39. Huber (n. 27), 100.

30. A longer essay might explore this point in terms of coalition building based on com-
mon economic struggle. One thinks, for example, of the Yale TA strike and the associ-
ation that occurred there with the custodial workers. For a substantial article on the
increasing burden low-income and immigrant students are bearing to attend college,

31. I don’t wish to subscribe to the odd message put forth recently by George Levine that
“the credentials we as professionals provide should not depend primarily and perhaps
not at all on student’s ability to negotiate complicated arguments about race, class, and
gender” (14). I would suggest, rather, that these things are becoming increasingly the
“primary” if occluded context of what we do, by default, whether we persist in enter-
taining fantasies of academic insularity or not. See Levine, “Putting the ‘Literature’

32. My thinking on CS as a fundamentally ironic enterprise has been greatly influenced
by Ross Chambers’s essay, “Reading and Being Read” (n. 2).

33. Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life (Berkeley: University of California

34. Holub (n. 23), 80.


spring 1996, 6.

It is possible to see all the various postindustrial developments in the
academy—such as the downsizing of faculties and other resources, initiatives to
increase productivity, and the growth of more or less vocationally oriented areas
such as composition, technical writing, and English as a second language—as
moments in a struggle to determine whether, how, and to whom the academy is
going to be held accountable. The concept of “accountability” has distasteful
notations for many academics—it is associated with reductive “bottom line”
thinking that would limit academic freedom in research and teaching. But the
terms of accountability wouldn’t have to be conceded to the likes of academic
administrators, state legislators, and neocconservative critics of the academy.
Progressive teachers need to be engaged in this struggle, and we can begin by recon-
ceptualizing pedagogy. In order to do so, we will need to move beyond the
limited understanding of pedagogy and the public accountability of higher edu-
cation that we have inherited from the modernist and civic humanist traditions.
MODERNIST ENGLISH STUDIES

During the past fifty years of rapid expansion in the American university system, English studies has functioned as a sort of mechanism—an ideological state apparatus—to produce two variant modes of individualization: for the late capitalist social order. One of these modes of individualism was that of thequist and escapist reader of literature, aptly described by Terry Eagleton as an "historically peculiar form of human subject who is sensitive, receptive, imaginative, and so on...about nothing in particular" (emphasis in original). A pedagogy focused on the cultivation of abstract aesthetic and emotional sensibility in the individual student correlated with the New Critics’ “fugitive” rejection of modernist cultural society. The other facet of individualism informing English studies, especially composition studies, has been the humanist ideal of the citizen prepared to participate, as an individual, in public deliberations on social policy. On first glance, it may seem that these two aspects of individualism are radically opposed to each other—the first teaching students to be passive and the second teaching students to be active participants in a democratic society. In practice, however, the pedagogical goal of civic humanist agency offers students little more hope for political empowerment than does the New Critical rejection of social engagement, since it is focused exclusively on individual agency.

PEDAGOGY AND THE THEORY REVOLUTION

By the early 1980s, with New Criticism under attack from various postmodern critiques, many teachers had turned to antifoundationalist discourses—poststructuralism, feminism, Marxism, antiracism, and postcolonial critique, cultural studies, and queer theories—to make English studies more democratic and more responsive to the needs of teachers and students. It is possible, in this context, to trace a "pedagogical turn" resulting from poststructuralism’s problematizations of textuality and subjectivity. In literary studies, poststructuralism’s rejection of New Criticism’s focus on texts as units of self-determined meaning led to a rethinking of the ways textual meanings and cultural values are produced, and among the obvious targets for a broader analysis of this cultural production were pedagogical practices themselves. Similarly, in composition studies, the postmodern critique of textual integrity and autonomy raised questions about the production of student texts and the contexts in which writing is generated, leading to increased attention to the historical and social construction of discourse communities. These insights should lead us not to seek the development of students as individuals but to see students as participants in the production of multiple, heterogeneous knowledges. The teaching project should not be oriented toward the transmission of authoritative “knowledge” but should be relocated in praxis—practice developed in a dialectical process of theorization and critique. I have theorized a radically antiracist and anti-individualist "confrontational pedagogy" elsewhere. There I want to focus on the ways understanding “knowledge” and the relationships between teachers and students in these terms entails a reunderstanding of the public responsibilities of teachers and students and also of the public sphere as a potential site for pedagogical interventions.

RETHINKING THE PUBLIC SPHERE

It is useful to begin by reconsidering the term "public sphere." This term is often used to mean the bourgeois public sphere—the realm of discourse in which, it is commonly assumed, public opinion is formed and policy decisions are made. Postmodern theory has challenged the viability of this conceptualization, but its continued currency makes it useful as a point of departure for rethinking the boundaries of the classroom. In the context of this definition, it might be questioned whether the college classroom counts as part of the public sphere. It is generally true, for example, that teachers are expected to treat their classrooms as their own private domains. Various institutional traditions contribute to this understanding of the classroom as private space. The relationship between teacher and student is commonly seen as analogous to that between parent and child; academic freedom policies are designed to protect the privacy of individual teachers.

On the other hand, there are obvious reasons to think of the classroom as public space. The classroom might be considered part of the public sphere at least in that it is often seen as a training ground for students who will eventually enter the public sphere “proper,” after preparation both vocational and civic. This understanding of the classroom as a public sphere informs the many activist pedagogies (adaptations of Paulo Freire’s strategies, Henry Giroux’s class-based resistance pedagogy, feminist and antiracist pedagogies, etc.) in which the classroom is seen as what Nancy Fraser has called a “counterpublic sphere”—a local and
oppositional space in which subaltern subjects may prepare to contest the hege-
momy of a dominant social order.1

To some degree, at least since the 1960s, many progressives have seen the entire 
academy as a potential counter-public sphere. Yet universities and even humani-
ties departments are overwhelmingly dedicated to serving the interests of postna-
tional capitalism. Postmodern theory doesn't seem likely to change this state of 
affairs, though, I think, it can be made to support a general deprivatization of 
knowledge and pedagogy: a rethinking of pedagogy such that the individual stu-
dent or even the "classroom" need not be the focal point of the production of 
knowledge. For postmodern pedagogies, the "knowledge" of a course must be 
viewed as contingent, subject to dialectical contestation, and continually 
inolved in the process of production and reproduction. The knowledge of a 
course will not be a hypostatized and homogenized disciplinary canonical tradi-
tion filtered through the teacher as master and text as master-resource. We must 
break down the walls of the classroom in order to make it possible for knowledge to 
enter other discourses to intervene, and to make the knowledge, theories, and 
literacies produced in a particular course available to engage other discourses.

Reading the Institution

One move in the direction of deprivatization would be to bring our students in on 
the attempt to get a larger perspective on our work as teachers and intellectuals. 
This must begin with theory, with the process of critique and auto-critique, 
always identifying the enabling conditions, the regimes of truth that support our 
take-for-granted institutional structures and practices. In the wake of the theory 
revolution we’ve had some success in providing students with the resources and 
opportunities necessary to historicize and theorize the place of English studies. 
But we need also to develop frameworks for specific local institutional critique. 
We need, for example, to examine with our students the material conditions of 
our work in the university. We need to locate our particular institutions in the 
national academic prestige hierarchy. We need to locate our particular depart-
ments in relation to other departments in our own institutions. By identifying the 
terms, limits, and conditions of knowledge production at various levels of the aca-
demic prestige hierarchy, we can make the ideological functions of knowledge 
production available for critique, and we can make it possible to articulate local 
goals and local agendas. In the absence of such a critique, academic standards, 
canons, and orientations toward knowledge production set at elite institutions 
become the default conditions for English and cultural studies at all institutions. 
This prevents us from developing more productive agendas in the more numer-
ous but less prestigious institutions.

Proceeding from a specific identification of the conditions of our work, we can 
beg to raise issues of accountability in collective rather than individualistic 
terms. For instance, in some of my courses I include a brief section on the eco-
nomics of English studies. I ask students to read texts such as Evan Watkins’s 
Work Time, which gives a detailed analysis of the work that gets done in a typi-
cal English department. I provide data on student enrollments, tuition costs, 
fees, faculty teaching loads, and so forth. I want each student to be accountable, 
and I want to make the course and my work in general accountable, to a public 
that—to borrow a phrase Bill Clinton used in describing his cabinet selec-
tions—"looks like America." How much is it costing the taxpayers of Illinois to 
provide this course in seventeenth-century English literature? What is the 
demographic makeup of the class? Should we invest our resources in this course? 
How can we proceed in a way that will be most accountable to the interests of 
the public?

At the state university where I teach, students pay around 40 percent of the 
costs of their education in tuition and fees; most of the rest of their costs are paid 
by tax revenues. This is too large a stake for the student (the student’s share has 
been rising steadily since the Reagan-era effort to privatize higher education was 
inaugurated), and the high cost of tuition makes it impossible for many Illinois 
citizens to attend the university.2 But many students are oblivious to how the 
remaining 60 percent of the cost of their education—appropriated tax reve-
ues—is raised and distributed. They don’t think about the subsidies they are 
going to get, or about the uneven distribution of these subsidies. Therefore, when I 
assert that students have some responsibility to the society at large, some stu-
dents inevitably reject my claim by saying something like, "my parents worked 
hard, earned money, and have paid for my college education—I can do what I 
want to do in college, I’m paying for it." I began providing the enrollment and 
tuition data as a way of engaging such students in the project of identifying the 
specific dimensions and limits of their privilege. Since they are only paying for 
less than half of their education, I ask, don’t they think we should consider the 
interests of those who are paying most of the bill?

Demographically, our student body is whiter and somewhat more affluent 
than the population of the state as a whole. So some people—many people of
larger assumptions about literature that set the boundaries of the profession. The field coverage model thus functions as an administrative convenience achieved at the cost of sacrificing accountability.

In an earlier essay, entitled "Curriculum Mortis," I proposed an alternative curricular structure designed to institutionalize the engagement and conflict of competing discourses within the discipline of English studies. Drawing on the theory-driven curricular reforms at Carnegie-Mellon and Syracuse during the late 1980s, I suggested a plan in which, after taking introductory courses in "Strategies of Representation" and "Strategies of Interpretation," students would encounter a curriculum mapped as a triangle with disciplinary discourses forming three corners: history, rhetoric, and poetics. Each student would take eighteen hours on one corner and six hours each on the other two corners. Finally, the student would take a senior seminar, for a total of forty hours. Courses that combined two or more disciplinary discourses would be mapped accordingly on the triangle, and such courses would be allowed to count toward the major requirement in any one of the discursive areas the course addressed. In this way transdisciplinary courses would be given a slight advantage over courses that addressed only one disciplinary discourse. The broad categories of history, rhetoric, and poetics were intended to correspond to the traditional subdivisional divisions of the department, but it matters less what the categories might be—or whether there are two, three, or more categories—than that various different disciplinary and discursive paradigms be articulated and situated in interactive relationships to each other.

My hope was that the triangle curriculum would institutionalize a constant process of rearticulation and negotiation among the various discursive paradigms that contribute to the production of knowledge in my department. However, after a lengthy process of consideration, the department adopted a compromise curriculum that incorporates a theory-focused introductory course and a senior seminar similar to those in my proposal, but the triangle was rejected. Instead, the department instituted a multi-track requirement based on genre categories—poetry, fiction, drama, and rhetoric. On the whole, I see this as a progressive development. The literary period courses are declining in importance and the new genre-focused courses are likely to be more theoretically self-conscious than the traditional courses; at the current historical-institutional moment it is more difficult to take as unproblematic that a particular kind of a text is a "poem" than it is to assume that the shape of composition is the most salient defining characteristic of a text. But I regret having lost an opportunity to make accountability for one's theoretical assumptions an integral part of a curricular process closely involving each faculty member.
Engaging "Vocationalist" Publics within the Academy

Progressive teachers of literature and cultural studies need to redefine and reappropriate existing academic structures and resources in ways that will enable us to reach out to broader constituencies within the academy. As I argued in "Curriculum Mortis," we need to interact more with faculty and students in quasi-professional and vocationally oriented programs in our own departments in order to hold vocationalists accountable to the democratic and intellectual ideals of the university and the society at large, and in order to hold academic humanists accountable to existing sociopolitical conditions. The traditional hierarchy of prestige in which humanists smugly tolerate but ignore vocationalists seals us off from these "publics" within the academy and their constituencies without. There are issues of accountability and elitism here. But our resistance to taking vocationalists seriously also inhibits our theoretical self-consciousness. This affects our scholarship as well as our teaching. For instance, among all of the excellent work in postcolonial criticism and theory from literary and cultural studies scholars in the past ten years or so, one seldom encounters any mention of the ongoing effects of cultural imperialism reproduced in our TESOL programs. I have read many brilliant critiques of colonialist ideology focusing on canonical works, nonliterary documents, and popular culture, but none of the postcolonial critics is thinking about the issue of cultural imperialism in TESOL. The work published in leading TESOL journals such as TESOL Quarterly, meanwhile, tends to be positivistic and apolitical. Even in terms of the goals of liberal humanism, the strict separation of vocational from academic courses is counterproductive, as Edward Said demonstrates in his observations on English language teaching in the Persian Gulf:

In sheer numerical terms English attracted the largest number of young people... the reason: many students proposed to end up working for airlines, or banks in which English was the world lingua franca. This all but terminally consigned English to the level of a technical language stripped of expressive and aesthetic characteristics and denuded of any critical or self-conscious dimension. You learned English to use computers, respond to orders, transmit telexes, decipher manifests, and so forth. That was all. 60

Deprivatizing the Classroom and Violating Collegiality

Strategies to make our professional practices more directly accountable often meet resistance because they violate the unspoken codes of collegiality that prevent teachers from engaging each other, and their students, in public dialogue and debate. For example, I regularly teach a doctoral seminar in literary theory and pedagogy in which I assign students to write an essay on the pedagogy of a particular literature course they have taken or observed, developing a critique of the relationship between the teacher's theoretical orientation and his or her classroom practices. A few weeks in advance I send a note around to my colleagues saying that I will be making the assignment and that some students may be contacting them for interviews or asking for materials from their courses, and thanking them in advance for their cooperation. When I introduce the assignment to students, I describe it as an opportunity for them to closely analyze the work of a veteran teacher, and I suggest that they use the assignment as an occasion to talk about pedagogy and theory with someone whose teaching they've particularly admired.

Inevitably, however, some students and some of my colleagues are made very uncomfortable by this assignment. Some students say they feel uncomfortable because they are being put in the position of judging their teachers publicly (all of the students' papers in my course are "published" on a listserv list and archived on a web page, and the students discuss the paper in the seminar). I see the assignment as an opportunity for teachers to have a careful and thorough critique of their teaching—a process from which it might be possible to identify areas of particular strengths to build on as well as weaknesses to focus on for improvement. But some colleagues react with suspicion, and, occasionally, with hostility when approached by the students. Some teachers haven't thought much about the theoretical underpinnings of their teaching practices, and don't like to be held accountable in this way. The assumption that the classroom is each teacher's private space is so strong that my assignment is sometimes seen as an invasion of privacy. Though I suppose this shouldn't be surprising, I think it is really quite remarkable.

ExtraCurricular Interventions

Progressive teachers should be alert to possibilities for intervention in extracurricular spaces that are often occupied by traditionalist and reactionary interests.
As an example, I'd like to describe one of my projects of this sort. In my department there are several annual student scholarships and awards, mostly named after former faculty members and funded by bequests from those families or their estates. These awards recognize the winners of various 'contests'—the best essay in a literature course, the best work of fiction by an undergraduate, and so forth—and they are presented at the annual department banquet each spring. A few years ago I developed an alternative award, the C. L. R. James/Malcolm X Award, which offers a $100 prize for the best essay on a sociopolitical issue in English studies by an undergraduate student. The C. L. R. James/Malcolm X Award represents a pedagogical intervention and an implicit critique of the traditional department culture in several ways that may not be immediately apparent. First, the name of the award promotes a tradition of left and antiracist critique in opposition to the mainstream aestheticism of the other awards. And the name of the award implies a rejection of the petty individualistic vanity of the other awards. Unlike the namesakes of the other awards, neither C. L. R. James nor Malcolm X ever taught in my department. But students who consider submitting their work for this contest have before them a model of intellectual recognition that stands for something more than the recognition of an individual—the C. L. R. James/Malcolm X Award, as the award announcement states, is named instead for two important radical critics of Western culture. The award has the effect of encouraging faculty to include sociopolitical critique as a category when they are assigning paper topics in their courses, and it signals to students that sociopolitical critique is welcome in the English department. The award attracts students who are interested in radical cultural critique into our programs, and recognizes the work of students with these interests. Nonmajors who have submitted essays for this contest have subsequently switched their majors to English, and several of the contestants have pursued graduate studies in English. Several students have commented that the existence of an award that recognizes sociopolitical critique was a factor in their decision: it helped them make aware of the possibility of doing radical cultural critique in English studies.

**COMPUTER NETWORK-ENHANCED PEDAGOGIES**

Some theorists have advanced the claim that Internet and hypertext technologies offer ready ways to realize the liberatory possibilities of postmodernism in the literature classroom. Yet technological innovations such as computer networks by no means represent a cure-all; their implementation will not necessarily foster the kinds of postmodern pedagogies I have been discussing. Indeed, this technology is all too easily co-opted by both vocationalist and liberal humanist pedagogies. Unless we wish to fall into the vocationalist trap of promoting the use of computer networks as yet another technological skill to be "mastered" and later converted into cold hard cash, or the liberal humanist one of assuming that computer networks will simultaneously allow for the expression of everyone's unique, individual voice and promote consensus through the suppression of difference, we will need to carefully and rigorously critique and theorize the pedagogical practices facilitated by computer networks. Furthermore, we will need to temper our characteristic optimistic faith in the progressive nature of technology in the face of the very real material conditions that limit access to these technologies for many people.

The possibility that students could have access to a broad intertext with a high degree of control over the possible connections that may arise in reading a complex text sounds appealing. But hopes for student empowerment through technology are generally conceived within a consumerist framework of prefabricated choices. While I reject these terms, I have experimented with the use of electronic texts as one of several means to reconfigure the local academic course as a public site of interaction and intervention. My experiments have used fairly low-tech and widely accessible Internet technologies such as e-mail, gopher archives, and the World Wide Web. In all my courses participants write weekly micro-essays taking positions on class discussion topics, and these are posted to an e-mail listserv list. Participants can access the list from any computer with a Telnet hookup or a modem. The list can include other students and faculty not in the class, and students and faculty at other institutions. The micro-essays can be cross-posted among different classes, different institutions, and from one semester to another. With the e-mail listserv list, the discursive space of the classroom can be expanded, and this in turn can facilitate the formation of a wider variety of articulated political positions among participants in the course. Over the past several years the texts written by me and by the students in my courses have been "published" on the university's gopher server and on the World Wide Web, making the texts available for public viewing. In this way the intellectual work of the course becomes more publicly accountable, and participants in the course can become involved in critical discussions with other students and faculty beyond the local department or institution.

Computer networks, whether classroom-based or worldwide, offer an opportune site for inaugrating a deprivedized, collective production of knowledge.
The virtual spaces created by computer networks constitute a landscape in which the traditional power relations between student and teacher can be significantly altered, in which students and teachers alike can speak freely, critique, and explore various subject positions. In this discursive landscape the knowledge generated in the classroom can be (literally) linked to other knowledges, other voices, thereby creating a participatory "public sphere" radically different from the one nostalgically referred to by civic humanism—in which the private citizen speaks eloquently as "the common man" in a universal public forum; or, as Hollywood would have it, "Mr. Smith goes to Washington."

**Understanding Our Situation**

In accordance with Illinois state law, my university library keeps a printout showing the salaries of all university employees above a certain salary grade level it's an interesting document. It indicates, among other things, that assistant professors in English earn around $35,000 per year, while assistant professors in marketing earn around $35,000 per year. This, for me, raises further issues of accountability. How does the university justly pay marketing faculty more than English faculty? Market demand, of course. But is market demand a legitimate criterion for determining the way resources are allocated in an institution of higher education? Does this mean that the academy values the teaching of English less than it values the teaching of marketing? Should English majors demand a rebate on their tuition, since they are being shortchanged in terms of faculty dollars expended? Or, if we're going to operate according to marketplace dynamics, can the English department compete by offering some marketing courses? I've read interesting cultural studies scholarship on the marketing campaigns and management strategies of companies such as Benetton, the Banana Republic, the Body Shop, and Baxter Healthcare Corp. Maybe we practitioners of cultural studies could train marketing majors more cheaply than the marketing department. Or, if we can't compete with them, maybe we can join them. I've considered the possibility of trying to publish a few pieces in the journal where marketing professors publish, and then applying for one of their positions the next time they run an ad in the Chronicle of Higher Education. As an assistant professor in marketing I know more than some full professors in English! Or, I know, they wouldn't take a leftist seriously in marketing.

This reminds me of another issue of accountability. Is it possible that, to whatever extent English departments really are hotbeds of radicalism—as some conservative journalists have insisted (though I don't believe it)—this tendency is a consequence of our underpaid conditions of employment? Twenty thousand more per year, for starters, could probably buy a lot of political correctness among English faculty. In the meantime, we need to remember how we're being valued by our institutions, and we must not forget that for a savings of twenty thousand per year, the academy should be willing to swallow some radical critiques with its Shakespeare and company.

Liberal humanist orthodoxy has assumed that the humanities in general, and literary studies in particular, have a sort of authoritative status that automatically counters the general tendency of educational systems to reproduce existing relations of power. In composition studies it has been assumed that the teaching of writing will automatically enable students to successfully function in a participatory democracy. Yet however broad the range of cultural experience represented in the texts, the goal of liberal humanist pedagogy is always to transform the student into an autonomous participant in the bourgeois public sphere, as the free-standing citizen of a mythical democracy that never was.

As a result, any political implications of the course and its texts or any political investments on the part of the student are always considered secondary to the "fundamentally human" experience of learning, which is assumed to transcend politics. Our students' general indoctrination in the ideology of individualism often prevents them from identifying structural causes of problems and larger social forces of oppression. If, for example, a disgruntled man bursts into a McGill University classroom and kills several female engineering students (we trust readers will recall this horrible incident from the fall of 1990), the ideology of individualism—or only account for the action by describing the assailant as a perverse or insane individual. Students indoctrinated in the ideology of individualism have no language or intellectual framework for understanding the extent to which even the particular directions that such shockingly "perverse" or "antisocial" behaviors take are sanctioned by a long history of misogyny and a continuing devaluation of women in our culture. On the other hand, the overwhelming hegemony of individualism blocks students' access to the social power of collective action, limiting students' awareness of the possibilities and procedures for political action based on the shared experience of social groups and shared interests among groups. However, useful the pedagogy of individualism may have been at a particular moment, then, it is inadequate for the current historical moment. It is time to hold ourselves, our colleagues, and our students accountable to constituencies beyond the universal human individual conceived as the subject of the liberal humanist academy.
Part III

Intellectuals and Their Publics