

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

RHETORIC NOTES

THE DEPARTMENT OF RHETORIC NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM THE DEO

BY KRISTY NABHAN-WARREN

As I type this short introductory greeting to my UI Rhetoric colleagues, I cannot believe that we are entering week six of the Fall 2021 semester. What a whirlwind of a summer and semester! I know that in many ways this academic year has been even more stressful and more uncertain than last year, when we were mostly all on Zoom in the midst of a pandemic. Now that we are back in the classroom without mask or vaccine mandates, while still in a pandemic, I understand the level of frustration and concern that colleagues across campus are expressing. I know that a lot of Iowa faculty are struggling, and I want you to know that I hear you, I see you, and I am with you. I thank you for the incredible

pedagogical work that you are doing, and I know that what Rhetoric faculty do is hands-on, intensive, and emotional work. I have had my own PhD students go through PDP training, and I see the results when I observe their teaching. What you do matters so much to our graduate students whom you train (a shout-out to Katlyn, Charlie, Dana, and Bevin, who were part of the early hard work this summer!), and it makes a huge impact on UIowa undergraduate students, who gain crucial life skills for whatever vocations and careers they assume post-graduation. You help get these young adults off to a great start with their writing, their speaking, and their conversational skills—skills that, as I know you all know but I want to reiterate here, will last a lifetime.

Since being invited to take on

this role early in the summer, I have been reflecting on what I hope I can bring to this department during the time I am with you. I hope that I can demonstrate collaborative leadership, active observation and listening, team-building, a strong work ethic, and above all else, kindness. I have tried to model my own leadership style after those I have observed in the course of my career as a teacher, scholar, mentor, administrator, and yes, as a parent to three (almost) teenagers who are indeed my toughest—all the while being incessantly lovable—critics. As an academically trained ethnographer and historian of religion and culture and a parent, I spend a lot of time listening to and learning from others, whether they are my historic or ethnographic interlocutors or my children. I have learned over

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REFLECTIONS AT AUTUMN'S COMING

BY MICHAEL OVERHOLT

I walk the obelisk-gray concrete from Hancher to North Hall this morning. First day of fall. The morning air is noticeably cooler than last week, and though I am wearing a blazer I'm not sweating for the first time this semester on my way to class.

A variegated reflection looks up at me from the surface of the Iowa River: refracted orange from the low, morning sun; slanted green from the trees on the banks; facing blue from the vertical sky. A mixed bouquet of fall and summer for me to take with me on my day. "Congratulations! Welcome back to teaching," the river

whispers. It's the first academic year in five I haven't felt like the sixth player on a basketball team.

My previous position as an instructional technologist felt like a consolation prize. "I am a teacher," I would tell myself, "because I'm teaching faculty." The problem is that I prefer students to faculty and the yearly renewal of hope and bright-eyed ambition students bring to campus. Each fall at the College of Charleston meant waiting to see if the Classics Department needed me. It's the same sort of feeling my elementary school self felt every July: Would my best friend Craig be in my section of second grade? Lots of hope. Lots of anxiety. Lots of room for disappointment. My bias says nothing about the instructional

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the years not to walk into any situation with pre-formed judgments but to be open to learning and to always be self-reflexive. This is what has helped me become a successful teacher, scholar, and I hope with all my heart—parent, too. I have learned through experience that humility is key and that hubris is dangerous. What I have learned from my short time with you is that you are a smart and passionate group of individuals. You demonstrate care and concern for each other. You listen to each other. You want to collaborate with each other and colleagues across campus. You are activists. You are kind. You care. You are AMAZING teachers. I have so enjoyed getting to know many of you these past several months of Zoom meetings, coffees, smoothies, and meetings in my EPB office. You are great colleagues who have a lot of respect for one another. I see my role right now as listening to your needs and facilitating the process in getting to where you want to be as individuals and as a department. I am working hard to build bridges between this department and the administration, and it is truly a privilege to do this work. Thank you for having me as your Acting DEO.

I know that we are in uncertain times on so many levels right now, but please know that I am here for you right here and now.

RE: A CASE FOR EMBRACING WEIRD STUDENT E-MAILS

BY ROBERT PECK

Dear Department of Rhetoric,

I hope this message finds you well and that you're enjoying the cooler weather. My name is Robert Peck, and I'm a lecturer in your department. You may remember me from faculty meetings, hallway conversations, and awkward silences as we wait for breakout rooms to close on Zoom. I'm writing to you today to discuss the important topic of e-mail formatting. Specifically, I want to talk about the expectations we have for it and how those expectations may be a mismatch for many of our students.

I can't remember how many times I've heard instructors bemoan or giggle over a weird student e-mail. Sometimes, our students are too professional, obviously trained by a guidance counselor or orientation event always to introduce themselves fully.

technologist profession. Presenting the most recent pedagogical practices or educational technologies is important. For three years, I stood watch in the tower of pedagogical innovation with zero grading responsibilities and substantial unstructured time to do as I thought best. Even started podcasting. I could make the teaching moves without the teaching load. But it's just not the same. It was hope deferred, which the Teacher of Proverbs insists sickens the heart.

"I prefer...the yearly renewal of hope and bright-eyed ambition students bring to campus."

To borrow pandemic language, the regular march of teaching-less semesters was a new strain of COVID to wait out. *This won't last forever*, I'd tell myself.

I pause on the bridge to let the moment's significance root before continuing to North Hall. *This former high school is too close to a railroad track and river not to be haunted*, I think. It's been one of my favorite places on campus ever since first teaching in it during the Spring of 2013. The walk to North Hall's back steps with the hillside sweeping up on the left and the river silent and wise on my right reminds me of a walk

Other times, they are intimate to the point of hilarity, unsigned and unclear, their missives scarcely a few words long: "When's the thing due again?"

In both cases, these messages are not only odd, but risk placing students at a disadvantage. The impression they make via e-mail shapes our in-person interactions, too, affecting how much benefit of the doubt we're willing to give and even impeding clear communication about classroom problems. For all of these reasons, it's no wonder that some instructors choose actively to teach e-mail formatting in class, often complete with personal anecdotes and examples good and bad.

However, frustration over student e-mail habits has always been a topic that leaves me cold. I have the luxury of not caring very much how I'm addressed, which I recognize as a function of my own privilege. That probably plays a large part

at my Uncle Myrrl's in Harrisonburg, Virginia, back in 1992. We were at that time visiting from Sarasota, the Gulf Coast town whose existential depth tourists regularly swap for beach trinkets. Harrisonburg's simplicity, however, wasn't as easily squandered, and it buzzed with an energy I couldn't recognize. "What's different about this place?" I believe is how I asked my mother. "It's a college town," she replied, and somewhere on the walk from College Avenue to Hillcrest Avenue I determined I'd live in a college town if given the chance.

My "Good morning" to a student entering 229 receives a grunt. He's either not a morning person or one of many unhappy with the grades posted last night. My thoughts start down the rabbit hole of how abstract a percentage grade on an essay really is, but the "random careless rhythm of their chatter"—as Gilbert Highet describes it—distracts me back to the present, where I embrace the reality that there's no hope deferred this year. No sick heart. Just the privilege of being part of a team equipping our culture to spot disinformation, find their voices, do justice, and love mercy. I'm a teacher, and the colors and sounds of fall titter with hope.

I wouldn't have it any other way.

in my reactions here. But there's more to it than that, too: I'd argue that by reframing personal, quick contact with us as a point of formal procedure for our students, we distance ourselves from their day-to-day and recede further into the unapproachable cloakings of the academy. And, dare I say, we risk taking ourselves a little too seriously to boot.

As with all communication, there is a grammar to e-mails. I do not use grammar here in the sense of laws or rules which must be obeyed. Rather, I use it in the sense of a norm: a series of expectations we have about how someone will behave. In "Says Who? Teaching and Questioning the Rules of Grammar," Anne Curzan makes the case that grammars are classed—our expectations about how to behave are shaped by our background and

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experiences. When those differ, the out group (in this case, those who aren't hip with the grammar of a certain comms situation) is othered, obviously to their detriment: they are seen either as unprofessional, uneducated, and sloppy or stiff, inhuman, and awkward.

Knowledge of the grammar is often dependent on opportunity. Has someone been formally educated? Read widely? Seen many examples of different rhetorical and written forms? If so, they are more likely to be able to mimic grammar to suit their needs; they are also more likely to have a background that gave them such opportunities easily.

This is my read of students who don't write an e-mail the same way I would. Their expectations simply differ from my own, likely because our circumstances to date also have differed. I try to focus on this and not allow the intrusive idea to creep in that their e-mailing shows a lack of respect or attention to the class. In fact, when I receive a less-formal message, I am almost happy about it at times: I feel like I've become approachable, that I fit into their grammar, that I can help them

more comfortably.

If you do teach e-mailing in class, I would love to know what ideas or texts you pair with it.

Curzan's essay above is fantastic. I've also used Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue" and invited students to consider the various Englishes of their own lives. Regardless, I hope you'll consider presenting e-mailing not simply as a matter of professional form, but introducing it alongside some discussion of what we teach when we teach grammar: that we do so to help our students fit in, to their advantage, in new situations, rather than erasing the grammars of the rest of their life.

"We teach grammar... to help our students fit in, to their advantage, in new situations, rather than erasing the grammars of the rest of their life."

Thanks for reading and for your time and help. I'll hope to hear from you soon!

All best,

Robert Peck
Lecturer, Department of Rhetoric
The University of Iowa

QUICK LINKS: INSTRUCTION AND TUTORING SUPPORT

The Writing Center: <http://writingcenter.uiowa.edu>

The Speaking Center: <https://speakingcenter.uiowa.edu/>

The Conversation Center: <http://clas.uiowa.edu/rhetoric/conversation-center>

Iowa Digital Engagement and Learning (IDEAL): <http://ideal.uiowa.edu>

Success in Rhetoric (SiR): <https://tutor.uiowa.edu/find-help/help-labs/>

RESOURCE CENTER SPOTLIGHT

UPDATES FROM THE WRITING CENTER

BY CAROL SEVERINO

The fall semester was off to a busy start for the Writing Center with more than 100 students registering for our [Enrollment Program](#) in the two weeks before the semester had even begun! Almost half of these were new freshmen students enrolled in Rhetoric courses. By the end of the fifth week, we had worked with 316 students in a total of 957 visits and had waiting lists for appointments almost every day. In addition to submitting documents for written feedback, students now have the option of making either an in-person or a video-conference appointment. They are choosing both in about equal numbers and they are very grateful for the support our wonderful tutors are providing. Our favorite comment from our post-visit surveys came from a freshman: "Thank you so much for being there for me right at the beginning of the semester! Many of my professors encouraged us to go right away. I'm so glad I did and I already have another appointment." Our thanks to all Rhetoric instructors for ensuring that new

Iowa students know about the resources available to them at the [Centers](#) and across campus.

In teaching news, our two courses are well underway with nine new graduate student tutors in our [Teaching in a Writing Center](#) practicum course and 14 new undergraduate students training to be Writing Fellows in [Writing Theory and Practice](#). We also have six new undergraduate tutors. These are experienced [Writing Fellows](#) and Success in Rhetoric tutors who received additional training in the first few weeks of the semester and began seeing students for appointments this week. These additions to our staff, which bring us to a total of 35 tutors providing over 190 hours of writing instruction a week, have been really helpful as due dates for first assignments have loomed on the horizon and requests for help from anxious students have ramped up. Our 30 Writing Fellows have also been at work responding to the first set of papers submitted by

students in eleven different courses ranging from the Interpretation of Literature to the History of Slavery and Black Culture and Experience.

The Fall [Institute for Teaching with Writing](#), a series of two workshops for faculty interested in teaching with writing, takes place on Friday October 1st and 8th. Two interdisciplinary teams from the [Teaching with Writing Obermann Working Group](#) have been busy preparing stimulating and informative sessions on creating meaningful writing assignments and responding to student writing. Twenty-two faculty from a wide range of disciplines and five colleges have registered so far. A big thank you to the Obermann Center for co-sponsoring the Institute and helping us get the word out. The Teaching with Writing Obermann Group is also working on the next issue of [Writing Across Campus](#), a newsletter designed to inspire faculty to include more writing in their courses by showcasing the innovative approaches to teaching writing that are taking place across campus.

Finally, a study of second

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language writing development by Writing Center directors, Carol Severino and Deirdre Egan, and their collaborator Shih-Ni Prim, has appeared in the latest issue of *Writing Center Journal*. A study of tutoring strategies in recurrent tutorials by Carol Severino, Deirdre Egan and our much-missed Rhetoric colleague, Ashley Wells, will appear in the next issue of *WLN: A Journal of Writing Center Scholarship*. We have now turned our attention to faculty perceptions of student writing, analyzing the results of a Writing Center survey of UI faculty and researching the history of writing across the curriculum initiatives (or lack thereof) at the University of Iowa.

NEWS FROM YOUR UNIVERSITY OF IOWA LIBRARIES

BY KATIE HASSMAN

A selection of updates and news of interest as you consider the fall 2021 semester. Questions or comments? Contact: Katie Hassman (Rhetoric liaison librarian) katie-hassman@uiowa.edu.

Need to schedule a library instruction session for your courses? Want to schedule a time to bring your classes to [The Perch](#)? Please fill out the [Library Instruction Request Form](#). We are still scheduling fall sessions but peak dates in mid-October are quickly filling up. Our librarian instructors are hosting synchronous online instruction as well as in-person sessions in library classrooms this fall. Let us know of your format preferences when submitting your request. Questions? Email Katie Hassman (katie-hassman@uiowa.edu).

Check out the new UI Libraries Gallery exhibition, "[From Revolutionary Outcast to Man of God: Dostoevsky at 200](#)." The gallery is open, and we welcome class visits. [Plan your class visit](#) and check out the classroom-ready activity, "[Reading an Object in the Main Library](#)." The Reading an Object in the Main Library activity was developed in collaboration with past Rhetoric TAs, Jamie Chen and Jackie Banigan. If you haven't seen it already, the Dostoevsky exhibit is organized into four sections: "Rebel," "Convict," "Gambler," and "Prophet." The four sections are clearly and unmistakably labeled, offering a

FACULTY BOOKSHELF MELISSA FEBOS'S GIRLHOOD BY CINDA COGGINS MOSHER

UI Nonfiction Writing Program Associate Professor Melissa Febos's 2021 book of essays, *Girlhood*, offers keen and timely insight into personal and systemic challenges girls face as they transition to adulthood. Her eight critically informed autobiographical chapters detail how difficult it remains, even in the most "enlightened" of circumstances, for girls and women to transcend ever-present internal and external sources of oppression.

Anyone who has been objectified, silenced, shamed, or devalued—or who has internalized this self-effacing narrative

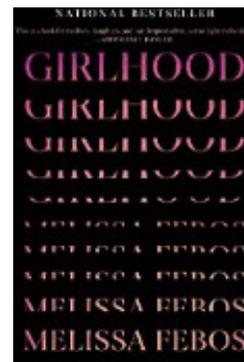
compelling rhetorical framing of exhibition artifacts for students to consider. Questions? Email Sara Pinkham (Exhibition and Engagement Coordinator) or Katie Hassman. (sara-pinkham@uiowa.edu or katie-hassman@uiowa.edu).

The [Research and Disinformation Series](#) (RADs) is up and available for classroom use and sharing. As a reminder, this series was created last spring 2021 semester as a collaboration between librarians Tim Arnold & Katie Hassman, and past Rhetoric TA, Chris Wei.

Encourage your students to schedule research consultations with librarians, especially as research assignments roll around. Research consultations can help students:

- Develop research topics
- Locate credible sources
- Develop search strategies
- And more

Individual consultation appointments with a librarian can be submitted by filling out our [online form](#). If students prefer to chat with a librarian at their convenience, they can always reach us on our [live virtual chat](#) 9 am–5 pm, Monday–Friday. Evening research consultations are also available through [The SEAM](#) from 5–9 pm, Sunday through Thursday. All evening research consultations this semester must be scheduled 24 hours in advance.



of being less than or practiced "empty content"—can identify with and bond over Febos's extensive personal and well-researched observations on the lasting effects of widespread degradation of girls and women. She offers numerous heartbreaking

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UI LIBRARY EVENTS

Main Library Gallery

From Revolutionary Outcast to a Man of God: Dostoevsky at 200

Open August 16–December 17, 2021.

Curated by Dr. Anna Barker, University of Iowa professor of Russian literature, the exhibition covers the entirety of Dostoevsky's prolific literary career. His youth, his years of exile in Siberia, a period of gambling addiction, and his philosophical and theological teachings are explored in the context of Russian historical events and many of his most famous novels, from *Poor Folk* to *The Brothers Karamazov*. The exhibition also briefly highlights the two operas based on Dostoevsky novels, Sergei Prokofiev's *The Gambler* and Leos Janáček's *From the House of the Dead*, as well as Dostoevsky film adaptations.



The Gambler in *From Revolutionary Outcast to a Man of God: Dostoevsky at 200* in the Main Library Gallery, University of Iowa Libraries.

examples of how she and others she knows were shamed and abused, often before they even became teenagers, for such offenses as going through puberty before others their age or being in the vicinity of a group of older boys.

While Febos necessarily spends much time detailing her and others' experiences with body shaming, internalized oppression, sex work, drug use, countless unwanted advances, failed relationships with men and women, and the difficulty of saying no even when it's expected, she balances the narrative with her commitment to reversing this damage and reclaiming the sense of self she enjoyed, "[b]efore puberty, [when] I moved through the world and toward other people without hesitation or self-consciousness" (14). Her narrative of redemption is every bit as thoughtful and unifying as her careful documentation of shared oppression.

While eliciting a sense of togetherness that can only come through shared experience, Febos's captivating essays ultimately herald a hopeful, realistic, yet admittedly difficult way forward, as summed up

nicely in the book's concluding paragraphs:

As a young woman, I struck myself against everything—other bodies, cities, myself—but I could never make sense of the marks I made on them or the marks they made on me. A thing of unknown value has no value, and I treated myself as such. I beat against my life as if it could tell me how to stop hurting, until I was black and blue on the inside. The small softnesses I found, however fleeting, were precious. They may have saved my life.

Now I am so careful. The more I know my own worth, the less I have to fling myself against anything. When I go back, I can see all the marks that girl made so long ago. I reach my hand through the water and touch their familiar shapes. (310)

Throughout *Girlhood*, Febos's unapologetic and masterful prose chronicles her tragically unremarkable experiences, both as a child and adult, that have left scars despite her transcendental journey to recapture her lost sense of self.

EULA BISS'S ON IMMUNITY

BY COLIN KOSTELECKY

Teaching Eula Biss's "Is this Kansas"—a

critical essay on college culture and systemic racism—has become a tradition in my class.

It's impossible for students not to have a visceral reaction to a text that takes aim at Iowa City itself. It shows them that essays are not some locked-away thing, frozen in time—pinned and shellacked behind glass. No. Essays can touch you. They can shout. They can grab you by the shirt and demand answers. More importantly, this essay is the work of a young writer, one who's willing to take risks—and even offend her target audience if it means getting her point across.

It's within this context that I picked up Biss's book *On Immunity*, after hearing Anne Sand had been teaching it in her class.

Let's just put aside, for the moment, the incredible prescience of a book about vaccines.

In 2014, Biss was already laying the groundwork for a careful overhaul of public health messaging in this country—messaging based not on shame but empathy. At a time when so many of us

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INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES

THE UNIVERSITY AS CONTEXT

BY CRISTÓBAL MCKINNEY

When I was working as an internal communications writer/editor at the University of Iowa's Office of Strategic Communication (OSC), I would often think back to my days as a rhetoric instructor when I taught Brooke Gladstone's *The Influencing Machine*. My job in OSC involved working with administrators to anticipate and respond to questions from local (and sometimes national) reporters, and the longer I did this, the more I was able to gain a critical distance on news articles about the university. I knew what was said behind closed doors, shared with reporters, and ultimately printed, and it became easier to see how news articles reflect local history, politics, economics, culture, psychology, and more—just like Gladstone argues in her book.

Now that I'm teaching rhetoric again, I start the semester with texts specifically about the university, and I share what I learned as an internal comms writer. A nice bonus to this strategy is that students can use their personal (if limited)

experience of this university as additional context. The result is a lively discussion that I think demonstrates valuable lessons about close reading and rhetorical analysis.

The first two readings of my course describe the university's announcement in July 2020 that officials would archive and remove the Black Lives Matter spray paint that was applied to the Old Capitol building earlier that summer. Students read the administrator-written announcement emailed to students, faculty, and staff in the weekly *Iowa Now* as well as a *Gazette* article, written by Vanessa Miller, which was published later that same day.

Students rightly notice that the *Gazette* portrayal of the university is more negative than *Iowa Now*'s, and they notice that the *Gazette* highlights the \$1 million cost of removing the spray paint while *Iowa Now* buries it on page three. When asked about which article they find more credible, one student favored the *Gazette* because they trusted the "hard numbers" provided, but when I revealed that the university's 2019–2020 budget for building repairs was about \$15.5 million, that the General Education Fund (which includes repairs and salaries) was about \$745 million,

and that the university's total budget (including the hospital) is close to \$3.6 billion, he changed his mind. He was now hesitant to trust either article completely. (All these figures are publicly available on the UI Provost website in the annually published *Data Digest*.)

I also teach Eula Biss's "Is This Kansas"—which this year coincided with the FIJI protests, yielding a particularly interesting discussion—and show students screenshots of news articles written about the university between the time Biss was living in Iowa City and today. These include when Iowa topped the Princeton Party School rankings in 2013, the KKK statue on the Pentacrest in 2014, the Nazi graffiti on the Unity Mural in 2018, and four events in 2019: the Business Leaders in Christ lawsuit against the university, the #DoesUIowaLoveMe social media campaign, the overdose and death of a fraternity member, and the bacchanalian violation of the ensuing alcohol moratorium (Miller reported it as "the largest tailgate in Iowa City").

This year, students said they don't think things are "as bad" at Iowa today as

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“Eula Biss’s *On Immunity*” cont. from pg. 5

harbor frustrations (and schadenfreudic fantasies) about anti-vaxxers, Biss’s words could not be more pressing:

Those who...support the notion that vaccines cause autism are not guilty of ignorance or science denial so much as they are guilty of using weak science as it has always been used—to lend false credibility to an idea that we want to believe for other reasons.

In these pages, Biss empathizes with the trials of motherhood, as a mother speaking to other mothers for whom traditional medicine has been a site of pain and dismissal, deeply patriarchal, where even today “stress” is used as a modern euphemism for hysteria. In short, Biss legitimizes the fears behind anti-vaxx sentiment as a means of persuasion. **And, like vaccination itself, this persuasive strategy is subtle, powerful, and (mostly) painless.**

This is all just a bonus.

“The University as Context” cont. from pg. 5

it was when Biss lived here but that they still see something of what she saw then. One student reported hearing the n-word spoken by white students as she passed their dorm room. A few students recalled the sexual assault notifications emailed to campus early in the semester. But students became most lively when I gave them demographic data about their class, the Class of 2025, which the university publishes every fall in an infographic I helped create as a writer in OSC. They enthusiastically report how much bigger or smaller Iowa is than their high schools, how much more or less diverse, and as we talk, it seems to me that they begin to recognize Biss as someone who, like them, has encountered this institution with all its horror and grace, and she becomes an important, but single, voice in a chorus that includes them.

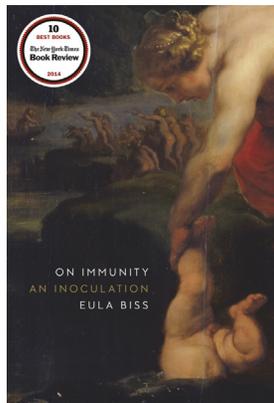
COLLABORATION INNOVATION: IT’S ALL IN THE TRYING

BY DHRUBA NEUPANE

DIGRESSION: MY WAY

Call it “anxiety of innovation,” repurposing Harold Bloom’s “anxiety of influence,” or whatever fits, I sometimes feel that we live

What’s even more important, more timeless, is the growth Biss shows as an author with range, with patience. To put both “Is This Kansas” and *On Immunity* on opposite ends of a persuasive spectrum—one side bold and passionate, the other side patient and caring—is to show the depth of an author’s spirit, how her strategies can change over the course of a career. For a course intended to stay with students long after they leave our classrooms, I can think of no lesson more useful than this.



in a post-innovation age where there is nothing new to do and everything has already been said, done, and experimented. Paradoxically, it seems also true that we live in some of the most, if not *the* most, innovative and exciting times in history. In pedagogy alone, the digital and the virtual turn have offered new possibilities and new challenges. New tools and technologies help diversify learning and knowledge making, although how transformative we have made them is a problem that remains. The digital divide is a problem that remains. Access and equality questions remain. In any case, the market responsabilizes us to be innovative and productive. It seems as if “there is no alternative.” We **MUST** either be innovative or...if that sounds like too much leaning on a pessimistic side, we can easily add an element of reflexivity and reflexive agency theory (Anthony Giddens) or a feedback loop idea to imply that we have some leverage. The market logic may strike some as a bad analogy because we are led to believe that education does not operate from the same logic that market and state productivity and innovativeness does. Yes, as pedagogues, our efforts to innovate stem from the desire to make the learning experience pleasant, effective, and meaningful for our students. Yet, it would not be an overstatement to say that the innovativeness and productivity push is real and “in.”

WE WANT YOU TO CONTRIBUTE!

Do you have something to share in a Faculty Bookshelf or Innovative Pedagogies column? Or have you been working with an undergraduate student on a neat project that you’d like to highlight? Do you have photos from a classroom activity that you have permission to share? Alumni, where has your Rhetoric coursework or teaching taken you? We’d love to feature your ideas and share the awesome things you’re doing in (and out!) of the classroom.

General inquiries and Features:

E-mail Jennifer Janecek at jennifer-yirinec@uiowa.edu.

Faculty Bookshelf: E-mail Justin Cosner at justin-cosner@uiowa.edu.

Innovative Pedagogies: E-mail Bevin O’Connor at bevin-oconnor@uiowa.edu.

CAVEAT

I will need a flexible, un-individualized, and process model of innovation that appreciates the effort to improve, the desire to change and learn from the past *together* as the ecology or continuum of innovation. Also politicized. Innovation on whose terms, benefitting whom, in what sense, with what values—those tend to be my questions. Don’t mistake this to be an anti-innovation apologia, however. What is innovation in its form—content; in its medium is the message (McLuhan), product is the process; in its kinetic potential?

CONTEXT

My Rhetoric 1030 course has four units: Rhetorical Unit (Writing), Inspiration/Motivation and Advocacy/Social Action (Speech), Argument (W), and Apologia (S). From rhetorical analysis, which is a more or less “objective” reading of a text, the second unit transports students to a more or less “subjective” zone, where they begin to explore who they are, what their placement or situatedness in the society is, and what values they hold and what goals and actions they pursue/promote, as a starting point of motivation and advocacy. For this unit thus far, my students brought

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in an exciting range of themes, including racial discrimination, ableism, diversity and inclusion, mental health, and ecology and environment.

THE SPEECH PROBLEM

When it comes to speech, the general mood and psychology among students is one of stress and anxiety. Those who are nervous about speaking exacerbate the situation in sticking to a belief that speech is all about avoiding anxiety and developing confidence. Everything else must take a back seat because everything else comes naturally when the archetypal fear problem is fixed. The experienced speakers have shared their practical “tips” on the benefits of breathing, calmness, and distraction techniques—something they could plug into if that would help. But what students generally ignore is that these techniques work when they have become part of our bodyminds or embodied and embedded particles. Lack of confidence is not an isolated and a sudden problem—a thing having more to do with history than chemistry, perhaps? The overpsychologizers are sometimes hard to convince that confidence is a sedimented, accumulated process. In a desperate effort to defeat fear, such students rely on things external to speech and undermine the subject knowledge, research, and idea level improvement. I advise my students to prepare well, to know the content because knowledge is power (not quite the Foucauldian way for now) and confidence. A few others believe that speech is nothing but a matter of practice. But it seems as if a good number in this fear group ignore the fact that a practice is of and with something. The missing puzzle in the psychological and the practical models is that confidence and practice are constitutive of subject material, making connection to an audience, and so on.

Too heavily content-driven speakers are not without problem either. A good number of them deliver a speech that is a “writing speech.” Some within this group over-rely on outside sources and drown their own voice—the classical problem! I need to remind them frequently, with reference to John Coleman, that [“A Speech Is Not an Essay.”](#) Not to dismiss the fact that I meet a few inspiring students each semester who demonstrate good knowledge and match that with a great sensibility of delivery. “How can I change the situation for

those who come with certain misconceptions?” I ask myself.

DIGRESSION: INTEREST

The Advocacy/Social Action unit is “interested” in an interesting way. It helps me articulate my belief that a study in rhetoric and writing should enable students to interrogate and unsettle visible and tacit forms and relations of domination and control. I invite students to understand what, how, and who shape our view of what is true, real, good, valuable, desirable, and possible (e.g., Göran Therborn on ideology), and to be aware of how identity/difference is constructed by and constituted in various representational apparatuses. Sounds big theories. :) I want this assignment to be a moment for us to reflect on issues around diversity, equity, and inclusion. I want this assignment, in combination with the apologia unit (and here I need to reach out to the resourceful Jenny), to be a moment for students to develop critical-ethical capacity, to be aware of their own social and knowledge position, to think about *returning* education to society, from where it evolves.

“Innovation on whose terms, benefitting whom, in what sense, with what values—those tend to be my questions.”

PAST

Until last semester, readings for this unit included public speaking and presentation chapters and videos, and practice involved a small assignment on selling an idea or product (Thanks to magnificent Megan!), and general discussion about speech/stage fears, anxieties, and strategies experienced speakers have developed to sublimate fear and anxiety into energy. I would give examples of speeches aligned with the unit theme and discuss generally the imperative for advocacy and social action and our roles and responsibilities as aware people, rhetoric’s civic goal!

TRYING POSSIBILITIES

This semester, I plan to try something new: adjust a few scaffolded readings

and activities and redesign some of the activities. One I am thinking of using is an in-class assignment created by our colleague Cassandra. This task asks students to explore who they are and what biases and values they hold. Reflective work such as this is valuable because it makes us aware of the biases, mindsets, and the “terministic screen” that affects our self/other evaluation. The reflective assignment will also be a moment for us to get back to the [Research and \(Dis\)information series](#) created by our own Chris Wei, Tim Arnold, and Katie Hassman based on Arnold’s workshops. I have also realized that it would be a good idea to add readings that explore the question of subject location (positionality), issues power and privilege more deeply. To that end, I plan to add materials from *Discuss Positioning, Privilege, and Power* (the 3Ps), following Walton, Moore, and Jones, from their book [Technical Communication after the Social Turn](#) that has three chapters by these names. Although these authors’ rhetorical purview is technical and professional communication teaching and research, these chapters are widely useful. The visible downside is that, despite their wide application, the examples being offered come from the instructor’s and researcher’s perspective, which our students may not find immediately relatable. For example, one passage in the “Positionality” chapter ponders, via Sylvia Lazos (2012), how difficult it is for a culturally and linguistically different/disadvantaged instructor to survive the academic labor:

Unconscious stereotypical beliefs create expectations about someone before that person walks in the door. When women and minorities enter their classrooms, their students, too, have expectations about them. Their majority counterparts do not face this obstacle. As women and minority instructors labor to make their classrooms friendly and warm (so that they can get decent student evaluations), they must ponder how their conduct will be perceived by their students in the context of their gendered and raced role expectations. From the get-go, the task is daunting. (68)

That said, I found a selective use of the chapters a better choice over a book-length work (e.g., *White Fragility*). By the time I am writing this piece, I have decided I am going to discuss some of the key takeaways among my students. In an ideal situation, I’d have loved the idea of making curricular

Continued on pg. 8

choices more distributive, decentralized, and participatory, perhaps, by giving students the chance to add and recommend readings and activities and sort of self-direct the process. I feel that I need to develop much more robust creative collaborative ethos among students and colleagues for what I suggested in the title—"collaborative innovation."

I am usually a strength-based, positive approach person. Am I focusing too much on what students are not doing?

WELCOME TO THE RHETORIC FAMILY!

STEVE DUCK is the proud new grandfather of Leo Molyneux Duck, brother to Elliot.



JENNIFER JANECHKEK and her husband Michael welcomed their third child, Elliot Charles Janechek.



FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

WAYNE ANDERSON presented a paper titled "It Won't Be a Quiet Funeral: White Crosses as a Symbol of the 1980s Farm Crisis" at the Agricultural History Society's annual meeting in June 2021 (held virtually). He also chaired a panel on "Marketing Rural Identity to the Nation" and served as administrative co-host for the conference in his role as the Society's Annual Meetings Advisor.

CINDA COGGINS MOSHER won the Hubbard-Walder Award for Excellence in Teaching. This [university-wide award](#) "is presented to UI faculty who have participated in a variety of university teaching... and have contributed to curriculum and/or program development." Cinda was one of four honorees of this inaugural award.

JENNIFER JANECHKEK published her article "['Jammed' Between Body and Mind: The Liberatory Fashion of Leonora Carrington](#)" in the "Fashion and Mental Health" special issue of *The Fashion Studies Journal*, vol. 3, no. 3 (2021). She also published "Using Print Culture to Research Disability and Rehabilitation" in Adam Matthew's new digital resource, *Research Methods Primary Sources*. She presented two papers (virtually) over the summer—one on "New Ontologies of Sound in Sensation Fiction: Deafness and Infrasound in Wilkie Collins's *Hide and Seek*" at the Midwest Victorian Studies Association Conference and one on "Increasing Anti-Ableist Rhetorical Awareness through Accessible Multimodal Assignment Design" at the Digital Pedagogy Institute.

DHRUBA NEUPANE co-authored, with Karun Karki, a book chapter called "Refugee Demographics: A Global Picture" in Bharati Sethi et al.'s edited collection *Understanding the Refugee Experience in the Canadian Context* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2021): 13–29.

CAROL SEVERINO, DEIRDRE EGAN, AND SHIH-NI PRIM co-authored an article titled "[International Undergraduates' Perceptions of Their Second Language Writing Development and Their Implications for Writing Center Tutors](#)," which appeared in *The Writing Center Journal* 38, no. 1–2 (2021): 165–202.

DEPARTMENT NEWS & DEADLINES

SUBMIT YOUR CV FOR CONSIDERATION FOR A MERIT RAISE!

Deadline: Saturday, October 10

Use the new CLAS standard CV template: <https://clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/apr-academic-professional-record>

Highlight accomplishments in the review period (August 19, 2019–August 21, 2021).

E-mail CVs to Abby Rush at abby-rush@uiowa.edu.

DEPARTMENT CONFERENCE FUNDING

The Rhetoric Department will reimburse faculty who are presenting at a conference up to \$150 per conference, with a limit of \$750 per semester, on a first-come-first-serve basis until the funding runs out. Contact Kristy Nabhan-Warren (kristy-nabhan-warren@uiowa.edu) and Barb Pooley (barbara-pooley@uiowa.edu) for more details.

"DEPARTMENT HOUR" SCHEDULE

Please reserve 10:30–11:20 am (and 10:30 am–12:00 pm for faculty meetings) for the following:

- October 8 – Committees
- October 15 – Exec Committee
- October 22 – Colloquium
- October 29 – Colloquium
- November 5 – Faculty Meeting
- November 12 – Committees
- November 19 – Colloquium
- December 3 – Colloquium
- December 10 – Faculty Meeting

EVENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

FALL INSTITUTE ON TEACHING WITH WRITING: SESSION 2

LOCATION: ZOOM

REGISTER: [HTTPS://WRITINGCENTER.UIOWA.EDU/INSTITUTE-TEACHING-WRITING](https://writingcenter.uiowa.edu/institute-teaching-writing)

DATE: FRIDAY, OCTOBER 8

TIME: 2:00–5:00 P.M. CST

The Fall 2021 Institute on Teaching with Writing is a series of two virtual interactive workshops on teaching with writing. Faculty and TAs in all disciplines, departments, and colleges (particularly instructors outside of Rhetoric and English) who are interested in using writing to promote student learning are welcome. Participants are expected to attend both sessions (Oct. 1 & 8). Learn more [here](#).



CLAS PREPARING FOR PROMOTION IN INSTRUCTIONAL TRACK WORKSHOP

LOCATION: ZOOM

REGISTER: [HTTPS://CLAS.UIOWA.EDU/DEOS/WORKSHOP-REGISTRATION](https://clas.uiowa.edu/deos/workshop-registration)

DATE: NOVEMBER 17, 2021

TIME: 2:30–4:30 P.M. CST

For all instructional-track faculty working toward promotion (to associate professor and to full professor). This workshop will cover criteria for promotion and what it means, how to put your portfolio together correctly, COI and letters of recommendation, and other helpful advice.

CALLS FOR PAPERS

NEMLA'S 53RD ANNUAL CONVENTION

LOCATION: BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

DATES: MARCH 10–13, 2022

DEADLINE: OCTOBER 15, 2021

The 2022 NeMLA conference theme is CARE. We understand CARE as the practice of interdependency, admitting our vulnerabilities as humans, animals, and other living organisms of the Anthropocene. The NeMLA theme of CARE will embrace but not be limited to questions of representation, migration, the environment, and identity. The Friday keynote event will be given by Judith Butler. [Learn more and submit an abstract here](#).

COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION'S 52ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

LOCATION: BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

DATES: MARCH 31–APRIL 2, 2022

DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 1, 2021

The College English Association, a gathering of scholar-teachers in English studies, welcomes proposals for presentations on Composition and Rhetoric for our 52nd annual conference. Submit your proposal at www.cea-web.org.

Composition and Rhetoric is an especially fruitful ground for conversations on Justice (the conference theme). Our field has always been deeply involved in the fight for academic equality, especially in the movements to incorporate basic writing into the academy and in writing center pedagogy. Scholars in Composition and Rhetoric have a vital role and an irreplaceable voice in the slow march toward Justice.

CEA invites proposals from academics in all areas of literature, language, film, composition, pedagogy, and creative, professional, and technical writing. We are especially interested in presentations that feature topics relating to justice in texts, disciplines, people, cultural studies, media, and pedagogy. For your proposal, you might consider these concepts related to Justice:

- resistance: protesting injustice
- equality: shifting perceptions of race, class, cultures, regions, genders, sexualities
- discourse: employing rhetoric and argument
- reclamation: spotlighting forgotten or

- unknown texts, authors, and cultures
- physicality: placing the body/publishing the text in contested spaces
- movements: challenging the status quo through ideas, genre, or form
- legitimacy: considering literature and the law
- education: teaching empathy and dialog
- individuality: combining the personal and political

Read the full Rhetoric CFP for CEA 2022 [here](#).

SPECIAL ISSUE OF GLOBAL EDUCATION REVIEW: RHETORICAL EDUCATION AND MEANING-MAKING IN GLOBAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

DEADLINE: NOVEMBER 30, 2021

For this issue of the *Global Education Review*, we call for papers that speak to rhetorical education in a range of global and historical contexts. Papers should address rhetorical education in theory and/or practice and relate to one or more of the following topics:

- Site(s) of rhetorical education—places where literacy or communication were taught and developed—that reflect culture and nationhood
- How students or young learners make meaning or communicate in various contexts
- Attending to how students or teachers used literacy to cultivate subjectivities
- Attending to the diverse meaning-making practices of students or teachers that extend beyond the written word and oral communication
- Students' resistance to rhetorical education
- Connections between past and current rhetorical education pedagogies
- Rhetorical education that meaningfully reflected diversity, equity, and inclusion
- The influence of social, economic, and/or political forces on rhetorical education or meaning-making

Please send an abstract of no more than 250 words in length with at least ten references along with contact information for all authors to lproszak@mercy.edu by November 30, 2021. Abstracts will be reviewed for fit to the special issue's theme. You will be informed if the full manuscript is invited for review by December 15, 2021. Full manuscripts are due by March 1, 2022. Full CFP [here](#).

October 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Faculty Meeting Fall Institute on Teaching with Writing: Session 1 2:00–5:00 pm	2
3	4	5	6	7	8 Committees Fall Institute on Teaching with Writing: Session 2 2:00–5:00 pm	9
10 CV for merit raise deadline	11 U Iowa Homecoming	12	13	14	15 Exec Comm. Iowa Homecoming Parade 5:45–10:00pm	16
17	18	19	20	21	22 Colloquium	23
24 31 Halloween	25	26	27	28	29 Colloquium	30

November 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Last day for undergraduates to drop a course without dean's approval	2	3	4	5 Faculty Meeting	6
7	8 Early registration begins	9	10	11	12 Committees	13
14	15 Last day for undergraduates to withdraw from a course without dean's approval	16	17	18	19 Colloquium	20
21 Fall Break	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				