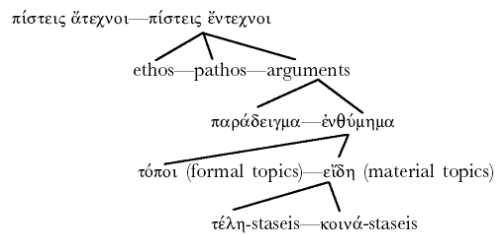


*Kneale Awards / Pedagogy (G)*

“Using *Stasis* in Professional Writing Pedagogy:  
Ancient Origins, Contemporary Applications”  
H. Allen Brizee



Introduction

Professional writing scholars tell us there is a growing need for critical workplace writers (Johnson-Eilola qtd. in Dubinsky, 590). These writers, we are told, form an important nexus of knowledge building and user advocacy. Further, scholars advise us these workplace knowledge builders are moving into management positions. Professional writers are shifting from hired hands or afterthoughts into key roles, and so they must possess effective decision making skills to help them and their organizations meet stakeholders’ needs. In *Teaching Technical Communication: Critical Issues for the Classroom* edited by Jim M. Dubinsky, Johndan Johnson-Eilola and Cezar M. Ornatowski point out the increasing demand for writers who are active participants in workplace issues rather than passive translators of technical information.

But how, specifically, do we foster critical thinking and effective decision making in our students to fill the needs outlined by Johnson-Eilola and Ornatowski? In this article, I argue that a more pervasive integration of *stasis* theory throughout our professional writing courses can help students develop the critical thinking and decision-making skills they need in the workplace. I contend the *stases* foster critical thinking and effective decision making in a number of ways. Moving through the *stases* encourages students to develop a critical understanding of rhetorical situations, and the taxonomic patterning of information in *stasis* helps students focus on the matter at hand so decisions reflect issues.

Further, I argue that using *stasis* should be central to professional writing pedagogy because of cultural influences on artifact development. I posit that the *stases* encourage students to work with (rather than against) parties involved in issues. *Stasis* theory asks students to agree on the facts (conjecture), the meaning of the issue (definition), the seriousness of the issue (quality), and the *stases* ask students to work together to determine what should be done (policy). In short, I hope to prove we can use *stasis* theory as a collaborative (and so more user-centered) process to help us integrate all sides of a discussion so that texts emerge as multi-sided, shared artifacts. My argument uses a *stasiastic* structure: fact, definition, quality, and policy.

## Facts

The first step in the *stasis* methodology is determining the facts, so a review of current professional writing textbooks to investigate the use of the *stases* seemed a reasonable beginning. However, a survey of major professional writing textbooks yields lackluster results when we try to find listings for *stasis* theory, the *stases*, or the elements considered part of *stasis* theory: conjecture, definition, quality, or policy.

Simply put, it is rare that *stasis* is covered overtly in textbooks<sup>1</sup>. This isn't so astonishing—*stasis* is probably considered outside the scope of subject matter for technical writing textbooks. If we see the *stases*, they're imbedded in sections on “Technical Definitions,” “Research Methodologies,” or “Proposals.” Within these sections, authors may use *stasis* to develop individual documents, such as definition papers, or isolated projects, such as problem-solution assignments. But as a process of invention, critical thinking, and rhetorical analysis *throughout the course*, it seems we neglect *stasis* in our textbooks.

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<sup>1</sup> A notable exception is Richard Johnson-Sheehan's *Writing Proposals: Rhetoric for Managing Change*.

This neglect shouldn't be surprising. Classical rhetoric is seen by some as “...narrow, mechanistic, and individualistic (e.g., Knoblauch and Brannon)” (Carter 97). And perhaps because of classical rhetoric's antiquity, professional writing instructors may not consider the *stases* useful in contemporary contexts. In “The *Stases* in Scientific and Literary Argument,” Jeanne Fahnestock and Marie Secor note, “The usefulness of classical rhetoric is often extolled but less often demonstrated” (427). And while there exists a litany of *stasis* advocates, scholars who support *stasis* (or alternative heuristics, such as tagmemics) have had little impact on our texts<sup>2</sup>. Despite the support for *stasis*, this heuristic is rarely covered in professional writing books. It is not a stretch to consider that a lack of coverage in texts could mean a lack of coverage in courses.

#### Definition: Tracing the Roots of *Stasis* to Develop a Meaning

Broadly defined, *stasis* theory is a taxonomic heuristic of inquiry that assists in collecting information to determine the issue at hand. *Stasis* may also be used to work toward solutions. Greek and Roman philosophers considered *stasis* a form of invention, and they also used *stasis* in legal cases. Although *stasis* can be used to argue, it is not considered “technical logic,” as Richard Fulkerson is quick to remind us:

Stasis theory classifies arguments in a wholly different way from logic, not by their form...or by the type of premise used...or even the relationship between premises and conclusions...but by the ontological status of the reality claim the conclusion asserts. (448)

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<sup>2</sup> Some of these scholars include Sharon Crowley, Jeanne Fahnestock, Richard Fulkerson, Alan Gross, Keith Grant-Davie, Jeanne W. Halpurn, Debra Hawhee, Nola Heidelbaugh, Ricahrd A. Katula, Lawrence Prelli, Frances J. Ranney, Susan Harkness Regli, Richard W. Roth, Marie Secor, Thomas O. Sloane, Robert P. Waxler, and Joanna Wolfe.

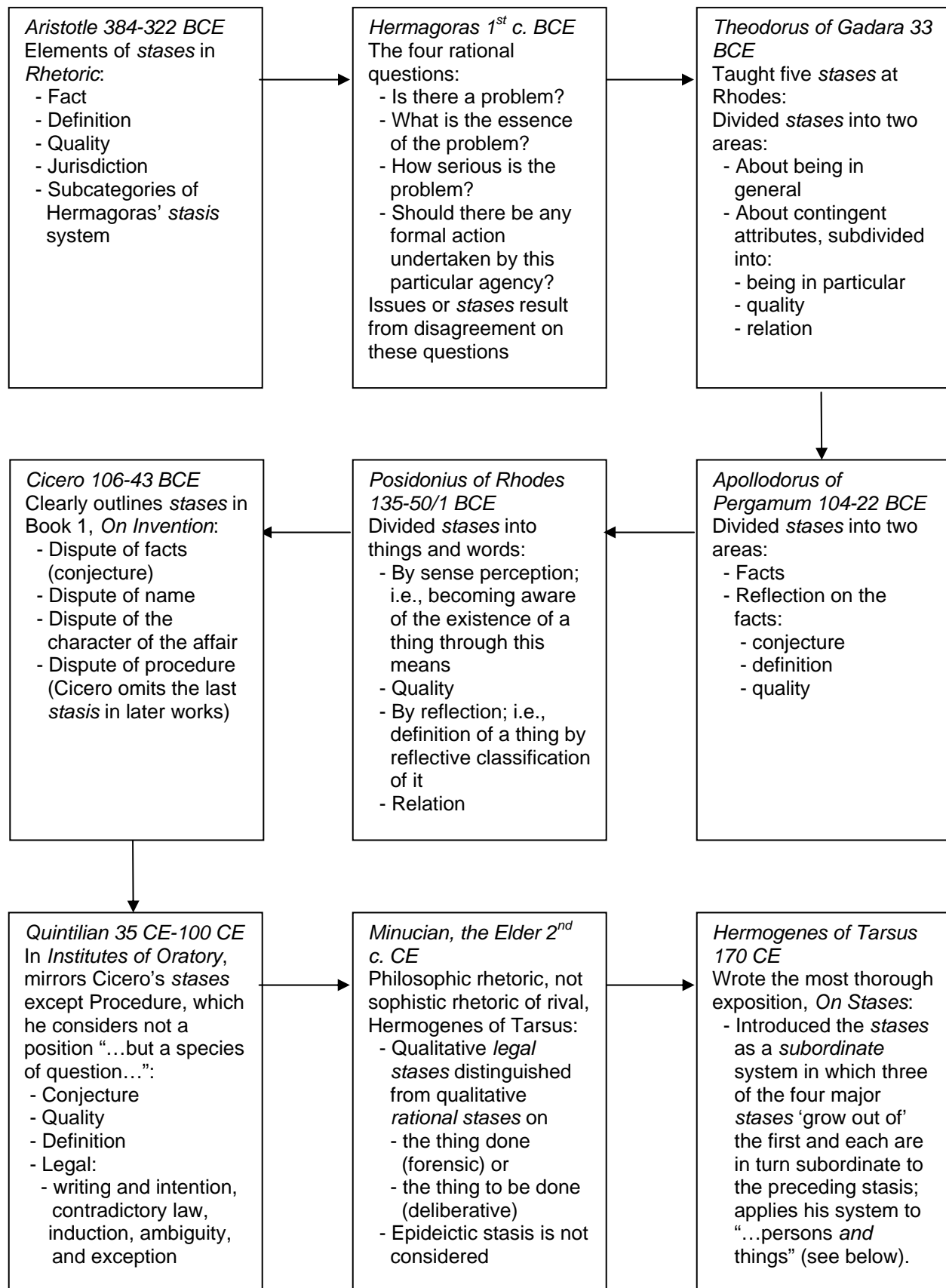
But how did we arrive at this understanding of *stasis*? To help answer this question, and to emphasize how important *stasis* was to the ancients, I outline the evolution of *stasis* theory from Aristotle through Hermagoras, Cicero, and Hermogenes to arrive at our contemporary definition.

*Stases: Ancient Origins, Rhetorical Value*

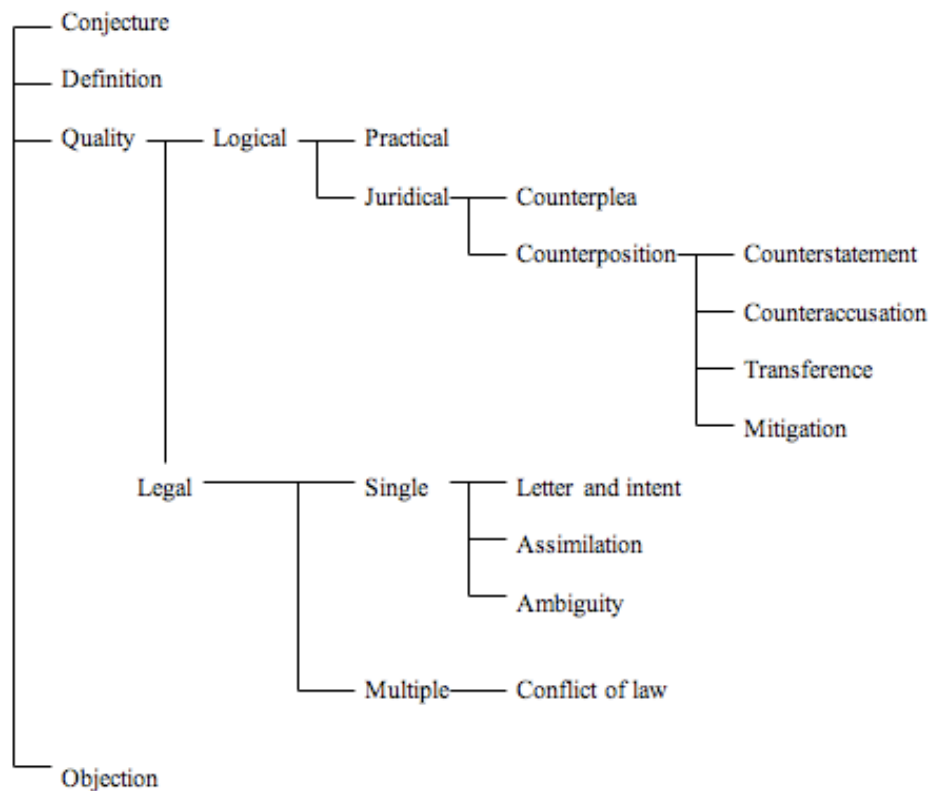
In *Rhetoric*, Aristotle discusses organization, the proofs, and the rhetorical canon, but he also hints at early concepts of *stasis*. In “Aristotle’s Almost Unnoticed Contribution to the Doctrine of Stasis,” A.C Braet finds “Books 1-2 contain four chapters with passages that definitely refer to what later came to be known as *staseis* (sic)” (410). Further, Braet finds “fact, definition, quality, jurisdiction, as well as subcategories of Hermagoras’ *stasis* system” (410).

Recognizing the value of this method of rhetorical analysis, other rhetoricians built on Aristotle’s ideas or developed their own *stases*. And while it is beyond the scope of this article to detail all of these alternate approaches, a brief timeline with some attendant information may help our understanding of the contemporary definition of *stasis*, and it may demonstrate the importance of the *stases* and why we should consider using them in our courses.

Fahnestock and Secor stated that Hermagoras is accepted as the father of *stasis* theory. But rhetoricians following him expanded on his heuristic: “The first substantial treatise on the *stases* was written by Hermagoras in the second century B.C., after which the *stases* were taken up and refined by every significant rhetorician until the Renaissance” (Fahnestock 428). The following graphic, based on Ray Nadeau’s “Classical Systems of *Stases* in Greek: Hermagoras to Hermogenes,” illustrates the major rhetoricians who worked on *stases*:



Hermogenes’ subordinate system is detailed below:



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|--|--|
| <p>(1) Are the facts of the case in dispute?<br/>                 (a) yes: the issue is <i>conjecture</i><br/>                 (b) no: go to (2).</p> <p>(2) Is the correct categorization of those facts in dispute?<br/>                 (a) yes: the issue is <i>definition</i><br/>                 (b) no: the issue is <i>quality</i>; go to (3).</p> <p>(3) Does the dispute focus on the implications of substantive features of the acts in question, or on the implications of the law under which the charge is brought (or of some other relevant legal instrument)?<br/>                 (a) act: the issue is <i>logical</i>; go to (4).<br/>                 (b) law: the issue is <i>legal</i>; go to (9).</p> <p>(4) Is the dispute concerned with a past or future act?<br/>                 (a) future: the issue is <i>practical</i>.<br/>                 (b) past: the issue is <i>juridical</i>; go to (5).</p> <p>(5) Does the defense deny that the act in question was <i>prima facie</i> illegal?<br/>                 (a) yes: the issue is <i>counterplea</i>.<br/>                 (b) no: the issue is <i>counterposition</i>; go to (6)</p> <p>(6) Is responsibility for the act accepted or transferred?<br/>                 (a) accepted: the issue is <i>counterstatement</i>.<br/>                 (b) transferred: go to (7).</p> <p>(7) Is responsibility transferred to the victim?<br/>                 (a) yes: the issue is <i>counteraccusation</i>.<br/>                 (b) no: go to (8).</p> | <p>(8) Is responsibility transferred to an accountable third party?<br/>                 (a) yes: the issue is <i>transference</i>.<br/>                 (b) no: the issue is <i>mitigation</i>.</p> <p>(9) If the dispute focuses on the implications of a law or legal instrument, is there one instrument or more than one (or one divided into more than one part)?<br/>                 (a) one: go to (10).<br/>                 (b) more than one: go to (12).</p> <p>(10) Is the literal interpretation of the law agreed?<br/>                 (a) yes: go to (11).<br/>                 (b) no: go to (13).</p> <p>(11) Is an implied meaning of the instrument substituted for its explicit meaning, or added to it?<br/>                 (a) substituted: the issue is <i>letter and intent</i>.<br/>                 (b) added: the issue is <i>assimilation</i>.</p> <p>(12) If the dispute is concerned with more than one legal instrument (or one divided into more than one part), then the issue is <i>conflict of law</i>.</p> <p>(13) If the literal meaning of a legal instrument is disputed, then the issue is <i>ambiguity</i>.</p> <p>(Heath 71-2, qtd. in Ranney, 15)</p> |
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Nadeau asserts “...the system of Hermogenes...remained current for...three centuries in spite of revisions and the publication of rival systems” (71). After considerable work by all the major ancient rhetoricians, Hermogenes provides us with the four *stasis* questions we use today:

**The Four Questions (Major *Stases*)**  
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1. **Conjecture** (*stasis stochasmos*) -“Is there an act to be considered?”
2. **Definition** (*stasis horos*) -“How can the act be defined?”
3. **Quality** (*stasis poiotes*) -“How serious is the act?”
4. **Policy** (*stasis metalepsis*) -“Should this act be submitted to some formal procedure?”

(Crowley and Hawhee 67)

These four questions are the primary *stases* we find in a limited number of composition books and integrated into some assignments in professional writing textbooks. Interestingly, Fahnestock and Secor add a fifth *stasis* (cause) after definition to address “...the overwhelming importance it has acquired since the age of Newton: the question ‘What caused it?’” (221). But taken as a complete heuristic, the system developed by every major rhetorician before St. Augustine is largely omitted in professional writing pedagogy.

### Quality

Once we determine the facts and the definition of an issue, the next step of *stasis*, quality, asks us to consider the seriousness of the act. In the *stasis* of fact above, we have already determined that *stasis* theory is not used openly in most professional writing texts. But is this a serious problem? Do we need *stasis* in professional writing pedagogy?

*Critical Thinking for Important Decisions*

Contemporary professional writing scholars are calling for students who can critically engage workplace writing situations. In addition, scholars articulate a need for students who are better decision makers and problem solvers. Primarily, the exigence for this is twofold:

- Critical workplace writers are more likely to advocate for a user-centered<sup>3</sup> design rather than “accommodating” system-centered<sup>4</sup> design. This is important because...
- ...technical writers are moving into decision making positions.

But does *stasis* address these needs in professional writing? Current practices in professional writing suggest that *stasis* does address these needs. In “Toward a Modern Version of Stasis,” Fahnestock and Secor state “Stasis theory has always been associated with technical rhetoric because of its forensic genesis...the challenge is to determine whether stasis theory reflects an epistemology generally adaptable to contemporary communication” (217).

In his article, “Relocating the Value of Work: Technical Communication in a Post-Industrial Age,” Johndan Johnson-Eilola calls for instructors to connect education to work in a “...critical rather than accommodating way (qtd. in Dubinsky, 590).” Johnson-Eilola’s appeal makes sense because rhetorically aware technical communicators are more likely to understand the context in which they write, the audiences for whom they write, and the impact of their writing on stakeholders. Toward this point, Fahnestock and Secor see the *stases* as beneficial in three ways: 1) recursiveness; 2) complex process of reasoning; 3) logical hierarchy:

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<sup>3</sup> User-centered: “...the emphasis is on people, rather than technology, although the powers and limits of contemporary machines are considered in order to...take that next step from today’s limited machines toward more user-centered ones.” Robert R. Johnson, *User-Centered Technology*, SUNY 1998.

<sup>4</sup> System-centered: “The system-centered view is based upon models of technology that focus on the artifact or system as primary, and on the notion that the inventors or developers of the technology know best its design, dissemination, and intended use.” Robert R. Johnson, *User-Centered Technology*, SUNY 1998.

...the stases are recursive. At any point, a question about any issue can interrupt the discussion of any other, sending the whole procedure back through another round of establishing facts, definitions, evaluations, and jurisdiction...we take this recursiveness as a sign of the theory’s flexibility. The stases do not necessarily outline one linear process, they suggest an order, which like a turning wheel, may keep recurring in the structure of an argument. (218)

In addition, they assert

A second essential feature...is the complexity of the stasis questions. Each evokes more refined questions at the same stasis and counter-argument at every stage...any adaptation of the stases should take account of and even value this complexity, for it means that the stases can lead the rhetor to an enriched invention strategy, not a limited one. (218)

Lastly, they state

Third, we should note that the stasis questions are hierarchical...questions of fact are logically prior to questions of definition and are subsumed in definition arguments; questions of definition are similarly included in questions of quality; and finally, questions of jurisdiction take in all previous arguments and can set them aside under the rubric of procedural impropriety. (218-219)

It is not unrealistic to consider, therefore, the practical applications of the *stases* in building knowledge on a given topic and in helping users move toward a greater awareness of how the facts, definitions, and quality contribute to decision making (policy):

...the stases are a powerful guide for helping us to explore what happens to arguments in full rhetorical situations...when we consider practical applications, we can see how arguer, audience, and occasion—in short the full rhetorical situation—can actually move the effective stasis of a dispute. (223)

A greater awareness of the rhetorical situation can, in turn, lead to better decision-making. Technical communicators trained in the *stases* will be rhetorically aware and better able to consider the topic at hand.

Cezar M. Ornatowski, in his essay, “Educating Technical Communicators to Make Better Decisions,” asserts that pedagogues must help professional writers develop better decision-making skills because writers are now contributing to technology, culture, and public policy. Ornatowski states that

...looking at technical communication in terms of making decisions, that is looking at what decisions technical communicators make, what the scope is of those decisions, and what their implications are, provides a new and critical dimension to technical communication education. (595)

In addition, Ornatowski highlights the expanding roles of technical writers in management:

Green and Nolan (1984) report that technical communication positions above the entry level often involve communicators in project management and other management-level decision making. In all these capacities, technical communicators must make decisions that call for expertise and savvy in interpersonal relations, organizational politics, oral communication, teamwork, and project management. (596)

Ornatowski sees technical writers as a nexus of meaning making. I posit that the *stases* can help technical writers succeed in these new roles. Similarly, Fahnestock and Secor see *stasis* as a heuristic with value beyond its courtroom applications:

...the stases can help us identify the assumed constituents of an argument. We do this for various purposes, sometimes simply to identify shared assumptions, other times to investigate how arguments on an issue do not speak to others because they are engaged in different stases. To see stases determined by context is to move beyond the formalism that associates the stases only with features of a text.

(223)

Further, they recognize how we can apply *stasis* in a social context: “...can we use the stases to describe the informal and indeterminate arguing that goes on over issues within disciplines or issues of general public interest? The answer is yes” (223).

Leading professional writing scholars identify a need for critical thinkers in decision-making positions. The ability to analyze a situation to determine the issues is vital to making responsible choices. But the workplace culture in which these decisions are made is probably just as important as technical writers’ classroom experiences. The *stases* offer us an approach that fosters collaboration and community-based knowledge building as well as conflict resolution.

### *The Social Perspective*

We can use the *stases* for invention and rhetorical analysis, but we can also use *stasis* as a heuristic for social construction. As a method of interaction between involved parties, *stasis* theory offers us a way to build knowledge collaboratively, a vital consideration in workplace writing. In *Writing in the Workplace: New Research Perspectives*, Rachel Spilka stresses the

importance of considering cultural influences on artifact development. She states that the social aspects of professional communication allow us to “...discover new and interesting patterns of rhetorical and social behaviors” (viii).

Moreover, reviewing the tenets of the social perspective illustrates how the *stases* can cultivate the kind of collaborative knowledge building that’s important for workplace communicators:

- Relationships between social contexts and the composing process in workplace settings
- Cognitive and social behavior throughout the writing process
  - Informal social interactions, formal meetings, writing, and reading protocols
  - Log books of data about social interactions
  - Discourse-based interviews of drafts
  - Evolution of documents. (viii)

Given its interactive process, *stasis* can play an important role in the social processes outlined above. Social constructionists view the culture and the process of authorship as influential on the artifact produced. It follows that *stasis*, since it promotes collaboration, can positively impact writers’ social interaction and writing strategies. In turn, *stasis* can positively impact the outcome of the labor, the text.

*Stasis* theory is a model of collaboration that can help people involved in projects work together so that processes and products are participatory rather than one sided. For example, Fahnestock and Secor see space for building common ground in the *stases*:

...arguments outside the tournament situation can frequently deadlock. To resolve conflicts deadlocked in the higher in the higher stases, parties can move down to the anterior stases of fact and cause...to...create that familiar territory known as common ground, the locus that agreement can inhabit...an analysis of conflict according to the stases can show parties where they are in fundamental and permanent disagreement about facts, definitions, causes—no small achievement. (223)

So even if parties cannot agree on every element of their discussion, *stasis* can help identify areas of disagreement to allow participants to build bridges where possible. This process points to *stasis*' value beyond invention and rhetorical analysis. Here we begin to see *stasis* as a collaborative knowledge-building heuristic and process for solving problems.

In his article, *Stasis and Kairos: Principles of Social Construction in Classical Rhetoric*, Michael Carter maintains “...*stasis*...makes rhetoric firmly dialogic, its goal not the imposition of one position on an audience but a critical discussion among the participants” (97). A serious limitation of contemporary rhetoric is that it can exclude interactive methods and favor oppositional persuasion, which in turn, can lead to conflict rather than cooperation (Rogerian rhetoric being an exception). *Stasis* theory can work as an avenue for cooperative, socially constructed meaning. Carter states

John T. Gage also finds that *stasis*, which ‘embodied the dialectical intentions’ of rhetoric, is conspicuously absent in modern invention theories: ‘Instead of an act of persuasion in a manipulative sense, rhetoric [with *stasis*] becomes a model for exploring the possibility of assent in the symbolic exchange of what one knows in the context of what others know.’ (97)

To develop his claims, Carter lists five areas where *stases* act to build knowledge socially:

- 1) Stases grow out of the conflict of opposing forces, the initial accusation, the denial, the *kataphasis* and *apophasis*...stasis, then, represents the place where rhetoric begins, an explicit or implicit disagreement or conflict (99)
- 2) The stasiastic conflict is generative, creating an impetus for rhetorical action. Though stasis has connotations of standing still, the result of the confrontation of two opposing movements or forces, it also bears a strong sense of the potential energy of creation and action (99)
- 3) Stasis is also a doctrine of inquiry. Nearly everyone who has written on stasis has associated it with asking questions: the first [level] is the determination of the true point of contention...the second level...is...*quaestio*, the rhetorical question ‘used as a focus for the contrary views of proponents and opponents. Those presenting the better answer to the question succeed in breaking the stasiastic impasse in their favor’ (Nadeau, “Classical” 55)
- 4) Stasis also provides a means for resolving the conflict. The principle of stasis not only encompasses the temporary impasse of opposing positions and the action that is sparked to overcome that impasse, but it also provides a *direction* for action—toward the resolution of the conflict” (100).
- 5) Finally, stasis is situational. It provides a way of defining the rhetorical situation, particularly the rhetorical conflict, so that the rhetors can respond with arguments that are appropriate to that situation, arguments found in the *topoi* included within the stasiastic categories” (100).

Carter also sees the *stases* as a process to solve conflicts:

...stasis...was an act of bringing the members of a community of knowledge—a resolution of a conflict of knowledge. And language was at the center of that act: both the method of seeking knowledge and the knowledge that emerged from that method defined the community. (101)

A basic premise of the social perspective is that culture influences documents. If a workplace culture is system-centered, it is likely documents produced in that culture will also be system-centered. If we are to move to a more user-centered workplace, the methods we use to address problems and compose texts must be more collaborative. *Stasis* theory offers us a collaborative heuristic we can use to move toward a more user-centered culture. This aligns with calls from Robert R. Johnson, Paul V. Anderson, Jeff T. Grabill, and Michael J. Salvo for a more user-centered approach to design and technical writing. By integrating the *stases* into our professional writing courses, we increase the likelihood students will apply the methodology to their writing and decision making when they leave our classes and move into the workplace.

So, is the lack of *stasis* theory in professional writing pedagogy a serious problem? My answer is yes it is a serious problem because professional writing scholars have issued a call for critical workplace writers and effective decision makers, and *stasis*, currently neglected, is a process we can use to foster both. Given the importance of workplace culture in professional writing authorship, I also argue the collaborative nature of *stasis* can help us shift our work from system-centered to user-centered.

## Policy

The final step in the *stasis* methodology is sorting out what to do. Parties look at and decide on the facts, agree on definitions, decide on the importance of the issue, and lastly, they determine policy. Following the *stasis* model, this section details *how* we can integrate and use the *stases* in professional writing pedagogy. Before I outline a specific plan with attendant materials, however, I should explain and address the two primary obstacles I see to using *stasis* in the classroom—the first is theoretical, the second pedagogical:

- 1) The challenge of shifting *stasis* theory from its arresting strategy to a generative approach of collaborative knowledge building and problem solving;
- 2) The challenge of educating instructors and students about this seemingly complex idea.

Moving the *stases* from eristic weapon to social knowledge-building heuristic requires a shift from the Roman concept of rhetoric, rooted in *athlios*<sup>5</sup>, to a Greek concept of rhetoric rooted in *agôn* and *aretê*<sup>6</sup>. I hope to help instructors and students better understand and use *stasis* through the pedagogical processes and materials provided in this policy section.

### *The Agony of Stasis*

The Romans developed the *stases* from humble beginnings in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* into a forensic system for establishing fact, definition, quality, and policy. We think the Romans did this because they maintained a complex legal system and a far-flung empire populated with different cultures. We posit their civic system required a fixed methodology for establishing common ground upon which to argue. Roman rhetoric differed greatly from Greek rhetoric,

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<sup>5</sup> “...*athlios* emphasizes the prize and hence the victor...” (Hawhee 186).

<sup>6</sup> “...*agôn* emphasizes the event of the gathering itself—the encounter rather than the division between the opposing sides...victory, in combination with aristocratic wealth and other virtuous actions, indicates a *questing*, a continual pursuit of virtuosity. What matters for *aretê*, then, is not the victory *per se* but rather the hunt for the victory” (Hawhee 185-6, 192).

however, in objectives and process. To the Romans, Greek rhetoric was too philosophical; it lacked pragmatism. Roman rhetoric acted as a tool for victory, whereas Greek rhetoric worked as a collaborative system of inquiry and philosophy. That’s not to say heated debate didn’t occur in the Greek agora—there’s plenty of evidence suggesting otherwise. But for the Greeks, rhetoric helped develop consensus; this consensus was fixed in *agôn* and *aretê* (Hawhee 185-6).

Depending on how it is used, *stasis* can be a tool for total victory in tournament settings, or it can work as a process for collaboration and cooperation. The heuristic can serve as an arresting strategy for identifying weak points in opponents’ rhetorical positions, or it can work as a generative methodology for promoting conversation. Our challenge, then, is to use *stasis* to build bridges rather than dig trenches. I argue that in order to develop the *stases* as a collaborative process, we must emphasize the Greeks concepts of *agôn* and *aretê*.

In “Agonism and Aretê,” Debra Hawhee states Greek rhetoric was influenced by the concepts of *agôn* and *aretê*. She argues the Greeks saw glory and honor *in the engagement itself* rather than just in victory, subtleties lost on the pragmatic Romans. Hawhee states *agôn* (“the contest, the encounter that produces struggle and change”) was vital to the Greeks (185). She also states *agôn* was inexorably tied to *aretê*, the Greek idea of virtuosity, which was “...bound with *agathos* (good), *kleos* (glory), *timê* (honor), and *philotimia* (love of honor)” (187).

Important to remember, then, is that virtuous contests (both athletic and intellectual) were more about the gathering and the process than about winning. In short, with *agôn* and *aretê*, we see the potential for generative rather than arresting rhetoric:

...*agôn* emphasizes the event of the gathering itself—the encounter rather than the division between the opposing sides...a continual pursuit of virtuosity. What matters for *aretê*, then, is not the victory *per se* but rather the hunt for the victory. (185-6, 192)

In order to integrate *stasis* into our pedagogy, and at the same time focus students' efforts on collaboration rather than victory, we need to shift the *stases* out of the zero sum game in which it now sits—our vision of rhetoric is far more Roman than Greek. Too often in our teaching of rhetoric, we privilege winning by over-emphasizing the importance of persuasion. The problem is, *stasis* was perfected by a Roman culture that honored victory and not, as Hawhee asserts, a Greek culture that valued *agôn* and *aretê*: “Put simply, whereas *athlios* emphasizes the prize and hence the victor, *agôn* emphasizes the event of the gathering itself—the encounter rather than the division between the opposing sides “ (186). It is precisely this agonistic force we must use to shift *stasis* from an arresting tool to a generative process for interaction and cooperation.

In order to move *stasis* from *win at all cost* to *postmodern collaboration for user advocacy*, we need to emphasize the glory in the struggle, the honor in the engagement. We need to teach the *stases* to help our students realize the *virtue of discourse* in a democratic society. Hawhee states

Taking seriously rhetoric's emergence in the context of the *agôn* requires a reconfiguration of rhetoric as an agonistic encounter. That is, for the sophists at least, agonism produces rhetoric as a gathering of forces—cultural, bodily, and discursive, thus problematizing the easy portrayal of rhetoric as telos-driven persuasion or as a means to reach consensus. (186).

Rather than seeing *stasis* as a battleground where combatants circle one another to find openings in rhetorical armor, the *stases* should act more like a puzzle where the parties involved in the discussion work together to build facts, agree on definitions and quality, so they can develop policies that emerge as multi-sided, shared processes. This won't be easy. *Stasis* takes work, work for the instructor, work for the students. But as Hawhee maintains, the Greeks believed that one could not achieve *aretê* without effort and sacrifice:

As Hesiod had long before pointed out, there has to be sweat before *aretê*...what matters for *aretê*, then, is not the victory *per se* but rather the hunt for the victory.

‘Questing,’ for Pindar, necessarily entails certain risks and much work, as he writes in an ode for the winner of the mule race at Olympia in 472 and 468

B.C.E.: ‘Achievements without risk win no honor among men or on hollow ships, but many remember if a noble deed is accomplished with toil’ (*Ol.* 6 9–12). (192)

So we need to emphasize for our students the importance—the value and valor—in working together toward productive ends. That's not to say, however, that working through the *stases* doesn't produce strife. It can. But Hawhee points out the Greeks had two kinds of strife, one of which we can adopt as a model for using *stasis* in professional writing pedagogy:

The idea of productive strife as a principle of movement is central, for example, in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, as he delineates two kinds of strife...Hesiod's concern is primarily with the *effects* of the two kinds of strife. While one kind of strife can be destructive insofar as it manifests itself in war resulting in death, among other things, the other kind of strife can be productive.... (192)

I argue this productive strife begins with showing students how they can use *stasis* as a generative process for building knowledge and solving problems. To this end, understanding and teaching the *stases* is the next obstacle we must negotiate.

### *Understanding and Teaching Stasis*

The basics of *stasis* theory are not difficult to explain. Traditionally, the *stases* have acted as a set of questions participants in legal systems used to isolate and argue different areas of a case. Hermagoras considered these questions important to answer individually, but Hermogenes was the first rhetorician to organize *stasis* into a subordinate framework.

As a subordinate process, parties moved from fact, to definition, to quality, and then policy only after each *stasis* was settled. If parties could not achieve stasis in one area of the heuristic, then an element of contention had been identified and could be argued further. Contemporary rhetoricians see the *stases* as more flexible, so that if stasis is not achieved in one area, the parties can skip down the heuristic to find common ground (Fahnestock and Secor 223). The hope is that after parties find common ground, the *stases* still in contention can be revisited and renegotiated. The *stases*, with attendant questions, then, can look like this:

<p>1. Conjecture</p> <p>Does the problem/issue exist?</p> <p>How did it begin and what are its causes?</p> <p>What changed to create the issue/problem?</p>	<p>2. Definition</p> <p>What exactly is the issue/problem?</p> <p>What is the definition of the issue/problem?</p> <p>What is it? What is it not?</p> <p>What are the parts of the issue/problem?</p> <p>How is it similar or different from other issues/problems?</p>
<p>3. Quality</p> <p>How serious is the issue/problem?</p> <p>Does the issue involve rights, laws, common good, or issues of care?</p> <p>What are the costs and benefits of the issue/problem?</p> <p>What are the alternatives, and are they better or worse?</p>	<p>4. Policy</p> <p>Where should we send this issue to be decided?</p> <p>What should we do about this issue/policy?</p>

But as a knowledge building heuristic, the most effective way of understanding *stasis* is to see it in action, to *use* it.

The ideas provided here do not form a static and perfected method; these materials must be revisited, renegotiated, and adjusted to align with institutional concerns, instructors’ goals, students’, and stakeholders’ needs. What I provide below are ideas I’ve discovered researching *stasis* and methods for teaching *stasis* in composition and professional writing courses.

I’ve organized this section to mirror how *stasis* can be applied during a 16-week professional writing course. I begin with an overview of generalized institutional goals for the course and then provide an explanation of how instructors can use *stasis* transparently as a heuristic for collaborative invention, research, writing, and problem solving.

Why the transparency? Simply put, I agree with Ann Brady in “Rhetorical Research: Toward a User-Centered Approach” when she states, “As a *technê*, or productive art...rhetoric becomes more useful the more it is used—and the more self-consciously it is used. If rhetorical knowledge remains tacit, thus unconscious, it remains largely inaccessible, even to those who possess it” (59).

### *A Stasis-Centered Semester*

Most professional writing programs have a general outline what their courses should be teaching. These goals vary, but it is probably safe to assert that professional writing programs tend to focus on the following areas:

- Rhetorical situations in workplace writing
- Process in workplace writing
- Collaboration in workplace writing
- Research in workplace writing
- Technology in workplace writing
- Document design and visual rhetoric in workplace writing
- Ethical and legal concerns in workplace writing.

To address these needs, I begin my courses with an introduction to user-centered theory as conceived by Robert R. Johnson and Paul V. Anderson. From there, I move into rhetoric and employment documents (please see my website for copies of my syllabi and other course materials—URL in Works Cited). After working with the basic concepts of rhetoric (ethos, pathos, logos—including induction and deduction—and the fallacies), we move to the informational white paper, which students research and compose in groups. To help build copiousness of information for the white paper, students cast a wide net to explore their topic and

to educate themselves and their future audiences for the problem-solution report. Important to the exploration is finding information from *all* sides of the issue, so students’ research and solutions best reflect all parties involved in the issue.

I use the *stases* as a form of invention by requiring students to answer as many of the *stasis* questions as possible through their exploratory research. Students follow an exploratory research map, which includes *stasis* questions. Students arrange and deliver their information in the white paper and then begin empirical research for the capstone project, the audience analysis and problem-solution report. We discuss how to use the *stases* to guide research, and students use an empirical research map to help triangulate their work (observations, interviews, and surveys). In addition, students work through an empirical research worksheet and *stasis* worksheet to focus their information and to identify any areas still requiring research. If groups can’t answer *stasis* questions effectively, they’ve located an area for more inquiry. Finally, students use the *stases* to conduct an in-depth audience analysis and to arrange and compose their problem-solution report. Students are expected to address and deal with as many sides of an issue as possible. I believe, therefore, *stasis* has helped students develop skills in the three areas I outlined above:

- 1) *Critical Thinking*: students use *stasis* during invention to help them conduct research on all sides of a topic/problem without privileging data that supports their thesis—there is no thesis to support at this point. The research is *exploratory*.

- 2) *Decision Making*: students use *stasis* during exploratory and empirical research, as well as during the audience analysis, to develop an in-depth understanding of the rhetorical situation. Therefore, solutions (decisions) better reflect the situation at hand and better reflect the needs of everyone involved with the problem: decision makers, secondary readers, shadow readers, stakeholders, those who may not agree with students’ solutions<sup>7</sup>.
- 3) *Collaborative Knowledge-Building*: students use *stasis* to work collaboratively in groups during the exploratory and empirical phases of the projects. During the exploratory phase, students use *stasis* to collect a wide range of data, including information about all of the people involved in the issue and their stakes in the process. During the empirical phase, students use *stasis*, and Stephen A. Bernhardt’s Seed Document, to ask critical questions about their project and to ask questions about stakeholders whose beliefs and/or needs may not align with the group’s conclusions.

Important also are the instructor’s efforts in reminding students to shift rhetoric, and the *stases*, away from the eristic Roman concept to align their efforts with the Greek notions of *agôn* and *aretê*. Instructors can help this process by asking students to focus on what has changed recently that contributes to the exigence of the issue rather than focusing on who is to blame for the problem. When dealing with civic issues in a problem-solution approach, inexperienced writers like to point fingers rather than trying to work collaboratively with decision makers and stakeholders. Focusing on what has changed rather than who is to blame is a key difference between deliberative and forensic rhetoric. The list below provides a clearer picture of the assignments I use during the semester (please see my Website for assignment sheets):

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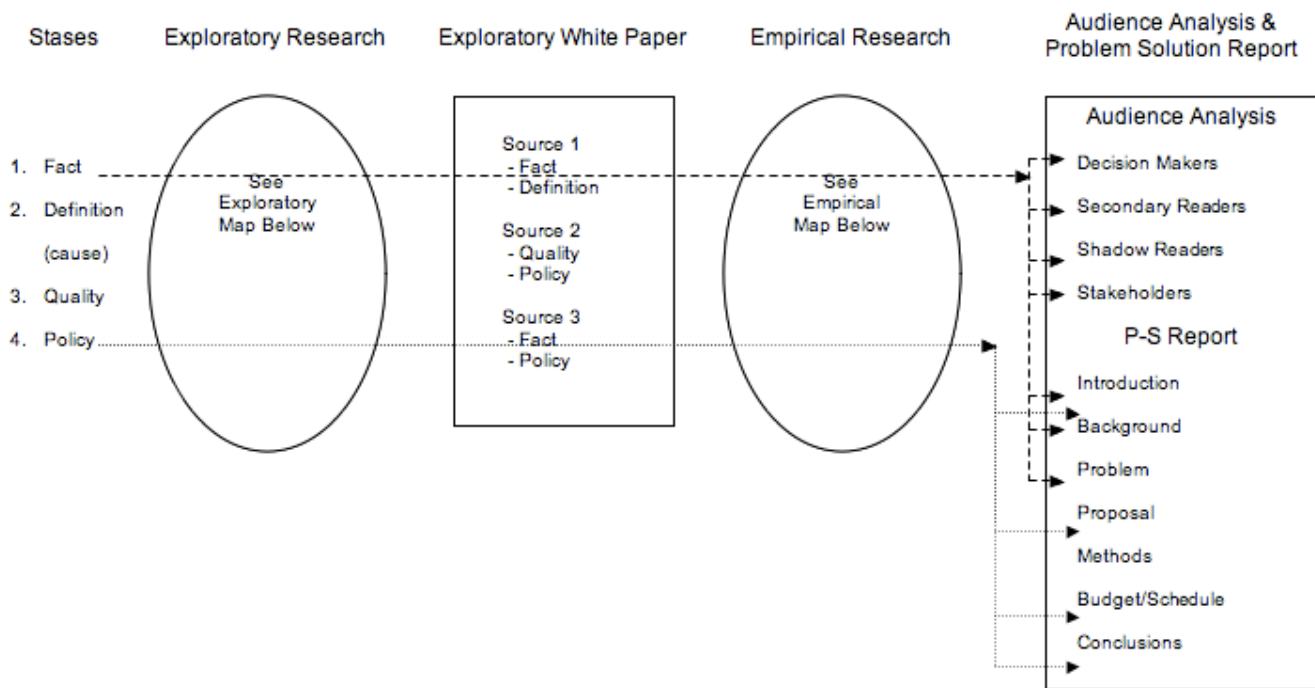
<sup>7</sup> To aid with this critical questioning, I use Stephen A. Bernhardt’s Seed Document from “Knowledge Management and Pharmaceutical Development Teams: Using Writing to Guide Science” as an assignment to help students analyze their research and conclusions.

“Using *Stasis* in Professional Writing Pedagogy: Ancient Origins, Contemporary Applications”

- Employment Documents (audience analysis, résumé, cover letter)
- Exploratory White Paper
- Seed Document
- Problem-Solution Report

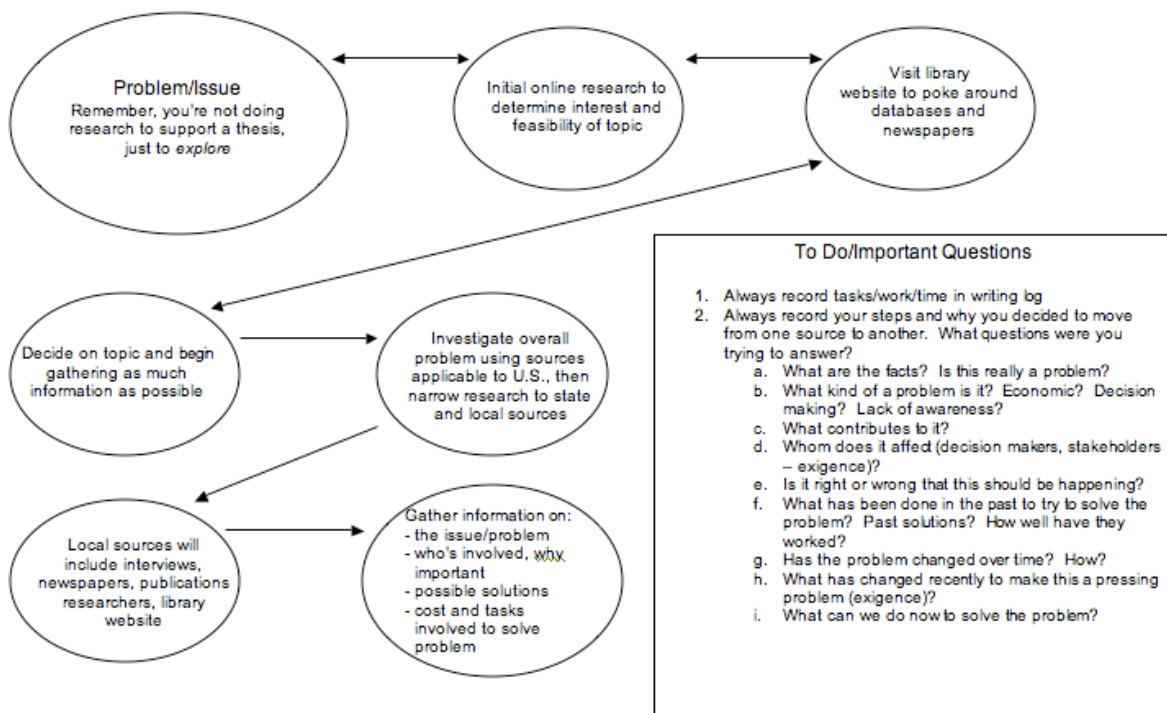
The graphic below illustrates how the *stases* inform and guide invention, research, and collaborative work throughout the semester. The research maps beneath the *stases* graphic work into the semester overview graphic where noted.

How the *Stases* Help Guide and Inform Exploratory and Empirical Work



**Mapping Your Research Methodology – The Exploratory Method**

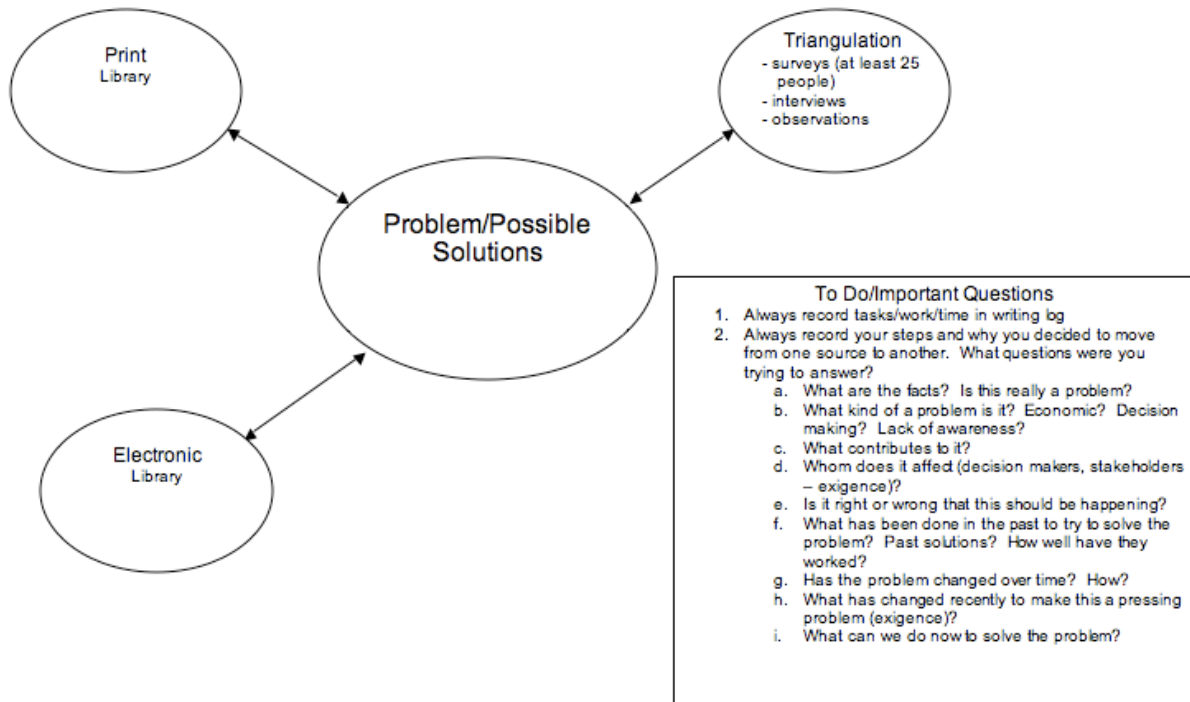
Use this research methodology guide to explore your topic. By mapping your research, you can plan the steps of how/where you will investigate your topic, decision makers, stakeholders, and possible solutions to your problem.



- To Do/Important Questions**
1. Always record tasks/work/time in writing log
  2. Always record your steps and why you decided to move from one source to another. What questions were you trying to answer?
    - a. What are the facts? Is this really a problem?
    - b. What kind of a problem is it? Economic? Decision making? Lack of awareness?
    - c. What contributes to it?
    - d. Whom does it affect (decision makers, stakeholders – exigence)?
    - e. Is it right or wrong that this should be happening?
    - f. What has been done in the past to try to solve the problem? Past solutions? How well have they worked?
    - g. Has the problem changed over time? How?
    - h. What has changed recently to make this a pressing problem (exigence)?
    - i. What can we do now to solve the problem?

### Mapping Your Research – The Empirical Method

Use this mapping research guide to develop your research methodology. By mapping your research, you can plan the steps of how/where you will investigate your topic, decision makers, stakeholders, and solutions to your problem.



The *stases* can help guide and inform exploratory and empirical work for critical inquiry and persuasive professional communication. In the semester overview graphic above, students begin with the *stases* and use them to help explore a topic (see Exploratory Map above). The map illustrates how two of the *stases*, *fact* and *policy*, might move through research and invention and be applied to arrangement and delivery in student work. Using the *stases* helps students conduct in-depth rhetorical analyses. Students build an awareness of context and audience, and they study the collaborative nature of writing and problem solving as they work with the heuristic.

When research shifts from exploratory to empirical, the *stases* continue to inform work (see Empirical Map above). Students working in groups interact to move through the *stases* as they compose team deliverables, such as the exploratory white paper, audience analysis, and

problem-solution report. Students also generate a greater awareness of stakeholders and their positions to better address the issue at hand and help work toward *stasis*. In addition, covering *stasis* openly, rather than including elements of it in assignments, promotes an understanding of the collaborative process of knowledge building and problem solving they can use in the workplace. Finally, to help students appreciate the active role *stasis* can play in collaboration, students work through in-class pro/con exercises described by Thomas O. Sloan in “Reinventing Inventio.” In this way, students use *stasis* for research, invention, arrangement, delivery, and collaboration.

## Conclusion

The *stases* have a long history as an effective analytic method for pinpointing issues and investigating rhetorical situations. In fact, *stasis* forms a major part of rhetorical systems used by the ancients and by contemporary scholars. In this article, I have shown that by omitting the *stases* in professional writing pedagogy, we teach only a fraction of what many rhetoricians consider rhetoric.

Recently, professional writing scholars have called for us to help students think critically about the rhetorical situations they will face in the workplace, so they can make better decisions as they move into management positions. *Stasis* can help us foster critical thinking and better decision making because it is a rigorous, yet flexible, analytic heuristic. *Stasis* helps students determine the issues, which can help them make better decisions for writing and project management.

Finally, I have shown that *stasis* can work as a collaborative heuristic that promotes social construction of knowledge and cooperative problem solving. This can, in turn, help us move toward a more user-centered workplace culture. Students will have to negotiate multiple

viewpoints on the job to compose documents and solve problems, and *stasis* can aid them in developing crucial collaborative skills. Used as a generative process rather than an eristic weapon, the *stases* can promote teamwork and interaction between conflicting parties, a common challenge in the workplace.

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