

Editor's Introduction

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Has rhetorical, genre, and discourse analysis of cultural texts ever been more important? (Rhetorical question alert.) Rigidified conventional thinking polarizes ideological camps in ceaseless pitched battle across the U.S., each engagement further convincing each position all the more strongly of its own righteousness and the existential threat posed by “the” purely evil other side. Hyperbole has become the minimum level of audibility, and the social contract making interlocutors of goodwill responsible to *try* to seek agreement on even the most basic statements of fact has long since been shredded. What is true is whatever a rhetor *needs* to be true in order to support a long-since drawn conclusion and obviate the need to change their mind. Our cultural and political truths appear to have been finally determined throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, responsible to desire rather than lived experience. (Naturally enough, this very analysis partakes in some measure of the same mental blockages.)

With apologies for the apocalyptic opener, my point of course is that when discourse diverges both from lived experience and from its long understood responsibility of social interaction and negotiation bent toward creating and maintaining civilization; when discourse instead is put to the opposite service, to the work of fists and arms (including making acceptable the return of fists and arms to spaces where earlier generations had succeeded in replacing them with speech); when calculated language is put to political and physical violence and used to bind, gag, and strip those who are different; in such times, there can be no more important role than that of watchful participants monitoring the discourse by which cultures are constituted, critiquing divergences between lived experiences and the discourses which attempts to frame and characterize them, finding language to explain better ways of interacting and discourse which better affirms us in our humanity, our lives, and our interactions with one another, and acting and speaking.

This is a journal of that.

Volume 14's table of contents offers a steady stream of genre, discourse, and rhetorical analysis that examines, questions, and critiques discourses in the world around us that are easily taken for granted even as they constitute cells which sort, divide, and contain us. Most of the writers here don't address the macro-political scene currently redefining “normal” in Washington. But in their eminently more reasoned and reasonable ways, each does the powerful cultural and rhetorical work of examining givens in discursive spaces large and small that impact *YSW*'s readership, and of envisioning better worlds.

Three pieces in this volume ask those questions of givens related to writing pedagogy. Katelyn Guichelaar opens the volume, examining the conventional wisdom that assumes students using metadiscourse differently than do professionals in their fields is a result of deficit in learning. Assembling a corpus of professional and student metadiscourse, Guichelaar identifies such

differences, but also analyzes the contrasting rhetorical situations of student and professional writers to suggest that students are crafting metadiscourse deliberately for their student situations. Later in the volume, Theresa Bailey analyzes surveys of faculty teaching multi-major professional writing courses, and a corpus of their course descriptions and syllabi, in order to critique the assumption that there is a stable center to the field's thinking about the shape of such courses. Bailey distinguishes between courses that "give students a fish" versus those that "teach how to fish," opening the question of what should be the central aims for MMPW courses. Our third piece questioning givens in the teaching of writing is Armand St. Pierre's examination of humanities-oriented writing center tutors working with clients in engineering majors. Contra the assumption that tutors without an engineering background will likely have difficulty working with STEM majors, St. Pierre theorizes a cultural approach to preparing tutors in humanities fields to feel able and confident in responding to the writing of engineering students.

This volume is notable for the range of non-academic discourses and genres its contributors study. Gina Keplinger's "Don't Dismiss the List" explores the possibilities of conducting persuasive discourse in the genre of lists, analyzing three texts shaped by lists while working in list form herself. Keplinger's list of the way lists work in texts that challenge U.S. cultural norms of race, identity, sexuality, and gender is both an insightful analysis and an intriguing break from the norms of page layout. Looking three centuries back, Kayla Wiles's archival analysis of 18th century Scottish physician John Gregory, a progenitor of modern bio-ethical debate, shows the work of Scottish

Enlightenment medical professionals in both critiquing British culture of the time and raising questions about medical treatment that remain with us today.

This year's contributors to *YSW*'s Spotlight on First-Year Writing have again produced work of superb quality and import. Kira Pratt opens the Spotlight with rhetorical and survey analyses of the cultural impact of Beyoncé's *Lemonade* and "Formation." She asks whether a single artist can really span a racially diverse audience to combat the dominant cultural presupposition of colorblindness in U.S. culture. Her multi-stage analysis leads her to argue that, yes, Beyoncé's work really is moving this needle. Our next first-year author, Maegan Trinidad, turns rhetorical analysis to district and appellate courtrooms, specifically the opening statements of cases argued at both levels. Trinidad creates an analytical framework she then applies to transcripts of major cases, looking for the rhetorical moves of prosecutors and defense counsel and contrasting their appearances in different courtroom scenes. Finally, Volume 14 closes with Taylor Rayfield's genre analysis of medical-information websites such as WebMD. In conducting a thorough analysis of the usability of several such sites, Rayfield juxtaposes consumer-information medical sites against traditional clinical sites of treatment, asking how the medical establishment is accommodating the spread of medicine onto the internet, and finding—well, go read the piece.

So that's our catalog for *YSW*'s 2017 outing: student/professional metadiscourse, the genre of the list, the genre of course descriptions in multi-major professional writing courses, archival analysis of 18th century Scottish arguments around medical ethics, the meeting of humanities and engineering

cultures in writing centers, the cultural impact of Beyoncé's *Lemonade*, the rhetorical moves of opening arguments in courtrooms, and the structure of medical-information websites. It's difficult to overstate how exciting it is to see collegiate researchers taking rhetorical and discourse analysis into fields of such breadth and import for the American-now.

Of course, work of such quality happens not on its own but in a larger community of inquirers sharing the values of these writers for rigorous research and data analysis put to the service of answering important questions about the role of writing, discourse, and rhetoric in shaping our world. Our writers have made their own acknowledgments of the faculty, mentors, family, friends, advisors, and editors who were instrumental in showing them ways to strengthen, and complete, their work. My own list of people to thank as editor is extensive. (I have decided, however, not to follow Ms. Keplinger's lead in explaining my list entirely through footnotes.)

I must begin with the two Editorial Assistants who worked on this issue, Anjeli Doty and Kinsie Clarkson. These two remarkable undergraduates in Montana State's English-Writing major played a huge role in every stage of production, from managing submissions and communication with writers, to assisting throughout peer reviewing, to keeping track of the disposition of every submission and every email to writers, faculty advising editors, and mentors, and finally, copy-editing. Anjeli and Kinsie were not just superb editorial assistants, but two of the finest students our program has seen, and it was truly a privilege and a blessing that both agreed to step into this position at *Young Scholars*. (Anjeli in 2016, Kinsie in 2017). My deepest thanks to you both.

We would not have a Spotlight on First-Year Writing without the herculean efforts (sorry for the cliché, but it's true) of Heather Bastian and Angela Glotfelter, co-editors of the Spotlight feature for this volume. They managed a large list of submissions as well as working with students to revise pieces, and did a tremendous job. Notably, both Heather and Angela are former undergraduates published in *YSW*, and Angela became our first graduate student member of the editorial board and faculty advising editor, a very welcome addition to the team.

Members of our Editorial Board both steer the journal's overall course and serve as our Faculty Advising Editors working directly with submissions as second-level peer reviewers and guides for students revising pieces for the journal. I begin my Acknowledgments of them with sad (but not final!) farewells. Jeff Andelora at Mesa Community College cycled off the editorial board during production of this volume, after many years' service to the journal. After we finished this volume, Stephanie Vie also stepped away, having put on additional hats as a department chair at the University of Central Florida.

Finally, founding co-editor Laurie Grobman also departed the board in order to free time for other work on undergraduate research in her community. There is no other way to say it: Laurie has been the heart and soul of *Young Scholars in Writing* since its inception, before its first volume in 2003. With co-editor Candace Spigelman, Laurie envisioned something much like, we hope, *Young Scholars* has become: a home of student voices contributing new knowledge to conversations around writing, rhetoric, and discourse, a venue for scholarship conducted to the highest standards, evaluated in a true peer-review system in which a

whole other group of students gets firsthand experience in the process of social construction of expert knowledge. Without Laurie's early vision and her first seven years as editor, there would quite simply be no *Young Scholars in Writing*. A total of fifteen years' service to the journal later, we hope to continue to be worthy of her vision. Undergraduate research has been a centerpiece of Laurie's academic work, including her 2010 collection *Undergraduate Research in English Studies*, co-edited with Joyce Kinkead. It remains so in her continuing work with students at Pennsylvania State University-Berks, who are doing amazing archival and historical research in the community there. Laurie, thank you for these many many good years given to *Young Scholars in Writing*.

Continuing in service on the Editorial Board—and doing tremendous work with students in honing contributions or, sometimes, helping writers understand what their pieces needed to do better to fit well in *YSW*—are Paige V. Banaji, Melanie Burdick, Abby M. Dubisar, David Elder, Laura Ellis-Lai, T J Geiger, Joanne Giordano, John Gravener, Jane Greer, Patti Hanlon-Baker, Jonathan Hunt, Joseph Janangelo, Jeff Klausman, Clyde Moneyhun, Sean Patrick O'Rourke, Steve Price, Holly Ryan, and Annette Vee. Again, *YSW* could not exist without the hard work and wisdom of these faculty.

Once a writer submits their work to *YSW*, the first step it encounters is peer review by undergraduates at Montana State University who enroll in our summer Magazine Editing and Production course. In it, they learn peer reviewing for scholarly journals in a structured environment that allows group evaluation and extensive practice at both identifying the strengths and weaknesses of submissions and what kind of feedback will be decisive but constructive. For the 2017

volume, these reviewers included Jenny Bryan, Kyle Butler, Ali Everts, Conor Glesner, Casey Hadford, Kelley Hildebrand-Hall, Ashton Nagel, and Katie Ramstead.

Finally, without the support of Montana State University's Office of the Provost, Vice President for Research and Economic Development, Dean of the College of Letters and Science, Undergraduate Scholars Program, Department of English, Liberal Studies Program, and Renne Library, *Young Scholars in Writing* would live only in our imaginations, rather than in all its purple paper and electronic glory. My thanks to these offices for their continuing support. Alison Gauthier, Ron Lambert, and Kay LaFrance in MSU's University Printing Services collaborated on fantastic layout, design, and production once again. It turns out that we at *YSW* are not Time Lords, and Volume 14 has required a great deal of patience from all involved as your humble and overcommitted editor listened to the whooshing sound of several 2017 production deadlines flying by. Our Printing Services folks did fantastic work in making up some of the time lost in the Editor's office this year, and we are most grateful to them for hastening production to get the journal into your hands as quickly as possible.

It can't be said too often: It is knowledge-making, open inquiry, skepticism, and primary research that put the *higher* in "higher education," and it is the duty of faculty and their institutions to involve college students directly in this grand project of sorting out how the world works, and how we should want it to. In answer to the rhetorical question, No: rhetorical, genre, and discourse analysis and critique of cultural texts have never been more important to the intellectual and material health of our than at this moment. How inspiring to see a new generation of scholars leading the way.

Thanks for reading *Young Scholars in Writing*
to see how.