



Rhetoric & Writing at BGSU

Rhetoric & Writing Notes - Spring 2006

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As a traditional beginning to our spring issue of Rhetoric & Writing Notes, we asked graduates of the program to update us on their careers and lives since they graduated. Below are updates from some alums, as well as information on current students' progress.

Alumni Updates

Lynnette Porter has been busy publishing over the last academic year and is planning a research trip soon. During her sabbatical next year, Porter is planning to conduct research in England and New Zealand. She'll be a visiting scholar at the University of Canterbury in Christchurch, NZ, in February and March 2007. Her recent publications include the following books and chapters or essays within books:

--•Unlocking the Meaning of Lost: An Unauthorized Guide, with David Lavery, Sourcebooks, April 2006.

--•Postcards from the Shire: Global Impressions of New Zealand after The Lord of the Rings," chapter accepted for publication in How We Became Middle-earth, edited by Dr. Adam Lam, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, NZ, 2006.

--•Mount Sunday," essay in Lembas for the Soul, White Tree Press, 2005.

--•The Road Goes Ever On," essay in Lembas for the Soul, White Tree Press, 2005.

--•Unsung Heroes of The Lord of the Rings: From the Page to the Screen," Greenwood/Praeger, 2005 nominated as "best Tolkien-themed book published in 2005" for the One Ring Celebration, a LotR conference in Pasadena, CA in January 2006.

Upcoming presentations for Lynnette Porter include:

--•Finding Yourself in a Lost World," invited speaker, Cornerstone Festival, July 2006, Bushnell, IL

--•Lost and Found,"invited speaker, Cornerstone Festival, July 2006, Bushnell, IL

--•Un-Locke-ing the Mystery of Lost's Monsters," invited speaker, Cornerstone Festival, July 2006, Bushnell, IL

--•Us and Them: Otherness in Lost,"speaker and panel chair, Popular Culture Association, April 2006, Atlanta, GA

Recent presentations for Lynnette Porter include:

--•Influence and Power: The Relationship between Pippin and Denethor," One Ring Celebration, invited expert speaker, main stage, January 2006, Pasadena, CA

--•Tolkien and the Fates: Free Will and Predestination in The Lord of the Rings," panel, One Ring Celebration, invited expert speaker, January 2006, Pasadena, CA

--•From Page to Screen: The Lord of the Rings and The Chronicles of Narnia," panel, One Ring Celebration, invited expert speaker, January 2006, Pasadena, CA

--•Death: The Gift to Man," panel, One Ring Celebration, invited expert speaker, January 2006, Pasadena, CA

--•I Spy with My Little Eye: In Lost, Seeing Isn't Always Believing," Popular Culture Association in the South, October 2005, Jacksonville, FL

Steven Krause, associate professor in the Department of English Language and Literature at Eastern Michigan University, and his wife, Annette Wannamaker are settled at the university. Krause's wife has been hired into a tenure-track position and starting in January 2006, Krause will be the Writing Program Coordinator, which is a position involving undergraduate majors and graduate programs in written communication. Some recent scholarly activities include:

--"Broadcast Composition : Using Podcasts to Build Community and Connections in Online Writing Classes," Presented at the Conference for College Composition and Communication, Chicago, IL, March 2006.

Course in Rhetoric" sponsored by an art organization in Liverpool, UK called STATIC.

--In July 2005, I was a panelist on "The Writing Show #5: Writing and the Internet." It was sponsored by James River Writers of Richmond, VA.

--April 1 was the keynote speaker at the annual Jacobson Symposium at Creighton University, Omaha, NE. The conference theme this year is blogs.

Publications

--"When Blogging Goes Bad: A Cautionary Tale About Blogs, Emailing Lists, Discussion, and Interaction." *Kairos*. 9.1 September 2004.

--"Blogs as a Tool for Teaching." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. June 24, 2005.

--"Comments on Collin Brooke's 'Weblogs as Deictic Systems,'" in *Computers and Composition Online* (Fall 2005).

Alum Keith Duffy's Music Makes Way to TV's *Sopranos*

W. Keith Duffy, assistant professor of humanities and writing at Penn State Schuylkill, recently had one of his song's on an episode of HBO's hit show *The Sopranos*. The track originally was included on Duffy's 2004 CD, "Trip to Style City," published by Bar-None Records. The producers of the show decided to include the track "Ciao Miz Lovely" in an episode. Another track titled "Disco Le Popi" from the same CD appeared in "The Oh in Ohio," a 2004 independent film starring Danny Devito, Parker Posey, Mischa Barton and Paul Rudd.

Duffy, by training a writing teacher, has written several academic articles chronicling his scholarly work with music in the writing classroom, including pieces titled "Digital Recording Technology in the Writing Classroom: Sampling as Citing" and "A Pedagogy of Composing: The Rhetoric of Electronic Music."

Information for this article from March 7, 2006 Penn State news story

Self Placement Program at Rhodes State College by John Fallon

We implemented writing self placement at Rhodes State College two years ago after I went to a WPA conference in Park City and learned about writing self placement from the Roger Gilles and Dan Royer from Grand Valley State (GVSU) in Michigan. Our learning outcomes and placement outcomes have been surprising. When GVSU instituted writing self-placement, enrollments in the developmental class declined. GVSU saw developmental placements slip from 33% to 22%. Students were electing to skip developmental work to move on to the required English Comp course.

At Rhodes, we have seen the opposite effect. Our developmental courses have seen increased enrollment. Seven percent more students are opting to take the elective pre-college developmental writing course--for which the students do not receive credit which counts toward graduation--than we had in the past during timed writing placement. We went from 26% timed placement into the pre-college writing course to 33% voluntary placement into the pre-college writing course.

Additionally, during the final two years of timed writing, 45% of the students in our pre-college course earned a grade of "C" or better. During the first two years of self-placement, 75% of students in our pre-college course earned a grade of "C" or better.

Even more interesting, of the students who earned a "B" or better in the pre-college course, the percentage who went on to earn "C" or better in the English Composition course went up dramatically during the self-placement period. Sixty-two percent of students with "B" or better in the pre-college class during the timed writing years earned "C" or better in English Composition. Contrastly, 83% of students with "B" or better in the pre-college class during self-placement earned "C" or better in English Composition.

Bottom line, students scored better in the pre-college class during self placement and scored better in the college level class. Additionally, students showed a higher rate of satisfaction with their placement decision. Asked why they chose to place themselves into the elective pre-college class, the answer was overwhelmingly based on self-confidence. There was a sense among the students that they based their decision on a sense of "readiness": they either felt "ready" for college level writing or felt "not ready" and made their placement decision accordingly.

The key to the success of the process is that students were given information in order to make an informed decision. Students receive a letter sent to their homes before the term begins. The letter describes the courses from which the students choose, including the required learning outcomes for each course and several checklists so students can gather information on which course would be the best fit for their level of confidence.

In January 2005 I moved to a new position in the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. I began in the position of Assistant VPAA and in July was named Associate VPAA. It has been quite a year. Even with my ten years of experience as Writing Center Director and another ten or so as the department head of the Languages and Literature department, three years of which I served in the dual role of department head and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, I found that I had quite a learning curve. With one year under my belt, I'm getting comfortable with the position and, as my faculty friends like to tell me, getting comfortable having moved into the deeper recesses of the dark side!

One of the reasons why I was chosen for the position was my experience with assessment. Those of us in Rhetoric and Composition are fortunate to have had background in assessment as part of our discipline. My experience with GSW has helped me successfully undertake large-scale writing assessment and management of a writing program, key factors for landing my first job, for becoming the department head of the largest department on campus, for successfully managing that department for over a decade, and for establishing a twenty year history of ongoing writing assessment, something that no other program at our university can claim. In my current position as Associate Vice President for Operations and Assessment, I work with faculty from various disciplines who are struggling with the concept of learning outcomes. My education at BG and my training in GSW make that such a natural part of looking at teaching and curriculum, that I am continually surprised at how difficult it is for those who have not had that opportunity. I find myself continually saying, "Aren't you curious to know if what you're doing is working?"

Another key factor in my gaining this new position was my campus-wide experience and exposure. As the head of a large-scale writing program, delivering the general education writing requirement for the campus, I interacted with every department on campus. There are few other disciplines that provide that kind of exposure. Also because writing ability is seen as such a key factor in student success, I worked with programs, not only on meeting general education outcomes, but consulted with them in regard to their own accreditation standards and industry practices. The fact that I had already established relationships with so many program coordinators and department heads made the transition to the Vice President's Office all that much easier.

I am always interested to note how many English Ph.Ds, rhet/comp or otherwise, end up in administrative posts. I believe that one reason has to be the ease with which we create text. We can churn out serviceable prose with little effort. The amount of writing I do in my new position is staggering. The other reason why my English background has assisted me is that in my former position as Associate Dean and now as Associate VP, it may be true that the majority of what I write is written under someone else's name. My first task upon arriving in my new office was to learn the writing style of my new boss so that I could write for him. His style is completely different from that of my former boss, and I had to study his style carefully in order to emulate it. Only an English major would think that was fun!

And finally, my nod to Bruce Edwards and what may be the most important lessons that he taught me: Rogerian Argument. My colleague Ruth Mirtz and I published an article entitled "Beyond postmodernism: Leadership Theories and Writing Program Administration" in *The Writing Program Administrator as Theorist*. We posited in that article that because of the changing dynamics of most English departments, traditional leadership theory is inadequate. We both agreed that our best means of wielding leadership is from our strength: rhetoric and composition theory, namely leading with words through the politics of persuasion and through the power of critical audience analysis. Rogerian leadership focuses on leading by listening, learning, and finding common ground. Leading is about persuading people to do things, sometimes things they don't want to do. Rogerian leadership reminds us that people will not be persuaded if they feel threatened, that building trust is essential. Analyzing the audience is the key to success. These are all things that come naturally to us because of our training in Rhetoric and Composition. The importance of understanding audience and persuasion cannot be minimized. Thank you, Bruce.

A background in Rhetoric and Composition prepares a person for far more than teaching composition. I continue to teach freshman composition because I love it and find the interaction with the students revitalizing, but what we learn in our discipline of rhetoric and composition can support our interests as we change direction and respond to new opportunities. I feel very fortunate to have stumbled into this new degree that BGSU was offering back in the late 70's. And even though, back in the dark ages, we had to fight for the respect of this discipline, I think that time has proven that what we study is timeless and always relevant.

BGSU Grads Take on Variety of Positions Across Nation

This May another group of BGSU doctoral students are stepping from the graduation stage to the work world. Below is an overview of where BGSU grads are finding their first post-PhD work.

Brennan Thomas has accepted a tenure-track assistant professor position at Georgia Southwestern State University in Americus, Georgia. She will be teaching a four/four load with two intro writing classes and two professional writing classes.

Heather Speiwick accepted a position at Saginaw Valley State University as an assistant professor of English/writing specialist. She will be working with the university's relatively new Professional and Technical Writing program.

Alex Chege has accepted a visiting instructorship with the General Studies Writing program at Bowling Green State University.

Justin Felix will accept a writing specialist/instructor at Bergen Valley Community College in New Jersey. He will also act as a

Doctoral Students Share Work at Conferences



Doctoral students Robin Murphy, Sergey Rybas, Jen Almjeld, and James Schirmer traveled to Albuquerque, NM in February to present at the 27th Annual Meeting of the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association.

Current doctoral students at BGSU have been busy participating in conferences across the country this year. Several students presented at Fifth Biennial International Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) Conference in Houghton, Michigan and many traveled to the Conference on College Composition and Communication in Chicago this March. Following is a partial list of the papers presented at various conferences:

Jennifer Almjeld

--"Collecting Culture: Scrapbooking Pieces Together From the Past to Shape Society and Individuals," Fifth Biennial International Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) Conference

--"Places of Production: Blogs as Academic Storehouses and Factories," 27th Annual Meeting of the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association

--"Research in New Media: Ethical Considerations for Removed Subjects" (Co-authored with Sergey Rybas), Second International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry

Florence Bacabac

-- "Sizing Up Conduct Book Rhetoric for Women: Conduct Rhetors as Instigators of Change or Transcribers of the Status Quo?," Fifth Biennial International Feminism(s) & Rhetoric(s) Conference

Andrea Cleaves

--at the Fifth Biennial International Feminism(s) & Rhetoric(s) Conference

--at the Conference on College Composition and Communication

Chris Denecker

--"Creating Connections to Christ: Pre-feminist Writings of Medieval and Renaissance Women," 12th Annual Women's Studies Conference

Elizabeth Flietz

--"Troubling Gender: Rethinking the Disruptive Body in Margaret Atwood's 'The Edible Woman'," Twentieth-Century Literature and Culture Conference

--"Art Spiegelman's Disruptive Humor: Comics in Response to 9/11"; "(Mis)Speaking Gender: Bodily "Speech" Acts and the Subverting Power of Language," American Culture Studies "Battleground States" Conference, BGSU

Erin Laverick

--"Grammar in the Context of Writing a Personal Narrative," Michigan Academy of Arts and Sciences

--"Creative Connection to Christ: Pre-feminist Writings of Medieval and Renaissance Women," Marquette University's Women's Studies Program Conference

Robin Murphy

--"Post 9/11 WTC Representations in Political Cartoons," 27th Annual Meeting of the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association

Sergey Rybas

"Research in New Media: Ethical Considerations for Removed Subjects" (Co-authored with Jen Almjeld), Second International

Technical Writing Conference, Teaching Division

--"Toward a Practical Objective-Driven Blog: A Case Study," 27th Annual Meeting of the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association

--"Professional online portfolios: A feminist promise" (Co-authored with Natalia Rybas), Fifth Biennial International Feminism(s) and Rhetoric(s) Conference

James Schirmer

--"Why Do They Call Me Mr. Happy?: Identity and Blogs," 27th Annual Meeting of the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association and American Culture Association

Bethany Snyder-Morse

--"Creating and Preserving the Past Through Narrative," Conference at Ohio Dominican University

Angela Zimmann

--"ePreaching: Can Homiletics Be Taught on the Internet," Michigan Academy of Science Arts and Letters

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Rhetoric & Writing Notes is an occasional web-based newsletter of the Rhetoric & Writing Ph.D. Program at Bowling Green State University. Alumni news and ideas for future stories should be sent to the Program Director, Richard Gebhardt, at richgeb@bgsu.edu (or at the English Department, BGSU, Bowling Green, OH 43403).

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