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From my twelve years of teaching and tutoring experience, I have found that students can best prepare themselves for the types of writing they will face during and after college by developing a writing process that considers the ever changing rhetorical situations of their work. I have also found that students are best served by working with a variety of rhetorical strategies so that they are prepared to compose in diverse situations. These strategies are guided by classical and contemporary theories of rhetoric—introspective, persuasive, and collaborative methods practiced individually and in teams. To help teach writing, I also use an ethical approach to research and dynamic methods of presentation that incorporate the latest technology. Therefore, in my writing courses students use a mixture of theory, research, and practice to grow into flexible but also proactive rhetors so that they can move from writing to action. The following ideas guide my teaching.

***Kairos*: Doing the Right Thing at the Right Time**

It is important to do the right thing at the right time, enacting what the ancient Greeks called *kairos*. In their book, *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students*, Crowley and Hawhee state that *kairos* "...was so important for ancient thinkers that it became a mythical figure" (38). Even though *kairos* does not have an exact English term, the idea of *kairos* influences contemporary composition studies and my idea of the rhetorical situation: "*Kairos* is thus a 'window' of time during which action is most advantageous" (37). Therefore, I try to equip my students with a variety of tools they can deploy depending on the context of their call to write. Both my technical writing and first-year composition courses begin with classical rhetoric. Students learn about rhetorical situations—purpose, audience, *kairos*, etc.—and the elements of rhetoric, including Aristotle's proofs (*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*). Students use rhetorical analysis, including the logical fallacies, to study the strategies authors use in various types of discourse. Though these ideas seem philosophical, I always connect theory with practice by asking students to use their skills to analyze discourse that influences their lives.

For example, computer science students in one of my technical writing courses used careful analysis to study the rhetorical situation involved with their project on the XO-1 laptop¹ (the "\$100 laptop"). The student group began the semester proposing the use of the XO-1 in elementary age classes for at-risk students in greater-Lafayette, Indiana. However, after some initial research into the usability of the XO-1, the students shifted their project from a proposal to a feasibility study. After working with the laptop and with local teachers, they found that it was *not* feasible to use the XO-1 because its interface was too complicated. Even though their initial position supported using the XO-1 in local classrooms, not surprising given their computer backgrounds, I believe these students did the right thing at the right time by recommending that teachers wait for the release of the more usable XO-2².

***Stasis*: Power With, Versus Power Over**

I believe in using writing to build power *with* people rather than using writing to build power *over* people. *Stasis* theory, a discursive method of invention (pre-writing), is an effective process for writing and working *with* people. From classical rhetoric, we learn that Aristotle and Hermagoras developed *stasis* theory to help rhetoricians conduct thorough analysis and to move from theory to action. Specifically, *stasis* theory asks people to investigate four elements of an issue at hand: the facts, the definition of the issue, the seriousness of the issue, and the *stases* ask people to work together to determine what should be done. These four steps work well as a generative heuristic that helps foster analysis and collaborative teamwork appropriate for technical writing and composition classes. Moreover, integrating the *stases* into my curriculum shifts the focus of the writing class from purely eristic approaches to rhetoric—in order to win an argument, your opponent must lose—to more discursive ideas of rhetoric. These discursive approaches emphasize building power *with* one another instead of building power *over* one another.

¹ The XO laptop developed by the One Laptop Per Child Foundation headed by Dr. Nicholas Negroponte, co-founder of the MIT Media Laboratory: <http://laptop.org/en/>

² Read more about this student project at my Writing for Change page on my Website: <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~hbrizee/Website/hbrizeeexchange.htm>

I came to the power *with* approach as a result of my first semester teaching composition. After studying rhetoric and writing for 15 weeks, I asked my class to explain rhetoric; their answer stunned me. One of my best students replied, "Rhetoric is using language to get people to do what you want." My other students nodded in agreement. I concluded that despite a semester of conscientious instruction, I had fashioned twenty bloodthirsty lawyers. As I continued teaching writing, I researched other approaches to rhetoric and eventually came across Isocrates' theory of *logos dunamis*, which roughly translates to *power with*. This theory stands in contrast to *logos hegemon*, which basically means *power over*. Since discovering these discursive approaches to rhetoric, I have asked my students to use their skills—including *stasis* theory—to build knowledge collaboratively rather than using rhetoric "to get people to do what you want."³

Heuriskô: Discovery through Research

I believe in using careful, ethical research as a method of discovery and invention. In her essay, "Kairotic Encounters," Hawhee notes that, "the concept of invention comes from the Greek verb *heuriskô*, which may be translated 'I discover'..." (17). Influenced by this approach to discovery, but also influenced by empirical methods, I follow a teaching process that integrates theory, research, and practice—*praxis*. Therefore, I am also guided by my research with the usability of technology and my work with the community. Moreover, my concept of *praxis* is guided by the ancients' notion of building "copiousness of information" where a rhetor would collect as much information as possible before composing a speech. Building copiousness of information is equally important today, for example, when students investigate the use of technology in education for their community.

When my student group of computer science majors researched using the XO-1 laptop to help teach at-risk students, they first read literature on the laptop written by the organization producing it, as well as news reports and independent reviews. Then they conducted primary research through a first round of basic usability testing. Lastly, the students considered data from usability tests conducted by local teachers with their students in classrooms. My students' research began with exploratory methods using secondary sources and moved into empirical methods with primary sources. The student group's research and usability testing illustrates how empirical methods *and* discursive rhetoric (power *with*) works to build knowledge collaboratively. My students worked with local teachers and their students to collect data together that influenced important decision-making.

To encourage strict methods of citation and source evaluation during research, I conduct in-class workshops where students use a variety of media to augment their inquiry. Specifically, we use online databases, Internet search engines, and collaborative knowledge nodes, such as Wikipedia and Google Scholar. During this process, I encourage students to use the latest software to create visually dynamic electronic and paper documents. To help students expand the possibilities of composition and creativity, we use MS Publisher, Adobe PageMaker, Adobe Photoshop, and Macromedia Dreamweaver. In addition, since oral delivery is so important, my students present their work in MS PowerPoint. I integrate the latest technologies into my courses so that students gain experience working with programs they will use in a variety of situations throughout their lives.

Through my teaching and research, I have found that a keen understanding of rhetoric and a firm commitment to using discourse to build knowledge collaboratively helps my students write in a variety of contexts. Moreover, a thorough and principled approach to inquiry provides my students with the research skills they will need to solve problems and communicate effectively with others. My hope is that my students, through their work with rhetoric, research, and technology, can move into their adult lives as responsible members of our society who will work to bring about positive change in themselves and in their communities.

³ Read more about how I use *stasis* theory in my technical writing courses at my Handouts and Assignments page on my Website: <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~hbrizee/Website/421assignments.htm>.