

PART III

Rhetoric and Pedagogy

Rhetoric as Pedagogy

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Isocrates was famous in his own day, and for many centuries to come, for his program of education (paideia), which stressed above all the teaching of eloquence. His own works . . . were the vehicles for his notion of the true “philosophy,” for him a wisdom in civic affairs emphasizing moral responsibility and equated with mastery of rhetorical technique.

—Thomas Conley

Rhetoric has always been a teaching tradition, the pedagogical pursuit of good speaking and writing. When Homer’s (trans. 1938) Achilles, “a rhetor of speech and a doer of deeds,” used language purposefully, persuasively, and eloquently, his voice sparked a rhetorical consciousness in the early Greeks (*Iliad* 9.443) that was carried into the private sphere by Sappho and then into the public sphere by the Greeks and Romans, who made pedagogy the heart of the rhetorical tradition. To that end, competing theories and practices of rhetoric were displayed and put to the test in the Greek academies of Gorgias, Isocrates, Aspasia, Plato, and Aristotle. Later it flourished as the centerpiece of the Roman educational system made famous by such rhetorical greats as Cicero and Quintilian.

More than 2,000 years later, the pedagogy of rhetoric played a key role in the early universities of the United States. During the 18th century, for instance, “rhetoric was treated as the most important subject in the curriculum” (Halloran, 1982). It was not until the 20th century that the importance of rhetoric to the cultivation of citizens both began to wane in the shadow of higher

education's shift in focus from the development of rhetorical expertise to that of disciplinary knowledge. Despite this shift, the foundational rhetorical theories, practices, and pedagogies developed by the ancients survived, even thrived, as they continued to guide rhetorical studies, whether those studies inhabit English or Communication Departments.

Thus, rhetoric is the grandparent of both English and Speech (communication) departments, as William Riley Parker, former secretary of the Modern Language Association (MLA), so easily explains. In an essay first published in 1967, he writes,

English was born about 100 years ago. Its mother, the eldest daughter of Rhetoric, was Oratory—or what we now prefer to call public speaking or, simply, speech. Its father was Philology or what we now call linguistics. Their marriage [Oratory and Philology's] . . . was short-lived. . . . I date the break with the mother, however, not from the disgraceful affair she had with Elocution, but rather from the founding of the [National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking] Speech Association of America in 1914, which brought, as was hoped, the creation of many departments of speech. I date the break with the father, not from his happy marriage to Anthropology, but from the founding of the Linguistic Society of America in 1924, and the developing hostility of literary scholars to non-prescriptive grammar, new terminology, and the rigors of language study. Splinter groups form when their founders feel their interests neglected, and English teachers, absorbed in what they considered more important business, were indeed neglecting speech by 1914 and losing all vital concern with linguistics by 1924. (1981, p. 6)

As half siblings always do, English and Speech developed individual interests, with English concentrating on literature and theory (how to read literature) and Speech eventually broadening its focus from one of oral delivery to the wide science of communication. Despite their divergences, however, English and Speech both carried the genetic influence of their shared grandparent: Both disciplines remained in the same department, tethered to rhetoric. And rhetoric has always been a teaching tradition, no matter where it resides.

AN INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF RHETORICAL PEDAGOGY IN THE UNITED STATES

“Not to know what happened before one was born is always to be a child.”

—Cicero

The MLA, disciplinary home of English literary studies (as well as modern language studies), was established in 1883, in part, as a way to resist the hegemony of classics in the college curriculum but, more obviously, as a way to “strengthen the study and teaching of language and literature” (www.mla.org/about). By the end of the 19th century, Yale, Harvard, and Johns Hopkins were among the many American colleges and universities reconfiguring their courses and methods in such a way as to slip the yoke of the clergy, who had traditionally held a near monopoly on a curriculum of theology, classics, and languages, and, instead, to harness themselves to the model of the German research university, where truth, rather than being passed down, was to be pursued disinterestedly. In 1874, James Morgan Hart, who received his Ph.D. at the University of Göttingen, wrote in unqualified praise of the German university system, saying that even the laziest of German students

has forgotten twice as much as the idler of American, the industrious student knows twice as much as the industrious under-graduate, and the future scholar of Germany is a man of whom we in America have no conception. He is a man who could not exist under our system, he would be choked by recitations and grades. What he studies, he studies with the devotion of a poet and the trained skill of a scientist. (p. 303)

By that time Hart moved from the University of Cincinnati, Ohio, where he also served as the president of the MLA of Ohio, to Cornell University, where he became president of the national MLA in 1895. Therefore, the MLA soon paved the emphasis on research in literary and language studies, its inception professionalizing English studies as well as the teaching of English and public speaking. Not 30 years later, in an attempt to thwart the curricular impositions of colleges on high schools, 65 high school and college teachers came together to establish the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1911. Like the MLA, they, too, linked English studies with teaching, including the teaching of public speaking. And they, too, soon began to promote the research necessary for improving the teaching of English and public speaking as well as the material conditions for teachers. Given the complementary interests of the two organizations, many college teachers of English have held membership in the MLA and NCTE.

All during this time of early professionalization, college teachers of public speaking were members of English departments, but they were not the half siblings of literature and composition teachers that Parker refers to; rather they were the poor cousins. In an attempt to carve out an academic discipline for themselves and their work, a small group of public-speaking teachers (17 to be exact) broke away from NCTE in 1914 to form the National Association of Academic Teachers of Public Speaking. These “Seventeen Who Made History” espoused disciplinary research as their priority (Weaver, 1959), but their scientific learnings seem to have had more to do with gaining academic respectability within the research university than with striving for a scientific approach to the successful teaching of public speaking. By 1935, more than 200 American college and university catalogs listed a separate department of speech (Griffin, 1997, para. 7). The name of their organization was changed to the Speech Association of America (SAA) in 1950, Speech Communication Association (SCA) in 1970, and the National Communication Association (NCA) in 1997—name changes that reflect the ever-broadening interests of their discipline.

During these early years of disciplinary formation, English teachers were occupied with teaching literature, grammar, composition—and some oral rhetoric. But the study of literature dominated the study of rhetoric. And after speech established its autonomy in terms of departmental status, teachers of public speaking offered courses in public address, oral interpretation of literature, radio announcing, drama, debate, and roundtable discussions. But soon social scientists began to establish themselves in speech communication departments, their numbers and influence often marginalizing more traditional rhetorical studies.

Still the “rhetorical turn” toward scientific communication and decision science at the expense of rhetorics of deliberation has, in many ways (and ironically), elevated the status of the discipline of rhetoric in the modern university, with colleagues from across camps recognizing the value and importance of rhetorical studies, whether analysis, deliberation, oration, or composition. Graduate rhetoric programs at the University of Iowa, Penn State University, University of Minnesota, Northwestern University, and University of Maryland are among the universities enjoying a renaissance, what with thriving interdisciplinary programs, successful graduate student placements, and, on the undergraduate level, close connections with undergraduate writing programs (e.g., Stanford University, University of Denver, University of Colorado, University of

Memphis). Whether the actual teaching of rhetoric and the delivery of rhetorical education are also enjoying similar renewal is debatable.

Certainly, some would argue that it is not. David Fleming (1998), for example, laments the “simultaneous rise of rhetorical theory and continued decline of rhetorical education” (p. 169). Despite the rise in graduate rhetoric programs, the decline in rhetorical education, per se, is, indeed, a different issue. According to Walter Beale (1990),

Rhetorical education is an attempt to shape a certain kind of character capable of using language effectively to carry on the practical and moral business of a polity. It is based implicitly or explicitly on ideas of individual competence and political well-being. Its dual purposes are the cultivation of the individual and the success of a culture. (p. 626)

Little wonder, then, that Thomas Miller (2004) was so dismayed by the results of his research, which revealed how very little rhetorical education undergraduate students are currently receiving. Miller surveyed the course requirements and electives for English and Communication majors at 100 four-year institutions, a survey that revealed a paucity of undergraduate courses focused exclusively on rhetoric, whether rhetorical history, theory, or practice. So despite rhetoric’s long link with pedagogy, the teaching of rhetoric, especially the teaching of undergraduates, appears to suffer from low status, in particular at the prestigious high-research institutions. Status for professors (rhetoric professors and otherwise) remains linked to their scholarship (i.e., their publications and research agenda), rarely from the quality of their teaching.

In *The Vocation of a Teacher* (1988), Wayne Booth captures the tension between the importance of rhetorical scholarship relative to rhetorical pedagogy by raising the fact that most undergraduate students take only one or maybe two rhetoric courses, or courses that can be even loosely related to a rhetorical education: first-year writing and public speaking, which, in many colleges and universities hardly qualify as exposure to the rhetorical tradition. Even more dispiriting to Booth is the fact that these two courses, courses that could invite students into rhetorical education and rhetorical studies, are most often taught by

underpaid part-timers, our exploited TAs (many of them just out of college themselves), at best our assistant professors, who are told, sometimes without even an effort at euphemism, that the road to promotion is not to teach well but to get that book out fast. (p. 23)

Were these courses taught by rhetorical scholars, the courses might look markedly different. They might serve as a venue for rhetorical scholars to pass on rhetorical traditions to the vast majority of college students who will not major in either English or Communication, thereby invigorating the rhetorical education of many more college students. As it is, undergraduate teaching is rarely rewarded and often passed on to the untenured or untenurable teachers to whom Booth alluded, most of whom have little or no training in rhetoric.

More recently, however, there seems to be morphic resonance across the country for emphasizing the pedagogy of rhetoric and rhetorical education. The impetus for this emphasis has come from inside departments of English and Communication as well as from the greater community. From the outside, for example, there has been a growing call for the revitalization of the civic mission of universities, a call that appears to be inherently tied to the pedagogy of rhetoric.

Having identified the lack of any civic focus in higher education, various foundations and associations have published reports addressing that lack and offering recommendations, among

them the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (*Educating Citizens*) (2003); the Association of American Colleges and Universities (*Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College*) (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2002); the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (*Returning to Our Roots: The Engaged Institution*) (Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities, 1999); and a coalition of the University of Michigan, Campus Compact, the Ford Foundation, the Johnson Foundation, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (*Wingspread Declaration on Renewing the Civic Mission of the American Research University*) (Boyte & Hollander, 1999). These calls to citizenship education, which is rhetorical education, go beyond the need for more voting, civic engagement, and service learning; rather, they consist of the importance of reexamining the purpose of higher education and the responsibility of college graduates. These calls often highlight the importance of “21st-century skills” such as critical thinking, innovative problem solving, deliberation, and judgment—skills, most rhetorical scholars would argue, that are part and parcel of the pedagogy of rhetoric.

In addition to the call for rhetorical, citizenship education, the rise of the “deliberative democracy movement” (Gastil & Levine, 2005), a movement based outside the walls of academia, is providing additional support for the growing focus on the need for universities, as well as public education in general, to do a better job of producing able citizens equipped for the 21st century. To paraphrase Gerald Hauser (2004), perhaps universities have finally begun to understand the importance of balancing the needs of Berlin (disciplinary knowledge production) and Athens (the cultivation of citizens).

The recent pedagogical push has also emanated from within English and Communication departments. Indeed, a number of prominent rhetoricians have recently joined this broader call to action. The 2003 Evanston, Illinois, conference sponsored by the Alliance of Rhetoric Societies (ARS) resulted in a number of eloquent statements concerning the importance of rhetorical pedagogy. In his impassioned summary of the discussions that took place in Evanston, Gerard Hauser (2004) focused on the pedagogical ones, admonishing his readers that “capacitating students to be competent citizens is our birthright. It has been our since antiquity. Modern education has stripped us of it. We need to reclaim it” (p. 52; see also Hauser, 2002). One of the offshoots of ARS meeting was the inaugural biennial Rhetoric Society of America (RSA) summer institute, held on the Kent State campus in Kent, Ohio. An extension of the summer institute, with its various workshops and short seminars, was the inaugural week-long seminar for graduate students and junior faculty, which, led by Michael Leff and Cheryl Glenn, focused on “Rhetoric as a Teaching Tradition.”

But the ARS, the RSA, and Hauser are not the only entities to call for enriching rhetorical education in America. Rosa Eberly (2000, 2002) has made similar pleas, as well as Hart (1993), Miller (2004), Denman (2004), Haskins (2006), and Walker (2006), among others. Two recent anthologies have also taken up the cause of specifically examining rhetorical pedagogy and rhetorical education in America (Petraglia & Bahri, 2003; Glenn, Lyday, & Sharer, 2004). Clearly, interest in rhetorical pedagogy has significantly increased in important ways in the past 10 years.

Indeed, we would argue that a primary source for the recent collaborations between rhetorical scholars in English and Communication, evidenced by RSA, ARS, and this very volume, is the common ground all of us share by being teachers of rhetoric. Regardless of whether we are in the midst of a “pedagogical turn”—the phrase Andrea Lunsford used to summarize her perceptions of the ARS conference (Leff & Lunsford, 2004, p. 61)—all rhetorical scholars need to consider a twofold critical question. Given this recent surge of interest in both rhetoric and the teaching of

citizenship (or rhetorical education), what are the necessary tools of citizenship in the 21st century, and how might rhetorical scholars work to help develop them?

If rhetoric renews its commitment to “cultivating citizens,” what should those citizens be taught? What should they be taught to do? To know how to do? The chapters in this section seek to address these questions by considering key issues and questions relevant to the contemporary pedagogy of rhetoric. These chapters also describe the material conditions in which the teaching of rhetoric takes place. To those ends, this section considers three distinct levels of rhetorical instruction, according to what audience is being educated. The first level consists of the introductory courses in English (first-year writing) and Communication (public speaking) departments that, as mentioned above, often provide the only exposure to rhetoric, however minor it may be, to the thousands of students in majors other than English or Communication. A second level consists of those sparse but valuable upper-level undergraduate courses in rhetoric that are populated primarily by English and Communication majors. In these upper-level courses, rhetorical scholars have the opportunity to expand students’ exposure to and understanding of the rhetorical tradition in its many guises (from rhetorical history and theory to rhetorics of specific disciplines or practices). A third level goes beyond the university classroom to consider the role of rhetorical scholars in educating communities. Were we to include a fourth level, it would surely focus on graduate education, but graduate courses in rhetoric, whether in English or Communication departments, most usually concentrate on scholarship and theory rather than pedagogy. Therefore, the chapters in this section range across these three levels in different ways, with some chapters focusing on the basic courses (Horner and Lu, Chapter 16), some on upper-level concepts (Ott and Dickinson, Chapter 21; Young and Kendall, Chapter 18; Middleton, Chapter 19; Mountford, Chapter 22), and some on extra-curricular endeavors (Atchison and Panetta, Chapter 17; Sharer, Chapter 20). Still each of the essays in this section seeks to inform rhetorical pedagogy across all the levels.

In the Chapter 16, Horner and Lu analyze the phrase “rhetoric and composition” as a means of reviewing the history of attempts to stabilize the field’s meaning. Focusing specifically on composition and its contextualization within universities, the authors argue that the field of rhetoric and composition is ideally situated to take advantage of a variety of learning experiences that are unrecognized in official university channels. Thus, the flexibility of the phrase “rhetoric and composition” ultimately facilitates the particular goal of attending to the diverse needs of composition students.

In Chapter 17, Atchison and Panetta examine the critical role intercollegiate debate has served in rhetorical pedagogy throughout the 20th century and into the 21st century. Involvement in debate programs was the entry point for many of the field’s preeminent rhetoricians, particularly within speech communication, and debate continues to provide a particularly public face for rhetorical studies for many outside English and Communication departments. Atchison and Panetta describe debate’s evolution from its early days within literary societies to free standing academic units and also examine some of the key concerns faced by contemporary debate programs. They conclude with suggestions for reform to the practice.

By tracing the development of several major narratives of literacy in rhetorical scholarship, Young and Kendall (Chapter 18) show that literacy is not only a rhetorical artifact but also a form of persuasion: The stories we tell about the importance of literacy reveal the priorities and biases of our cultural situations. Beginning with the Great Divide literacy theorists of the mid-20th century, Young and Kendall trace literacy studies’ development from a view of literacy as an autonomous talent, to a socially constructed practice, to a globally minded method of

engagement. The tensions inherent in these different narratives of literacy play out, as Young and Kendall observe, in classroom situations—though standardized tests, placement programs, and government mandated standards that lack nuanced attention to the contextual nature of literacy practices. Throughout these developments, literacy plays an important persuasive role for those attempting to shape education and establish cultural capital.

Looking back on Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy*, Middleton (Chapter 19) describes the development and deployment of orality theory with an overview of significant publications in that field. She begins with a description of historical privileging of literacy and moves on to recover a variety of primary and secondary oral practices, arguing that increased attention to such practices can and should rescue our field from exclusive, and narrow-sighted, attention to written literacy. Middleton ends with a series of questions that hope to "broaden the range of inquiry on orality theory."

Sharer (Chapter 20) examines the long-standing and sometimes tenuous relationship between the teaching of rhetoric and civic engagement. Tracing this connection from the roots of rhetorical theory to the modern university, she observes that modern rhetorical instruction often neglects its civic origins. Sharer turns to progressive and radical educators, as well as political, historical, and ethnographic researchers, to argue that civic engagement should be reintegrated into our pedagogies via critical reading and writing, service learning, and cross-disciplinary movements. Such reintegration would not only better prepare our students to be knowledgeable and participating citizens but would also emphasize the practical importance of rhetorical education.

Ott and Dickinson (Chapter 21) examine the rhetorical response to the "pictorial turn" and the "rise of image," as well as how visual rhetoric has been incorporated into the classroom. They review, synthesize, and comment on the principal conceptions of visual rhetoric and outline an approach to teaching (with) visual rhetoric. In addition, they connect the pedagogy of visual rhetoric to the notion of critical citizenship, arguing that students must learn to interrogate and evaluate visual forms of rhetoric.

In the final chapter in this section, Mountford (Chapter 22) examines the relationship between composition and speech communication and argues that for the gap between the two disciplines to be bridged, concerned scholars must be familiar with the historical legacy of separation that they're attempting to overcome. The split between composition and speech communication came at a time when the educative philosophies of each discipline clashed: Scholars of composition criticized the mass media focus of communication in favor of the more traditional objects of study within communication. Recent attempts to bridge this gap have not recognized the historical reasons for separation. Mountford's historical narrative and suggestions about the possibility of unity through feminist work point toward how composition and communication could again unify rhetoric's disciplinary standing.

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