

GLOSSARY

ACTIVITY SYSTEM

In his 1997 article “Rethinking Genre in School and Society: An Activity Theory Analysis,” David Russell describes an *activity system* as “any ongoing, object-directed, historically conditioned, dialectically structured, tool-mediated human interaction.” In simpler terms, an *activity system* consists of a group of people who act together over time as they work toward a specific goal. The people in the system use many kinds of tools, both physical (like computers or books) and symbolic (like words), to do their work together. The group’s behaviors and traditions are influenced by *their* history, and when one aspect of the system changes, other aspects of it change in response.

ACTIVITY THEORY

Activity theory “was originally a psychological theory that sees all aspects of activity as shaped by people’s social interactions with each other and the tools [including writing and language] that they use” (p. 395). In Chapter 3, Kain and Wardle explain the concept further: “The most basic activity theory lens, or unit of analysis, is the activity system, defined as a group of people who share a common object and motive over time, as well as the wide range of tools they use together to act on that object and realize that motive. David Russell (1997) describes an activity system as ‘any ongoing, object-directed, historically conditioned, dialectically structured, tool-mediated human interaction’” (p. 398).

APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeship is a term used to describe the relationship between a master and a student, or a mentor and a mentee, in which the student or mentee undergoes training in order to become an expert in a profession or group.

In his 1998 book, *Communities of Practice*, Etienne Wenger argues that apprentices move from peripheral participation to more central participation in a group as they become engaged with and more skilled at the group’s practices. (See also **community of practice**.)

ARGUMENT

Argument can describe any of the many ways by means of which people try to convince others of something.

Mathematically, arguments are the individual propositions of a proof. In a legal context, formal arguments are used to persuade a judge or jury to rule in favor of a particular position. In everyday use, or on talk radio or cable news shows, arguments tend to consist of people yelling at each other but rarely convincing or being convinced. We call all these forms of argument *agonistic*, meaning that they pit people against each other in a win/lose contest.

In an *intellectual* or *academic* context, argument is *inquiry-based* or *conversational*, and it describes the attempt to *build knowledge* by questioning existing knowledge and proposing alternatives. Rather than aiming simply to show who is right or wrong, inquiry-based argument aims to *cooperatively find the best explanation* for whatever is in question.

AUDIENCE

An *audience* is anyone who hears or reads a text — but it is also anyone a writer *imagines* encountering his or her text. This means that there is a difference between *intended* or “invoked” audience and *actual* or “addressed” audience.

For example, when Aristotle composed *On Rhetoric* in about 350 BCE, his intended audience was his students, and for a time they were also his actual audience. (We would also call them his *primary* audience, the ones who first encountered his text.) Today, Aristotle’s actual audience — the people who read him in coursepacks, on iPads, and on Kindles — are *secondary* audiences for Aristotle’s work.

AUTHORITY

An *authority* is an accepted source, an expert, or a person with power or credibility. *Authority* (as an abstract noun) connotes confidence and self-assurance.

In this book, the term is generally used to refer to people who understand the **conventions** or accepted practices of a **discourse community** and thus are able to speak, write, or act with credibility and confidence. A writer's **ethos** is based in part on his or her authority.

AUTHORSHIP

To “author” a text is to create or originate it; the *authorship* of a text then is a question of *who* created or originated it. Most traditional Western notions of authorship presume that **originality** is one key component of authorship.

The term is seen by some scholars as problematic if it assumes *sole* authorship — invention by just one person — because it seems to discount the importance of social interaction and the fact that virtually every idea we can have already draws from other ideas authored by other people. The question becomes, where do we draw the line on who has authored what? For a related discussion, see **plagiarism**.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Literally, *autobiography* is writing about one's own life. (“Auto” = self, “bio” = life, and “graphy” = writing.) The **genre** of autobiography is a book-length text containing a retrospective account of the author's life.

More broadly, *autobiographical* means simply about, or having to do with, one's own life. Donald Murray and others contend that all writing is autobiographical — that is, that one's writing always has some connection to one's own life and that a writer can never completely remove all traces of her life from her writing.

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Autoethnography is an **ethnography**, or cultural study, of one's own experiences and interaction with the world.

CARS (“CREATE A RESEARCH SPACE”) MODEL

The *CARS model* is based on John Swales's description of the three typical “moves” made in the introductions to academic research articles (for more, see Chapter 1). Swales conducted an analysis of research articles in many disciplines and discovered that most introductions in all disciplines do the following:

1. establish a territory (by describing the topic of study);
2. establish a niche (by explaining the problem, gap, or question that prompted the current study); and
3. occupy the niche (by describing the answer to the question or problem, and/or outlining what will be done in the article).

CASE STUDIES

Case studies are detailed observations and analyses of an event, situation, individual, or small group of people. Case study research, according to Mary Sue MacNealy in her book *Strategies for Empirical Research in Writing*, refers to “a carefully designed project to systematically collect information about an event, situation, or small group of persons or objects for the purpose of exploring, describing, and/or explaining aspects not previously known or considered” (197). Case studies are considered to be qualitative research.

CLAIM

A *claim* is an assertion that a writer tries to convince his or her readers of. An example might be “*Wired* magazine is great.” To believe or accept a claim, readers need to know the *reasons* why a writer believes the claim or wants readers to accept it — saying, for example, “*Wired* includes really interesting articles about people in the technological world.” Readers may also need *evidence* to believe the claim or its reasons, such as “Every month *Wired* has several stories that interview the people who invented netbooks, the iPhone, cloud computing, and the most cutting-edge technological innovations.”

COGNITION

Cognition describes anything having to do with *thought* or *mental activity*.

In Writing Studies, *cognitive* and *cognition* have to do with the internal thinking processes that writers use to write. Scholars in this field have contrasted the *internal, private, personal* nature of cognition with the *social* aspects of writing — that is, with the writer’s *external* interactions with their surroundings, culture, and audience. A great deal of research about cognition in Writing Studies was conducted in the 1980s and sought to find and describe the mental processes that writers use to solve problems related to writing.

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

Community of practice is a term coined by sociologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger to describe groups of people who participate in a shared activity or activities. In his 1998 book, *Communities of Practice*, Wenger argues that participating in a community of practice also involves “constructing *identities* in relation to these communities” (4).

This term is similar to, but not exactly the same as, the terms **activity system** and **discourse community**, discussed in Chapter 3.

COMPOSITION

Composition is the process of designing a text and its ideas (“I’m composing my paper”) or the product of that design process (“I got an A on that composition”). Writing scholar Paul Prior divides writing into two separate acts, **composition** and **inscription**, where *composing* is designing a text and its ideas, and *inscribing* is using tools and media to set the text on some object.

Composition sums up the first three rhetorical canons of *invention* (coming up with ideas, from memory or from research), *arrangement* (determining the line of reasoning or the flow of ideas in the text), and *style* (fine-tuning expressive choices of language and sentence syntax to best suit the text to its **exigence, audience, and context**). One of the unique powers of writing is that *inscription* is often an aid to *composition*: When you do many kinds of writing, the act of inscribing is itself often giving you new ideas — that is, helping you compose.

CONCEPTION

A *conception* is a belief about or understanding of something, with the same root as the term *concept*, meaning “something conceived,” or an idea formed in the mind. A “conception” is the way in which you perceive or regard a thing. For example, one “conception of writing” might be that “writing typically requires revision.”

CONSTRAINTS

Constraints are factors that limit or otherwise influence the persuasive strategies available to the rhetor. More precisely, in “Rhetorical Situations and Their Constituents,” Keith Grant-Davie defines constraints as “all factors in the situation, aside from the rhetor and the audience, that may lead the audience to be either more or less sympathetic to the discourse, and that may therefore influence the rhetor’s response to the situation” (p. 500).

CONSTRUCT (*conSTRUCT, CONstruct*)

Construct, the verb (pronounced conSTRUCT), means *to build or to put together* (“con” = with, and “struct” = shape or frame). By turning the verb into a noun (pronounced CONstruct), we make the word mean, literally, *a thing that has been constructed*. In everyday use, we use the noun *CONstruct* only in the realm of *ideas or concepts*. The ideas of *freedom, justice, wealth, and politics*, for example, are all constructs, or ideas that we have *built up* over time.

What is important to remember about constructs is that, while they may seem to be “natural” or “inevitable,” they’re actually unchallenged **claims** that can be questioned, contested, redefined, or reinvented.

CONTEXT

Literally, a *context* is the substructure for a woven fabric (“con” = with/together, “text” = weaving, fabric). In Writing Studies, *context* typically refers to where a text comes from or where it appears. (A *written work* first started being called a *text* because it’s “woven” from words in the same way that *textiles* are woven from threads.) Contexts can consist of other text(s) as well as the circumstances or setting in which a text was created

— for example, various contexts for the statement “We hold these truths to be self-evident” include the Declaration of Independence, the meeting of the Continental Congress in spring and summer of 1776, and the broader socio-historical environment that describes pre-Revolutionary War America.

CONTINGENT

One of the claims of this book is that meaning is *contingent*; that is, it depends. In other words, meaning is conditional. For example, “good writing” depends upon the context, purpose, and audience. Ideas about meaning as being contingent and conditional are taken up most directly in Chapter 4, where authors claim that meaning depends on context and that principles for good communication depend on the specific situation and are not universal.

CONTRIBUTE, CONTRIBUTION

In academic contexts, one makes a *contribution* by adding to an ongoing conversation on a given research subject, issue, problem, or question.

In Writing Studies, *contribution* is commonly discussed in terms of Kenneth Burke’s *parlor metaphor*, where Burke describes scholarship as an ongoing conversation at a party: You arrive late and other guests are already in conversation; you join one conversation by listening for a while and then, once you have something to add, making a contribution to the conversation; after a time, you join another conversation, while the first one continues without you.

CONVENTIONS

In Writing Studies, writing is understood to be governed by *conventions* — that is, agreements among people about the best ways to accomplish particular tasks (such as starting new paragraphs, or citing sources, or deciding how to punctuate sentences). That people have to come to agreements about such questions means that there is no “natural” or pre-existing way to accomplish the tasks; rather, people simply agreed to do A rather than B. Tabbing the first line of a paragraph one-half inch is a convention; ending sentences with periods is a convention; citing sources in parentheses is a convention, as are parentheses themselves.

Conventions are a kind of **construct**, and like constructs, they can be questioned, challenged, and changed, if key decision makers agree to alter them or to establish another convention in their place.

CORPUS (ANALYSIS)

A *corpus analysis* is a detailed examination of a collection or *corpus* of related texts, phrases, utterances, etc. (*Corpus* means “body” — the word *corpse* also derives from it.) For example, John Swales conducted a *corpus analysis* of academic writing to discover how people in various fields introduce their research.

CREATE A RESEARCH SPACE MODEL: see CARS (“Create a Research Space”) model

DISCOURSE/DISCOURSE

At its most basic, *discourse* is *language in action*, or language being used to accomplish something. Discourse can describe either an instance of language (e.g., “His discourse was terse and harsh”) or a collection of instances that all demonstrate some quality (e.g., “Legal discourse tries to be very precise”). Because groups of people united by some activity tend to develop a characteristic discourse, we can talk about communities that are identified by their discourse — thus, **discourse community**.

James Paul Gee uses *Discourse* with an uppercase D to differentiate his specialized meaning of the term.

DISCOURSE COMMUNITY

Scholars continue to debate the meaning of *discourse community*, as the selections in this book suggest. For the sake of simplicity, we will use John Swales’s definition from his 1990 book, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. According to Swales, a *discourse community* is made up of individuals who share common goals agreed upon by most members; further, it has “mechanisms of intercommunication among its members,” “uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback,” has and uses

“one or more genres” that help the group achieve its shared goals, “has acquired some specific lexis,” and has “a reasonable ratio” of “novices and experts” (24–27).

ECOLOGY

An *ecology* is, literally, the interactions among groups of living things and their environments (and the scientific study of those interactions). More broadly, “ecology” has come to refer to any network of relationships among beings and their material surroundings. In **rhetorical** terms, ecology refers to the web of relationships and interactions between all the rhetors and all the material in a **rhetorical situation**. Like other meanings of *ecology*, it is difficult to define the boundaries of a rhetorical ecology because elements in an ecology will also connect to elements outside the ecology.

EDITING

Editing is the correction of minor errors in a written text. Editing usually comes at the end of the writing process. It should not be confused with **revision**, which involves major rethinking, rewriting, and restructuring of texts.

EMBODIED, EMBODIMENT

Rhetorical interaction happens with, to, and by beings with material bodies. The term *embodiment* reminds us that such interaction is **contingent** on the bodies that give it shape. It is easy to assume that rhetorical interaction is simply ideas worked on mentally apart from bodies; when we look for how rhetorical interaction is *embodied*, we remember that the interaction depends on material bodies as well as ideas.

ENCULTURATE

A newcomer *enculturates* when he or she learns to become a part of a group or “culture” (including an **activity system, discourse community, or community of practice**). Becoming successfully enculturated usually requires gaining some level of competence in the activities and language practices of the group. See **apprenticeship** for a definition of a similar term.

EPISTEMIC

The term *epistemic* has to do with the making of knowledge. Research is an *epistemic* pursuit because it is about developing new knowledge. *Epistemology* is the branch of philosophy that deals with human knowledge: where it comes from and how people know what they know. Communication, including *writing*, is also an epistemic activity — it makes new knowledge — as we can see when we read a piece and come away with a new idea that we didn’t know before but also that wasn’t in the text we just read.

ERROR

Error is the term for “mistakes” in grammar (e.g., subject-verb agreement, like “Dogs barks loudly”), punctuation, or usage (e.g., using *that* where some readers would prefer *which*). *Mistakes* is in quotes here because such “errors” are as often differences of opinion regarding convention or taste as they are actual problems that every English speaker or writer would agree are violations of rules.

ETHNOGRAPHY, ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Ethnography is a research methodology for carefully observing and describing people participating in some activity. At its broadest, ethnography can be written of entire cultures; more narrowly, *ethnographies* may involve writing about a class of students, a church and its members, or a video game arcade and the gamers who play there.

ETHOS

In classical rhetoric, *ethos* is one of the three “pisteis” or persuasive appeals, along with **logos** and **pathos**. In a narrow sense, *ethos* describes the credibility, expertise, or competence that a writer or speaker establishes with an audience through his or her **discourse**. More broadly, *ethos* is a term for the sense of “personality” that rhetors perceive about one another. Ultimately *ethos* describes a rhetor’s “way of being in” or “inhabiting” their

world. As such, it has to do with a rhetor's *identity* and is a basis for **identification** among rhetors. As a persuasive appeal, ethos derives from **authority**, character (the perceived values, morals, and ethics of a writer), and goodwill (the readers' sense that the writer has the readers' best interests at heart and is not purely self-interested).

EXIGENCE

Exigence is the *need or reason* for a given action or communication. All communication exists for a reason. For example, if you say, "Please turn on the lights," we assume the *reason* you say this is that there's not enough light for your needs — in other words, the *exigence* of the situation is that you need more light.

GENERALIZABLE, GENERALIZE

Generalizable is a term used to refer to research findings that can apply (or *generalize*) to a larger group than the one that was studied. Generalizable research typically examines a group of statistically significant size under rigorous experimental conditions. Qualitative research is not generalizable, strictly speaking, while quantitative research may be.

GENRE

Genre comes from the French word for "kind" or "type" and is related to the Latin word *genus*, which you might remember from the scientific classification system for animals and plants. In the field of rhetoric, genres are broadly understood as *categories of texts*. For example, the poem, the short story, the novel, and the memoir are genres of literature; memos, proposals, reports, and executive summaries are genres of business writing; hiphop, bluegrass, trance, pop, new age, and electronica are genres of music; and the romantic comedy, drama, and documentary are genres of film.

Genres are types of texts that are recognizable to readers and writers and that meet the needs of the **rhetorical situations** in which they function. So, for example, we recognize wedding invitations and understand them to be different from horoscopes. We know that when we are asked to write a paper for school, our teacher probably does not want us to turn in a poem instead.

Genres develop over time in response to recurring rhetorical needs. We have wedding invitations because people keep getting married, and we need an efficient way to let people know and to ask them to attend. Rather than making up a new rhetorical solution every time the same situation occurs, we generally turn to the genre that has developed — in this case, the genre of the wedding invitation.

Genre theorists have suggested that the concept of *genre* actually goes well beyond texts; accordingly, some theorists use *genre* to describe *a typified but dynamic social interaction that a group of people use to conduct a given activity*. (*Typified* means it follows a pattern, and *dynamic* means that people can change the pattern to fit their circumstances as long as it still helps them do the activity.) In "Rethinking Genre," for example, David Russell says that genres are actually "shared expectations among some group(s) of people" (513).

For more on genre and genre theory, see Chapter 1.

HEURISTICS

Heuristics are approaches or patterns for problem solving. For example, a heuristic for deciding what to have for dinner tonight might be the following: (1) check the fridge; (2) check the pantry; and (3) eat whatever can be assembled most quickly and palatably from the ingredients there.

IDENTIFICATION

Identification represents the recognition of common ground among rhetors. When someone says "I can identify with that statement," they are saying the statement is in some way equivalent to some part or aspects of themselves. Rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke suggested that persuasion is actually an act of creating identification, so that one rhetor convinces other rhetors to see themselves in or aligned with the speaker's ideas.

IDENTITY

Identity comprises your characteristics or personality, consisting of those factors that create a sense of “who you are.” Recent theory suggests that individuals may have multiple and/or changing identities, not one “true,” stable identity.

INSCRIPTION

Inscription refers to the act of marking a medium in order to create writing. Writing Studies researcher Paul Prior divides writing into two separate acts, **composition** and inscription, where *composing* is designing a text and its ideas, and *inscribing* is using tools and media to set the text on some object. While inscription can happen without composition (photocopying) and composition can happen without inscription (conversation), what we describe as *writing* cannot happen without both. Prior reminds us that a *medium* (what gets inscribed) can be anything from a t-shirt to a plastic disc to a clay tablet to paper, while *inscribing tools* can be anything from knives and sticks to pencils to printers to DVD burners.

INTERTEXT, INTERTEXTUALITY

Intertextuality refers to the idea that all texts are made up of other texts — and thus, to the resulting *network* of texts that connect to any given text or idea. At the most basic level, texts share *words*: that is, every text uses words that other texts have used. Sometimes texts use words that, in their combination, are considered unique; in those cases, following Western conventions, those words must be formally marked as *quotations*. *Intertextuality* can go beyond just language, however, by referencing the *ideas and events* that other texts have focused on. If, for example, I claim that people whose governments abuse them have the right to make a better government, I haven’t used a quotation from the Declaration of Independence, but most people familiar with that document could “hear it” in my statement. Intertextuality thus is an effect even more than an intention — I don’t have to intend to be intertextual in order to *be* intertextual.

INVENTION

Invention comprises the processes, strategies, or techniques writers use to come up with what to say in their writing. While the term suggests the notion of “making things up,” a significant part of invention is not saying brand-new things but rather combing one’s memory and written resources for things that have already been said that will work. Ancient rhetorical theorists such as Aristotle thought carefully about how *stock arguments* they called *common topics* could help a speaker — for instance, the idea “that which has happened frequently before is likely to happen again,” which could be recalled through invention and included in many pieces of writing.

KAIROS

Kairos represents the element of “being in the right place at the right time” that removes some agency from a **rhetor**. *Kairos* carries a sense of a *moment* when by timely good fortune, circumstances beyond the rhetor’s control favor an argument that the rhetor wishes to make. For example, a law enforcement officer in favor of heightened surveillance of U.S. citizens can use the *kairos* of a recent terrorist attack to strengthen her argument by pointing out how the attack demonstrates the need for greater surveillance. The officer is of course not responsible for the attack but can use the “fortunate” occurrence of that particular moment to her advantage.

LEXIS

Lexis is a term used for the specific vocabulary used by a group or field of study.

LITERACY, LITERATE

Literacy denotes fluency in a given practice. In its original use, literacy referred to *alphabetic literacy* — that is, to fluency in reading and writing “letters,” or alphabetic text. This kind of literacy was contrasted with orality, which was characterized as a *lack* of literacy. Over time, however, in academic circles, the meaning of *literacy* and *literate* has broadened to encompass fluency in other areas; most academics therefore now use the term *literacies* (plural) and discuss *digital, electronic, musical, visual, oral, mathematical, and gaming* literacies, among many other kinds.

LITERACY SPONSOR

Literacy sponsor is a term coined by Deborah Brandt to describe people, ideas, or institutions that help others become **literate** in specific ways. A sponsor could be a parent or sibling who taught you to read, a teacher who helped you learn to love books, or a manufacturing company that requires its employees to be able to read. The sponsors of alphabetic literacy in your life might be very different from the sponsors of visual literacy, musical literacy, or other forms of literacy in your life. (*Pandora*, for instance, can be a musical literacy sponsor for people who use it.)

LITERATURE REVIEW, REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A *literature review* (or *review of the literature*) is a text that explains the existing conversation about a particular topic. Literature reviews are usually found at the beginning of research articles or books, but are sometimes written as separate projects. Note that *literature* in this case refers to published research in an area, not to novels or short stories.

LOGOS

Logos is one of the three major “proofs” or “appeals” (**pisteis**) identified by Aristotle as central to persuasion. (The others are **ethos** and **pathos**.) In rhetorical theory, Aristotle used *logos* to refer to persuasion by verbal reasoning. In Greek, *logos* literally means “word,” referring to language, or “reason,” or to kinds of reasoning, including logic. Aristotle did not limit logos appeals to formal logic, but also understood a logos appeal as any an audience would recognize as reasoning by inference or enthymeme.

LONGITUDINAL STUDY

A *longitudinal study* is a research study that examines an individual, group, event, or activity over a substantial period of time. For example, rather than studying a student’s writing habits for just a few days or weeks, a longitudinal study might look at his or her habits over several years.

MEDIATE

People use texts in order to get things done. They read in order to learn something (for example, they read instructions in order to figure out how to put together a new desk); they write in order to communicate something (for example, a student might write an e-mail to let her mom know she is short on money). When a text helps people accomplish an activity as in these examples, we say the text *mediates* the activity. To *mediate* is to help make things happen, to play a role in situations and enable communication and activities to take place. In the examples offered above, reading the instructions *mediates* assembly of the desk; sending Mom an e-mail *mediates* receiving \$200 to buy much needed school supplies.

METAKNOWLEDGE

Metaknowledge is knowledge about knowledge — that is, what we can determine about our learning, its processes, and its products.

METHODOLOGIES

In an academic or scholarly context, *methodologies* are procedures for conducting research — the formalized, field-approved methods used to address particular kinds of research questions. Some examples of methodologies in Writing Studies are **case study**, **ethnography**, experiment, quasiexperiment, and discourse analysis. *Methodology* can also mean the particular combination of methods used in any particular study. For example, the methodologies used by Sondra Perl in “The Composing Processes of Unskilled College Writers” include case study and discourse analysis.

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness means thinking carefully about what one is doing — that is, purposefully and carefully paying attention. This term derives from Zen Buddhism and has become a key concept in modern psychology. It is often used by researchers interested in helping writers effectively **transfer** knowledge about writing. For a writer to be mindful, for example, means not just to come up with something to say, but to *pay attention to how* she came

up with something to say. In the future, she may be able to *mindfully* try that procedure again, adapting it to the new situation.

MODES, MULTIMODALITY

A *mode* (or *modality*) refers to the senses or facilities readers use to experience a text; typical modalities are linguistic (verbal), alphabetic-print, visual/image, aural, color, and kinesthetic/touch. In another sense, *modality* means mode of **inscription** of **texts**, with typical examples being paper, codex/book, or electronic/networked. *Multimodality* refers to texts that combine multiple modes, such as alphabetic, visual, and aural. Technically, *all* texts are multimodal because there are no texts that use just one mode. For example, a novel that is entirely verbal (without any images) inscribed in black alphabetic print engages verbal, print, and color modalities simultaneously.

MOTIVATED

To be *motivated* is to have particular reasons and desires for doing, saying, or thinking something. All rhetorical interaction is motivated — that is, there is a motive behind it. The reasons that motivate a particular interaction also give it a bias or slant: Motivation is inevitably subjective and thus works against neutrality or objectivity.

MULTILITERACIES

Multiliteracies is a term that reflects the recent, broader understanding of literacy as consisting of more than mastery of the “correct” use of alphabetic language. Multiliteracies include the ability to compose and interpret texts showing **multimodality** (including oral, written, and audio components, among other possibilities), as well as the ability to make meaning in various contexts. A group of scholars known as the New London Group is generally credited with coining the term *multiliteracies*.

MULTIMODAL: see modes

MUSHFAKE

Mushfake is a term used by James Paul Gee to describe a partially acquired **Discourse**, a Discourse that people use to “make do” when they participate in or communicate with a group to which they don’t belong. Gee borrows the term from prison culture, in which *mushfake* refers to making do with something when the real thing is not available.

NARRATIVE

Narrative is most often a synonym for *story* or *storytelling*; the word carries the sense of an accounting or retelling of events, usually in the order they occurred. In the context of writing studies, we focus on narratives as **epistemic**, a way of making knowledge and meaning through rhetorical interaction. Narrative is so central to how people make and convey truth that very few kinds of knowledge-making can happen without it, including scientific research (almost always explained by using narrative) and legal reasoning (which almost always uses narratives of actual events to establish the facts of a case to which the law must be applied, and also uses narrative to explain the development through time of a given law or legal principle).

NORMATE

According to Rosemarie Garland Thomson (1996), *normate* refers to a culture’s ideal of a “normal” or “typical” body. Wheeler and Jones (p. 654) add what a culture expects to be the values, privileges, and experiences of a “normal” or “typical” person. Some examples of a *normate* body in U.S. culture would be a person who has 20/20 vision (eyesight), has four working limbs with five fingers per hand, can walk up and down stairs with ease, and can eat wheat and dairy products without difficulty.

ORIGINALITY

Originality is the quality of being singular, unique, and entirely made up or invented, as opposed to imitative or derivative. American culture presumes that writers will have originality — that they will invent work never

seen before — and judges the quality of **authorship** in part on its originality. This simplified view of **invention** is assumed by many scholars to be inaccurate in that it fails to describe how people develop ideas through social interaction. This can lead to difficulties in defining and identifying **plagiarism**.

PATHOS

Pathos is one of the three major “proofs” or “appeals” (**pisteis**) identified by Aristotle as central to persuasion. (The others are **ethos** and **logos**.) In rhetorical theory, Aristotle used *pathos* to refer to persuasion by appeal to emotions and values, which he opposed to appeals to reasoning (*logos*) or to personal credibility (*ethos*). Aristotle recognized that even though emotions are not always “logical” or reason-driven, they are powerful motivators and thus persuasive. Western philosophy has long believed *pathos* to undermine *logos*, but current understandings of rhetorical theory recognize that appeals to reasoning are actually simultaneously appeals to values and thus act as *pathos* appeals in argument. (See Downs, chapter 4, p. 457.)

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL

Journals are collections of relatively short articles (between five and thirty pages, usually) on a related topic, published periodically (monthly or quarterly, usually) — just like a magazine. Some journals are *scholarly* — meaning that their articles are written by scholars in a field or discipline *to other scholars* studying in the same field. Their purpose is to report on new research: scholarly journals are the main sites in which scholarly conversations (see Greene, page 31) are carried on. Most of the articles collected in this book come from scholarly journals, such as *College Composition and Communication* or *College English*. Some of these scholarly conversations can be *very* specialized — the kind that perhaps only twenty-five or fifty people in the entire world would share enough background knowledge to understand. (Imagine an article on a brand-new branch of theoretical physics or a piece on a new kind of black hole — topics that not many people study.) That specialization poses two problems for a journal: First, how does the editor of a journal — who might be an expert on *a few* specialty areas in a field (say, on “writing process” and on “pedagogy” in composition) but can’t be an expert on *all* of them — actually know whether a given article knows what it’s talking about? Second, so many people doing research want to publish in any given journal, the journal doesn’t have space for them all. In fact, it might only have space for a small percentage of what gets submitted to it. How can it choose which pieces to publish and which not to? The answer to both questions is *peer review*: the editor sends submissions to other experts in the specialty the article is reporting on — usually between two and four other readers. They report back to the journal’s editor on the relative *value* of a submission — how significant a contribution it makes, how it fits in the ongoing conversation — and on its *quality* — how well its argument is made, how good its research is. They can make suggestions to the editor about how the piece needs to be improved before publication, and thus guide revisions that most articles are required to make before finally being published. Peer review, then, is a major feature of scholarly journals, and most library databases (along with Google Scholar) let you limit searches to just peer-reviewed journals. (Almost all scholarly *books* are peer-reviewed as well.)

PISTEIS

The Greek term for *proofs* that a rhetor can offer in support of an argument. Most often this term refers to what Aristotle called “artistic” proofs, meaning those that rhetors invent and embed in their discourse. The three such proofs Aristotle identified are **logos**, **ethos**, and **pathos**.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism literally means *kidnapping* in Latin; in contemporary English, the word refers to the *theft* of a text or idea. (Authors sometimes think of their writings or ideas as their “children,” thus the link to kidnapping.) Definitions of plagiarism tend to come down to *taking another’s ideas without giving them credit and thus pretending that you invented the ideas yourself*. In cultures that highly value *intellectual property* — the idea that one’s ideas are one’s *own* and that use of those ideas by others deserves either credit or payment — plagiarism is an ethical violation punishable by community sanction (such as failing a class or losing one’s job). Plagiarism’s cousin *copyright infringement* is an actual crime punishable by fine or imprisonment.

A significant difficulty with the idea of plagiarism is that **originality** and **authorship** are technically quite difficult to trace in ways that new digital technologies are making impossible to miss or deny. In *sampling*, *re-*

mixing, and *mash-up* cultures where ideas are freely reused and reincorporated to make new texts, authorship becomes very difficult to trace, and it becomes difficult to tell what counts as original work.

PLANNING

While **invention** focuses on coming up with what to say in one's writing, *planning* focuses more broadly on *how to get a piece written*. Therefore, it includes not only invention but *arrangement*, which is the art of organizing what one has to say to present it most effectively. Planning also includes **process** considerations, such as considering what work needs to be done to complete a piece, what order to do it in, and when to do it in order to meet a deadline.

PROCESS

Process refers to the variety of activities that go into writing/composing, including, at minimum, *planning*

- (inventing and arranging ideas),
- *drafting* (creating actual text from previously unwritten ideas),
- *revising* (developing a text or a portion of a text further after an initial draft), *editing*
- (fine-tuning, polishing, or correcting problems in a text), and
- *production* (inscribing a composition in its final, "produced" form, whether in print, online/digital, or some other material format).

Process theory is the study of the methods by which various writers compose and produce texts. The *process movement*, which took place within the field of Composition Studies in the 1970s, was the widespread adoption by writing teachers of instruction that focused on teaching students successful writing processes rather than focusing solely on the quality of their written products.

REGISTER

In the field of linguistics, *register* refers to a type of language used in a particular setting. Changing one's register might mean changing the kinds of words used, as well as the way one says the words. For example, a person might say, "I've finished my homework" to her parents, using one register, while she might say (or text), "I'm finally dooooooone!" to her friends.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: *see literature review*

REVISION

Revision is the act of developing a piece of writing *by writing* — that is, by adding additional material, shifting the order of its parts, or deleting significant portions of what has already been written. The purpose of revision is to "see again" ("re-vision"), which is necessary because what one could see in originally drafting a piece has been changed *by* the drafting.

This might become clearer if you think of writing as driving at night. When you begin to write, you know a certain amount about where you're going in your project, just as, when you're driving at night, your headlights let you see two hundred yards (but only two hundred yards) ahead. Writing (or driving) further takes you to new places, where you continually see something different, rethink your position, and decide how to proceed.

Because revision can go on for some time, for many professional writers *most* writing time is actually spent revising, not creating the first draft. Also, it is important to distinguish revision from **editing**, the correction of minor mistakes in a near-final draft.

RHETOR

Originally (in Greek) a *public speaker*, *rhetor* means *one who engages in rhetorical interaction or discourse*. *Writer* and *speaker* are common synonyms.

RHETORIC

Rhetoric is the study or performance of human interaction and communication or the product(s) of that interaction and communication. Because most human interaction is *persuasive* by nature — that is, we’re trying to convince each other of things, even when we say something simple like “that feels nice” — one way to think of rhetoric is as the study of persuasion. *Rhetoric* can refer to a *field of knowledge* on this subject, to systematic *explanations for* and *predictions of* how persuasion works, or to the *performance art* of human interaction and persuasion itself.

Rhetoric always has to do with these specific principles:

1. Human communication, or **discourse**, is **situated** in a *moment*, a particular time and place, which is part of a larger **ecology**. That moment and ecology are the **context** of the communication. A particular text takes its meaning in part from its context, so knowledge of the context is necessary in order to know the text’s meaning. For example, “Help me!” means one thing when your mom is standing next to a van full of groceries and another when she’s standing next to a van with a flat tire. Her *discourse* is *situated* in a particular context.
2. Communication is **motivated** by particular **rhetors’ purposes**, needs, and values. No communication is *unmotivated*.
3. Communication is *interactional*, “back-and-forth” between rhetors. Readers actually *complete* the meaning of a writer’s text. Successful writers therefore think carefully about who their **audience** is and what the audience values and needs.
4. Communication is **epistemic**, which means that it *creates new knowledge*. We often talk about “reporting” or “transmitting” information as if we can find information and pass it along unaltered. But we actually *can’t* transmit information without altering it, so our communication makes new knowledge as it goes.
5. Communication is **embodied** and material, meaning that it exists not simply in the mental realm of ideas but *takes place via material bodies* that themselves shape the meaning of the communication.
6. Communication is shaped by *technology*. “Technology” simply refers to *use of tools*, and it is certainly possible to communicate without technology (through purely organic means such as by voice). Practically speaking, though, almost all communication in any culture in which you’re reading this book is assisted and shaped by technology. Rhetoric teaches us to look for how technology influences even communication that doesn’t directly use it.
7. Communication is *contingent*, meaning that what we consider *good* communication depends on the circumstances and context in which it happens. Because communication depends on context, we can’t make universal rules about what makes good communication.

RHETORICAL

Rhetorical refers to a phenomenon such as human interaction that has the qualities of being situated, motivated, interactive, epistemic, embodied, and contingent. (See the definition of **rhetoric**.) *Rhetorical study*, for example, is the investigation of human communication as situated, motivated, interactive, epistemic, embodied, and contingent. *Rhetorical reading* involves reading a text as situated, motivated, etc. *Rhetorical analysis* is a way of analyzing texts to find what choices their embodied **rhetor** (speaker or writer) made based on their purpose and motivation, their situatedness and context, and how they interact with and make new knowledge for their audience.

RHETORICAL SITUATION

Rhetorical situation is the particular circumstance of a given instance of communication or **discourse**. The rhetorical situation includes **exigence** (the *need or reason* for the communication), **context** (the *circumstances* that give rise to the *exigence*, including location in time/history and space/place/position), **rhetor** (the originator of the communication — its speaker or writer), and **audience** (the auditor, listener, or reader of the rhetor’s discourse). The rhetorical situation is a moment in a larger rhetorical **ecology**, the network of relationships among rhetors in the situation.

RHETORICAL THEORY

Rhetorical theory is a set or system of principles for and explanations of human interaction from the perspective of rhetoric, which emphasizes the situated, contingent, and motivated nature of communication. Rhetorical theory has historically emphasized persuasion but can be more broadly understood as explaining and predicting how we make up our minds and how we change them.

SITUATED

Located at a particular place and time, and therefore dependent on a specific context and set of circumstances. In everyday language, we use *situated* to describe an object's or person's place: "The piano was situated on the left side of the great room" or "She situated herself between the two potted ferns." In a scholarly, rhetorical sense, we mean roughly the same thing, but use the term to call attention to the uniqueness of the moment and place of situation: "The President's speech is situated at a very tense time of diplomatic relations with Libya." *Situatedness* is a key element of rhetorical activities: When we say a given activity or experience is "rhetorical," we mean that it has the quality of being *situated* in time and space (among other qualities). That is the opposite of being *universal*: A universal rule is one that applies in all times and places. In contrast, most rules are situated, applying only to specific times, places, and circumstances.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

Social context is the environment, situation, or culture in which something is embedded. Key aspects of the social context of **discourse** might include participants, goals, setting, race, class, gender, and so on.

STASES

Stases (we often say *the stases*) are a problem-solving pattern (a **heuristic**) that helps writers develop arguments by asking a set of specific questions about the subject. First described in the rhetorical theory of Aristotle, the word *stases* shares the same root as the words *state*, *status*, and *stasis* (the singular of *stases*), all of which denote *condition* or *being*. Stases have to do with *the state of things*, so that when we consider the stases, we are taking stock, or asking, "What is the state of things?" The stases include (1) questions of fact, (2) questions of value, and (3) questions of policy:

1. What is the *nature* of the thing in question? How would we define or name the thing? What caused the thing? For example, if a four-legged creature with a wagging tail shows up at your back door, your first question might be "What is [the nature of] that?" Your answer might be that it's a "stray dog."
2. What is the *quality* or *value* of the thing? Is it good or bad? Desirable or undesirable? Wanted or unwanted? Happy or sad? Liked or disliked? Your answer to this will depend on a complex set of calculations, taking into account the nature of the thing and the context in which it is encountered. To extend our example, let's say you decide the stray dog is good because you like dogs and this one is appealing.
3. What should *be done* about it? What policy should we establish toward it? What is the best thing to do with respect to it? In the case of our example, you might decide that the best policy would be to take in the stray dog, at least temporarily, and feed it.

SYMBOL

A *symbol* is a thing that represents or stands for something else — usually an object standing for an idea or an abstract concept. In the U.S. flag, which is itself a symbol, white stars stand for (symbolize) individual states and the blue field in which they all rest symbolizes unity. Language is a symbol (or sign) system; all words are symbols for the objects or concepts they're associated with.

THEORY

A *theory* is a systematic explanation for some aspect of people's lived experience and observation. For a given experience — say, an apple falling on one's head — people propose explanations, or *theories*, for why the experience happens as it does, or why it doesn't happen some other way (e.g., a theory of gravity). People then test the theory against more observed experiences, seeing if those experiences are consistent with the explanation suggested by the theory, and seeing whether the theory can predict what will happen in future experiences. Theories are, for a long time, not "right" or "wrong" but "stronger/better" or "weaker/poorer" at explaining the phenomenon in question. The better or stronger a theory is, the more completely it accounts for existing phenomena (experiences, events, and objects) and the more accurately it makes testable predictions about future events. For example, a theory that tries to explain how people make up or change their minds has to be able to account for existing cases of this and predict how future cases will work. Theories — such as the

theory in Writing Studies that “writing is a process” — become treated as essentially factual when we recognize that though they are still **constructs** (made-up explanations that can only approximate the truth), they’re very good explanations widely supported by many kinds of evidence.

THRESHOLD CONCEPTS

Threshold concepts are ideas that literally change the way you experience, think about, and understand a subject. Every specialized field of study (or discipline — history, biology, mathematics, etc.) has threshold concepts that learners in that field must become acquainted with in order to fully understand the ideas of that field of study. Threshold concepts, once learned, help the learner see the world differently. They can be hard to learn (what researchers Jan Meyer and Ray Land call “troublesome”) for a variety of reasons, including the possibility that they might directly conflict with ideas you already have. Once you’re aware of these new and troublesome threshold concepts and you really start to understand them, they are hard to unlearn — Meyer and Land say they are “irreversible.” Very often, learning threshold concepts doesn’t just change the way you think about the subject, but also the way you think about yourself. But what makes them most powerful is that they help you understand a whole set of other ideas that are hard to imagine without knowing the threshold concept — so they let you do a whole lot of learning at once by helping entire sets of ideas “fall into place.” Chapter 1 discusses the main threshold concepts addressed in *Writing about Writing*.

TOPE

Tone is a reader’s *judgment* of what a text sounds like, sometimes also termed the dominant mood of a text. It is important to note that tone is not a characteristic actually *in* a text but rather one constructed in the interaction among the writer, the reader, and the text. Tone emerges not just from the language (word choice and sentence structure) of a text but also from a reader’s judgment of the **rhetorical situation** and the writer’s **ethos** and motivation.

TRANSFER

Sometimes called *generalization or repurposing*, *transfer* refers to the act of applying existing knowledge, learned in one kind of situation, to new situations. For example, a writer who learns how to write a summary in her College Writing I class in English is expected to *transfer* that summary-writing knowledge to her “history of the telescope” project in astronomy. Transfer, we are learning, is not automatic — people learn many things that they forget and/or don’t or can’t use in different circumstances. Research suggests that learning in particular ways (for example, being **mindful**) can increase the likelihood of later transfer.

VELOCITY

Based on the term from physics meaning *movement at some rate in some direction*, rhetorical theorists use *velocity* to describe how a text “moves” or is transformed through time and space. A text may be written into new forms or taken to new places. Analysis of velocity attends to both *direction* — where the text “goes” or how it is transformed — and *rate* — how quickly the transformation takes place. The concept of *velocity* is available not just to analysts but to rhetors themselves, who can compose and inscribe a text with a specific velocity in mind to begin with.

VOICE

Voice is the way a writer “sounds” in a text, or the extent to which you can “hear” a writer in his or her text. The definition of this term has changed over time. It has been used to refer to *authenticity* in writing, as well as to a written text that seems to be “true” to who its author is and what he or she wants to say. Author bell hooks has argued that finding a voice or “coming to voice” can be seen as an act of resistance. In *Writing about Writing* we use the term *voice* to refer to a writer’s ability to speak with some **authority** and expertise deriving from his or her own experiences and knowledge. According to this view, writers have multiple voices, any one of which may find expression, depending on the precise context of utterance.

WRITING STUDIES

Writing Studies is one of the terms used to describe a field or discipline that takes writing and composing as its primary objects of study. Another term commonly used to describe this field of study is Rhetoric and Composition. Most of the readings in this book are written by Writing Studies scholars.

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