

## Representing Pedagogical Change: Genre, Expertise, and the Modes of Discourse in Writing Program History

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*Responding to ongoing concern about the persistence of the modes of discourse, this essay argues that genre pedagogies in composition have been shaped by the discipline's ambivalence toward the modes in disciplinary histories and some early adoptions of rhetorical genre theories. Histories of the modes of discourse presented them as emblematic of poor teaching and a lack of disciplinary expertise. However, genre pedagogies have taken different stances on the modes, sometimes rejecting them and sometimes incorporating them as part of the educational and structural constraints of writing instruction. These theoretical, historical, and pedagogical representations of the modes of discourse contribute to the modes' persistence in contemporary writing instruction. This situation raises questions about how WPAs can contend with different views of the modes as they seek to promote disciplinary expertise, to follow pedagogical best practices, and to model ethical program development. After detailing the history of the modes' relationship to genre, this essay analyzes how the modes influence current genre theories and pedagogies, including textbooks. It ends with suggestions for WPAs to articulate goals for genre pedagogy that account for institutional constraints, the varied representations of the modes in genre pedagogies, and the recommendations of the WPA Outcomes Statement.*

*It should be no great surprise that the modes have tainted the whole enterprise of discourse classification for composition studies.*

—Amy Devitt, *Writing Genres* (122)

Like many new WPAs, I began my job eager to make changes in a program where the faculty and their approaches to teaching predated me. Our first-year composition (FYC) faculty came from many ranks and disciplines—tenured, tenure-track, full-time, and part-time faculty trained in literature, creative writing, professional communication, English education,

and composition. For a number of years, the program had used a custom textbook organized around the modes of discourse (exposition, description, narration, and argument, or EDNA, for short). Tasked with developing a new textbook, professional development opportunities, and assessment processes, I introduced genre as a “threshold concept” for designing assignments and analyzing texts in FYC (Adler-Kassner et al.). Although faculty generally accepted genre’s relevance for composition, many continued to reference the modes to describe their “narrative” and “argumentative” assignments. Given the current reputation of the modes in composition studies, I wondered why such terms were so persistent among faculty who valued real audiences and authentic purposes for writing. This question led me to revisit histories of the modes of discourse to understand how those histories represented pedagogical change and why that change has proved so challenging in the case of the modes.

Scholars in composition have observed that EDNA has had remarkable staying power. Most scholarship attributes this persistence to the labor conditions of composition instruction, including the need to employ composition experts to teach writing (Connors; Crowley), the struggle WPAs face in trying to influence all faculty in their writing programs (Liu), and reliance on contingent and unsupported writing instructors (Kahn). These explanations point to institutional challenges facing FYC that make it difficult to change writing programs. However, they do not fully explain why a 19th-century pedagogy, whose demise Robert J. Connors located in the 1950s, remains a problem in the 21st century. A lesser-explored hypothesis concludes that composition’s “hostile reaction to the modes” shaped genre theories in composition, resulting in several composition scholars defining genre primarily in opposition to the modes of discourse (Herrington and Moran 4).<sup>1</sup> This essay explores that hypothesis by detailing how composition scholars described the modes in ways that implicitly or explicitly attributed outdated pedagogy to writing instructors without accounting for other forces that have kept EDNA terminology circulating in composition. I show that genre was presented in contrast to the modes of discourse to avoid reducing genre to a formalist classification system. However, I argue that some composition scholars incorporated EDNA into genre instruction to address students’ and instructors’ prior knowledge of the modes. As a result, genre pedagogies, particularly when they are represented in textbooks, continue to reflect the variety of approaches composition has had to the modes—from rejection to accommodation.

Let me state that I am not arguing that the modes reflect current rhetorical theories of genre, or that WPAs should depart from the recommendations of the *CCCC Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing*. I

am suggesting that the problem of the modes cannot be fully reduced to composition's failure to establish disciplinary or to hire qualified instructors. If, as I argue, the modes continue to resurface in presentations of genre in composition, then they will continue to inform the language used to talk about writing. Colin Charlton et al. argue that WPAs need to understand these kinds of debates over disciplinary concepts in order to "account for and make visible precisely what identifications are being negotiated between, across, and within disciplines" (158). In other words, WPA work must consider how the multiple disciplinary influences on writing programs shape our expertise. As Elizabeth Wardle and J. Blake Scott argue, WPAs should promote disciplinary expertise while recognizing the constraints of staffing FYC courses and the "unique history and *ethos*" of composition as an interdisciplinary field that includes writers and writing researchers (90–91). They suggest that WPAs promote "interactional expertise," or expertise in the concepts of a specialized discipline, in addition to valuing the local and interdisciplinary expertise that faculty bring with them to teaching (81). In doing this work, WPAs can benefit from examining how key concepts have transformed over time in ways that may influence the prior knowledge of faculty and the discourses employed in writing programs.

In the case of genre pedagogies, the modes are part of the context in which genre has been described and received in composition. Many scholars, including Amy Devitt, Anis S. Bawarshi and Mary Jo Reiff, and Anne Herrington and Charles Moran, present rhetorical theories of genre in contrast to the modes of discourse and other formalist classification systems. However, as Barbara Little Liu details, genre's inclusion in the *WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition* still prompted concern that genre was too similar to the modes (73). The *Outcomes Statement's* recommendations for genre have partly invited these concerns by suggesting that students need to write in several genres in FYC, although genre scholars warn that such an approach can easily reproduce the formalism of the modes (Devitt; Beaufort "Where"; Wardle). As typified responses to recurring rhetorical situations, genres differ from modes in that they are not intended to function as a taxonomy and cannot be learned apart from the rhetorical situations in which they act (Miller). Yet many popular writing textbooks continue to define genre as a classification system and include narrative and argumentative essays as genres or genre conventions (Braziller and Kleinfeld; Lunsford et al.). The modes continue to appear in the language used to describe writing because they are part of disciplinary history, debates about genre, and pedagogical materials.

Understanding genre's representation in composition can help WPAs identify directions for their writing programs that attend to disciplinary history, institutional and programmatic locations, and instructors' knowledge and experience. In what follows, I describe how composition histories paved the way for the field to view genre theory as a replacement for the modes by arguing that the discipline needed new forms of textual classification. However, their criticisms of EDNA attributed the modes' persistence to a lack of expertise or interest in writing instruction among writing instructors, ignoring the material structures of writing programs and leaving little guidance for the managerial work of pedagogical change. I then detail how genre theorists in composition took up the problem of the modes, sometimes incorporating EDNA terminology and sometimes ignoring the modes entirely. Consequently, genre pedagogies describe the modes very differently—as fake genres, school genres, genre conventions, or genre categories. To address these differing treatments of the modes in genre pedagogies, I provide suggestions for WPAs to articulate goals and develop genre pedagogies in their programs in light of current research on faculty learning and pedagogical change.

#### THE MODES OF DISCOURSE AND COMPOSITION'S HISTORY OF FRAMING EXPERTISE

In the 1980s, a series of published histories of the modes of discourse provided an exigence for arguing that composition needed to define its disciplinary identity. EDNA thus shaped arguments about disciplinary expertise and served as a foil for new writing theories, including genre. From 1981 to 1986, five separate articles provided a history of the modes—a term coined to describe the common EDNA assignments that developed primarily from 19th-century faculty psychology applied to late 19th- and 20th-century composition.<sup>2</sup> These histories began with Robert J. Connors' "The Rise and Fall of the Modes of Discourse," followed by articles from Sharon Crowley, Frank D'Angelo, and Jon Harned—all in *College Composition and Communication* (CCC). In 1986, Miller and David A. Jolliffe published "Discourse Classification in Nineteenth-Century Rhetorical Pedagogy," in the *Southern Speech Communication Journal*, arguing that the split between rhetoric and composition was "analogous to the difference between rhetorical genre and compositional mode" (371). Unlike the CCC articles, Miller and Jolliffe attributed the problem of the modes to the split between rhetoric and English departments, suggesting that FYC could not serve as a site for teaching rhetorical communication. In contrast, composition historians sought to adopt rhetorical theories for composition out of frustration with

teachers' use of the modes of discourse. Thus, scholarship on the modes linked them to genre, but this work also presaged the different definitions of and purposes for genre in writing instruction.

Arguing that composition needed to establish disciplinary expertise, the histories of the modes largely attributed EDNA's persistence to untrained teachers using outdated textbooks. Connors urged readers "to be on guard against systems that seem convenient to teachers but that ignore the way writing is actually done" (455). He attributed the modes' persistence to a lack of concern among teachers with "the fact that this schema did not help students learn to write better" (Connors 455). Calling the modes rhetorical, Crowley noted the tenacity of the modes among tenured faculty teaching composition; she attributed EDNA's persistence to its "theoretical origin" not its "historical conditions" (88). D'Angelo recommended the modes "be discarded as the basis of serious composition teaching" (40). Perhaps more sympathetic to EDNA, Harned concluded that the modes of discourse falsely present an "optimally easy" process for teaching writing with only "a handful of rules" (49). Largely tangential to pedagogical theory, composition teachers were presented in these works as unserious, eager to take the easy way out, unconcerned, or (euphemistically) "tenured." Although these articles made important critiques of the modes of discourse, most located the problems of the modes within the dispositions of teachers, a view that oversimplified the process of change in writing programs and the discipline.

In the 1980s, histories of the modes focused on making composition teaching more *serious* through disciplinary knowledge, implying outdated teachers or pedagogies simply needed to be replaced. These histories align with the discipline's tendency to ignore the managerial work of composition and instead to "reassert composition's centrality" in the face of fears about composition's marginal identity (Strickland 5). The historical representation of the modes located composition's disciplinary problems in "the quality and behavior of the persons teaching composition rather than upon the material circumstances in which they were teaching" (Strickland 67). Criticisms of the modes did not address the material circumstances of writing program faculty, such as the expansion of the non-tenured and non-tenure-track labor force to over 60% of faculty by 1989 ("Higher Education" 14). Additionally, these criticisms oversimplified the complexity of enacting pedagogical change in writing programs, which requires that instructors have access to direct instruction in composition theory as well as time to make mistakes and to revise their pedagogy accordingly (Bishop 139–43).

Instead, these histories represented pedagogical change as a matter of replacing the modes with newer forms of discourse classification. Connors

praised newer “empirically-derived classifications of discourse” based on the writer’s purpose (454). Drawing from literary theory, Crowley suggested “generic classifications” might be a replacement for the modes, based on “the real or pretended relation of texts’ authors to their audiences,” rather than “structural features of the text” (90). These histories were searching for new classifications for composition, but the concept of genre in composition at the time lacked clear definition.<sup>3</sup> D’Angelo and Harned used genre synonymously with form. Like Crowley, D’Angelo distinguished EDNA theoretically from “generic kinds,” but he described description and narration as invention “processes” and exposition and argumentation as “forms” more akin to genres (33–35). Only Harned used *genre* to describe all the modes, despite the fact the term never appeared in any of the modes textbooks he cites (47). Although not clearly defined, genre was both conflated with the modes and presented as a possible alternative to the modes before its major introduction into composition pedagogy. In this way, histories of the modes of discourse paved the way for thinking about genre as another form of textual classification.

Miller’s work also contributed to linking the modes to genre, although she had both a different disciplinary purpose and orientation than the composition historians. When Miller published “Genre as Social Action” in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* in 1984, she was less concerned with composition than with articulating a broader rhetorical pedagogy that included speech and communication. Yet Miller still contrasted composition’s modes of discourse with rhetorical genres, defining EDNA as “a closed, formal system based nominally on intention but described according to form,” and attributing the modes’ dominance to “a long textbook tradition” in composition (155; see also Miller and Jolliffe 378). Miller argued genre provided a way to teach students “how to participate in the actions of a community,” while EDNA focused exclusively on prescribed, audience-less forms (165). In a retrospective interview in 2015, Miller describes how she wanted to push “back a bit against composition theorists in the modes tradition, which I had become convinced by that point was a particularly arhetorical and unproductive approach to understanding discourse and the teaching of discourse” (Dryer). Using the modes as one example of many formal discourse classifications in composition, linguistics, and communication, Miller’s “Genre as Social Action” nevertheless invoked the modes to define genre and responded to the problem historians of the modes were debating.

Unlike the composition historians, Miller’s work challenged composition’s curricular location, not its teachers’ knowledge or investment in teaching writing. This purpose is more obvious in her article with Jolliffe, which attributed the modes’ dominance in rhetorical education to the split

of speech and composition into separate departments (379). Miller and Jolliffe suggested any composition theme would reinforce “the separation of discourse from social action” because the text’s form had no relationship to the rhetorical situation of the composition classroom (379–80). Miller’s recent reflections distance her work on genre from composition as allied with English more explicitly, when she describes the modes as “a conception of genre that’s indigenous to English studies because of the static, objectified quality of words on the page. But the idea of rhetoric as action is *not* indigenous to English studies” (Dryer). Advocating a broader vision of rhetorical education, Miller’s comments about composition presaged conflict over whether genres can be taught at all in FYC given its curricular location and composition’s identity (e.g. Wardle). Yet composition initially took more interest in genre than communication, viewing genre theories as applicable to writing instruction despite Miller’s reservations (Dryer). Miller’s disciplinary purpose for genre theory differed significantly from—perhaps even contradicted—composition’s concerns with replacing the modes of discourse in writing pedagogy. Genre theorists who took up Miller’s work for composition in subsequent decades had to wrestle not only with genre’s association with the modes in disciplinary history, but also with the problem Miller had anticipated about how genre might be taught rhetorically in FYC. These challenges led to different approaches to the modes in composition—approaches that, as I will show, carry with them assumptions about how WPAs should define FYC and whether they should address instructors’ prior knowledge of the modes of discourse.

#### GENRE PEDAGOGY AND THE LEGACY OF THE MODES OF DISCOURSE

As the previous section describes, Miller and the composition historians expressed a desire to get rid of the modes, albeit for different reasons. In their account of this history in the introduction to *Genre across the Curriculum*, Anne Herrington and Charles Moran suggest that resistance to the modes drove many composition scholars to use the term *genre* without clear definition, including James Britton, James Moffett, Peter Elbow and Pat Belanoff, and Ken Macrorie (4–7). Herrington and Moran suggest that “reaction to the ‘modes,’ and to writing taught by formula, has characterized a powerful strand in the teaching of writing, one in which the teaching of genres has been forced into the background” (5). In other words, disapproval of the modes left genre ambiguously defined in many composition pedagogies (5–7). Some of those pedagogies rejected the modes entirely; however, others, including Anne Beaufort and Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas N. Huckin, recommended that teachers reference the modes

directly while teaching, given that many writing instructors and students were familiar with EDNA terminology. These different stances toward the modes resulted in different presentations of genre pedagogy, some of which actually incorporate EDNA terminology.

As composition scholars became interested in genre in the 1990s and early 2000s, many acknowledged widespread concern that genre would become another iteration of the modes. For example, Beaufort's 1992 CCCC presentation anticipated that audience members might view genre as "just another set of rigid barriers between texts, similar to the discourse modes" ("Where" 3). Berkenkotter and Huckin's 1994 *Genre Knowledge and Disciplinary Communication* described concern that genre pedagogy repackaged "the prescriptive *rhetorical modes* approach that had students reading 'exemplary' essays by linguistically and rhetorically mature writers" (153), linking the modes to product-based pedagogy. In 2005, Liu called for WPA scholarship to provide guidance on genre pedagogies to avoid what many worried would be genre's inevitable conflation with the modes of discourse. Concern about the need to replace the modes (and the feasibility of doing so) influenced the reception of genre in composition. While some responded by rejecting the modes' association with genre, others integrated them to account for the structure of FYC and the prior knowledge of teachers and students.

Beaufort treated the modes as a platform for introducing genre. She analyzed how instructors used EDNA to respond to student writing, concluding that teacher feedback reinforced an artificial school essay genre ("Where" 5). However, in rejecting the artificial essay, Beaufort did not necessarily reject the modes. Instead she suggested that a genre-oriented approach to teaching "literary or journalistic conceptions of the essay" would recognize those genres' "greater emphasis on description and narration" (5). Another instructor's "comparison" assignment (often considered a mode)<sup>4</sup> is praised as providing a real "purpose and social context" for the assignment through comparison to the business report genre (8). In other words, Beaufort dismissed the "theoretical model" of the modes in favor of genre, but she used the modes to describe genre conventions or even to name assignments that were framed as genres to students. This early articulation of Beaufort's genre theory mirrors the references to the modes in her later book, *College Writing and Beyond*, which also treats the modes and genres as not necessarily incompatible in its examination of the pedagogy of a certain FYC lecturer (49–51).

Other genre theorists expressed ambivalence about the modes while acknowledging that professional constraints prevented the modes from being entirely dismissed. Focusing on writing in the disciplines, Berkenkot-



ter and Huckin disapproved of the “prescriptive” pedagogy of the modes (153). However, they cautioned that genre pedagogies could not simply replace the modes, because teachers could not ignore the terminology students learn in primary grades before they are aware of differences in disciplinary communities (153). They cited evidence that failure to teach the modes as conventions of instructional genres in early educational development might unfairly privilege white, middle-class students who had already internalized dominant communicative expectations (154). In college, teachers might need to address the “instructional genres” students encountered in earlier levels of writing instruction (153). Ultimately, Berkenkotter and Huckin accepted the modes as pragmatic terms for teaching genre conventions. However, their purpose was not to reinforce teaching the modes as an end itself, but rather to critique pedagogies that failed to expose students to multiple curricular genres and to make differences in genre conventions explicit (161, 163).

More recent genre theories reject the modes entirely, but they also argue that FYC is a problematic site of genre instruction. This scholarship acknowledges that genre pedagogies can easily become a formalist classification system like the modes when taught in school, which creates a challenge for a discipline focused on FYC. Amy Devitt treats the modes as critical genres “created by analysts to serve the situational and community needs of analysts” and school genres “mandated by one group to be written by others” (99). Although she calls them genres, she describes the modes as inflexible and unresponsive to context, presenting them as a foil to genre (122). However, removing the modes from composition instruction would require changing “the nature of the scholarly and educational endeavor that the modes serve” (120). Devitt proposes teaching genre awareness, not genre forms, in order to improve students’ genre acquisition in the future. Like Devitt, Bawarshi recognizes that asking students to mimic genres in FYC removes genre from the disciplinary and professional activities where genres can be learned (155). Instead, Bawarshi proposes FYC as its own site of genred activity, providing an opportunity for students to learn how the genres they read invoke the genres they write in any social activity (118–19). Bawarshi thus moves instruction in genre awareness from individual genres to the roles of writers and the genre sets they produce in those roles. More skeptical about the possibilities for transfer, Wardle rejects teaching school genres (“mutt genres”) entirely in favor of teaching disciplinary content in FYC. Wardle acknowledges that this approach may necessarily lead to the abolition of required FYC because it requires disciplinary expertise for all instructors (785). These scholars’ rejections of the modes serve as the basis for major structural revisions to FYC that may be more or less possible

depending on institutional constraints. Further, their different approaches to genre in FYC complicate WPAs reading of the *WPA Outcomes Statement*, which calls for both genre awareness and for teaching multiple genres. In doing so the *Outcomes Statement* seems to balance earlier views of genre, which accommodated the modes as genre conventions, with newer theories that focus on genre awareness but reject the modes.

This tension between including or rejecting the modes is apparent in existing composition textbooks. Although a textbook reflects only part of what a program or teacher does, composition textbooks guide teachers and students, and WPAs often make decisions or give advice about textbook selection. Textbooks highlight the challenges of labeling genres for instruction in ways that consider teachers' and students' knowledge. One key feature of rhetorical genres is that they only exist insofar as users recognize them within situated rhetorical activity. In other words, a genre is not an *a priori* deductive category (as in literary genre theory) or an inductively "discovered" textual type defined as a genre by a theorist. Rather, genres become real in the interaction of writers, audiences, activities, cultures, and histories (Bawarshi 72). The key task for textbook representations, then, is to make genres recognizable to the teachers and students using these textbooks, which often involves making a decision about whether and how to include the modes.

Some genre textbooks treat the modes as part of naming genre conventions or metagenres (see table 1). For instance, the *Bedford Book of Genres (BBG)* focuses on genre acquisition, organizing all of its genres according to three modes presented as metagenres: narrative, informative, and persuasive (Braziller and Kleinfeld 5). These metageneric categories slightly rename EDNA, but nevertheless derive from 19th-century theories of the modes' ability to affect an audience's mental faculties by delighting, informing, or persuading (Connors 444–45). However, *BBG* resists totalizing the modes as metagenres; it acknowledges genres are flexible groupings that "don't fall neatly into the categories and primary purposes we've outlined in this book" (5). Other versions of this model include the modes as genre types. For example, *How to Write Anything* lists narratives and arguments (with more specific subgenres detailed) alongside the genres of reports, evaluations, and causal analyses, among others (Ruszkiewicz 3). Each genre group is described in terms of an action, such as recording people's life events as narratives and "asking readers to consider debatable ideas" (Ruszkiewicz 3). Similarly, *Everyone's an Author* invokes the modes by listing genres according to their generalized rhetorical action, such as "arguing a position," "writing a narrative," "reporting information," "writing a review," and "making a proposal" (xvii–xix). The modes-as-metagenres approach tries

Table 1  
Representations of genre in contemporary textbooks.

	Rhetorical Genre Theory	Disciplinary Genre Awareness	Multigenre Writing	Modes as Genre Conventions	Modes as Metagenres
Example	<i>Scenes of Writing</i> (Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi)	<i>Writing About Writing</i> (Wardle and Downs)	<i>21 Genres and How to Write Them</i> (Dethier)	<i>How Writing Works: A Guide to Composing Genres</i> (Jack and Pryal)	<i>Bedford Book of Genre</i> , (Braziller and Kleinfeld)
Presentation of Genre	Groups multiple genres according to academic, workplace, or civic scenes of writing (e.g., academic analysis, complaint letters, letters to the editor)	Defines genre chapter 1, using scholarly articles as an example. Specific scholarly articles are “tagged” for genre features and the text includes articles about genres	Lists genres with 1–2 short examples, followed by a list of questions and suggested moves for each genre	Introduces genre analysis and projects (e.g., informative genres, inquiries, reviews, argumentative genres, workplace genres, reports); includes the modes as “strategies” for invention and as genre conventions	Organizes genres according to their alignment with narrative, informative, and persuasive metagenres
Goal	To teach students to see genre as part of scenes of writing and the roles of writers	To provide disciplinary knowledge of genre that results in genre awareness	To provide students with the knowledge to practice writing in multiple genres	To describe processes and features of texts for use in genre analysis and writing multiple genres	To provide a framework for recognizing authors’ rhetorical purposes for writing

to get students to write in a wide range of genres, and it uses the modes to help students recognize a rhetorical purpose for writing. The potential pitfalls of this model are that, like the modes' focus on manipulating the audience's faculties of reason, it can reinforce an author-centric view of rhetorical action separate from situations and audiences. Furthermore, in teaching students to write in multiple genres, these textbooks often provide one or two examples of a genre, which are necessarily limited and struggle to capture the sense of social action a genre performs.

Other textbooks include the modes to describe genre conventions, relying on recognizable terms for texts but striving to subordinate those terms in favor of promoting genre awareness. *How Writing Works* lists the modes in the "Writing Process" section of the textbook, suggesting they can serve both as invention tools for writers as well as terms for describing the genre conventions of a text (Jack and Pryal 441). For example, under "narration" students are asked to consider whether narrative would help the audience, whether narrative supports their purpose in writing, and whether narratives are a common convention in the genre they are writing (Jack and Pryal 442). This representation of the modes follows more specific instructional materials designed to promote genre awareness among student-readers and to teach students how to consider genre knowledge when they encounter a new genre. Another iteration of this model occurs in the *Norton Field Guide to Writing (NFW)*. The *NFW* treats the modes as metagenres and as genre conventions. Listed genres include "reporting information," "arguing a position," "memoirs," and "proposals," to name a few (Bullock xxvi–xxii). Additionally, the *NFW* lists the modes ("arguing," "narrating," "classifying and dividing," "comparing and contrasting") elsewhere as "strategies" for use in particular genres (Bullock xxvi–xxvii). Each description of these strategies concludes with questions prompting the student to consider the rhetorical situation, including genre, in which that strategy would be appropriate (Bullock 372–73). This model of incorporating the modes often seeks to unite the practice of analyzing and writing genres, as the *NFW* hints when it defines genre: "Genres help us write by establishing features for conveying certain kinds of content. They give readers clues about what sort of information they're likely to find and so help them figure out how to read" (62). Rather than emphasizing the role of the writer, this model often emphasizes students as readers, and may limit students' ability to see genre as situated rhetorical action. However, the modes provide a familiar language for articulating genre differences and similarities. In that way, the modes no longer serve as discrete texts or mental actions; instead they serve as tools for identifying analogous conventions across writing situations, a form of reasoning central to transfer (Donahue 155, 159).

Finally, other genre textbooks omit the modes entirely, but articulate different pedagogical goals. *Writing About Writing* defines genre and details the genre conventions of the scholarly articles students' will read in the textbook, but does not provide direct instruction in other genres even though sample syllabi in the instructor's edition include reflections, ethnographies, literacy narratives, and other assignments. *Scenes of Writing* covers genre sets for particular roles, such as student, citizen, and professional. However, the student genres—academic analysis and argument—navigate the complexities of FYC by describing analysis and argument as both academic genres written by students and as “rhetorical skills” that academic readers believe apply “in a variety of contexts” (Devitt et al. 290)—language that resembles descriptions of the modes as genre conventions. Taking a different approach, *21 Genres and How to Write Them* exposes students to at least one example of each of its 21 genres, providing students with a list of analytical questions and “suggested moves” for each genre (Dethier). The structure of that text prioritizes genre acquisition (Dethier 3). However, given the book's breadth, students may not have the depth of situated experience required to do anything more than follow the suggested moves as a formula for writing each genre. These textbooks demonstrate that even when genre pedagogies do not explicitly mention the modes, they may still reduce genres to a formalist classification system in practice. All of these approaches require WPAs to recognize the limitations and contradictions of genre pedagogies, as well as the way that faculty in their program take up the language of genre in practice.

Genre theory has impacted adaptations of disciplinary knowledge in textbooks. All of the textbooks considered here, regardless of how they approach the modes, describe genre categories as flexible, changing, and rhetorical. However, textbook writers (and publishers) inevitably make decisions about the legacy of the modes—decisions that genre theorists themselves have negotiated differently depending on their disciplinary orientation and vision for FYC. Presenting the persistence of the modes as a problem of teacher expertise has oversimplified the challenges of teaching genre in a pedagogical context defined by varied institutional, programmatic, and disciplinary goals. In practice, WPAs make decisions that negotiate disciplinary knowledge with local needs and constraints—often with little ability to make dramatic structural changes given state or accreditation requirements. Recent scholarship on instructors' knowledge of genre, such as Christine M. Tardy et al.'s article showing that new instructors tend to start out thinking of genre as “static or literary categories of texts,” can serve as valuable tools for helping WPAs identify goals for programmatic change. However, WPAs also need knowledge of the disciplinary histories

of key concepts in composition. That kind of knowledge, as I describe in the conclusion, provides a foundation for rewriting the representation of teachers in composition and creating collaborative contexts for learning about the limitations and affordances of different ways of framing genres in the classroom.

#### IDENTIFYING PROGRAMMATIC GOALS FOR PEDAGOGICAL CHANGE

This history of the modes' connection to genre may help WPAs develop genre pedagogies in their own programs. Knowledge of the modes' history can help WPAs recognize that formalist approaches to genre are not solely a product of faculty members' expertise, but may emerge from the ways that learning outcomes or textbook materials construct the scene of FYC for teachers and students. Additionally, apparent references to the modes of discourse, such as narrative essays, argumentation, and expository writing, may reflect the more varied uses I chart in the previous section rather than a dogmatic commitment to teaching the modes as discrete forms. Eliminating those references, therefore, may miss an opportunity to use the modes as a way of developing faculty's awareness of genre. As a threshold concept, genre is transformative for learners, and involves passing into a different understanding of writing (Adler-Kassner et al 18). As scholarship on teacher training suggests, faculty acquire new knowledge through a nonlinear process that requires time and experimentation (Bishop; Wardle and Scott). How a faculty member understands and implements a complex, debated concept like genre depends on their training, their writing background, their disciplinary affiliations, and the support and professional development they receive. WPAs might apply Sandra L. Tarabochia's "pedagogical ethic," recognizing how cross-disciplinary knowledge influences writing programs and actively including faculty in a reciprocal knowledge-making process (8–9). WPAs can articulate goals for developing interactional expertise about genre in their FYC programs with awareness of the legacy of the modes in composition.

In addition to identifying disciplinary differences in how faculty interpret genre pedagogies, WPAs may consider programmatic constraints when following the recommendations for genre from the *WPA Outcomes Statement*. The statement depicts genre pedagogy as a way to teach students "rhetorical knowledge" and "knowledge of genre conventions." However, a particular writing program might emphasize genre awareness, disciplinary knowledge of writing, preparation for writing across the curriculum, or the genre sets associated with a particular role, such as FYC student or scholar, based on student needs, course sequence, assessment outcomes,

institutional identity, or other factors. WPAs also should set pedagogical goals according to the labor structures of their programs, given that faculty learning requires time and support for engagement and experimentation. A WPA entering a program with a high percentage of contingent faculty has to recognize that pedagogical change requires a sustainable and ethical labor structure necessary for faculty development. In writing programs that have reduced reliance on contingent faculty, WPAs can consider faculty's disciplinary backgrounds and experiences, recognizing that even those with degrees in rhetoric and composition may conceptualize genre pedagogy differently. Tarabochia reminds us to be reflexive in using our values to respond to others' pedagogies, to consider how we can learn from faculty in our programs (not just teach them), and to be flexible in how and when we choose to encourage pedagogical change (152). Similarly, Charlton et al. suggest that WPAs prioritize dialogic negotiation that focuses on the long term goal of identifying ideological bridges and working toward a fluid set of programmatic commitments (159).

Following from these scholars' recommendations, some of the strategies WPAs could use to cultivate pedagogical change in their programs might include:

- assisting faculty in identifying contradictions or paradoxes in assignments or lessons that might complicate students' genre learning;
- identifying existing conflicts and commonalities in the ways that faculty conceptualize genre and facilitate opportunities for reading and discussion related to those issues;
- anticipating different interpretations or conflicting ideas about genre in the texts shared in the writing program (readings, textbooks, workshops, etc.) and highlighting program priorities in the presentation of these materials;
- introducing the practice of asking students to reflect on similarities and differences in types of writing (perhaps for assessment) to build in more formal genre awareness and analogous reasoning;
- introducing genre terminology into student learning outcomes and assessment criteria in order to collect data to build arguments for hiring, professional development, or curricular change; and
- sharing genre knowledge with faculty outside the department or discipline in order to enhance campus-wide genre pedagogy and to spread accountability for writing instruction across disciplines.

These moves offer alternatives to rejecting or ignoring the prior knowledge of students and faculty in framing genre for writing instruction.

Composition theories applied to the context of FYC must consider prior knowledge as central to encouraging the transfer of knowledge about writing to new contexts—a foundational requirement for any FYC pedagogy to be useful. Students must be able to abstract their knowledge of genre, provided they understand that knowledge as situationally dependent and learn to apply it appropriately (Donahue). Thus, the goal of genre in FYC is to help writers “recognize similarities between . . . two situations and appropriately transform and expand knowledge so it works in a new situation” (Wardle 770). In this way, genre terminology may promote transfer by helping students articulate situational knowledge about writing and reason by analogy (Donahue 155, 159). Furthermore, Michele Eodice, Anne Ellen Geller, and Neal Lerner argue that transfer should not be viewed as pouring genre knowledge into empty vessels; rather, students need meaningful, flexible categories of texts to help them draw from the past and anticipate how they will use writing knowledge in the future (Eodice et al. 95–97). For programs where instructors’ or students’ knowledge is still informed by the modes, that may require explaining the history of those categories to point toward new directions for teaching. Recognizing narration as a convention in some essay genres, for example, may help elucidate the cultural and ideological values embedded in the idea of the essay, such as the possibility of an author as agent conveying shared meaning through language and using imagery to induce persuasion. This terminology is part of our field’s history and our culture’s ongoing definitions of writing, and to simply deny them as prior knowledge for instructors and students misses an opportunity to investigate the actions of texts in the world.

## NOTES

1. Throughout this article I use the terms “genre theories” and “genre pedagogies” to generalize about approaches to genre in composition. By “genre theories” I refer primarily to North American genre studies, or rhetorical genre theory, influenced largely by Carolyn Miller’s work defining genre as recurring types of texts that share formal, content, and rhetorical features that have developed over time in recurring types of situations (159–60). I use “genre pedagogies” to describe the application of genre theories in composition, particularly FYC, including recommendations for teaching genre and pedagogical materials like textbooks. These terms do not fully reflect the range of approaches to genre within and across rhetoric and composition, linguistics, communication, and literature. However, my focus on WPA work demanded a more selective representation of genre in line with the recommendations of the WPA Outcomes Statement. For a discussion of the differences and similarities in such approaches, see Bawarshi and Reiff and Tardy et al.



2. Broadly speaking, the modes were formal classifications based on the functions of four faculties of the mind—the intellect, will, imaginations, and feelings (see D’Angelo 36–37; Harned 45). Each of the modes of discourse focused on engaging one of the faculties to achieve a specific purpose (e.g. argumentative modes were designed to influence the audience’s will).

3. Literary theorists, rhetoricians, and communications scholars were developing theories of genre at this time. Northrup Frye, whom Crowley references specifically, drew from Aristotelian poetics to define drama, epic, lyric, and prose as genres based on their author-audience relationship (246–48). Rhetorician Edwin Black identified argumentation, aligned with the modes, as a rhetorical genre (148). Others in communication and speech in the 1970s, such as Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, were concerned with identifying genres inductively. These theorists drew from varied historical textual classifications (including literary theory), and helped establish genre as a rhetorical concept in composition.

4. Some versions of the modes included various classical and literary textual categories, such as comparison and contrast, definition, illustration, etc. (Connors 448). The histories of the modes make it clear that many terms in addition to EDNA were associated with the modes, especially as the modes became less explicitly tied to faculty psychology over time (D’Angelo 32–33). Poetry was also considered a mode in some instances (Connors 445).

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