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ABSTRACT

A survey of graduate writing courses offered at United States universities revealed two rationales for providing graduate level writing instruction: (1) students are underequipped by their undergraduate training for more advanced work, and (2) graduate work demands a different kind and level of writing which schools have a responsibility to teach. Accordingly, this bibliography lists works to guide those writing at and beyond the graduate level and works suited for graduate writing courses. The bibliography is divided topically into five sections: (1) general books on research papers, theses, dissertations; (2) research guides; (3) writing guides for specific disciplines; (4) style guides and handbooks; (5) books on publishing; and (6) materials pertaining to graduate writing pedagogy. (SRT)

Resources for Graduate Writing Instruction

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In "A Survey of Graduate Writing Courses Offered at American Universities," John Mascaro and Alan Golding report that of 144 respondents, fifty schools offer writing courses as regular parts of their graduate programs.[1] This statistic raises a provocative question. If one-third of the survey respondents recognize that graduate writing instruction is important enough to be a permanent part of the curriculum, with yet other schools indicating that they also would implement graduate writing programs were it not for budgetary restraints or lack of qualified faculty, why is the value of such instruction not more widely recognized?

The survey suggests two rationales for offering writing courses at the graduate level: (1) that students are under-equipped by their undergraduate training for more advanced work; and (2) that graduate work "demands a different kind and level of writing and that they the schools have a responsibility to offer instruction in that writing." While either reason would legitimize graduate writing instruction, it is significant that only five schools describe courses designed as remedial.

The preponderant number of course rationales provided by the respondents support the principle articulated elsewhere by teachers and editors alike that graduate writing courses perform a vital function of training students both in the conventions and formats of their disciplines and also in the qualities of argumentation unique to their fields.[2] Underlying this emphasis is a valid sequencing concern. In more cases than not, graduate students, especially those outside of the humanities, have no

formal instruction in writing after Freshman English -- a course in no way intended to introduce students to the professional writing of a particular field.[3]

Without advanced training and the opportunity to develop a meta-awareness of their writing practices, students are likely to continue to produce the academese which has come to be the native language of graduate school and to bring this turgid, uncommunicative form of writing to the tasks they encounter in the real world. It is not surprising that employers complain about the inability of recently graduated students to write technical reports, grant proposals, and the like, not surprising that journal editors across all fields continue to cite the poor quality of submissions, especially those from graduate students and recent Ph. D.'s, not surprising that it often requires a year to translate a dissertation into a book. Clearly, the goals of any discipline's published writing should also be those of the graduate writer, and intervention in the form of writing instruction is a way of orienting graduate students to them as they prepare to leave the academy.

The Mascaro/Golding survey reports that most graduate writing courses are taught by faculty within the department or program offering them; however, most instructors have been trained in a department of English, most often to the Ph. D. level. Given their sensitivity to language and to the criteria of good writing generally, teachers with English degrees should be an appropriate resource, given theoretical knowledge of and/or practical experience with the conventions and formats of the

discipline with which they are working. They are also the best candidates for teaching cross-disciplinary courses and workshops.[4]

It may well be that it is the university's English department or Writing Program that should initiate programming for the university's graduate community. If a need for such instruction exists, and few publicly argue that it does not,[5] the same across-the-curriculum model might be applied to graduate education that is currently applied to courses developed for upperclassmen who are just entering a discipline. What are required -- besides discipline-specific training for the instructor -- are a theory base and pedagogical materials.

The following resources are aimed primarily at those most intimately involved in graduate writing instruction: the teacher and the graduate student. There is, however, an important secondary audience -- the undergraduate instructor. Knowing the texts which define the writing expected at the end of the student's academic career creates perspective on what we as teachers do at its beginning. It also makes a truer sequencing possible for the writing-across-the-curriculum program which aims to send its constituency off to graduate and professional schools.

Section A includes books on graduate writing tasks; the proliferation of these texts in the past decade indicates a growing awareness of graduate writers' needs. Section B presents a cross-disciplinary collection of research guides. The list is not exhaustive, but is intended rather to suggest the range of

such materials available. Instructors and writers of how-to books differ on whether to include discussion of the research process in a graduate writing course. I have found that students welcome it.

Section C includes writing guides for specific disciplines. Again, the list is not inclusive, but presents a range which enables the cross-disciplinary instructor to derive the principles of superior professional writing which cross over fields. The similarities in desiderata of scientific writing and of writing in the humanities, for example, are often surprising.

Section D presents a collection of style guides, also useful for comparative studies. Section E includes books specifically focused on publishing. The graduate students' vital interest in this area provides one of the main reasons for the popularity of graduate writing courses. Finally, Section F contains materials directly pertaining to graduate writing pedagogy. As yet, the number of entries is small, and without networking may remain so. In the meantime, a significant amount of "unofficial" pedagogy can be found in the disciplines' journals; a glance at any volume of Index Medicus, for example, the major periodical index for the medical sciences, reveals a substantial number of entries under the heading "Writing."

Notes

[1] The report, forthcoming in the Journal of Advanced Composition, notes that the courses are "legitimate components of their the schools respective programs, offered on a regular basis and involving the same amount of class time." They appear at every level of graduate study and in a wide range of fields.

In a similar survey, Robert E. Bjork and R K. Oye found that of 101 medical schools, fifteen offered courses. Those not doing so "indicated a need but claimed lack of time, lack of interest on the part of those needing instruction, or a lack of qualified faculty members." ("Writing Courses in American Medical Schools," Journal of Medical Education, 58 1983 , 112).

[2] Cf. H.R. Struck, "Wanted: More Writing Course for Graduate Students," College Composition and Communication, 27 (1976), 192-97 and writing guides prepared for professionals by academic editors (e.g. Robert A. Day. How to Write and Publish a Scientific Paper, 2nd ed., Philadephia: ISI Press, 1983).

[3] Moreover, many graduate students report having tested out of their undergraduate college's freshman English requirement.

[4] At UCLA, Writing Program instructors staff both discipline-specific and cross-disciplinary graduate writing course and are regularly evaluated "high" (between 8 and 9 on a

9-point scale) by course participants. The courses range from three-week thesis and dissertation workshops to term-long courses offered by departments such as history, library science, oral biology, and social welfare.

[5] The survey respondents who indicate that writing instruction should not be a concern in graduate education appear to subscribe, according to the survey authors, to a traditional view of university curricula which relegates formal writing instruction to the early stages of university education. This view, Mascaro and Golding note, "may be changing in the face of the great amount of attention recently directed towards writing and communication skills at all levels of education."

A. General books on research papers, theses, dissertations

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Campbell, William Giles, and Stephen Ballon. Form and Style: Theses, Reports, Term Papers. 6th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981.

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Kleinbauer, W. E., and Thomas P. Slavens, Research Guide to the History of Western Art. Chicago: American Library Association, 1982.

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Yates, Brian T. Doing the Dissertation: The Nuts and Bolts of Psychological Research. Springfield, Ill.: Thomas, 1982.

C. Writing Guides for the Disciplines

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Barras, Robert. Scientists Must Write: A Guide to Better Writing for Scientists, Engineers, and Students. New York: Methuen, 1978.

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