph.D. program, carried out in

preparing for examinations and in conducting research for dissertations. This more specialized research can be made practical and specific as well as theoretically consistent by a component that has traditionally not been given formal status in most English Ph.D. programs—supervised practice in teaching and administration, preferably including supervised teaching internships and pedagogical research.

### **What Kinds of Practical Experience Should Basic Writing Teachers Have?**

Theoretical and practical research of the types already described must be combined with supervised teaching and administrative experience if basic writing teachers are to take on administrative, teaching, and teacher-training functions in English departments that serve basic writers. Several kinds of supervised activities are required to provide this experience.

First, student teachers should do a large amount of supervised basic writing instruction using a variety of instructional formats. They should have first-hand experience with workshop classes, tutorial methods, small-group work, self-paced instructional materials and individualized conferences.

Second, they should have supervised administrative experience that will prepare them to develop and evaluate basic writing programs. This aspect of practical preparation should include applied work in developing curriculum, selecting and testing course materials, administering collaborative learning centers where more advanced students help less-prepared students, and measuring and evaluating student writing for both placement and advanced placement purposes.

Both the teaching and administration should be carried out, whenever possible, in the types of systems or institutions—secondary, junior and community college, and college and university—where the teacher intends to develop a career. Obviously, this arrangement for practical work during graduate training suggests a broadened concept of how English departments use teaching and research assistantships and fellowships, and it assumes the gradual development of supervised teaching internships in local and regional secondary schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges. In addition, to evaluate these work experiences, English departments will develop more subtle and precise methods of measuring the development of teaching and administrative skills than they have traditionally used.

## TRAINING BASIC WRITING TEACHERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE

Is it possible for an English Ph.D. program to cover so many areas, both theoretical and practical, and still retain the most important of its traditional humanistic goals? The curricular problems suggested in this question are central to the entire post-secondary English profession, not simply to the question of teacher training. Current English studies have already begun the process of examining the knowledge of other disciplines. To deny the presence of this knowledge and its influence is to deny the obvious need English departments have to serve non-majors and non-traditional students. The following outlines the English Department at Louisville's approach to synthesizing interdisciplinary and traditional areas of study.

### **Course Requirements**

At Louisville, students who enter the English Ph.D. program in Rhetoric and Composition receive general training in composition theory, applied linguistics, reading theory, cognitive psychology and learning theory, rhetoric, and literature by taking a required number of courses in each of three general areas: Rhetoric and Pedagogy, Linguistics and Reading, and Literature.

*Rhetoric and Pedagogy.* Each student must take at least three semester courses in this area. Rhetoric courses include a general survey of the history of rhetorical theory and its pedagogical applications, a basic practicum in which composition and rhetorical theory are applied to the teaching of English 101 at the University of Louisville, a survey and application of rhetorical theory to the teaching of literature, and a research-based course in which current rhetorical methods of examining student writing and their writing processes are applied to actual situations in University of Louisville writing classes. These regularly offered rhetoric courses are supplemented by rhetorical topics courses, usually offered once a year, in which rhetorical theory is applied to different problems in the teaching of writing and reading. Topics have included "rhetoric and the reading process" and "current rhetorical problems in teaching composition."

The area is filled out with composition pedagogy courses in literature and language, which are offered at least once a year and at least once each summer. These courses encourage students to apply theory to practice by developing teaching units, sets of teaching strategies, goals and objectives that are theoretically consistent, and writing exercises and assignments

that are consistent with this current theory. Pedagogy that has been based upon current theory in composition and rhetoric, then, becomes one of the program's primary means of showing teachers how what they know about reading literature can be put to use in basic writing classes.

*Linguistics and Reading.* Students must take two semester courses in this area. They may choose from a wide variety of theoretical or practical linguistics courses from either the English Department or the linguistics program. Most potential basic writing teachers take applied courses in syntax, sociolinguistics, and psycholinguistics. Students in rhetoric and composition must also have taken advanced undergraduate courses in English grammar and history of the English language before entering the program, or they must complete them during their first year in residence.

*Literature.* Every student in the program must take three Ph.D.-level literature seminars. The program encourages that these courses be broad in conception, theoretical in approach, and appropriate for students who will be adapting literature to the needs of the writing classroom, and to writers and readers of varying abilities and experience. Coupled with the occasional use of literary examples in rhetoric, pedagogy, and linguistics courses, the literature seminars provide students with an understanding of how literary discourse functions in the larger universe of written discourse.

So far, this discussion of course requirements illustrates how the synthesis of composition, rhetoric, linguistics, reading, and literature becomes part of a student's curriculum. Cognitive psychology and learning theory are usually covered as part of the theory offered in rhetoric and linguistics courses, or they are covered in one or both of the elective courses that a rhetoric and composition student takes.

### **Examinations**

*Integration* and *application* are key words in explaining the examinations that are given at the beginning and end of course work in the rhetoric and composition doctoral program. Students are asked to prepare by integrating insights and methods from at least two of the three course areas—rhetoric and pedagogy, linguistics and reading, and literature—and they are expected to apply what they know to the solving of problems in the teaching of composition. Individual examination questions either combine theory and practice or deal with content and application separately, usually according to the goals of a particular student.

The program's synthesis of traditional English teaching skills in literature and rhetoric and these new areas enable these teachers to keep the discipline's traditional goals intact as they improvise new techniques drawn from some of the newer disciplines. The dual emphasis on integration of different disciplines and their methodologies and on their practical application to composition teaching methods helps basic writing teachers draw on several disciplines in order to solve new kinds of teaching problems. But, above all, the emphasis on integrating theory and method encourages graduate students to consider problems of application—in the classroom, on the job, or in planning a course or unit.

### **Dissertation Options**

The rhetoric and composition program at Louisville includes two dissertation options. The first asks the student to research and write a traditional-length scholarly-critical dissertation in which some aspect of current rhetorical, linguistic, or literary theory is applied to problems that are common in the composition classroom. One student who is doing this type of dissertation has drawn on contemporary literary theory and psycholinguistics to develop a theoretical model describing the fluent reading process. She has then applied this model—using the case study method—to an examination of the reading processes of six fluent readers as they read John Fowles' *Daniel Martin*. The dissertation will close with a chapter exploring the implications of the results of these case studies for the college-level composition and literature class.

The second dissertation option is more strictly empirical in nature and purpose. Students who choose to do it are required to produce two 10,000-12,000 word monographs: an essay in which either rhetoric, linguistics, or literature—or some combination of two or three of these areas—is used to construct a theoretical model that explains a particular teaching unit or classroom approach; and a research essay—similar to the National Council of Teachers of English research monographs—in which a relevant sample of students from an identifiable student population, secondary or college, would serve as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of the teaching unit or classroom approach that had been defined in the first monograph.

Finally, the two monographs are to be used to produce a public teaching demonstration, preferably done on videotape and examined and discussed by the student and his or her dissertation committee. The teaching demonstration enables the student to transfer whatever had been learned in researching and writing the monographs to an actual teaching situation, and it enables the committee to function as an informed group

of pedagogical critics, able to evaluate the student's teaching according to the terms set up in the monographs.

Basic writing teachers will probably benefit most by choosing the second option. It enables them to conduct interdisciplinary research in composing the theoretical monograph, to apply that interdisciplinary theory to a particular group of basic writers and their teachers—perhaps in the University's Writing Clinic or developmental English 100 classes—while doing the research monograph, and to illustrate the most significant implications of this theory and research in developing the teaching demonstration. Such a series of projects ought to give career basic writing teachers the opportunity to study systematically the disciplines they will need to know something about, the students they will subsequently teach, and the teaching methods they will later use.

### **Practical Experience**

I have previously mentioned that Louisville's composition program affords graduate students who wish to emphasize research and teaching in basic writing many opportunities to work in different developmental programs. Tutoring of unprepared writers, in one-to-one and workshop formats, is available in English 100 and the Writing Clinic. Trained graders are always needed for placement and other tests, and this training always includes work with approaches to measurement and evaluation—holistic, primary-trait, and others—that are based on current research. And, of course, there are opportunities for a variety of teaching experiences in the regular and advanced composition programs, where curricular changes that are based on current composition research either have been established or are undergoing experimentation.

The doctoral program in rhetoric and composition also offers students the opportunity to participate in several types of administrative and research internships as they complete coursework, examinations, and dissertations. These include year-long positions as assistant directors of composition, as research assistants in rhetoric, and as directors of the Writing Clinic. Each of these positions is supervised, but a great deal of autonomy is given to interns to help them develop independent administrative and decision-making skills. These internships provide practical experience beyond that provided by the program's regular teaching assistantships, clinic tutoring jobs, part-time composition teaching positions, and part-time administrative jobs. The English Department hopes, over the next year, to supplement these University internships with internships of similar kinds at regional community colleges, four-year colleges, and high schools.



Students are given credit or remuneration for internships. The Department is now arranging for a block of independent-study credit—probably up to fifteen hours—to be available for students as they incorporate intern work in the overall graduate program. These hours will most likely count toward the total number of hours normally granted for dissertation research, but not as Ph.D. coursework. Particularly able students, especially those carrying out independent and original research during their intern period, will receive tuition remission for their work.

Other students have been and will continue to be paid on part-time rates for their intern work. Holders of University Fellowships, for example, who are enrolled in the rhetoric and composition doctoral program are now allowed to receive pay for teaching one course. Such teaching, done under a composition program advisor's supervision, will count as a teaching internship although the student will not receive academic credit for the teaching. Traditional Graduate Teaching Assistant work will continue to account for all or part of some students' intern experiences.

In every instance, these internships will be located in programs and schools where non-traditional and open admissions students regularly attend. These programs and schools will require careful placement and competency testing programs, will include both developmental and regular composition classes, and will require reliable and valid means of course and program evaluation. In other words, every internship would be a potentially ideal opportunity for basic writing teachers to try out and improve upon what they had already been studying and researching in their regular program requirements.

### **Evaluation**

Generally students have responded positively to the Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition at Louisville. The opportunities for interdisciplinary study and for applied work in composition and rhetoric are highly praised. Students who have held administrative internships have been very successful in the job market because of their practical experience. Two are assistant professors in developmental programs at the University of South Carolina at Aiken; another obtained an assistant professorship specializing in composition and rhetoric at Ohio State University; a fourth was recently hired as an instructor in Ohio State's composition program. A fifth is running a writing program at a small liberal arts college in Missouri, and a sixth has a full-time position at a local junior college. No rhetoric and composition student who has seriously looked for a teaching job in an English department has failed to find one. Many

other students already hold full-time positions and have enrolled in the program to advance themselves professionally—at institutions such as Western Kentucky University, Northern Kentucky University, Kentucky Wesleyan, and Jefferson Community College in Louisville.

Initial negative response focused upon the need to combine traditional and innovative content areas and theory and application in comprehensive examinations. After some initial tough going, however, the Department has developed a consistent policy for developing examination questions that integrate knowledge of particular areas of rhetoric, composition, linguistics, and pedagogy with the traditional language and literature areas.

Louisville's Ph.D. program probably will not suit several types of basic writing teachers. Those teachers who wish a less theoretical and broad-ranging program, one that would enable them to focus upon a particular research philosophy or educational technology, might be more comfortable in programs with more strictly linguistic or pedagogical focuses. Those who, in contrast, might prefer an even larger array of rhetoric, linguistics, and pedagogy courses might be served best by larger and more traditional departments of rhetoric, linguistics, or pedagogy. And many basic writing teachers who wish to teach on secondary or community college levels without involving themselves in curricular development or administration might best be served in applied master's programs in English or education. All these are, of course, legitimate professional options, and they are best carried out in programs with more specialized missions.

But for those potential English teachers who wish to enter the profession at a time when the ability to teach basic writing is important at almost every level of the secondary and college curriculum, Louisville's Ph.D. in rhetoric and composition should help them develop the breadth of knowledge and the practical skill necessary to meet the needs of program development and individual basic writing students. Basic writing teachers, theoretically and practically trained, might then be able to show the profession how to serve both traditional and non-traditional students simply because they will have integrated new disciplines that are related to the language and learning problems of basic writers with the knowledge of literature and language that has been traditional to English departments.

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