Rhetorical mindfulness and eco-criticism: inhabiting the space of first-year composition

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Rhetorical Mindfulness and Eco-criticism: Inhabiting the Space of First-Year Composition

By

Dylan Medina

Accepted in Partial Completion
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Kathleen L. Kitto, Dean of the Graduate School

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Dylan Medina
May 10, 2012
Rhetorical Mindfulness and Eco-criticism:
Inhabiting the Space of First-Year Composition

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By

Dylan Medina

May 2012
Abstract

First-year composition (FYC) holds a peculiar place in the realm of higher education. Frequently, it is the only universally mandated course that students must pass implying the presupposed value of the class. However, while FYC is generally valued highly, it is highly misunderstood. Much of this misunderstanding stems from various fallacious, problematic, or limited views of what writing is, how it is produced, and how it is best taught. This paper seeks to find a place for FYC by discussing what the course can and cannot accomplish.

Post-structuralist work in semiotics, like that of Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, and others, provides a foundational discussion on and problematizes the ways language represents the world. Ecocritical theory proposed by Lawrence Buell and Dana Phillips addresses these problems by allowing representation to be reconnected to the space it represents. Beyond the role that space plays, Discourse theory outlined by Barbara Johnstone, among others, demonstrates the relationship between space and Discourse. This paper then moves to genre theory, which stems from the works of Amy Devitt and Anis Bawarshi, among others, providing a focus on the particular genres that individuals must inhabit to emerge into rhetorical situations. This genre becomes a nexus in which the external and internal latent matrices clash and are linked. Genre-awareness, which allows individuals to understand how specific genres respond to the rhetorical situation, plays a critical role in providing choice, and thus agency to the individuals. For this reason, genre-awareness is a key component to a successful FYC course. This paper links ecocriticism with genre theory to suggest that, beyond genre-awareness, rhetorical mindfulness, or a mindfulness of all of the forces within the latent matrices, is another crucial component of FYC. Genre-awareness and rhetorical mindfulness are easily integrated into and central components to an FYC course. These tools allow students to become conscious of their ways of existing rhetorically and gain some degree of choice, and thus, agency, as they move through future rhetorical situations they encounter in their lives.
I would like to acknowledge the assistance and support I received from my thesis committee, Professors Ning Yu (thesis chair), Dawn Dietrich, Carmen Werder, and Catherine McDonald. Professor McDonald provided me with extensive resources and guidance in genre theory and composition studies in general. Professor Werder advised me as to how I might reign in and focus my unwieldy earlier drafts on a main claim that I could successfully argue in the time and space available to this project. Professor Dietrich introduced me to much of the post-structuralist theory that I incorporated herein, and provided vital feedback on my interpretation of that theory. Above all, I want to acknowledge Professor Yu's guidance throughout the entire project from its beginnings in his seminar on ecocriticism in 2011 to the final phases of revision and the defense. He aided me as I worked to incorporate the various comments that I received from the other committee members, particularly since each committee member provided a very different perspective based on his or her own field of expertise. His assistance and commitment over the duration of the project was invaluable and instrumental in this first phase of my development as an academic.
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Chapter One

First Year Composition (FYC) rests in an uneasy position in the university. At Western Washington University (WWU) this course appears as English 101 and is the only universally mandated course that all students must take (unless they can wave the class for some reason). While most students are compelled to take English 101 (generally during their first year), some confusion surrounds what the course is and what it is for. Currently, a study is being conducted by Carmen Werder at WWU tracing expectations of 101 students and other writing proficiency faculty across the university; for that reason, I will not attempt to address the conceptions or misconceptions about the purpose of English 101. Instead, my goal is to discuss the nature of FYC in a more general way that will help to explain why English 101 is such a vital course for students entering the university landscape and what place the course holds in the university. In short, I argue that FYC is not a *placeless* class that exists outside of discipline. Instead, it is a rhetoric class, and therefore should focus on helping students be better rhetoricians. This means that it should help students become more skilled at entering the rhetorical situations that they encounter in their university careers and their lives.

Much has already been written that demonstrates the value of the kind of meta-cognitive awareness that I am promoting here. Genre-awareness is a major concept of North American genre theory and is unpacked at length in the works of Amy Devitt; Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff; Patrica Linton, Robert Madigan, and Susan Johnson; among many others. I do not seek to significantly change the approach that genre theorists have already promoted at great length. Instead, my goal is to bring genre theory and ecocriticism together. The concepts from ecocriticism that I borrow here stem from works by Lawrence Buell, Dana...
Phillips, and others. By working on this borderland between the two, I argue that the ways in which ecocriticism addresses the question of the environment of the text can help further explain what genre-awareness is, can be, and how it can serve students in FYC.

However, this is simply the short answer, and I do not want to begin with FYC itself, but instead, begin with the foundations of composition in general. I will start by looking at semiotics and the procedures involved in composition, and then I will move into a discussion of the discursive forces that define composition. Additionally, it is vital to focus on the context in which composition occurs. This context refers to landscape, space, and place, which are key concepts of ecocriticism that I will unpack further in this chapter to reveal the link between the representation and the exoteric. The representation is that which the individual constructs to represent what is in his or her mind. The exoteric is the space that is outside of the self. The two are linked in that the representation is a manifestation of that which is inside the individual and acts as a medium between the internal and external.

Whenever students sit down to write they must negotiate between the many forces within the situation that demands a student to write. I will use the term “rhetoric” for any meaning constructed by a rhetor to accomplish something in response to the specific set of exigencies that call it into being. If rhetoric is any sort of constructed meaning, then I will use the term “text” in larger sense to refer to any artifact of a rhetorical action. In other words, the text is the materialization of a rhetorical action. Extending the focus of composition beyond verbal texts addresses the wide variety of rhetorical situations that students will be compelled to enter. I want to take a moment to define “rhetorical situation” since it is a contentious term to some degree. Lloyd Bitzer suggests:
“There are three constituents of any rhetorical situation: the first is the exigence; the second and third are elements of the complex, namely the audience to be constrained in decision and action, and the constraints which influence the rhetor and can be brought to bear upon the audience. (7)

The rhetorical situation includes the exigency, which is the demand that rhetoric be constructed. It includes the audience, or the people whom the rhetor seeks to affect. Also, the rhetorical situation places limitations upon the rhetor. For Bitzer, the rhetorical situation is that which brings rhetoric into being and therefore demands a specific rhetoric be constructed. This means that the rhetorical situation is objective, and it exists \textit{a priori}, calling rhetor into action. Richard E. Vatz responded somewhat heatedly to Bitzer’s claim, arguing that “[n]o situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric with which he chooses to characterize it” (1). In other words, the rhetorical situation does not exist \textit{a priori} to rhetoric, but is rather a construction itself.

The debate, then, stands between the rhetorical situation as being objective calling forth rhetoric from the individual who must enter it, and the rhetorical situation as rhetorical and constructed by the perception of the rhetor. Since the dispute, some scholar’s (Consigny) have attempted to merge the two perspectives since the debate. I wish to follow this line of thought. On one hand, the rhetorical situation is perceived and therefore defined by the individual’s perception, which in turn is discursive and ideological (Discourse defines epistemology), on the other hand, there are forces within the exoteric that exert a very real demand upon the rhetor that cannot be ignored. This middle road is central to my present project. People, if they are conscious of the rhetorical situation, have some agency over it stemming from the choice they have in how to perceive and inhabit it, but at the same time,
they must account for the external forces that are part of the situation as well. In fact, the rhetorical situation could be seen as the zone between the external and the internal forces that struggle to define the rhetoric, as well as the rhetor. Through the first two chapters, I will discuss the ways in which this struggle occurs.

For now, I want to highlight that rhetoric need not be text or even verbal, but it might also be any sort of constructed meaning that attempts to respond to a rhetorical exigency. This means that building a shelter in the rain would be a rhetorical action. In this case, the rain and the individual’s desire to stay dry are the main forces that act upon the individual driving him or her to construct the shelter, which is the text of this rhetorical action. How the individual builds the shelter depends largely on past experiences with building shelters. This is important because much difficulty that students face in FYC can be likened to entering a rainstorm with no past experience or knowledge of building shelters or building shelters that are not acceptable for their audience. Students simply have not had sufficient past experiences in enough situations.

For those comfortable with specific types of situations, many of the forces within the rhetorical situation that influence how texts are produced are highly “naturalized” in the sense that the people generally are not consciously aware of the existence of these forces. Constructing rhetoric involves a number of steps that happen so rapidly, naturally, and continuously that people generally do not take the time to notice the process if the specific mode has been naturalized. This is particularly true for students entering into FYC courses at WWU due to the pressures they face in confronting standardized testing and timed essay exams. Preparation for the kinds of rhetorical situations present in standardized tests forces students to develop shortcuts and compress the process of constructing rhetoric as much as
possible. Almost before they have finished reading the prompt, whether it is a multiple choice question or a text to which they must respond in essay format, students are trained to rush to find the answer or construct a thesis statement. Students under this kind of pressure clearly will not have time to reflect on effective rhetorical responses, thus the process of constructing rhetoric becomes increasingly difficult to see. However, these standardized exams are not the sole cause of the naturalization of rhetoric. People who respond regularly to similar rhetorical situations develop naturalized and unconscious—thus invisible—responses to these demands. For instance, when writing an email to a friend, we might think about what we want to say in terms of the meaning we want to convey, but we generally do not take time to think about how we are saying it or how it responds to the rhetorical exigencies that drive us to respond.

While people generally do not see the process behind the meanings they make, there are moments in which this process becomes visible. An example might be when we attempt, in earnest, to learn a foreign language, or perhaps to a greater extent, when we find ourselves in a rhetorical situation in which we must inhabit that unfamiliar language. In that situation, we do not possess an effective rhetorical identity that we can slip into unconsciously to respond, and so we must attempt to construct the rhetoric consciously. I am not arguing here that second language learning could help FYC (perhaps it could, but more research would be required). Instead, I am suggesting that in these uncomfortable moments we can see the process by which we construct rhetoric.

The composition classroom, and the classroom in general, presents challenges because students have not yet naturalized any of the disciplinarily legitimate ways of responding to the rhetorical situation. When students fail to recognize the unfamiliar forces
and attempt to use pre-existing “naturalized” responses developed in other rhetorical situations, they appear clearly to be non-members of the specific discipline. For example, a student writing a five-paragraph essay, when asked to write a critical inquiry essay, would flag him or herself as a non-member of the discipline that demands a critical inquiry essay. If we are to discuss how to help students compose better, and if we are serious about constructing a valuable FYC course that will help students in their careers, educational or otherwise, then we must begin by looking closely at the forces that the student (or any of us) must negotiate when responding to rhetorical situations. Here, I want to point out that many of the rhetorical situations that students will face will not demand students to “write” in a traditional sense. However, the mode, while important, is only one force within the situation.

Now that I have outlined the rhetorical situation, I want to take some time and unpack the various procedures within the act of constructing rhetoric. Structuralists and post-structuralists (like Saussure, Barthes, and Derrida) have already written at length about the way in which people signify their experience and thoughts. I want to further unpack the different procedures that occur when people construct rhetoric and further open up space between each procedure. This is vital because the difficulty that students face in FYC stems from their inability to effectively construct rhetoric for the situation. This should provide a theoretical framework to support a discussion of pedagogy in the following chapters.

To illustrate the relationship between the individual and the exoteric, I have constructed Figure 1.1, which borrows from images that appear in structuralist and post-structuralist arguments. This figure illustrates the way in which the exoteric passes through the mediums of perception and interpretations to develop the image within the mind of the
individual. Perception includes all sensory information. This perception, which is the physical signals that are sent to the brain by the nervous system, must then be translated into a concept through the procedure of interpretation. The image then might pass back through the semiological systems, which I will discuss shortly, to become a representation within the exoteric. This process is cyclical and is the way by which “self” exists in the exoteric. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, rhetoric exists as a medium through which the individual interacts with the exoteric.

Signifying begins when the individual senses the exoteric. Sensation establishes a bridge between the individual “self” and the surrounding exoteric. For instance, when I open my eyes, a link forms between myself and whatever I see and me. Again, rhetoric begins when people look outside of themselves at exoteric space, or the realm of the other. It is important here to highlight the difference between space and place. Kim Donnehower defined the difference in her keynote address at the Western States Rhetoric and Literacy Conference in 2011: to be place is space that has been inhabited. To explain this further, I suggest that by sensing the exoteric, the individual converts space into place. Space is the uninhabited domain outside the “self” that exists prior to observation. Place, on the other
hand, is occupied *space*. Whenever a person enters a *space*, that individual renders it rhetorically into *place*, which he or she can then inhabit and experience. *Space* might be non-human, like a forest or mountain, or constructed, like a city street or a building. Even a building prior to my observation of it is *space* to me, but once I observe it and inhabit it by forming a mental image that I can understand it becomes *place*.

When people enter a *space*, they begin to perceive it. In fact, perception itself allows people to enter the *space* by establishing a sensory bridge between the *self* and the realm of the *other* eventually rendering that *space* into *place*. These perceptions begin as chemical and electrical sensory inputs, which are distinctly not the exoteric, but rather a code of it. The brain interprets these sensations and the individual unconsciously or consciously imposes some meaning on that representation, producing *place*. To relate this concept to structuralist and post-structuralist terminology, the object in *space* is the *referent*, the objects within *place* are the *signifieds*, and the linguistic units that represent them are the *signifiers*. This rendering is rhetorical because *place* is the meaning that has been constructed out of our perception of *space*. *Place* as rhetoric responds to the rhetorical exigency that stems from the need to contextualize the *self* within an environment that is *other*.

What is important to note is that the *signified* is not, and can never be, the exoteric that it represents, but the *space* and the exoteric do generally remain connected even in some, perhaps distorted, fashion. *Place* can be a shadow, a distortion, or even a precise representation of *space*, but they can never be one in the same. This procedure of rendering *space* into *place*, or conferring meaning on the sensory representation of the exoteric occurs naturally, invisibly, and almost instantaneously. This is relevant to FYC because, as I will discuss at length later, composition is largely a question of inhabiting *places* in the effective
ways with which students are likely unfamiliar. Since students encounter both non-human elements (parts of the “landscape”) and constructed elements (texts) within the space of the exoteric, it is important to recognize the relationship between how the students perceive and interpret both. While perceiving a landscape and perceiving a text are slightly different, there is some commonality in that both landscape and text exist outside of the conscious self and must be rendered by the procedure of perception if an individual is to really inhabit the exoteric by imbuing it with meaning. One major question that must be addressed is: How much of this place is defined by features of the space and how much is defined by the perceiver?

This relationship between the individual, space, and place that I am suggesting is important for FYC is a central issue of ecocriticism, which attempts to contextualize literary texts in space. Or in other words, it attempts to find the relationship between space and the text to help better understand both. I want to borrow from this theoretical field to help discuss the role of space in composition. Dana Phillips, in his book, The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Culture, and Literature in America, suggests that meaning is largely imposed by the perceiver because, as he says, “much of the evidence for what we now call geology and evolution lay scattered about the earth’s surface in plain sight long before anyone was able to see it…which suggests that narratives come before apprehensions and descriptions” (13). In other words, even if space exists a priori, we require narratives, or ways of making meaning, that we impose upon space to make it significant, meaningful, and even visible.

In his argument, Phillips makes a good point. When we read, when we observe, we do impose meaning on the world around us unconsciously and naturally. The two distinct procedures of perception and interpretation merge when people observe the exoteric with
interpretation dominating over perception. This is a good thing. If we had to constantly take
the time and effort to consciously perceive and then interpret sensory inputs, we would,
perhaps, be better observers, but we would not get anything done. The procedure of
perception and interpretation ordinarily occurs as one seamless operation (observation). In
his essay, “How to Recognize a Poem When You See One,” Stanley Fish discusses this in
relation to students in a poetry class cleverly interpreting a list of names on a chalkboard as a
poem (“How to Recognize a Poem When You See One” 1023). The students are capable of
reading the names as a poem, or making meaning in that fashion. These students compress
the interpretation and perception procedures because they are uncritical and unmindful of the
situation (and they trust Fish not to play a trick on them).

It may be natural to compress interpretation and perception into one procedure;
however, for the time being, I want to keep this gap between space and place or, more
precisely, between space and self that fills it with place, between sensory input and the
signified, open because this zone between space and the individual is where observation and
composition occur. Even Fish admits artificially separating these procedures is possible: “I
am not saying that one is never in the position of having to self-consciously figure out what
an utterance means” (598). While we do generally compress observation and interpretation
into one step, by becoming conscious of how we impose meaning on our observations
through interpretation, we can begin to notice the meaning that is directly inspired by the
exoteric and that which comes only from the observer. This kind of awareness will become
central to my argument later, but for the moment I want to continue following this line of
inquiry.
While imposing meaning on the exoteric through our process of interpretation is an important thing to be aware of, the exoteric imposes meaning upon us, as well. Gillian Rose discusses this in her chapter on “Audience Studies” in *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, when she suggests that when the audience views a visual object “they are momentarily shaped by the visual object as they look at it. This suggests that the significance of objects is not entirely determined by the meanings people place upon them” (286). There seems to be an exchange between the conscious self and the exoteric during perception. How exactly this occurs will become clearer when I discuss genre theory in the next chapter, but in basic terms, interpretations require something to interpret. In this way, the perceived thing that a person interprets does, to a certain extent, guide how that interpretation takes place, and as we’ll see, interpretation is ontological (one must *be* a certain way to see a certain way); therefore, the perceived thing itself defines the individual insofar as it guides the individual’s interpretation. In other words, the viewer shapes the *space* by rendering it into *place*, but at the same time, the *space* limits and modifies the ways in which the viewer renders it. This suggests that, in some way, *space*—specifically the encounter with *space*—modifies the individuals that perceive it. This has significant implications because it suggests that *space* plays a critical part in how individuals grow through the educational experience. For FYC, this suggests that students enter the course with certain identities that allow them to render *space* in certain ways, but the course then molds their identities by forcing students to encounter different *spaces* associated with “university writing.” This implies that students do not simply learn new information, but they also gain new rhetorical identities.
To further explain how perception and composition are ontological, we must turn to the concept of Discourse, which I have been using somewhat loosely until now. James Paul Gee, in his book *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*, provides a definition that I shall borrow here: “I use the term ‘Discourse,’ with a capital ‘D,’ for ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity” (29). In relation to perception, Discourse defines the way in which one can perceive and stems from (and, at the same time, defines) the community to which the perceiver belongs. In other words, it is not exactly the individual that interprets space rendering it into place, but rather the Discourse working through the individual imposes meaning on space. This falls in line with Fish’s argument that meaning is not intrinsic to the exoteric, but is imposed by the social group in which the perceiver is imbedded. At the same time, Discourse itself is shaped by place. As Barbara Johnstone writes in her book, *Discourse Analysis*: “Discourse is shaped by the world, and discourse shapes the world” (9). Johnstone uses this recursive structure to define Discourse as both shaping and being shaped by the world to suggest that the borders between Discourse and “reality” are not clearly defined. Discourse shapes place as it defines perception, but at the same time, since space affects the community that resides within it, and since the community defines Discourse, then space, by affecting the community, shapes the Discourse.

I want to continue to follow this concept of Discourse (though I will find complications to it later) because it provides a foundation for a discussion of genre. Sarah Mills, in her book, *Discourse*, explains how Discourse defines perceptions by linking Discourse to epistemology. Specifically, she suggests that the society’s “episteme consists of
the sum total of all the discursive structures which come about as a result of the interaction of the range of discourses circulating and authorizing at the particular time” (57). In other words, our ways of knowing the world stem from the interaction between all of the legitimized ways of defining the world as defined by the various discourses that exist within society at large. Each individual’s way of knowing the world, and therefore his or her perception, is defined by the various discourses that he or she inhabits. For instance, when I go for a hike in the forest and I observe the trees, my interpretation of what I observe is colored by the Discourses I inhabit. When I observe a tree, my observation is colored by knowledge of how many board feet that tree might contain, by the knowledge that it is part of a second generation forest that has been turned into a less disease resistant mono-crop, and by my knowledge of how many years that tree has stood, etc. In a sense, my interpretation may be multifaceted and fragmented by what sort of discursive meaning I might impose on that forest. At the same time, I can consciously suppress my interpretation and attempt to simply observe the forest. By delaying the interpretation, it seems possible to refine the observation of the exoteric and create a less distorted representation, or at least create a variety of distorted observations that provide a more holistic and complex representation. For instance, I could see the forest as lumber and as an unfortunate mono-crop simultaneously. This allows me to see both discursive meanings giving me a larger, more multifaceted perception of the referent.

Even at this point, words are generally not involved, which might beg the question how does this relate to FYC? FYC demands students to enter an unfamiliar space, both physically and mentally, so a developing sense of place seems very useful even before the students begin to write. However, after this complicated and automatic procedure of
constructing *place* that people can use, which involves taking something from the exoteric and bringing it into the “self,” the individual might be inclined to reverse the process and put something back into the exoteric. In fact, one of the main purposes of FYC, as a composition or writing class, requires the students to construct some sort of text that becomes part of the exoteric. Simply put, we ask students to write papers. I will now spend some time unpacking the second set of procedures in which the rhetor responds to the exigencies of the rhetorical situation by constructing a text in the exoteric. I recognize that this separation that I’m making between observation and composition is somewhat inaccurate and neglects the fact Johnstone points out about the recursive nature of composition in which the rhetorical situation and the rhetoric simultaneously define one another and overlap. However, for now I will follow this division between observation and composition, in full knowledge that it is an artificial division, so as to better investigate the individual “moves.”

Composing involves combining specific features that make up the *place*, or the *signified*, with a *signifier*—a manifest symbol that represents, or stands for, the *signified*. This combination of *signified* and *signifier* becomes a *sign*, or a unit of rhetoric. I want to point out that the *signifier*, though frequently thought of as a word, may also be non-verbal like a gesture or an image. Roland Barthes, in *Mythologies*, provides a useful and frequently reproduced diagram, included as Figure 1.2, which illustrates how this *signifying* works. It is important to note that *signifying*
occurs in a chain of two semiological systems. The first is language, which fixes signifiers to signifieds. The second is myth, which fixes signs—the products of the first system—with culturally legitimated meaning.

Barthes suggests that to produce a text the signified must be rendered through these two semiological systems. The first system is that of language. The signified combines with the appropriate linguistic unit depending on the language use of the Discourse. For instance, the signified that becomes “tree” for Discourses that use English then becomes “arbre” for those that use French. Of course, post-structuralists have pointed out that the relationship between “tree” and the signified it represents is purely arbitrary and frequently slips into a chain of différance in which the relationship is infinitely deferred. Derrida argues that the structure that links the signifier with the signified provides a center whose “[function is] not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure—one cannot conceive of an unorganized structure—but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the freeplay of the structure” (495). In other words, the structure of language limits the variety of signifiers that can represent any one particular signified. For instance, “tree” can stand for a variety of different plants, or for the Cross, etc., but it cannot stand for the signified that matches the signifier: “fish.” Structure exists to limit potential freeplay that would allow “tree” to stand for the referent of “fish,” and thankfully, we can, within a number of Discourses, use the sign, “tree,” to stand for a specific signified.

While this freeplay is a challenge to objective language use, the deconstructive even, when the structure begins to fall apart as the ordering system of the structure begins to create paradoxes and signs with mutually exclusive significations, can help make the structures that stabilize language visible thereby revealing the Discourses that define the construction of
place and composition of texts in a given situation. The resulting paradox sparks cognitive dissonance in those experiencing the deconstructive event. This cognitive dissonance forces the signifying process to become denaturalized as the structure that provided that naturalization falls apart. It is in this moment of structural collapse when the “structurality of structure” (ibid) reveals itself and its artificiality. 7 Even within a stable structure, a certain degree of freeplay occurs. For instance, “Tree” could signify both a Douglas fir and a Palm depending on whether the signifying occurs in Washington or Hawaii.

This freeplay within the first-order semiological system is stabilized by what Barthes calls “myth.” For Barthes, “le mythe est un système particulier en ceci qu’il s’édifie à partir d’une chaîne sémiologique qui exite avant lui: c’est un système sémiologique second” (199).8 In other words, myth operates on top of the first-order semiological system from the moment it is constructed and imposes meaning upon the signs of that first-order system. To return to the sign, “tree,” myth is that which allows “tree” to stand for a specific type of tree in a specific Discourse. Mythology, since it is based on a real human history, allows the exoteric to shape the Discourse. For instance, in the Northwest, we generally imagine some variety of evergreen, a pine or fir, when we use the word “tree” because that type of tree is dominant in the space of the Northwest. I would argue that this context in which a Discourse exists over the course of its development creates a specific mythology which further limits the freeplay that continues to occur even after language fixes signified with signifier. This is particularly true because space changes little compared to the transience of human experience. In this way, space shapes Discourse, the first part of Johstone’s recursive description.

The second part occurs then when the individual views and writes about the world. Discourse, as an episteme, defines the ways that its members can construct place. So, it
might be more accurate to suggest that Discourse is shaped by *space* in the sense that it stems from the history of a human social network within a specific exoteric environment, and Discourse shapes *place* by guiding interpretation, the first order semiological system, and the second order semiological system. This linkage between Discourse and the environment is important because when we compose, or ask our students to compose, we negotiate between the two through the signifying procedures. Students struggle, perhaps, because they are not imbedded in the recursive zone between Discourses and *space* at the university, just as a native Bellinghamster would need to renegotiate their perception of a tree when he or she visits Hawaii.

Of course, the rhetoric produced by this signifying process can become detached from the exoteric representing itself rather than the exoteric that it seems to represent. Jean Baudrillard suggests this in “from *The Precession of Simulacra*” when he discusses the difference between two different modes of signification, one that represents a false absence, and the other that represents a false presence. Baudrillard writes, “[t]o dissimulate is to feign not to have what one has. To simulate is to feign to have what one hasn’t. One implies a presence, the other an absence” (1937). Dissimulation involves a conscious effort of hiding, whereas simulation is more akin to an act of bluffing. If we think about this in terms of the rendering of *space* first into *place*, then into language, dissimulation would be language that consciously hides its connection both to *place* and to *space*. An example of this dissimulation might be Magritte’s painting of the pipe. It seems to represent the pipe, but the subtext, “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe,*” highlights the fact that it is not, in fact, a pipe at all. In this way, the dissimulation highlights the fact that it is not the exoteric object. The key with dissimulation is that the dissimulator remains conscious of the absence that he or she creates and that which
the absence masks. Simulation would be language that hides the fact that it is *not place* or *space*. Simulations pretend that they are the exoteric objects, thereby hiding the difference.

Baudrillard suggests that there is a danger in simulation because “it threatens the difference between ‘true’ and ‘false,’ between ‘real’ and ‘imaginary’” (1937). With dissimulation, it is always clear that the dissimulation is not “real” because it is a conscious obfuscation of the “real.” Whereas, simulation, since it presents itself as a “real,” can blur the distinction between what is “real” and what is “simulated.” This is just what Baudrillard suggests has happened through history. The simulacrum follows the sequence: “—it is the reflection of a basic reality / —it masks and perverts a basic reality / —it masks the absence of a basic reality / —it bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum” (1939). In the first step of the “precession,” the text stands as a “true” representation of the exoteric. This suggests that there is little distortion between observation and text. In this stage, the text is like a clean mirror. In the next step, the text still reflects the exoteric, but it does so in a distorted way, like an image in a funhouse mirror. Once the precession passes this point of simulation, the text begins to become disconnected from the exoteric. In these cases the text either attempts to hide the fact that it is not the exoteric or finally it becomes completely detached from any referent and becomes the “real.” Baudrillard’s argument presents serious challenges, especially if we follow the precession to its inevitable conclusion because there we arrive at a state of nihilism in which the “real” becomes nothing more than simulacra. While this may occur in some cases, Disneyland or Las Vegas for instance, we generally recognize that these simulations are not real, and if we lose sight of this then it takes very little (a tsunami, for instance) to allow the exoteric to rupture the simulation that takes its place. However, it is a serious concern for ecocritics
when the text that we experience as real becomes completely detached from anything in
space.

Similarly for scholars in composition studies, I would suggest that even when a text
becomes its own simulacrum, it is still the product of an individual responding to a rhetorical
situation, and part of that rhetorical situation, and one key site of rhetorical exigency, is the
space that the rhetor must inhabit. This suggests that instead of being unmoored from space
entirely, the simulacrum represents an ignored or forgotten space that has become invisible.
For example, Disneyland may be a simulacrum in the sense that it is detached entirely from
reality, but since it is a representation, it is defined by Discourse, which is in turn defined by
the exoteric “real.” Therefore, even the simulacrum is connected through Discourse to the
space in which it operates. That connection simply becomes forgotten. While space is still
part of the rhetorical situation that produces the simulacrum, it is hidden, making it difficult
for people unfamiliar with that type of rhetorical situation and with that Discourse to respond
to it. By hiding the space of the rhetorical situation, a text that is its own simulacrum appears
to condense out of thin air allowing the reader to forget the situation that called it into being.
This is a problem for FYC students because one of our goals is to help them see and figure
out how to respond consciously to the sorts of situations that they will encounter in the
university. Ecocriticism provides excellent insight into this problem of representation that
Baudrillard highlights, and it provides some approaches to re-anchor the text to its place and
space. I will spend the remainder of this chapter moving through some theories from
ecocriticism that address this problem before moving into the next chapter in which I will
look more closely at the ways in which rhetors inhabit the rhetorical situation.
Dana Phillips, a prominent ecocritic and theorist, discusses this problem of representation, and suggests that even for texts that have become their own simulacrum, “[c]onfusing actual and fictional trees, or trying to conflate them (however rhetorically or provisionally), would seem to be a primitive error” (10). This is true; if we are conscious of the relationship between the textual and exoteric then it is easy to avoid conflating the two or letting the representation become a pure simulacrum. However, this error might not be so primitive, and Phillips may be underestimating the danger. Since people are generally unconscious of their language use, it is fairly easy to forget that the language is not the exoteric. This negligence allows people to forget the Discourse and its ideologies that shape the response to the rhetorical situation. Phillips tells us that it is important, especially for the ecocritic who is concerned with the relationship between the textual and the exoteric, to remain conscious of the difference between the two. He argues, “to approach either text or world without a sense of this difference is to attempt to view through the looking glass, and we all know what you are going to see when you attempt this view” (11). If we forget that both texts, and place in general, are defined by Discourse, then we risk seeing them as the exoteric itself. When this occurs, the text becomes its own pure simulacrum detached from the “real.” Then we become like Fish’s students, imposing meaning that the exoteric does not necessarily call forth. This is a serious problem if we think of rhetoric as a way of bridging the gap between the conscious mind and the exoteric, because it causes the individual to become isolated in his or her own mind, enclosed in a veil of rhetoric. It seems, then, that it might be valuable for FYC to follow in the footsteps of ecocriticism and address this issue of simulation by encouraging our students to become more aware of the ways in which they
construct their rhetoric. In the following chapter, I will discuss exactly how this awareness might be achieved in FYC, but I want to stay with the theory of ecocriticism for the moment.

Ecocritics and nature writers provide many suggestions on how to bring the text back into contact with *place* and bringing that view of *place* back into contact with *space*. This reconnecting relies largely on rhetorical awareness, or an awareness of how each layer of mediation distorts and represents the previous layer. Since their focus is on *place* and its representation of *space*, ecocritics have generally focused on nature writing from writers like Henry David Thoreau, Annie Dillard, Barry Lopez, Edward Abbey, etc. In his book, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*, Lawrence Buell suggests that their “claims of realism merit reviving not in negation of these myths but in counterpoise, so as to enable one to reimagine textual representations as having a dual accountability to matter and to discursive matter” (92). This suggests that realism—since it is clearly recognizes the existence of the exoteric (if it does nothing else)—allows those who become part of the rhetorical situation (readers and rhetors) to remember that an exoteric exists behind the text and that the writing occurred in relation to real *space*. This is not to say that realism ought to be the only mode in which one writes. Instead, we must remain aware of the fact that the exoteric exists. We must remember that representations (re)present the exoteric. We must see how exactly they represent the exoteric, and how they remain accountable to both the discourse with its mythology and to the exoteric itself. Buell calls this “dual accountability” and argues that “[representation] must finally satisfy the mind and the ethological facts” (93). In other words, a text must both fit with the discursive mythologies that define what meanings *can be made* and with careful observations of the exoteric.
Later in the book, Buell explains that to improve observation and achieve this “dual accountability,” individuals must observe in more than one mode, or understand the world through more than one epistemology. This is central to my own argument, so I will quote Buell at length:

All nonfictions I have discussed operate, in different degrees, with due respect for the way experiential place-sense can connect up with actual environments but also with respect for its perceptual limits; all recognize in map knowledge both a potential standard against which to measure the vagaries of place-sense and an alternative form of perceiving valid only insofar as it has power to connect one with lived reality or to impress itself on the environment so as to create the environment in its own image. In the interplay of map knowledge and place-sense, then, environmental writing affirms the place, be they cartographic or intuitive; but at the same time it activates and validates (within limits) both ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ modes of knowing that otherness. In the interplay of these alternatives the possibility both of heightened consciousness of place-sense and of self-critical resistance to sleepily centripetal place-embeddedness is quickened. (278)

What Buell is doing here helps us address the dangers of representations becoming their own pure simulacra detached from the exoteric. While Buell focuses specifically on non-fiction, this could be extended to all works that must balance between what he calls “place-sense” and “map knowledge.” Map knowledge is the more direct of the two and relies on precise observation of the exoteric. This epistemology relies on observational tools that attempt to limit the effects of the observer’s own subjectivity. By using methods like standardized
measurement, cataloging, various composition modes (journaling, drawing, etc), and multiple
repeated observations, our map knowledge approaches (but will never achieve) complete
objectivity. An empirical mode of observation also helps account for the distortion of the
representation caused by mythology. This ability to observe evidence prior to interpreting it
discursively allows the individual’s perception to be limited most significantly by his or her
senses. Being able to look “objectively” is a valuable skill because it allows for claims to rise
in direct response to the evidence that exists in the exoteric, and it provides the groundwork
for individuals to challenge the dominant mythologies. It is this skill of careful, sustained
observation that is frequently lost or ignored in an educational environment defined by
standardized testing because students are forced into interpreting and responding to main
ideas as rapidly as possible. This seems to suggest that as students lose their ability to
observe, they will also lose their ability to rationally resist the dominant mythologies.

“Place-sense” is more ephemeral and refers to the way of knowing through intuition.
Since the discourses at the university nominally privilege reason over intuition as an
epistemology, intuition frequently does not appear as a legitimated action in many classes.
Place-sense relies on an individual’s ability to sense the character of the exoteric rather than
approach it empirically. While there is certainly some value in this approach, intuition is not
popular in a number of disciplines at the university. This sense of the real is perhaps what
Baudrillard is referring to in *The Spirit of Terrorism* as the super-added layer of terror that is
added to the image as a *frission*—or the sensation of hairs standing up on the back of one’s
neck—of the “real.” It is perhaps intuition that provides the *frission* that follows the
realization that there is an exoteric somewhere up the chain of signification from the text.
In a way, “place-sense” acts as a sort of extrasensory perception that reaches beyond the limits of interpretation, observation, and the senses. However, this sort of intuitive mode of reading, both of texts and the exoteric, benefits from being balanced by a more rational and empirical approach to observation. While intuition might provide a less mediated glimpse of the exoteric, or space that exists just beyond our grasp, it only provides a glimpse. Intuition allows us to see the shadow of the space that is a present-absence in the text.

Empirical observation, while using information from sensory inputs, still only has access with representations of the exoteric. Therefore, it must rely on repeatability and standardization. By developing a large enough sample size, one can approach objectivity. Intuition and observation then can be combined, and by balancing between the two, we can arrive at representations that are “good enough” to respond to the rhetorical situations in a manner that accounts for the real exigencies therein—and maybe “good enough” is all we really need. After all, everyday construction of rhetoric is a naturalized process that, for the most part, occurs invisibly and unconsciously. This naturalization is essential if rhetoric is to be a useful tool that allows the conscious mind to connect with its context. It seems that to attempt to capture the exoteric exactly in rhetoric, or to pursue equivalence between place and space, is to be like a certain whaler.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to bring the threads of semiotics, Discourse theory, and ecocriticism together in relation to the insights they provide on the potential place of FYC. Within a rhetorical situation, the individual begins by observing something of the exoteric. This exoteric can be either a material object or an abstract idea. The key is that this exoteric does not exist in the rhetor’s conscious mind a priori. Sensory perception codes the exoteric into a series of electrical and chemical impulses that become an image in the
conscious mind; semiotics calls this image the signified. The next step, which if the rhetor fails to observe self-consciously becomes conflated with observation, is interpretation. Interpretation fixes non-linguistic meaning to the signified. These first two procedures allow the rhetor to inhabit the exoteric, converting space into place. By balancing map-knowledge and place-sense the rhetor can begin to account for the distortion that occurs in observation, and therefore more attention to observation might be a valuable focus for FYC courses that ask students to begin to inhabit unfamiliar rhetorical situations. Observation—and to an even greater extent, interpretation—is shaped by Discourse, which is both ontological and epistemological. This means that interpretation depends more on the discursive ways of seeing than on the observed space itself. Much distortion can occur in this process if interpretation imposes meaning without self-consciously reflecting on the validity of this meaning in relation to the observational information, as Stanley Fish’s poetry students illustrate. While everyday activity does not require us to be particularly self-conscious and this procedure of observation/interpretation occurs invisibly, it is important for academics, seeking a better understanding of the exoteric and our place therein, to heighten our awareness of both our interpretive procedure, and by doing so, the exoteric. FYC provides students with an early chance to begin heightening this awareness.

In the next chapter, I will look more closely at the space and place of the rhetorical situation through the lens of genre theory. This will provide a more solid framework to discuss how students might develop the kinds of awareness that will help them find their way in unfamiliar rhetorical situations and develop map-knowledge and place sense. Rhetorical awareness, map-knowledge, and place sense are all necessary to do the kinds of academic
work that students will encounter in the university that will ask them to try to explain in some way our existence within *place* and within *space*.
Chapter Two

In the previous chapter, I discussed the procedures involved in constructing rhetoric, which acts as a medium by which the “self” can access the exoteric or that which is not “self.” Discourse, which is the ontology, epistemology, and language of a particular social network, shapes the procedures of constructing rhetoric and thus shapes the rhetoric itself. While analyzing Discourse provides considerable insight into the construction of rhetoric, Discourse remains a somewhat abstract concept, making it difficult to discuss specific rhetorical situations and the “real” forces that converge therein. Any one Discourse includes ontology, epistemology, and rhetoric and therefore contains many different ways of being, ways of knowing, and ways of using language. This is too abstract and broad to be a good foundation upon which to build a solid pedagogy. Further, since Discourse, while influenced by space, is a social construct and does not do much to help develop map-knowledge and place-sense. Genre theory, which I will discuss in this chapter, helps focus the abstract features of Discourse into specific, concrete social actions that shape the way individuals use language.

Genre is not a new concept in the study of rhetoric, but in recent decades, the concept of genre has changed dramatically. The more familiar definition views genres as different types of text. For instance, we are familiar with poetry, prose, and drama as genres. Likewise we could think, more specifically, of the genre of book review or essay or even email. These definitions of genre attempt to categorize the texts themselves, but they do very little to discuss the rhetorical situation that called the texts into being and how the rhetor negotiated the various forces that grapple to define the construction of rhetoric. I argue that ignoring the context that caused texts to come into being hinders our ability to teach students about those
situations. Cultural studies and its precursors helped bring this limitation to the forefront as they concerned themselves with texts, but more importantly with the production of texts. With the advent of cultural studies, no longer could a text be seen as a stable container of meaning, but the result of ideological and discursive struggle over who gets to control the rhetor’s identity, and thus, the text, since the two are directly connected. This shift (reflecting changes in the Discourse of these scholars) in what scholars find interesting about texts played a role in how genre has been and is being redefined. In one of the foundational texts on genre studies and its theoretical, rhetorical, and pedagogical implications, *Writing Genres*, Amy J. Devitt points out the prevalent argument “that genre should be redefined rhetorically according to the people who participate in genres and make the forms meaningful, a shift from genre as defined by literary critics or rhetoricians to genre as defined by its users” (3). In other words, genre theory seeks to shift the view of genre away from the artificial categories into which scholars have grouped types of texts to the people who make these genres.

The problem that Devitt sees with “treating genre as form and text type [is that it] requires binding genre to an emphasis on writing as a product, without effect on the processes of writing or, worse yet, inhabiting those processes” (5). An emphasis solely on the textual artifact produced by a rhetor inhabiting the rhetorical situation within a specific genre allows the analyst to ignore the procedures that caused those artifacts to come into being. Carolyn Miller provides another useful definition of genre that again allows genre to define not type of text but the activity. In her essay, “Genre as Social Action,” Miller suggests that we “understand genre as typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (159). In other words, genres are things that people do repeatedly and normally in response to specific
and repeating rhetorical situations. Now genres are “doing-being-becoming” combinations that become normalized within a specific social network.

Important in this (re)appropriation of the term “genre” as human, instead of textual, is the view that genre is a social action or way of being, as Paul Heilker explains in his essay, “On Genres as Ways of Being.” He explains that genres are “ways of being, ways of emerging into the world” (19). If our existence in the exoteric is rhetorical in the sense that the connection between the self and the other is mediated by rhetoric, and we must negotiate between the self and the exoteric to construct this rhetoric—whether it be a gesture, set of actions, or a more traditional material text, and even those ideas themselves are rhetorical constructions—then Heilker’s definition suggests that genre shapes the way in which we construct the rhetoric that signifies that which is in our consciousnesses. Thus, when considered in conjunction with ecocriticism, genre is the way we inhabit space. Or rather, we inhabit space by inhabiting a genre. For example, one quarter I both taught and attended class in the same room. In both cases, space remained constant, but the ways I inhabited that space were very different. Within the teacher genre, I could say, think, and respond in different ways than within the graduate student genre. I had to negotiate these different genres to determine how exactly I needed to inhabit them in any given moment. This suggests that discourse was not forcing me; instead, I retained a certain degree of agency by being able to choose. My map-knowledge and place-sense helped me in this negotiation. Since genre theory helps us look at specific rhetorical situations, which then we must negotiate, I find it useful to bring together, but not conflate, ecocriticism with genre theory. This merging is also useful for students in FYC who have little or no experience in the rhetorical situations present in the space of the university.
Since I have already built up the concepts of map-knowledge and place sense in chapter one, I want to work through genre theory here by rapidly reviewing Devitt’s book, *Writing Genres*, as an overview to the theory so that I have a solid foundation upon which I can merge the two later on. Early in the book, Devitt discusses the relationship between genres and the social settings that they shape and from which they arise. In doing so, she seeks to complicate the idea of Discourse community. She questions this concept because it “privileges discourse above other group activities, motives, and purposes; and it disguises the social collectivity that shapes the very nature of the group and of its discourse (and its genres)” (39). In other words, it places Discourse before the group and allows it to define the group. This is problematic because if Discourse defines the group without the dialectic operation of Discourse defining place, and space defining Discourse, then one can ignore the internal collaboration that occurs within the group and the interaction with the exoteric that causes the group to develop its discursive identity. Furthermore, since Discourse is defined by ideologies, we can focus entirely on the ideological roots of Discourse, ignoring the context that brought that Discourse and ideology into being. If we do this instead of acknowledging the dialectic between idea and space, then we risk allowing Discourse to become disconnected from the physical world like Baudrillard’s simulacra. Genre helps anchor the Discourse to the group, and more specifically, to the group’s response to the rhetorical situations that form as individuals are compelled to exist in the exoteric in which the group resides. This is critical if we are at all interested, as I suggest we should be, in map-knowledge and place-sense.

While genres, in the moment in which they fill the rhetorical situation might seem fixed or regular, it is important to remember that they flex and change constantly. By looking
at how various genres interact with one another within a specific context, Devitt demonstrates the ways genres change and develop, while simultaneously grouping people into semi-discrete social networks, suggesting that history and genre are linked in a similar way that Barthes suggests myth links to the historical real. A major question arises when we suggest that genres are historically defined and return some degree of agency to the individual, specifically “aren’t they still the givens that constrain creativity?” (Devitt 137). In other words, if genres are historically founded ontologies, how can one hope to have individual volition? Of course, genre can define our rhetorical existence in the world, but genres can never force us to inhabit them. In this way, Devitt suggests that while genres define social actions—or more accurately: genres are social actions and identities—people always have the choice whether to inhabit them or not. I would take this a step further and suggest that people also have some limited choice among many potential genres to inhabit; the key is developing the sense to know which ones. Many theorists (Devitt, Bawarshi, and to a certain extent Wardle) suggest that a better understanding of genre theory, or genre awareness, will allow students to better choose which genres to inhabit for which rhetorical situation (and I would tend to agree). This choice allows for a sort of individual creativity.

It will be useful now to solidify this concept of genre a bit by looking at an example Catherine McDonald provides in her dissertation, *The Question of Transferability: What Students Take Away from Writing Instruction*. She describes the genre of ordering food at a restaurant. This genre produces a text: the order. I think it is important to remember that the order is not the genre but an artifact of the rhetor inhabiting a genre. To inhabit this genre we know that we must first read and properly interpret the menu, then we must remain seated while ordering and not stand on our chairs, and it is better if we use a polite tone when asking
the server any questions and finally placing our order. It is important to point out that during this specific social interaction some genre conventions are violable: we could perhaps order off menu, or we could be rude to the server (although this might result, as my thesis chair points out, in their spitting on our burger), but other genre conventions are simply inviolable; we could not stand up on our chair and shout “gimme some grub!” If we violated that genre convention, we would likely be asked to sit down or leave.

Genre defined as a social action works well; however, I suggest that a problem arises when we think of a typified response to a recurring situation because that implies that genres are, to a certain degree, standardized and that rhetorical situations recur. This is simply not the case. Each rhetorical situation is unique. There may be similarities with other situations, but they are certainly not standardized. For example, any specific “restaurant order” genre occurs only once: the moment I order my food. However, I might activate similar genres in the future when I return to that restaurant or visit others. I say “similar” and I want to emphasize that I do not mean “the same.” Similarities between these unique but related genres develop patterns that collect in social networks’ interactions with similar rhetorical situations. I will likely always inhabit the various “restaurant order” genres in similar ways based on my social network and its history with restaurants. However, I want to emphasize the point that these genres are never truly typified or recurring.

It is easy to understand the rationale behind the concept of recurring situations because people within a social network share similar antecedent genres, having interacted with similar exoteric spaces. Since genres stem from a combination of these shared similar antecedent genres and similar, somewhat stable, exoteric spaces, members of the social network to respond to new rhetorical situations in similar ways. In his essay, “The Genre
Function,” which responds to Foucault’s “author-function,” Anis Bawarshi explains that since genres define how we respond to particular rhetorical situations, genres “are both functional and epistemological” (340). This means that genres define what we do, and they also define how we know the situation. This implies that genre is involved in both interpretation of the exoteric and rhetorical construction of the signified. This means that genre also affects our map-knowledge and place-sense, which are critical to our understanding of the rhetorical situation. Devitt points out that this relationship between genre and situation is highly flexible: “people construct genre through situation and situation through genre; their relationship is reciprocal and dynamic” (21). Genre relates to Discourse in that genres are the specific ways of knowing, being, using language, etc. that make up a Discourse. This theory of genre helps explain how exactly space shapes Discourse. Since these recurring rhetorical responses exist in a specific space, causing space to be rendered into place in a specific way based on the rhetorical demands (the genre of “ordering food” did not develop in the context of the home, and one would not inhabit it at home with his partner, or if one did, he would be sleeping on the couch), and this place affects the ways in which the rhetor can construct rhetoric. We recognize the signified of place as the appropriate context for certain genres but not for others. This ability to recognize explains why I suggest that this borderland between ecocriticism and genre theory, in which the focus rests upon space, place, genre, and the individual, is so important.

I want to look closer at the genre, because while it is an ontology and epistemology, these are still abstract concepts that do not remain sufficiently anchored to the physical world. Devitt helps refine the concept of genre when she “[suggests] that genre be seen not as a response to recurring situation but as a nexus between and individual’s actions and a
socially defined context” (31). In other words, genre is not a fixed way of reacting to the exigency placed upon the individual in the rhetorical situation, but the flashpoint at which the individual negotiates the demands placed upon him through the various procedures of signifying. This definition is useful because it provides further agency to the individual. Instead of needing to be entirely defined by the Discourse (implying that the Discourse invisibly controls the individual), an individual may consciously choose how to “become” in the rhetorical situations. I would argue, then, that this view of genre as a nexus also suggests that the job of composition instructors is largely to help students figure out how to become conscious of this generic signifying, ask the right kinds of questions to become aware of all the forces at work within the rhetorical situations, and to make suitable choices as they inhabit a specific genre. A major part of this involves helping students develop a sense of the relationship between space, place, and genre. Having a sense of their place within the rhetorical situation helps students attain more control and choice over their response. This choice provides them with a greater agency, as Devitt suggests:

“Since people use many genres, people can participate in multiple contexts just as they do multiple activity systems, experiencing the similarities, the contradictions, and the double binds as they go. The layers of contexts—of situation, culture, and other genres—create other places for such double binds and concurrence to occur.” (29)

In other words, rhetorical situations do not limit people to only one generic response based on the Discourse and rhetorical situation in which they are embedded. One response implies that each individual would observe, interpret, signify, and materialize in one fashion. Clearly, while we do see much conformity in social networks, a unified response does not
happen. If we look closely at McDonald’s example above, while on the surface the genre of ordering at a restaurant seems unified, there are many choices that each individual might make and those choices depend largely on how the individual negotiates the rhetorical situation based on the various genres with which that individual is familiar. The concept of genre as nexus provides the power of choice to the individual, and that choice grants him or her agency. Agency is valuable to FYC because it allows the course to, instead of forcing students to be assimilated by some imaginary ideal text that exists in the abstract “academic Discourse,” focus on developing students control over this choice and ability to capitalize on this agency.

To explore the agency and choice provided by genre theory, I want to extend Devitt’s concept of genre as nexus and build upon it because I suggest that there are several different moments associated with this nexus. Before a rhetor inhabits a specific genre and before the rhetorical situation opens up there are various potential energies (forces or exigencies) that are inactive. These energies exist as a sort of latent matrix, which includes the physical space, the place, the texts, the people, the institutional features, everything in the exoteric realm beyond the confines of the rhetor. This matrix is mirrored by a second latent matrix that exists within the rhetor and contains everything the rhetor brings with him or her, including antecedent genres, ideologies, and languages. These latent matrices include everything that could potentially exert an exigency within the rhetorical situation and its audience and constraints. Between the two latent matrices many potential genres exist that do not become activated because insufficient exigency exists to call an active genre into being. Figure 2.1 shows the rhetorical situation prior to the activation of a specific genre. In this gap, a reaction occurs when the rhetor necessarily brings the external and internal latent
matrix into contact by inhabiting space.\textsuperscript{11} When a particular reaction occurs between all of the forces in the latent matrix, a rhetorical situation opens up as a void upon one of these potential genres. This void not only allows the rhetor to inhabit space, but it undeniably demands that the rhetor inhabit that space by linking the forces from the two latent matrices into a nexus or genre, to borrow from Devitt. The rhetor’s existence brings the forces in the latent matrices together temporarily allowing a particular potential genre to activate as illustrated by Figure 2.2. As this activated genre fills the void of the rhetorical situation, the rhetor emerges into being by inhabiting that genre. This entire situation is highly fluid as the various forces internal to the rhetor and within the exoteric are in flux and highly variable due to movement through space and time. However, similar genres seem to occur. Since the latent matrices remain relatively stable within social settings, rhetors end up activating similar genres based on the reaction between their culture and the exoteric giving the illusion of recurring social actions. These activated genres may, then, bring forth a textual artifact.
To discuss the role of the text further, I want to look to what Bawarshi and Reiff write in *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory, Research, and Pedagogy*, linking genre with Blanchot’s discussion of literature: “[i]n Blanchot’s formulation, literature becomes a transcendental domain that exists outside of or beyond genre’s ability to classify, clarify, or structure texts…Texts do not belong to a genre, as in a taxonomic relation; texts participate in genre, or more accurately, several genres at once” (21). The reference to phenomenology is particularly useful because it allows for us to look at text beyond just an artifact of an activated genre. It is, in fact, an artifact of the nexus in which the rhetor brings various antecedent genres that he or she possesses together to interact with the exoteric. Texts connect the “self” with space because they contain both. The text is obviously part of the exoteric because of its materiality. In a traditional sense, it is made out of paper and ink, and even digital or virtual texts have a materiality in the sense that they are bits on a computer hard drive that then become rendered as pixels on a screen. The text is also part of the consciousness because it renders the meaning that exists abstractly within the rhetor’s mind.
By existing in both the exoteric as a material object and within the consciousness as meaning, the text becomes a sort of portal between the consciousness of the rhetor and the exoteric. It allows the consciousness of the rhetor to enter into the exoteric and affect it. For instance, as a text, Disneyland, with its enormous parking lots and simulated environment, changes the exoteric which it fills. Through text, the human mind changes the exoteric, remaking it in the image of the mind. Likewise, the space itself changes the consciousness by forcing the consciousness to account for the real physical limitations imposed by space.

Once the text has been produced physically, it also acts as a portal for the reader. When the reader activates the text through the act of reading, it becomes a portal allowing the materiality and meaning of the text to enter into the mind of the reader. The active, living text creates chains of signification that link the consciousness of the reader with the exoteric and the consciousness of the rhetor. For example, when I read Desert Solitaire, by Edward Abbey, I am able to decode the linguistic signs, understand a meaning, and gain access both to Abbey’s mind, the meaning he made out of the time he spent in the camper in Arches National Park, and indirectly, the place and space that inspired him to write the book.

All the while, genres define how people enter these portals as Bawarshi suggests, “[i]n the same way that intentions bring objects to our consciousness, genres bring texts and situations to our consciousness. Genres inform our intentionalities” (66-7). This intentionality is key and implies further agency in the individual. People do not randomly come into contact with texts. Even if I randomly come into contact with a book, I have to take the time to look at it. This is a choice. Rhetoric exists to accomplish something, and driving that is human intention. That intention is based largely on the generic identity, or the way in which the individual chooses to negotiate between the latent matrices in a rhetorical situation. This
is significant because it is people—not Discourses—who are at the core of the nexus. It is people whose presence causes the latent matrices to react to become a rhetorical situation that then causes the same people to activate and inhabit certain genres. Certainly, Discursive forces in the form of values and beliefs drive human decision-making and guide how people activate genres, but ultimately, the individual has some choice. Furthermore, it is the individual who chooses to pick up a text, open the portal, and look into the rhetorical situation that called the text into being. There are significant implications of this view of text as a portal that forms within the activated genre that the rhetorical exigency calls up. I will discuss them in terms of pedagogy at length in chapter four, but there are other non-pedagogical implications that could be paths for further research.

This view of genre and text seems relevant to ecocriticism and genre theory, resting on the border between the two. Ecocriticism emphasizes the role of place, space, and the need to remain in touch with the exoteric that affects representation. Genre theory provides a framework to explain the relationship between space, the individual, and representation. As Devitt explains, “[i]f genre responds to recurring situation, then a particular text’s reflection of genre reflects the genre’s situation. Thus the act of constructing the genre—of classifying a text as similar to other texts—is also the act of constructing the situation” (21). In other words, the text’s genre nexus reveals the features of the situation to which that genre responds. The situation is place, and therefore, the generic features in a text demonstrate how the place is constructed. This is useful for ecocritics because analysis of the text with specific focus on the genre nexus could reveal the specific choices that the rhetor made when inhabiting that nexus. The text can tell the critic how the rhetor observed, interpreted those observations, represented the signified, and finally materialized the individual signs in a
This kind of analysis would tell us much about the forces that influenced the rhetor’s *signifying* and, perhaps, something about the exoteric that triggered the first procedure of observation. Even if the exoteric, even if space, remains inaccessible, we can gain a clear picture of the *place* and the exigency that caused the text to be produced. A clear picture of *place* could bring the ecocritic to a clearer understanding of the *space* of which the place is a conscious interpretation of the space.

Likewise, this relationship between genre as a nexus and situation is useful composition scholars in constructing pedagogies. When we think about composition as a process of inhabiting the genres most effective for specific situations, we can help our students develop a sort of genre awareness so that they can learn how to ask the right kinds of questions that will illuminate future rhetorical situations and their potential genres. If we think of genres as nexuses that stem from the ontological and rhetorical choices that people make, then a composition teacher could help students learn how to better recognize the forces at work and how to negotiate between those choices to affect a desired result. This focus is particularly useful if we think of composition as the construction of rhetoric, which is not just a text, not just constructed meaning, but also constructed meaning *to accomplish a specific result*.

As there are various sorts of texts, various nexuses that lead people to construct those texts, and various antecedent genres, the real challenge for people is how to choose how to (re)appropriate aspects of antecedent genres that they have experienced to effectively inhabit that new rhetorical situation. To face this challenge Devitt suggests, “[p]eople interpret situations, select genres, and function culturally within a context of existing genres that brings the past perpetually into the present” (28-9). In other words, people generally do not
respond in a completely new way to any particular situation; they select between various responses that they learned in other situations. In a sense, the rhetoric that is constructed when individuals respond to a situation is not so much a “new creation” in the romantic sense, but a recombination of antecedent genres that people acquire during their enculturation into their society. This means that if genre is a particular way of coming into being in a rhetorical situation, for a person to succeed in inhabiting that rhetorical situation, he or she must have experienced antecedent genres that might be recombined in a way that responds to the situation. For instance, I may have experienced the “ordering at a restaurant” genre at a casual restaurant, but I may find myself experiencing a similar rhetorical situation at a fancy restaurant. I can borrow from my past experience at casual restaurant and from any experiences that I have had in formal settings to embody a genre for the situation that affects the desired result. However, I cannot effectively negotiate my way into some situations because I lack the necessary antecedent genres. In these cases, I will either fail to emerge, which might look like moving into a different space, or I might emerge in an ineffective genre and mark myself as a non-member of the Discourse. I suspect that this explains much of the trouble that students have in FYC and is exactly the kind of challenge that the course could help students face.

Before moving into chapter three in which I will bring the theory present in chapters one and two together to suggest a possible place for FYC that accounts for the theory, I want to recap the theoretical framework. I begin defining “rhetoric” as meaning constructed in response to a situation to accomplish a specific aim. Rhetoric is a symbolic representation of that which exists in the mind and responds to the interpretation of the exoteric. This representation is defined by two semiotic systems (as Barthes suggests) that function
naturally and invisibly. I have attempted to hold these systems unnaturally visible so that we might better understand how “composition” works and how we might better help students develop. Rhetoric involves observation—the procedure of coding sensory input into a mental image—interpretation—the procedure of filling the mental image with meaning—signifying—the procedure of linking that meaning/image combination with words or images—and finally composing—linking the words together in the form of a completed text. Discourse, or all of the ways of inhabiting this rhetorical situation unique to a social network, defines the way that an individual goes about constructing the rhetoric. However, the theory of Discourse defining social actions is limited because it is abstract, difficult to analyze, and can imply the fiction of homogenized Discourse communities. It also threatens the agency of the rhetor, who becomes simply the signifying tool of the Discourse. Instead, it is useful to think of the rhetorical situation, which develops out of the external and internal latent matrix of potential genres. Within the rhetorical situation, a rhetor temporarily activates a genre that represents the rhetor’s negotiation between the demands of the internal and external latent matrices. The activated genre is the nexus of this negotiation and if that genre produces a material text then the text provides future readers a portal into the rhetorical situation.
Chapter Three

In the previous two chapters, I have set out a theoretical framework suggesting that genre is the nexus in which the internal and external latent matrices merge. These matrices include all of the forces within the “self” and the exoteric of the rhetorical situation that pull the rhetor. Individuals, when they inhabit the rhetorical situation, must figure out the most effective ways to respond and must select between many potential genres that could be activated. I suggest that this requires what Buell calls map-knowledge and place-sense. While ecocritics like Buell use this as a metaphor to discuss literary texts, I think this applies well to the pedagogies associated with genre theory. In this chapter, I will look closely at FYC pedagogy to discuss how the course provides students with the kinds of awareness necessary to be able to navigate their ways through the university. It is important to point out here that laying out a pedagogy that is universally applicable is impossible. What may work in one FYC class may not work in another. This is true between universities and within any one university. However, I do believe that by looking at the pedagogical implications that I lay out in this chapter, site specific pedagogy could be developed based on the specific space of the university and of the classroom.

To further explain the relationship between general pedagogical concepts and specific, concrete practices, I want to begin with the relationship between Theory and Lore in mind. By Theory, I mean the abstract explanations of what theorists see occurring in composition in their studies. This also includes pedagogies that attempt to generally address these abstract explanations. By Lore, I mean specific classroom practices, specific assignments, and concrete projects that occur during a course. Both Theory and Lore, individually, are insufficient, and the relationship between the two is symbiotic. Theory is
useful to explain how and why composition works, but it has a tendency to become detached from what actually happens in the classroom. This is particularly true if the classroom addressed by the Theory is a hypothetical classroom. The classroom becomes a simulacrum and the Theory that explains it becomes detached from reality. Furthermore, by generalizing, Theory has a tendency to be applied in a one-size-fits-all manner (we can see this in some varieties of “process” pedagogy), and therefore, it does not account for the variety of composition classrooms, a variety of different students, and a variety of different rhetorical situations. The results of the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) clearly demonstrate the flaws with one-size-fits-all models and standardization in general. Lore, on the other hand, is useful because it is developed in direct response to the specific classroom situations. This flexibility and concreteness is useful to teachers and students who must inhabit the real physical space of the classroom. However, while Lore comes only from real classroom experience, it can fail to explain why certain pedagogies function or not, because it seeks simply to respond to the situation on the ground. However, since Lore is less abstract it can take Theory’s place and be used to explain the classroom situation. At its worst, Lore becomes little more than recipe swapping.

When a pedagogy links Lore to Theory, concrete assignments and practices can respond to the situation in the class under the guidance of a theoretical framework. Furthermore, specific classroom practices can help illustrate the Theory, which can be abstract and difficult to grasp. At the same time Theory can help overcome the limitations of Lore based pedagogies that result from a purely anecdotal foundation, by helping to explain why the anecdote occurred in a specific way. This relationship between Theory and Lore is somewhat like the relationship between practical skills and meta-cognitive awareness.
developed in a composition classroom. This makes sense because constructing and running a class is really another form of composition in which the instructor, with the support or collaboration of the students, makes a specific pedagogical meaning.

What I am suggesting here is that an effective marriage of Theory and Lore provides the best, and necessary, foundation for a good composition pedagogy (this could also be applied to any pedagogy). This means that the instructors who produce Lore must be well versed in Theory, and the theorists who develop Theory must have a solid understanding of various classroom situations and the limits to their own experience. This implies that we must have more faith in instructors to be able to interpret Theory and produce the appropriate classroom practices that account for both the class and the Theory. If we can see teaching as a mode of composition, then whatever we ask students to do in our classes, we ourselves could also be doing in developing our courses. Above all, instructors should be trusted to inhabit the genres that will help students become better rhetoricians. In this way, the instructors can demonstrate the kind of rhetorical mindfulness that I suggest they demand of their students.

In this chapter I want to look at the way FYC could focus on developing students’ mindfulness about the existence of the latent matrices, rhetorical situations, and genres so that they have the necessary tools to perceive the rhetorical situations that they must inhabit and choose the potential genres to inhabit to affect the desired result. This kind of rhetorical mindfulness builds off of genre awareness, but uses concepts of map-knowledge and place sense to go a step further to open up the entire context in which the rhetorical situation rests. This kind of awareness allows students to look closely at the latent matrices, potential genres, and the antecedent genres and consciousness that rhetors bring with them. Rhetorical
mindfulness also demonstrates the ways in which these various forces allow certain genres to be activated and the effectiveness of these genres to the social networks in which they are enacted. In other words, students must have the sufficient genre awareness to see the kinds of antecedent genres they carry with them and how those genres fit their specific past rhetorical situations. They must also have map-knowledge and place-sense to perceive and understand the constraints of the space and place that they must inhabit. Rhetorical mindfulness gives students a sense of all, or at least many, of the potential genres that could allow the latent matrices to interweave forming the genre nexus, and a sense of what the results will be of any particular genre being activated.

I want to begin by discussing the challenges that students face, some possible responses to these challenges by way of genre-awareness, and finally extend beyond genre awareness only slightly into rhetorical mindfulness. This discussion is necessary due to a real challenge that students face when entering the university: while people constantly move from one genre to another, the university demands students to move into unfamiliar rhetorical situations and inhabit entirely unfamiliar genres with serious consequences (grades) if they fail to do so effectively. While mastery over of specific genre sets may be possible through simple trial and error, and this may be sufficient for everyday life, entering new, unfamiliar rhetorical situations at the university becomes easier for students who have the tools to become conscious of their movement from one rhetorical situation to another as they move through space and time. Again, these tools of meta-cognition may not be necessary when the rhetorical situations are familiar, but they become vital when the situations are unfamiliar, which most of them are for freshmen at the university. In other words, people exist in space
rhetorically at the most fundamental level, and all of this rhetoric is in turn composed by the individual inhabiting specific genres.

This FYC course would serve students when they leave the university, but the main set of rhetorical situations that I want to focus on here is those at the university that require students to produce texts. Even in these cases the variety of rhetorical situations present is vast. For instance, in English alone we encounter classroom discussions, write conference papers, and write journal articles, just to name a few. These rhetorical situations seem to be recurring because they stem from similar latent matrices, but even between similar rhetorical situations there is the need for awareness because as Johnstone points out when discussing the challenges to genre theory and genre development: “[t]he biggest obstacle to describing recurrent situations is the fact that exactly the same situations never actually recur” (149). While there may be similarities between rhetorical situations, no two rhetorical situations are exactly the same. For this reason, looking at activated genre nexus in relation to potential genres and latent matrices fits better than the older definition of genre as a typified response to a recurring situation.

While rhetorical situations may never be identical, similarities between them and between the texts they produce exist, particularly within a discipline, allowing for individuals familiar with the discipline to respond naturally with generalized antecedent genres. These similarities account for what Johnstone calls “‘[v]ertical’ Intertextuality [which] refers to how texts build on texts that are paradigmatically related to them in various ways, members, that is, of the same or similar categories” (139). In other words, texts are influenced by the rhetor’s experience with other texts produced in similar rhetorical situations. It follows that since a text is a portal into the rhetorical situation, when individuals encounter new rhetorical
situations similar to those which they saw in texts, they will respond by inhabiting similar
genres to those that gave rise to those texts. An individual encounters similarities between
genres because whenever he or she encounters a new rhetorical situation, one main force that
drives the construction of a new genre is his or her experience in antecedent genres.
Experience in past genre might have occurred directly or indirectly through a text-portal.
These past experiences help define the choices they make in interpretation and *signifying*.
The fact that a text-portal can provide an experience by proxy of a rhetorical situation
demonstrates one value of students reading sample essays, particularly if they are asked to
discuss the rhetorical situation that brought those texts into being or inhabit similar genres.

I want to return to the genre of the “restaurant order” to explain how antecedent
genres define how I respond to future rhetorical situations. When I go to a restaurant I will
always have to place an order (otherwise, people might question why I’m there). The
rhetorical situation changes each time, however, because I may not have the same server and
I may not be the same person (if we are to believe that individual identities are in a constant
state of development and flux, then I will never have the same server or be the same person).
Likewise, other factors may have changed as well. Even though the situation changes, I can
use what I know about having ordered at a restaurant in the past to make the choices that will
be most effective in inhabiting a new genre for this rhetorical situation. However, to take
advantage of what I know, I must know that I know it, and be aware enough of the rhetorical
situation to make the appropriate connections between the internal and exoteric latent
matrices. In other words, the rhetor must be aware what is going on around them.

Unfortunately, the students entering FYC are not particularly aware, especially when
it comes to how they inhabit *space*. Generally, students might have some idea of what they
want to do in the university, but in my experience many students go to university because that is what members of their socio-economic group are supposed to do. Furthermore, the predominance of standardized testing as the focus of high school education trains students to think rapidly and in shortcut fashion looking for key points, main ideas, and answers to impose specific meanings on the evidence without allowing those meanings to arise from a rigorous and analytical engagement the evidence itself. This means that students are not trained to look closely at the evidence and come to their own conclusions about it, but rather begin with their conclusions already in mind. In the same way, the five-paragraph essay, in which the students begin with the thesis statement and then attempt to locate evidence to support that thesis, forces students to impose meaning upon the exoteric and selectively view only portions of the exoteric that fit their preconceptions. In other words, the thesis demands that students activate certain genres that account predominately for the internal latent matrix, ignoring the external latent matrix except as it suits their purposes. This lack of awareness appears broadly in English 101 at WWU as a lack of reading comprehension skills.

While it may seem that I am criticizing students here, I am not, and I am not interested in placing blame for the problems that students face. It is foolish to expect students entering the university already competent, and it is beneficial that students face challenges and make mistakes that seem obvious to those already experienced in the university rhetorical situations. What I am interested in is why students struggle in FYC and what FYC can do to help students struggle more effectively in the future. One of the reasons students struggle, as Irene Clark points is because “for many students, new to the university community, and accustomed in high school to writing personal narratives or information-based reports, these goals [of the rhetorical situations at the university] remain hidden, and
students read their writing assignments without understanding the kind of performance they
are expected to enact” (5). Clark, and she is not alone in doing this, points to specific
antecedent genres (to which I would add the frequently maligned five-paragraph essay) that
are not particularly useful as guides to inhabit the new rhetorical situations in FYC or at the
university in general. However, I would argue that antecedent genres the students have
enacted do not matter as much as their ability to see how those genres do or do not fulfill
specific demands of the present rhetorical situations. For instance, it matters little if a student
has mastered the five-paragraph essay genre set, what is important is that he or she
recognizes demands of the new rhetorical situation and the ways in which the five-paragraph
essay genre does or does not fit that new situation.

The problem occurs when students acquire the capacity to inhabit and enact genres in
certain ways, but fail to gain any conscious, meta-cognitive knowledge of those genres.
Without this kind of awareness, students cannot know the relationship between new
rhetorical situations and antecedent genres. Clark points to a remedy for this problem when
she suggests, “genre study can provide a useful frame for analyzing writing prompts,
ening teachers in a variety of disciplines to become aware of the implicit assumptions in
the writing tasks they assign” (1). By studying the genres that produce these writing prompts,
students will be able to see the rhetorical situation that brought the prompts into being, as
well as the new rhetorical situations that the students must enter of which the prompt is a
part. This requires a certain degree of awareness that involves not only seeing the specific
conventions of each genre, but also seeing how the conventions are interrelated and how they
respond to the specific exigencies of the rhetorical situation.
One possible solution that frequently appears in teaching FYC suggests that we teach the handful of most common genres across the university. However, in “‘Mutt Genres’ and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the Universities,” Elizabeth Wardle challenges the idea of teaching disciplinary genres for a number of reasons. While she finds value in thinking about genre in teaching composition, she suggests, “[s]imply teaching the institutionalized features of a genre to students also ignores the complex reasons why the genre evolved into what it is, and the myriad reasons it may (and almost certainly will) continue to change” (768). Of course it makes sense not to teach the “institutionalized features of a genre” because those features are generally superficial, and therefore teaching students about them can actually hinder students’ ability to see underlying features that are more substantial. By extension, as Wardle suggests, genres change constantly due to fluctuations in the internal and external latent matrices, so the moment an instructor teaches a specific genre, it is already obsolete before the students had a chance to use them.

I would go further and say genres might “appear” to evolve due to the similarity of rhetorical situations, but the term “evolution” implies a linear progression, and the way genres fluctuate is far more random than that. Each rhetorical situation involves the development of a new genre, which may be similar to antecedent genres, but as it does not respond to the same rhetorical situation, it cannot necessarily be seen as an evolution of the antecedent genres. Perhaps the evolution that seems apparent when we look at various similar genres stems from our desire to see an orderly systematic evolution rather than a chaotic web of interrelated rhetorical situations in which rhetors respond the best they can by borrowing from where they must to negotiate between the present rhetorical exigencies. Wardle suggests that even if we could teach “stable” genres, “students cannot meaningfully practice
writing genres of the university in such a first-year course” (783). I agree that the time limits of FYC, particularly at WWU with the quarter system, prevent students from seriously acquiring any academic genres. What we can teach, however, is mindfulness that students can begin to develop rapidly (even in a quarter) that will serve them when they attempt to figure out future rhetorical situations they must enter.

This focus on mindfulness moves us away from the view of genre as “writing” or a taxonomy of texts, and if we follow genre theory, genre is a way of being and doing in direct response to a rhetorical situation. This means that genre is a way of inhabiting a place. Writing is, perhaps, one part of inhabiting the place, but focusing on the writing exclusively fails to recognize the virtue of genre awareness pedagogy, which focuses on rhetorical situations and their demands rather than on specific texts. Wardle offers a radical recommendation to eliminate the mandatory FYC course and replace it with a voluntary “Writing About Writing” (WAW) course (784-5). In short, a WAW course is a rhetoric course in which students learn about the theories of writing with which I am engaging here. Borrowing for this sort of course could be useful for an FYC course in that engaging with rhetorical theory could provide students with greater insight into how composition scholars think about rhetoric, and I would rejoice in seeing an introductory WAW course at WWU; however, rejecting a mandatory FYC course goes too far and shirks our responsibility to help students develop critical inquiry skills necessary to all work in the university.

What is important about FYC is to recognize that it is not, nor should it be, a course in “university writing.” If English 101 were designed solely to improve students writing, then I might suggest that we are wasting our time, but I think it is also a bit of a misconception that FYC is a writing course. We do write in English 101. Students write much and get better
at writing certain types of texts, but the main gains that they make are meta-cognitive and developmental. Furthermore, since genre is both an inhabitation and enactment, it involves performance. This suggests that even if we could select genres, and their ways of writing, to teach, it is doubtful that an instructor could do so due to the way in which performances are learned. Patricia Linton, Robert Madigan and Susan Johnson, in their essay “Introducing Students to Disciplinary Genres: The Role of General Composition Course,” explain that “it may be the case that even within the disciplines, skill in writing can be learned (as one component of apprenticeship) but not taught” (63). The FYC instructor cannot teach students how to write, or how to inhabit a genre, the nexus of the rhetorical situation, in the FYC course; however, they can provide an environment in which students try to inhabit genres. All the while, the instructor can help students gain meta-cognitive knowledge of why their efforts succeed or fail in inhabiting the situations.

This view of FYC is why a course based in genre awareness and rhetorical mindfulness could be more beneficial for students than one that seeks to improve their “writing.” To further explain “genre awareness,” Anis Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff explain that:

“[T]he Brazilian model [of genre-awareness pedagogy] begins with early production of genre based on writers’ previous knowledge and experience, then moves to analysis of genre within rhetorical and social contexts, culminating with (re)production of the genre, thus bringing together a focus on genre awareness, analysis of linguistic conventions, and attention to social contest” (177).

The course based on genre awareness begins by looking to students’ antecedent genres. For instance, at WWU instructors could begin with students’ experience with the five-paragraph
essay, in which the students are well trained. Since the rhetorical situations that call forth the
genres that allow these texts to be produced are relatively similar, standardized, and stable,
most students will possess similar antecedent genres. Analysis of the five-paragraph essay
would provide a portal back into the rhetorical situation that was at their naissance. From this
analysis, discussion could move to speculation on other ways to respond to the same
rhetorical situation. By thinking about what kind of text would be produced from different
choices in inhabiting the genre, students would be able to gain a meta-cognitive
understanding of why the genre exists as it is and what its uses and limitations are.

Bawarshi and Reiff suggest that “[r]esearch in education and psychology identifies
meta-cognition as an important component of knowledge transfer, especially across
dissimilar contexts of the sort students will encounter between FYC courses, courses in
different academic disciplines, and workplace settings” (Genre 190). Meta-cognition
facilitates transfer, particularly far transfer, because it looks past the superficial similarities
and differences between rhetorical situations and into the underlying similarities on which far
transfer is based. However, for exactly the same reason, genre-awareness is useful to the
FYC I’m describing here. Looking to deep, substantive features of particular genres provides
students with an understanding of aspects of rhetorical situations that frequently get buried
beneath the superficial structures. Understanding where these deeper features are can then
help students ask the right kinds of questions in future rhetorical situations. As students
develop this meta-cognitive awareness, they could begin to try out some of these different
genres establishing more varied antecedent genres through practice. By practicing new and
varied genres, students develop their internal latent matrix, which provides them with more
options when connecting to the exoteric latent matrix in future rhetorical situations.
Devitt further explains this kind of pedagogy when she suggests a pedagogy based on “teaching genre awareness,” which she suggests is “a critical consciousness of both rhetorical purposes and ideological effects of generic forms” (192). Genre awareness allows people to understand why a particular genre responds to a specific rhetorical situation the ideological, or Discursive, forces that guide that response. In other words, the course does not teach the genres themselves, but rather it teaches “the process of learning new genres rather than specific linguistic features of genres” (Devitt 197). This is key because genre awareness allows students to recognize the how and why of a specific genre, and more importantly, it teaches students how to acquire new genres by recognizing the forces at work in the rhetorical situations of various disciplines. While there could easily be a disconnection between the genre and the rhetorical situation in which it develops, Devitt suggests, “[a] primary task for teaching genre awareness is to keep form and context intertwined” (198). In other words, it is critical that students look not just at the particular beings and doings of genre but also the context of the rhetorical situation. This combination of genre-awareness and awareness of the rhetorical situation is essential. The meta-cognition comes with the ability to recognize how the situation helps the genre form and how the genre defines the individual’s perspective within the situation, thereby, helping further define the genre.

However, genre awareness is not enough. Genre awareness focuses on genre and context. This is a vital beginning but it does not necessarily cover all aspects of rhetorical construction. The context of a genre is a place as opposed to a space. The context of genre is the rhetorical situation that calls the genre into being. This rhetorical situation is a place because it is already endowed with meaning. It “means” some sort of rhetorical exigency that allows it to be both rhetorical and situational (hence, the validity of Vatz’s argument). That
“meaning” already implied in the rhetorical situation suggests that an interpretive procedure has already occurred to place that “meaning” upon the situation. I am arguing here for a rhetorical mindfulness that goes beyond the rhetorical situation to the exoteric and all the forces within the latent matrices, which become a rhetorical situation the rhetor brings them together by entering the *space*. Rhetorical mindfulness relates very closely to the sort of Ecocritical-awareness Buell, among many others, promotes. This larger awareness requires that the individual be conscious of *space, place, texts*, and the relationship between them. This kind of mindfulness allows the student to see how the exoteric itself becomes a *place* with rhetorical demands when it is interpreted. For instance, I recently gave my English 101 students an exam in which they were asked to demonstrate the skills that they have been acquiring in the course. For this exam, I asked the students to purchase a Bluebook, or a university sanctioned exam book. On the cover of the Bluebook there are lines for the students’ names, the date, their student id number, etc. Almost all of the students responded unprompted by me to the rhetorical exigencies of these lines and included all of the information that they had available. Genre awareness would allow students to recognize how these lines demanded them to become the right kind of diligent students who fill in all of the blanks with the matching information. However, genre-awareness takes for granted that these lines are rhetorical situations to which the students must respond. In the context of my class, I asked them to put their names somewhere on the exam, but the rest of the lines were not, in fact, part of the rhetorical situation because in the larger context of the classroom, they were not required. Rhetorical mindfulness allows students to see beyond the rhetorical situation to the latent matrices.
To see beyond the rhetorical situation and respond effectively, people require creativity, experience of a wide variety of rhetorical situations in a discipline, meta-level awareness, self-reflection, and the ability to tolerate and deal with cognitive dissonance and difference. All of these depend largely on the individual’s awareness and mindfulness. I argue that this awareness relates closely to what Blanchot calls fascination. He writes about the poet who succeeds in this, “[w]hoever is fascinated doesn’t see, properly speaking, what he sees. Rather, it touches him in an immediate proximity; it seizes and ceaselessly draws him close, even though it leaves him absolutely at a distance” (33). This means that fascination, which I suggest is linked to the kind of rhetorical mindfulness that I am discussing here, makes the layers of mediation more transparent, between the exoteric, the observation, and the interpretation.

I want to explicitly bring up the theory of ecocriticism again because fascination seems very much like Buell’s place-sense. Place-sense refers to the intuitive awareness based, perhaps on the stepping outside of the ego which divides the self from the other. At this point, I would not want to press much into how place-sense works within the human mind and would require more research to really explore. In any case, place-sense or fascination then needs to be shored up with something a little less intuitive and relative. To do this the rhetor must be aware and account for the various forces, including the way that genre defines perception that the rhetor must negotiate in the rhetorical situation. Rhetorical mindfulness begins with genre awareness, but goes beyond it, and can be facilitated by mimicking the environmental writers, who demonstrate the capacity to balance between the internal and exoteric latent matrices, between space and ideological forces, that rhetor must negotiate as he or she fills the void of the rhetorical situation.
As an example of those who effectively account for both latent matrices and emphasize the importance of *space*, it is useful to look at environmental writers. Lawrence Buell explains that “[t]he best environmental writers continually recalibrate familiar landscapes (sometimes familiar to reader as well as writer) in such ways, so as to keep alive the sense of the ‘undiscovered country of the nearby,’ as Jon Hanson Mitchell calls it” (261-2). Familiar landscapes, or familiar features of the exoteric, tend to become covered by imposed meaning. For instance, in familiar spaces people seem to have a tendency not to notice minor changes, particularly when those changes occur gradually over time. This suggests that we impose meaning upon the exoteric before we have a chance to become fully aware of it. By maintaining a sense of novelty in the exoteric, by consciously maintaining an awareness of the exoteric as it is, rather than as we imagine it to be, we are less likely to misinterpret it.

This recalibration of the exoteric does not insist that we can perfectly represent the exoteric. Dana Phillips calls this recalibration, “revaluing nature,” which “doesn’t have to be an all or nothing proposition dependent on the possibility or impossibility of resembling nature” (144). Clearly, structuralists and post-structuralists have demonstrated the impossibility of *signifying* nature, but awareness of the latent matrices and the individual’s negotiation of them to define this *signifying* can allow the rhetor to better see, and then better point to the exoteric when he or she enacts and inhabits a genre. For instance, when I attend class everyday in the same classroom, I become accustomed to what it is supposed to look like. After enough time the *place* becomes naturalized and hardly noticeable. When the *place*, becomes invisible, and *space* becomes forgotten, then it is easy to neglect the exoteric’s affect on the external latent matrix. However, if the classroom is changed, or if I
I want to return to the example of my students and their Bluebooks for a moment. The rhetorical mindfulness that I am promoting here would guide students to look at each of these lines on the Bluebooks as just that: lines of text (a series of letters followed by a long underscore). From there students can move into analyzing how these lines of text become part of a rhetorical situation that require students to respond in specific ways; but by pausing to recognize what the rhetorical situation is before the student interprets it as such and becomes a rhetor, the student can critically analyze why the rhetorical situation exists and whether the exoteric is the appropriate site for a particular rhetorical situation, or even if the rhetorical situation exists as the student thinks it exists. A critically aware student might question whether they needed to respond to any or all of these lines.

While this kind of mindfulness here may seem insignificant, it could be tremendously significant in other situations in which the rhetoric produced is more substantial. For instance, high school students in specific socio-economic contexts face the rhetorical situation of applying to college. There is some choice as to how they apply to college, where they apply, in what subjects they hope to study, and so on. Genre awareness allows

consciously refigure the classroom by sitting in a different chair, I remain conscious of the exoteric because it is unfamiliar allowing me to not forget it and enhancing the degree to which I can be mindful of the rhetorical situation. This applies to FYC because by being aware of the rhetorical situation as it is, and by being aware of the latent matrices, people are less likely to be misguided by antecedent genres whose pull may be stronger than the exigency that stems from the exoteric itself. This awareness begins with genre awareness, which keeps the generic exigencies visible, and continues into a closer mindfulness of the exoteric prior to interpretation of what it means.
students to develop more effective genres for the rhetorical situation to achieve their desired result, but it does not necessarily challenge the underlying ideology that makes the context a rhetorical situation in a specific fashion. Rhetorical mindfulness allows students to recognize that the context, the exoteric, is a specific spatial-temporal site and to recognize why the rhetorical situation can be interpreted from that site—middle-class ideology, for instance—demands that they enter this rhetorical situation of applying to college. It then allows them to question the ideology that drives the initial interpretation that frames the spatial-temporal site as a rhetorical situation.

Additionally, and in relation to entering new, unfamiliar rhetorical situations, by unveiling the exoteric upon which the rhetorical situation is placed, mindfulness allows people to choose whether the rhetorical situation they think they must inhabit arises from the exoteric or arises from their past experiences and does not fit with the exoteric. This perception/interpretation error appears frequently in English 101 as students attempt to write five-paragraph essays in response to our writing prompts. They fail to clearly see the exoteric writing prompt and instead respond to a rhetorical situation that is not really there, but only in their minds. By being mindful, students can see what kind of rhetorical situation is actually open before them in the exoteric. It also allows them to interrupt the naturalized, invisible and immediate transition from observation to interpretation. This can help prevent antecedent genres from guiding the rhetor to the wrong interpretation, and therefore, the wrong rhetorical situation, and it can allow them to discover the link between the space in which rhetorical situations exist, and the genres that come into being in response.

On an even more significant scale, rhetorical mindfulness allows the individual to escape the context of Discourse, or at least allows the individual to consciously choose which
Discourse to inhabit, since it is impossible to escape being in a Discourse. To explain this further, it is important to recognize that humans exist more or less entirely mediated by rhetoric; their existence is bound up by Discourse. It mediates observation, perception, and materialization. Since all of these are actions, they are genres. Since genres are defined by, among other things, Discourse, then Discourse defines all rhetorical interaction with the exoteric by influencing the potential genres that the individual might inhabit. However, since Discourse is a social phenomenon that has been entirely constructed—it is artificial—then it reasons that that which is not constructed is not defined by Discourse. This suggests that rhetorical mindfulness could allow the individual to push towards the boundary between consciousness and the exoteric prior to its rhetorical rendering through interpretation. Awareness of this profundity could provide a significantly broad perspective of how disciplines make sense of the exoteric. From that perspective the student is in a good place to find his or her way into the genres that will produce the desired effect through more limited genre-awareness.

I want to conclude this discussion of pedagogy by moving into a more concrete example: specifically, how rhetorical mindfulness and genre-awareness could help students move from the fairly stable genre set of the five-paragraph essay to the more exploratory, inductive essay that we ask for in English 101. In the final chapter, I will look at several more examples by approaching writing prompts from different disciplines to demonstrate what tools a rhetorically mindful and genre-aware student could have when approaching them. For the moment, however, I will look at a writing prompt from the SAT essay section and writing in English 101. The SAT exam provides an excellent example of the rhetorical situation that
could call a 5 paragraph into being. To explain this, I need to explain briefly what the five-paragraph essay does and how it responds to the rhetorical situation.

The five-paragraph essay frequently appears when students are being instructed to respond to essay exams, including AP exams and the essay portion of the SAT. In these situations, the temporal limits of the space are very tight. In the case of the SAT, students have 25 minutes to respond to a prompt of which they have no former knowledge. This restriction cannot be violated, as testing times are strictly enforced. Since these standardized writing exams frequently directly impact the students’ future careers, not much room exists to take serious risks when responding to the prompt. The essay prompt itself, which includes a statement and a question about that statement, significantly limits the semantic scope the students can incorporate in their response, and if read properly the prompt implies a limited set of possible thesis statements in response. Beyond this, the exam is taken at a testing site, usually a classroom, which physically limits the positions that students can inhabit (Heilker’s essay “On Genres as Ways of Being” provides an interesting discussion of student desks). Other factors that define the rhetorical situation of the essay portion of the SAT exam include student knowledge of how the exams are evaluated and the antecedent genres that the students bring with them. It is in this last portion that the five-paragraph essay comes up.

In preparation for standardized writing exams, students are frequently taught how to write the five-paragraph essay, which is a highly useful tool for responding to the restrictive rhetorical situations of the exams. A five-paragraph essay begins with a rhetorical hook to attract the interest of the reader. This is useful for the exam situation, I suspect, because the readers of these exams face many many papers and any hook or bit of excitement helps an essay stand out. The five-paragraph essay then moves into the strong assertion of the thesis
statement, usually located at the end of the first paragraph, perhaps briefly followed by a summary of the three minor pieces of evidence. After the thesis statement, three “body” paragraphs appear. These paragraphs each contain a point of support for the thesis statement. Perhaps one paragraph is used as a counterpoint, but this generally occurs only in more risky essays that use the counterpoint as a sort of straw-man to dispel possible points of disagreement. Even with this counter paragraph, the thesis remains unchallenged. Finally, after the three body paragraphs, the last paragraph of the five-paragraph essay recaps the original thesis and concludes with some parting remark.

The five-paragraph essay is tremendously useful for exam situations, because it allows the student to form a highly coherent, direct, and focused argument in a short amount of time, based on one main claim that responds to the writing prompt. The major problem, however, with the five-paragraph essay is that it responds very poorly to complicating evidence and complexity that is part of most rhetorical situations insofar as the human experience in the world involves complexity. Further, teaching it as “writing” (a term that suggests a universal skill, which I hope I have demonstrated it is not) implies that it will be a useful genre set in any situation that requires “formal writing” in the future. Most contemporary rhet/comp theory demonstrates that this is nonsense.

If we look into an SAT prompt we can see how rhetorical mindfulness would benefit the student. The following is “Prompt 1” from the March 2012 SAT exam:

Think carefully about the issue presented in the following excerpt and the assignment below.

Mistakes we have made in the past are supposed to make us wiser, stronger, and better able to deal with the future. This approach suggests that we should
continue to focus on our mistakes, that we should remember them, no matter how painful or embarrassing to us they may be. But nothing is to be gained by concerning ourselves with old mistakes. We should forget them as soon as possible.

Assignment: is it best to forget about past mistakes as soon as possible? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observation.

You have 25 minutes…go! Students entering this rhetorical situation should already have some understanding of how to succeed in their writing. However, a deeper awareness of the situation would be useful not only for their success on the exam, but for their success in recognizing the differences between the five-paragraph genre and the potential genres of future rhetorical situations that passing this exam will allow.

Rhetorical mindfulness will help students see first the space that makes the five-paragraph essay an appropriate text for this rhetorical situation as I have discussed above. However, it would further allow students to create a more complex essay even within the limited framework of the prompt. The prompt clearly asks for a “yes/no” answer, which lends itself well to developing an inflexible, strong thesis statement. However, if students have greater rhetorical mindfulness, they could avoid automatically falling into this kind of binary and recognize that the situation is more complex and that perhaps the standard five-paragraph essay is insufficient or needs to be modified slightly to account for the complicating evidence. Further, the question itself simply asks whether it is better to forget past mistakes or not. This has very little to do with the statement above which actually
implies should learning from a mistake be a short term process forgetting the mistake as soon as the lesson is learned rather than a long term process of constantly revisiting the situation in which the mistake was made. Rhetorical mindfulness would allow students to differentiate between the literal question, which will yield an acceptable answer, and the implied questions, which will yield significantly more complex answers. Since complex answers demonstrate complex thinking, which is privileged in word by the exam, the student aware of the literal and implied questions, including the nature of the exam as a rhetorical situation will be more successful.

Beyond success on the exam, rhetorical mindfulness, which allows students to see the entirety of the rhetorical situation, will also allow students to differentiate between a writing prompt that calls forth a five-paragraph essay, and a writing prompt from a different class, like English 101, that calls forth an inductive essay that addresses with complicating evidence and complex thinking. Writing prompts in English 101 ask students to work with difficult questions and respond not with one unified claim, but rather by proffering a claim that develops through the introduction of complicating evidence. Further, these writing assignments ask students to enter into dialogue with a number of texts. This necessarily requires students to account for various perspectives present within the texts that resist unified, uncomplicated claims. It is easy to see the differences between these two types of writing, however, not so easy for a student in the context of the rhetorical situations calling forth the writings. Further, since we do not assign timed writes in English 101 and generally do not use specific questions as prompts for students’ writing, the rhetorical situations in English 101 are considerably less limited. Generally, students have as much time as they need (perhaps not as much as they want) to think extensively on the topics and work through
several revisions that allow them to further complicate their claims. Also, students can write about any topic they wish within the conversation of the text. However, if students begin by expecting all “formal writing” to be the five-paragraph essay then they will fail to produce the effective response to many rhetorical situations, and will impose meaning too rapidly on the rhetorical situation without questioning how they might most effectively respond.

Rhetorical mindfulness would allow students to see the differences between the situations, specifically in terms of how claims and evidence are related. Also, they would recognize the similarities; both five-paragraph essays and inductive essays ask students to link claims and evidence to one another in some fashion. So, since students already know that a claim is related to evidence, students could use that aspect of the antecedent genre of the five-paragraph essay to better respond to the rhetorical situation of the inductive essay by switching the order in which evidence and claims arise. Rhetorical mindfulness will help them differentiate further between the inviolate and the violable features of any potential genre giving them further choice on how to respond to rhetorical situations.

I want to conclude now with a brief speculative discussion on how genre awareness and rhetorical mindfulness could be incorporated into an FYC course to improve its contribution to transfer. While many of these recommendations match what English 101 actually does in present and recent iterations, it is worthwhile to (re)present those recommendations to reaffirm what is useful and what is not useful for students. Furthermore, by representing English 101, I hope to help define its place and use at the university.

One of the main ways a pedagogy based on genre-awareness and rhetorical mindfulness is useful is that it can be incorporated in various ways to various degrees to the unique situations in the classroom by allowing students to begin at different levels of
awareness. Some students could be advanced and begin seeing the deeper abstract forces that are part of the internal and exoteric latent matrices while less advanced students could still begin to gain awareness that rhetorical situations and genres exist. Students that are products of the secondary education system guided by NCLB are not tremendously aware of anything except main ideas and the five-paragraph essay. These students would benefit from beginning with rhetorical mindfulness. In either this case, rhetorical mindfulness practice and genre awareness allow students to, first, determine the appropriate rhetorical situations to respond to and not respond to, and second, figure out all of the exigencies of the rhetorical situation including those in the exoteric latent matrix of *space*, and the internal latent matrix of *place* and antecedent genres. Then a student could attempt to inhabit and enact the most effective genre for the situation, learning through trial and error and conscious reflection on how and why he or she failed or succeeded.

A general FYC course based in rhetorical mindfulness and genre awareness would begin with observation. Ideally, the students would be lead through various journaling and descriptive activities that seek to delay the interpretive procedure. Instead of asking students what a particular sensory input means, they would be asked to describe it as precisely as possible (granted, perspective always prevents a precise description). These kinds of activities could be applied to either organic materials or artificial texts because both contain some substance prior to the reader imposing meaning upon them. Observing nature involves seeing what is there prior to imposing meaning through interpretation. Observing a text involves seeing its materiality, and could apply to reading what it says as opposed to what it does (however, this begins to border on interpretation). The goal here is to see what the thing
is or what it is made of. This observation could be enhanced by a meta-cognitive aspect that asks students to question why they see a thing in a certain way.

This meta-cognitive enhancement could be accomplished through group work which would allow students to gain a broader and more diverse observation by combining their own perspective with that of others. From there students could begin to move towards the rhetorical mindfulness and genre-awareness. To illustrate this intersection between rhetorical mindfulness and genre awareness I would like to borrow Paul Heilker’s example that he uses in his essay, “On Genres as Ways of Being.” Heilker discusses the student desk as a rhetorical exigency of the classroom that calls forth specific genres. He points out all of the various ideological demands that the chair makes upon the student to be in a specific way. However, the desk itself could be observed as an exoteric object prior to its interpretation. We could describe what it is, what it looks like, how it fits into the rest of the space that becomes interpreted as a rhetorical situation. Then we could describe the entirety of space. From there we can choose to interpret and inhabit that space in typical ways defined by the ideology through Discourse and antecedent genres, or we could choose to repurpose the space with different rhetorical situations. This allows for creativity in how we construct the place.

To change the rhetorical situation we might move the desks into a circle to disrupt the rhetorical situation that demands order and standardization, or we might remove the desks altogether, further disrupting the rhetorical situation and allowing for others to spring up in its place. In either case, critical awareness allows the student to choose how the rhetorical situation develops through interpretation of the observed space. This skill can then benefit students because they will slow down their imposition of meaning and allow meaning to
develop naturally and consciously from space as the rhetorical situation develops. This combination of rhetorical mindfulness and genre awareness would then be augmented throughout the course by allowing students to encounter various spaces, and then begin to inhabit the nexuses of the rhetorical situations that the students allow to develop consciously and from the evidence in their observation. All the while, students could be asked to look reflexively on how these genres develop from the exoteric. This self-awareness is the foundation for meta-cognition, which will then allow students to go through this investigation in any discipline or Discourse the students wish to enter.
Chapter Four

In the previous three chapters, I presented a discussion of the place of FYC as a rhetoric course that helps students develop their genre-awareness and rhetorical mindfulness. These relate directly to and are further explained by ecocriticism, specifically the concepts of map-knowledge, place-sense and “revaluing nature.” Map-knowledge helps students observe closely the place around them. This applies to how they encounter the place in which the rhetorical situations arise. Place-sense refers to the intuitive sense of the exoteric. This supersedes the senses, and while it is somewhat ephemeral, it should not be ignored. Place-sense allows students to develop and intuitive feeling that can reinforce their view of space as provided by their map-knowledge. Revaluing, or re-reading, space prevents it from becoming naturalized and invisible to students. Constantly providing a fresh view of the spaces and places of the rhetorical situations allows students to be more aware of the role that the physical space plays as part of the external latent matrix in forming the rhetorical situation. These meta-level skills allow students to gain a clear, conscious view of the rhetorical situations that open up before them as they move through the university. They also allow students to see the forces within the internal and external latent matrices that pull them to inhabit particular potential genres. This rhetorical mindfulness increases the students’ agency by allowing them to have more conscious choice over which genre nexuses to inhabit and how. I concluded the previous chapter by looking at the rhetorical situations of the SAT essay exam and the English 101 inductive essay.

Now I want to move to some writing prompts from various disciplines and discuss how rhetorical mindfulness and genre awareness will help students respond more consciously and effectively. With these meta-cognitive tools, students will be more likely to recognize the
specific rhetorical situations and potential genres towards which the prompts lead them. Additionally, by knowing that genres and rhetorical situations exist, students will be aware of the fact that writing is not invisible and that there are specific demands and constraints that are being placed upon them. Students who can see these demands, which appear clearly upon careful analysis of the writing prompt, will be better suited to choose from antecedent genres to respond, or if they lack any effective antecedent genres for the situation, as the right kinds of questions of the professor or TA that will allow them to figure out how to respond. In my analysis of these prompts, I will highlight things of which a rhetorically mindful student would be more conscious.

These writing prompts were provided to me by Roberta Kjesrud, the Writing Center Director at WWU. Of these prompts, I want to look at four, one from the Fine Arts, one from the Humanities, one from the Social Sciences, and one from the Hard Sciences. These prompts are by no means intended to be representative of anything beyond themselves, and should not be used to generalize anything about the disciplines, university composition, or writing proficiency courses. Instead, they provide sample rhetorical situations that students could encounter to demonstrate the values of the rhetorical mindfulness and genre-awareness that I am promoting here. One feature that I will not mention extensively is the physical classroom in which the classes associated with these writing prompts were held. I have not found that information; however, it would be another feature that could be uncovered with rhetorical mindfulness. This is appropriate, since genres constantly fluctuate along with the rhetorical situations across the university, I suggest that it is difficult (but not impossible), even with a larger study that reviews a statistically significant number of writing prompts, to say anything “general” about any discipline. Further, I suggest that what students need from
FYC, and what it can provide them with, is the tools to be able to find their own way into the various rhetorical situations that they will encounter. In this chapter, I will cite from these writing prompts at length, but they can be found in their entirety in the Appendix.

I want to say one more word about writing prompts before I begin to look at them specifically. Writing prompts provide a somewhat unique type of rhetorical situation. Many rhetorical situations provide very little guidance to the individual who must inhabit them. For instance, when I order at a restaurant, I am not provided with guidelines as to how to order (except for the menu). Likewise, when I write an email to my friend, or my professor, or a stranger, I do not have a set of guidelines that tell me how to compose the email. I must figure out for myself by looking at samples, thinking about the features of the rhetorical situation, and think about past emails that I have written or read from other people. Since I have written hundreds or thousands of emails to various people, I am somewhat comfortable with inhabiting that rhetorical situation. However, writing prompts constrain the rhetorical situation by providing various guidelines that are designed to help students choose specific genres out of all the potential genres that could be inhabited. These guidelines range instructions on superficial features of the specific genres to deeper, substantive features. Writing prompts, in a way, seek to simulate the kinds of genres present in the discipline from which they are produced, allowing students to get their feet wet in the genres of the discipline without having to figure everything out for themselves. One could think of writing prompts as training wheels. In this way, writing prompts can be tremendously valuable tools for students if they have the rhetorical mindfulness and genre-awareness necessary to see the latent matrices of the rhetorical situation they represent.
To move into a discussion of the writing prompts, I will begin with the prompt titled “Research Assignment” from *Art History 490: Exhibition Theory and Practice* in Winter 2008. This writing prompt is one of the shorter prompts, and a large portion (almost half) of the total word count addresses plagiarism, including an extended citation from the Western Libraries and University Judicial Affairs Website. Immediately, a rhetorically mindful student would recognize that this rhetorical situation takes the issue of plagiarism very seriously and it might be wise to do a bit of research as to what plagiarism is exactly if the student does not already have that knowledge from antecedent genres. Furthermore, a rhetorically mindful student could see that this issue of plagiarism is related to student conduct in general, which is a university wide concern. Breaches in student conduct, including plagiarism, come with significant punishments. This means, in terms of the rhetorical situation, that at the *place* of the university, the genres that students can inhabit are limited by a specific code of conduct which includes an interdiction of plagiarism. The rhetorically mindful student would then be able to make the choice whether to plagiarize or not based on the consequences of violating that genre feature. In this case, students could see that this feature is one of the inviolable ones.

The writing prompt continues:

**Due: Tuesday February 19, at the beginning of class**

**Format (for each paper):** 12-point font, double-or 1.5-spaced, approx. 750-1000 words (approx 3-4 pages), plus a bibliography

**Citation style:** Chicago, APA, or MLA, but **BE CONSISTENT!!**

**Number of sources (for each paper):** 4, either web-based or hard-copy (can also include data from Western Gallery file or artist or dealer interviews).
Must be the best possible sources: **NO WIKIPEDIA OR ANY OTHER SUPERFICIAL SOURCE!!**

**Late work will lose 5 points/day/project**

***Do not recycle these papers—they will form the bases for your wall texts***

This writing prompt is broken into three clear sections. The first section details structural requirements (or the physical constraints) of the assignment, the second section describes the thinking move required, and the third section provides a complete breakdown of the grading calculations. The first section begins with the due date. This suggests that a major part of the rhetorical situation that must be addressed is the temporal. Within any rhetorical situation the rhetor has a limited amount of time to respond to the exigencies and negotiate the various forces at work therein. For the example of the “restaurant order genre,” the patience of the server and the client’s discomfort at making the server wait define the temporal limit. The rhetorical situation that calls for a novel, on the other hand, might be limited temporally by the patience of the author or the deadlines of the publisher. Since these writing prompts stem from courses that, at WWU, are limited to about 11 weeks, more stringent deadlines exist within the rhetorical situation. The prominence of the due date on this writing assignment could highlight to a mindful student that perhaps the professor who created the assignment wants to make sure that the students don’t forget. This implies that the professor has likely encountered many students attempting to turn in late work, and therefore has likely already heard all of the excuses (and perhaps has little patience for them, as suggested by the emphasis of the due date).
The rest of this first section details the “Format…Citation style…[and required] Number of sources.” Of the commonalities across disciplines, structural requirements including formatting, grammar requirements, number of sources, etc. was the most prevalent. A rhetorically mindful student might recognize the very clear contrast that exists between this structural section and the next section, which defines the necessary content, or “thinking moves,” required by assignment. The bold font, short chunks of text, and position at the beginning of the writing prompt (the position of second greatest emphasis after the end of the document) draw the attention to this section and make it considerably easier for the reader to comprehend the structural demands. Again, the rhetorically mindful student would recognize the difference between the two sections and begin to figure out how to negotiate the demands of both with the resources within his or her internal latent matrix of antecedent genres. Here, also, the number of sources and the location to find sources is emphasized whereas how to interact with source texts does not appear until the next section.

The second section of this writing prompt is less accessible:

For this assignment, you will conduct research on the two objects with which you will be working for our exhibition. Your research will cover 4 general areas: the facts of the artist’s life and artistic practices; the technical aspects of the work (the media, the technique—engraving, lithograph—used); a visual analysis (subject matter/theme and composition); and the contexts within which they were created (e.g., symbolic meanings, specifics of commission, how typical this kind of work is for the artists, settings in which they were originally viewed, controversies over authenticity, etc.). You will be graded
This section is a fairly large block of text, and unlike the first section, it lacks the same kinds of emphasis on important information. The first sentence provides a general overview of the assignment and defines the evidence that the students will have to observe, interpret and compose upon. This writing prompt directs students to specific exoteric objects thereby limiting the need for the students to figure out what space they might connect to in their composition. The rhetorically mindful student can recognize that the evidence of this prompt includes “two objects,” so it might be valuable to see how these objects reside in space, how the student renders them in place, and how others have rendered them to provide “revalued” perspectives. The following sentence explains how the student should interpret and compose the exoteric. This prompt asks students to discuss the context in which the object was produced, the materiality of the object, the semantic content of the object, and finally the way the object—once produced—interacted with the world. This provides the student with several features that should be present in the genre nexus that he or she will inhabit. Genre awareness, particularly if students then look at sample texts that respond to the same prompt, will help the students see these features clearly. Furthermore, this kind of analysis seems very much like rhetorical analysis in the sense that this prompt asks the student to discuss the way the object makes meaning in the world. Awareness of this feature can let the student look to his or her antecedent genres for past experience with this kind of analysis. This second section ends with an explanation that the students’ writing “will be graded on thoroughness of research, effective use of sources, and articulate use of writing.”
assignment, specifically, to earn a grade that will serve the student in the future. The rhetorically mindful student can see this emphasis on evaluation and grading, become conscious of its ubiquity across the university, and thereby, gain some greater understanding of the nature of the space of the university and how it must be inhabited.

The three main features that make up the grade on this assignment begin with research. Research links with the observation and interpretation procedures of inhabiting a rhetorical situation. Observation includes the ability to interact with the right quantity and type of evidence, and interpretation includes the ability to make meaning, or gain an understanding of that evidence. The next somewhat general command refers to the remaining procedures of composition including the first and second-order semiological system. The meaning that the student develops from interpretation must “effectively” appear in the genre that the student inhabits its text. Finally, the student must be “articulate,” which seems to be another way of suggesting the necessity of Standard English and grammatical “correctness.”

In the final section, which might be one of the most valuable features of this prompt because it highlights the relative value of each part, the prompt lays out the number of points possible for each feature of the text that the genre nexus of this rhetorical situation:

**Grading for each project:**

Introduction and conclusion: 5 points

Body: 15 points

1. Artist’s life and practice (what did s/he learn where, what did s/he focus on artistically (subjects, media), what types of compositions did s/he favor, what is recognized about her/ his career, etc.): 5 points
2. Technical aspects of the work (media, technique)

3. Visual analysis (subject matter, elements of composition): 20 points

4. Contextual analysis (political, religious, commercial, economic contexts, underlying symbolic meanings, whichever apply): 10 points

Syntax, grammar, and format: 5 points

TOTAL: 60 points

Grading breakdowns are useful for rhetorical awareness because it allows students to see the relative importance of each of the constraints of the rhetorical situation. In this assignment, it is interesting to note that 50 out of 60 possible points depend upon the student successfully inhabiting an effective genre and producing the proper text in response to the long, complex sentence in the middle of part two. The point distribution suggests that the thinking move described in section two of the prompt is the main “work” that is to be done in this genre. However, since the main thinking move appears in a position of low emphasis in the prompt, students run the risk of missing it. This does not suggest that the professor is trying to hide things, but rather that the move is likely already naturalized and to a certain degree invisible. Students may or may not have naturalized the discipline, but either way, the prompt does a fairly effective job of hiding the main feature for which the students’ responses will be evaluated. Only, at most, 5 out of 60 possible points for this assignment depend upon the first section of the prompt. This is interesting because the portion of the prompt that is highly visible and highly accessible counts for less than 10% of the students’ total grade for each project.
The second prompt that I will look at is titled “Canada: A Historical Survey Essay” for History 277 in Fall 2004. This writing prompt begins with the basic information about the rhetorical situation:

**Due:** Nov 29 at beginning of class (essays will be accepted earlier)

**Length:** 6-7 pages (2200-2500 words), exclusive of footnotes and bibliography

**Weighting:** 40% - The late penalty is 5% per day, including each day of the weekend.

Extensions will not be granted retroactively.

This prompt also begins by setting the temporal limit for the rhetorical situation and the physical limits of the text produced. Also, by explaining the percent of the total course grade represented by this assignment, the writing prompt demonstrates how this rhetorical situation fits into the course as a whole. These parameters define the rhetorical situation to a strict time, kind of text required, and relationship to the course as a whole. The rhetorically mindful student will recognize these superficial features of the rhetorical situation and then focus his or her attention to the next section which addresses the substantive features.

This prompt addresses these substantive concerns by guiding the students’ meaning making with a series of questions that they can choose from. To respond to one of these questions the students “must begin [their] essay with a clear thesis that answers the assignment questions, [they] must support [their] thesis by developing an argument that is interpretive and analytical rather than narrative or descriptive, and [they] must support each point in [their] argument with evidence documented with footnotes” (1). This suggests several things: first, since this demand is bold-faced then it implies that it is of the utmost
importance. Next, the entire student text must be unified around a common claim that answers one of the simulated rhetorical problems provided by the prompt. This “thesis statement” implies that the student should focus on developing an answer to the question instead complicating the question with contradictory evidence. One problem that could arise from this prompt for students who do not recognize the difference between this rhetorical situation and antecedent genres is that by focusing on the thesis, the student risks writing a five-paragraph essay. Rhetorical mindfulness would allow students to see any potential similarities and differences between the two. They might also see that the main claim must be argumentative instead of descriptive. This focus highlights the importance of the procedure of interpretation. This interpretation must be supported by evidence, which implies that the students must be able to observe the evidence clearly enough to be able to link it to a particular claim. The fact that the thesis is supported by evidence may seem unimportant. However, it implies that the thesis is stable and primary, and the evidence serves the thesis. This seems to be a common thread across the writing prompts, and it is somewhat problematic because it privileges imposing meaning above interpreting the exoteric in the rhetorical situation. This is somewhat reminiscent of Fish’s students who were able to impose poetic meaning upon the list of names that Fish had written on the board. I will discuss further the problems with this assumption in the next chapter when I address FYC pedagogy.

The most telling aspect of “Canada: A Historical Survey Essay” is the amount of attention it pays to sources. Sources are so important to the rhetorical situation that this writing prompt simulates that the most visible line on the first page of the prompt appears:

**RESEARCH: If you do not follow the instructions regarding sources, you may receive a grade of zero with no opportunity to rewrite.**
This threat states directly that not only will the student fail the paper but also likely fail the class, since the paper makes up 40% of the student’s overall grade. By focusing the attention on the use of sources, this writing prompt balances the focus on the thesis as that which unifies and drives the paper with the focus on the exoteric or the evidence that makes the thesis valid—or at least makes the thesis demonstrable. The remainder of the writing prompt provides extensive bibliographies to correspond with each question. Rhetorically mindful students would see the way the prompt constrains their interaction with the exoteric, specifically by controlling the kind of sources they might use to make their meaning. Understanding this would help students recognize the implication that some sources are useful and others are not. A particularly savvy student might take it upon him or herself to figure out what exactly makes a source useful so as to be better prepared to find sources to respond to future rhetorical situations in that discipline.

Here it will be useful to look at exactly how this prompt asks students to use sources:

You must use both primary and secondary source material for your research. The primary sources must form the basis of your research and must provide the bulk (at least three-quarters) of your evidence. The secondary sources must provide background and historical context and may provide more evidence to support and/or further elucidate your argument. *Analysis must be your own.*

Most of the source material that a student can look at must come from primary sources. Primary sources are original historical documents rather than scholars’ responses to them. This privileges the writer’s analytical skills rather than their dialogic skills. Instead of being asked to respond to a conversation, which is a common metaphor in the English department, students responding to this prompt must write about (instead of talking to) historical
documents and not the other scholarship in the field. This is a useful thing to recognize because many students are familiar with the concept of entering into conversation with secondary sources, a move that is emphasized in English 101. Rhetorical mindfulness and genre awareness will help students avoid making the mistake of spending too much time in conversation with other texts.

The final passage that I wish to address from this writing prompt is the fourth guideline about using sources that reads, “If you wish to use additional sources that are not on the list, you must clear them with me first.” In this way the writing prompt exerts significant control over what kinds of sources the student might locate in the rhetorical situation and where in the space of the exoteric (within texts) this rhetorical situation can reside. Students with sufficient genre awareness could recognize these spaces and then learn to find and inhabit these spaces without instructor assistance. This writing prompt is long and perhaps overwhelming to some students, but again it highlights the importance of students developing rhetorical mindfulness and genre-awareness to recognize what a prompt is asking them and how to inhabit a rhetorical situation effectively.

The third prompt that I will look at is titled “Research Paper Assignment” for Psychology 301: Overview of Research Methods in Winter 2012. This writing prompt emphasizes a normalization of the rhetorical situation, the temporal limits of the situation, and the structural requirements of the text. These three emphases appear in boldface text: “Everyone is required to write on this general topic…Remember to number in APA format, and staple your pages…A hard copy of your paper is due on Friday, March 2 at the beginning of class (1PM, not 5pm, not 12 midnight).” The first requirement demonstrates an effort to normalize the rhetorical situation. While most writing prompts do
this somewhat, the rhetorically mindful student could recognize this constraint. If students are expected to enter a set of highly normalized rhetorical situations, then the students would benefit from paying very close attention to the specifications of the rhetorical situation as presented in the prompt. From this general topic, the students “have a great deal of flexibility in developing [their] specific research hypotheses.” In other words, the writing prompt fixes the specific evidence (the “experience of self-evaluative emotions” and its predictors) that the students must first observe and then interpret. After that, the students are left with a great deal of freedom to interpret the exoteric in accordance to how they see it. In other words, the students are asked to generate claims that they can then test against the evidence. This implies that the claim comes first and then is tested by evidence; however, it also suggests that the claim responds to the evidence in a cooperative way. The dialectic here is similar to that which occurs between space and Discourse to construct place. However, in this case the dialectic is between evidence and claims. If we think of evidence as a feature of space and claims as a feature of Discourse (since Discourse, by being ideological, does influence the kinds of claims we can make), then the relationship between the two dialectics is illuminating. Students who have experienced an FYC course that reveals to students the operation of Discourse through the development of genre awareness are in a position to see the relation between the two and try to locate the most effective discursive response, or more accurately, generic response to the rhetorical situation.

The complex relationship between the constraints and freedom in this prompt could produce some confusion. Students could have trouble matching this prompt up with antecedent genres, but a mindful student could then ask the useful questions as to how to negotiate between the restrictions and freedoms of the prompt. As with all the other prompts,
the temporal limits and structural conventions call forth the most direct and strict demand of the writing prompt.

As a writing prompt in the social sciences, “Research Paper Assignment” asks students to work within a conventional IMRDS format common to the social sciences. This is a critical feature that cannot be overlooked. While all students will see this feature, rhetorically mindful students could look at the formatting restriction and appreciate how that affects the potential genres that they might inhabit. This format is also important because it implies a specific epistemology that allows the rhetor to reflect the process of constructing rhetoric, from observation to materialization, in the formal features of the paper. IMRDS stands for Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Summary. The first three sections focus on the observational and the beginning of the interpretive procedures in the construction of rhetoric. The Introduction provides an explanation of the context in which the study resides, allowing the reader a glimpse of the rhetorical situation that called this text into being. From there the rhetor is required to move to Methods, which discusses the way in which the results were collected, or in other words, how the student went about observing the exoteric subject of study. The Results section provides the actual material produced by the methods and represents the student’s observation of the exoteric. This portion demonstrates the place that the student has constructed out of the space of the rhetorical situation. The final two sections address the rhetor’s interpretation and signifying of the place. This particular prompt only requires the students to write Introduction and Methods sections for studies that could later be carried out.

While this writing prompt spends much time discussing the nature of the hypothesis that should drive students’ research, like the previous two writing prompts, it also spends a
large percentage of the prompt discussing the use sources (about 2/3rds). This is significant because use of “sources,” of one form or another, seems to be important in much “academic writing,” in the sense that “sources” are the aspect of the exoteric to which this kind of writing frequently responds. Rhetorical mindfulness allows the student to see this as a common feature across the places of the university. This insight is valuable because it provides students with a better understanding of what antecedent genres to draw on (specifically those that required the use of sources). The explanation of sources in this writing prompt appears as follows:

5. References

At least 10 high-quality sources (e.g., peer-reviewed journal articles – both research articles and review articles are OK). Ask your TA or Dr. Goodvin if you are not sure about the quality or applicability of a source. All sources must be incorporated and cited appropriately in the text of the paper. References must be in proper APA format (6th edition). The target article can count as one of your references, although you do not have to use it.

Note: the 10 references need to be relevant enough to be sensibly cited in the text, but they do not all need to focus on the specific topic of your study. Depending on your specific topic, there may not be 10 previous articles that are directly relevant. If so, find articles that are indirectly relevant (i.e., that support your general argument if not your specific hypotheses). For example, if you want to test the relationship between two variables in a unique population, some of your articles could address why that population might be different from the typical population used in the target article.
Note: you should not cite works based on a secondary source (i.e., use “as cited in…”; see APA Manual). If a work is important enough to cite, you should obtain, read, and cite the original primary source. If you really want to cite something that the WWU library does not have, you can obtain a copy via Interlibrary Loan (ILLiad), provided you do your library research according to the recommended timetable, not at the last minute. Real psychology papers almost never cite secondary sources. ONE EXCEPTION: for the purposes of this paper, it is OK to cite secondary sources for some standard measurement instruments (e.g., for-sale questionnaires that would be expensive for you to obtain). However, make sure you understand what the instrument measures. Only the secondary source goes in the reference list, not the primary source (see APA Manual) – and thus only the secondary source counts as one of your 10 references.

Note: any claim that goes beyond uncontroversial common knowledge needs to be referenced. For example, statements such as “Women are more emotional than men,” or “Parenting style is the most important influence in children’s development” would need to be referenced, unless you make it clear that this is your personal opinion.

The first thing that I wish to point out is the emphasis on “high-quality sources;” this theme is carried throughout the discussion of sources and appears in the other writing prompts from various disciplines. This concern for the quality of sources makes sense if we think of disciplines as Discourses because Discourses contain epistemologies for their members. In the same way, disciplines define the appropriate sources of knowledge for their
members. The fact that the writing prompt encourages students to check the quality of sources with the TA or professor is telling, because it implies that students have not yet acquired the necessary epistemologies to fully enter the rhetorical situations of the discipline without guidance. Students with rhetorical mindfulness will be more likely to recognize the rationale behind seeking guidance from a more experienced member of the social network, and these students will learn more quickly to recognize the characteristics that make a good source. This knowledge will help students more effectively locate good sources in other rhetorical situations within the discipline. These references or sources that the writing prompt encourages students to interact with in the rhetorical situation include both primary and secondary sources and may be the subject matter of the inquiry, or the exoteric, or may be lenses that can help the student interpret or render the results of their study. This prompt also suggests that citation of secondary sources is not a standard characteristic of psychology as a discipline. Once again, the mindful student could see the difference between a dialogic approach (attempting to enter the conversation with other texts) and a more individual, analytical approach.

The final writing prompt that I will be analyzing is untitled and comes from Biology 439: Symbiosis from Fall 2006. Unlike the other writing prompts, this one includes an evaluation rubric to help the student understand how evaluation will occur. This is particularly useful because a rhetorically mindful student will be able to analyze the rubric along with the demands within the writing prompt itself to attempt to understand the rhetorical situation and approximate an effective genre. This writing prompt asks explicitly for the student to write a “literature review.” The mindful student might investigate the standards associated with this normalized type of text, and from there try to figure out the
genre that caused it to be composed and the rhetorical situation called the genre into being.

The prompt explains to the student:

> Writing a literature review paper will help you synthesize information on a particular topic and critically evaluate this information. This exercise goes beyond the material covered in lecture and class discussions. Along the way you will develop better skills in reading the primary literature, critical thinking, and in developing arguments. Your goal is to create an original work that embodies your perspectives and interpretations of the topic. You might consider using the final paper as a writing sample to give to prospective employers, graduate admissions committees. (1)

This prompt begins by addressing the interpretive procedure of signifying, requiring students to observe their topic across a number of texts and place a specific meaning upon their observations. Next, the writing prompt includes some limitations on the variety of sources that the student might bring into the rhetorical situation. Specifically, the student must bring in evidence “beyond material covered in lecture and class discussion” (1). By not allowing the student to use material already covered, this writing prompt forces students to bring new, unfamiliar material into the rhetorical situation. Within this context, students are asked to construct rhetoric that explains the exoteric that they have analyzed.

The writing prompt points to the specific skills, for which the students possess antecedent genres (ie. they all have ways of reading), necessary to embody an appropriate genre. The writing prompt suggests that one main topic should focus these procedures of observation and interpretation. To select the topic the prompt tells students to “[b]e flexible, you might have to abandon a topic. Recognizing a good topic requires a lot of thought. Ask me for guidance as you think about different topics you might explore.” In contrast to the
other prompts that contained various sorts of threats, this prompt offers kind advice, which I
would argue is useful for students who are already being asked to enter into unfamiliar
rhetorical situations (not a comfortable thing to do). A mindful student who recognizes the
flexibility of the topic could feel the freedom to allow their claims to arise from their
experience of the evidence. Offering this freedom relieves the pressure that students feel,
particularly those coming from high-pressure, standardized testing, environments. If students
do not achieve this kind of mindfulness, they do risk approaching this rhetorical situation in
the same way they would a five-paragraph essay. This could have consequences that a
rhetorically mindful student might not have to encounter.

Again, we see that this writing prompt, like the others, requires students to interact
with both evidence and claims. While differences exists in how these prompts ask students to
view the relationship between claims and evidence, the relation between the two seems to be
something common across the university. Rhetorical mindfulness and genre-awareness
would allow students to begin to see this and then ask how each new rhetorical situation asks
them to address claims and evidence. It is also useful to note here that this writing prompt
provides students with more authority over what sources they might choose. This increases
the amount of agency the student has over the rhetorical situation. For this reason, genre-
awareness and rhetorical mindfulness helps students control that agency and figure out
exactly how they want to activate the genre nexus therein.

Once students find the resources the writing prompt asks them to “[s]ummarize the
information in your own words as you read (avoid plagiarism). Form your own conclusions
based on your review of the data in the paper (you may disagree with the author(s)!). Check
to make sure you are reading papers relevant to your main topic; it is easy to be distracted by
other topics” (1). The process of summary forces students to internalize the material in the
text, and from that internalized material students must make interpretations to form their own
conclusions. The fact that the materials students are asked to respond to in a literature review
are texts adds another layer of mediation in the process of constructing rhetoric. Close
reading and analysis of texts also forces students to activate the texts and look into the genre
that produced them. Students that are conscious of these various activities that they must
perform to inhabit the genre nexus within the rhetorical situation will do so more effectively.

After discussing the rhetorical situation that the students must enter, this last prompt
asks students to write in a specific format. This format is designed to guide the entire process
of rhetorical construction from observation to materialization. In two sections the students
are asked to relate back to the thesis statement, or the main claim, that they are making on the
literature that they have analyzed. The main section of the text that students are expected to
produce.

[W]ill summarize and integrate information from the primary literature and
will focus on a critical evaluation of the literature. The literature reviewed
should be relevant, and [their] interpretation and synthesis of material
emphasized over simple reporting of the facts. Simple summarization and
quotes of material from cited papers are not acceptable.” (2)

The structure presented in the writing prompt guides students to begin by observing the texts,
then to move to interpretation and evaluation. Students need to recognize what this prompt is
asking them to perform, and how they might look to antecedent genres, or ask appropriate
questions to do so. In the evaluation rubric, this process of interpretation and evaluation
makes up half of the entire grade for the paper. Of the remaining 50% of the grade, half of it
(a total of 25%) depends upon the quality of the information that the student finds. This means that the procedures of observation and interpretation account for 75% of the total grade for the paper. Observation and interpretation are important aspects of composition because they root the rhetorical situation in place, and indirectly, in space.

Students who possess rhetorical mindfulness could begin to see the commonality and difference across these different writing prompts. By having this meta-cognitive understanding about these different rhetorical situations, students can begin developing toolkits for entering new rhetorical situations more effectively. The first thing that a student might recognize is that these writing prompts attempt to lead them to specific potential genres that respond to the rhetorical situations. By knowing what genre is, students will recognize that the writing prompts are not just calling for the production of a text, but for the students to inhabit a specific generic identity. Recognizing the existence of rhetorical situations and genres will allow students to begin to look for them and for the most effective ways to inhabit them. The more experience students have in inhabiting genres, and in being self-aware when doing so, the more useful antecedent genres the students will have in their latent matrices. This provides them with more choice in future situations.

Rhetorical mindfulness will also provide students with an understanding of how space and place affect the rhetorical situation. This involves developing map-knowledge and place-sense. Once students can see and feel the exoteric around them, once they learn how to look outside themselves, students can imitated the nature writers and “revalue” nature for themselves so they avoid becoming too accustomed to the spaces and places, allowing them to become invisible. By rereading the exoteric, students will gain more perspectives, which allows them to gain a better understanding of the exoteric. This is valuable not only for their
responses to the rhetorical situations, but also for the exoteric itself. If individuals cease to forget that it’s there, they are also less likely to neglect or harm it.

Likewise, rhetorical mindfulness and genre-awareness allows students to see the constraints within the rhetorical situation. The writing prompts themselves usually explicitly spell out the more important constraints, but these meta-cognitive skills help students understand why these constraints exist, exactly where they are, and which ones are violable and which are inviolable, students are more capable of responding effectively to the situation. Next, almost all of the writing prompts asked students to interact with sources or some aspect of the exoteric. Recognition of this is important because in a general sense, the members of the university, in very different ways, seek to explain why some piece of the world works the way it does and humans fit into it. Knowing this, students will be able to maintain a common theme in mind as they take disparate courses. But students are not immediately asked to do this alone. To one degree or another, the instructor acts as an authority to help put students in touch with the *spaces* and *places* in which they will find the materials of their observation.

It seems clear that framing FYC as a rhetoric course that focuses on developing students genre-awareness and rhetorical mindfulness could provide tremendously valuable tools for students as they encounter new constantly fluctuating genres. Once again, these concepts of awareness and mindfulness are not new. However, I have focused on the borderland between genre theory and ecocriticism to further discuss how genre-awareness and rhetorical mindfulness might be applied to FYC. By incorporating concepts from ecocriticism, including map-knowledge and place-sense, FYC could focus these meta-cognitive skills on the role that *space* and *place* play in defining the rhetorical situation. We frequently discuss the importance of audience in composition. However, this attention to
*place* is equally important because while rhetoric, language use, and therefore composition, are human constructs and mediate almost all human interaction with the external world, these constructs, or more importantly, the Discourses that define these constructs develop out of the historical interaction between people and their environments. This means that the *spaces* of composition, which rhetorical mindfulness reveals, play a key role in the constraints upon the rhetorical situation and therefore the potential genres that can be inhabited. I am not arguing that we should solely teach awareness of *place* and *space* in FYC. However, I am suggesting that along with genre and Discourse awareness, we might also add the concepts from ecocriticism allowing students to become mindful of the entire rhetorical situation and how it exists in the world.
Notes

1. This means that a text can be anything that the rhetor produces that becomes part of the exoteric or everything that exists spatially outside of the “self.” In contrast, rhetoric is both the process of constructing and the meaning that is constructed that may or may not have a physical artifact associated with it.

2. By “natural,” I mean a thing that exists unquestioned and normalized. For instance, when we speak our native language we generally do so “naturally” without having to consciously think about how to do so. This being said, something natural may be of human construction. For things not made by people, I will use the term “non-human environment,” or “environment” for short. For the parts of the exoteric that are constructed through human agency, I’ll use the term “humanly constructed environment” or “constructed environment” for short.

3. I use the term “process” but want to resist the link to process based pedagogy. While writing and constructing rhetoric in general is a process in the sense that it involves a series of procedures that are followed sequentially, I do not want to imply that there is only one process or that teaching writing process is a useful pedagogy. Students will follow a process when they write for us, but the goal of composition pedagogy should be to help students become aware of all of the procedures involved in inhabiting a rhetorical situation so that awareness can become a bridge into other rhetorical situations. Frankly, each student will have a very different process and the goal should be to help students align their process with the exigencies of the rhetorical situation.

4. I want to highlight the difference between “appropriate responses” and “effective responses.” An appropriate response implies that the rhetorical situation has a set of
responses from which the rhetor can choose. An effective response is similar in that it implies useful and non-useful responses to the rhetorical situation; however, since the response is rhetorical, and rhetoric is meaning constructed to accomplish something, effective seems the better term because it also implies that it accomplishes the goals of the rhetor. In both views, the rhetor has a choice to make, but appropriate implies that the rhetorical situation has in it presupposed useful responses, whereas effective implies that the rhetor has the choice of how to fill the situation. One view sees the rhetorical situation as a puzzle with a missing piece in which the rhetor must create the piece to fit, and the other view sees the rhetorical situation as the same puzzle but with a set of possible pieces to fill that puzzle. I suggest the former is more appropriate because it provides the rhetor with greater agency and focuses the concern on what the rhetor seeks to accomplish.

5. I will use the term “composition” to refer to the process of constructing rhetoric. “Composition” may be something of a misnomer as it implies producing something “new.” I am skeptical as to the possibility of producing something truly “new,” and it may be more useful to think of the term as an act of “remixing” or (re)producing preexisting rhetoric in new ways.

6. I want to make a distinction between “Discourse” and “Discourse Community.” Discourse refers to the abstract set of codes and values that define a discrete social network. Discourse Community, which is a problematic term because it presupposes a homogenous and discrete social group, refers to the group of people whose “beings” are defined by a specific Discourse. The boundaries between Discourses seem too hazy to really accurately define a discrete community, and that these communities are, as Benedict Anderson suggests in his book *Imagined Communities*, largely imaginary.
7. I use the term “artificial” in the least negative way possible. By it, I do not imply “fake,” but rather I mean something of human construction. A building is artificial in the sense that buildings do not exist “naturally,” but once constructed they are absolutely “real” and become part of the exoteric.

8. “Myth is a system, particular in that it constructs itself from the semiological chain that exists before it: it is a second-order semiological system.” (My translation.)

9. These features of empiricism are part of the mythology of science and presuppose a certain human capacity for observation. The danger for science appears when it fails to recognize that its epistemology is not objective or absolute.

10. “Antecedent genre” refers to any genre that a particular individual has inhabited in the past. This is critical because, while antecedent genres provide a set of models that help people inhabit future rhetorical situations, they also are a major challenge for students, particularly young, novice students who fail to recognize the differences between new rhetorical situations and their antecedent genres. A prime example of this is students who write five paragraph essays for their FYC courses.

11. I say necessary because people must, by nature of our physicality, inhabit space in some way and that is done through a medium of rhetoric. Since people are constantly inhabiting a genre, this negotiation between the latent matrices is constantly recomposed, and inhabited genres are constantly fluctuating as people move through space and time.

12. I use the term “Lore” for its significance in composition studies. However, I believe that “praxis” or “modus operandi” would be equally appropriate terms.

13. Transfer theory discusses the ways in which students carry whatever skills and knowledge they gain from one class to another class. Currently, a heated debate rages over
what transfer is, what transfers, and how FYC courses might better facilitate transfer. I will not address the issue of transfer here, as I lack sufficient hard data to say anything substantial. However, this could be an avenue of future research.

14. I think that the question of class in terms of rhetorical mindfulness would be an excellent avenue of future research, but I shall not pursue that line of inquiry here.
Works Cited


Wardle, Elizabeth. “‘Mutt Genres’ and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University.” *CCC*. 60.4 (2009): 765-789. JSTOR. Web. 20 February 2012.
Appendix
AH490-Research Assignment (2 projects, 30%=120 points total)

Due: Tuesday February 19, at the beginning of class

Format (for each paper): 12-point font, double- or 1.5-spaced, approx. 750-1000 words (approx 3-4 pages), plus a bibliography

Citation style: Chicago, APA, or MLA, but BE CONSISTENT!!

Number of sources (for each paper): 4, either web-based or hard-copy (can also include data from Western Gallery file or artist or dealer interviews). Must be the best possible sources: NO WIKIPEDIA OR ANY OTHER SUPERFICIAL SOURCE!!!

Late work will lose 5 points/day/project

***Do not recycle these papers—they will form the bases for your wall texts***

For this assignment, you will conduct research on the two objects with which you will be working for our exhibition. Your research will cover 4 general areas: the facts of the artist’s life and artistic practices; the technical aspects of the work (the media, the technique—engraving, lithograph—used); a visual analysis (subject matter/theme and composition); and the contexts within which they were created (e.g., symbolic meanings, specifics of commission, how typical this kind of work is for the artists, settings in which they were originally viewed, controversies over authenticity, etc.). You will be graded on thoroughness of research, effective use of sources, and articulate use of writing.

Grading for each project:

Introduction and conclusion: 5 points

Body:

1. Artist’s life and practice (what did s/he learn where, what did s/he focus on artistically (subjects, media), what types of compositions did s/he favor, what is recognized about her/ his career, etc.): 15 points

2. Technical aspects of the work (media, technique) 5 points

3. Visual analysis (subject matter, elements of composition) 20 points

4. Contextual analysis (political, religious, commercial, economic contexts, underlying symbolic meanings, whichever apply): 10 points

Syntax, grammar, and format: 5 points

TOTAL: 60 points

Plagiarism:

What is plagiarism? In a nutshell, it is stealing someone else’s ideas and presenting them as your own. Following is a quotation from the Western Libraries and University Judicial Affairs websites:

“Plagiarism is presenting as one's own in whole or in part the argument, language, creations, conclusions, or scientific data of another without explicit acknowledgement. Examples include but are not limited to: using another person's written or spoken words; using information from a World Wide Web site, CD-ROM or other electronic sources; using...
statistics, graphs, charts and facts without acknowledging the source of the ideas; using one's
own or substantially similar work, produced in connection with one course to fulfill a
requirement in another course without prior permission; or paraphrasing, which is using
someone else's argument without acknowledging the source by imitating the argument using
other words.”

This university takes academic dishonesty very seriously. Students caught plagiarizing can be
failed on the assignment in question, failed in the course as a whole, or be dismissed from the
university. Thus, make careful notations of which sources you are using and quotations or
paraphrased ideas from those sources. Developing a system for research will help you avoid
plagiarism.

For more info, see:
http://www.library.wwu.edu/ref/plagiarism.html
History 277  Canada: A Historical Survey  
Essay – Fall 2004

Due: Nov 29 at beginning of class (essays will be accepted earlier)
Length: 6-7 pages (2200-2500 words), exclusive of footnotes and bibliography
Weighting: 40% - The late penalty is 5% per day, including each day of the weekend.

Extensions will not be granted retroactively.

Assignment: Answer one of the questions listed, developing your own analysis based upon research from the sources listed below.

You must begin your essay with a clear thesis that answers the assignment question, you must support your thesis by developing an argument that is interpretative and analytical rather than narrative or descriptive, and you must support each point in your argument with evidence documented with footnotes.

Footnotes and bibliography must follow the Chicago style for the humanities. See your book, A Short Guide to Writing about History, or listings in the syllabus for help, particularly the Writing Center and, in reference or on reserve, Chicago or Turabian.

Instructions: For all essays, be sure you understand the broad and specific historical context of your enquiry. Carefully reread the relevant sections in The Structure of Canadian History. For more context and to find answers to specific questions, such as chronological, institutional or biographical information, see the section in your syllabus on “Canadian History Resources.” If you need more help, be sure to ask.

RESEARCH: If you do not follow the instructions regarding sources, you may receive a grade of zero with no opportunity to rewrite.

1. You must use both primary and secondary source material for your research. The primary sources must form the basis of your research and must provide the bulk (at least three-quarters) of your evidence. The secondary sources must provide background and historical context and may provide more evidence to support and/or further elucidate your argument. Analysis must be your own.

2. For each question, you must read at least 50 pages of primary source material, plus at least four scholarly secondary monographs. At least one of the monographs must be a book; the rest may be articles or sections of books. All materials are listed below.
3. You must read the 50 pages of primary material and the scholarly secondary material entirely, not merely a few selections or sections from them. You may (indeed, you are encouraged to) read more primary and secondary material from the attached list.

4. If you wish to use additional sources that are not on the list, you must clear them with me first. Be sure to use the “Finding Sources” section at the end of this handout. Do not use material from lectures. Do not use material from websites without consulting me first.

5. To help you understand the authorship and audience of your documents, be sure to read the introductions to them in the books or websites in which they are printed. However, do not count these introductions as part of the 50 required pages of primary documents.

6. The Structure of Canadian History is not a scholarly monograph and may not be counted as such. You may use it SPARINGLY to understand context and to fill in occasional details and identify historical characters, but not for analysis. No more than one-tenth of your evidence may come from Structure.

7. Read A Short Guide to Writing about History for help with research, writing and accepted scholarly conventions and style. In particular, note the section on “Avoiding plagiarism.” You are responsible for learning what plagiarism is and for avoiding it. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to see me.

8. All direct quotations from printed sources, including significant phrases, must be enclosed in quotation marks and footnoted according to the Chicago (Humanities) style. Quotations must be exactly as printed in the original, or modified according to Chicago style.

9. You should expect to have an approximate minimum of five to seven footnotes per page in addition to a bibliography in Chicago (Humanities) style. Footnotes must be provided for direct quotations as well as for summaries, information and ideas taken from another source. If in doubt, it is better to provide a footnote than to risk a charge of plagiarism.

10. To ensure I can identify your thesis, underline it or CAPITALIZE it or put it in bold print.

11. Type your essays (computers are available throughout the university), double-spaced, on one side of the paper only. On your title page, put your name, student number, course number, the number of the topic you have chosen, a title that reflects your thesis, and my name. Number your pages and staple your essays in the top left-hand corner. Do not use folders.
12. Keep a copy of your essay and all notes until your grade arrives from the Registrar.

ADVICE: Always read your sources, whether primary or secondary, with a mind that is open to what the sources reveal, both directly and indirectly. However, be sure also to read analytically, keeping in mind the author’s perspective, audience and purpose, and the historical context.

QUESTIONS & SOURCES: Most sources are on Reserve or in the Microform room in Wilson Library except for those in non-circulating journals. Not all journals are available at WWU, so you will need to order some articles on ILL. Be sure to do this early!

QUESTION # 1: Encounters between French Jesuits and Native peoples in the region known to the French as New France were recorded by the missionaries in a series of reports entitled the Jesuit Relations. Historians reading these reports have noted many similarities and differences in French and Native cultures, economies, and institutional structures, and in the ways both groups viewed the natural environment and ordered their lives and societies. Examine what the Jesuit Relations have to say before 1701 about three of the following topics: religion, warfare, trade, authority, health, environment, gender & family. Explain and account for the main differences and similarities in French and Native views on the three topics, including how each side viewed connections among the three topics. (Note - be specific about which Native groups and what locations and times you are examining. Be sure not to lump all Natives together. Note the differences that local conditions make, and be sure to account for developments over time.)

Primary source: Read at least 50 pages from the Jesuit Relations before 1701. In your bibliography, state specifically which pages you read. The Jesuit Relations (translated by Reuben Gold Thwaites) are available in full in a number of places:
- on microfiche in Wilson Library at E156 .L5 LAC 21463-90
- online at http://puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations/
- in the original French, online at www.canadiana.org

Excerpts are available in the following books:


Greer, Allan, ed. and intro. The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-
Secondary Sources: These scholarly monographs deal with aspects of the question:

Trager, Bruce  *Natives and Newcomers; Canada’s ‘Heroic Age’ Reconsidered* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1985)


Delage, Denys  *Bitter Feast: Amerindians and Europeans in Northeast North America, 1600-64* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press 1993

Supplementary secondary sources: These scholarly articles shed more specialized light:

**Relevant sections of:** Trudel, Marcel  *The beginnings of New France, 1524-1663.* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, c1973)

**Relevant sections of:** Eccles, W. J.  *Canada under Louis XIV, 1663-1701* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1964)

**Relevant sections of:** Trigger, Bruce  *Children of Aetaentsic: a history of the Huron People to 1660* Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987

Bruce G. Trigger  "The Deadly Harvest: Jesuit Missionaries Among the Huron" in Michael S. Cross and Gregory Kealey, eds.  *Economy and Society During the French Regime, to 1759* Toronto: McClelland and Stewart 1983


**QUESTION # 2:** Immigrants to British North America have recorded their experiences, concerns and observations about the people and places in their new
lives in Canada. Historians find these records useful in understanding the influences that marked emerging social relationships and the developing Canadian community. Examine letters from British immigrants in the 1830s, published in *English Immigrant Voices*, concentrating on what these letters reveal about the significance of economic position, work, cultural identity, politics, religion, gender, family relations and anything else the immigrants thought relevant in their decisions to immigrate and in their experiences in Canada. **What were the most significant influences in immigrants’ adjustments to Canada and why?** (Note - be specific about variations such as those of age, sex, origin, etc., among the immigrants, and about their settlement locations and times. Do not lump all immigrants nor all locations together. Be sure to account for developments over time.)

**Primary source:** Read at least 50 pages of letters from *English Immigrant Voices: Labourers’s Letters from Upper Canada in the 1830s*, edited by Wendy Cameron, *et al* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999). In your bibliography, state specifically which pages you read.

**Secondary Sources:** These scholarly monographs deal with aspects of the question:


**Supplementary secondary sources:** These scholarly articles shed more specialized light:

**Relevant parts of:** Way, Peter *Common Labour: Workers and the Digging of North American Canals, 1780-1860* Cambridge University Press 1993

**Relevant parts of:** Bilson, Geoffrey *A Darkened House: Cholera in Nineteenth-Century Canada* (U of T Press, 1980)


QUESTION # 3: When Canada began to take over the prairie west in the 1870s, it sent the North-West Mounted Police to bring law and order to the west and to ensure peaceful and orderly settlement. The Police (from inspectors to commissioners) reported their activities and observations with a candor that historians have found useful in assessing their relations with Natives and newcomers. Examine what the NWMP Official Reports have to say about relations among the Police, Natives, and the non-Native population, comparing and contrasting their observations in any period before the North-West Rebellion of 1885 with any period after it. What are the most important changes in the relationships before and after 1885 and why? (Note - be specific about which Native and non-Native groups, Police officers, and locations and times you are examining. Be careful not to lump all Natives, non-Natives or Police together. Note the differences that local conditions make, and account for developments over time.)

Primary source: Use at least 50 pages from the North-West Mounted Police Annual Reports, 1874-1889. In your bibliography, state specifically which pages you read. The Annual Reports are in the following books:


Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Report of the Commissioner of the North-West Mounted Police Force. Selections. The New West; being the official reports to

Secondary Sources: These scholarly monographs deal with aspects of the question:


Supplementary secondary sources: These scholarly articles shed more specialized light:


Relevant articles in: Barron, F. Laurie and James B. Waldram, eds. 1885 and After: Native Society in Transition Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre 1986


Betke, Carl "Pioneers and Police on the Canadian Prairies, 1884-1914" Historical Papers/Communications historiques 1980

QUESTION # 4: Women in late nineteenth-century Canada were expected to conduct their lives according to strict conventions, but historians have found letters and diaries of women that reveal a wide range of responses to the conventions. Examine the lives of the five Nova Scotia women whose letters and diaries between 1871 and 1881 are published in No Place Like Home, and consider at least three conventions. How, to what extent, and why did the five Nova Scotia women accept or challenge the conventions of the late nineteenth-century? (Note - be sure to explain the context by beginning your essay with a description, mainly from the secondary sources, of what conventions women were expected to follow. Then do not simply list each woman’s responses to the conventions, nor be satisfied with suggesting that it was simply a matter of personal choice, but search in their letters
and diaries for common threads, such as class, race, age, etc., that might provide a larger explanation of these women’s responses to conventional expectations.

**Primary source:** Use all the letters and diaries of Churchill (122-33), Butler (138-151), Richardson (156-166), MacDonald (172-186) and Connell (191-202) in *No Place Like Home: Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women, 1771-1938*, edited by M. Conrad, *et al.* (Halifax: Formac Publishing 1988)

**Secondary Sources:** These scholarly monographs deal with aspects of the question:


Brouwer, Ruth Compton *New Women for God: Canadian Presbyterian Women and India Missions, 1876-1914* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990


**Supplementary secondary sources:** These scholarly articles shed more specialized light:


Beattie, Betsy ““Obligation and opportunities: single Maritime women in Boston, 1870-1930” *Labour / Le Travail* 48 (Fall 2001) 283-285

**Relevant articles in:** Guildford, Janet and Suzanne Morton, eds. *Separate Spheres: Women’s Worlds in the 19th-Century Maritimes* Toronto: Copp Clark Irwin 1994
QUESTION # 5: When Canada fell into economic depression in the 1930s, governments and people suggested a wide range of solutions to the economic and social disaster. Historians examining the proposed solutions have debated the ideological and practical appeals of the various proposals in attempting to understand why the public did or did not support them. Examine three different proposals from the collection of documents in The Dirty Thirties. To what degree and why did any of the three proposed solutions to the economic depression gain widespread support during the 1930s? (Note - location and time are particularly important in this question, so be sure to explain the specific historical context in which each solution was proposed. Consider a wide range of explanation such as politics, ideology, local conditions, economics, etc.)

Primary source: Use at least 50 pages of documents from pages 398-552 in The Dirty Thirties: Canadians in the Great Depression, edited by Michiel Horn (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1972). In your bibliography, state specifically which pages you read.

Secondary Sources: These scholarly monographs deal with aspects of the question:


Finkel, Alvin The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1989

Supplementary secondary sources: These scholarly articles shed more specialized light:


Danysk, Cecilia "No Help for the Farm Help: The Farm Employment Plans of the 1930s in Prairie Canada" Prairie Forum 19:2 Fall 1994 231-251

**Relevant articles in:** Horn, Michiel, ed. *The Depression in Canada: Responses to Economic Crisis* Toronto: Copp Clark Longman 1988

**Relevant articles in:** Cook, Ramsay, ed. *Politics of Discontent* Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1967

**Relevant articles in:** Brennan, J. William "Building the Co-operative Commonwealth": essays on the democratic socialist tradition in Canada [Regina]: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1984.


**QUESTION # 6:** Women’s economic opportunities during the 1950s were considered to be greater than at any earlier time. Historians examining the lives of individual women have found, however, that despite the general economic prosperity of the decade, economic conditions and opportunities were uneven. Examine the collection of letters by Ruby Cress in *Haven’t Any News*. To what extent and why did Cress share in the general economic prosperity of the 1950s? (Note - Cress’s economic situation includes her ways of meeting her family’s needs and wants, and includes, for example, not just the job she had, but the social attitudes, family relationships, or the general pattern of economic development that made some jobs more available or more attractive to her than others, as well as the non-wage activities that formed part of her economic situation. Be sure to take into account a variety of considerations such race/ethnicity, age, local conditions, income/education level, local conditions, etc.)

**Primary source:** Use at least 50 pages of letters from *Haven’t any news: Ruby’s letters from the fifties* by Ruby Cress, ed. Edna Staebler (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995). In your bibliography, state specifically which pages you read.

**Secondary Sources:** These scholarly monographs deal with aspects of the question:


Parr, Joy *Domestic goods: the material, the moral, and the economic in the postwar years* Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

**Supplementary secondary sources:** These scholarly articles shed more specialized light:


Strong-Boag, Veronica “Canada’s Wage-earning Wives and the Construction of the Middle-Class, 1945-60" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 29:3 Fall 1994


**Relevant articles in:** Brand, Dionne, with the assistance of Lois De shield and the Immigrant Women’s Job Placement Centre *No burden to carry: narratives of Black working women in Ontario, 1920s to 1950s* Toronto: Women’s Press 1991


**Relevant articles in:** Strong-Boag, Veronica and Anita Clair Fellman, eds. *Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History* third edition Oxford University Press 1997

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**Question # 7: Other topics.** If you wish to write on a topic not listed above, you must clear your topic with me first, in the following steps: 1) learn something about your proposed topic and its context, 2) ensure sufficient primary and scholarly secondary material exists to write your essay, 3) meet with me by October 14th for a preliminary discussion to define and refine your topic, and 4) submit a prospectus and bibliography by October 28th. Such essays will only be accepted if you follow these steps.

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**GLOSSARY:**
**Primary** - refers to the raw materials that historians use to interpret the past. Usually, a primary document is one that was written at the time, or close to the time, of the historical event it describes, by someone who was connected in some way with the event. Examples include letters, diaries, memoirs, newspaper reports and government records.

**Secondary** - refers to a study based on the interpretation of primary documents. Usually, a secondary source is one that explains a historical event or phenomenon by examining the primary documents and using them as evidence to support a historical argument. In published collections of primary documents, the editor who collected the documents will often write an explanatory introduction to the documents. This introduction is a secondary, not a primary, source.

**Examples**: in Section Two in the Class Manual, the material entitled “Public Welfare Concerns” (pp 33-34) is secondary material because it interprets the primary documents following, such as the selections from Mandements, lettres pastorales et circulaires (entitled “Condemnation of Popular Practices” on pp 34-35), which is a document written by Quebec Bishops for parishioners during the French regime.

**Scholarly** - refers to a book or article that has been written by a professional historian who is trained in and follows the scholarly practices, conventions and standards of the profession. Some clues: it has (many) footnotes or endnotes of (usually) mainly primary sources and other scholarly monographs; it is published by a university press or by the scholarly branch of a trade press (eg, the Canadian Social History series by McClelland and Stewart); it is cited as a scholarly work in historiographical essays and in book reviews in scholarly journals. If it is mainly photographs it is unlikely to meet the criteria.

**Monograph** - a detailed, in-depth analytical examination of a small and specialised area of study, based mainly on the analysis of primary documents. A monograph can be an article or a book, and in some cases *might* be an introduction to a primary document. However, ‘monograph’ usually refers to a book-length study. It is not a general survey or overview (such as your textbook *Structures*); it is not a collection of articles (each one of which might be an article-length monograph); it is not a primary document or collection of documents. If it is mainly photographs it is unlikely to meet the criteria.

**FINDING SOURCES**

**Library sources on some topics are limited, so be sure to begin your research early.**
A common feature of above-average essays is a **first-rate** bibliography. Select your scholarly secondary sources **from among the most significant and most recent works in the field**; do not be satisfied with merely finding the required number of works on your topic. Be sure to use sources that deal with the situation in Canada unless you receive specific permission from me to do otherwise.

**STEP ONE** - planning. Take time to think carefully about your topic. What do you know so far? What more do you need to know? What is the main question you are trying to answer? What other questions will help you answer your main question? What are the different areas you will research in order to get a full picture about your topic?

**NOTE** - it is vital that you conduct your research with an open mind. Be careful not to assume you already know the answer. Do not set out to “prove” something. Be prepared to recognise if you have made incorrect assumptions. Let the evidence you find in your research guide you to your analysis.

**STEP TWO** - understand the historical context of your topic. Read the sections in *The Structure of Canadian History* dealing with your topic and time period. Other sources for historical context include *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (in the non-circulating Reference Collection), and specialised topical or regional histories such as *Canada’s First Nations, Canadian Women: A History, Working Class Experience, The West Beyond the West, The Canadian Prairies: A History, The Dream of Nation: A Social and Intellectual History of Quebec, Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, etc. (choose recent ones). **NOTE**: as a general rule, the sources listed in this paragraph, and other similar sources of a general nature such as encyclopedia articles and survey textbooks, are not acceptable as scholarly secondary monographs or articles. If in doubt, see me.

**STEP THREE** - prepare a preliminary list of titles. It should be longer than the one you will eventually use as your bibliography. Think of the broadest scope of your topic to ensure you find all relevant titles. Search for recently published material. **Places to look:**

**A. First, ask the experts:**

1. “Suggestions for Further Reading” in *A History of the Canadian Peoples* and other suggested readings in the sources listed in STEP TWO, above.

(3) historiographical essays (eg, *Writing About Canada: A Handbook for Modern Canadian History*) and published bibliographies (eg, *Changing Women, Changing History: A Bibliography of the History of Women in Canada*).

**B. Second, strike out on your own:**

(1) tables of contents of specialized scholarly journals such as *Canadian Historical Review, Journal of Canadian Studies, Prairie Forum, BC Studies, Canadian Ethnic Studies, Labour/Le Travail, Acadiensis*, etc., and the lists of new books and book reviews at the back of each volume.

(2) published collections of essays such as *Sweet Promises: A Reader on Indian-White Relations in Canada, British Columbia: Historical Readings, or Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women’s History*, etc.

(3) indexes such as the *Canadian Periodical Index*, in the non-circulating Reference Collection or online as *CPI.Q*.

(4) as you begin reading the books and articles from your title list, check their footnotes or endnotes and bibliographies for secondary sources.

**STEP FOUR** - Begin to pare down your titles list as you begin your reading and note-taking. In some cases, a quick reading of a book’s table of contents, introduction and index can tell you whether the book will be useful to you. Another quick way is through judicious reading of abstracts, historiographical essays and book reviews.

**Helpful Hints when looking for article titles:**

The best listing of Canadian journals is *The Canadian Periodical Index*, in the Reference Room and online as *CPI.Q*. Other indexes such as FirstSearch and America: History & Life do not list many Canadian scholarly journals. Or you may simply go to the stacks and thumb through the relevant journals such as *Canadian Historical Review, Prairie Forum, Labour/Le Travail, Canadian Ethnic Studies, BC Studies*, etc.

Another scholarly collection of essays you should look through, since it is not usually indexed, is *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (previously titled *Historical Papers/Communications historiques*) F1001 C26

If you come across an article listed in *The Beaver* or other non-scholarly journal, take note of the author and try to find an article by him/her in a scholarly journal (*Beaver* and other journals often publish popularized versions of scholarly studies)
A. General comments and guidelines about preparing a literature review paper.

These comments and guidelines are summarized and paraphrased from Pechenik (2001: available in the Reserve room of Wilson Library), with additional suggestions from other sources. These are meant to help guide you through the process of preparing the review. I highly recommend Pechenik’s book as a resource for all areas of biological writing (J.A. Pechenik. 2001. A short guide to writing about biology, 4th edition, Addison Wesley Longman Publ., New York, 318 pp.)

Writing a literature review paper will help you synthesize information on a particular topic and critically evaluate this information. This exercise goes beyond the material covered in lecture and class discussions. Along the way you will develop better skills in reading the primary literature, critical thinking, and in developing arguments. Your goal is to create an original work that embodies your perspectives and interpretations of the topic. You might consider using the final paper as a writing sample to give to prospective employers, graduate admissions committees.

Steps:
1. Topic selection. Pick a topic that interests you and that you can understand. Simple topics are often the best ones. Keep in mind that you are likely to narrow your topic as you read more about it. Be flexible, you might have to abandon a topic. Recognizing a good topic requires a lot of thought. Ask me for guidance as you think about different topics you might explore. As you narrow the topic you will develop a sense of your objectives. Write these down and refine your search to include papers that are relevant to the objectives you have selected.

2. Research. If you find a book that covers your topic, use it to help decide what specific areas you might focus your efforts in reviewing the primary literature. To search the primary literature, use the library databases. The goal is not to find every paper on your topic but to select a number of papers to read and evaluate. Take notes as you read each paper. Pechenik (2001) recommends asking the following questions:

   “Why am I writing this down?
   What is especially interesting about this information?
   Can I see any relationship between this information and what I have already written or learned?”

Summarize the information in your own words as you read (avoid plagiarism). Form your own conclusions based on your review of the data in the paper (you may disagree with the author(s)!). Check to make sure you are reading papers relevant to your main topic; it’s easy to be distracted by other topics.

3. Writing the paper. Read all of your notes, and organize them into categories (ideally those that are the section headings of your Discussion). Organize your thoughts by looking at which categories lead naturally into other ones, showing a progression.

B. Recommended guidelines for literature review papers.

A literature review paper consists of the following sections: Title, Introduction, Discussion, Conclusion (summary), and Reference list. The content of each section is described below. Diagrams or graphs may be included if they help illustrate a point (these should be placed on separate sheets of paper). All papers must be typed and double-spaced.
The final literature review paper (due Monday December 04)

1. **Title.** Should be brief and informative (describes the topic as completely as possible, and is restricted to the specific content covered by the paper).

2. **Introduction.** The introduction gives the background to the topic, starting with the broad context of the study and leading up to the thesis of the paper. This section need only be a few paragraphs in length. This section explains why you chose your topic and what your central question (objectives, thesis) will be. It is your chance to interest the reader in the topic! The Introduction should prepare the reader for the rest of the paper.
   - What is known about the general topic? Include literature citations.
   - Why is this topic important? (Why did you pick the particular question [thesis] to write about?)
   - Conclude this section with a **concise statement of the thesis** of your paper.

3. **Discussion.** This section will summarize and integrate information from the primary literature and will focus on a critical evaluation of the literature. The literature reviewed should be relevant, and your interpretation and synthesis of material emphasized over simple reporting of facts. Simple summarization and quotes of material from cited papers are not acceptable. This section is the main body of the paper (a few pages). I will evaluate you as follows:
   - Do you place the available information into context? (Does the literature support or weaken the thesis?)
   - Do you interpret the literature from your own perspectives and analysis of the information?
   - Have you documented your sources properly (literature citations)?

4. **Conclusion.** This section briefly summarizes and highlights the major points presented in the Discussion. The findings must be related back to the thesis question posed in the Introduction. You may suggest additional research needed to answer questions raised by the literature review in this section, but should not introduce any new information. This section should be one paragraph or two in length.

5. **References.** Appropriate references to the primary literature must be cited correctly. You should read through the final version of your paper and list all of the works cited. Do not list references that are not cited in the text. The reference list should be arranged in alphabetical order (using the last names of the first authors). Choose a consistent format for the style.

   **For example:**
   Author(s). Year. Title of article. Journal title. Volume number. Pages (inclusive).
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<th>Levels of Achievement</th>
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