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**CURRICULAR INQUIRY: A SURVEY OF WRITING PEDAGOGY PRACTICUM  
INSTRUCTORS**

by

**CLARE JENNIFER RUSSELL**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2020

MAJOR: ENGLISH (Rhetoric and Composition)

Approved By:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## DEDICATION

Para la familia Perea. Tenemos nuestro primer doctora en la familia, pero no puedo salvarte de coronavirus.

¡Orale!



Figure 1. Wipe Now Spray Later © Jose R. Castillo

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the patience and support given to me by all my committee members. I could not have wrested these words from my brain onto the page without all your steady friendship and mentorship. Donnie, Jeff, and Asao, thank you for sticking with me from the beginning. Genevieve and Adrienne, thank you for joining my committee near the end of my doctoral journey, when others might have considered me a sketchy bet. Thanks for not letting imposter syndrome eat me alive. My honorary committee member, Jule Thomas, also deserves recognition. Our late-night discussions of early drafts were irreplaceable.

I also want to say what up doe to Kermit E. Campbell, author of *Gettin' Our Groove On: Rhetoric, Language, and Literacy for the Hip Hop Generation*. That book put Wayne State on the map for me. If I had never looked up where Wayne State Press was located, I never would have applied to the program, I never would have moved to Detroit, and y'all never could have changed my life.

Finally, thank you to all my interviewees for sharing their time with a graduate student curious about how we teach people how to teach writing. Speaking with all of you was my favorite part of this process.

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## **CHAPTER 1: ORIGINS AND OBSERVATIONS**

When do college writing instructors learn how to teach writing? When do graduate students learn the foundations of disciplinary study? For many graduate students in Rhetoric and Composition, the answer to both those questions is during the practicum course for new writing instructors. The practicum course, a required course for many new college writing instructors, is a vital site for identifying what are considered best practices in the teaching of college composition, but also for critiquing, revising, and reevaluating those practices. My dissertation contributes to the conversation about how Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) learn to teach college composition, and how what they learn in teaching practicum courses impacts graduate education in Rhetoric and Composition.

Chapter 1 provides a framing narrative, which introduces the practicum setting to those that may not be familiar with it and provides a guide to the rest of my dissertation content. I describe my own experiences in different practicum classrooms in order to offer insight into my research motivations. I also use personal narrative to introduce my major research findings and scaffold my dissertation research.

### **Origins**

I want to explain where my interest in the practicum course for college composition instructors began to clarify why I define it as a formative space for new writing instructors and new writing studies graduate students. My narrative also outlines the larger disciplinary discussions that my research applies to. Lastly, if my readers have never been in a practicum course, or it has been many years since they last thought about that time in their academic career, my narrative also provides descriptions of those course that can inspire reflection upon their own experiences learning to teach college writing.

My interest in how we teach GTAs how to teach writing began when I accepted a graduate teaching assistantship and enrolled in my first teaching practicum course as a masters student in Rhetoric and Composition. I should state that I was a recent “convert,” both to the study of RhetComp, and to the academic lifestyle. I took an introductory rhetorical theory course as a non-degree student with intentions of figuring out whether or not to pursue a masters degree in English. I finished the semester as an applicant for the masters program in English, with an emphasis in Rhetoric and Composition. I also applied for a Graduate Teaching Assistantship. I had no teaching experience to talk about on my application, so I made some connections between my abilities to train and supervise co-workers at the corporate branded coffee shop where I had worked for 9 years. I quit that job 4 months before my ten-year employment anniversary and entered the world of a GTA.

I, and about 30 other masters and doctoral students at my institution, had signed up to oversee teaching a room full of college students how to write. My cohort represented varying levels of teaching experience. Many, like me, had no prior teaching experience. Many others had been teaching secondary education or had taught first-year composition courses at different universities. Our classroom included GTAs from all the different English Department concentrations (Medieval Studies, Literature, Creative Writing, RhetComp), as well as a few Philosophy GTAs from outside our department. It would take two weeks before the start of the semester to get our cohort ready to walk into a classroom and assume the role of teacher. Then we would spend the next 16 weeks simultaneously learning to teach writing, teaching writing, and pursuing graduate degrees in our respective disciplines. After those 18 weeks together, we would then teach without the support of the practicum course. We would be officially trained to teach a first-year writing course, and ready to continue doing so until the end of our assistantship or academic career, whichever came first.

Our department did not require GTAs to take another pedagogical theory course to complete the MA degree, but I opted to take several more pedagogy courses about teaching multimodal composition, teaching English as Second Language (ESL) students, and even teaching literature.

I completed my MA degree and continued to pursue a doctoral degree funded through another teaching assistantship. At my doctoral institution I was required to complete more pedagogical training as a GTA, this time a two-semester training sequence, with one course labeled a practicum and the other labeled a theory course. I also took more non-required courses about pedagogical theory. To summarize, at the end of my graduate education in Rhetoric and Composition, I completed multiple teaching practica and pedagogical theory courses, and taught multiple first-year writing courses at two institutions serving very different student populations. I often tell colleagues that I study how to teach people how to write because I enjoy learning new pedagogical theories and translating those into practice. Learning to teach college composition is also a large part of my growth and professionalization as a graduate student and FYC instructor, and I consider the teaching practica courses I took where most of this advancement occurred.

### **Observations**

I would next like to share my reflections and observations about how to teach people how to write, specifically as they relate to the GTA teaching practicum and graduate education in Rhetoric Composition. These observations result from my own experiences combined with research I conducted during my dissertation and each will be clarified in proceeding chapters.

*The teaching practicum for GTAs is interrelated with the continuation and evolution of graduate programs in Rhetoric and Composition.*

As I mentioned earlier, before I took my first teaching practicum, I was already familiar with RhetComp theory. Many graduate students, however, are introduced and/or converted to the

discipline in the practicum course. Several of the practicum instructors I interviewed as part of this study told similar narratives of conversion: either they had joined the RhetComp discipline through their experiences in a practicum course, or they had witnessed students in their practicum courses make the same decision.

Further connecting graduate education in RhetComp to the practicum is the fact that GTA preparation in English departments is most often administered by RhetComp faculty. At both my masters and doctoral institutions, the Rhetoric and Composition faculty taught the practicum and administered the mentoring and assessing of the GTAs. During the practicum at my masters institution, we had several guest speakers from the English Department share pedagogical practices with us, but they were also RhetComp faculty members or graduate students. This disciplinary presence was noticeable, considering the English Department Chair at that time was a British Literature scholar who also had experience teaching composition courses. Similarly, doctoral students from other majors of study within the department had been teaching the same course we were learning to teach, but we were only invited to learn from faculty and graduate students in RhetComp. The concentration of RhetComp students and faculty in practicum leadership roles indicated to me that teaching people how to teach writing is what RhetComp scholars do, but not other disciplines housed in the same department.

I further highlight the connection between GTA preparation and professionalization, also known as Writing Pedagogy Education (WPE), with Rhetoric and Composition in Chapter 2 (also see Appendix C). As WPE scholarship grows, the GTA practicum course arises as the site where disciplinary debates over the future of RhetComp are had, and where the discipline defines its scholarly territory.

***Practicum instructors perform a unique gatekeeping role in perpetuating and introducing best practices in the teaching of college writing.***

Because Rhetoric and Composition faculty are often responsible for teaching and mentoring GTAs, they are a new writing instructor's introduction to composition at their institution, as well as ambassadors for an entire field of study. If one course is responsible for preparing new instructors of writing, that course also provides the vocabulary and skills they use to define themselves as writing instructors. For example, I remain invested in genre and genre awareness theory because I learned to teach writing at an institution where those theories dominated, but also because the material was taught in a way that encouraged reflective application.

For example, in our practicum we read scholarship by leading genre theorists and we were required to teach from a genre studies textbook (written by our writing program administrator), which guided us in applying the theories we were reading. My practicum instructor, while endorsing the institutionally preferred pedagogy, also connected that theory back to larger, disciplinary discussions. We read the Writing Program Administrators Outcomes Statement of First-Year Composition alongside the university's course specific learning outcomes for English 101. Through that comparison, I became aware of a national conversation happening around the teaching of college composition. Genre theory was just one way to approach the teaching of college writing, and there were many more theories and practices that it worked with and against. What I learned in my first practicum course was applicable both locally (how to differentiate my way of teaching from that of my classmates') and globally (how to explicate my way of teaching to a wider audience of writing studies scholars).

Practicum instructors create the syllabi and decide which pedagogies to teach in a practicum course; therefore, they control how widely, or narrowly, the field of Rhetoric and Composition is viewed by students. A narrow, or local, practicum curriculum teaches GTAs how to apply practices and theories about the teaching of writing at one institution. A global GTA curriculum situates those pedagogies within larger disciplinary conversations. In Chapter 3 I investigate how writing pedagogy practicum instructors explicate the connections between their course learning outcomes, their syllabi content, and how they define writing studies disciplinarily. *Some pedagogical practices and theories consistently dominate practicum classrooms, while others are consistently marginalized.*

Related to the above observation about the gatekeeping role of practicum instructors is the observation that many of the same scholars, theories, and pedagogies continue to be predominantly utilized in practicum classrooms, while others are consistently marginalized. This uneven coverage of composition studies scholarship results in limitations on what future writing instructors are and are not capable of. I was first made aware of the variations in GTA practicum experiences, and the influences on instructor development, when I moved from a Hispanic Serving Institution to a Predominantly White Institution. In the HSI practicum I was introduced to theories about language diversity, non-standard language use, multilingualism, and linguistics. Critical language awareness was also referenced in the practicum learning outcomes, as well as the learning outcomes for the FYC course we were teaching. This explicit connection between scholarship in the field and institutional learning outcomes encouraged GTAs to translate theories into classroom practices that fulfilled the course outcomes.

At the PWI institution where I next worked, language diversity was not taught as explicitly as it had been at the HSI. The course learning outcomes, for both the practicum and for first-year



composition at the PWI, offered little incentive for GTAs to learn about or utilize language diversity scholarship. If GTAs wanted to know how to teach basic writers, ESL learners, or international English speakers, they would have to encounter that scholarship outside the practicum. In other words, GTAs at the PWI were responsible for learning to teach diverse learners on their own time, in other classes outside the practicum or the department. This absence was noticeable to me because I had just come from an institution where writing instructors were encouraged to analyze language practices through a critical cultural lens. But, I thought, if my colleagues in the practicum at the PWI had no prior introduction to language diversity scholarship in the field of Rhetoric and Composition, they might not notice the same exclusions I had.

In Chapter 4 I identify the dominant teaching practices endorsed by writing pedagogy practicum instructors and critique the curricular choices that perpetually marginalize the same theories and practices over time.

### **Pathways**

Ultimately, what is included in a practicum course curriculum determines the capabilities of future writing instructors and Rhetoric and Composition scholars. Patterns emerge from my research which identify how marginalization occurs in the GTA practicum through curricular omissions, as well as coverage limitations for certain topics and scholars. For example, consistently narrow coverage is given to topics such as language diversity, critical cultural pedagogy, disability studies, and antiracist assessment. Similarly, a handful of scholars of color are consistently referenced across practicum syllabi but are only allotted one week out of 16 for discussion or are relegated to supplemental reading lists and not required reading. A practicum course is by nature a survey course, but, I argue, if the same theories and scholars are continually

taught as dominant to others, then the innovation and expansion of WPE, and the field of RhetComp more broadly, is severely limited.

In Chapter 5 I discuss implications for my research in practicum course design, graduate studies in rhetoric and composition, and further WPE studies. I suggest that future WPE studies emphasize the practicum instructor as research subject. WPE scholarship has historically positioned practicum students as research subjects, but often neglects practicum instructors' pedagogical rationales, which provide needed context and background for evaluating GTA reactions to a course design. Ideally, future WPE studies will include instructors, GTAs, and first-year composition students so that a more holistic view of how we teach people how to write can emerge.

## CHAPTER 2: CONSTELLATIONS AND CONNECTIONS

Chapter 1 used observations from my experiences as an emerging writing instructor and RhetComp graduate student to frame my dissertation findings. Chapter 2 provides my study design, a rationale for utilizing syllabi analysis in combination with instructor interviews, and a literature review describing the practicum course as a productive site for exploring WPE and RhetComp doctoral education.

### Problem Statement

Estrem and Reid define the study of writing pedagogy education (WPE) as encompassing “the ongoing education, mentoring and support of new college-level writing instructors” (“Writing Pedagogy Education” 283). They further identify the teaching seminar, or practicum, for new graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) as “the heart of WPE” (283). The curriculum of a TA writing instruction seminar can be used to explicate a writing program’s unique version of WPE, as well as to provide insight into an institution’s larger disciplinary allegiances (Caouette; Sideris; Thornsberry). Indeed, the majority of WPE scholarship utilize the TA seminar as a primary research site.<sup>1</sup> Graduate teaching assistant preparation is also used as a comparative measure for rhetoric and composition doctoral programs (Brown et. al; Chapman and Tate; Eble; Latterell). Teaching assistant education programs are also seen as productive sites for critiquing and improving the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition. In her article aptly titled “Reproducing Composition and Rhetoric: The Intellectual Challenge of Doctoral Education,” Louise Weatherbee Phelps explains the importance of graduate education in Rhetoric and Composition for both shaping disciplinary knowledge and influencing the way that knowledge is practiced. According

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<sup>1</sup>See Dobrin and Pytlik & Liggett for edited collections about the GTA teaching practicum. The following is a list of WPE scholarship focusing on the pedagogy practicum: Ebest; Estrem and Reid “New Writing Teachers”; Estrem and Reid “Writing Pedagogy Education”; McKinney & Chiseri-Strater; Reid “Teaching Writing”; Reid “Uncoverage”; Reid et. al; Restaino; Stenberg & Lee; Ryan & Graban.

to Phelps, "...the most powerful channels for change in higher education are those that focus on graduate students as the faculty of the future." ("Reproducing Composition" 126). It is graduate students, she claims, who will "...revitalize an increasingly dysfunctional academic community and acculturate senior members to a new world" ("Reproducing Composition" 126).

In order to properly shift focus to graduate students as the "faculty of the future," Phelps called for teacher-scholars in rhetoric and composition to research graduate education pedagogy as critically, reflexively, and thoroughly as they have undergraduate writing pedagogy and first-year writing. Nearly twenty years later, Estrem and Reid are reiterating Phelps' call to advance TA education scholarship. They compare the curricular spaces of TA instruction and FYC, claiming that WPE scholarship is based more on lore and "locally self-evident" approaches, rather than on disciplinary knowledge that has been critiqued, refined and verified like the scholarship on FYC pedagogy ("Writing Pedagogy Education" 224). Based on existing WPE scholarship, we know much about how new college writing instructors react to the GTA preparation process. Many of the narratives in WPE scholarship are told through the lens of the TA educator or writing program administrator and reveal much about what are considered best teaching practices; however, the curricular invention processes of practicum instructors remain unexplored. Investigations of how GTA practicum instructors design their courses can provide insight into how "the faculty of the future" are being reproduced, thereby responding to the call for further refinement and theorization of WPE scholarship. Historically, debates about what pedagogies and theories should be used to teach FYC have been symbolic of larger institutional issues and shifts in power, so best practices for preparing instructors to teach FYC are similarly symbolic.<sup>2</sup> Identifying what practicum

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<sup>2</sup> The following scholars provide historical narratives of Rhetoric and Composition that align changes in the teaching of writing with shifts in disciplinary, political, and ideological movements: Berlin "Contemporary Composition"; Crowley, Composition; Fulkerson "Four Philosophies"; Hairston "Winds of Change"; Herzberg; Miller.

instructors are teaching in their courses, and how they are teaching it, can contribute to disciplinary awareness through identification and critique of dominant teaching practicum practices.

### Study Design

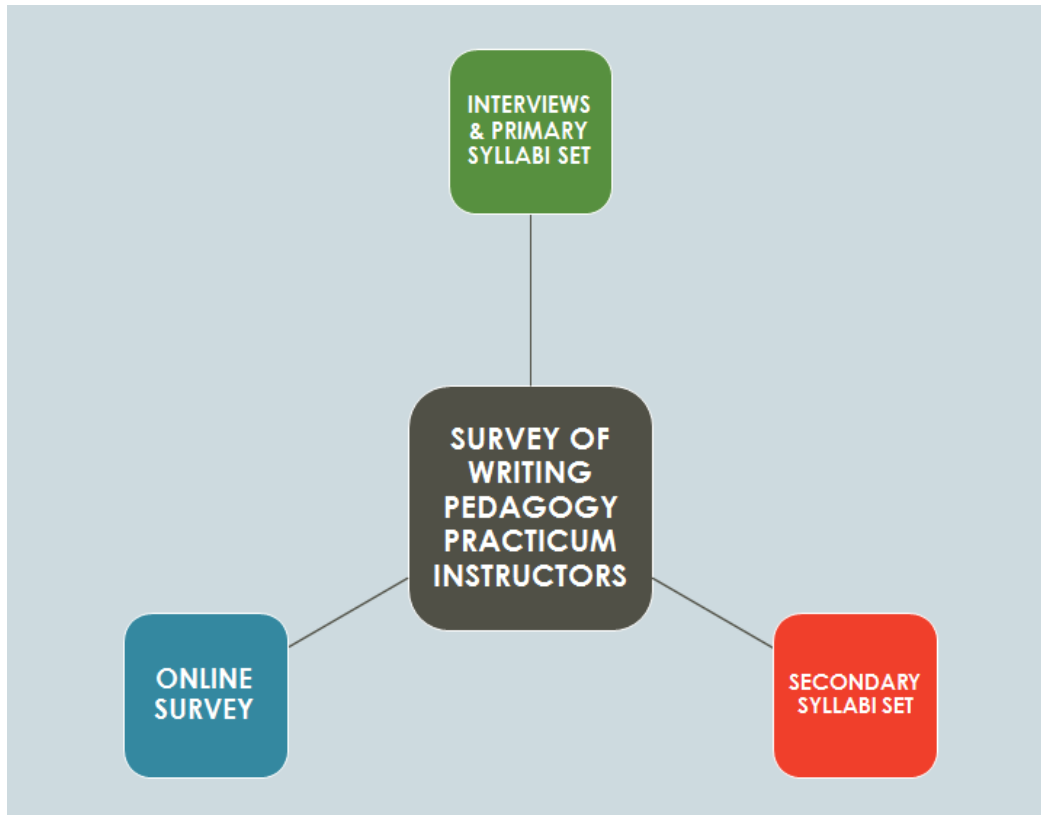


Figure 2. Visualization of Study Components

I conducted a multiple phase study of GTA educators in order to find out more about the institutional setting in which they taught the practicum, as well as the instructors' curricular design processes. The first study phase was a multiple choice and short answer response survey completed by 32 anonymous participants. The second phase of the study asked participants from the first online survey to consent to an hour-long video interview and to share a course syllabus. A total of 12 participants consented to be interviewed and submitted teaching materials in the second phase of the study. The third study phase is collection of a secondary data set obtained from a 1995 special issue of the journal *Composition Studies*. The special issue, titled "*A forum on Doctoral*

*Education*,” contains 17 GTA practica syllabi, critical statements written by the course instructors, as well as articles that explain the conversations occurring around writing pedagogy education at the time. The special issue of *Composition Studies* provides a valuable snapshot of how graduate students in Rhetoric and Composition were being prepared to teach writing. I compared this secondary data with the data I collected from my research participants in order to identify pedagogical trends in practicum design that have changed over time.

Study recruitment occurred via email and data was collected using Qualtrics. Participant emails were obtained from publicly available databases of writing program directors maintained by the National Consortium of Doctoral Programs in Rhetoric and Composition, and the Masters Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialists. I directly contacted writing program administrators at all masters and doctoral granting institutions identified by the organizations above to participate in the study, or to forward the study information to eligible participants at their universities. Eligible study participants were instructors who had taught a writing pedagogy practicum between 2016 and 2018. Study participants who completed the first phase of the study, the survey, were asked to provide an email address should they wish to participate in the second part of the study. I received 32 responses to the online survey and 12 of those participants agreed to be interviewed and share a practicum course syllabus. The 12 syllabi collected from interviewees are labeled as the primary syllabi set. The 17 syllabi collected from the special issue of *Composition Studies* I labeled the secondary syllabi set.

### **Online Survey Design and Analysis Procedures**

My goal for the online survey was to learn more about the institutional setting in which participants taught the practicum, as well as the instructors’ experience teaching the course. The survey questions I was most interested in answers to questions 11 and 12, which I composed to

test Latterell's critique of deterministic teaching in the WPE practicum. Question 11 asks whether GTAs in the practicum must use a required syllabus or teaching materials and Question 12 asks instructors to describe the adaptability of those materials. I perceived answers to these questions most relevant for hypothesizing how accurately Latterel's critiques about deterministic teaching could be applied to WPE classrooms 20 years after her study was completed. Similarly, the rest of the short answer questions on the online survey were meant to provide data that might be useful for better defining deterministic and pedagogical inquiry practices in WPE classrooms. Short answer questions prompted GTA educators to describe how they selected course texts and readings, which theories and pedagogies they most emphasized, and how institutional politics might inform course design. Please see Appendix A for the complete survey. Qualtrics, the program I used to distribute the survey, also provided useful tools for organizing and analyzing my results. For example, I could view all answers to a short answer question at one time, making it easy to draw connections and note emerging themes. For each survey short answer question Qualtrics generated a 1-2 page document that listed all the responses. With all responses easily visible at once, I was able to note patterns and repetitions, which I used to answer the survey question, as well as to consider applications to WPE and the practicum classroom. My main method for indicating repetitions and patterns was annotating the Qualtrics response document by hand.

### **Interview Design and Analysis Procedures**

My goal for the interviews and primary syllabi collection was to build on the short answer questions from the online survey in order to further understand instructors' curricular design processes. In particular, I was looking for narratives that could better illustrate deterministic teaching and pedagogical inquiry in the WPE practicum. As explained earlier in this chapter,

syllabi content analysis is a method that identifies best practices for curricular design and motivates critique of dominant pedagogical and theoretical frameworks. According to Stanny et, al, “[I]nstructors describe their best intentions for the course in a syllabus,” but those intentions do not always coincide with how they teach the course (909). Speaking with WPE practicum instructors about their syllabi allows for inquiry into how they align course content and delivery, as well as how they set and assess expectations for GTA success.

I recorded one-hour long interviews with participants using Zoom. I assigned each interviewee an alias. The first interviewee’s name begins with the letter A, the second with a B, and so on. I did this so that I could remember in what order I interviewed participants. Alice is, therefore, the earliest interview I conducted, and Lisa is the last. Before each interview I reviewed the participants’ answers to the online survey, as well as their syllabus, and noted any questions I wanted to ask them specifically (see Appendix B for the questions asked of every participant). I took notes by hand during the interviews, noting timestamps for parts of the interview I should consider reviewing. After the interviews concluded, I would review my notes and briefly summarize what we had discussed. A few days after the interview I would watch the recording with my notes and the instructor’s syllabi in front of me. I made additional notes and observations during the second viewing, adding additional pages to the first set of notes. I also created an “interview index” for navigating the interview recordings. The index included timestamps, annotations, as well as plans for how to categorize and use the narratives that emerged during each interview. Since many interviewees provided examples and narratives that overlapped, the index was essential for keeping track of the different threads in each interview.



### *Interviewee Profiles*

The profiles that follow serve to characterize the curricular motivations of each instructor and to describe in as much detail possible the setting in which they taught their practicum course.<sup>3</sup>

Demographic data was not collected for the interviewees, nor did they volunteer any racial or ethnic identifications during the interviews. General observations that can be made from information shared in the interviews are:

- All interviewees teach at public 4-yr universities in the United States with the following regional representation:
  - Midwest 60%
  - Southwest 20%
  - West Coast 20%
- Three interviewees are male and nine are female
- All interviewees have terminal degrees in English (MFA or Phd)
- Two interviewees are non-tenure track faculty, three are tenure track faculty, and seven are tenured faculty
- Two interviewees teach at Hispanic Serving Institutions
- Four interviewees also held the title of Director of First Year Writing or Writing Program Administrator at the time they taught the practicum.

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<sup>3</sup> Not all interviewees are featured in the data analysis chapters, specifically Gina, Helen, and Keith. Excerpts from their interviews do not appear in Chapters 3 and 4 because the focus of their interviews was tangential to the key study findings. Gina, Helen, and Keith's profiles are used to highlight perspectives useful for understanding administrative aspects of the practicum setting, but not for elaborating on curricular critique and revision in WPE settings. Further research about administration in WPE settings is necessary and useful, but outside the scope of this study.

## Were your students required to use a common syllabus or other departmental approved teaching materials?

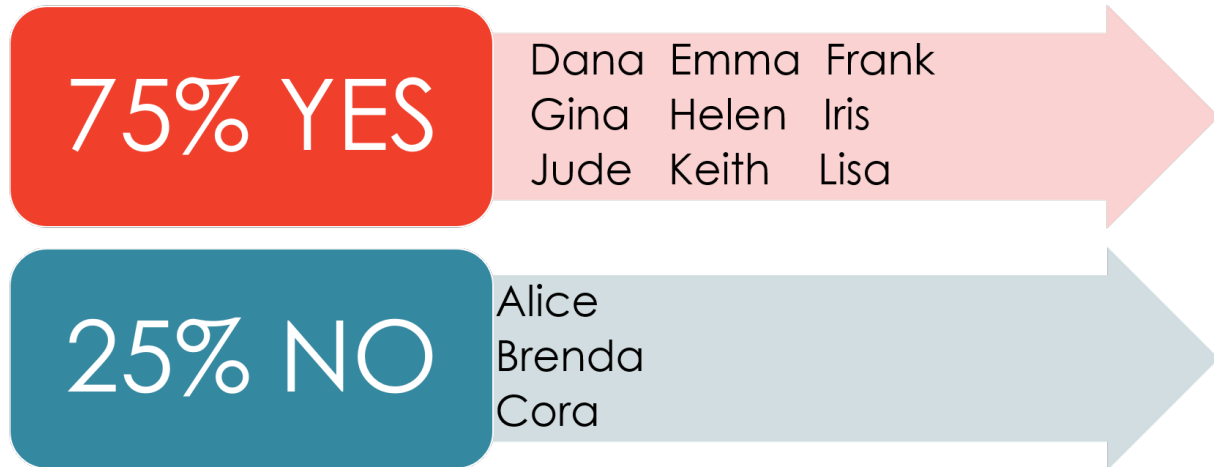


Figure 3. Interviewee Use of a Common Syllabus

### Alice

Alice is a tenure track faculty member at a 4-yr public university in the Midwest. At the time of our interview she had taught 1 practicum course at her institution and was in the process of teaching it again. Alice prepares her students to teach a 100 level composition course, which she has recent experience teaching at the same institution. The GTAs in Alice's are a mix of MA and PhD students representing different emphases of study within the English Department. Alice's interview is defined most notably by very self-reflective moments about her identified failures at teaching a practicum course for the first time. Alice admitted that her dissertation research, which focused on the practicum experience, "almost steered her wrong." She articulated that perhaps she had emphasized theory too much and too often in her first practicum teaching experience. Alice's reason for emphasizing theory was that she wanted to ensure she valued her students' contributions to the field, but, she said, many of the new instructors didn't know what the field was, which tipped the curricular scales in favor of theory the first time she taught it. Alice now focuses on helping

her students think through and critique their pedagogical motivations and values, so that new writing instructors can better make the connections between what they are reading and what they are doing in the classroom.

### **Brenda**

Brenda is a tenured faculty member at a public 4-yr university in the Midwest. She prepares MA and PhD students in the English Department (from various concentrations of study) to teach a 100-level FYC course. Brenda has experience teaching FYC courses at her current institution, where she also directs the Writing Program. In her interview, Brenda memorably articulates how she “found the field” in her teaching practicum, and shares early memories of her GTA experiences, and how they continue to resonate in her own practices. As an MFA student learning to teach writing, she says she came to understand the need to think flexibly as a writing instructor. Much of the interview we spent discussing how Brenda builds a classroom in which her GTAs can avoid rigid and unquestioned application of theory, and how that learning outcome is informed by the department’s emphasis on Sociocultural approaches to assessment, research, and teaching.

### **Cora**

Cora is a tenured faculty member at a public 4-yr university in the Midwest. At the time of our interview she had taught her first practicum course and was preparing to teach it again. The GTAs in her course are prepared to teach a 100 level FYC course, which Cora has also recently taught at the same institution. Cora’s practicum is a hybrid 5-week summer course, with the first two weeks completely online. The reason for this course structure is that the majority of Cora’s students are international students who are not physically in the country for most of the summer. During Cora’s interview she explained that the most important learning outcome in her practicum course is learning the writing process and being able to teach it to others. The value in explicating

this process is to help new writing instructors think of writing as an object of study, and to provide them with “the language to talk about what they already do” so that they can then share that knowledge with their students.

### **Dana**

Dana is a tenured faculty member at a public 4-yr university in the Midwest who teaches a writing pedagogy practicum course specifically for MA students majoring in engineering and computer science. Dana’s practicum students prepare to teach a technical writing course required of specific science and engineering majors at her institution. Dana has recent experience teaching this same technical communication course at the same institution. During Dana’s interview she stressed that the most important learning outcome to emphasize for her GTAs is being prepared to teach at the end of their MA program. Even though the GTAs are required to teach from a common syllabus, the final project in Dana’s course is to develop a syllabus that is “their own” and distinct from the institutional course. Dana explained, “I have the students tell me how they are going to teach, instead of me telling them how I teach.”

### **Emma**

Emma is one of two interviewees that indicated working at a Hispanic Serving Institution. She is tenured faculty at a public 4-yr university in the Southwest where she prepares GTAs to teach a 100-level FYC course. At the time of our interview, she was teaching her second writing pedagogy practicum course to MA and PhD students representing different areas of study within the English Department. In our interview, Emma provided the most lengthy and detailed response to survey question #15: How did local/regional political conditions at your university affect your course design? Emma’s interview is also notable because she is 1 of 2 interviewees who included Student’s Right to Their Own Language in her syllabus. Emma explained that “SRTOL in the

practicum experience feels more and more important” in the current political climate. She described how her practicum students authored diversity and antiracist writing assessment statements for the common syllabus, inspired by SRTOL, but ultimately, only the diversity statement was approved by university administration. At the time of our interview, Emma was still negotiating with administrators to have the antiracist statement approved.

### **Frank**

Frank is tenured faculty and Director of FYC at a public 4-yr university on the West Coast. He teaches two courses required of graduate students teaching FYC at his institution: a teaching practicum and a RhetComp theory course. Frank teaches doctoral students from many areas of study in the English Department, but overwhelmingly Literature majors. He describes both his practicum and RhetComp theory courses as “operating under a Writing About Writing and multiliteracies approach.” Because the university has a large multilingual student population, multiliteracies and translanguaging “are an especially important part of the writing program.” Frank describes his practicum classroom as a “laboratory like setting” where new writing instructors can try things and get responsive feedback, thus providing opportunities “to expand practice in the field in interesting ways.” An example of “expanding practice” that Frank used is that of contract grading because “it is changing philosophies, not just practices.” Frank teaches contract grading as an antiracist assessment option in his theory course and encourages GTAs to use it in the practicum.

### **Gina**

Gina is a NTT faculty member at a public 4-yr university in the Midwest and she has over 30 years of experience teaching writing, training undergraduate writing tutors, and coordinating faculty development in 2-yr and 4-yr college settings. Gina has taught the teaching practicum at

her institution since 2005. The practicum course is paired with a pedagogical theory course that graduate students take simultaneously (with a different instructor), so Gina described her practicum course as focused on “reflection and praxis.” When asked how her extensive experience with writing program administration and faculty development influences her practicum curriculum, she replied that her main goal is to know the curriculum inside and out in order to “maintain coherence” among the 130 sections of FYC taught at her institution. Related to programmatic coherence, she described her most difficult issue as “getting students to buy into the curriculum.” In order to address this issue, Gina strives to keep the course “as flexible as possible” within the focus of the FYC curriculum.

### **Helen**

Helen is tenured faculty at a 4-yr university on the West Coast. She prepares masters students in the English Department to teach a Stretch Composition course. She has taught writing pedagogy courses at her institution since 2001 and is the author of a textbook on best practices for the teaching of writing. She uses this textbook in her own course to “provide an introduction to luminaries in the field,” which Helen says is integral for demonstrating to practicum students what “success in the field looks like.” Helen further explained that connecting success in the field to her curriculum requires personalizing the people they are reading and guiding students to find theories and scholars that resonate with them. Helen personalizes her curriculum by inviting the scholars her graduate students are reading to the classroom. Helen also utilizes an assignment that requires practicum students to “follow the trajectory of a scholar in the field.” This assignment facilitates scholarly research in the field, but also helps her students to develop personal connections to the scholarship.

**Iris**

Iris is non-tenured faculty at a public 4-yr university in the Midwest. She has taught FYC for several years at her institution but has taught the practicum only once. Iris' students are a mix of masters and doctoral students from the English Department teaching a 1000 level FYC course for the first time. Iris described her curriculum as facilitating "playing around pedagogically," but also emphasizing that every choice an instructor makes has an effect on their classroom. In Iris' practicum, developing a teacherly ethos means making choices in the classroom and making the connections between those choices to pedagogies and theories in the field. One of the assignments in Iris' course asks GTAs to integrate a new teaching strategy into their curriculum and then write a rationale for their selection and a reflection on its effectiveness. Iris explained that emphasizing the pedagogical process also helped diffuse some of the "fight or flight" responses her students had to the common syllabus at her institution.

**Jude**

Jude is a tenure track faculty member at a 4-year university in the Midwest. He has taught the practicum twice at his institution and at the time of the interview was preparing to teach it again. His students are masters and doctoral students from the English Department learning to teach a 1000 level FYC course. The priority in Jude's classroom is for GTAs to "embody the program's FYC curriculum." Jude further explained that "this course needs to work for the GTAs in more nuanced ways beyond learning to teach writing at our institution." Jude provides multiple examples for how he facilitates curricular embodiment. First, as part of the practicum, GTAs must complete the same writing assignment required of undergraduates in FYC courses at the institution. Second, Jude encourages the GTAs in his course to "label their own assumptions" about the teaching of writing. In the Researched Project assignment Jude asks practicum students

to “explore a rankling experience related to the teaching and learning of writing.” Jude also designed a two week unit titled “Countering dominant discourses,” in which GTAs read and discuss SRTOL and linguistic and cultural diversity. Third, Jude encourages GTAs in his practicum to be involved in the writing program through departmental service and initiatives like the locally published writing studies journal.

### **Keith**

Keith is a tenured faculty member at a 4-yr public university in the Midwest where he is the former writing program director and department Chair. He mainly teaches writing pedagogy courses for undergraduate secondary education majors and this is his first time teaching a composition practicum course for graduate students. Keith taught English masters students in his practicum course, and almost all were high school teachers seeking certification to teach dual-enrollment writing courses. Because of Keith’s unique familiarity with both secondary and post-secondary writing pedagogy education, much of our interview focused on his answer to my question: “What is unique about a RhetComp approach to writing pedagogy as compared to a secondary education approach?” Overall, Keith expressed that in his undergraduate WPE courses, the emphasis was on methods and classroom application of theories, but not on the theories, which he described as “summarized and distilled” in the secondary education textbooks. The advantage of teaching a graduate level WPE course is that engaging with the theory becomes the emphasis and graduate students are ready to engage with it fully. In his experience, the teaching journal is the best way to encourage instructor reflection and engagement with theory.

### **Lisa**

Lisa is a tenure track faculty member at a 4-yr, public, Hispanic Serving Institution in the Southwest. She teaches the entire two semester sequence of theory/practicum required of GTAs at



her institution. The students in Lisa's practicum are masters students in the English Department and most study literature. Lisa emphasized the importance of asking for and utilizing feedback from her practicum students when developing her curriculum. The first time she taught the course, she said she "made incorrect assumptions about the GTAs, what they knew, and what they wanted to know." Asking what they need and how they want to be supported "develops a mutually respectful relationship with TAs via which they feel empowered to speak up, share frustrations, and ask for help." Empowered TAs can also take advantage of the curricular freedom and customization Lisa provides her students. Lisa says that as a graduate student she learned the difficulty, but also rewards, of authoring your own writing assignments and curricular materials as a new writing instructor. Her practicum students are given similar amounts of freedom in translating institutional learning outcomes to their writing prompts because, "when TAs can bring in their own interests and knowledge great writing assignments can be written."

### **Syllabi Analysis Procedures**

My goal for the syllabi analysis was to compare how best practices for teaching the college writing practicum have changed over time. In order to make this comparison, I focused on analyzing the types of assignments graduate students were asked to complete, as well as the readings used, in each course. I narrowed my focus to these two elements of the syllabus, rather than coding the entire document, because writing assignments can indicate disciplinary goals and values (Bazerman; Devitt; Melzer), and course readings can be used to interpret how an instructor interprets the rhetorical canon (Ruiz; Martinez).

I used the following procedure to analyze the writing assignments in both the primary and secondary syllabi sets:

*Initial Pass:* review descriptions for course assignments and group them into common genres based on what practicum students are asked to do.

*Second Pass:* Assign genre descriptors to groupings and repeat coding in order to further refine genre descriptors. After this second pass I settled on assignment categories described below.

*Third Pass:* Tabulate how often each genre appears in each syllabi set. This data is represented in Figures 4 and 5, which illustrate the types of genres most assigned in each syllabi set.

I used the following procedure to analyze the course readings in both the primary and secondary syllabi sets:

*Initial Pass:* Identify syllabi that cover addressing diverse learners, language diversity, or power/representation within the field of rhetoric and composition.

*Second Pass:* Assign descriptors that group repeated authors and texts into specific areas of study and review the syllabi again to refine the descriptors.

*Third Pass:* Identify the authors instructors use to address the above issues and tabulate how often they appear in each syllabi set. This data is represented in Tables 1 and 2.

### **Assignment Category Descriptions**

#### ***Weekly Responses***

These types of assignments are self-explanatory. Across both primary and secondary syllabi sets the purpose was the same: to examine a course reading and respond to it according to instructor guidelines. Responses tended to be about 500 words and in the primary set, they typically occurred via discussion boards.

***Traditional Research/Seminar Papers***

These assignments were anywhere from 10-25 pages and required sustained study of a topic, text, or scholar covered in the course. A research paper was considered traditional if it only required researching theories of teaching and not applying them to teaching material creation.

***Teaching Materials***

Assignments in this category include writing that is meant to be included in a teaching portfolio, or to demonstrate effective teaching. Examples include: syllabi, teaching philosophies, course rationales/descriptions, assignment sequences, and teaching demonstrations.

***Teaching Observation***

Assignments in this category include being observed or required to observe another instructor. Completion of a teaching observation assignment typically includes typing up observation notes or responding to an observers' feedback.

***Presentation***

A presentation is classified as an oral report, accompanied by visual demonstration, on some aspect of the course content. A presentation is distinctly different from a teaching demonstration, which is classified under the teaching materials category.

***Collaborative Writing/Research***

Assignments classified as collaborative require working with at least one other person to complete a course assignment. Examples include peer review, discussion groups, and in one case, editing and publishing a journal on the teaching of writing.

***Teaching Journal/Reflective Writing***

This category includes reflective writing assignments that were not included in a teaching portfolio or as job market materials. Instructors who assign teaching journals require minimum

weekly entries. Reflective writing that is not in journal format is typically assigned as part of a midterm or final assignment.

### ***Other***

Assignments categorized as other appeared in three or fewer syllabi. Examples include: literacy narratives, quizzes, midterm or final exams, portfolio norming sessions, video blogs, and mentoring assignments. Mentoring is described as regular meetings between a GTA and an assigned faculty mentor.

### **Syllabi Analysis as a Method for Curricular Revision**

Course syllabi represent an agreement between a learning institution, the instructor, and the students in a course, and the document has several different functions from design to distribution to archival. Colleges use syllabi to inform instructors and students about campus policies and codes of conduct. Instructors use syllabi to plan courses and to detail classroom-specific grading policies and etiquette in an educational setting. Students reading a syllabus for the first time can deduce what grade they might be able to achieve in the course, what they are to learn, and what interactions with the instructor might be like. At the end of the course the syllabi are archived until needed for grade disputes, or for future course design inspiration. Because syllabi are content-rich, pervasive, and relatively easy to attain documents, they are frequently used in educational research and curricular assessment. Content analysis of course syllabi are used to provide snapshots of a discipline's curriculum and to document best practices for teaching certain courses (Chong; Gorski; Pieterse et. al; Stanny et. al; Walsh et. al). Content analysis can also reveal how the syllabus is used to define disciplinary knowledge, as well as how students might position themselves as learners and potential initiates in the field (Bowers-Campbell; Jones; Sulik and Keys). Content analysis uses multiple textual analysis strategies in order to better understand a

document's context, author and purpose. It is a powerful textual analysis method because it utilizes systematic, quantitative textual analysis strategies, such as categorizing and coding, but also includes more descriptive and qualitative ethnographic methodologies (Love). The following literature review describes multi-disciplinary syllabi content analysis studies and reveals how the methodology can be used to evaluate and critique curricular goals in higher education settings.

### *Curricular inquiry*

Wide-scale syllabi content analyses are conducted to discern compliance with university policies and recommended teaching practices, as well as to gauge national curricular standards for a course. Stanny et. al analyzed all undergraduate courses at a 4-year, public university in Florida in order to discern how new university-wide accreditation standards for course design were being implemented by instructors. The researchers developed a rubric for categorizing syllabi content according to evidence of high-impact pedagogical practices (HIPPs). These HIPPs were recently endorsed by the university as part of an initiative to improve adherence to instructional standards articulated by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Stanny et. al wanted to discover how instructors were currently aligning their own teaching practices in accordance with the 13 HIPPs endorsed by the AAC&U. Overall, Stanny et. al documented two major patterns in how instructors were implementing HIPPs in their course design. In the first documented pattern, many instructors were using the specific language of a HIPP to describe learning outcomes for the course, but none of the assignments or activities presented in the syllabus addressed those outcomes. In the second documented pattern the opposite occurred: instructors described activities and assignments using the language of a specific HIPP but did not include that specific learning outcome in their syllabi. According to Stanny et. al, these two observations were evidence that “[I]nstructors describe their best intentions for the course in a syllabus,” but their intentions might

not always clearly coincide with how they teach the course (909). The authors acknowledge that a syllabus alone is not the best indicator for understanding how a course is ultimately taught, but they do recommend large-scale syllabi content analysis for determining how Offices of Teaching and Learning and other university initiatives can support instructors in designing courses that represent university standards for effective teaching. In this particular study, Stanny et. al suggested that the university emphasize the need for explicit connections between course assignments and student learning outcomes in future syllabi and course planning trainings.

Content analysis of course syllabi is also used to determine how curricular decisions are made in specific courses. The data from such analyses provide descriptions of existing best practices and can be used to make suggestions about ways to improve or develop new course offerings. Walsh et. al collected roughly 100 syllabi from graduate level grant-writing courses in the United States. Walsh et. al also distributed a multiple-choice answer survey to instructors of the courses analyzed. The survey was meant to provide more detail on how and why instructors selected textbooks and course readings for grant-writing courses. The results of the content analysis and survey revealed an emphasis on skills-based training and acquisition of skills. The results of the content analysis corroborated a skills-based approach as most implemented in grant writing courses. When asked what made a grant writing textbook most useful, instructors cited “constructive examples” and “practical information” as most desirable (Walsh et. al 79). In this study, no disconnect between explicitly stated course objectives and course design was evidenced, as in Stanny et. al’s study.

Stanny et. al analyzed syllabi from all undergraduate courses at one institution and revealed a lack of explicit connection between course learning outcomes and course design. Walsh et. al analyzed syllabi for one specific type of course taught by several different departments across

multiple institutions but revealed consistency in course objectives and design. What is evidenced by both studies, however, is the ability of syllabi content analysis to provide answers about curricular design posed by the researchers. Walsh et. al sought to understand best practices for teaching grant writing at the graduate level and the content analysis they conducted revealed a consistent skills-based approach to national grant writing course design. Stanny et.al wanted to assess whether university wide attempts to improve course design were being implemented successfully. In their case syllabi content analysis exposed inconsistencies in how instructors align course learning outcomes with design of assignments and activities, instigating the development of improved pedagogical training initiatives at the university. Syllabi content analysis aids educators in evaluating and making recommendations for course design, but the revisionary capability of syllabi content analysis has not yet been explored.

### ***Pedagogical critique***

Syllabi content analysis can identify and describe best practices for curricular design but can also inspire critique of dominant pedagogical and theoretical frameworks, as well as reflection upon the impacts of dominant design choices on disciplinary knowledge. Walsh et. al identified the majority of grant writing syllabi analyzed as emphasizing skills-based pedagogies focused on producing active grant writers; however, there was no discussion about whether an emphasis on skills-based pedagogies was the most effective way to prepare grant writers in their respective disciplines. Walsh et. al collected syllabi from several different departments offering grant writing courses, but there was no discussion about what pedagogical methods might be effective depending on the needs of a particular discipline. The studies discussed in this section of the literature review illustrate how syllabi content analysis can lead to meaningful critique and revision of dominant disciplinary educational practices.

Both Pieterse et. al and Gorski conducted syllabi content analyses in order to interrogate how a certain educational concept was being taught by instructors in specific disciplines. Pieterse et. al questioned how rigorously multicultural and social justice competencies were being covered in counselor and counselor psychology training programs. Gorski analyzed syllabi for Multicultural Teacher Education (MTE) courses to determine which theoretical frameworks for multicultural education were most frequently taught. Each content analysis led to researcher recommendations for pedagogical and theoretical improvements to the course curricula under study.

Pieterse et. al's study was conducted to determine how the fields of counseling and counseling psychology had responded to a significant demand for skills in multicultural competence and social justice advocacy education. The researchers were concerned that current efforts to address diversity and social justice training were inadequate, or not clearly articulated enough that a new counselor might be able to incorporate the concepts into their own practice. Pieterse et. al's content analysis of 54 multicultural and diversity-related course syllabi drawn from counseling and counseling psychology programs in the United States indicated a "disconcerting deficit in specific skills-based instructions in multicultural and social justice counseling competencies" (109). An overwhelming majority of syllabi emphasized knowledge and awareness of the concepts related to multicultural competence as counselors, but only 13% of syllabi included instruction on applying and implementing that knowledge as a practicing counselor (Pieterse et. al 109). Without a practica or internship component to a multicultural competence course, Pieterse et. al claimed, an aspiring counselor's commitment to practicing principles of social justice and multiculturalism cannot be properly assessed. Further complicating the issue of assessment is a divide in multicultural competence between students and supervisors in many clinical practica



settings. Often, many supervisors charged with evaluating the multicultural competence of their students were educated before the advent of such training, and will not know about the concepts, or have experience with them (Pieterse et. al). Ultimately Pieterse et. al argued for more clear accreditation criteria for multicultural competence courses that require application of theory and acquisition of skills, rather than emphasizing just acquisition of knowledge. The authors imply that stricter accreditation standards can ensure that future students in the fields of counseling and counseling psychology acquire the necessary multicultural competencies and are assessed by instructors and supervisors that also value and practice those skills.

Pieterse et. al's syllabi content analysis emphasized how curricular standards influence future practitioners and educators in a field of study. Similarly, Gorski's study of Multicultural Teacher Education (MTE) syllabi further illustrates how content analysis provides curricular knowledge that can lead to more explicit connections between a curriculum and the students it generates. In the case of MTE courses for teacher educators, Gorski found that most of the courses he analyzed were designed to prepare teachers with multicultural knowledge that would make them tolerant and sensitive to the racial and cultural needs of their students. This acquired disposition towards issues of multiculturalism would not, however, "prepare teachers to identify or eliminate educational inequities, or to create equitable learning environments," qualities he considers necessary for authentic multicultural educators (Gorski 316). This level of both awareness and action Gorski equated with a pedagogical approach to MTE he described as "Teaching as Resistance and Counter-hegemonic." Only 3 of the syllabi he analyzed fit into this category and most of the courses attempting to scaffold this level of critical socio-political activism into their courses "crashed" before reaching that point (Gorski 316). The rest of the syllabi Gorski analyzed were coded and categorized according to how the content reflected different approaches

to multicultural education, ranging from conservative to critical. Although Gorski considers Teaching as Resistance and Counter-hegemonic to be the most critical and authentic framework for MTE courses, he does acknowledge that other liberal and critical frameworks were reflected in 35 of the 45 syllabi he analyzed. Only 7 syllabi represented the most conservative MTE framework, Teaching the “other,” explained as “defining multicultural education through a market-centric or capitalistic lens” and perpetuating existing power relations (313). Gorski acknowledges that even though he dismisses Teaching the “other” as a viable framework for teaching MTE courses, that framework would still create courses that meet the basic accreditation standards for multicultural competencies. Ideally, however, multicultural educators should scaffold learning opportunities that inspire future educators to critique and change educational settings (Gorski). The categories that emerged from Gorski’s syllabi content analysis provide a lens through which programs can consider how instructors matriculating from their programs might handle issues of race and culture. Even if MTE course designers disagree with Gorski’s rationale for the most authentic MTE pedagogical framework, his theoretical categories provide lasting value as standards via which to critique the curricular goals of their own courses and programs.

### ***Educational socialization***

Data from syllabi content analyses can be used to answer questions about curricular standards, both how those standards are defined and assessed. Syllabi content analyses can also yield data useful for determining the correlation between a curriculum and the skills and knowledge graduates of the curriculum will acquire. Content analysis of course syllabi can also provide descriptive data curricular and course designers can use to measure what knowledge and skills students might acquire from a particular course or program of study. Yet another source of

data that a syllabi content analysis can yield relates to design elements of the syllabus itself. The research discussed in the section of the literature review explains how the language and content of a syllabus affect student and instructor expectations for learning.

Close attention to the language and content of course syllabi leads to inferences about the classroom dynamic and how an institution wished to socialize students in a particular discipline. Bowers-Campbell looks specifically at how language in a syllabus can limit student autonomy and potential. She analyzed the standardized syllabus for the college developmental reading course she was teaching and supplemented her content analysis with student interviews about how they viewed the document. Bowers-Campbell most criticized the language of the standardized syllabus for providing a very narrow definition of successful college reading. According to her, many of the words used to communicate course objectives literally and symbolically depicted the students as underperforming and deficient. The section on how to pass the class was described as “exit requirements,” further describing the students as trapped, or unable to leave if they do not perform the required set of reading skills described in the syllabus. When interviewed, students did not challenge the assumptions made about their presumed reading inadequacies. Instead, Bowers-Campbell found that students accepted their designations as struggling readers and looked only for the information they needed to escape the course. She concluded that her students do not expect to find, nor do they find in the standardized syllabus, any inspiration in the fight against discourses and documents “that perpetuate binaries of good or struggling reader” (Bowers-Campbell 121).

Sulik and Keys further describe how the syllabus can be used as a tool for socialization in the college classroom. The researchers concluded that syllabi for introductory college Sociology courses served several socializing functions. The syllabi: shaped the student role, clarified the instructor role, cultivated a class climate, and modeled the discipline and practice of sociology

(Sulik and Keys). Many of the syllabi included specific examples of what Sulik and Keys defined as “speaking sociology.” This meant that the instructor used sociological concepts to describe student expectations for the course, as well as how the instructor would create conditions for learning. Any specific rules for class conduct and etiquette, for example, might be described as necessary for healthy interactions amongst social groups, a key premise in the study of Sociology. In another example, an instructor might frame a course assignment as related to a larger cultural issue, which concerned the classroom as a microcosm of society, another important research perspective in the discipline. Sulik and Keys argued that this discipline-specific language contributed to transparency and “a shared responsibility between teachers and students for meeting course objectives and developing a class climate” (158).

If a course syllabus represents an agreement between an instructor, the students, and the institution, content analysis can help answer questions about how these agreements are made and negotiated. A comparison of Bowers-Campbell’s and Sulik and Key’s results reveals the importance of syllabi language in establishing an agreement between the instructors, the students, and the institution offering the course. While institutional influence in syllabus design was not made explicit in Sulik and Key’s study, the implication seems to be that the instructor is the mediator between what is required to be included on a syllabus and what they chose to include for the benefit of their students. This mediatory power to control the language of her syllabus was not present for Bowers-Campbell. She did not indicate in her article whether she had the power to revise the language in her required syllabi, but her criticism about the narrow definition of reading contained in the syllabus implies that she is aware of differing perspectives on the teaching of college reading and might wish to incorporate those into her classroom. Further indicating her lack of agency in revising the syllabus is the fact that her article ended with her critique and did not

explore specific changes she might make to her course syllabus, or how she might proceed in recommending that the university revise the syllabus language.

### ***Implications for study design***

While some of the syllabi content analyses discussed in this literature review supplement the coding of syllabi with surveys of instructors and interviews with students, there have been no in-depth interviews conducted with instructors. Instructors, whether they adhere to a standardized syllabus or draft their own, control how that syllabus is performed in the classroom. Pairing content analysis with instructor interviews can improve understanding of how instructors attempt to align curricular and pedagogical goals in course design. This knowledge can in turn lead to more critical and meaningful curricular design that accounts for the instructor's role as mediator between the institution and the student.

### **WPE and the GTA Practicum Course**

The connection between WPE and the field of Rhetoric and Composition is well documented in historical scholarship on the origins of first-year writing curricula. The introduction of the required first-year composition course at Harvard in 1872 changed how the discipline of rhetoric and composition defined itself. Several histories detail the rise of doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition with an increase in colleges requiring a first-year composition course, therefore creating a demand to train instructors for those courses (Crowley; Dobrin; Pytlik and Liggett). English department TAs teaching FYC had more control over their classrooms and more responsibilities than those in other departments, yet a 1972 study of English Department TA preparation programs revealed little emphasis on pedagogical training, and little to no faculty involvement (Eble). This assessment was reversed in the next major studies of TA education and doctoral programs in Rhet Comp conducted in the mid-1990s (Brown. Meyer and Enos; Latterell).

Latterell concluded in her dissertation study of 36 English GTA education courses that, although department involvement had increased and methods of pedagogical delivery had improved, the content of many practica courses remained highly skills based, or “deterministic.” Latterell describes a deterministic teaching emphasis as one that “mold(s) new writing teachers along existing lines of pedagogical and institutional interest” (20). A deterministic way of teaching frames narratives of success and failure around how quickly and easily a new GTA orients herself to the institutionally endorsed model of writing. Latterell described GTA education scholarship at the time as told through local narratives, and framed as resistance to, or adaptation to, rhetoric and composition theory. She conceded that lore and storytelling are important for developing disciplinary knowledge, but that an emphasis on this style of research limits what the study of GTA education can contribute to rhetoric and composition, in particular, what GTA education can “tell the field about how it reproduces itself and shapes its future” (8).

### **WPE Scholarship: Studying the Practicum Experience**

Much TA training scholarship emphasizes narratives of a new writer’s teaching experiences.<sup>4</sup> These narratives are told using teaching journals, or other reflective writing assigned as part of a TA seminar, interviews, or a combination of these methods. Auto-ethnographic and reflective writing are meant to develop a new writing instructor’s insight into their learning process, but these writings cannot yield a complete and reliable assessment of the effectiveness of TA preparation. One reason is that reflective writing does not always present the most honest or critical self-assessments of performance. McKinney and Chiseri-Strater found that the TAs in their teaching practicum tended to compose their journals using “performed identities” (60). Some TAs

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<sup>4</sup> In addition to many of the sources listed in the previous note, the following dissertations use localized narratives to study the GTA practicum: Dunn; Johnson; Munoz; Myers; Odom; Rankin; Warwick; Wolf.

in the class tailored their journals to reflect the teacher identity they thought was ideal, sometimes in direct contrast to what was observed in their classroom performance and curricular choices.

Journals and reflective writing cannot yield a complete and reliable assessment of the effectiveness of GTA preparation, but they can tell us more about the students learning to teach college writing, so that curricula designers might anticipate the needs of future TAs. However, Warwick cautions that GTA educators should not begin to think that they know their students' needs better than they do based on existing WPE scholarship. In an analysis of narratives of GTA preparation, Warwick found that most emphasize conferring knowledge upon graduate students, rather than creating problem-solving and collaborative moments between instructor and GTA. Research detailing effective methods of teaching outnumbered research on graduate student needs, evidence diverges from the student-centered pedagogies endorsed in the teaching of FYC (Warwick). Further, stock narratives get repeated in GTA education scholarship, which categorize GTA behavior at either end of a resistance/assimilation spectrum. According to Warwick, this spectrum frames resistance as a threat to dominant narratives of successful GTA training. These findings corroborate Latterell's suspicion that preparing college teachers of writing is approached deterministically because stories told through WPE scholarship portray new writing instructors as learning to perform (or not) a set of skills conferred upon them. GTAs are characterized as either adequately or inadequately adapting to the practicum curriculum; thereby limiting the types of writing instructors graduate students can choose to be, and limiting their ability to, as Phelps said, "revitalize the discipline."

### **WPE and Curricular Invention**

If GTA preparation is framed through a binary of resistance or assimilation, students may be encouraged to conform to, rather than to expand and revitalize existing narratives of success as

new writing instructors. Latterell argued in 1996 that most doctoral programs were still relying on skills-based and deterministic pedagogical approaches (26). Stenberg and Lee echoed a similar concern in 2002 when they described how an “entrenched model” of teaching was being accepted and perpetuated in practicum curricula. In an entrenched model of teaching, professors often assume that pedagogy is mastered and dispensed to homogenous audiences of student novices. This teaching model relies on acceptance and continuation of existing hierarchies and power relationships within the university, often without critical thought or revision over time. In contrast to an entrenched model of pedagogy, Stenberg and Lee advocate for a process of ongoing pedagogical inquiry that requires a visible and reflexive relationship between theory and praxis. Stenberg and Lee’s pedagogical inquiry is a process whereby theory and practice influence one another in “an ongoing process of discovering – and responding to – revisionary possibilities (327). Heard furthers the idea of pedagogical inquiry with his concept of curricular invention. Curricular invention views graduate education course design in Rhetoric and Composition as a creative, problem solving act that requires discovery of what the discipline values, and how it interacts with the rest of the world. He cautions that practicum instructors’ desire to impart practical, skills-based knowledge on new GTAs “may keep them from contributing to the disciplinary community in inventive ways” (317). Framing practicum design through its potential to encourage innovative disciplinary problem solving and inquiry can improve deterministic and entrenched teaching practices.

The composition practicum is also a rich site for interpreting if, and how, a writing program sustains what Phelps defines as a “climate of invention.” A climate of invention encourages and supports “creative work by everyone in an ongoing way,” (Phelps “Institutional Invention” 65) and ensures that all members participate in inventing the institution’s goals and organizational



structures. An inventive institutional climate reimagines the traditional academic conflict regarding power and creativity, a conflict Phelps describes as “the individual academic or student against the institution” (67). This conflict perpetuates the binary of creativity versus institutionalization and sustains an environment prone to conservatism rather than innovation. In a conservative environment, reforms occur via rebellion and conflict, but maintaining those innovations requires institutionalizing them, a process that inevitably “recreates stasis” and conserves a new set of institutional values and practices to rebel against (Phelps “Institutional Invention” 65). Sustaining a climate of invention, rather than a recurring power struggle between creativity and institutionalization, allows an institution to be “radically inventive,” and “to enable continual innovation and adaptation in any domain by those populating or served by the institution” (Phelps “Institutional Invention” 68). Attending to how invention is modeled and taught in the writing pedagogy practicum can lead to better understanding of how ideological battles play out in the classroom, and how to ensure students and instructors use those tensions productively rather than perpetuating entrenched political battles.

Chapter 2 explains how syllabi content analysis is used to reveal curricular revision opportunities for both programs of study and individual courses. Chapter 2 also describes the potential of pairing syllabi content analysis with instructor interviews to improve curricular critique and revision specifically within WPE and graduate education in Rhetoric of and Composition. Chapters 3 and 4 present findings from a Survey of Writing Pedagogy Practicum Instructors that reveal pedagogical trends in practicum course design over time, as well as opportunities for curricular critique and revision.

### CHAPTER 3: DESIGNS AND IMPLICATIONS

Chapters 1 and 2 establish the GTA teaching practicum as a productive site for exploring questions about WPE and graduate education in Rhetoric and Composition. Chapter 2 introduces syllabi content analysis methods useful for evaluating curricular invention in the practicum course, which Estrem and Reid call the “heart of WPE.” Chapter 3 investigates patterns that emerge from my data revealing how practicum instructors balance curricular standardization and innovation within their course design. Chapter 3 begins with a historical comparison of writing pedagogy practica syllabi and then progresses into more detailed and localized accounts drawn from survey results. The following definitions will be useful for navigating the structure of this chapter:

*Secondary syllabi* – syllabi appearing in a 1995 special edition of the journal *Composition Studies*, titled *A forum on doctoral education*.

*Primary syllabi* – syllabi collected as part of my Survey of Writing Pedagogy Instructors. The courses were taught between 2016-18.

*General Survey Findings* – short answer and multiple-choice responses collected from 32 participants in phase one of a Survey of Writing Pedagogy Instructors.

*Interview Findings* – responses collected from hour-long interviews with 12 participants in phase two of a Survey of Writing Pedagogy Instructors.

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter 2 syllabi content analysis is described as a method that identifies best practices for curricular design and motivates critique of dominant pedagogical and theoretical frameworks. According to Stanny et, al, “[I]nstructors describe their best intentions for the course in a syllabus,” but those intentions do not always coincide with how they teach the course (909). Chapter 3 identifies examples of how writing pedagogy practicum attempt to align curricular intentions with

course design. I begin by identifying the types of assignments practicum instructors consistently assigned in the *secondary* (1995) and the *primary* (2018) syllabi sets. (Please see pgs. 24-25 for descriptions of the assignment categories). I present findings from the Survey of Writing Pedagogy Practicum Instructors that examine how instructors rationalize their course design choices. The *General Survey Findings* heading designates patterns that emerged from all 32 responses. The *Interview Findings* heading presents further evidence collected from 12 interviewees that further examine overall patterns in practicum course design. My results provide evidence to affirm the writing pedagogy practicum as a site for understanding shifting curricular trends in WPE and disciplinary values in rhetoric and composition.

### **Overall Trends in the Secondary Syllabi**

The *Composition Studies* syllabi rely heavily on traditional academic genres, such as reading responses, seminar papers, presentations, book reviews, annotated bibliographies, and exams, to evaluate student success. Many course grades are dependent upon one lengthy research paper due at the end of the course, or 3 shorter papers due throughout the semester. The purpose of these papers is for students to demonstrate what they learned about the teaching of writing through course readings. Some writing assignments have more flexible requirements and ask students to define a problem related to the teaching of writing, and then propose a solution to that problem using the genre deemed most appropriate. Suggested genres for these more flexible assignments are grant proposals, designs for classroom studies, or curricular materials. Overall, however, the traditional academic seminar paper and weekly reading responses are the genres that dominate practicum course design in the secondary set of syllabi.

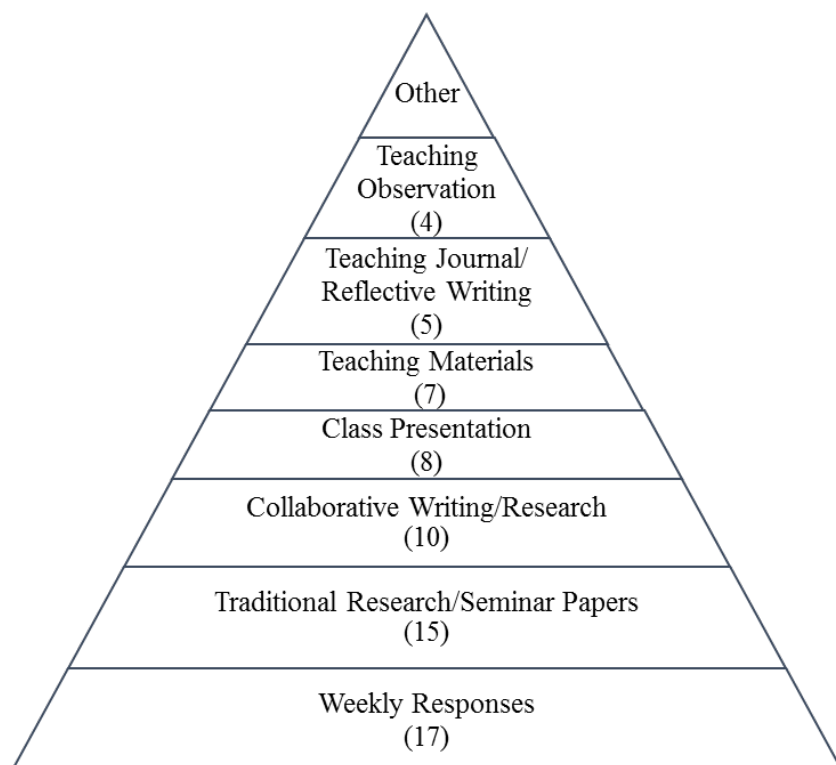


Figure 4. Assignment Types in the secondary syllabi set (1995)

A writing pedagogy practicum course is meant to prepare instructors to teach college writing courses, but, most syllabi from 1995 did not require students to produce evidence of that teaching. Less than half, 7 out of 17, practicum courses required GTAs to create teaching materials as part of the course writing assignments. Even fewer courses, 4 out of 17, required GTAs to observe the teaching of others, or to be observed themselves. High emphasis on writing about theory and pedagogy in contrast to low emphasis on constructing curricular materials seems designed to limit the theory/praxis connections that could be made by new writing instructors. For example, most of the secondary syllabi are designed to facilitate knowledge retention regarding which scholars endorse which pedagogies, and about the history of Rhetoric and Composition in general; however, a scaffold for applying this knowledge to the students' own teaching practices is not always built into the practicum courses from 1995. Further, a reliance upon seminar-style writing assignments and traditional reading responses implies that connecting theory and praxis is

the ability to match a scholar with a specific theory or pedagogy, and that the best way to assess successful application of this knowledge is through traditional academic research genres. While reading and writing-intensive course structure does not necessarily undermine the goal of connecting theories with teaching practices, the course deliverables do not contain enough evidence of how new writing instructors would apply the theories learned.

Another trend identified across syllabi from *A forum on doctoral education* is that of establishing the scholarly domain of Rhetoric and Composition Studies. Many course reading lists were organized around major pedagogical theories, texts, and scholars, representing a survey of the discipline. This survey course organizational method dominated syllabi design, with a few focusing on a specific pedagogical approach, such as Critical Cultural Studies (Syracuse, University of North Dakota and Indiana University of Pennsylvania). Related to my earlier critique is the same concern for how GTAs in these courses are being asked to connect disciplinary and canonical knowledge to classroom application.

### **Overall Trends in the Primary Syllabi Set**

The syllabi collected as part of my Survey of Writing Pedagogy Practicum Instructors reveal a distinct increase in the number of job market and teaching material assignments GTAs were asked to create. In contrast to the syllabi collected from 1995, all of those collected in 2018 (12/12) assessed students based on genres used to demonstrate teaching, such as teaching philosophies, and course materials. Teaching observations also increased from 4/17 courses requiring them in 1995, to 8/12 in 2018. The increase in instructors assigning teaching materials and observations indicates a shift towards aligning successful demonstration of teaching ability more closely with canonical knowledge.

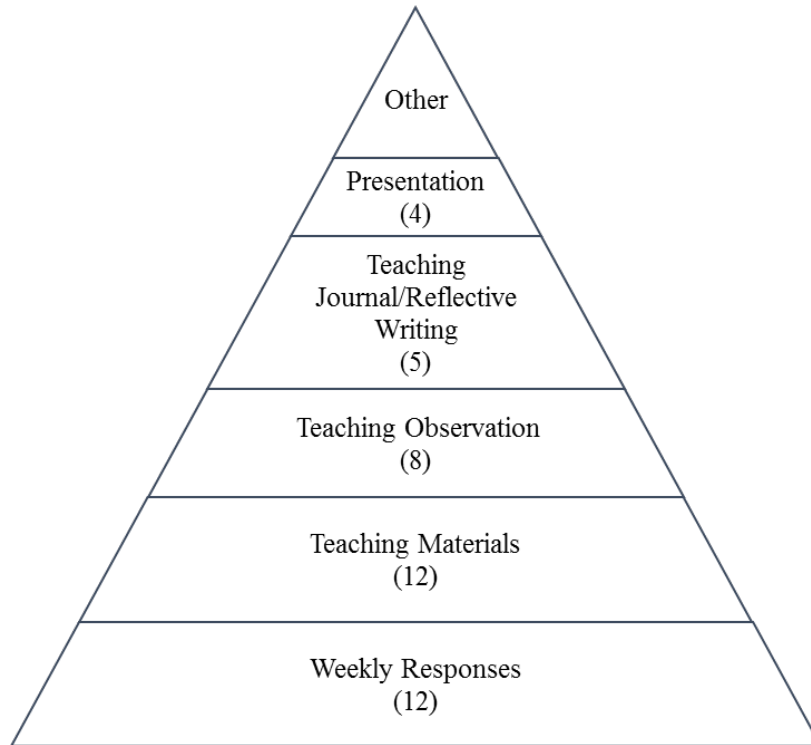


Figure 5. Assignment Types in the Primary (2018) Syllabi

Related to the shift in course design towards pedagogically informed genres is the increase in job market material creation. The genres assigned in the primary syllabi set are required for college teaching and faculty job applications, which suggests that success in a practicum course is now aligned with the ability to get a job as a college writing instructor. One syllabus specifically stated that excellent work in the course was connected to employability as an English major. Two other syllabi emphasized the importance of “professional development” in the course description.

Two trends remain stable between both sets of syllabi. First, all 12 of the primary syllabi remain loyal to the weekly reading and response assignment. Second, all the syllabi also conform to the same RhetComp survey course design as courses from 1995. Both trends indicate that disciplinary history and knowledge are still valued in the design of writing pedagogy practicum courses, and that reading responses remain the preferred way of assessing student engagement with that content.

As I mentioned in the previous section, a reading and writing-intensive course structure does not necessarily undermine the goal of connecting theories with teaching practices if course deliverables provide ample opportunities for new writing instructors to demonstrate pedagogical application. Identifying and comparing the genres students compose in writing pedagogy practica classrooms leads to improved understanding of how pedagogical application is demonstrated and assessed in the field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies.

### **Trends in Pedagogical Awareness**

In the previous section I demonstrated how writing pedagogy practicum courses shifted over time to more closely align the types of assignments utilized in course design with larger disciplinary values about the teaching of writing. Practicum courses are now designed to prioritize application of theory via teaching and job market materials, instead of traditional academic research genres. This section will further demonstrate how and why practicum instructors use teaching materials to assess the connections students make between what they are reading and what they are doing in the classroom. Many of the instructors I interviewed explained that connections between theory and praxis are made most effectively when students are taught to make the process of teaching transparent and explicit through the creation of teaching materials. Interviewees described the process of composing teaching materials as leading to higher pedagogical awareness, which in turn motivates reflection upon and revision of curricular choices. In my study I identify two factors that repeatedly influenced an instructor's ability to cultivate pedagogical awareness in a writing pedagogy practicum:

- Use of a common syllabus or other required teaching materials
- Facilitating contributions to the local writing program

Each bullet point corresponds to a proceeding chapter section, and each section is divided into general survey findings and interview findings.

### *The Common Syllabus and Pedagogical Inquiry*

#### General Survey Findings

## Were your students required to use a common syllabus or other departmental approved teaching materials?

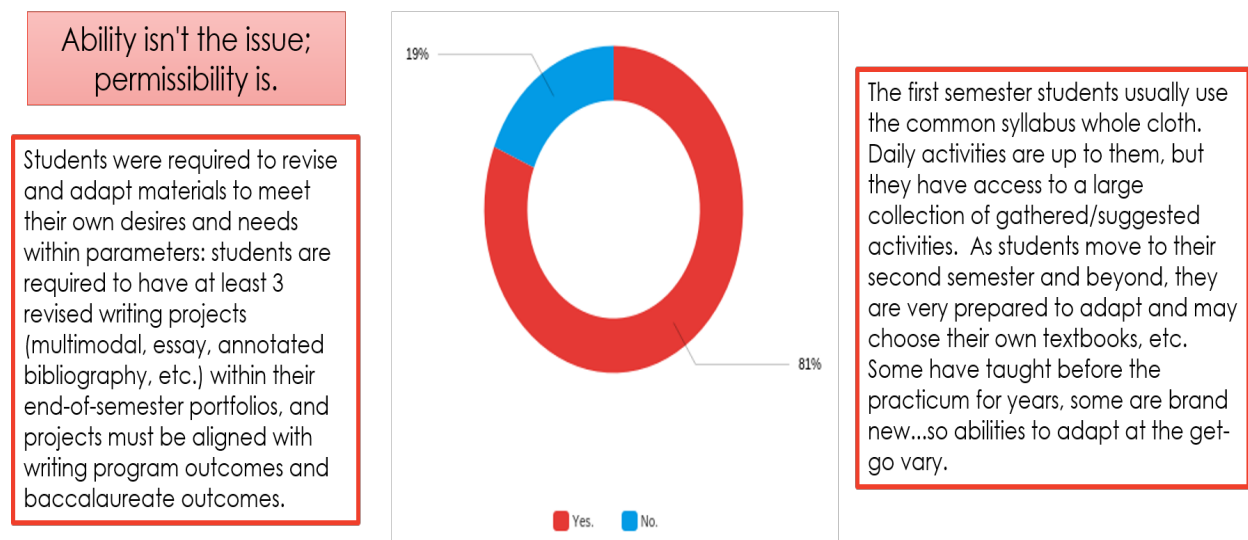


Figure 6. Adaptability of Common Syllabus and Teaching Materials

Out of 32 practicum instructors surveyed in the first phase of my study, 26 (80%) said that their GTAs were required to use a common syllabus or other required teaching materials when teaching for the first time. When asked to describe the ability to revise/adapt those materials, many respondents revealed that both they, and their students, had many options for adaptation and customization. Even though GTAs had to adhere to the departmental learning outcomes and teach a specific sequence of assignments, students could still choose a course theme, redesign the rubrics used to assess assignments, or modify the language of the assignment prompts. GTAs also had other levels of flexibility in customizing their courses such as choosing the course textbook,



creating a new scaffolding sequence for a major assignment, or choosing the assignments they wanted to teach from those approved by the writing program. GTAs also had some leeway in adapting their syllabi to reflect their own approach to the curriculum. Some practicum instructors even built revision and adaptation of the required teaching materials into their course design. A strategy cited by several survey participants was to allow GTAs to propose new course materials after 1-2 semesters of teaching the common syllabus, that, if approved by the practicum instructor or writing program administrator, would be added to departmental bank of teaching materials. This progression from common syllabus to individualized teaching materials supports the idea that a common syllabus need not limit pedagogical innovation but can be used to cultivate pedagogical awareness and programmatic innovation.

### Interview Findings

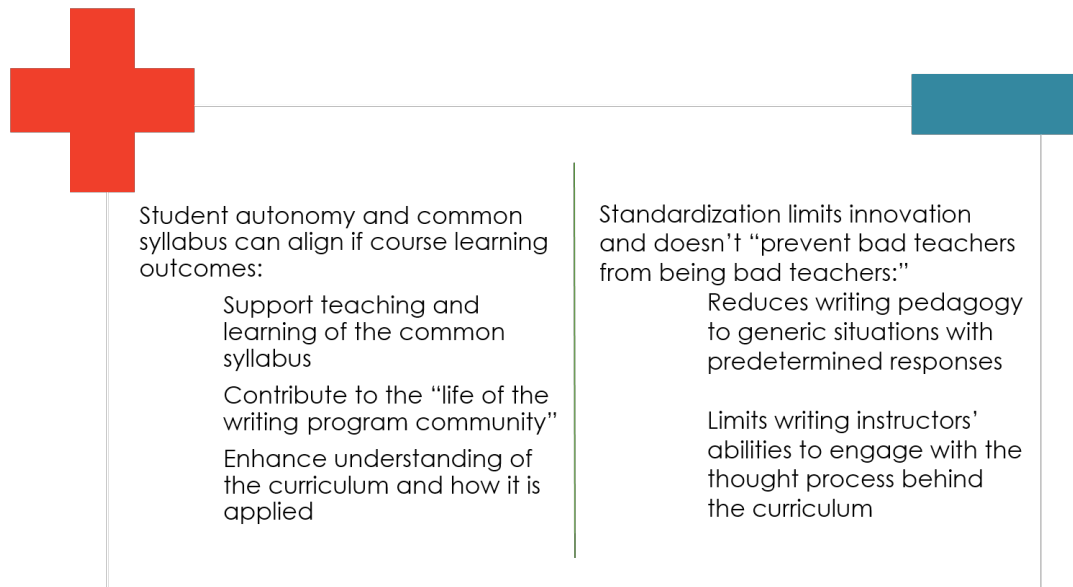


Figure 7. Common Syllabus and Pedagogical Awareness

Interviews from phase two of my survey further explicate the constraints and affordances of teaching from a common syllabus. Brenda and Alice provide examples of how a common

syllabus can limit pedagogical awareness, but Dana explains how she teaches the common syllabus in way that encourages pedagogical awareness.

Brenda recalled a negative example from her days as a practicum student in which she was required to read a textbook that explained the teaching of writing through several hypothetical scenarios. She remembers this book taught her what *not* to do as an instructor, which was to reduce writing pedagogy to generic situations with predetermined responses. Brenda remembers that the scenarios presented in that textbook “seemed like fantasy to her” and did not help her think about her own classroom in a realistic way. She decided then that case studies used to discuss best teaching practices should be taken from instructors’ own classrooms and not drawn from hypothetical scenarios. According to Brenda, the best practice for helping novice writing instructors is individualized attention, not a set of rules to follow. Standardization limits innovation and doesn’t “prevent bad teachers from being bad teachers.” She explains that common syllabi are used to make sure that novice teachers are following the rules, but a set of rules won’t “prevent bad teachers from being bad teachers.” Also, when you force innovative teachers to follow a line, you limit their potential to improve your curriculum.

Alice, who also does not teach a common syllabus, shares Brenda’s opinion about the limits of using a set curriculum to teach new writing instructors. According to Alice, a common syllabus can limit writing instructors’ abilities to engage with the thought process behind the curriculum, which in turn can cause a disconnect when thinking through what went wrong with a part of the curriculum. According to Alice, if a GTA can’t see the thought process or motivation behind an assignment, they are missing important context that can aid in revising and improving it.

Alice uses a story from her first time teaching a practicum course to further explain the importance of explicating the thought process behind curricular choices. An issue she encountered

her first time teaching the practicum was the tendency for her students to include teaching materials from their mentors in send of semester teaching portfolios. Alice worried the GTAs were not modifying the materials enough, and not offering critical or explicit reasons for replicating the mentors' work. In other words, her students claimed that the teaching methods the mentors employed were examples of best practices but could not explain why or how in their own words.

Dana explains how student autonomy and the common syllabus align in her course design. Dana teaches a practicum course in technical and professional communication and her teaching mantra is: "trust the wisdom of the class." She enacts this mantra by encouraging students to tell her how they are going to teach, instead of her telling them how to teach. Her philosophy of writing pedagogy education is reflected in the cumulative course assignment, the Syllabus Development. For this assignment GTAs are required to create a syllabus, course rationale, assignment descriptions, detailed daily activities, and at least 5 "concept modules." Dana's syllabus explains the concept modules as such:

**Concept Modules:** More specific than the syllabus/policies typically provided to students. Assignment modules must include specific references to teaching methods and the teaching literature to show that your plans for the courses are based on best practices as reflected in the literature of our field. Each module must cite at least 4 sources from the tech com academic literature and provide references to textbooks where the concepts and genres are used or described.

Concept modules not only ensure that GTAs are reading and learning theories in tech comm, but that they are also thinking through how to apply those theories in a tech comm writing classroom. The rubric Dana uses to evaluate the Syllabus Development assignment emphasizes explication of teaching methods, explaining that the materials created should "serve as a primer for novice instructors, not just telling them what to do, but how and why." Also, the highest quality versions of the assignment will "reflect thoughtful engagement with pedagogy." In contrast, a student's grade will be negatively affected if the project is "either too generic or incomplete to

reflect well on you.” These criteria for assessment reflect a thoughtful negotiation of how to both encourage application of theory and discourage adherence to theories or practices simply because they are required by a common curriculum.

### *Engaging with the Discipline*

#### **General Survey Findings**

When asked how they decided which writing theories and pedagogies to emphasize in their classes, most survey respondents said they prioritized departmental directives first and emphasized practices that aligned with the departmental vision. Secondly instructors identified personal opinions and experiences as influencing course content, followed lastly by educational organizations such as the Council of Writing Program Administrators and the National Council of Teachers of English. Those that cited “variety” as important still described that variety as limited by personal and departmental standards. Only two answers to the question mentioned drawing on GTA experiences or concerns when determining course content. Only one respondent specified including theories and pedagogies not implemented in the local writing program as important.

General survey findings indicate that writing pedagogy practicum classrooms may emphasize a narrow view of the field of Rhetoric and Composition at the expense of wider, more representative view. Interview findings, however, provide examples of curricular design that encourage GTAs to engage with writing pedagogy education both locally and globally.

#### **Interview Findings**

Jude’s syllabus contains two exemplary learning outcomes for aligning practicum course design with local curricular development and professionalization:

- Demonstrate an understanding of \_\_\_\_\_’s first-year writing curriculum by engaging in hands-on, embodied experiences with key elements of that curriculum

- Contribute to the life of the writing program community, helping enact and shape its mission and goals

The seminar project for Jude's course, the "Writing Studies Inquiry," encourages practicum students to engage with the curriculum they will be teaching and its continued improvement. The assignment consists of three parts completed over the course of the semester. The first part asks GTAs to describe an experience related to the teaching and learning of writing, and then develop "an open, emergent question suited to further inquiry" based on that incident. The next parts of the project require students to situate their question within the scholarship of teaching writing, write a research proposal, and finally, a researched project that "speaks back to the issue in a responsive manner." The final form that the project can take is not specified, but it is important students explore formats that "can support teaching and learning in our local writing program."

The Writing Studies Inquiry facilitates GTA interaction with the curriculum because it closely mirrors an assignment that all FYC students must complete. As GTAs complete the assignment, they gain insight into what issues might arise as their students complete it. Also, experiencing the curriculum they are teaching can help GTAs improve the process by which they teach and assess it. The Writing Studies Inquiry project is meant to facilitate this process of critical and reflective engagement with the standard curriculum in a way that invites new and varying approaches to it.

Frank explained that many of his course readings are selected from a bank of readings that students can also contribute to, with his approval. Student contributions to the reading bank often reflect current and emerging literacies that his students introduce him to. Frank recognizes that listening to the different knowledge students bring to the class can sometimes move the curriculum in ways that he is unprepared for, but that is what helps him stay current with regards to innovations

in the field. He credits students with introducing him to different multicultural and feminist literacies that have become part of the reading bank, and therefore a resource for future instructors at that institution.

In Brenda's practicum course the students publish a journal together. Her students are required to participate in the journal as either an editor or contributing author and previous versions of the journal are also required reading for the course. The work of contributing to and producing the journal initiates practicum students to the professional performance of the discipline. Further, embedding the journal into the practicum curriculum ensures that GTAs remain contributors to the local life of the writing program, as well as to the future of writing pedagogy education scholarship.

### **Conclusion**

Study results presented in this chapter provide examples of how practicum course design has remained stable and how it has shifted since 1995. The writing pedagogy practicum curriculum remains focused on introducing new writing instructors to major pedagogical theories through a survey course structure, and the primary assessment of that disciplinary knowledge occurs through reading and response. An important shift has occurred, however, in assessing how that theoretical knowledge translates to the teaching of writing. The creation of teaching and job market materials is now the dominant method for evaluating learning progress in writing pedagogy practica classrooms. The consistent implementation of this assessment strategy across syllabi collected in 2018 affirms the connection between a course curriculum and the skills and knowledge graduates of the curriculum will acquire (Bowers-Campbell, Sulik and Keys). While general survey findings might indicate that practicum instructors design courses that narrowly define Rhetoric and Composition according to personal and institutional allegiances, interview findings reveal how

practicum instructors can, and do, encourage new writing instructors to contribute to disciplinary knowledge creation at the local and national levels.

## CHAPTER 4: TOKENS AND SILENCES

Chapters 1 and 2 establish the GTA teaching practicum as a productive site for exploring questions about WPE and graduate education in Rhetoric and Composition. Chapter 2 introduces syllabi content analysis methods useful for evaluating curricular invention in the practicum course, which Estrem and Reid call the “heart of WPE.” Chapter 3 investigates how practicum instructors balance curricular standardization and innovation within their course design. Chapter 4 presents further research interrogating disciplinary hierarchies that perpetuate marginalization of theories related to language diversity, race, and writing assessment in the teaching of writing.

Chapter 4 identifies theories and scholars that are consistently marginalized/absent from writing pedagogy practica syllabi and then progresses into instructor accounts of how disciplinary hierarchies influence the inclusion of certain scholars and texts in course design. The following definitions will be useful for navigating the structure of this chapter:

*Secondary syllabi* – syllabi appearing in a 1995 special edition of the journal *Composition Studies*, titled *A forum on doctoral education*.

*Primary syllabi* – syllabi collected as part of my Survey of Writing Pedagogy Instructors. The courses were taught between 2016-18.

*General Survey Findings* – short answer and multiple-choice responses collected from 32 participants in phase one of a Survey of Writing Pedagogy Instructors.

*Interview Findings* – responses collected from hour-long interviews with 12 participants in phase two of a Survey of Writing Pedagogy Instructors.

### Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 2, Latterell is highly critical of deterministic practicum course design, which provides a narrow view of the field of writing studies and limits new writing



instructors' abilities to innovate pedagogically. The dangers of deterministic course design on pedagogical innovation are also voiced by Phelps, Warwick, Stenberg and Lee, and Heard. All share a concern that practicum course design tends to fall into patterns of imparting practical, skills-based knowledge to new writing instructors rather than encouraging problem solving and theoretical exploration. Stenberg and Lee emphasize the tendency for deterministic teaching to facilitate uncritical acceptance of existing hierarchies and power dynamics within the teaching of writing. Heard agrees that graduate education should encourage, rather than limit, student ability to investigate and critique disciplinary values. Phelps argues that it is graduate students who are the "faculty of the future" and the ones who need freedom from deterministic and skills based graduate education to critique entrenched hierarchies and revitalize disciplinary knowledge. According to Warwick, however, when GTAs begin to critique entrenched practices encountered in practicum settings, they are labeled as resisting, rather than assimilating to the curriculum. If GTA training is framed as either resistance or assimilation to a dominant pedagogical view, students may be encouraged to conform to, rather than to expand and revitalize existing narratives of success as new writing instructors. Phelps echoes the concern that framing GTA success in the practicum as assimilation versus resistance limits not just the success of GTAs, but also instructors, disciplines, and institutions.

### **Trends in Curricular Tokenism**

While practicum course design has shifted since 1995 to include more writing assignments that emphasize connecting theory with classroom practice, many of the same theories/practices continue to be marginalized/absent from course reading lists. I found issues of language diversity and race in the teaching of writing to be limited in both coverage and presence across both primary and secondary syllabi sets and describe this phenomenon as curricular tokenism. Curricular

tokenism in writing pedagogy practicum design is defined as utilizing scholars or theories in a manner that appears inclusive, but ultimately does not facilitate translation from theory to practice.

Examples of curricular tokenism in writing pedagogy practicum course design include:

1. Disproportionally limiting coverage of the same topics and scholars.
2. Continually using the same few scholars to represent a theory or branch of study.
3. Designing assignments that do not encourage the translation of marginalized theories into classroom practice.

### **Syllabi Analysis Results**

As explained in Chapter 3, writing pedagogy practica syllabi rely on responding to instructor curated reading lists as a strategy for acquiring theoretical and historical knowledge about the teaching of writing. Across the primary and secondary syllabi sets, topics addressing how to respond to diverse learners and scholarship written by people of color are given consistent, limited coverage, demonstrating how instructor curation of reading lists can perpetuate that marginalization.

### ***Overall Trends in Secondary Syllabi Set***

Topics consistently underrepresented included theories of critical pedagogy, basic writing scholarship, and language diversity. Table 1 indicates how each scholar was categorized and how often each appeared on the readings list of the syllabi from *Composition Studies*.

Table 1

### **Marginalized Topics and Scholars in the Secondary Syllabi Set**

<b>Critical Pedagogy</b>	<b>Basic Writing</b>	<b>Language Diversity</b>
Paolo Freire (6) bell hooks (3) Mike Rose (2)	Mina Shaughnessy (3) Min-Zhan Lu (2)	Victor Villanueva (2) Gloria Anzaldua (2) Henry Louis Gates Jr. (2) Geneva Smitherman (1) Jacqueline Royster (1)

The secondary syllabi set is also missing references to national standards and practices for the teaching of writing, which emphasize the need for writing instructors to consider diverse student literacy practices. Only one syllabus requires GTAs to read the CCCC Statement of Principle and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing. The fact that none of the syllabi mention the CCCC statement on Students Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL) further demotes the importance of linguistic diversity. The absence of SRTOL further illustrates how issues of language diversity are neglected in writing pedagogy practica course syllabi.

There are outliers in the secondary syllabi that provide examples of how some practica instructors attempt to address issues of uneven coverage in their reading lists. The syllabus from Indiana University of Pennsylvania specifically cites a multicultural approach to the teaching of writing (Hurlbert 38). Each week of the course pairs a classical rhetorical theory or practice alongside a contemporary and multicultural scholar. Multicultural rhetorics named and studied in the practicum course at IUP include: Latino/Latina, Asian American, African American, Native American, gay and lesbian, Jewish, and Arabic. Miami University Ohio specifically mentions negotiation of power dynamics as a goal for their course in 1995, but the reading list includes no authors of color or readings about race and identity. Discussions of power occur predominantly in course units titled Gender and Discourse, which includes all white feminist scholars, and Discourse and Difference, which features Peter Elbow, David Bartholomae, and Mina Shaughnessy. (Helton 53). These two examples illustrate how attempts to address power and race in writing pedagogy practicum classrooms can manifest in ways that further perpetuate and marginalize underrepresented scholars and branches of study.

### ***Overall Trends in Primary Syllabi Set***

More categories exist for defining critical language and literacy scholarship within Rhetoric and Composition, but this new scholarship continues to be marginalized in writing pedagogy practicum course design. Table 2 presents some of the new theories and practices mentioned in the primary set of syllabi, but the new topics receive the same minimal amount of coverage as their critical scholars in the syllabi collected 15 years prior. So, although we can see an increase in the conversations around power and race in Rhetoric and Composition, we see the same marginalization of that scholarship in curricular design.

The primary syllabi set also showed continued absence of References to national standards and practices for the teaching of college writing. Two syllabi from the primary set included SRTOL as a required reading, one syllabus included the CCCC Statement of Principle and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing, and another syllabus reading list included the Council of Writing Program Administrators Outcomes for First-Year Composition.

Table 2

#### Marginalized Topics and Scholars in the Secondary Syllabi Set<sup>a</sup>

<b>Critical Literacy and Language</b>		<b>Universal Design</b>
<i>English as Second Language Practice and Linguistics</i> Paul K. Matsuda (2) Suresh Canagarajah (2)	<i>African American Rhetoric</i> Adam Banks (1) Vershawn Young (2) Geneva Smitherman (1)	<i>Disability Studies</i> Jay Dolmage (2) Stephanie Kerschbaum (2)
<i>Intersectionality</i> Michelle Gibson (2)	<i>Latinx Rhetoric</i> Aja Martinez (1)	
<i>Multimodality</i> Cynthia Selfe (2)	<i>Native American Rhetoric</i> Malea Powell (1)	

a. Note: Critical literacy and language scholarship include theories that challenge the dominance of alphabetic texts and Standard Edited English in Rhetoric and Composition Studies.

## General Survey Findings

I found that scholarship on critical literacy and language studies continues to be covered minimally in writing pedagogy practica curricula, and that very few practicum instructors explicitly connect their course design to national standards for the teaching of postsecondary writing that necessitate knowledge about critical language and literacy practices. Responses to survey question #15 (see Figure 7) provide further explanation for how and why this disconnect might occur.

When asked how local and regional politics affected course design, 40% of practicum instructors surveyed said they had no affect (see figure 7). One instructor honestly wrote that they had not thought about the connection at all, though they had considered integrating the writing program with the center on civic engagement at their university. This community engagement initiative was, however, considered “mostly a peripheral issue in the practicum/seminar.” Uncertain and muddy connections between politics and the practicum classroom can be a reason why issues of power and race are continually marginalized in practicum course design. Perhaps instructors are unsure of how, or why to raise these concerns in the classroom, or, possibly, they do not view local and regional political concerns as connected to the teaching of writing at all.

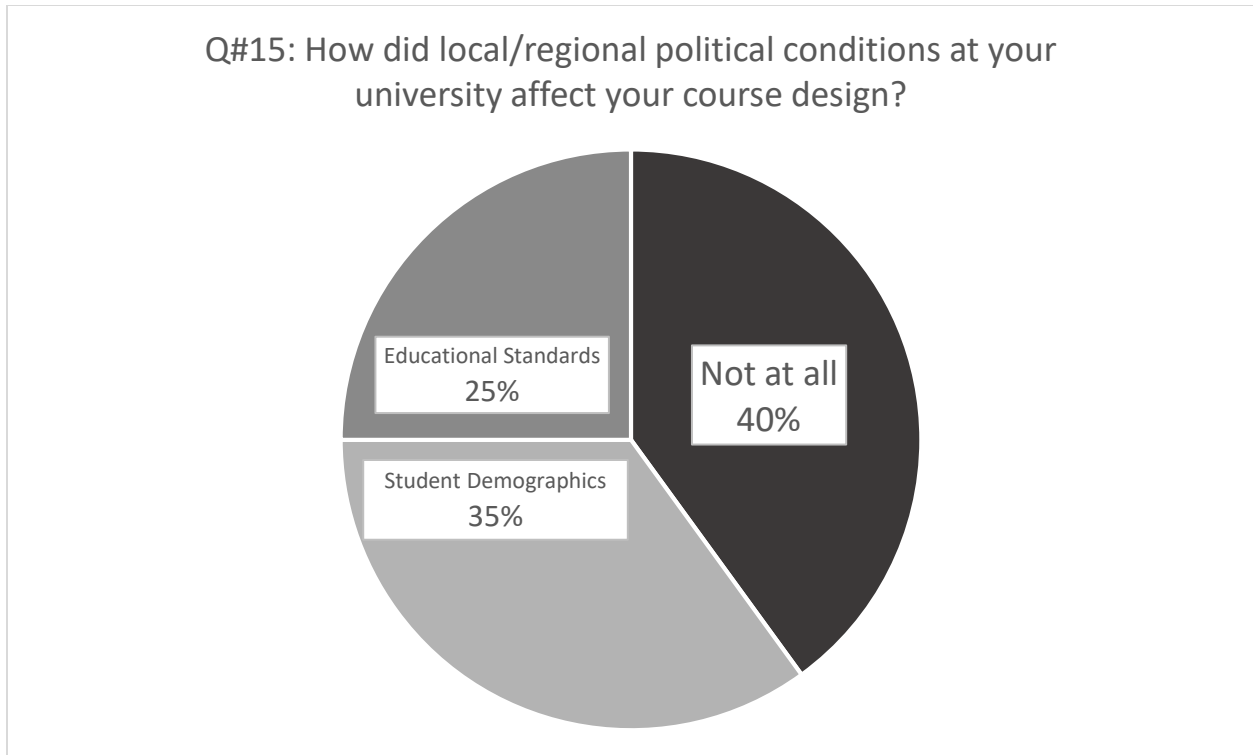


Figure 8. Responses to Survey Question #15

In contrast to the response quoted above, another practicum instructor described how the class read about self-care, embodiment, and coming out in the classroom because “political conditions in the country certainly made me feel they were important to stress.” Course design choices influenced by student needs (both graduate students in the practicum and the undergraduates they were being trained to teach) accounted for 35% of responses to Question #15. Within those responses, the student populations most mentioned were international, first-generation, and multilingual students. One quarter (25%) of respondents wrote about how state-specific standards affect transfer and exemption for FYC courses, which impacts what is taught in FYC classrooms, which in turn influences how the practicum must be designed.

### **Interview Findings**

Although 60% of practicum instructors surveyed say they are aware of how local politics affects course design, syllabi analysis suggests that this awareness might not translate into

curricular change. Many survey respondents mentioned diverse student populations as motivation for familiarizing new writing instructors with language diversity scholarship, however, as explained earlier in this chapter, curricular tokenism can lead to limited application of these theories by practicum students. Interview findings provide examples of how curricula tokenism can occur, and how instructors can limit it.

### **Applying Marginalized Theories in the Practicum**

As discussed in Chapter 3, instructors assess success in the practicum by how clear GTAs make connections between theory and practice within teaching portfolios and job market genres. In this chapter I revealed that curricular tokenism prevents rigorous engagement with critical literacy and language theories. How do instructors assess how rigorously GTAs have engaged with marginalized theories in developing their teaching materials?

Cora, a first-time, tenure-track practicum instructor, reflected on the difficulty she experienced teaching Vershawn Young's "Should Writers Use They Own English?" According to Cora, her graduate students "seemed to like it but didn't know what to do with it." In response to that difficulty, Cora said next time she teaches the practicum she will remove some of the literacy and language readings and make more time for teaching material workshops. Cora rationalized this choice based on her pragmatic course design approach. Because the majority of Cora's GTAs are international students, the practicum course is a 5-week online course taught in the summer and this structure constrains her ability to provide as much coverage of the field as she would like. Cora also said course evaluations indicated that students wanted more time to work together remotely on designing assignment sequences, hence the replacement of language diversity readings with workshopping. I tell Cora's story to point out how practicum instructors can perpetuate curricular tokenism unconsciously. Cora's experience is also useful for reflecting on

how language diversity scholars are often tokenized because the instructors are not sure how to scaffold the theory into practice, thereby imparting the same uncertainty unto the GTAs.

If practicum instructors do not include language diversity readings in the syllabus, or do not encourage the application of that knowledge, the students bear the burden of incorporating that material into the curriculum. Iris, another first-time practicum instructor, explained how she added Asao Inoue's *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future* to her curriculum based on recommendations from the previous semester's cohort. Ultimately, Iris said that she experienced a lot of stress trying to design her own adaptations to the schedule and assignments inherited from her predecessor, and she concluded that "some cohorts want more, some want less of the race/critical conversations." Her decision to read Inoue's book with her students indicates that both students and instructors should share the responsibility of having these conversations in ways that limit curricular tokenism.

Frank, a tenured and experienced writing pedagogy practicum instructor, explains how he actively encourages GTAs to utilize critical race theory in their classrooms. One of the learning outcomes for his course is to develop a theory and practice of responding to and assessing student writing and Frank says he actively encourages his GTAs to explore contract grading as an antiracist approach to this goal. When I asked Frank how he would respond to another practicum instructor who expressed being uncomfortable with experimentation in the practicum setting he responded: "Where does innovation in the teaching of writing occur if not in the practicum?" He went on to describe the writing pedagogy practicum as a "laboratory" where new writing instructors can try new things and get responsive feedback from a more experienced writing instructor. According to Frank, the practicum is where we have "opportunities to change not only philosophies, but



practices, in the teaching of writing.” Contract grading is a current example of how theories, in this case antiracist writing assessment, are changing writing instructor behaviors and practices.

Emma, a tenured professor teaching the practicum for the first time at a Hispanic Serving Institution, sees the practicum as a site for not only changing graduate students’ teaching practices, but for changing departmental and institutional settings. She explained that the need to have conversations about race and writing feel more and more important to her in the current political climate. Emma and her students read SRTOL (she was only one of two interviewees to include it on their syllabi), and then together drafted a statement on language diversity and antiracist assessment that the GTAs planned to include on their FYC course syllabi. When Emma shared the statement with administration, it was deemed offensive and not endorsable by the university at large. Individual instructors could use the statement in their course design, but the Dean would not publicly officiate it. Emma posted the language diversity statement on the FYC composition webpage without the Dean’s permission. At the time of the interview this situation was still emerging, but Emma described her GTAs as “brave and forthright in confronting racism in the institution.”

## **Conclusion**

Latterell observed decades ago that theory is often taught in the GTA practicum formulaically, in a way that encourages unreflective practice. I argue a more recent, but related, critique is that the same scholars and pedagogies continue to be marginalized in writing pedagogy practica syllabi. I call this phenomenon curricular tokenism because it affects critical race and literacy scholarship the most. The long-term results of curricular tokenism in writing pedagogy classrooms can lead to the silencing or ignoring of racially aware pedagogues, as well as to open hostility towards those instructors that utilize and champion those practices (Perryman-Clark,

García de Müller & Ruiz). In a recent study of race in writing program administration, García de Müller and Ruiz uncovered just such narratives occurring in the teaching practicum. According to García de Müller and Ruiz, “strong institutional support for race-based initiatives was the result of a fostered culture of talking about issues of race by scholars in the department pushing for these initiatives to be programmatic” (32). As Emma related in her story, securing administrative buy-in for racially sensitive pedagogy is necessary so that practicum instructors can use those practices without fear of censure.

Another harmful consequence of curricular tokenism in the writing pedagogy practicum is the effect on composition instructors’ perceptions of linguistically diverse writers. Research on language and identity documents how non-standard language use is tied to perceptions of underrepresented student populations as less effective writers, while standardness is more aligned with Whiteness (Davila; Smitherman; Smitherman & Villanueva). Davila’s research reveals specifically how composition instructors make assumptions about undergraduates’ race and social economic status based on how closely their writing adheres to Standard Edited English. The writing pedagogy practicum is where we can begin to weaken and dismantle these language ideologies from the bottom (new doctoral students) to the top (writing program administrators).

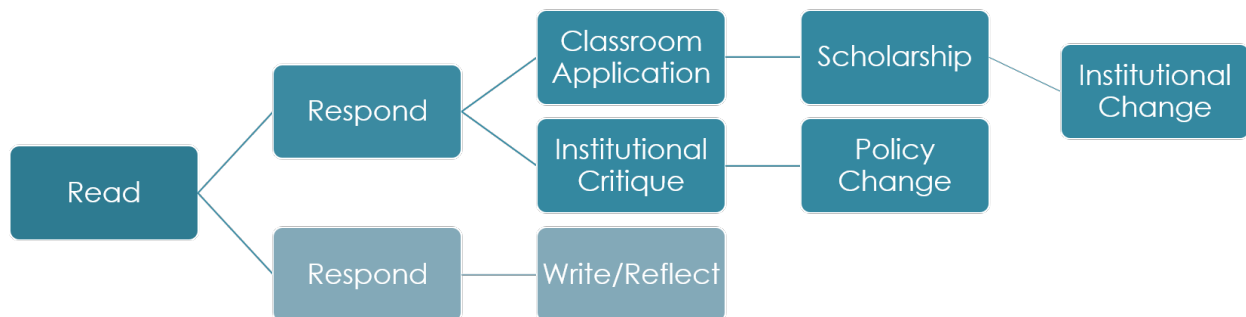


Figure 9. Applying Marginalized Pedagogical Theories

## **CHAPTER 5: OFFERINGS AND PATHWAYS**

In the first chapter I used my own experiences as a GTA to illustrate how much influence practicum classrooms have on the development of new writing instructors and doctoral students in Rhetoric and Composition. I want to prove with my story, and this dissertation research, that what new writing instructors learn in the practicum determines the type of writing instructor they can be. The scholars, theories, textbooks, readings, and assignments all influence what knowledge a new writing instructor can leverage in course design and classroom interactions. Writing pedagogy practicums are where, as Phelps said, the “faculty of the future” study. It makes sense future writing instructors should be knowledgeable and skilled, but how are they also encouraged to innovate as teachers and disciplinary practitioners? After listening and learning from my experienced and dedicated survey participants, I know that I am not prepared to tell them how to do their jobs. What I can present are implications for further scholarship and research that emerged from our conversations about the future of writing pedagogy education and the faculty of the future.

### **Implications for WPE Pedagogy**

As I discovered in my research, writing pedagogy practicum instructors are concerned with how rigorously GTAs are connecting theory with practice, and they assess how well a student is making those connections based on teaching portfolio and job market materials. Based on my comparison of two sets of practica syllabi, teaching materials have supplanted the traditional academic research paper as the most assigned genre. How can writing pedagogy practicum instructors ensure that this new dominant genre continues to be a reliable indicator of pedagogical awareness? How can instructors design course deliverables that scaffold curricular inquiry? I offer

two heuristics for answering these curricular design questions, borrowed from theories of rhetorical invention.

### ***Heuristics for Curricular Invention***

Rhetorical theories of invention provide a theoretical framework for interpreting how writing pedagogy practicum courses can scaffold curricular invention. Each of the following heuristics provides a framework that curricular designers can use to gauge the innovative potential of individual assignments, as well as an entire course.

### **Lauer's Continuum of Invention**

In *Invention in Rhetoric and Composition*, Lauer describes a continuum along which all strategies for rhetorical invention can be positioned (122). At one end of the continuum are algorithmic, or rule-governed and highly formulaic invention strategies. At the opposite end are aleatory, unguided, chance-based strategies. See figure 1 for a visual representation of Lauer's algorithm, including examples of where some well-known rhetorical invention strategies fall within it. This continuum is useful for evaluating how pedagogical choices tend towards deterministic and entrenched design. To clarify, instructors can use this continuum to evaluate how they balance rule-governed invention strategies with more aleatory ones in overall course design. I do not imply that rule-oriented invention is not useful in GTA education, but rather that a balance along the algorithmic/aleatory spectrum provides evidence of moving away from deterministic and entrenched teaching practices.



Figure 10. Lauer's continuum of heuristic procedures with examples

Using Lauer's continuum to design individual assignments:

What information do I already provide for my students?

What knowledge do I expect my students to demonstrate?

What do my students need to discover on their own to complete this?

What new knowledge will students discover?

Where would this assignment fall along the continuum?

Using Lauer's continuum to design courses:

Which learning outcomes assess knowledge acquisition?

Which learning outcomes ask students to demonstrate a skill?

Which learning outcomes ask students to apply a theory?

Which learning outcomes ask students to develop a theory?

Where would my course fall along the continuum?

Using Lauer's continuum as a heuristic for curriculum design allows instructors to visualize how their curriculum might lean towards one or the other end of the spectrum. This visualization, paired with the self-assessment questions provided above, help curriculum developers self-assess the balance between skills-based and exploratory learning in their courses. In a WPE practicum setting specifically, a curriculum informed by Lauer's Continuum of Invention might optimize opportunities for new college writing instructors to experiment with and cultivate pedagogical inquiry, further limiting deterministic and entrenched teaching practices.

### **LeFevre: Invention As a Social Act**

Another theory that can scaffold curricular invention is Lefevre's theory of invention as a social act. Invention as a social act emphasizes the cooperative, mediatory function of invention in institutional, programmatic, and classroom specific contexts (see table 1). LeFevre's

perspectives on rhetorical invention evaluate how narrowly (individually) or widely (collectively) instructors encourage students to explore WPE scholarship. LeFevre's theory is also used to categorize individual assignments and course outcomes according to levels of individual, collaborative, and collective invention, which further improves understanding of how widely students are invited to explore disciplinary knowledge.

Table 3

Perspectives on Rhetorical Invention as a Social Act<sup>a</sup>

Perspective	Platonic	Internal Dialogic	Collaborative	Collective
	Individual is agent of invention		2 or more people interact to invent	Invention influenced by social collectives
<b>Emphasis for Invention</b>	Invent by recollecting or finding and expressing content or cognitive structures that are innate. Asocial mode of invention; internal locus of evaluation of what is invented.	Invent through internal dialogue or dialectic with construct of internalized other. Internal locus of evaluation but influenced by internalized social codes and values.	Invent by interacting with people who allow developing ideas to resonate and who indirectly or directly support inventors. Listeners and readers receive and thus complete the act of invention. Locus of evaluation may be one person influenced by judgments of others, or a pair or groups of people who invent together.	Invention is hindered or encouraged by the force of supra-individual collectives. Locus of evaluation is a social unit beyond the individual (e.g. an organization, bureaucracy, or socio-culture)
<b>Examples</b>	Expressive powers latent in the right side of the brain.	Left brain/right brain relationship influencing invention.  <i>Teaching journals</i> <i>Research papers</i>	Peer review One-on-one tutoring sessions Contracts and treaties  <i>Teaching circles</i> <i>Mentoring</i> <i>Group curriculum building</i> <i>Contributing to departmental resources such as reading banks, journals, and teaching material archives</i>	Collective seal of approval: admission to/exclusion from professional organizations  <i>Teaching portfolios</i> <i>Common syllabi</i> <i>Department learning outcomes</i> <i>CCC Standards for GTA education</i>

Source: Lauer, Janice M. *Invention in Rhetoric and Composition*. West Lafayette, Parlor Press, 2004, p. 53.

a. Note: italicized examples clarify how to apply the categories to course design

Using LeFevre's perspective on rhetorical invention to design assignments:

How does this assignment scaffold social collective invention?

Does this assignment ask students to reflect on personal values/beliefs related to the teaching of writing?

Does this assignment ask students to learn about the values/beliefs of other writing instructors?

Does this assignment ask students to align their values/beliefs with theories/scholars/practices in the teaching of writing?

Does this assignment ask students to situate their values/beliefs about the teaching of writing within Rhetoric and Composition Studies?

Using LeFevre's perspective on rhetorical invention to design courses:

How do my course learning outcomes scaffold collective invention?

Which learning outcomes assess what students have learned about themselves?

Which learning outcomes assess how students learn from each other?

Which learning outcomes assess how students participate in the writing program?

Which learning outcomes assess how students participate in the discipline?

Using LeFevre's concept of invention as a social act in curriculum design allows instructors to reflect upon how knowledge gained in the course is taken up individually and collectively. LeFevre's four perspectives on invention, paired with the self-assessment questions provided above, guide curriculum developers in self assessing the individual and collective learning happening in their courses. In a WPE practicum setting specifically, a curriculum informed by

LeFevre's Perspectives on Rhetorical Invention as a Social Act creates opportunities for pedagogical reflection that improve a WPE instructor's ability to connect the work done in the practicum to the writing program and the field more broadly. These collective knowledge creation connections can further limit deterministic or entrenched teaching practices in WPE settings. For another visualization of how collective knowledge building manifests in programmatic change, please see Figure 9.

### **Limitations and Implications for Future WPE Studies**

At the conclusion of this dissertation study, I see the most room for improvement in the online survey design. Firstly, my sample overwhelmingly represented public 4-yr institutions. Private institutions, 2-yr colleges, Historically Black Colleges, and other minority serving institutions were not represented in my data set. Two of my interviewees taught at Hispanic Serving Institutions, but their responses cannot be considered indicative of all HSI's. Another potential audience my study excluded is that of colleges that do not use the practicum model to prepare new writing instructors. Estrem and Reid identify the practicum classroom as "the heart of WPE," but institutions use other models to prepare and mentor new TAs. In fact, the initial online survey could have collected more data about the format/sequence of GTA preparation from respondents. Each of my interviews volunteered detailed information about how the practicum functions within the larger graduate student trajectory at their institutions, but the online survey does not help bring this timeline into focus at other colleges. Better understanding the different ways graduate programs approach GTA preparation can only improve our overall sense of best practice in the field. If I were to conduct another online survey of practicum instructors, I would design more questions to bring the variety and nuance in teacher training into clearer focus, as well as ensuring that participants from more than just 4-yr universities are represented. As Jude, one of



the interviewees in my study stated, the practicum “needs to work for the GTAs in more nuanced ways beyond learning to teach writing at our institution.” Any future versions of a practicum study should work to uncover these nuances.

The online survey, as well as the interviews, failed to collect reliable demographic data about the survey participants. I use the word reliable because I can make educated guesses about the age, gender, and race of my interviewees (white and between the ages of 35-55) but, as someone whose age and racial identification are often misjudged, those educated guesses could be inaccurate. I am 40, female, and mixed race, but I identify as Latina. I know from experience however, that I present as a much younger, white female. This has consequences for how I am treated and interacted with. For example, when I went to take a photo for my faculty ID, I was given a student ID instead. Once during a workshop on how to talk about race in the classroom, my activity partner tried to bond with me over our shared whiteness, to which I had to reply I could only identify with her about halfway. Anecdotes aside, future studies of GTA educators should collect demographic data so that clearer pictures of who teaches the course can develop. In my own study, I should have contacted my participants afterwards and asked if they would answer additional demographic questions.

My research goal was to highlight the practicum instructors’ perspectives in curricular design, in contrast to the large amount of WPE scholarship focused on the students’ perspective in those courses. What I found, however, is that each perspective alone is limiting. The GTA perspective, for example, provides insight into how a curriculum is responded to and taken up by new writing instructors, but without the instructor perspective, readers can only guess at the intentions of the course designer. Another issue with WPE scholarship that centers the GTA occurs when the researcher is also the course designer. As Warwick found in her practicum research,

narratives of GTA success in WPE scholarship are framed as assimilation or resistance to a course curriculum. McKinney and Chiseri-Strater found that GTAs also used the same either/or frames when reflecting on their classroom performance in their teaching diaries. WPE research that centers the GTA educator as subject also has its limitations. Although the curricular intentions of the instructor are illuminated, readers are left with questions about how practicum students performed in the class. More holistic WPE studies would assess course design from both the instructor and the student perspectives. WPE studies can also be improved by more longitudinal research. As Reid et al. demonstrated in their 3-year study of a practicum cohort, more time is needed to understand how GTA training has “taken root” (30) in the students’ teaching practices.

My study also highlights the need for further archival and comparative syllabi analysis studies of WPE courses. A comparison of syllabi collected from different points in the life of a discipline or a writing program can provide important evidence of which practices emerge, disappear, reappear, and never really go away. The syllabi archives of English departments seem like a particularly intriguing place to begin further archival syllabi analysis. What other trends in course design might we notice happening over time and what connections can we see to larger shifts in disciplinary practice?

### **On Learning to Teach New TAs: A Letter to a Practicum Instructor**

The audience I wish to share my research with the most is GTA practicum instructors. I am therefore addressing them in a format that feels more personal than a scholarly article. I also chose this format to extend the points made by Shelley E. Reid in “On Learning to Teach: Letter to a New TA,” published in the *Journal of Writing Program Administration* in 2017. I believe Reid meant her strategies to empower and encourage graduate students learning to teach writing, but

she also doesn't fully explore the repercussions of her advice to graduate students, who are extremely vulnerable to power dynamics in the university.

She addresses her letter to graduate students in a WPE course and explains how the practicum classroom will be an educational experience very different from the "long, familiar line of school events" ("On Learning" 129) previously encountered. Studying pedagogy, Reid explains, requires that you be successful as a "teaching learner." To study pedagogy successfully, one must be able to access their prior knowledge about writing and its teaching, become comfortable with trial and error, and should strive to identify and respond to dynamic teaching situations with "as many reasonable alternative paths you can imagine ("On Learning" 137). Ultimately, Reid advises new TAs not to be know-it-alls, but "question-it-alls." A question-it-all is aware that studying pedagogy will continue outside the practicum classroom and for as long as teaching is a career path, especially since one class cannot teach them everything they need to know to be successful. According to Reid, full coverage in a practicum course is impossible, but it is possible to train GTAs to be metacognitive, which will enable them "to transfer learning to a new situation and continue to learn it there." ("On Learning" 135). My issue with this reasoning is that it tells GTAs they are responsible for several things: recognizing the omissions in their practicum curriculum, questioning those omissions, and also compensating for those omissions with their own research. What is the role of the faculty member teaching the practicum in supporting the question-it-all pedagogy learner? The writing program? The English Department? The institution? The letter below explores what faculty and writing program administrators can do to encourage and support the question-it-all graduate students in their departments.

Dear Practicum Instructor,

Hello! I hope that you are excited to teach a course that contributes greatly to the success of your students, to your writing program, and, inevitably, to the success of undergraduates at your institution. It is a huge responsibility to build a curriculum that introduces the way we do things in RhetComp, but also the study of pedagogy. You may be recalling your own experiences learning to teach writing as you design your practicum syllabus. What did you learn in your practicum that you want to share with your students? What do you wish had been taught in your practicum? Reflecting upon your own experiences learning to teach writing can help you answer the bigger questions about your course: What do the GTAs in your course need to learn? Can you teach them these things? Who can help you teach them what they need to know? Perhaps the most important question to ask yourself is: What kind of writing instructors do I hope my GTAs become?

Shelley E. Reid, an experienced GTA educator and writing pedagogy education scholar, advises GTAs to not be know-it-alls, but instead “question-it-alls.” A question-it-all is aware that studying pedagogy will continue outside the practicum classroom and for as long as teaching is a career path. Further, a question-it-all recognizes the omissions in their practicum curriculum, questions those omissions, and also remedies those omissions with their own research. As a self-assessed question-it-all student, I have some advice for you regarding how to support your question-it-all graduate students. I want to begin by saying that Reid’s ideal of the question-it-all student is meant to empower graduate students and to make us feel like we can and should ask questions about how we teach people how to write. What Reid doesn’t address is the instructor’s role in also questioning it all.

I mentioned already that I consider myself a question-it-all pedagogy learner, but I would like to offer some evidence for this self assessment before continuing. I am writing this letter to

you as part of the completion of my dissertation research; research which focused on the GTA practicum and the instructors of that course. My path to this research began with a noticeable omission in my practicum experience: the lack of language diversity and critical pedagogy training at my Predominantly White Institution. I began to research antiracist and decolonial pedagogies, which seek to challenge language and cultural supremacy in the academy, and to incorporate them into my writing classroom. During my dissertation research on the GTA practicum, I found evidence that my practicum classroom is not the only one that provides limited or no coverage of language diversity and antiracist assessment scholarship. I would say that this research path models question-it-all methods, and as such a model student, I offer my advice on how to encourage and support learners like me.

*Know both national and institutional standards for the teaching of writing*

I learned from interviewing several GTA educators that maintaining departmental and institutional standards for teaching first-year composition is an important learning outcome for the GTA practicum. It is important that new writing instructors are familiar with the theories that inform the department's approach to the teaching of writing, and the best pedagogies for supporting that approach. However, the institution's way of teaching should not be accepted uncritically. Catherine Latterell, a fellow practicum researcher, identifies uncritical adoption of a departmental stance on teaching writing as a "WPA-Centric" approach to the practicum, which she associates with deterministic GTA education. Deterministic teaching is the opposite of teaching your GTAs to question it all. Rather than encourage exploration of alternatives, a deterministic way of teaching frames narratives of success and failure around how quickly and easily a new GTA orients herself to the institutionally endorsed model of writing. To avoid framing

your own GTAs success deterministically, you and your students should read national guidelines for the teaching of college writing such as:

- NCTE Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing
- WPA Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing
- CCCC Students' Right to Their Own Language (SRTOL)

These statements place your university's approach to the teaching of writing in conversation with many other theories and pedagogies. Graduate students benefit from being able to articulate the pros and cons of the university endorsed pedagogical approach, especially when authoring teaching materials and responding to questions about teaching in job interviews.

### *Rebalance the Canon*

One of the most visible ways to share in the questioning is to make sure your reading list presents traditionally canonical texts in Rhetoric and Composition in conversation with new and alternative scholars that respond to those traditions. If you choose to use a textbook, assess how the field is represented. If the textbook overwhelmingly contains white scholars, look for scholars of color to add to your syllabus. Aja Martinez describes how she balances canonical representation in her article "Core-Coursing Counterstory: On Master Narrative Histories of Rhetorical Studies Curricula." Martinez explains that many of the foundational texts in the rhetorical studies canon are overwhelmingly white, male, and Eurocentric, so she fixes this imbalance by presenting more women and scholars of color in her curriculum. In an example from her History of Rhetorical Studies syllabus, her reading list includes 28 texts by white authors and 28 by People of Color. Martinez explains that maintaining this balance is her responsibility as instructor of a course that introduces future scholars in the field to what we do and why we do it. It is her job to ensure that

multiple canons are presented and that her students are taught methods for understanding who is centered in these canons and why.

*Equal representation=equal consideration*

Challenging the canon also means not allowing marginalized and less visible scholars to be treated as less relevant and worthy of consideration than the “foundational” authors. In my dissertation I defined this kind of unequal coverage as curricular tokenism. Curricular tokenism in writing pedagogy practicum design is defined as utilizing scholars or theories in a manner that appears inclusive, but ultimately does not facilitate translation from theory to practice. Examples of curricular tokenism in writing pedagogy practicum course design include:

- Disproportionally limiting coverage of the same topics and scholars.
- Continually using the same few scholars to represent a theory or branch of study.
- Designing assignments that do not encourage the translation of marginalized theories into classroom practice.

In several of my interviews with GTA educators, a common narrative was that of the GTA who had had an “Ah-hah! Moment,” or a moment when theory and praxis connected in their teaching. Make it your responsibility to ensure that ideas about language diversity get incorporated into your students’ ah-hah! moments. If your class reads about World Englishes, code meshing, and code switching, ask them to design an assignment/activity that incorporates that knowledge, give them feedback, ask them to teach it, and ask them to reflect upon it. Define application of that theory beyond reading and responding to the scholarship and you can mitigate curricular tokenism in your classroom.

*Bring the field to life*

Remind your students that many of the authors they read are alive and working as professors and writing program administrators. If your students cannot make the connections between theory and practice themselves, bring the people doing the work to them. Do you have any colleagues that utilize the scholars you are reading in the classroom? Invite them to share teaching materials and talk to your class. If you don't personally know anyone doing the work your students are having trouble translating to practice, invite a scholar doing that work to your campus to lead a workshop or deliver a presentation. In both of these situations, inquire about your department's policies on guest speaker honorariums. Better yet, ask your GTAs to help you write the funding request, or to brainstorm ideas for compensating guest speaker labor. Your university office for teaching and learning is also a resource for bringing the field to life. Many OTLs provide pedagogical workshops throughout the year and might also take special requests for workshop development. If this is the case at your university, consider asking your GTAs to help you propose a workshop on a teaching topic they want to explore further.

I want to conclude this letter by reminding you that if you want your students to question it all, you should be ready to amplify those questions, and to help find answers. Louise Whetherbee Phelps wrote in her 1995 article "Reproducing Composition and Rhetoric: The Intellectual Challenge of Doctoral Education," that it is graduate students who will "revitalize an increasingly dysfunctional academic community and acculturate senior members to a new world" (126). As the practicum instructor, you are in a mediatory role between the graduate students and administration. How you amplify or silence your TAs questions directly affects the kind of writing instructor and colleague they will become. I wish you and your students a generative pedagogical journey.

Sincerely, Clare



**APPENDIX A****SURVEY OF WRITING PEDAGOGY PRACTICUM INSTRUCTORS****Section 1**

1. Before completing this survey, please make sure that you are eligible to participate by answering the following question:

Have you designed a writing pedagogy practicum course *in the past two years (2016-2018)* for English, Rhetoric, and/or Writing Studies Graduate Teaching Assistants? A practicum is defined in this study as a graduate course in theory and pedagogy that GTAs are required to take in order to teach writing at an institution. The GTAs in such a course are either teaching while enrolled in the practicum, or will be qualified to teach writing at their institution after completion of the practicum.

Yes, I have taught this specific type of course in between 2016-18 and I am eligible to participate in this study. Please continue to question #2.

No, I have not taught this specific type of course within the selected timeframe and am not eligible to participate. Please do not continue with the survey.

2. Where did you teach your practicum course?

Public 4-yr University

Private 4-yr University

Historically Black College or University (HBCU), Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), or other minority-serving institution.

Other (specify)

3. What was your position at the institution when you taught this course?

Tenured Faculty

Tenure Track Faculty

Non Tenure Track Faculty

Graduate Student

Other (specify)

4. How many teaching practicum courses had you taught before this one?

It was my first time teaching this type of course.

1-2

3 or more

5. Which option below best describes the course you were preparing your students to teach?

Basic or Remedial Writing Course

English as Second Language Writing Course

Writing Across the Curriculum/Writing Across the Disciplines Course

100/1000 Level General Education Writing Course

200/2000 Level General Education Writing Course

300/3000 Level or higher General Education Writing Course

Other (specify)

6. Had you previously taught the course your students were preparing to teach?

Yes, I had taught the same course my students were teaching, and at the same institution.

Yes, I had taught a similar course, but at a different institution.

No, I had not taught the course my students were teaching.

7. If you answered yes to the last question, how recently had you taught a course similar to the one your students were preparing to teach?

In the past year.

In the past 2-3 years.

More than 3 years ago.

8. What was the distribution of masters and doctoral students in the practicum you taught?

I taught only masters students in my course.

I taught only doctoral students in my course.

I taught both masters and doctoral students in my course.

9. Which option best describes the distribution of student disciplines and/or areas of study in your practicum course?

My students were mostly from one department and the majority of those students were Rhetoric and Composition or Writing Studies majors.

My students were mostly from one department, but represented different areas of study within that department (for example: linguistics, literature, film, cultural studies)

I taught graduate students from departments other than English, as well as the types of students discussed in the above options.

Other (specify)

10. What additional teacher preparation activities were your students required to participate in outside of the practicum classroom coursework? Check all that apply.

pre-semester orientation

teaching and/or professionalization workshops

classroom observations

peer and/or faculty mentoring (i.e. teaching circle attendance or routine meetings with an experienced instructor)

department service (i.e. participation in department committees or graduate student organizations)

Other (specify)

## **Section 2**

11. How did you select your course readings and/or textbooks?
12. How did you decide which writing theories and pedagogies to emphasize in your classroom?
13. How did local/regional political conditions at your university affect your course design?
14. Tell me about a positive or negative experience with designing this course.
15. Were your students required to use a common syllabus or other departmental approved teaching materials?

Yes. You are done with this section of the survey. Move on to Section 3.

No. Answer Question #16.

16. If you answered yes to the previous question, how would you describe both your and your students' abilities to revise/adapt those required teaching materials?

## **Section 3**

The survey you just completed is the first phase of research in this study. I would like to select 20-25 survey respondents to participate in a follow-up interview. If you are interested in participating in phase two of the study, and would consider consenting to an interview, would you please include your name and email address here so that I may contact you? If so, I will contact you within one week to discuss the study further, answer any questions, and provide a consent form for further participation.

Full name:

Email:

**END:**

Thank you so much for participating in this survey! Your contribution is invaluable to this study. If you would like to know more about the study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Clare Russell, at [clare.russell@wayne.edu](mailto:clare.russell@wayne.edu).

**APPENDIX B**

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Thank you for scheduling this interview. I have received your email indicating you have read the interview information sheet and consent to have this interview recorded, and to submit a syllabus and/or other teaching materials. Do you have any further questions before we begin? I will begin the recording only after all your questions are answered.

**Sample Interview Questions**

1. Which learning outcome(s) did you prioritize in your GTA practicum classroom? Why?
  - a. What assignments/activities/readings did you find most important for facilitating progress towards those outcomes?
2. Which learning outcome did students make the most progress with? Why do you think so?
  - a. What assignments/activities/readings did you most associate with this progress?
3. Which learning outcome did students make the least amount of progress with? Why do you think so?
  - a. What assignments/activities/readings did you most associate with this learning outcome?
4. How would you redesign those assignments/activities/readings in order to facilitate more progress towards this learning outcome?
5. How would you redesign this course, should you teach it again?

## APPENDIX C

### HISTORY OF CCC STATEMENTS ON GRADUATE PROGRAM DESIGN

The preparation and professionalization of graduate students teaching college composition has been linked to doctoral programs in Rhetoric and Composition since the initial forming of the discipline (Brown; Crowley; Dobrin; Phelps, “Reproducing Composition”; Pytlik and Liggett). I would like to provide greater historical detail illustrating Rhetoric and Composition’s connection to the teaching of college composition using position statements endorsed by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC or C’s) over a span of 30 years. I will illustrate how college composition instruction shapes the way Rhet Comp scholars talk about labor and disciplinary knowledge, and also how the statements portray disciplinary cohesiveness, but also diminish historical disputes over labor and job equity.

Rhetoric and Composition’s path towards disciplinary relevance can be traced through a history of statements addressing labor and curricular standards for teachers of post-secondary writing. It is important to understand that these documents were each drafted decades apart, and from different rhetorical exigencies, but also to consider what the statements can collectively communicate about the advancement of Rhetoric and Composition as a field of study. The statements discussed do not represent a fully comprehensive selection of national statements made by NCTE and Cs but were selected because they pertain directly to the development of graduate level pedagogy, as well as to the labor and pay of graduate teaching assistants. Each statement is discussed in chronological order.

#### *Position Statement on the Preparation and Professional Development of Teachers of Writing, 1982*

One of the first C’s endorsed statements regarding how to prepare post-secondary teachers of writing was drafted in 1982 by the C’s Task Force on the Preparation of Teachers of Writing.

The audiences for this statement were writing and language arts teachers at “all levels” (446), and there were several specific recommendations for English departments and teacher educators on developing institutional standards for college writing instructor preparation. The language of the 1982 C’s statement on the preparation of writing instructors assigns English Departments as the purveyors of opportunities for professionalization and instruction in the teaching of postsecondary writing instructors. Most notably, departments were required “to provide opportunities for the faculty to develop knowledge of theory and skill in the teaching of writing” (448). The specific skills and theories explicated in the statement encouraged composition instructors to study “other scholarly work in the humanistic teaching of writing” (448). This scholarly work was further defined as research related to rhetoric and the meaning of language, discourse theory, and the composing process. So, while the 1982 statement did not specifically identify the field of Rhetoric and Composition, the language used to define the “the humanistic teaching of writing,” was pulled from fields now included under the disciplinary umbrella of Rhet Comp and/or Writing Studies.

The 1982 statement focuses on explicating the knowledge and skills an effective teacher of writing should have, providing an early framing of what tenure-track positions in Rhetoric and Composition might require. It is also notable for designating specific responsibilities for teacher educators in the advancement of the discipline. Most notably teacher educators are tasked with providing opportunities for new instructors to “apply what they are learning from the theories and practice of writing” (449). This statement would be replaced by the CCCC Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing in 2015.

*The Wyoming Conference Resolution, 1986*

The next major position statement to address the preparation and professionalization of postsecondary writing instructors was The Wyoming Conference Resolution, drafted in the



Summer of 1986. In contrast to the CCCC task force prepared statement of 1982, the Wyoming Resolution focused exclusively on issues of labor and labor disputes. Trimbur and Cambridge (1988) described the events at the Wyoming Conference that summer as “a remarkable release of the anger and bitterness so deeply felt in the rank and file of writing teachers” (13). The resolution stated that “the salaries and working conditions of postsecondary teachers with primary responsibility for the teaching of writing are fundamentally unfair” (Trimbur and Cambridge 18). Examples of unfair working conditions included excessive teaching loads, unreasonably large class sizes, lack of benefits and professional status, and well as barriers to professional social advancement. This list of examples was drawn from the collection of “academic horror stories” (Trimbur and Cambridge 13) being told at the Wyoming Conference. McDonald and Schell (2011) provide further insight into the drafting of the Wyoming Resolution through interviews and statements with conference attendees and those that helped draft the document. Interviewees describe the setting of the Wyoming Conference as much more intimate than that of the larger national conferences such as MLA and CCCC. The result of this intimacy was a spirit of collective political action in which individual stories about unfair working conditions and tenure processes that disadvantaged writing instructors led to direct action (McDonald and Schell 348). The Wyoming Resolution specifically tasked the CCCC Executive Committee with establishing a process by which writing instructors could bring grievances against institutions not maintaining fair labor practices. Later, at the 1987 CCCC Business Meeting in Atlanta, the Wyoming Resolution was passed, and the newly formed CCCC Committee on Professional Standards charged with implementing it.

According to McDonald and Schell’s historical account, the Wyoming Resolution was “the most celebrated CCCC resolution at the time since “‘Students’ Right to Their Own Language””

(368). What is most notable about the 1989 statement is the two pages of introduction in which unfair labor conditions are described as threatening the quality of instruction students receive, as well as the quality of life instructors can attain.

*Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing, 1989*

The result of the Wyoming Resolution was the formation of the CCCC Committee on Professional Standards for Quality Education. The committee drafted the first version of the Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing in 1988. This original draft aimed to maintain the original spirit of the Wyoming Resolution by describing fair employment practices for college writing faculty of all levels, as well as grievance procedures whereby those instructors could cite unfair treatment and demand an institution be held accountable and censured.

Ultimately the CCCC Executive Committee approved a revised version of the statement in 1989, explaining that the purpose of the document was “to examine the conditions which undermine the quality of postsecondary writing instructions and to recommend alternatives to those conditions” (“Statement of Principles and Standards” 329). The CCCC Executive Committee did not create formal grievance procedures, stating that enforcement would be beyond the legal and organizational scope of C’s, and that grievances would be best handled by local labor unions and intuitional task forces with the legal knowledge and expertise to best handle them (“CCCC Initiatives” 61). This decision led to public criticism of the organization, particularly that the original intent of the Wyoming Resolution was lost to bureaucratic and self-serving interests, and that Cs could only do symbolic work (McDonald and Schell 371).

The final version of the statement endorsed by the CCCC Executive Committee did succeed in designating fair labor practices for tenure-track, part-time and contingent faculty, as

well as graduate students. However, the statement was also critiqued for establishing tenure-track positions as the most valuable and protected in the teaching of college writing. Many part-time faculty members were concerned that the 1989 statement would not improve their job conditions because tenure was defined synonymously with academic freedom and job security in the document (McDonald and Schell 371). The statement does say “the responsibility for the academy’s most serious mission, helping students to develop their critical powers as readers and writers, should be vested in tenure-line faculty” (330), but also acknowledge an increasing reliance on non-tenure, part-time faculty, and graduate teaching assistants. The statement devotes a section to each faculty designation and recommends how departments and institutions can better support contingent and non-tenure track positions in writing programs.

In particular, this statement distinguished the unique responsibilities of graduate students teaching college writing. English GTAs are described as having greater responsibility than other graduate students because they have full control over their classes. This increased responsibility should be accounted for when deciding pay, benefits, class size and course load for English GTAs, so as not to compromise the students’ education. In addition, the statement recommends that “each institution provide training and supervision of graduate writing instructors” (“Statement of Principles and Standards” 332) conducted by faculty with experience in rhetoric and composition.

The 1989 version of this statement is notable for its labor and skill categorization of different post-secondary writing faculty positions, particularly the unique role of graduate students teaching college writing. It is also important to note how the exigence for the statement is framed around a crises “(a)t all levels of the academic hierarchy” in which “current institutional practices en-danger the quality of education that writing teachers can offer their students” (329). This exigence for reform is a direct result of the Wyoming Resolution, yet it is not mentioned, directly

or indirectly. The CCCC Committee on Professional Standards for Quality Education, the original drafters of the 1989 statement, would continue to work towards establishing grievance procedures, but would disband six years later. The Statement of Principles and Standards for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing would then be revised in 2015.

*Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing*, Revised March, 2015

A new task force of C's members revised the statement in 2015, and compared to the 1989 version, much is different in purpose and organization. Initially, the two pages of framing exigence from the 1989 document are replaced with a short executive summary. While the executive summary does make the document easily navigable, any mention of the original document's history or exigence is erased (except for a brief mention near the title that previous versions of the statement did exist). Another stark contrast in exigence emerges when comparing how the authors explain the purposes of each document. The 1989 statement sought "to examine the conditions which undermine the quality of postsecondary writing instructions and to recommend alternatives to those conditions" ("Statement of Principles" 329), whereas the purpose of the 2015 statement is to "distill extensive research on how writers learn... and how those involved in designing and delivering postsecondary writing instruction can best foster success for writers ("Principles for the Postsecondary" (para.7).

The 2015 statement is organized into two major sections. The first describes eight principles for "sound writing instruction." The principles "presume sound writing instruction is provided by professionals with degree-based credentials in Writing Studies, Composition and Rhetoric, or related fields" (para.7). This presumption of disciplinary dominance replaces descriptions of unfair labor conditions that "often misunderstood or undervalued" ("Statement of Principles" 329) the contributions of tenure-track composition faculty in 1989. The second section

of the 2015 statement explains how principles of sound writing instruction are supported by four “enabling conditions.” This section contains the most original language from the 1989 statement regarding fair and equitable working conditions, such as limits on class sizes, course loads, and access to professional development opportunities. The rest of the 2015 document, however, does not fully reflect the political advocacy that motivated the original 1989 version. The 2015 document portrays a confident and established academic discipline, especially when compared to the reformational tone of the 1989 document. If readers do not know about the origin story behind the most current version, they might assume there is little left to reform in the discipline, and that there is very little to undermine the success of postsecondary writing instructors. The contrast between the verbs “undermine” and “enable” signal that the 2015 authors view the status of the field very differently.

*CCCC Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing, Revised November, 2015*

(replaces the 1982 CCCC “Position Statement on the Preparation and Professional Development of Teachers of Writing”)

There are few similarities between the most recent version of this statement and its original 1982 version. The main differences are how the audience and discipline are defined. The audience is now specifically college writing instructors, and the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition is now clearly defined as separate from English and Literature Studies, but also closely related to Linguistics and English Education. According to the statement, highly effective new and continuing writing faculty will have at least a MA degree in any of those fields, and will also have taken graduate courses in composition, rhetorical theory, and/or pedagogy. It is recommended, but not required, that those new and continuing college writing faculties also have experience with teaching diverse student populations, writing centers, teaching with technology, and assessment.

The statement demands that college writing instructors acquire more specific sets of skills, and many of those skills are attained through graduate study in Rhetoric and Composition.

The 2015 statement addresses in greater detail the requirements of graduate student assistantships, a term not used in the 1982 statement. That statement articulates what support a department must provide for graduate student assistants that are both students and instructors of record, affirming that “their status as both learners and as emerging practitioners in the classrooms must be protected” (“CCCC Statement on Preparing” para. 26). The language used to describe what types of coursework and disciplinary knowledge graduate student assistants should have closely mirrors that used to describe what is required of highly effective new and continuing faculty. This similarity in language use serves to further establish a connection between graduate studies in Rhetoric and Composition as best preparing the postsecondary writing faculty of the future.

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**ABSTRACT****CURRICULAR INQUIRY: A SURVEY OF WRITING PEDAGOGY PRACTICUM  
INSTRUCTORS**

by

**CLARE JENNIFER RUSSELL****August 2020****Advisor:** Dr. Donnie Sackey and Dr. Jeff Pruchnic**Major:** English (Composition and Rhetoric)**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

The practicum course, a required course for many new college writing instructors, is a vital site for identifying what are considered best practices in the teaching of college composition, but also for critiquing, revising, and reevaluating those practices. My dissertation contributes to the conversation about how Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) learn to teach college composition, and how what they learn in teaching practicum courses impacts graduate education in Rhetoric and Composition. My dissertation study focuses on the perspectives of instructors who design practica courses that prepare college writing instructors to teach first-year composition at their institutions. GTAs in Writing Studies, Rhetoric and Composition, and English Departments have already been the research subjects of numerous dissertations and publications, but the instructors themselves are not often the research focus.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

Clare Russell is a Rhetoric and Composition instructor interested in theories and pedagogies that benefit a diverse variety of writing students. Clare continually strives to make connections between what she studies and what she practices in her classroom. She has piloted Stretch Composition programs at two different institutions and taken any and all pedagogy courses offered during her masters and doctoral programs. Clare's teaching style is best described as a writing about writing approach, with an emphasis on genre awareness theory. Ask her about contract grading and how it has improved both her teaching and her relationship with her students! She is also prepared to discuss the following subjects at any time: teaching, cats, food, science fiction, hip-hop, her home state of New Mexico, and her current favorite podcast.