

Q. Why have we taught writing the ways we have?

A. Differences in writing pedagogy stem from differences in epistemology

But there are other factors, too - their influence is indicated by arrows on the chart. All together, these five layers go a long way toward accounting for our pedagogies.



| | Ch 2 | Ch 3 | Ch 4 | Ch 5 | Ch 6-7 | Ch 8 | |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|--|---|
| | Late 1800s | 1900 | 1920 | 1940 | 1960 | "The present" | |
| National crises Wars, economic phenomena, population changes, etc. influence our teaching | Expanding economy New middle class: wanted prestige through certification. Thus meritocratic rather than aristocratic college system. | WWI (1914 - 1918) Literature encourages patriotism. Thus reading American literature to make the world safe for democracy. | Great Depression (1929...) Writing is not individual, but social | WWII (1939-1945) College teaches social values and democracy, hence the "general education" movement. High veteran return rate. McCarthyism/Red Scare (1950-1956) | Cold War Sputnik worries America into funding composition Backlash to Vietnam War Education should be relevant, empower students | College enrollment stabilizes. | |
| Epistemology This is Berlin's organizing principle. What we think reality is and how we know reality determines our teaching. Only 3 options, which don't change over time. | Option 1: Objective (O): "positivist," truth is in the material world, just like science tells us through the inductive method of collecting sense data and arriving at generalizations. "Truth is | prior to language, is clearly and distinctly available to the person who views it in the proper spirit, and is ultimately communicable in clear and distinct terms. Disagreement has always to do | with faulty observation, faulty language, or both, and never is due to the problematic and contingent nature of truth" (11). Option 2: Subjective (S): "Platonic," truth cannot be verified | by science. It is either within each person or in an unchanging realm of ideas which cannot be fully expressed. "Truth can thus be known but not shared, not communicated. The | business of rhetoric in such a scheme is to correct error as one speaker engages in a dialogue with another, each sharing a dialectical interchange in which mistaken notions are exposed. | This purging of the false then prepares them to perceive the true through an individual act of visionary perception" (12). Option 3: Transactional (T): "social," truth emerges from | linguistic interaction. This is Berlin's favorite. "Truth is never simply 'out there' in the material world [as in an objective epistemology] or the social realm, or simply 'in here' in a private and personal world [as in a subjective epistemology]. It emerges only as the three--the material, the social, and the personal--interact, and the agent of mediation is language" (17). |
| Pedagogical movements The fashion of the time affects our teaching. Poetic (that is, interpretation) and rhetoric (that is, creation) are naturally linked. | Current-traditional rhetoric emerges (O) Task of the writing teacher is to "teach the transcription process, providing instruction in arrangement and style--arrangement so that the order of experience is correctly recorded, and style so that clarity is achieved and class affiliation established" (27). Philological and historical poetics popular (O) "Soon questioned and were eventually overturned" (27). | Current-traditional rhetoric (O) strong, leads efficiency movement e.g. Harvard, Columbia, Illinois, Wisconsin Practical, provided new professionals the writing tools not to embarrass themselves Rhetoric of liberal culture (S) e.g. Yale, Princeton, Williams Elitist/aristocratic. Encourage genius, taste. Belletristic approach: writing about lit Rhetoric of public discourse (T) e.g. Ohio St., Vassar, Scott at Michigan Writing to participate in democracy NCTE formed (1910) Opposes college-imposed "Uniform Reading Lists" that made high schools teach to the test. Committed to teaching - the MLA had copped out and focused on research. | Current-traditional (O) Dominant, but challenged by expressionistic rhetorics. Introduced the research paper and emphasis on genres like editorials, feature articles, etc. Expressionistic rhetoric (S) Self-expression, Freudianism, process over product, metaphor exposes the unconscious. New Criticism poetic (S) Burke, Parrington poetics (T) Social rhetoric (T) Progressivism "Wished to apply the findings of science to human behavior" (59). In English depts, led to intelligence tests, grammar tests to place people according to their different abilities. | Composition and CCCC (4Cs) Gave compositionists a loving home to flourish. Writing, speaking, reading and listening should be taught as a unified set of activities. General Semantics movement (O/T) Since all words are abstractions, language can never represent wholly the thing-in-itself, but it can in its structure represent the relationship of things to each other Composition based in literature (S) Politically "safe"; composition should be done in high school anyway; learning lit protects against the tyranny of the mob. "Rhetoric" as an alternative to (O) Historical, applicable. "Rhetoric is the tool that must be used to reach an approximation of truth upon which action can be based." Gained increasing traction in the 1950s. | Behavioralism (O) Led by Bloom and Bloom and Zoellner in late 60s. Don't focus on thinking, focus on behavior. Thoughts follow our behavior anyway. Expressionistic (S) The essay is not a matter of mechanics, erudition or instruction, but "personality, intimacy, inwardness" (148). Writing as discovery of the self. Classical (T) The rhetorical act is constructed from interlocutor, audience, reality and language, all defined as rational. Cognitive Psychology (T) Writing as progressive problem solving. Epistemic (T) All reality is a linguistic construct - a language is a theory of the universe. Rhetoric is all communication, not just persuasion. Writers actively shape the world. | Triumph of epistemic rhetorics (T) "We have begun to see that writing courses are not designed exclusively to prepare students for the workplace, although they certainly must do that... the writing course empowers students as it advises in ways to experience themselves, others, and the material conditions of their existence" (189). Boundary shifts "The taxonomy I have used in discussing rhetoric and writing up to 1975 does not prove as descriptive after this date" (183). | |
| Institutional practices The colleges we teach at structure our teaching | Writing courses down to 1 yr; British literature becomes main concern of English departments e.g. Harvard, Johns Hopkins. This improved the institutional status of lit profs and fit in with speaking in English and with having college entrance tests in English (see Raymond Williams, <i>Marxism and Literature</i>). | Harvard (O) Students wrote "themes" corrected and revised on spelling, punctuation, usage, and syntax. Description, narrative, exposition. Princeton (S) "Preceptorial method": 1 teacher for 3-7 students: years of literary study would "reform the intellectual and spiritual health of the student" (44). Writing classes, if offered at all, should take place senior year, so students would be mature. Ideas approach (T) (where?) Students read divergent essays about a controversial topic, then respond to them. | Familiar classroom structure 25 students/class, two short themes, two long themes, several conferences. Wide use of literature (rhetorical study in worse schools). Use of handbook, essay collections. Placement tests, grouping students by ability Creative writing classes start (S) Workshop approach (S) Literature is a point of departure to respond, not to analyze. Social classrooms (T) e.g. teach that <i>all</i> genres respond to situational constraints; develop in students a spirit of inquiry; don't use artificial "themes" (no purpose) | Iowa comm course (O) Skills, not content (i.e. not literature). Practical, not artistic (i.e. not imaginative). Student interest important. Programs always assessed. U of Denver comm course (S/T) Writing clinics on the model of nondirective psychology. Writing trouble = psychic disorder. 3-term course: observation, research, finding an interest. No tests. Structural linguistics Start with simple sentences, build up. Imitative pattern practice is essential. Be scientific. Transformational linguistics (led by Chomsky in the 1960s) would cause a theoretical schism, but would bring techniques like sentence-combining to improve syntactical maturity. | Behavioralist classrooms (O) Talk out ideas, get immediate feedback (make the process of composing observable). Help students learn the <i>process</i> so they can write unassisted. Expressionistic classrooms (S) Free writing, rewriting, journal writing, meditation, using analogy, editorial groups, "happenings," writing about topics of genuine personal concern. Classical classrooms (T) Persuasive and expository writing assigned, Aristotle's <i>topics</i> used for invention, controversial public topics. Cognitive classrooms (T) Use heuristics. Don't need economic/historical data Epistemic classrooms (T) Study all parts of the comm triangle to see social diversity of opinion. Resist "student as nigger" (Farber). | David Bartholomae Uses cultural theory based in Foucault and Said. Writing instruction is education into a discourse community. Students fake it til they make it Linda Flower Cognitivist. Study the behavior of writers while composing Chaim Perelman Wrote <i>The New Rhetoric</i> with Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca. Reinterpretation of Aristotle geared toward discovery. Jeanne Fahnestock U of Maryland. Classical rhetoric, stasis theory. How style is constitutive of content. James Kinneavy Traces epistemic rhetorical thought from ancient Greece on. Paolo Freire Wrote <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i> , Carolyn Miller Writing across the disciplines: how does academic behavior shape knowledge? Charles Bazerman Founded the rhetoric of science: even scientific discourse is rhetorical. | |
| Movers and shakers Other people influence our teaching | Francis James Child Famous Harvard prof, British lit Didn't have to teach writing Charles William Eliot Harvard President | John F. Genung (O) Amherst A. S. Hill (O) Harvard Fred Newton Scott (T) Students have a right to their own language. Writing should focus on problems, solutions. | John Dewey (T) Society and education are dialectical, American pragmatism Richard Reeve (S) Write about your dreams J McBride Dabbs (S) Keep a journal, write about whatever you want | Alfred Korzybski (O) General Semantics, applied scientific empiricism to language. Don't use "is" Richard Weaver (T) Early reviver of rhetoric. Wrote <i>Composition: A Course in Writing and Rhetoric</i> | Jerome Bruner Education as process. Students should compose, not study someone else's composition. Alfred R. Kitzhaber (T?) Called for a new rhetoric. Writing "correctly" not enough: needs to "discipline thought" (129). Peter Elbow (S) "I don't know what I perceive, feel or think <i>until</i> I can get it into language" (153). | | |
| Individual teachers We teach college writing. | | | | | | | |