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A Call for the Teaching of Writing in Graduate Education

by Mike Rose and Karen A. McClafferty

Introduction

Let us begin with a vignette from a class in professional writing that one of us has been teaching for about four years now. It is a graduate-level workshop with 12 students from diverse disciplines. The class has been discussing three pages of a student's literature review, and zeroes in on those times when she offers strings of citations. Another student wonders if she needs all those citations. The instructor suggests the possibility of offering selected important or summative studies, with the use of "for example." The writer then says:

STUDENT ONE: I have a question. When do you use "e.g." and when do you use "i.e."?

STUDENT TWO: I think you use "e.g." when you're offering examples and "i.e." when you're re-phrasing something you've just said.

INSTRUCTOR: That's right. In either case, it's followed by a comma.

STUDENT FOUR: Ah. Thank you.

Student Four adds a comma to her paper. Several others take a note.

STUDENT THREE: I noticed that you used the phrase "many researchers" to give credibility to your argument. (To instructor) When do you have to give examples of who those researchers are?

A brief conversation ensues, where five students in the class share their own experiences with and opinions about the question. Finally, the instructor suggests, in this case, to use "e.g." and include several examples. He adds:

INSTRUCTOR: It's my belief that you can have too many citations. Too often, we see an overreliance on citation to establish authority in academic writing, a shopping bag of sources rather than building an argument. It's true

that citation is the coin of the realm, but ask yourself what you're trying to achieve with your citations, what's your purpose?

The conversation continues with Student Two referring to her academic advisor, whom we will call Harry:

STUDENT TWO: This is a Harry comment, but you have to ask yourself, if someone is reading this paper, why should they take your word for it? How do they know you've read what you're supposed to read? You have to show that you've read the important background material.

STUDENT ONE: O.K., but I still need help summarizing exactly what's important.

The class then turns back to a paragraph in her paper.

During these not atypical few minutes in the workshop, a student and her colleagues struggle with an issue of summary and citation—which includes a discussion of usage and punctuation. Fairly quickly the discussion turns to broader issues of academic standards and of rhetorical purpose. Then the conversation comes to involve a moment of professional attribution and the consideration of the identity, style, and thinking of a mentor. The conversation moves from microlevel graphical conventions to issues of authority and identity; all are interrelated, and all represent key aspects of the scholarly writing process. What we think is especially important here is that issues like these are being addressed in the students' training in an explicit and sustained way.

Writing is an activity in which all academics engage. It is an activity that consumes a great deal of our time, both in the production of scholarship and in the teaching and mentoring of students. There is a

small but growing research literature on writing at the graduate level, most of it dealing with the appropriation of disciplinary discourse conventions by graduate students during their course of study (e.g., Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988; Blakeslee, 1997; Prior, 1995). But there is little professional discussion of what we can do to help our students write more effectively.¹ And though some graduate faculty spend a good deal of time working with their students on their writing, there are few proposals to address writing specifically in the graduate curriculum. (One reason for the reluctance might be concerns that such an effort smacks of remediation, an issue we will address shortly.) The irony here is that the quality of scholarly writing is widely bemoaned, both outside and inside the academy (e.g., Limerick, 1993; Rankin, 1998), yet we seem to do little to address the quality of writing in a systematic way at the very point where scholarly style and identity is being shaped. So, in 1996, Mike Rose instituted a course in professional writing housed in the Social Research Methodology Division of our Graduate School of Education & Information Studies.² In this article we would like both to describe what gets done in the course—and could be transferable to other institutions—and to reflect on what an explicit focus on writing instruction might provide to a graduate program in education.³

Several faculty have taught the course since its creation, and each does it a bit differently, but the essential structure is that of a writing workshop. The primary texts for the course are student writing, and, while there may be one or two initial common assignments, most of the course is spent focusing on the writing students are doing for a range of courses and a range of purposes. The students come from any of the five divisions in our school (Social Sciences &

Comparative Education, Social Research Methodology, Psychological Studies in Education, Urban Schooling, and Higher Education & Organizational Change), and, depending on the particular academic quarter, can range from first-year students to those writing their dissertations. Demand for the course has consistently exceeded its capacity. Often, at the discretion of the instructor, extra sections are created to accommodate as many students as possible.

The pedagogical specifics will vary by instructor, but basically during any given class session a certain number of students bring in three to five pages of their writing. The students distribute this work either within small groups or to the workshop at large, read it aloud and give their assessment of it, and then engage in discussion with peers and the instructor about it. Such a structure requires that the instructor create an atmosphere of reading and response that is both rigorous and considerate, calling on all students to respond to their peers' work in thoughtful and useful ways.

Let us note several things about the foregoing description. As is suggested in the opening vignette, the topic of discussion can range widely from issues of mechanics, grammar, and organization, to style and audience, to evidence and argument, to research design, to broad issues of conceptualization, to the very place of one's work and one's scholarly identity in a field. As well, students are working in a variety of genres—from the class paper, to an essay for practitioners, to the dissertation—adding to the richness of the conversation. Additionally, the course provides one of the few places in the curriculum where students from a range of backgrounds get to hear about and respond to each other's work, and provides a wider audience than is usually available within the confines of a course within a division.

Mike Rose has taught the writing seminar eight times. Karen McClafferty is a former student in the course and is now a postdoctoral fellow at UCLA. We thought there would be value in combining our two perspectives and articulating what we believe to be the issues surrounding graduate-level writing instruction, and the benefits of it. To aid in this articulation, Rose reviewed several years' worth of student work, and McClafferty sat in on a new offering of the course, taking notes on both content and interaction. Both of us reviewed tape

recordings of class discussions from a previous year. And we benefited from participants' written evaluations and from student comments on an earlier draft of this article. The issues we identified through these activities cluster around six thematic strands: the interrelation of formal and rhetorical elements of writing; writing as craftwork; writing as a method of inquiry; audience; becoming a critic; and writing and identity. We have organized and labeled these themes into distinct categories, but the reader will note significant overlap among them. This complexity is inevitable, and it is reflective of the nature of the course, where students move swiftly among topics of discussion. We will discuss each of these themes in turn, and then discuss problems and questions emerging from the course.

The Interrelation of Grammar, Style, Logic, Voice

As evidenced by the opening vignette, students rely on this course to gain competency in a wide range of topics. The topics play off each other, interconnect. From an attempt to revise an awkward sentence comes a question that reveals confusion over a paper's key concept. A discussion about comma and semicolon usage reveals buggy rules about punctuation and sparks a further discussion about the rhetorical value of varying sentence length. A thorny research design leads to questions about the value of a project, and an attempt to structure a literature review raises questions about how one locates oneself in a field. And a student's desire for more "voice" in her writing takes the class back to sentence length and semicolons, and to the use of vignette, metaphor, and analogy. This wide range of shuttling occurs quite naturally, as students begin to form their identities as scholarly writers. They are not only receptive to the natural connectedness of all of these areas—they seem eager for forums in which to integrate them.

This raises interesting questions about remediation. When we talk about writing instruction, especially at the graduate level, there is often an assumption that we are talking about remedial intervention, that is, a course that is addressing topics that students should have mastered in previous schooling. To be sure, some students enter the course with such problems: Though highly literate by most any common mea-

sure, these students have not had the kinds of education that require extended writing about scholarly texts coupled with systematic feedback. Let's consider the kinds of problems we typically see.

Some students are new to their fields and, consequently, to the material they are attempting to synthesize and write about. Similarly, they are often not that familiar with the traditions and conventions of social science writing and/or with organizing and discussing quantitative or qualitative data—and the result can be some pretty awkward prose. Some report that writing has always been hard for them, they've never taken to it, and they face it now with anxiety—and with a variety of linguistic and rhetorical misconceptions. A lot of students are unsure about various mechanical and grammatical rules, and have been told conflicting things over the span of their education. And some students are not native speakers of English and, though literate in two or more languages, display in their writing a range of common ESL errors.

The debate among university faculty about what of the foregoing should or should not be considered remedial has gone on for most of this century. Different faculties at different institutions in different eras have arrived at various positions about it (Rose, 1985). A graduate faculty considering the creation of writing courses would need to have this discussion among themselves. Our faculty did in 1996 as our writing course was being developed, and many faculty members from across departmental divisions participated in the conversation. The topic touched nerves and needs, as faculty expressed exasperation about the quality of student writing ("I'm absolutely burned out") and widely acknowledged the importance and necessity of some sort of systematic writing instruction. The outcome was support for the course—and the overall endeavor of addressing writing directly and comprehensively—because, as one professor put it, "it's part of [students'] ongoing development." "Students [in our division] are required to take three statistics courses," added another, "and writing is no less important for their professional success." "It's an issue of methods training," said a third.

Still, there is the fact that some of what goes on in a writing course like ours is pretty basic stuff—perhaps too basic to

have a place in a graduate program. And though we do agree with the opinion expressed by one of the participants in that 1996 meeting—"the students are here, so it's our responsibility"—we think there's a more compelling argument against the label of simple remediation. Basics of grammar or sentence structure or paragraph organization do arise and are treated in the course. Students often begin their own self-critiques with questions about punctuation, grammar, or word choice. But these conversations almost always lead to or occur within the context of a broader issue that is not remedial. To use again the example of semicolon rules, the rules are presented, but are frequently interconnected to rhetorical and stylistic concerns, which quickly can lead to issues of purpose and argument. Seen this way—which reflects the actual dynamics of the workshop—distinctions between what is basic and what is not become harder to make. And students become more aware of the complex interrelation of the elements of written language.

Listening to Writing, Crafting Writing

It is common to hear poetry read out loud, or fiction, but fairly uncommon to hear scholarly prose. Yet reading one's prose out loud animates what too often is a dry, unengaged production and use of text. You *hear* your writing. And others hear, as well as read, it too. One immediate effect is that reading aloud enables one to catch a number of grammatical errors and instances of stylistic awkwardness or conceptual confusion. It is common for a student to pause while reading and say: "Oh, that doesn't work well at all, does it?" Such moments give rise to talk—from the writer, from others in the class—about how to revise, and this helps everyone become more attuned to and articulate about particulars of grammar and style. One student gave cogent expression to this process:

I learned quite a bit from . . . talking about problems in the writing of other students. A major problem in someone's work was sometimes a problem of a lesser degree in mine (e.g., needing to add more flesh to numbers in text or writing better topic sentences). Even when a flaw in another's writing was [not one of mine] there were times that thinking about a solution made me more aware of an important stylistic device or writing strategy.

Over time, students begin to see writing as craftwork, rather than as an innate gift or an inaccessible science of grammatical and analytic rules that must be mastered before writing can begin. The participants in these seminars range in skill, experience, and comfort with writing, but what is interesting to us is the number of students who hold counterproductive beliefs about it—beliefs that complicate or mystify the writing process or that attribute skill to unattainable sources. And these beliefs interact with everyone's struggle to appropriate scholarly genres and languages.

This is not the place to discuss attribution theory or to debate the sources of skill in writing, but what we can say is that as students continue to listen to and read writing out loud and talk in specific ways about how to make it better, their sense of agency toward it seems to change. They come to understand that writing is something you can *work on*. In very specific ways, you can move the parts of a sentence around; you can try addressing the reader more directly; you can talk about and try out some of the stylistic things a peer does that appeal to you. We think here of a student who could write the prose of experimental psychology well—could summarize research literature and present results pretty competently—but who felt her writing "was lifeless." During one class meeting, another student's paper intrigued her, and she zeroed in on the way that student used a metaphor in discussing results. The instructor asked her, then, to see if she could create one or two metaphors in the text she was preparing for the next meeting. A specific, manipulable technique—and she could judge what effect it had on her writing. We do not want to claim that 10 weeks in a seminar and a few tricks will make someone a confident and graceful writer. The experience, however, does provide knowledge and tools and a sense that one can do things to one's writing to make it more effective.

Writing as Method

In addition to experiencing writing as a craft, students also have multiple opportunities to understand the ways writing is central to their inquiry. Researchers working within an ethnographic tradition, of course, view writing as methodology, as do historians, who would most likely include in their training a course in histor-

ical writing and historiography. But for many other students, writing is thought of as simply a vehicle or a conduit for delivering one's findings (cf. Lanham, 1983, and Reddy, 1979, Ch. 5).

To counter the vehicle analogue, the course instructor talks about the ways writing can help one think through a problem—and provides examples from his or her own and others' writing lives. But, as well, the continued, shared, specific discussion of students' writing processes combined with the course's emphasis on re-writing contributes to a sense that writing is not simply an inert means of representation, but is a vital element of inquiry. There is the intimate connection of writing and conceptualizing. There is the use of writing to test an idea—an instructor might tell a student who is tentatively suggesting an idea "to go down that road, to write it out, and see where it takes you." There is the way writing makes thought visible—and thus open to examination for coherence, for flaws in logic, for worth and value. ("Writing fixes thought on paper," observes phenomenologist Max van Manen, 1990, p. 125.) There is the rich potential interplay of different semiotic systems (words, numbers, graphics), and course participants come to see that numbers need to tell a story, that even a list reveals a rhetoric, that a series of sentences can have a tight propositional logic to them. Writing becomes a means to articulate thought and test it. All this, of course, can go on in any class and in any encounter between a faculty member and a student over a piece of writing. But it is sustained and made explicit in a course that focuses on writing.

Audience Awareness

As students immerse themselves in scholarly literature, trying both to understand and use it and to acquire its conventions in their own work, complex issues of audience arise. To whom are they writing? To a professor or a committee, of course, but only to them? Students are socialized to believe they're writing for a scholarly community, but that's usually a heterogeneous group and, to boot, a pretty inchoate notion—and a hard audience to write for when one is working overtime to acquire the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of that community. "It paralyzes me," observed one of the students. (There is the further problem

that the quality of scholarly writing itself varies widely.) And what if one also wants to be able to write about one's work for broader audiences, for teachers or policy-makers or the public at large?

By presenting their work to each other on a regular basis, students are faced with an audience that sits across the table, ready to respond, question, and advise immediately. Students will occasionally pause as they read their writing aloud, noting that, as they revised the document, they had a particular classmate in mind. A student might say, "I knew Dave was going to ask me what my big point was here, so I tried to say it right up front." In the end, the physical presence of an audience plays out in two ways. First, students read their writing directly to their audience and receive immediate feedback. Second, students may recall or imagine interactions with their peers as they compose—whether for this course or for other purposes—a practice that seems to encourage them to explain, define, and be more precise.

Adding to the strength of the audience presence is the fact that the group is not only composed of students at a variety of levels, but it is also interdisciplinary. By bringing together students from diverse disciplines, the course allows for more dynamic discussions about students' work. Students do not necessarily arrive with the same background knowledge or accompanying assumptions. As a result, conversations often revolve around clarification of concepts that may seem basic or straightforward to the writer but are new and complicated to the readers. The result is that the writer is compelled to communicate his or her ideas more clearly and with less jargon, and this can lead to some very specific and useful rhetorical tricks of the trade: learning to present a technical term followed by a precise definition or quick example, elaborating on tables and charts in the body of the text, creating apt illustrative metaphors or analogies, and so on. Finally, a student learns how to make scholarly writing accessible to a wider audience, while honoring the conventions of his or her discipline. Thinking back over the offerings of the course and our investigation of it, we suspect that the course's most significant benefit is the fostering of a rhetorical sense, that writing acts on a reader and that—recalling craft work—the writer can

influence that response. As one student put it: "The course got me to think of my writing as strategic. Who am I writing to? Where do I want to take them with my argument? How can I get them there?"

Becoming a Better Reader of Other People's Writing

If the dynamics work right, the writing workshop becomes a small community maintained by students' face-to-face responses to each other's writing. This encourages both a seriousness as well as a certain consideration of one's peers. In a sense, a writing workshop might strive toward becoming a microcosm of the ideal scholarly community, where colleagues thoughtfully respond to each other's work, and there is a press toward greater articulation and understanding. We saw elements of this intellectual camaraderie throughout the course.

Just as students gain confidence in their ability to talk about writing, they also become more certain of their skills in reading and commenting on each other's work. They become co-instructors—guiding, prodding, pushing, and encouraging each other to write more effectively and more authoritatively. And they progressively are able to integrate grammatical nuts-and-bolts conversations (which are necessary and important in their own right) with broader issues of voice, method, and conceptualization. Considering that many will go on to teach—at the college and university level or elsewhere—this effect of the writing course has further benefit. If these students carry their sensibilities and editing skills over into their own instruction, it will enhance their effectiveness as teachers. Similarly, once these students graduate, they will be called upon to read colleagues' writing, whether as friends, as reviewers, or as members of editorial boards. Improved skills as readers enable them to carry out these tasks with greater efficiency and effectiveness.

There are, of course, many ways to go about creating a scholarly atmosphere that is conducive to good, thoughtful work on writing, and every instructor will have his or her own inclination as to how to achieve this goal. Though there will be variation, we can suggest several qualities—based on Karen McClafferty's observations and queries to students—that course participants see as important in fostering this atmosphere. The instructor, of course, must

be knowledgeable about scholarly conventions and writing and model precise and humane response, but also be willing to have authority distributed across the workshop, be able to move to the periphery of discussion, attending to it while encouraging student exchange. (If the workshop is composed of students from across divisions, this move to the periphery will occur naturally, for some of the participants will know more about a given topic than will the instructor.) Students need the discursive space to jointly make sense of a piece of writing and assist in improving it. The instructor should also have an interest in, be curious about, the way scholarly conventions and writing skill are acquired, be able to assess the effectiveness of a piece of student writing but be able as well to shift to a developmental perspective, viewing that piece of writing in terms of a student's (as yet partial) socialization into a discipline. (We'll say more about this issue when we discuss grades under "Problems and Questions.") Put another way, the instructor needs to consider the cognitive and interpersonal dynamics necessary to create a scholarly atmosphere that is specific, systematic, and rigorous while being attentive to the intellectual intentions of the student author—and considerate of how difficult the task of writing is and how much of one's sense of self can be invested in it. Isn't this, in fact, the web of concern that should be at the heart of any attempt to create a scholarly community?

The Writing Process as a Process of Scholarly Identity Formation

All of the strands discussed so far tie to this final one: the creation of a scholarly identity. Writing is one of the primary sites where scholarly identity is formed and displayed. Whether through papers written for coursework, for conferences or journals, or simply correspondence, scholars often form their impressions of their colleagues based on the written word. This may be even more the case as greater proportions of interactions take place across e-mail. Graduate students are part of all this as they begin to form their own scholarly identities through their choices about what they research, whose work they cite, and how they communicate their own ideas. The opportunity to reflect on their writing is additionally (and importantly) an opportunity to reflect on themselves.

The course plays an important role in this process, assisting students as they establish and refine their own relationships to their work. Some students come to the course seeking a greater connection with their research and writing. Many have been taught (or have simply assumed) that scholarly writing requires a distance, even disassociation, that absents the author. For other students, academic work is so intimately connected with issues of personal history and identity that a greater amount of distance is necessary if the work is to have broader implications. For each of these kinds of students, the course can provide the opportunity to find an integration of authorial presence and scholarly convention.

We are taken by this coupling of writing and identity—by how many of the issues raised in the course, exchanges, and engagements with revision of text could be understood in terms of identity development. We find moments when, implied or explicit, questions like these emerge: What kind of work do I want to do; what issues and problems compel me? What methods seem most effective and appropriate, and which methods suit my own beliefs and dispositions? How do I locate myself in this field I've chosen—where, to pick specific examples, is my presence felt in a literature review or in a detailing of method? How can I sound even a little distinctive? How can I get some style into my writing, a “voice”?

How do these questions emerge in the context of a writing workshop? Often, they follow directly from conversations about what styles, formats, and methods of writing are acceptable in the academic world, and what approaches must be transformed, or abandoned altogether. Through these conversations, students come to realize the ways in which their writing ties the personal beliefs they hold about the work they do and the people or phenomena they study to the public ways in which they present these beliefs to others. As they increasingly see the written word as their primary method of communication—and as a medium over which they can have mastery and control—they become more expert at questioning and understanding just what it is they want to communicate. In short, they more consciously shape their own scholarly identities, construct meaningful relations to their disciplines.

Problems and Questions

There are problems with our course—limitations and design flaws. Let us now discuss six of them and offer our partial solutions.

First, though there is clear value in writing for a diverse audience—and such an audience, as we suggest, can provide helpful feedback—scholarly writing is grounded in domain knowledge. Thus there will be times in the discussion of a student's work when an expert's knowledge is required. (An example would be the methods section of a quantitative paper, where the technical detail of an advanced statistical procedure is explained.) Though a non-expert audience can be helpful in providing a test for clarity of expression, that audience would be of limited help in the specifics of how expression could be clarified and still maintain technical accuracy. The heterogeneous composition of the course often yields two or more students from the same division, and thus with at least generally related training. So the instructor orchestrates response and/or forms sub-groups in ways that utilize this shared training.

Second, there is, as one would expect, a diversity of audiences and expectations within the faculty of our Department of Education, and that variation plays out in the writing course. The instructor needs to be mindful of this diversity. It is not uncommon, then, for the instructor to contact a student's advisor—with the student's permission—to clarify the advisor's expectations and /or to check the advice the student is getting in class. (This can have a valuable secondary effect in that issues of writing are explicitly discussed among the faculty.) It is also valuable to turn this diversity of expectation itself into a topic of class discussion with invited faculty and/or among the class participants. This foregrounds the issue of audience and lays it open for analysis.

Third, the focus on three to five pages of writing works against a consideration of the overall structure of a paper, and problems at that level are commonplace in graduate education. This limitation is somewhat circumvented when a student works on the same project—a proposal, a thesis chapter—throughout the course. Thus we encourage extended work on one or two projects, though, typically, about a quarter of the class participants are not working on such projects when they take the course.

Fourth, an academic quarter goes by quickly—a semester is somewhat better—and improving one's writing is not a quick-fix enterprise. Students' writing skill, understanding of the process, and rhetorical savvy does change over the quarter, along the lines discussed above, but in some respects the course is just a beginning. The course can be taken more than once, and a few students do—for example, in their first or second year and then again when writing a proposal or a thesis. And the instructor encourages students to form writing groups once the course is over—and some do.

This point leads to a further, important issue: the possibility that the regular offering of a course in professional writing can generate a heightened attention to writing beyond the boundaries of the course itself. Whether or not this happens, of course, would depend on a number of contextual factors. It seems that at UCLA the course over time has had a catalyzing effect. We've instituted a further course, a special topics course in writing and rhetoric, and through it have offered seminars in advanced ethnographic writing, new rhetorical theory, and the writing of the OpEd piece. We are also experimenting with writing tutorials for non-native speakers of English. Some students are taking the initiative and forming writing groups themselves. Students have always formed informal study groups around exams and support groups for dissertations, but we are seeing an emphasis within those groups on writing, and the formation of groups with an explicit focus on writing. And, finally, some faculty seem to be talking frequently and forcefully about writing and are expressing interest in addressing it more effectively. Several divisions are increasing the attention paid to writing in their newly revised core courses or research practica. Faculty are requesting workshops on responding to student writing, and we are beginning to organize gatherings where we discuss both student and faculty writing together.⁴

One of the reviewers of this article raised the fifth question: Who would teach the course? “There are too many demands already on faculty, and there are actually very few faculty who would be good at teaching such a course.” While discussing the creation of a scholarly community, we offered some thoughts on the qualities that might make someone a good fit to teach

the course. Let us now think through the politics of getting people to teach it. One reason to convene the aforementioned schoolwide meeting of the faculty is to collectively discuss the issues of teaching load and resource allocation—thus the chair or dean should be present. The course does come with a price tag, and at UCLA we initially had to piece together resources to pull it off, and then subject it to further faculty review. So some on-the-ground work, public discussion, and course development and review might be needed. This combination generated at UCLA advocacy from a number of quarters—necessary to give the effort some roots and staying power.

Finding appropriate instructors is a concern, but it is possible that there will be some faculty who have a professional interest in developing and teaching a graduate-level writing course. Writing instruction is too often thought of as a simply technical enterprise and as a service, but, as we hope we've shown, it can be intellectually engaging—rich rhetorically, theoretically, methodologically—and it could easily intersect with research interests in a number of ed school domains: from language and literacy, to the sociology of knowledge, to professional development. Finding such connection will also contribute to the stability of the course, grounding it in the school's intellectual culture.

Sixth: grading. Another reviewer raises "the thorny issue of grading developing writing." "What are the students' perspectives on being graded," the reviewer asks, "while simultaneously being asked to take risks with their writing?" Grading *is* a thorny issue. We would be disingenuous to not acknowledge the tensions among institutional requirements, professional standards, and developing writing. One solution, of course, would be to offer the course *pass/no pass*. If letter grades are given, the instructor has several options that could honor the nature of the course. Grading could be phased in, with qualitative assessments recorded for earlier assignments and letter grades for later pieces, as proficiency improves. Another approach would be to develop evaluation criteria that reward the multiple elements that comprise effective writing and editing: the quality of response to others' writing, the incorporation of feedback, the attempts at experimentation, the linguistic sophistication of one's prose—with attention to patterns of development, and so on. One

could grade by portfolio, whereby students select the pieces they think display various competencies and write further commentary on them—thus aligning assessment with the development of rhetorical self-awareness. (It strikes us that this issue of grading performance in a graduate writing workshop could be a terrific topic of discussion for a school's language and literacy, evaluation, and measurement faculties.) One thing that was clear in students' responses to grading was that they appreciated a multidimensional approach to assessment—that each piece of writing wasn't treated as a final product for summative assessment, and that risk and possible blunder would be appreciated and accounted for . . . which takes us back, again, to the issues raised in the discussion of the creation of a scholarly community.

In closing, let us offer a thought that is not directly related to writing but, we think, emerges from a sustained consideration of it. A focus on writing provides a place in the curriculum where students can slow down a bit, reflect on what they're doing and why, and think about the language they're using to represent it. For example, students will sometimes bring to class a piece of writing that was presented to a research group or seminar, and use the class as a vehicle to unpack and think through the group's reaction. In the midst of all the pressures to become part of and publish within a discipline, students are able to stop and think, to try new things, even to be playful in their thinking and writing. The writing workshop is a formal course, and students receive a grade at its end, so we wouldn't want to claim that participants see it as a free zone. But because it's outside of their discipline, because in most cases their advisor isn't present, and because everyone in a sense feels they're in the same boat—struggling to make their writing better—because of all these factors, the workshop does seem to have an unusual place in the course of study. The academic profession, like so many other kinds of work and ways of living, has speeded up and intensified (Cassuto, 1998; Hampel, 1995). This pace can yield heightened productivity, but it brings with it a rush to closure that can work against reflection and experimentation. Writing, really thinking about writing and practicing its craft, demands a slowing down, a deliberation, and students need—we all need—a place in our professional lives for that.⁵

NOTES

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¹ There are exceptions. A notable one is the effort of Howard Becker, leading to his 1986 book *Writing for Social Scientists*.

² There were precedents. Professor Sol Cohen taught a seminar in scholarly writing and Professors James Catterall and Amy Stuart Wells taught several non-credit workshops to prepare students in their division for qualifying examinations. These folks provided helpful guidance as the new writing course was being developed.

³ Some would argue that the ability to write scholarly prose is best acquired and refined through immersion in scholarly practice, in apprenticeship situations, via extended experience in research projects with a mentor. Explicit focus on scholarly writing in a separate course might undercut such processes and, as well, constrain a student's own discovery and creative impulses (cf. Hunt, 1989). We would surely not dispute the value of the apprenticeship and the acquisition processes operating therein, but there is both research evidence (e.g., Blakeslee, 1997; Casanave, 1995) as well as the testaments of our students that explicit—at times even quite direct—instruction in writing, particularly with unfamiliar genres, is helpful.

⁴ We believe that discussing writing produced by students and by faculty within the same workshop can help faculty consider student writing from a different perspective—find parallels and correspondences—and, as well, can generate a broader understanding of their own composing.

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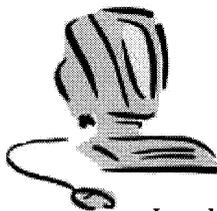
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