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Cultivating Awareness of Identities and Ideologies in Academic Writing

Josh Gauthier
University of Southern Maine

Trish Hodgkins
University of Southern Maine

Katelyn Parsons
University of Southern Maine

April Tarmey
University of Southern Maine

Vic Schalk
University of Southern Maine

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CULTIVATING AWARENESS OF IDENTITIES AND IDEOLOGIES IN ACADEMIC WRITING

Josh Gauthier, Trish Hodgkins, Katelyn Parsons, April Tarmey, and Vic Schalk with faculty mentor Patricia Hager
 Working with Writers, HUM 335

The Writing Center is a “third space” at the Lewiston-Auburn College where students meet with undergraduate and graduate peer writing assistants to work on gaining and developing key writing skills. Recently, we have been exploring ways to engage in dialogue with students about the roles of identity and ideology in writing.

Abstract

Writing is never a neutral process. It is never isolated from the context in which it takes place, nor is it isolated from the ideologies of that context. Because of this interconnectedness, it is important to recognize the ways in which students, faculty, and the Writing Center approach the process of writing. According to Gee (2008), **teaching writing will always “apprentice the learner into” certain ideologies** (as cited in Scott, 2016, p. 48). However, it is our hypothesis that students do not always consider the variations of writing disciplines, the inherent ideologies of those disciplines, or the identities that each individual brings to the writing process.

We set out to explore the level to which faculty consider and explicitly discuss writing as an apprenticeship into an ideology. Due to our interactions with both students and faculty, **the Writing Center is ideally situated to bring awareness of writing ideologies** to the entire university campus. Additionally, the Writing Center can and should also engage in dialogue with students about the roles of identity and ideology in writing thereby enabling them to :

- approach the writing process with awareness and intention,
- be more conscious of the ideologies of their context, and
- accept or challenge those ideologies rather than being unconsciously influenced by them.

Ideologies Within Disciplines Affect Their Values and Practices.

For example – if each discipline was to study emotion:

- Science - biology - experiments
- Psychology - psychological theories - case studies - interviews
- SBS - human interaction - case studies - interviews
- Humanities - cultural perceptions - artistic representations
- LOS - role of emotions in organizations

Emotions, often described as subjective reactions to experiences, have in fact a physiological basis in neuronal and hormonal activity.

Media representations of emotion inherently demonstrate and reinforce acceptable and non-acceptable displays of emotion for both men and women.



Works Cited

Roozen, K. (2016). Writing is linked to identity. In L. Adler-Kassner & E. Wardle (Eds.), *Naming what we know: Threshold concepts of writing studies* (pp. 50-52). Logan, UT: Utah State University Press.
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Writing is Ideological

- “Given that our participation with multiple communities involves acting with their texts, writing serves as a key means by which we act with and come to understand [the elements of those communities, including] the writing process and practices at play in our various sites of engagement, as well as the beliefs, values, and interests they reflect.... **Writing, then, functions as a key form of socialization as we learn to become members of academic disciplines**” (Roozen, 51).
- The ideologies of each discipline define what sort of information is focused on and how that information is discussed.

The Writing Process

- “Difficulties people have with writing [may be due] to whether they can see themselves as participants in a particular community” (Roozen, 2016, p.51).
- Students may feel too rushed to engage with the writing process.
- **Students may not ask - “What is the goal of this assignment? And how does it fit into the goals of the discipline?”**

Writing Center Role

- In writing assistance, the purpose of the assignment and the conventions of the discipline may not be the subject of discussion.
- A goal of the WC is to help the student see how the expectations of the assignment fit with the goals of the discipline.
- We want to help students transition from considering themselves uninformed and passive, to considering themselves active members of a discourse community (Fitts, 2005).