



Rhetoric & Writing at BGSU

Rhetoric & Writing Notes - Fall 2004

Issue 10: Fall Semester 2004

To begin the tenth glorious issue of Rhetoric & Writing Notes, we asked new and established students in the program to write something about themselves, what their interests are, and the projects they may be working upon. The response was fantastic – as 15 current students replied. In alphabetic order, here they are. . .

Jen Almjeld

Jen Almjeld is a first-year doctoral student in the rhetoric and writing program. Jen received her MA in English from the Eastern Kentucky University, where she also was teaching before coming to Bowling Green State University. Jen's undergraduate work was in journalism and she spent three years serving as a general reporter and then features editor at a small daily newspaper in Richmond, Ky. Almjeld later served for two years as the faculty adviser to the student newspaper at Eastern Kentucky University.

Florence Elizabeth M. Bacabac

I am originally from the University of the Philippines where I got my B.A. and M.A. in English (Language). I taught a few college English courses ranging from basic communication, to scientific and business communications & research, to literature, at the University of San Agustin (2 years) and the University of the Philippines (5 years). I recently finished my M.A. in Teaching English as a Second Language at BGSU. My interests include structural semantics, ESL pedagogy, and teaching of writing.

As part of my professional extension service, I've held workshops / conferences serving different clientele: "Teaching of Writing" for High School English teachers in the University of the Philippines (2001), "Introduction to Business Letter-Writing" for Metro Iloilo Water District employees in Iloilo City, Philippines (2001), "Teaching Grammar in ESL Classrooms" for Public Middle School Teachers in Columbus, Ohio (co-presented with Alice Cook, 2003), and more recently, "Utilizing Descriptive Video Service (DVS) Media in the ESL Classroom" for ESL teachers in Ohio TESOL (co-presented with Dr. Sheri Wells-Jensen & Mary Clancy, 2004). On the side, I enjoy doing editing and tutorial stuffs. I also like Steve Vai and Sylvia Plath.

Lanette Cadle

Lanette Cadle gained ABD status this spring along with HSRB approval to begin her dissertation project, "A Public View of Private Writing: Personal Weblogs and Adolescent Girls." Currently gathering data for case studies while working on chapter two, she will also be presenting on that topic at the national NCTE conference in Indianapolis in November. In March 2005 she will be chairing and facilitating a half-day workshop at the CCCC in San Francisco along with fellow facilitators Kristine Blair, Andrew Mara, Jude Edminster, Cheryl Hoy, and BGSU alumnus Elizabeth Monske (now an Assistant Professor at Louisiana Tech). Her individual presentation in a panel on blog theory, "Their Own Space: Adolescent Girls and the Personal Weblog," will be presented as well at the CCCC this March. On the publications front, her review of the anthology *In the Blogosphere* in the Fall 2004 issue of *Computers and Composition Online* can be seen at www.bgsu.edu/cconline/blog/index.html.

Mwangi Chege (Alex)

Alex Joined the Rhetoric and Writing program in the Spring of 2003 and therefore is in between his second and third year. Alex is from Kenya and he got his Bachelor of Education (Arts) and Master of Philosophy, with a focus in linguistics, from Moi University, Kenya. Before coming to Bowling Green State University, Alex taught high school in Kenya (for about ten years.)

Alex will have two more courses to take by the end of this semester but has already started working on his prelims. His dissertation focus is on literacy. Besides literacy, he is interested in ESL issues and even has TESL as his cognate.

Christine Cucciare

I'm presenting a paper at NCTE next week in Indianapolis. "Redefining the Sign and Bridging the Schism: Teacher Training in Composition and Creative Writing." I also had a paper accepted at the May 2004 Virginia State Conference on Composition. I did a presentation for "Pizza and Papers," a student run tutoring group held in the dorms here at BGSU.

What else? I did a review of a book, "The Unadorned Life" by Curtis Smith for the fall 2004 issue of the *Mid-American Review*. In other news, I placed third in my age group in the 5 mile run at the Michigan Crim Festival of Races (the biggest race festival in

Justin Felix is currently in his third year of the Ph.D. program. He will be giving a presentation with Brennan Thomas and Thai Tran at the 2005 CCCC Convention. He recently published a short story in "It's That Time Again 2! More New Stories of Old-Time Radio." He had also been published in the original volume and has been invited by the editor to submit a story for a proposed third volume.

Heather Fester

Heather recently presented a paper entitled "The Rhetoric of Complaint: Returning 'Agency' to Student Writing," a discourse analysis of student writing on the editorial page of the campus newspaper, at the 2004 Watson Conference in Louisville, KY. She will be traveling to San Francisco in March 2005 to present at the CCCC on a panel with Dr. Donna Nelson-Beene, Richard Colby, and Rebekah Shultz Colby. Heather's talk will focus on issues of resistance in the Basic Writing context, drawing from a semester-long experience as a basic writing tutor for the 780 Basic and Developmental Writing course last spring. The other presenters will also be drawing from their experiences in that course for the panel.

Ann – Gee Lee

Ann-Gee Lee is a first-year student in the doctorate program and a writing consultant in the Writers Lab. She chose BGSU since there is no PhD for Rhetoric-Composition in California.

Her MA in English with a concentration of TESOL and Rhetoric-Composition comes from California State University Stanislaus, where she also received her BA in English with TESOL and minor in Spanish. After receiving her BA, Lee taught high school English for a year and then went back for her master's. The focus of her thesis/project was multi-genre writing with English language learners, which was also presented at a local conference.

Lee was an on/off campus tutor, working with students of all ages, and also worked in an Intensive English Program, preparing students for the Test of English as a Foreign Language, reading, writing, listening and speaking, as well as English grammar. Lee also taught developmental writing and computer-assisted First-Year Composition.

Lee's interests are teaching/learning languages, reading contemporary novels, writing, music, and design. In the next four years, she hopes to publish some professional and creative work and teach/train English language learners abroad.

Lee is enjoying Bowling Green's safe, clean, study atmosphere and weather, and is especially looking forward to the snow.

Cynthia Mahaffey

I will be defending my doctoral dissertation in Rhetoric and Writing Oct. 20 at 1 pm in the Women's center. [Editor's note: Congratulations for successfully defending your dissertation!] My title is: "Wearing the rainbow triangle: The effect of out lesbian teachers and lesbian teacher subjectivities on student choice of topic, student writing and student subjectivities in the composition classroom." In addition to finishing my dissertation, I teach full-time for GSW in the Chapman Learning Community at Kohl Hall here at BGSU, am raising a 15 year old son, am speaking at a variety of venues on campus about LGBT issues. I also teach Women's Studies and American Culture Studies. This is my eighth year at the university and I believe I am the only mother and the last one of my cohort to get my PhD.

Robin Murphy

Robin Murphy, 2nd year PhD student from Oklahoma, recently received notice that her book review of Culture and Context: A Basic Writing Guide with Readings. W. David Hall Pearson/Longman, 2004 will be published in the new online publication InReview (www.asu.edu/inreview) in the upcoming Basic Writing edition. Robin is also assisting Dr. Kris Blair with her forthcoming textbook, Cross Currents: Cultures, Communities, Technologies, as a Research Assistant and Contributing Author, which involves finding relevant urls, images, articles etc., and co-writing a chapter on current issues, popular music, and Post 9/11 rhetorics. Robin lives in BG with her two dogs and husband, Kaleb, a computer dude employed at Owens Community College.

Sergey Rybas

I received my Master's Degree in Scientific and Technical Communication from BGSU in May 2004 and am now in my first year of the PhD program in Rhetoric and Writing. My research interests include the use of computers and other technology in written communication, the study of usability, and writing for multicultural audiences. I have a passion for traveling and have experience living and teaching in Russia and Thailand in addition to the US. I have been married to my beautiful wife Natalia for over six years now and have to thank her for most of the good stuff that has happened to me so far.

Inez Schaechterle

Inez Schaechterle, 4th-year Ph.D. candidate, presented at the Rhetoric Society of America biennial conference, held in Austin TX, May 28-31. Her paper, titled "Women in Trousers and Henpecked Husbands: Anti-Northern, Anti-Bloomer Rhetoric in the Early- and Pre-Civil War South," was part of a panel on nineteenth-century women and rhetoric. In addition to presenting, Schaechterle was one of three graduate student presenters to receive a small cash award.

James Schirmer, a first-year student in Rhetoric & Writing, came to BGSU by way of Texas A&M in Corpus Christi, where he received a Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Composition. Still in a period of transition, however, he finds acting as a sponge, absorbing as much theory and practice as possible, much more fruitful than attempting to figure out just what are his current research interests.

Brennan Thomas

Brennan Thomas, a 3rd-year Ph.D. student in Rhetoric and Writing, recently attended the Watson Conference in Louisville, Kentucky (Oct. 7-9). She presented a short paper on training strategies that WPAs might employ to prepare GTAs to teach first-year composition in computer labs. The paper suggested a three-pronged approach: a) technology training and computer skills development (both prior to and during the school year), b) simulated teaching in computer labs (in which the GTA utilizes computer lab technology to teach sample classes her fellow trainees), and c) communities of practice (in which small groups of GTAs and experienced instructors met to discuss teaching strategies and technological issues).

Angela Zimmann

My name is Angela Zimmann. I am 31 years old, and an ordained pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and my background is in industrial engineering. I have been married to Rev. Marty Zimmann for almost 10 years; and I am the very proud mother of Seth (age 5) and Chelsea (18 months).

Here's some fun personal facts... I'm an avid democrat; I am a bad housekeeper and practically useless as a cook; I love to read true-crime novels; I love country music, the sappier the better; I love math!; I am not a morning person; I adore children; I relish all kinds of junk food, particularly that found at fairs and festivals; I am exhilarated by learning; I enjoy running, but I am very slow at it; I don't drink alcohol (but have no issues concerning it - my husband likes his beer!); I don't smoke; I do drink too much coffee and Diet Pepsi; and that's all I can think of for now; and it is probably more than you cared to know!

We'd like to give our thanks to all these fine students for sharing some information about themselves. Now, **Dr. Richard Gebhardt** would like to share with you some of his thoughts regarding specialization within our field. . .

“Can I specialize in . . . ?”: Some Thoughts for Students Exploring Rhetoric and Composition PhD Programs

Every year, at least several people send me some version of this question:

In the Rhetoric & Writing PhD Program, can I specialize in . . . ? (You can supply a topic--online teaching, perhaps, or writing administration, service learning, text-hypertext tensions, literacy practices, women's rhetorics, writing in the disciplines . . .)

That is a good question, and one some R&W Program alumni may hear from MA students. So I thought I would share some things I say when students ask me that question.

Specializing in any topic within our broad field tends to center in the dissertation and other post-course work requirements. In the R&W PhD Program, for instance, the Specialized Preliminary Exam asks students to develop and study bibliographies in several areas (often, related areas) of dissertation interest, and the written exam often asks students to discuss central issues or research problems they hope to explore in dissertations. Then students work with their advisors to prepare for the Graduate Lecture (our name for the dissertation-topic approval); here, they develop a detailed dissertation proposal with initial bibliography, give a public presentation of the project, discuss their plans with their committee--in the process, usually, refining initial ideas and plans they then pursue in the year or more of research and writing that leads to the dissertation.

During the first couple years in doctoral programs, students take required courses, which may be general or more sharply focused. For instance, the R&W PhD Program requires seven Core Courses--Rhetoric and Written Discourse, History of Rhetoric and Written Discourse, Advanced Writing Pedagogy, Research in Rhetoric & Writing, Computer-Mediated Writing, Scholarly Publication in Rhetoric & Writing, and a Special-Topic Seminar--and additional Rhetoric & Writing electives (or for those with an MA in composition and rhetoric, an optional cognate in an area like administration, literature, technical writing, or women's studies). Work in such courses may well advance a student's specialization--when courses relate directly to it and when students center course projects on specialization-related matters within broader courses.

The course requirements of a given doctoral program in rhetoric and composition are shaped by the intellectual interests of faculty and the broad goals of the program itself (both things you should be able to find pretty easily in the website of a program you are considering). In our program, for instance, students and faculty utilize a range of intellectual approaches--rhetorical, cultural, empirical, political--at work in the field of rhetoric and composition. But what has made the program distinctive since its founding in 1980 is its focus on writing instruction--a focus that shows in, among other things, course requirements, program learning outcomes, and the range of experiences students can have as teaching assistants. Some students in the Rhetoric and Writing PhD Program keep this focus in their dissertation work, too, with specialist orientations toward areas like technology, rhetorical history, gender

"Reviewing and Refocusing Doctoral Education in Composition Studies" (JAC, Winter 2002):

Some programs emphasize research and composition theory.

Some programs emphasize writing pedagogy.

Some programs stress cultural studies in research and pedagogy.

Some programs blend rhetoric and preparation to teach literature.

Some programs blend rhetoric and preparation to teach linguistics.

Some programs stress technical and professional communication.

This diversity in central program concerns is important for MA students who are interested in doctoral study in rhetoric and composition. It means that they can look for a good "fit" between their own scholarly interests and professional goals and those of potential programs and of the faculty with whom they would work in those programs. [RCG]

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