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ABSTRACT

Following J. Sprague's (1992) call to reevaluate instructional communication theory and practice in light of critical theory and Sprague's (1993) call for a more engaged form of discipline-specific pedagogy, this paper responds with a reevaluation of speech communication education in light of rhetorical theory. The paper argues that speech educators need to return to their disciplinary roots to once again teach students both how and why to become articulate citizen-critics and citizen-speakers. This is made possible, in part, by teaching a "commitment to a competent rhetoric," (Hauser and Blair, 1983), a rhetoric that is inventional, situational, practical, critical, political/transformational, and urgent. The paper discusses the problematic turn in speech pedagogy that has divided rhetorical theory from pedagogical practice, explores the implications of this division, defines and explains "commitment to a competent rhetoric" and concludes with specific rhetorical/pedagogical strategies that might foster a commitment to a competent rhetoric in the high school and college classroom. Contains 44 references and 3 notes. (Author/RS)

Teaching a "Commitment to a Competent Rhetoric" in the Speech Communication Classroom

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Abstract

Following Sprague's (1992) call to reevaluate instructional communication theory and practice in light of critical theory and Sprague's (1993) call for a more engaged form of discipline-specific pedagogy, this essay responds with a reevaluation of speech communication education in light of rhetorical theory. I argue that speech educators need to return to our disciplinary roots to once again teach students both how and why to become articulate citizen-critics and citizen-speakers. This is made possible, in part, by teaching a "commitment to a competent rhetoric" (Hauser & Blair, 1983, 145), a rhetoric that is inventional, situational, practical, critical, political/transformational and urgent. The essay discusses the problematic turn in speech pedagogy that has divided rhetorical theory from pedagogical practice, explores the implications of this division, defines and explains "commitment to a competent rhetoric" and concludes with specific rhetorical/pedagogical strategies that might foster a commitment to a competent rhetoric in the high school and college classroom.

Teaching a "Commitment to a Competent Rhetoric" in the Speech Communication Classroom

> Personality must be educated, and personality cannot be educated by confining its operations to technical and specialized things, or to the less important relationships in life. Full education comes only when there is a responsible share on the part of each person, in proportion to capacity, in shaping the aims and policies of the social groups to which [s]he belongs. This fact fixes the significance of democracy--(John Dewey, 1920, 209).

> If politics--and, in its turn, rhetoric--is associated with the means of getting things done, it is imperative that ethics, which deals with ends and the relative values of what is achieved, be reunited with the political art. Rhetoric, as the intermediary between the will to action and the achievement of the result, must accordingly be conceived as both a political and an ethical instrument. . . . A sustained faith in democracy itself depends upon it--(Thonssen, Baird, and Braden, 1970, 555).

> The pedagogical work of . . . a politically embedded subject would include a strong ethical and critical strand. A few 'affective' objectives tacked onto a class syllabus cannot begin to suffice for the courses we teach. A student who has effectively learned about communication and learned how to communicate will know how to resist certain forms of power, how to get power, how to use it responsibly, and how to give it away or share it by empowering others. . . The only pedagogy suited to our subject would, like our emerging theories, reflect the full scope of social life" (Sprague, 1993, p. 118).

As speech educators we often teach students to be good writers and speakers. We also often teach them weighty theories about, for example, social change, cultural meanings, and the body politic. But how often do we provide them the chance to see the connections between ideas and the political expression of those ideas? Although we teach them how to write and speak well, what do they feel empowered to write and speak about?

Despite the conservative turn in critical pedagogy in the early years of the speech communication discipline, with its emphasis on great speakers and exemplary orations, it at least demanded attention to the "civic voice" of the critic/speaker and "the connection of criticism to pragmatic, civil affairs." This focus recognized "that the texts produced in the larger community had material effects on the individual in real situations, and that rhetorical critics [and speakers] therefore, had the 'responsibility of considering the ethical implications of public statements'" (Nothstine, Blair & Copeland, 1994, p. 42, citing Thonssen & Baird, 1948, p. 471).

Possibly because of our pursuit of other scholarly and pedagogical goals, as the discipline has matured, we have lost this emphasis on the critic/speaker as citizen continually honing a civic voice and making a commitment to the public sphere. Whether this was due to the "objectification" of knowledge production, which invited communication scholars to mask the voice of the critic as subject, or whether it was a result of the discipline's attempts to move away from our practical speech roots (Macke, 1991) in order to "legitimize" our field of study, our students have suffered as a result. For students who want to follows in our academic footsteps the loss may not be as great, although they too may simply perpetuate the same esoteric knowledge industry that has created the current state of the field. For those majority of students who do not want to become academics, however, they "may well leave the university culture

knowing more about how to be citizens of the academic community than they do about ways of being, thinking, and acting in a larger, public culture" (Nothstine, Blair & Copeland, 1994, p. 43).

Following Sprague's (1992) call to reevaluate instructional communication theory and practice in light of critical theory, and Sprague's (1993) call for a more engaged form of discipline-specific pedagogy, this essay responds with a reevaluation of speech communication education in light of rhetorical theory and practice. The rationale for such a reevaluation is that rhetorical theory and practice, unlike critical theory, provide both a critical and a discipline-based grounding for what and how we teach.

Sprague (1993) explains that despite the increasing realization that "generic instructional models are of limited use," the communication field has continued to embrace such models (p. 109). Possibly as a result, as Book (1989) points out, "pedagogical content knowledge unique to communication has gone virtually unexamined." (p. 318-319). This has often resulted, according to Sprague, in a gap between our theory and our pedagogy most notable in the contrast between our skills-based basic courses and our more theory-driven upper division courses. This gap is particularly surprising since speech communication's sister field, English, in its rediscovery of rhetoric, has engaged in vigorous exploration of the connections between theory and practice, most notably in English composition

courses and in rhetorically-based research regarding the teaching of writing. A return to our discipline's rhetorical roots in the teaching of speech communication, in other words, would provide a more engaged discipline-specific pedagogy.

Sprague (1993), in her call for a discipline-based pedagogy, asserts that such a pedagogy "would recognize the relationship between communication and power" (p. 117) and would "make it hard to be contented with the traditional ways of teaching communication ethics that merely cautioned, 'speech is a powerful tool for good or evil, so do be responsible in using it'" (p. 118). Rhetorical theory not only provides a discipline-based pedagogy it also reinvokes a critical and political framework for what we do as speech educators. As Hart (1993) points out, speech communication was originally "founded on, and funded by, quintessentially political assumptions" (p. 101). In this formulation teaching speech communication is a political act because by "helping a student unlock his or her thoughts for others, the communication teacher also unlocks a potentially demanding citizen." Speech teachers, as "social insurgent[s]," Hart asserts, "peddle freedom," (Hart, 1993, p. 103). Sprague (1993) notes in closing that "vigorous discussion of the ethical and practical implications of curriculum and of teaching methods [should] again animate our field." (p. 119). Rhetoric theory, I assert, provides such an ethical and practical reanimation of speech pedagogy.

Specifically, this essay argues that teachers of public speaking, argument, and rhetorical and media theory and criticism should return to our disciplinary roots and once again teach students both how and why to become articulate citizen-critics and citizen-speakers. This is made possible, in part, by teaching a "commitment to a competent rhetoric" (Hauser & Blair, 1983, 145), a rhetoric which invites students to see themselves as empowered members of a polis possessing the will, the skill, and the rhetorical sensitivity to enter this arena. This definition of competence implies a teaching model that is inventional, situational, practical, critical, political/transformational and urgent.

In what follows I discuss the problematic turn in speech pedagogy that has divided rhetorical theory from pedagogical practice, explore the implications of this divisions, define and explain "commitment to a competent rhetoric" and conclude with four rhetorical/pedagogical strategies that might foster a commitment to a competent rhetoric in the high school and college classroom: teaching a writing and speaking that is exigency-born, inviting classroom dialogue about the invention process, modeling an explicitly critical and pragmatic stance towards discourse, and broadening the audiences to whom and about whom students speak and write.

The Problematic Turn in Speech Pedagogy

A number of scholars have pointed to a crisis in public life concerning deliberation and political action by the citizenry

(Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler, Tipton, 1984; Hauser & Blair, 1983; MacIntyre, 1984; Mackey-Kallis & Hahn, 1991; Sennett, 1978). According to Hauser and Blair (1983), this crisis manifests itself as "a prevailing civic and familial 'privatism,' a concern for personal interests over public ones, a lost sense of community, a seeking for self in others and even a wholesale narcissism" (p. 140). When public concern for the construction of social knowledge and the common good is replaced by the language of privatism any deliberative role for the citizen ends. Public discourse is transformed from the deliberative, what should we do, to the demonstrative, and the epideictic, what happened and who should we praise or blame for it?

Wishing neither to simply praise or blame, some responsibility for the decline of public life must rest with speech communication educators--we who are first and foremost, as Thonssen, Baird and Braden note, responsible for creating educated citizens:

> When men [and women] have something on their minds, freedom to speak it constitutes the natural outlet for their will to action. But it presupposes a literacy on their part, a knowledge of what they express, and a recognition of the responsibility inherent in free expression. Quite properly the inculcation of such principles of conduct is the task of those who train the citizenry in speechcraft (1970, p. 556.)

Despite this charge, many of us who train the citizenry in speechcraft and its criticism today have abdicated our responsibility. According to Book, we have "trivialize[d] the value of studying public speaking" by allowing "students to choose insignificant topics (such as the way to make a peanut butter sandwich) instead of requiring research and development of speeches on socially significant topics" (1989, p. 319). Claims Wartella, "We have squandered the enormous interest in communication about issues in the public arena shared by the public at large," (1994, p. 54), and "we seem to do all we can either to ignore . . . or subvert . . . for our own narrow disciplinary battles" the interest of "communication students [who] come to our departments eager to understand the role of communication in modern society" (p. 61). In short, we have added to the decline of public life and a public citizenry noted by many of the aforementioned scholars.

How did speech educators add to this decline? Although there are various histories of the discipline available, and every anniversary in the field seems to occasion a new one (Benson, 1985; Phillips & Wood, 1990), the one that sheds the most light on this current dilemma is our disciplinary move away from the practical, ethical, and political dimensions of speech communication--a move with specific ramifications for courses in public speaking, argument, and rhetorical and media theory and criticism.

It may have been that our quest for legitimation as a field has driven theory-building at the expense of practical application (or a growing gulf between the two, which results in the same thing). This gulf is apparent in the paltry state of theoretically-driven speech pedagogy. Sprague (1993), for example, claims to be "haunted by Nelson's (1986) comment that 'pedagogy is an embarrassment to theory (p. 114).'" She is willing to concede, however, that it is rare in speech communication to see "genuine debate over both curriculum and teaching method argued from intellectual premises." (p. 112). She claims that possibly less than a quarter of the scholarship published in Communication Education (if we exclude research on communication apprehension) has focused on theoretically-driven pedagogy specific to the speech communication curriculum.

Our quest for legitimation as a field may have also resulted in our objectification of knowledge production which, itself, has made ethical and political judgements in the classroom obsolete. Already by 1970, Thonssen, Baird and Braden acknowledged the field's "tendency to veer away from the moral or ethical concepts in rhetorical theory" (p. 559), due, in part, to "our virtual deification of the so-called scientific spirit and method" (p. 555). This "scientization of criticism," according to Nothstine, Blair, and Copeland, writing in 1994, "has rendered judgement, or any other form of engaged reaction, as incidental at best to the critical work" (p. 43). Since it does not appear in the critical

work it often does not appear in the classroom discussion of the speech or the critical work as well.

Evidence for speech educators abandonment of the practical, ethical and political in the teaching of public speaking can be found by a quick scan of the most popular basic public speaking textbooks. With the notable exception of Brydon's and Scott's Between One and Many, and Gamble's and Gamble's Public Speaking in an Age of Diversity, both first released in 1994, the vast majority of public speaking texts treat ethics as a separate short segment of a chapter, avoid all mention of the word rhetoric, and devote little attention to speech criticism and/or reasoning and critical thinking. Beebe's and Beebe's Public Speaking (1991), for example, a text of over 400 pages, devotes only one page to a discussion of ethics. The word rhetoric does not appear in the body of the text. An appendix, however, called "The Classical Tradition of Rhetoric" by Thomas R. Burkholder discusses the evolution of the discipline, seemingly as an afterthought to the book itself. Another basic textbook, Mastering Public Speaking (1993), by Grice and Skinner, although devoting a chapter to a discussion of ethics, uses the word "rhetoric," only once in a brief discussion of ethos, pathos, and logos. Although Osborne and Osborne's Public Speaking, 3rd. Edition (1994) mentions the word rhetoric five separate times over the course of the book, no single chapter or extensive discussion is devoted to the ethics or politics of public

speaking (reasons to be an effective public speaker are covered in approximately four pages).

Although only a cursory glance at a few of the basic public speaking texts in our field, this glimpse highlights the extent to which our field has drifted from our disciplinary roots. Assuredly, mention of the word rhetoric does not insure that sufficient treatment of the ethics, politics and pragmatics of voice will follow. It may, however, be indicative of a public speaking course relatively uninformed by rhetorical theory and, as a result, potentially devoid of criticism, ethics and politics.

The notable exceptions to this rule, Brydon's and Scott's (1994) and Gamble's and Gamble's (1994) public speaking books are worth mentioning. Gamble and Gamble's Public Speaking in an Age of Diversity, for example, quite self-consciously confronts not only the diversity of public speaking audiences, but also the ethical, political, and critical restraints acting upon and the obligations of the speaker/critic. Brydon's and Scott's Between One and Many devotes individual chapters to such concepts as "rhetorical speaking and rhetorical situations," "rhetorical sensitivity," "opinion leadership," reasoning and thinking critically," and "detecting deception in communication." There may be some indication, in other words, that basic textbook writers in our field, whether conscious of being informed by rhetorical theory or not, have embraced much that makes speech

communication a viable ethical, critical and political tool in the current age.

In sum, meaningful public life is in decline or has been coopted by the privatization of the public. Speech teachers, in our abandonment of theory generally and rhetorical theory specifically--for whatever reason--may have added to this decline by removing practical, critical and political judgement from speaking and writing in the classroom. How then, does a return to our discipline's rhetorical roots provide these missing elements?

Commitment to a Competent Rhetoric

Teaching a "commitment to a competent rhetoric" (Hauser and Blair, 1983) in the speech communication classroom not only provides a discipline-specific pedagogy it also offers a critical model for both what and how we teach. Commitment to a competent rhetoric invites students to see themselves as political beings with an urgent stake in determining the process by which they will be governed and how they will live, it urges them to see themselves as empowered members of a polis possessing the necessary critical and inventional skills to enter this arena, and it asks them to become rhetorically sensitive individuals speaking to and about diverse communities and cultures. In short, commitment to a competent rhetoric implies a teaching model that is situational, inventional, practical, critical, political/transformational and urgent. Each of these qualities are discussed and then applied in a classroom context.

Rhetoric as Exigency-Driven

Commitment to a competent rhetoric is exigency-driven (Bitzer, 1968) in its broadest formulation because it requires a continually learning, thinking and creative society where citizens enter the public realm "willing to take risks and take responsibility for problem-solving" (Boyte, 1990, p. 40). This is much different from "the main forms of 'participatory politics' around today, in which citizens take up issues as moralized crusades" (Boyte, 1990, p. 40). Instead of viewing politics and public life as a means to an end, commitment to a competent rhetoric sees politics as an urgently needed "craft, or a set of arts, that a citizen can learn and develop over time" (Boyte, p. 39).

This orientation is consonant with Dewey's conception of the role of education. Explains Dewey, "The best thing that can be said about any special process of education, like that of the formal school period, is that it renders its subjects capable of further education: more sensitive to conditions of growth and more able to take advantage of them. Acquisition of skill, possession of knowledge, attainment of culture are not ends: they are marks of growth and means to its continuing" (1920, p. 185).

Commitment to a competent rhetoric, in other words, invites students to see the classroom as a laboratory where the urgently needed predispositions for democracy are conceived and nurtured. From this perspective "the act of communication rather than its consequences is emphasized, giving prominence to the sharing of

experiences in the act itself" (Hauser & Blair, 1983, p. 149). In this formulation a public is not constituted by shared special interests, but rather by a shared urgency to add one's voice in the public arena, having something to say and possessing the ability and rhetorical sensitivity to say it well.

Commitment to a competent rhetoric, however, is also exigency-driven in a much more specific fashion. An exigency, any immediate and practical problem best resolved or addressed through reasoned discourse, is what often gives rise to the critic's/speaker's voice (Bitzer, 1968). The critic writes and the speaker speaks to address some common concern or some relevant issue. Just as the professional critic's/speaker's rhetoric is born of some situational exigency, student speaking and writing is most effective and most challenging when it too is born out of exigencies. Commitment to a competent rhetoric, in other words, invites a classroom rhetoric, whether in the form of the public speech or critical essay, that is specifically exigency-driven.

Rhetoric as Situational

Nothstine, Blair and Copeland (1994) assert that "a terribly important step will be taken when teachers of criticism have access to an alternative teaching model [that allows] these beginning critics to write to and from various communities, rather than exclusively the community of professional critics" (p. 56). A return to rhetorical theory, through its emphasis on audience and situational analysis, provides the means by which

such a pedagogy might be conceived. Bitzer's (1968) rhetorical situation and Hart's (1990) reasons for doing criticism, for example, provide rhetorically-based rationales for expanding and diversifying the audiences to whom and about whom students speak and write. Hart (1990), for example, explains that criticism can "be a kind of vacationing, a way of visiting the not-us by examining what they have to say." The benefit of this is that "because the rhetorical critic examines messages meant for other people at other times, it is hard to do criticism and remain provincial. Rhetoric brings us face to face with otherness: experiences that differ from ours, anxieties that seem remote, dreams that do not compel us." (pp. 38-39). Addressing issues of audience diversity or rhetorical sensitivity to others becomes not simply the politically correct thing to do but rather the defining quality of audiences and situations. Commitment to a competent rhetoric, in other words, views audience analysis or analysis of the rhetorical situation, whether for writing the critical essay or fashioning the public speech, as a reconfigured tool that provides a new way of seeing both oneself and the other.

Rhetoric as Inventional

Commitment to a competent rhetoric not only acknowledges the situational nature of rhetoric, it also embraces its inventional qualities as well. Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion," for example, is explicitly

inventional. This definition and its more recent interpretations emphasizes rhetoric as a process of discovery; taking journeys to possibly new and unusual places (topoi), gaining perspective by incongruity (Burke, 1937), trying out new ways of seeing and thinking, looking at artifacts and ideas through random stimulation (Foss, 1989) or from different perspectives (Young, Becker and Pike, 1970).

Rhetoric as inventional not only emphasizes the creative, adventurous and intuitive qualities of writing and speaking, it also reveals writing and speaking as highly personal, subjective and relevant. If ideas come from someplace it also implies that they come from someone who went in search of them. Ideas, in other words, do not spring fully-formed like Athena from the head of Zeus, they come from real people trying to explain or understand some specific situation or issue that concerns them, that matters to them and may possibly matter to others as well.

Rhetoric as Critical and Practical

Commitment to a competent rhetoric suggests a return to Quintilian's notion of the "good [wo]man speaking [writing] well." "This definition," as Quintilian reminds us, "includes all the virtues of oratory and the character of the orator as well, since no man can speak well who is not himself good" (1943, p. 315). Firstly, the "good [wo]man" implies that ethics must be central to the entire philosophy and practice of the speech communication curriculum. Students must be invited to judge their own and other speakers' and writers' stances and approaches

to issues of social and political concern. Additionally, students must come to understand the power of the spoken and written word and the impact of the use and misuse of that power. Secondly, "the good [wo]man speaking[writing] well" implies that students, as citizens, not only have the privilege and the obligation to speak out on issues of public concern they also need to develop skills that allow them to speak to those issues eloquently. We often emphasize the importance of speaking and writing skills for career success, but to what extent do we emphasize their importance for civic success? As teachers we must find a way to impress students that the taken-for-granted quality of democracy and free speech cannot and should not be assumed as eternally given and enshrined in our public institutions. It is democracy's taken-for-granted quality that has, in part, fostered the perception that there is no need for our continual monitoring of, or involvement in, the public sphere. This means that the speech communication curriculum should equip students to enter the arena of public debate about issues of significance to themselves and their communities.

Isocratic principles imply such a practical and ethical role for rhetoric. Thonssen, Baird and Braden (1970), for example, explain that "while holding to a defense of practical knowledge, Isocrates insisted that the individual strive for good conduct--that [s]he be a citizen whose ethical principles shone through his[her] actions" (p. 557). Hart (1993) also notes the practical assumptions embedded in Isocrates' rhetoric: "When Isocrates

taught rhetoric to his Greek schoolboys he empowered them," explains Hart, "he helped them see avenues for making their minds count in the affairs of their society" (p. 101). Rhetoric, in Isocrates' day, was not only relevant but necessary for practical and civic success.

Rhetoric as Political/Transformational

Commitment to a competent rhetoric not only views rhetoric as critical and practical but as political and transformational as well. The idea that speech and politics are inseparable, for example, is argued by Arendt (1958) in The Human Condition. Speaking of the democratic system in ancient Athens, Arendt explains that "to be political, to live in a polis, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion and not through force and violence" (26-27). The word "polis," from which "politics" comes, is derived from the Greek word "city," the city of Hellenic Athens providing one of the earliest and best known example of a functioning democracy. From this self-same democracy we have inherited a meaning for "politics" that connotes community deliberation of issues and events directly concerning the polis. In this view, the world of politics--public discourse on public matters--is inseparable from the polis, the community who creates, shapes, transforms, and carries out these deliberations.

Democratic society," claims Thonssen, Baird and Braden (1970):

> rests upon the premise that the collective body of the common people is competent to exercise supreme authority in the state. In such a scheme, the power of public address must be a force of no mean proportion. If each citizen is to be--or is naturally, as Aristotle put it in his Politics--a 'political animal,' and if speech is to be the instrument by which advantage and disadvantage, truth and justice, are to be sustained, it follows that each [wo]man must be something of a states[person] and of an advocate in his[her] own right. Each citizen must serve as a balance wheel in an exceedingly complex political mechanism (p. 556).

To live in a polis as an actively functioning member of that realm requires the competent exercise of speech. It also demands that we see ourselves as responsive to and responsible for the democratic society in which we live.

Ultimately, commitment to a competent rhetoric does more that simply foster participation in the public realm, however, it engenders transformation of that realm. Notes Hart (1993), "those who teach public address and media studies teach that social power can be shifted and public visions exalted if people learn to think well and speak well." (p. 102). In a multicultural society beset with problems of poverty, sexism, racism and inequality, as many educated and committed voices as possible are needed in order to envision and create a better world. Notes Banks, "citizenship education for the twenty-first century must not only help students to become literate and

reflective citizens who can participate productively in the workforce but also to teach them to care about other people in their communities and to take personal, social, and civic action to create a humane and just society" (Banks, 1990, p. 211).

In sum, commitment to a competent rhetoric implies a speech pedagogy that is urgent, situational, inventional, critical, practical and political/transformational.[1] If rhetorical theory provides the grounding for such a pedagogy, how might it be actualized in the speech communication classroom?

Fostering Commitment to a Competent Rhetoric in the Speech Communication Classroom

There are a number of ways speech communication teachers can foster a commitment to a competent rhetoric, all of which are grounded in the best traditions of rhetorical theory and practice. The remainder of this essay discusses four; teaching a writing and speaking that is exigency-born, inviting classroom dialogue about the invention process, modeling an explicitly critical and pragmatic stance towards discourse, and broadening the audiences to whom and about whom students speak and write. These suggestions not only offer a starting point for a discipline-specific pedagogy they also conceive of the classroom as the breeding ground for democracy where creating critical citizen-speakers and citizen-writers is speech education's primary goal.

Pedagogy as Exigency-Driven: Teaching an Urgency of Voice

Just as rhetoric is born of some situational exigency (Bitzer, 1968), some need that must be address, some wrong that must be righted, student speaking and writing is most effective and most challenging when it too is born out of exigency. Commitment to a competent rhetoric, in other words, implies a model of speaking and writing that is compelled by relevance and urgency. Whether it be the need for biodegradable plastics in the cafeteria or the desire to understand the seductive appeals of an advertiser's campaign, student rhetoric, in the form of the speech, the essay, or the criticism of some speech, essay, or media discourse must be exigency-driven.

Student rhetoric is exigency-driven when it is grounded in a need best defined by the student alone or in concert with the audience/teacher. This means more than simply letting students pick topics that interests them, it means spending as much time discussing the "why" of topic selection as the "what." Why this topic/issue? Why this approach? I often require students to demonstrate to themselves, myself, and sometimes a particular audience why their speech or essay topic is more than just "bellybutton lint." The "so what?" question often has more relevance than we realize.

There are a number of ways to create writing and speaking assignments that are exigency-driven. Teachers can foster extensive brain-storming of topics both inside and outside of class where numerous topics are generated and then explored for their relevance and significance. Trips to the library can count

not only as research into the topic area but also as research into the topic's relevance/urgency. Teachers can have students turn in proposals for possible speeches and essays where they justify their topic's relevance and urgency for themselves, classmates, and the community/society at large. Class sessions can be used for students to introduce writing/speaking topics to classmates in order to solicit questions and answers for the student writer/speaker.

Helping students fashion rhetoric that is both relevant and urgent makes classroom assignments more meaningful and fosters the view that students' voices matter and can make a difference whether the topic is drinking and driving or attitudes towards "safe sex."

Pedagogy as Inventional: Dialogueing the Invention Process

Commitment to a competent rhetoric requires active dialogue in the speech classroom about the invention process. Exploring inventional practices in the classroom not only helps explain how to fashion the critical essay or public speech it also reveals why to write or speak. Professional rhetorical critics, for example, are often very clear on why and how they go about doing what they do. Rod Hart, talking about his reasons for being a critic, notes "I am a critic because I do not often like the language my contemporaries speak nor the policy options they endorse. I am a critic because I feel that rhetoric should move a society forward rather than backward, that it should open and not close the public sphere, that it should make people generous

and not craven. I am a critic, ultimately, because I am a citizen" (Nothstine, Blair & Copeland, 1994, p. 55). Although critics are often clear to themselves why they do what they do this is often not expressed in their writing. The critic's invention practices, notes Nothstine, Blair and Copeland, are often hidden or assumed in the critical essay or speech either due to the conventions of disciplinary writing and speaking, or because the invention process is "too messy, involved, uncertain, and unscientific--in short, too 'unprofessional'"(p. 51).

The critics' silence about the invention process both in the classroom and in their work, however, impacts the speech communication classroom. Students, faced with the task of either writing the critical essay or fashioning a public speech are often left wondering how to begin or even why such an exercise is necessary or even valuable. Revealing our own invention process to students may not only give them an understanding of why we do what we do, it will also invite them to at least think about reasons, other than receiving a grade, for why we ask them do what they do.

One way for teachers to do this is to bring their own writing, speaking, and/or research into the classroom. This invites students to see knowledge generation as an ongoing dialogue between real people, not just something that exists as an "objective" monologue in some book. Knowledge as a continuous dialogue encourages students to see ways in which they themselves might fit into that dialogue as fellow scholars and citizens--not

just as receivers of information and policy decisions but as generators of knowledge and policy debate as well.

Another possibility is to emphasize students own inventional practices. Although this is often explicitly addressed in the basic public speaking course, other courses, such as argument, rhetorical theory and criticism and mass media theory and criticism, tend to assume rather than address the inventional practices of the writer/speaker. Foss's (1989) Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice, is an exception. She spends an entire chapter on the inventional practice, discussing such things as how rhetorical critics formulate their questions, their methods and their conclusions.

Another way to invite dialogue about the invention process is to use books such as Critical Questions: Invention, Creativity, and the Media to teach upper-division and graduate courses in rhetorical and media criticism. The critics in this book foreground and background their own writing and often offer the reader glimpses of why they became scholars in the first place. But more importantly the book provides students an understanding of the rationales that guide scholarship and the reasons why scholarship sometimes makes a difference in the real world. "Critical Questions" unmasks the invention process for new critics in a way that is both practical and political. It reminds us that scholarship in our field is situational, political, subjective, in-process, and often very personal.

Pedagogy as Political: Teaching an Explicitly Critical and Pragmatic Stance

Commitment to a competent rhetoric invites developing both a critical and pragmatic stance towards discourse. More specifically, it requires teaching and modeling a willingness--even an eagerness--to render critical judgements and practical assessments in the classroom about speeches and speakers, artifacts and their creators, and critics and their work.

As teachers who often teach students to evaluate the validity of the knowledge and truth claims of communication theorists and critics, we sometimes fail to encourage them to evaluate the significance of those claims for social/political action in the real world. Scholars are partially to blame in that we ourselves, in our writing, often fail to point out either the practical significance or the applications of our findings/argument. Notes Cherwitz and Theobald-Osborne:

> After reading highly specialized rhetorical accounts of messages, one is often left with the question: Of what value is such criticism to those in society who transmit and receive communication? Or more specifically, To what extent can the insights gleaned by scholarly criticism be used constructively to promote better politics? These questions are more than trivial; for at core, the rhetorical art is a practical one, an art that we intuitively know makes a difference for the vast majority of people not ensconced in academe (1990, p. 73).

Because of our own critical practices as scholars it is possible that students see speeches, original research and/or textbook writing as divorced from real life issues and concerns. If scholarship and speechcraft were evaluated by their practical significance students might come to see writing and speaking as tools for social and political change rather than as meaningless exercises.

Teacher-scholars silence on the issue of practical significance is also tied to our self-censuring stance when it comes to the sticky issue of judgement. Failure to render ethical assessment of the rhetorical efforts of others and ourselves, however, be they student speakers in the public speaking class or public statements offered by scholars, politicians and the mass media, is again linked to our fear of "losing" our authority as "objective" assessors of the empirical world of human action.

This position, indefensible to begin with in light of the philosophical roots of the discipline, has two potential ramifications. On the one hand it may result in our students inability to see the connections between speaking, writing and the ethics of voice. On the other it may justify their unwillingness to participate in public life and render ethical judgements on their own and others rhetorical efforts in this arena.

Use of various issues forums such as "The National Issues Forum (NIF)" or "Opposing Viewpoints Pamphlets", is one way to

introduce significant social, political, and cultural real world issues into the high school and college classroom. These forums are particularly appropriate for courses in basic and advanced public speaking/argument as well as classes in rhetorical theory and criticism. Topics range from drug legalization, to abortion, to prayer in public school. By laying out the most prominent positions on the issues these booklets provide the parameters for the debate. This helps teachers set up a successful environment in which the issues can be both debated and discussed. Not only are students exposed to these issues they are also encouraged to develop speaking and thinking skills manifest through reasoned debate. But perhaps most importantly, use of these types of forums, or debates of this type, promotes an attitude of active participation in the body politic.

Pedagogy as Situational: Broadening the Audiences to Whom and about Whom Students Speak and Write

Commitment to a competent rhetoric requires broadening the audiences to whom and about whom students speak and write. Always writing and speaking for the teacher, for example, often makes students' voices devoid of any fire, creativity or authorial commitment.[2] As a result of a limited audience for their work, writing/speaking for the teacher quickly teaches students that only certain people are accorded the right to judge their voices. They soon learn that we live in a culture where we need lawyers to speak for our rights in court, politicians to define the morality and justness of the wars we fight, and

teachers to fill us up with knowledge and grade our efforts. Our voices--students' voices--have been turned over to technical experts invited to act as our advocates and our judges.

If, on the other hand, students learn to write and speak to others audiences--the college community or the community at large via a letter to the editor in the school or local newspaper, the local government or the university administration via a petition/address, members of the discipline via conference papers--they come to see writing as an activity connected, by its very nature, to praxis.

Encouraging students to write and speak to each other also takes the teacher "out of the loop." We no longer serve as prime arbiter or purveyor of knowledge. Beyond the obvious pedagogical advantages of this, the political advantages are tremendous. Students, working and talking with each other, may come to see the classroom as a community responsible for its own life, shape, and growth. Might this commitment to a knowledge community inside of the classroom generalize to a commitment to a civic community outside of the class?

Inviting students to speak and write <u>to</u> communities other than the teacher and to speak and write <u>about</u> the rhetorical efforts of other cultures and communities also opens the door for discussion of diversity and rhetorical sensitivity to others. In invites students to acknowledge and even embrace difference rather than fear or avoid it. Learning about the attitudes, beliefs and practices of those from other communities and

cultures in order to either address those groups or analyze their rhetorical efforts becomes a rhetorical challenge.

One way to broaden the audiences to whom students speak and write in the speech communication classroom is to provide access to diverse communication channels and the skills to use them. Advocates of computer technology, for example, believe that computers "could play a role in rebuilding community life by improving communication, economic opportunity, civic participation, and education" (Schuler, 1994, p. 39). One way this occurs is through the use of electronic bulletin boards. According to Schuler:

> Community membei and activists all over the world have developed and are developing community-oriented electronic bulletin boards of community networks with a local focus. These community networks, some with user populations in the tens of thousands, are intended to advance social goals such as building community awareness, encouraging involvement in local decision-making, or developing economic opportunities in disadvantaged communities. They are intended to provide "one-stop-shopping" using community-oriented discussions, question-and-answer forums, electronic access to government employees and information, access to social services, email, and in may cases, Internet access (p. 39).

An example of participatory democracy via the computer is Community Memory of Berkeley, California. The group began in the early 1970s with unmediated two-way access to a message database

through public computer terminals and was started in order to strengthen the Berkeley community. According to the group's brochure "strong, free, nonhierarchical channels of communication--whether by computer and modem, pen and ink, telephone, or face-to-face--are the front lines of reclaiming and revitalizing our communities" (Schuler, 1994, p. 39). What is most noteworthy about this group is its emphasis on all information as created by the community and for the community. This means that there is neither a prime arbiter of knowledge nor a gatekeeper deciding whose voices get heard.

Electronic bulletin boards could be adapted for the classroom. Either a class could go interactive with the larger community through an existing community bulletin board or, depending on the school's resources, a bulletin board could be set up within the school. McComb, in a recent issue of Communication Education devoted entirely to the Internet, discusses at length the benefits of computer-mediated communication in college courses (1994). Berge (1994), in the same issue, explains the increasingly significant role that electronic discussion groups are playing both on and off college campuses. Through the computer, students can interact with others in the school and/or have particular discussion groups set up amongst class members. Either way, the network can be used as part of the classroom curriculum. Not only would this promote computer literacy, already a taken for granted skill in the 21st century, it would introduce students to the limitlessness of

community-building via the computer. Might students then take their predisposition towards electronic networking about issues of social and political concern out into the "real world" and continue as computer literate citizens?

Conclusion

The central question raised about humanities instruction by members of the 1968 Daedalus Conference on the Future of the Humanities was a question, "What do the humanities have to do and what should they have to do with the day-to-day business of living in our present world?" (Ong, 1971, p. 307). The answer?:

> Humanistic studies are not effectively related to the extracurricular life. The failure here can take several forms. The one which today perhaps leaps first to the eye is the failure in activism: the humanities are not responsive enough to political, social, and educational crises. . . . Too many teachers fail to convey any sense of the real world in which their own responses and students' responses to the material of their subject take form (Ong, pp. 308-309).

Made in 1968, these comments could as easily have been spoken in 1994 since these educators' concerns have certainly not disappeared. This is strikingly evidenced by the Speech Communication Association's "Taskforce on Issues and Questions for the Discipline." Convened by SCA President Michael Osborne in 1990 to look into areas with which the discipline should be concerned into the 21st Century, the taskforce identified public

empowerment as one of the four biggest issues facing the discipline today.

This assessment is not surprising since a number of critics and theorists have argued that the public sphere has shrunk to the realm of individual action and responsibility or has become increasingly constituted as beyond the reach of deliberative actions by the public. As speech teachers we are necessary implicated in this charge. We must remember, however, that speaking and writing well as a citizen are inextricably bound to issues of hierarchy and power. Citizens' voices are necessarily defined by the politics of their condition: their freedom, their power, and their status.[3] The public sphere is an arena where free and equal interaction can only occur, in part, when participants have the commitment, the critical and inventional skills, and the rhetorical sensitivity to engage in meaningful public life.

As speech educators we must begin to recognize, if we have not already, that part of our mission is teaching students to become responsible and articulate citizens. This involves teaching a commitment to a competent rhetoric, achieved, in part, by translating the ideas and ideals of rhetorical theory into classroom praxis. This essay has only begun to suggest ways in which a commitment to a competent rhetoric might play itself out in the speech communication classroom. Much more thought on the issue needs to come from speech scholars and educators--those who

are on the front lines, or should be, where the battle for democracy is either won or lost every single day.

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Notes

1.Such a rhetorically-based pedagogy would find itself in good company with current critical pedagogy. Critical theorists such as Freire, Habermas and Arendt, as Sprague reminds us, take the position that preparing our students for citizenship in the public realm requires that schools themselves "become models of democratic practice" in which classrooms become "public spheres of discussion, debate, and critical inquiry" (1992, p. 7, citing Dewey, 1927).

2.Although students in the basic public speaking class speak to their peers as an audience, and this is generally emphasized through audience analysis, it is still true that the audience is generally confined to the classroom proper.

3.See, for example, Huspek's and Kendall's (1991) examination of the political vocabulary of a speech community of male, unskilled, industrial labor workers in order to understand why they "withhold their voices from the formal political arena" (pp. 3-4). They argue that both feelings of powerlessness and a lack of the dominant culture's political vocabulary contribute to this group's political reticence.