Curriculum Mortis: A Manifesto for Structural Change

RONALD STRICKLAND

Since the early 1980s, in the wake of the paradigm shift from New Criticism to the politically self-conscious postmodernism and poststructuralism currently dominant in English studies, teachers of literature have been under attack from conservative academics and journalists. The terms of this attack, and of the counter-critiques mounted by politically- and theoretically-versed scholars, are by now quite familiar. Conservatives and liberal humanists charge that radical English teachers were ignoring traditional canonical texts in favor of indoctrinating students in an alternative canon of "politically correct" texts espousing Marxist, feminist, and "multicultural" agendas. Theorists and radicals responded that the traditional canon itself constitutes a "politically correct" set of values of a different sort, and that the focus of English studies should be critical interrogation of cultural texts and other discursive systems rather than un critical appreciation of "great" literature.

My sympathies in this debate lie entirely in the theorist/radical camp. In this essay, however, I want to take up a question that has not been sufficiently addressed by either side of the debate over the English curriculum: what is the role of English studies in an increasingly technical-vocational academy? In relation to this question, I think the conservatives who are concerned that theoretically self-conscious and
politically-oriented approaches will mean the death of literature have been barking up the wrong tree. In the current postmodern, post-industrial acade-
my, quasi-professional and vocational courses rub shoulders with traditional
arts and sciences courses. Workers, not just customers, are now trained in col-
leges and universities. Traditional literary study—reified in post-Romantic
terms as an escape from economic and political concerns—is fast becoming
expendable luxury in universities whose primary function is the training and
credentialing of the growing technical-professional-managerial work force.
In this climate market pressures, not critical theory, will doom the study of
literature. Yet if conservatives have, for the most part, missed the symptoms of
literary study's current "do-ease," radical teachers and scholars have been too
often distracted by the conservaties' rear-guard attacks. We have not
developed the kinds of institutional structures and practices necessary for
engaging the challenge to democratic education posed by the technical-voca-
tional mission of the academy
Most of us are complicit in this technical-vocational mission. We maintain
the luxury of teaching literature or literary theory in relatively comfortable
conditions at last partly by appropriating resources generated by "service"
programs directed to English departments. These programs—composition,
technical writing, English as a second language, etc.—are disproportionately
taught by graduate assistants and non-tenured faculty, and they are typically
marginalized within English departments in a variety of contexts such as office
space, departmental committee representation, curricular offerings, and grad-
uation requirements. Within the larger profession, we have a scholar-
ship publishing structure that tends to reward those whose specialized
research is most remote from the concerns of these "service" courses. This
hierarchy of privilege needs to be dismantled not merely because it is unfair
for our colleagues who teach technical-vocational courses, but also because it
limits the critical scope and effect of literature teachers as well.
We need to meet the challenge of the growing technical-vocational hege-
mony in the academic world in our own departments in our curricula. The most
promising models for curricular change currently on the horizon are the "cul-
tural studies" and "textual studies" models, in which both elite and popular
texts are taken as objects of study, in which the traditional canon is opened up
to include more texts by women and people of color, and in which literary and
cultural theories are given primary emphasis in the curriculum and in
individual courses. These innovations are necessary and valuable, but they
do not go far enough toward reeducating the narrow parochialism of traditional
literary studies because they don't engage and contest the values and assump-
tions of the technical-vocational training courses in the university at large and,
often, in English departments themselves. In the following pages, I will argue
some possible models for an English curriculum more directly engaged in a
contextual dialogue with the technical-vocational mission of the academy in
a postmodern, post-industrial society.
THEORETICAL FRAMES: TRANSDISCIPLINARITY
AND CULTURAL STUDIES
One of the means by which New Criticism and its narrowly aesthetic-orien-
ted approach to literature has continued to fend off political and theoretical
challenges in the classroom (if not in the scholarly journals) is the wel-
trumped field coverage model of literary study. As Gerald Graff has dem-
strated in Professing Literature, this model produced an ostensibly plural-
lar literary curriculum in which specialists in particular literary-historical periods
were encouraged to do narrowly focused research and teaching, each in his or
her own narrow specialization, each briefly ignoring the larger assumption
about literature that sets the boundaries of the profession. For some time now,
over-specialization has been recognized as counter-productive by political
engaged teachers both on the right and the left. Compare, for example, the
following observations:
Each department or great division of the university makes a pitch for itself,
and each offers a course of study that will make the student an initiate. But
how to choose among them? How do they relate to one another? The fact is
that they do not address one another. They are competing and contradictory, with-
out being aware of it. The problem of the whole is usually indicated by the
very existence of the specialties, but it is never systematically posed. The net
effect of the student's encounter with the college catalogue is bewilderment and
very often demoralization. (Bloom 339)

Unless one fudges the definition of intellectuals in terms of purely formal and
statistical educational criteria, it is fairly clear that what modern society pro-
duces is an army of alienated, privatized, and smugly experts who are
knowledgeable only within very narrowly defined areas. This technical intel-
lectualism, rather than intellectuals in the traditional sense of thinkers associated
with the totality, is growing by leaps and bounds to run the increasing com-
plex bureaucratic and industrial apparatus. Its rationality, however, is only
instrumental in character, and thus suitable mainly to perform partial tasks
rather than tackling substantial questions of social organization and political
action. (Foucault 116)
The first passage was written by Allan Bloom, and the second was written
by Paul Ricoeur—who hold diametrically opposed conservative and pro-
gressive views on university education but who share an increasingly
widely held dissatisfaction with the myopic over-specialization of most acade-
mic disciplines. Despite the wide range of disagreement between conservatives
and progressives in the academy, the undesirability of over-specialization is
one thing that both sides can agree on. The university curriculum should be a
site in which different perspectives—political and intellectual positions—can
confront one another. One result of over-specialization is that political and
intellectual conflicts among faculty and students are displaced to the level of
administration. Instead of a situation in which colleagues with different politi-
cal, intellectual, and institutional positions debate specific issues, the power
struggles are hidden behind closed doors as administrators negotiate funding
levels. The net effect of this displacement is a systemic rearticulation of intel-
lectual vitality.
I came face to face with just this sort of crippling effect of over-specializa-
tion in my own institution recently when one of my English department col-
leagues submitted a new course proposal for a graduate level cultural studies
course—Introduction to Cultural Theory—to the university curriculum of
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literally-oriented approaches will mean the death of literature have been raking up the wrong tree. In the current postmodern, post-industrial age, pre-professional and vocational courses tab should with traditional arts and sciences courses. Workers, not just managers, are now trained in colleges and universities. Traditional literary study—once considered in post-Romantic terms as a result of Russian and political concerns—is fast becoming an unprofitable luxury to universities whose primary function is the training and credentialing of the growing technical-professional-managerial work force. In the current market-driven society, would the study of literature, 2Yet if conservatives have, for the most part, misread the symptoms of every student's current "dis-ease," radical scholars and teachers have been too distracted by the conservatives' rear-guard attacks. We have not yet developed the kinds of institutional structures and practices necessary for facing the challenge to democratic education posed by the technical-vocational mission of the academic institution. One of us is a concerned literature teacher and literature or literary theory in relatively comfortable positions at partly by appropriating resources generated by "service" courses attached to English departments. These programs—composition, critical reading, writing, English as a second language, etc.—are disproportionately filled by graduate assistants and non-tenured faculty, and they are typically isolated within English departments in a variety of contexts such as an office, departmental committee representation, curricular offerings, and grading requirements. Within this arena, we have a scholar-publisher whose publishing activity tends to reward those whose work is most remote from the concerns of these "service" courses. This is the case quite clearly and effect of literature teachers as well. We need to meet the challenge of the growing technical-vocational hagiology in the academy with our own departments, in our curricula. The most moving models for curricular change currently on the horizon are the "cul-
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and cultural theories are given primary emphasis in the curriculum and individual courses. These innovations are necessary and valuable, but they are far enough, and the narrow parochialism of traditional literary studies because they don't engage and contest the values and assumptions of the technical-vocational training courses in the university at large and, at a situation in which colleagues and institutions are not directly engaged in a trumpv dialogue with the technical-vocational mission of the academy in stepped-post-industrial society.

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ted in Professing Literature, this model produced an ostensibly pluralistic literary curriculum in which specialists in particular literary-historical periods were encouraged to do narrowly focused research and teaching, each in his or her own narrow specialization, each blithely ignoring the larger assumptions about literature that set the boundaries of the profession. For some time now one specialization has been recognized as counterproductive by politically engaged teachers both on the right and the left. Compare, for example, the following observations:

Each department or great division of the university makes a pitch for itself, and each offers a course of study that will make the student an instant. But how do they relate to one another? The fact is, they do not address one another. They are competing and contradictory, with
out being aware of it. The problem of the whole is uniquely indicated by the very existence of the specialties, but it is never systematically posed. The net effect of the student's encounter with the college catalogue is bewildering and very often demoralizing. (Bloom 339)

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plex bureaucratic and industrial apparatus. Its totality, however, is only instrumental in character, and thus suitable mainly to perform partial tasks rather than tackling substantial questions of social organization and political direction. (Piccone 116)

The first passage was written by Allan Bloom, and the second was written by Paul Piccone—two authors who hold diametrically opposed conservative and progressive views on university education but who share an increasingly widespread dissatisfaction with the myopic over-specialization of most academic disciplines. Despite the wide range of disagreement between conservatives and progressives in the academy, the un抵达ability of over-specialization is one thing that both sides can agree on. The university curriculum should be a model in which different perspectives—political and intellectual positions—can confront one another. One result of over-specialization is that political and intellectual conflicts among faculty and students are displaced to the level of administrative institutions. Instead of a situation in which colleagues with different political and institutional positions debate specific issues, the power struggles are hidden behind closed doors as administrators negotiate funding levels. The net effect of this displacement is a systemic retribution of intellec-
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tion in my own institution recently when one of my English department col-
leagues submitted a new course proposal for a graduate level cultural studies course—Introduction to Cultural Theory—to the university curriculum com-

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mittee. The Communications department protested the proposal, and a committee of four English faculty, including myself, met with a committee of four Communications faculty in a special meeting, chaired by a member of the university curriculum committee, to discuss the proposals and work out the objections to the course. At the meeting I was surprised to learn that the Communications department objected to the English department adding a course because, they argued, "literature" was their proper area, and "media"—which they took to be the purview of cultural studies—was theirs. We should stick to literature," they suggested, and we would teach "media" explained to our colleagues from Communications that we see our field as somewhat wider than that of "literature," that we're not sure what "literature" is anyway, and that, in any event, we think it's necessary to reach out in order to understand what is "literature." Furthermore, we argued, since cultural studies is by definition a field that crosses disciplinary boundaries, the courses should be taught in a blind spot that corresponed to one department would have no general objection to cultural studies courses offered by the Communications department. They responded that this sort of intellectual quibbling was fine for the amusement of faculty arguing in coffee shops or writing in scholarly journals, but that what was really at stake here was a real-world academic turf battle—and "cultural studies" was their turf. So neither side gave an inch, and this conflict was simmering up stairs to be addressed by the university curriculum committee. The university curriculum committee eventually decided in our favor. Nonetheless, I think it's unfair that the institutional structures discourage public debate on these kinds of cultural conflicts. In this particular instance, the objection rested on such fusty intellectual grounds that it probably wouldn't have been made in a forum open to a general audience of faculty and students. This is "academic politics" with a vengeance. The flimsiness of the objection itself is merely a symptomaticeffect of a kludgey pluralistic institutional structure that discourages the political conflict of serious intellectual debate.

If a curriculum based on liberal pluralism seems inadequate to the development of critical literacy from a left perspective, it is no more adequate to the right. The neoconservative response to the problem of over-specialization was inaugurated several years ago by William Bennett's call for limiting pluralism and establishing a coherent, traditional canon based on the texts of Western civilization—a version of the "great books" curriculum. Bennett assumes that the most important function of humanities education is to pass on a common legacy of Western civilization to all college students. He describes this canonical tradition, in terms adapted from Matthew Arnold, as "the best that has been thought, written, or otherwise expressed about the human experience." Some obvious objections to this goal are 2. There is no such canonicity, in fact, "common" to all American citizens, that it leaves out a good deal of human experience, and that to subject students to oppressed social groups to an emplished celebration of this tradition amounts to cultural imperialism. On the other hand, the classics of Western civilization represent an important body of cultural capital to which all students should be given access. The more urgent question may be not what should be taught, but how it should be taught. As Gerald Graff has pointed out, "a Shakespeare text taught by Bennett would bear small resemblance to the same text taught by Eagleton" ("What Should We Be Teaching?"). At its best, that is, cultural studies specifically attempts to promote a critical, engaged engagement with traditional culture, often by juxtaposing texts from various cultural traditions. The main obstacles to a unified, coherent curriculum, as the opponents see it, are "politicized" transdisciplinary movements that often have a European canonical tradition.

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by Bennett would bear small resemblance to the same text taught by [Terry Eagleton] ("What Should We Be Teaching" [193]). At its best, that is, critical theory requires a rigorously critical approach to whatever is taught. Similarly, cultural studies specifically attempts to promote a critical, oppositional engagement with traditional culture, often by juxtaposing texts and perspectives of non-Western and suppressed cultural traditions to those of the European canonical tradition.

The main obstacles to a unified, coherent curriculum, as the conservativists see it, are "politicized" transdisciplinary movements that often have the effect of breaking down the walls between traditional disciplines—feminism, with its primary focus on gender as a category that is more significant than any particular discipline, and multiculturalism, which seeks a curriculum that would be more reflective of and responsive to the experiences of minorities. But women's studies and ethnic studies programs actually tend to work against over-specialization by enlarging the area of general interaction among disciplines. Here the neoconservatives have a blind spot that corresponds to their blindness to the true source of the crisis facing traditional literature. The most serious obstacle to a unified traditional curriculum is the proliferation of and increasing importance given to technical, professional, and vocational education within the university, though this development is almost always unnoticed by conservative critics. Among radical teachers, on the other hand, the presence of technical and vocational programs within the university, and the presence of such courses within English departments, should be seen as providing opportunities and institutional contexts for challenging the corporate-sector values and practices that characterize these programs. We need to develop curricular structures within our departments in which a debate among positions representing different value-systems and social and professional paradigms can be carried on.

Amid the ongoing controversy about the ways that intellectual and political forces like critical theory, feminism, and multiculturalism are changing the English curriculum, one of the most powerful forces for change has received the least attention—the students. In demographic and economic terms, the academy is being asked to educate different students, and for different purposes, than was the case forty or even twenty years ago. More of our students are non-traditional college students—minority students, first-generation college students from working-class backgrounds, and older, returning students. English departments are being called upon to provide a wider variety of services—including training in critical thinking, writing and rhetoric, and exposure to traditional cultural values—to students whose main purpose for attending the university is to gain specific and directly applicable training for employment. Thus, in addition to the benefits in intellectual rigor and political accountability to be gained from an ongoing critical engagement between faculty teaching technical-vocational and service courses and faculty teaching traditional humanities courses these courses offer us access to groups of students—particularly working-class students and African-American students—who often share the humanities majors in favor of majors offering more immediate and more lucrative career opportunities.

There are some formidable obstacles to a critical engagement between literature and faculty teaching technical-vocational and service courses

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in English departments. Cross-disciplinary interaction is always difficult to achieve and maintain in the academy because of the institutional forces for specialization that I mentioned earlier. But in the situation that problem is compounded by the overlay of institutional status hierarchy. There is a persistent attitude among literature faculty that those who teach rhetoric, composition, technical-professional writing, or English for speakers of other languages are people who would rather be teaching literature but don't "have what it takes" (whatever that is). This attitude is generally reinforced by the uneven distribution of institutional resources, power, and prestige among the different subdisciplines of English studies. The professional environment defined me as a close parodist of a feudal society—the literature teachers are the "aristocrats," living off the appropriated surplus labor of the "peasants"—teaching assistants, part-time and temporary faculty, and teachers of composition, remedial courses. And "literature" performs some of the same functions for us as it performed for the feudal aristocracy—it confirms (for us) that our exalted professional status is the natural result of our cultural superiority.

The first move toward changing this crippling status hierarchy is to begin to treat our marginalized colleagues with more respect. By this I do not mean that literature faculty should accept uncritically the value or credibility of the marginalized positions. Quasi-professional technical and vocational programs in the universities valorize themselves as academic disciplines precisely on the basis of their association with traditional academic disciplines. Too often, however, we have allowed them to enter that arena without demanding the price of admission—an engaged participation in the ongoing intellectual debate over social and cultural values. Any course of study within the university should be held accountable for its fundamental aims and purposes in relation to the aims and purposes of other disciplines and programs within the university and in relation to the general aims of education in a democratic society. Departmental and disciplinary boundaries are not easily crossed, but the multi-disciplinary structures of many English departments offer viable starting points for transdisciplinary work. If literature teachers can begin to engage seriously the too-frequently ignored teachers of technical and vocationally-oriented courses in our own departments, eventually, perhaps, we can develop ways to interact more directly with those in other departments as well.

In this sense the term "interdisciplinary" instead of the more familiar term "transdisciplinary" marks an important distinction. "Transdisciplinary" scholars and pedagogy go beyond a common practice of "interdisciplinary" work which merely appropriates knowledge produced in one discipline for use in another discipline without questioning the basic assumptions or conceptual frameworks of either discipline. "Transdisciplinary," as it has been described by Maxud Zavarezhed and Sheila Blake, is a term that is aware of the status of knowledge in one of the modes of ideological construction of reality in any given discipline, through its self-reflexivity, it challenges not simply to accept knowledge but to ask what constitutes knowledge, why and how and by whose authority certain modes of understanding are certified as knowledge and others as para-knowledge or non-knowledge. (10)

Transdisciplinary pedagogy is not a matter of ignoring existing disciplinary knowledge, or of merely substituting some other body of knowledge for, say, an existing literary canon. Instead, it constitutes what Dominick LaCapra calls a "transformative endeavor" that requires an "intimate knowledge of the disciplines and the related canons or disciplinary practices one is criticizes, attempting to refashion, including the sometimes valid resistances to change they may pose." The goal of such work is not to valorize "blurred genres" in general, but to explore connections that appear blurred only with narrow disciplinary frameworks (5). What LaCapra terms the "transformative endeavor" identifies what I see as the theoretical challenge to open literature study up to transdisciplinary and counter-disciplinary paradigms. We need to break down disciplinary barriers that have the effect of trivializing the work of the scholar/teacher by narrowing the range of questions that can be addressed. This will require teachers and students habituated to the narrow specializations of our discipline to make a deliberate and concerted effort to broaden their perspectives, but the rewards—both political and intellectual—will be worth the effort.

CHANGING THE CURRICULUM

The English department at Illinois State University, where I teach, is large, multi-purpose department. In addition to traditional literary studies courses in literary theory, film, cultural studies, children's literature, women's literature, and African-American literature, we offer a specialization in English education for secondary teachers; we offer technical and professional writing courses at both the graduate and undergraduate levels; we offer graduate and undergraduate courses in English as a second language at both the undergraduate and graduate levels with an optional master's degree emphasis in ESL; and we have a large composition-rhetoric program. Yet our graduate curriculum remains literature-centered. Our writing courses, our graduate courses, and our English education courses are relegated to the fringes of the curriculum, while the core of traditional literature remains relatively undisturbed. All students are required to take two introductory courses in literature and a senior seminar designed as a "capstone" course, looking back at the courses the student has taken. Students are encouraged to take a chronologically distributed sampling of six courses in English and American literature. This leaves room for two or three electives, which could be in literary theory, rhetoric, creative writing, technical writing, or linguistics. English education majors, training to be high school teachers, are routinely exempted from the full complement of English and American literature courses, in order to make room for required education courses.

In respect to this curriculum, I think the opposition of theory vs. literature is largely irrelevant—just a family squabble among a fairly narrow sector of the department. What the current curriculum suppresses are oppositions like erasure (including literary theory) vs. rhetoric, literature vs. composition, grammar vs. linguistics, literature vs. technical writing, etc. My department, curriculum, and the problems that attend it, are typical and symptomatic curricular problems in many other English departments. The literature-centered focus of our curriculum and our departmental organizational structures inhibit our theoretical self-consciousness and our ability to engender each other's serious debate. This affects our scholarship as well as our teaching.
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uages are people who would rather be teaching literature but don't have "what it takes." This attitude is generally reinforced by the unattenuated remarks, rewards, and prestige among the differ-

ent subdisciplines of English studies. The professional environment strikes me as a "closed parlor of a feudal society"—the literature teachers are the "aristocracy" living off the surplus labor of the "peasants"—teaching assistants, part-time and temporary faculty, and teachers of marginalized subjects. An "academic aristocracy"—it confirms for us that the exalted pro-

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The first move toward changing this crippling status hierarchy is to begin to treat our "departmental" colleagues with more respect. By this I don't mean institutionalized positions. Quasi-professional "academic" positions of the universities valorize themselves as academic disciplines precisely as they allow us to enter that arena without demanding the price of admis-

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wise in our own departmentally defined activities, perhaps we can develop ways to interact more directly with those in other departments as well. If use of the term "transdisciplinary" instead of the more familiar term "interdisciplinary" marks an important difference, the flexibility and peculiarity knowledge produced in one discipline for use in the training of another discipline. "Transdisciplinary," as it has been described by Donald Morton,

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struct of reality in any given discipline, the extent to which the disciplines have taken one another and how and by whose authority certain modes of understanding are certified as knowledge and others as part-knowledge or non-knowledge. (10)

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ture-centered focus of our curricula and our department's organizational structures inhibit our theoretical self-consciousness and our ability to engage each other in serious debate. This affects our scholarship as well as our teach-

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ing. 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, I haven't encountered any mention of the ongoing effects of cultural imperialism reproduced in our ESL programs. I have read many brilliant critiques of colonial ideology focusing on canonical works, non-literary documents, and popular culture, but none of the postcolonial critics is thinking about the issue of cultural imperialism in ESL. The work published in TESOL Quarterly, meanwhile, tends to be positivistic and apolitical, though there have been recent efforts to bring the insights of literary theory and cultural studies to bear on TESOL issues.

But teachers of literature should be putting pressure on teachers of ESL, and vice versa. If the emergence of postcolonial and subaltern criticism in literary studies has no relation to the teaching of ESL in the academy, how can we expect such developments to have any impact beyond the academy? As long as ESL remains a marginalized and often ignored "service" function of English studies, no projects that are being done in one will be able to make an impact on the other. The relationship between composition and technical writing to literature in English departments is being missed. Instructors are missing an opportunity for a productive critical engagement with these colleagues and students. Missed opportunities can be—that is what this book is about. The relationship of these subdisciplines limns the scope of our critical and theoretical awareness as well.

To counter this intrinsic parochialism and elitism, we need curricula that would require all students to take a representative sample of the broader field of English Studies and that would systematically require students and faculty to think through the intersections of various functional divisions (rhetoric, literary, cultural studies, pedagogy, professional writing, etc.) and philosophical orientations (humanism, Marxism, existentialism, logical positivism, feminism, etc.) within our departments and the discipline at large. Such conditions aren't reflected even in the course catalogs of departments that are often hailed and revered as leaders in the theory revolution—Duquesne University, Brown University, and the University of California at Santa Cruz, for example—because the undergraduate English curricula at these institutions remain firmly literature-centered. In the curricula of these progressive elite institutions theory courses and literature courses coexist in an unproblematicized pluralism that can only be maintained in an environment uncontaminated by have-nots: classrooms free of students determined to get access to social power through the mastery of writing, technical communication, or language skills.

Some English departments have consciously restructured their curricula in attempts to limit the trivializing effects of pluralism, however. An interesting model is that of Carnegie Mellon University. From Carnegie Mellon's English department students can take degrees with emphases in creative writing, literary and cultural studies, and technical writing, and the department offers separate majors in professional writing and technical writing. All of the students in those programs are required to take a core of four courses (Creative students take five core courses). According to the university's undergraduate catalog, the core is designed to "include work in all three discursive areas of the department: creative writing, literary and cultural study rhetoric" (192). The catalog recommends that all students take course "Survey of Forms" (fiction or poetry) and "Discursive Practices, Language Structure, Signs" during their first semester in the major. In subsequent semesters students are required to take courses entitled "Discourse and Historical" and "Reading Twentieth Century Culture." (Creative writing majors ta fiction and poetry courses in the "discourse" category."

At the time the new curriculum was established Gary Waller (then Carnegie Mellon's English department) described it, in a somewhat satirically ironic parody of advertising hype, as "the first poststructural curriculum" (1). Waller's "packaging" of the curriculum as the latest up-new-model in English studies galvanized Donald Morton and Masud Zav to characterize the change as a "reparative, curricular revolution." As Zav's techncocratic audience, Waller's rhetoric is that of an elf manager concerned with the "application" of ideas (produced by others) with "dovetailing" their various parts so that he can create a "breakthrough" producing the first poststructural curriculum for (consumption in the Masses). Waller's proposed curriculum is purely and subtly cognitive; the students are "to understand" but not to "intervene."

This critique was not unwarranted, particularly in view of the way W. capitalizing on the "new and improved" image of Carnegie Mellon's cu while down-playing the potential political implications of the course. Nonetheless, there are some significant gains here. By requiring all its students to be familiar with a variety of discursive strategies, Carnegie Mellon's cu displaces literary formalism from its center. And it seems designed to students some exposure to skills of ideography, technical and professional writing. "Reading Twentieth-Century Culture" and "Discourse and H. Analysis." One wonders, however, whether the students experience pervasive contiguity of the different requirements as discrete bodies of knowledge or as transdisciplinary fields of discourse that often overlap and each other.

One way of restructuring a curriculum to foreground competitiveness among various discursive fields is that of the new English and Textuality major at Syracuse University, where I was formerly a graduate student department's course catalog describes the new curriculum as quoting the new curriculum is organized not by coverage of a literary or critical text, but by a focus on the problems of reading and writing texts. Such an approach attempts to distinguish between traditional problems, in theory, there are many separate viewpoints and each must be read in relation to opposing viewpoints, and a multiplicity of essays, each of which acknowledges an identity or collective identity to other perspectives. The poise of a curriculum based on the latter model is not to impose one's knowing on everyone else, but to make the differences visible and to foreground what is at stake in one way of knowing one others. The goal is to make students aware of how knowledge...
For instance, among all of the excellent work in postcolonial criticism and its contestation of the history of cultural imperialism and ideology focusing on canonical works, non-literary documents, and pop-cultural studies, one of the most successful examples is the work published in TESOL Quarterly. The article criticizes the way that postcolonial criticism has been used to promote the integration of literature and cultural studies into the academic curriculum, and argues that the lack of attention to the teaching of English as a second language has contributed to the marginalization of these disciplines. The article concludes with a call for a more inclusive and critical approach to the teaching of English as a second language.
The Syracoss curriculum can be schematized as a triangle with groups of courses clustered under three distinct modes of inquiry: historical, political, and theoretical. Students begin by taking two introductory courses, entitled "Reading and Interpretation I: From Language to Discourse," and "Reading and Interpretation II: Practices of Reading." Then they are required to take two courses each from two groups, one course from the remaining group, and three courses of electives that can be from any of the groups, or chosen from creative writing or advanced expository writing courses that are not in any group.

What is particularly valuable about the Syracoss curriculum, in my view, is that it self-consciously attempts to place different intellectual positions in counterpoint relation to each other. One of the things that I find disappointing, however, is that the Syracoss program remains entirely literature- and culture-focused. The composition and rhetoric program was separated from the English department as part of the transition from "English" to "English and Textual Studies." The technical writing program was always small and marginalized at Syracoss, and it seems to have been entirely left out of this new curriculum, as does the creative writing program. I know the exact reasons for these exclusions, though I know enough of the departmental political battles at Syracoss to suspect that the story is much too long to go into here. Instead, humbly acknowledging that I have a curricular citizenship instead of a curricular citizenship, I wish to sketch out a variation of the Syracoss triangle as it might be adapted for the department I teach in at Illinois State.

Discursive Practices I: Strategies of Representation

Discursive Practices II: Strategies of Interpretation

The corners of the triangle represent "history," "rhetoric," and "poetics," respectively. Each student would select the major by taking two required introductory courses of three credit hours each: Strategies of Representation I and Strategies of Interpretation. In these introductory courses attention should be given to a full range of courses practiced in the English department—linguistics, literature, rhetoric, technical communication, etc. Then students would proceed into the triangle: here each student would take 18 hours on one corner and six hours each on the other two corners. All students would be required to sample from each of the three major divisions. Finally, all students would take the senior seminar, as is now required, for a total of 40 hours.

The broad categories of history, rhetoric, and poetics are intended at once to correspond to and in some ways to disrupt our current divisions. Existing courses could be adapted to fit in these divisions. Our current group courses and creative writing courses might fit under poetics, while the composition, rhetoric, and technical writing courses would generally go under rhetoric. Conventional periodical surveys of literature might ordinarily fit under the history rubric. Literary theory courses would go under the poetics rubric, while the theoretical theory courses would go under the rhetoric category. But a key of this curriculum would be to displace literature from its center in our allow new conjunctions and juxtapositions of such fields as comparative cultural studies, and literature. Hence, such a curriculum would rethinking the goals and assumptions of existing courses.

All course syllabi should be self-conscious about the dependabilities of knowledge and value that frame and enable their construction, and all should acknowledge their boundaries and boundary-crossings in relation to their disciplines of other courses. One of the things I learned about this new program was specifically to engage the particular problems and that constitute two or more categories. For instance, I recently team-taught a course entitled "The Concept of Authority and the Transformation of English Law" with a member of our technical writing faculty. We invest issues of authority and authority and authority in ways that foregrounded the co among various historical, political, and theoretical perspectives. At least because of the insertion of a technical writing perspective in the course gave considerable attention to changes in the material conditions of text writing from manuscript to the full but steady growth of literature over the past two centuries in England. In addition, we attracted an unusual diversity of literate trained and technical writing students who came to the class with fluctuating assumptions and expectations. This required constant adjustment and produced a heightened sense of personal limits for both students and the teachers. Or, for another example, we have a special course entitled "The Rhetoric of History and the Rhetoric of Rhetoric," taught by a member of our rhetoric faculty and a colleague from the English department. I can envision a course exploring the consequences and p of English as an "international" language that would examine the uses of English in different economic, political, and cultural contexts, a could put the values and assumptions of ESL, technical writing, and penial subaltern theory in productive interaction with each other. Such should aim to address the potential conflicts and interrelationships am different discourses within the broader field of English studies.

In the triangulated curriculum, courses specifically designed to try the interrelationships of different discourses could be replaced. In these instances I would have the professor(s) develop a syllabus in which the courses that are not currently certified as counting equally for our students. The mont's curriculum committee (constituted in a way that includes faculty members who represent) from the various corners of the triangle, which would arbitrate the designations. My intention here would be to reframe sectional courses by making each course more attractive to students.

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10 College Literature
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and Rhetoric II: Practice of Reading." Then they are required to take two
from each of the remaining groups, and three
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or advanced expository writing courses that are not in any group.

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itself-consciously attempts to place different intellectual positions in
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"The technical writing program was always small and marginalized as
the creative writing program. I think we know the exact reasons for these
things, though I know enough of the political battles to say that
it seems to have been entirely left out of this new curriculum,
the technical writing program, and that it is our fault.

In my view, the Syracusan curriculum is the model of the triangle as it might be adapted for the department I teach
State:

- Practitios I:
  - of Representation

- Practicats II:
  - of Interpretation

- History
- Rhetoric
- Poetics
- Senior Seminar
- College Literature

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courses of three credit hours each: Strategies of Representation and
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six hours each on the other two corners. All courses would be
sample from each of the three major divisions. Finally, all students
the seminar, as is now required, for a total of 40 hours.
I would set up an ongoing collegium series on topics of broad interest among the various subdisciplines of English studies, and require students from the introductory sections and the senior seminar to attend and participate in these colloquia each semester.

In addition to the aim of requiring students to be exposed to a broader cross-section of English studies and encouraging them to consider the inter-relationships of various positions and orientations within the field, another goal of this curricular model would be to encourage us as faculty to interact more directly with each other. There would still, of course, be a room for separate and independent work, but there would be a greater focus on new and different projects on a range... even as an additional and significant benefit of the program, that of fostering intellectual exchange.

This, of course, is just one of many possible patterns and many different rubrics for the various subdisciplines within an English curriculum that could be devised for different local situations. The number of subdisciplines and their names is no more important as is the need for them to be in productively interactive relationship to each other. The teaching of literature, rhetoric, and cultural studies should be viewed as a discursive arena in which intellectual strains can develop a sustained critique of existing social values through which a critical literacy can be produced. Above all, the study of literature as the study of the cultural context is the intellectual whether progressive or reactionary—should be avoided.

I know from discussions with colleagues in my own department and other departments that the kinds of curricular changes I am calling for will encounter resistance and skepticism from those—including theorists and radicals and progressives—who are comfortable with the current dominant hierarchy of privilege within the discipline. After viewing my Illinois State colleagues observed that such a change would leave him, as a literature teacher, completely out of the department’s mission. When I pointed out to him that the curriculum I am proposing still gives primary priority to reading in literature at least two thirds of the curriculum (the history and political corners of the triangle); he was genuinely surprised, though not exactly persuaded. The fact is, in his mind the department’s mission is the teaching of literature, and everything else we do is to do incidental. Or literature is the center around which various satellites such as technical writing, composition, and linguistics orbit. Yet this model for the department marginalizes about one-third of the faculty—of approximately forty-five tenured and tenure-track members of our department, only thirty or so teach literature.

Nonetheless, I must acknowledge, the curriculum I have outlined is really only a very modest beginning toward the development of an open-minded and critical faculty of human sciences to serve uncertainly the changing needs of the late capitalist global labor market. Juxtaposing subdisciplinary discourses as I have done the changes I am recommending could produce a public, institutional arena for literature teachers to talk with teachers of composition, rhetoric, technical and professional writing, ESL, English education, etc. about our interrelated roles and responsibilities in the production of educated citizens. However, we would still face the difficult task of learning how to work well together, and, yet more difficult, how to critique each other’s position.

The task at hand for English teachers of all specialties is to resist the claim that our work is always already highly politico- and to exploit the inter-relationships of various positions and orientations within the field, another goal of this curricular model would be to encourage us as faculty to interact more directly with each other. There would still, of course, be a room for separate and independent work, but there would be a greater focus on new and different projects on a range... even as an additional and significant benefit of the program, that of fostering intellectual exchange.

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I would like to thank my colleagues in the English department for their comments on this essay. I would also like to thank the Ohio State University Press for permission to reprint "The Subject of Literature," Cultural Critique, 1986, and "What Should We Be Teaching? When There’s No We?" in Critical Studies, 1987.

NOTES

1 See, for example, Jeannett, Bloom, Hirsch, Kinball, and Bykes. Several scholars have observed (some have documented extensively) the extent to which traditional literacy provides political support for political power, and the claim that literature transcends politics supports a conservative political analysis. See, for example, Widdowson et al., English, Learning Theory (1987), "The Subject of Literature," Stimpson, Graff, Professoring Literature, and Mortimer. The one nonconservative writer who has given most attention to the question of the relationship between literature and political power is John Demos, "What’s Wrong with English?: "(1970). In this regard, the student is the reader, not the writer. The student can read in order to gain knowledge, but the writer can also interpret texts, thus creating new meanings. By promoting reading as an active process, we encourage students to engage with the material on their own terms and to develop their own interpretations. This, in turn, enhances critical thinking skills and promotes a more authentic understanding of the texts they read.

WENDY CITED


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interrelated roles and responsibilities in the production of educated citizens. However, we would still face the difficult task of learning how to talk to each other, and, yet more difficult, how to critique each other’s positions.

The task at hand for English teachers of all specializations is to recognize that our work is always already highly politicized and to exploit that condition. Conflicting political demands are being made upon us in the form of the postconservative call for us to guard the gates of traditional high culture, and in the form of the corporate labor market pressures for us to give students skills training without critical consciousness-raising. Our success in resisting these pressures will be limited unless we can change our curricular and other departmental structures to allow, even to require, full participation in the academic life of the department by all faculty, including those teaching the presently marginalized and developed "service" courses. It is up to us to find new ways to engage all students and faculty in the debate on culture and social values at as high a level of sophistication and intellectual rigor as possible.

NOTES

See, for example, Bennett, Bloom, Hirsch, Kohn, and Sykes. Many literary scholars have observed (and some have documented extensively) the extent to which the claim that literature transcends politics supports a conservative political agenda. See, for example, Waidson et al., Beldice, and "The Subject of Literature"; Stimson, Graft, Professional Literature, and Zavarech and Morton.

The postmodernist critic, who has given us the means for attention to the cultural pressures against the traditional literary study is A. J. Kerman, in The Death of Literature. Yet, even after a detailed and informative analysis of the social and economic forces arrayed against traditional cultural values, Kerman returns to argue deconstruction and poststructural theory in a highly overemphasized critique at the end of his book.

See, for example, Perce, Paszunok, "The Concept of Method"; and the exchange in TESOL Quarterly between McCall ("Comments") and Penney ("The Author Responds"). In addition, the newsletter TESOL Matters provides an informal forum for debate on geopolitical concerns.

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Syracuse University English Department. Unpublished departmental announcement. Fall 1996.

**Eskimos, Hippopotamuses, and Straw Men: Tools for Rebuilding Textual Determinacy**

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**STEVEN JAMES FALLON**

Literary hermeneutics has ostensibly moved away from the rigid determinism associated with the New Critics’ claimed beliefs, but while critics embrace the indeterminacy of texts and the interpretive freedom that results, many feel a need to stake out limits to textual indeterminacy. It is not unusual for critical essays to celebrate the validity of a surprising new interpretation, but then insert a disclaimer that suggests that not just any reading can be allowed. Interpretive anarchy is thus held at bay with this concession to interpretive exclusion. In his recent work, *Conflicting Readings*, Paul Armstrong advances the argument that meaning belongs both to the text and its interpreters. Each text is “capable of taking on different shapes according to opposing hypotheses about how to configure it,” but always remains capable of transcending any particular interpreter’s beliefs about it” (x). Armstrong defends the balance his reading model offers. While interpretive “moderation is seen as wishy-washy” by some, he insists that his model offers more sophistication than the “simplistic” extremes other critics support (xiiii).