



**NEXT STEPS: CREATION AND STRATEGIC CONTEMPLATION OF A WOMEN'S  
RHETORICS COURSE**

by

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## **Chapter 1 - Walking, Talking, Reflecting, and Teaching: An Introduction to Next Steps**

“Reflecting on my own work in feminist theory I find writing – theoretical talk – to be most meaningful when it invites readers to engage in critical reflection and to engage in the practice of feminism. To me, this theory emerges from the concrete, from my efforts to make sense of everyday life experiences, from my efforts to intervene critically in my life and the lives of others.” ~bell hooks

In this project, I am attempting to fill in a gap I have encountered in the pedagogical discussions of women’s rhetorics. This thesis is also an attempt to walk the walk both as it was taught to me by various instructors in real-life classrooms and by professors and teachers in journals, books, and other texts. The ultimate purpose for my project is more than just to help normalize the teaching of women rhetors: I also want to provide some of the tools beginning teachers of women’s rhetoric might need in order to help begin this normalization process. By “normalize,” I mean that I hope someday students will take classes on women writers in the same way that they take classes based around classical rhetorical scholars – they are seen to be necessary to become a balanced, fully realized student of rhetoric, to the extent that it is simply understood that they are “required reading.” My hope is that eventually, we would no more allow a student to graduate without reading Plato, Aristotle, and Quintilian than we would allow that student to graduate without reading Aspasia, Julian of Norwich, or history relating to women and rhetoric.

Locating arguments that women are under-represented in the study of rhetoric and composition is fairly easy, as is discussion regarding why that is. Less easily discovered are the materials with which to teach undergraduate students about women writers, their choices, and their circumstances, and even less available is the reasoning associated with those materials. I hope that this project begins to fill in this gap.

## INTRODUCTION

In this project, I discuss why an undergraduate level women's rhetorics class is important. Further, I create and discuss the materials necessary to teach such a class. In so doing, I engage in the important pedagogical self-reflection called for by bell hooks, Jacqueline Jones Royster, Gesa E. Kirsch and many other feminist scholars. Self-reflection (or, as Royster and Kirsch refer to it in their book *Feminist Rhetorical Practices: New Horizons for Rhetoric, Composition, and Literacy Studies*, "strategic contemplation") is an underdeveloped tool in the standard approach to research in academia, but when utilized, can lead to more nuanced and complex results, as described by Patricia Bizzell in her introduction to *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*: "If the researcher will 'linger deliberately,' as [Royster and Kirsch] put it, intuitions about the subjects of research can emerge" (x). In their chapter devoted to strategic contemplation, Royster and Kirsch go on to argue that self-reflection/strategic contemplation can give us insight and opportunity to focus on two separate areas of our research: first, the physical aspect of research or the "outward journey in real time and space . . . as researchers go to the archives, the historical sites, the city or country where a historical subject worked or lived" (85). This outward, physical journey of research is the data-collection portion of the process, in which researchers can (and should) submerge themselves in the idea, time period, individual, etc. they are investigating: "looking up, down, under, and around the rhetorical situation in order to take in the sights (e.g., walking the streets, seeing the buildings, examining the scale of things), carefully collecting details, information, experiences, all of which can help researchers better understand a historical period, a place in time and context, a particular rhetorical figure, or a specific practice as it exhibits rhetorical effects" (85).

The second aspect of the research process is an internal one, they argue, in which the researcher is attentive to their own process: how researchers' "creativity and imagination come

into play; how a vicarious experience that results from critical imagination, meditation, introspection and/or reflection gets mapped, perhaps simultaneously, as both an analytical one and a visceral one” (85). Engaging in critical reflection in all stages of our research can provide us with insight into our research problem, our results, and our “passion” (86).

Recovery work continues to go on, and continues to be important; however, the more urgent discussion centers around how to best accomplish recovery, or what effects we can anticipate as a result. The results of recovery work and the import of the act of recovery continue to remain essential to our discipline, but to a certain extent, merely saying we need to continue to recover women’s texts in this context is similar to preaching to the choir. As I read for my thesis, I encountered many calls for the work of recovery to continue. Much as scholars today situate themselves as a part of their opening rhetorical moves in scholarly papers (i.e., identifying their gender, their privilege, the various ways in which they self-identify), early scholars felt the need to explain their recovery work. Nancy F. Cott’s *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women* and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric* both include in their introductions a justification for the recovery work they are doing. The majority of the opening chapter of Glenn’s *Rhetoric Retold* lays out the importance of research into women rhetors generally, and Aspasia specifically. While our discipline might not have progressed as far as it can, it seems much less likely that a female rhetor would be discounted merely due to her gender, as was the case only thirty years ago. Scholars might situate themselves as an opening rhetorical move; however, those moves function less as justification and more as part of their argument now.

The current calls for continuation of recovery work of women rhetors now includes encouragement to undertake various “next steps” towards incorporating all aspects of women’s

rhetorics into our work as pedagogues, scholars, and academics. Cheryl Glenn utilizes the concept of mapping territories to describe this shift in her essay “sex, lies, and manuscript,” when she states that “having passed through the familiar and patriarchal territory of exclusionary rhetoric, we are moving into a frontier – the rhetorics of the future that await our exploration, our settlements, and our mapping” (195). Lindal Buchanan and Kathleen J. Ryan, editors of *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics: Landmark Essays and Controversies* establish feminist rhetorics as an amalgamation of “projects and purposes,” including a “practice, a scholarly endeavor capable of transforming the discipline of rhetoric through gender analysis, critique, and reformulation” (xiii). Recovery and reclamation of women rhetors is an increasingly more complex and nuanced undertaking, as we learn more about the many ways women writers and speakers can improve our views of teaching, writing, and researching. However, as much as there is discussion in research and scholarly work about the need for inclusion of women’s rhetorics in the larger field of rhetoric, there isn’t much in the way of accessible, hands-on, “how-to” information usable in the classroom. My thesis intends to help fill this gap.

The basic major themes, ideas, and issues represented in this project are as follows: First, historically, women were required to engage in writing practices different from those of males, whether due to prevention from engaging in the same practices as men, or that they didn’t wish to do so. The study of these differences, as well as why these differences exist, is an overlooked yet important part of our understanding of rhetoric. Secondly, in the past, writing by and for women was used to reinforce the status quo and the concept of “the angel in the house.” As women wrote and created, if they chose to speak publically, they needed to invent both their persona as an acceptable female speaker as well as their text. Finally, connectivity, feminine style, getting it crooked, and exemplary vs. ordinary women are reoccurring themes throughout scholarship in this area, and each represents a part of rhetoric that is relatively new to study. I



associate the majority of the project with these last four themes, and see this work as an attempt to fill in a gap left between calls for the continued recovery of women's texts, their uses, and the outcome of those uses. The larger intention of my project is to think about how to convey these themes pedagogically.

Initially, the discussions relating to women's texts and rhetorics dealt with the basic question of "should we," rather than "how should we?" Before scholars could begin to consider the question of "how should we recover women's texts?" we had to work through the more basic question of "should we?" Scholars describe the common reaction to historical work with women rhetors (especially those of color) as being surprised that women created at all – the common concept being that only women of great privilege and great abilities were able to speak. A basic binary existed in our understanding of women rhetors: the only women to write or speak were those exceptional women, while all other women were prevented from (or were incapable of) writing or speaking.

The presence of women in the history of rhetoric is understood now to be an important topic of study, largely due to the early work done by many scholars – for instance, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (*Man Cannot Speak for Her*), Andrea Lunsford (*Reclaiming Rhetorica*), and Krista Ratcliffe (*Anglo-American Feminist Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition*), and many more. The work of these scholars makes the teaching of women's rhetorics all the more compelling, but the actuality of creating and teaching a class in women's rhetorics remains daunting, especially when one considers the potential difficulties that can be encountered – thus my desire to find some topic-specific pedagogical tools to help mitigate the mistakes I might make, while also improving the field with the inclusion of more pedagogical resources

Should a new composition teacher be in need of some pedagogical instruction to establish her introductory writing class (or even a higher level class, for that matter), there are many texts

and resources available: consider *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook* by Edward P. J. Corbett, Nancy Myers, and Gary Tate, or *The St. Martin's Guide to Teaching Writing*, by Cheryl Glenn and Melissa A. Goldthwaite. Prior to my first experience teaching composition, I was gifted by the department with *Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition*, an anthology by some of the most well-known writers in the field, like Victor Villanueva, Theresa Enos, and Sharon Crowley. While *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook* provides accessible theoretical scholarship with extensive discussion of how to address specific issues in the classroom, the remaining two texts provide assignments and syllabi from which a beginning instructor could pull directly at a moment's notice.

Finding specific sources which would do what I wanted/needed them to do, such as answer questions like, "What texts should I use in a women's rhetorics class?" or "What writing assignments would expose students best to gendered issues in the study of rhetoric?" was difficult, especially when I asked myself how I could do my part as an instructor to present women rhetors to students so that they can appreciate the gender-specific attributes of their texts, but without simultaneously re-inscribing them as outside the norm? While I could find theoretical texts (*Teaching Rhetorica: Theory Pedagogy, Practice*, for instance) and the occasional anthology (*Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)* or *Walking and Talking: Feminist Rhetorics*), I couldn't find sourcebooks specifically addressing what I wanted: how do I do this? More importantly, how do I do this well, being mindful of the important theoretical work done by Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, Cheryl Glenn, Patricia Bizzell, Jacqueline Jones Royster and so many others? I found little to help me that didn't fall into one or another of the traps and problematic issues laid out by other scholars (inserting female authors into a literature class, for instance, could involve making "arbitrary and isolated choices" relating to which authors to use, as described by Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald in *Available Means*). Much of

what I did find was more theoretical (in the realm of *Teaching Rhetorica*, for instance) than “how-to.”

The research I did to prepare for this thesis can be divided into several distinct areas: texts of a historical nature (what women rhetors did differently from traditional, male rhetors, for instance); texts arguing for a particular approach to the treatment of women’s rhetorics (how, if at all, should we change the traditional canon’s “rules” for the treatment of women rhetors); gender-specific approaches to research and methodologies, and feminist pedagogical approaches (bell hooks’ texts, for instance). All these texts discuss the importance of women’s rhetorics, the various problems inherent in different approaches to women rhetors and texts they created, and some do make suggestions as to how we might move forward as a field. Throughout the following chapters, I refer back to these individual concepts frequently.

Of course, before we can reach a point where we can develop any sort of “how-to” or set of guideposts for the instructor new to teaching women’s rhetorics, we have to understand the possible danger zones along the way, and much of my readings address these issues. Cheryl Glenn, Xin Lu Gale, and Barbara Biesecker discussed at length some of the problems that are inherent in attempting to write women rhetors into the previously off-limits area of classical rhetoric. Patricia Bizzell, bell hooks, Shirley Wilson Logan, and Jacqueline Jones Royster consider the complications of race and class as well as gender. The problems scholars laid out in their texts were substantial and varied. Addressing one problem might require the overlooking of another – a problem feminists have struggled with for some time as evidenced by the efforts being made to become more inclusive to women of color.

#### PURPOSE OF PROJECT

This project is a set of tools in the form of both the practical items themselves (syllabus, calendar, readings, etc.) as well as discussion regarding why they are useful, why they do the

things they do, and why regular, ongoing critique of our pedagogies and approaches in teaching women's rhetorics (regardless of discipline) is important. In keeping with the feminist pedagogies I attempt to embody as an instructor, I strive to remedy what I view as a lack in existing praxis-related scholarship by compiling my work for the consumption, reflection upon and building up of others. I attempt to engage in the sort of work called for by Royster and Kirsch in their text, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, in which I critique and reflect on my work, the need for such work, and invite the same from others.

Royster and Kirsch describe two important aspects of their goals for their text: the first dealing with the "organic nature" of the knowledge created and gained as a result of scholarship surrounding women's rhetorics and feminist practices while the second addresses the nature of ethics in scholars and work produced (14). Additionally, they intend for scholars to be "fully challenged to learn how to listen more carefully to the voices (and texts) that they study, to critique our analytical assumptions and frames, to critique guiding questions reflectively and reflexively" (14). In my creation of the individual texts that make up this thesis, I am engaging in a close reading of teaching materials, with the intent to fill in a gap I encountered, but also to engage with those materials "reflectively and reflexively," as well as to listen carefully to the texts and voices I attempt to teach others with (14). Royster and Kirsch argue for an increased "dialogic relationship between the past and present," between the worlds of past authors, the world we currently inhabit, and the future worlds belonging to our students (14). The teaching tools I have constructed have been impacted by the works of other scholars in many ways - so much of what we as instructors do is handed down to us by others, and I am attempting to place my own mark on these tools, while also interpreting and studying the approaches and theories of those who went before me.

Theoretical information was readily available (as was information about scholars already teaching and writing about the topic), but there were few cracked doors to real classrooms into which I could peer and gain some effective cornerstone material to begin work as an instructor of a class relating to women's rhetorics. Questions abounded in the texts I read and studied: for instance, in *Teaching Rhetorica*, the authors ask how scholars might be affected by their own teaching of women's rhetorics: "How are scholars teaching *Rhetorica*, and what is *Rhetorica* teaching them?" (Ronald and Ritchie 2). Ronald and Ritchie go on to state that the essays in their text reflect the ways scholars have placed women's rhetorics into the "complex interplay among . . . scholarship, teaching, material experience, and action" (4). Their conception of pedagogy is not limited to the classroom – a concept I, too, embrace, but which was more expansive than was helpful to me in my particular search for specific and concrete direction. While it is important to be interested and focused on the more expansive, creation and discussion of classroom-specific information is important to help the normalization process of women's rhetorics (making the area as natural to the discipline as the study of any of the classics) as well as to encourage more instructors to consider the topics for their own classrooms. In Ronald and Ritchie's *Teaching Rhetorica* the authors stated they wanted to explore the "catalyst for examining how their presence might affect the kinds of classroom structures, projects, and goals we might create" (5). *Teaching Rhetorica* wanted to discuss the complex flavors that a rare spice added to their dish, while I was still attempting to locate the seeds from which I could grow the plant. Encouraging both instructors and students to explore women's rhetorics requires the creation and discussion of more tools (especially classroom-specific tools), rather than limiting ourselves to one text specific to the genre. The area of women's rhetorics needs to be viewed as more central to the discipline, and with the paucity of materials available, it is very difficult to argue the centrality of the topic.

If *Teaching Rhetorica* came the closest to answering my “how and why” questions, then *Available Means* (also edited by Ronald and Ritchie) was the answer to my “which ones to teach” question. While I could have compiled a small packet for the class myself, I wanted to utilize an anthology that was on the market, and I wanted to make use of primary texts (with the option to include secondary work online). My choice of anthologies was rapidly made, although the number of texts I could choose from was fairly small. *Available Means* did a great deal of the work which needed doing by gathering the varied texts by women rhetors, spanning many years and cultures. The intention of the authors is to attempt to avoid one of the problems I mentioned earlier: that of writing and speaking being accessible only to women of great stature and intelligence. Ritchie and Ronald compile the works of women writers from Aspasia and Diotima to the more recent Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Gloria Steinem, and they do so with a focus on the lesser known writings of the very well-known women they utilize. The editors recognize that while the speech of Sojourner Truth, for example, at the 1851 Woman’s Rights Convention was exceptional and stirring, many other anthologies include it. They therefore include another version of her speech – the one transcribed by Frances Gage and which includes Gage’s own commentary. Ritchie and Ronald also moved beyond the standard texts typically found in anthologies and into the less valued and privileged formats available to women writers and speakers: diaries, letters, newspaper columns, “fables,” and “critical legal essays” (xx). Much thought and care went into the choosing and gathering of rhetors and their texts, as well as into the organization of those texts (both in chronological order, as well as a section organizing the titles by subject). This text was indeed more helpful than other, more theoretical texts or texts not specific to women’s rhetorics – it provided me with all the reading materials I might want for the instruction of students (although it is from 2001 and could stand with an update). I still felt, however, that if left solely to my own devices with this text, I and the class could wander

pleasantly through the many women writers and their texts, but not gain the knowledge that I hoped for. This thesis fills the gap by compiling in one place discussion of some of the theoretical, existing materials and writings as well as the more specific, pedagogical tools utilized in the classroom. I have tried to create both the conceptual framework for my materials as well as the materials themselves, giving us the thinking that leads to the materials – something that is missing from the currently available works.

As I continued my search for helpful materials, I encountered a relatively new anthology: Buchanan and Ryan's *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics*. In the forward to this text, I discovered that my struggles with theory and practice, theory without practice, practice without theory, and all other possible variations thereof was not mine alone: Kate Ronald discusses in the book's forward the concept of walking and talking (from the title) and what it means from the standpoint of a feminist rhetorician and scholar: "walking denotes firsthand, practical experience, and moreover, it means connecting that practice to theory. It strikes me that feminist rhetoricians almost always do both, by necessity. Denied the right to speak historically . . . feminist rhetors more often than not devised theory from practice, not the other way around" (x). My difficulties were clarified – if I wanted to devise my own theories, or expand on those of other scholars, I needed to work from my own practice.

As I worked with Buchanan and Ryan's text, I found myself on slightly more comfortable ground – the text was separated by topics, making my thinking about how to structure my own class a little clearer: the anthology provides some history of feminist and women's rhetorics, discusses some of the issues relating to research in these areas, considers the "gendered sites, genres, and styles of rhetoric" in which women function and touches on some of the areas of dispute amongst scholars (vi). The huge area of study charted out by Ritchie and

Ronald in *Available Means* was suddenly a bit more accessible with the addition of *Walking and Talking* through the use of primary texts contextualized by secondary texts.

Another text that assisted me in thinking about how I wanted to approach the teaching of women's rhetorics was by Jessica Enoch and Jordynn Jack ("Remembering Sappho: New Perspectives on Teaching (and Writing) Women's Rhetorical History"). In this essay, Enoch and Jack describe some of their new and different pedagogical approaches to rhetorical women. They consider the import of public memory and remembering/forgetting as it relates to women's inclusion in public matters. The authors have their students doing archival work to reclaim women rhetors, and in the course of so doing, they are able to consider the rhetoric of forgetting, of silence, of why women were left out of the canon. Their work is centered around Southern women and the concept of students "speaking back to the archive." Enoch and Jack did more than just crack the door to their classroom – they allowed their readers to venture in a bit and take part in a limited way (they reference websites constructed by their classes and by individual students, although those sites are not maintained). I had found additional teaching experience I could mine for application to my own theories for the classroom I hoped to create.

Perhaps my women's studies background would be of help in my searching, I thought, and began to look for some helpful sources in another discipline. I found, again, much work of a theoretical nature and little of a "how-to" nature, and much of what I encountered was not as recent as I would like. Vinal Balasubrahmanyam describes these problems in the 1993 essay "Teaching Women's Studies: The Problems" when she explains that there is a "paucity of appropriate teaching materials. It is pointed out that there is plenty of published stuff available, containing masses of information, but very little of it is in a form appropriate for classroom use. Much initiative is required from teachers to compile this suitably" (1572). The fact that I was still struggling with this issue myself, 20 years later, told me that my thesis work was needed and



indeed could fill a gap – a gap that others had seen and remarked on, but that has not yet been suitably addressed.

Returning to research in the field of women's rhetorics, I examined works by Cheryl Glenn, bell hooks, Susan Jarrett, and other important scholars in the field of rhetoric. Glenn's texts *Rhetoric Retold* and *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence* both discuss the importance of women to the history and understanding of rhetoric, but neither of them speak to the issue of how best to approach the teaching of a class specifically about women writers. *Rhetoric Retold* argues that a history of rhetoric must include a focus on aspects of culture (both in the larger sense as well as the individualistic) which might not necessarily come into prominence but nonetheless can be used to decipher how rhetoric functions then as well as now. *Unspoken* explores the ways that even when speech is not present – when it is withheld by the speaker or quashed by the auditor – communication can still take place. Both of these concepts and the readings which explore them are important, and help inform my own thinking about the larger study of rhetoric; however, they did not speak specifically to my research and classroom-centered need.

Patricia Bizzell additionally writes of historical matters and specifically focuses on research with a feminist framework in her essays "Feminist Methods of Research in the History of Rhetoric: What Difference Do They Make?" and "Opportunities for Feminist Research in the History of Rhetoric." In her essay "Feminist Methods of Research," Bizzell argues that much like early women rhetors did not author or structure their texts the same way that men did, feminist researchers do not pursue the same ends as do traditional researchers, and being aware of this can assist us in our scholarly work. In her text "Opportunities," she delineates then explores three approaches to expanding feminist research in the field of rhetoric. While ultimately helpful to me in my research for the project, something comparable in terms of praxis

was more in line with what I was looking for. I wanted to find the sort of how-to or hands-on information I knew existed for “standard” writing and rhetoric classes, but addressed specifically to the teaching of a women’s rhetorics class.

One reoccurring and ultimately helpful concept I encountered was that of the importance of self-reflection as we write – both for students as well as for instructors. Using a historical lens, Jessica Enoch studies the benefits of self-reflection in our approach to teaching in her book, *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1865-1911*. In her book, she studies the pedagogies of five female teachers (teaching between the years of 1865 and 1911) who were engaged in teaching marginalized students. Enoch explains that the five teachers approached their students with an awareness of the marginalization the students faced in the world, and worked (using the tools acceptable to them at the time) to teach them to enter the discourse community involved with the issues that were important to them within the sphere of their influence. Enoch wants to redefine rhetorical education as “any educational program that develops in students a communal and civic identity and articulates for them the rhetorical strategies, language practices, and bodily and social behaviors that make possible their participation in communal and civic affairs” (7-8). In order for the women she studied to engage with their subject matter and their students in such a way as to achieve their goals, the teachers had to be aware (through self-reflection as well as through observation of daily life) of the situations of the world in which both they and their students lived and worked.

The concept of self-reflection as a strategy is key to the argument made in Royster and Kirsch’s book, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*. The authors state that in their work, they are attempting to bring “visibility and audibility to women’s rhetorical participation and achievements and to identify the patterns of disciplinary transformation,” finding a number of

themes similar in different formats of feminist rhetorical studies (134). Most importantly, they state, they find that feminist teachers engage in “robust inquiry strategies” which include “critical inquiry, strategic contemplation, social circulation, and globalization” (134). These approaches and strategies gather data that “function reflectively (considering the intersections of internal and external effects); and reflexively (deliberately unsettling observations and conclusions in order to resist coming to conclusions too quickly)” (134). In order to best teach students to become self-reflective (as they attend to their writing processes, for instance, as well as how they interact with larger societal issues), teachers must be adept at the act of “unsettling observations and conclusions,” an act that requires no small amount of self-awareness and reflection.

Royster and Kirsch continue to discuss the import of self-reflection when they describe the teachings of feminist rhetoricians – that they have encouraged us to be conscious of how comfortable (or uncomfortable) we might be in various situations and the importance of being slow to judge (76). From those feminist rhetoricians we are also encouraged to engage with the texts and artifacts created by historical women outside the context of our own lives and instead within those of the women themselves, and by so doing, become aware of how our understandings of ourselves affect our readings and understandings of those early women rhetors (76). Also important is our attention to the challenge of both what we actively see and understand as well as those things that take place outside our view: “These reflective and reflexive practices have predisposed us to understand the inevitability that, more than likely, there will be factors and dimensions of scenes and situations that we may not notice and especially so if we fail to exercise a direct and specific commitment to look and look again, listen and listen again, think and think again recursively”(76-77). Without self-reflection and awareness, the “blind spots” Royster and Kirsch encourage us to be aware of will continue to remain outside the periphery of our sight.

Royster and Kirsch state that the job of feminist scholars is “to be reflective and reflexive, not only about the extent to which these scholarly actions are actively participating in the shaping, growth, and development of feminist rhetorical studies but active also in forming an innovative vanguard for general practices in rhetorical studies, rather than functioning mainly at its periphery” (31). The act of self-reflection, they state, is what moves our field of study out of those blind spots on the periphery and into a stronger and more visible space, whether that space is within a classroom or not. In order to see women’s rhetoric become a standard part of an educational plan in our discipline, it is necessary to continue to push women’s rhetorical studies out of our periphery, and into a place where it can be viewed as normal, average, and needed for a full, rounded education in rhetorical studies.

One of the arguments made by Ronald and Ritchie in *Teaching Rhetorica* is that pedagogy and pedagogical practices are not limited to the classroom, a concept that is evident in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell’s discussion of the import of self-reflection as it relates to the concept of feminine style: “many of the qualities of the [feminine] style . . . are also part of the small-group phenomenon known as consciousness-raising, associated with contemporary feminism as well as other social movements, which is a communicative style that can be incorporated into speaking or prose writing” (13). Consciousness-raising was a form of communication which was crucial to the early women’s movement, and which depends greatly on one’s ability to step back from habitual epistemologies and instead engage thoughtfully with our own experiences as well as those of others – and this practice functioned as a form of teaching as well. By sharing what I have learned about my life, my listener learns that her experience is not solitary, but instead is common, strengthening her own ability to self-actualize.

An author commonly associated with the concept of self-actualization and reflexivity is Paulo Freire – in his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he states that thoughtful communication

allows teachers and students to move beyond traditional roles: “Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers” (80). Teachers can only become teacher-students if they are capable of and willing to understand both their student as well as themselves fully – a place that cannot be reached without substantial inner work.

Freire believed that both action and reflection were dependent upon each other, in that one without the other resulted in “idle chatter” or “activism” (87). He stated that activism, or “action for action’s sake – negates the true praxis and makes dialogue impossible” (87). Action (speech or otherwise) without sufficient reflection on the situation at hand has limited worth, in other words. We can begin to see through the application of Freire’s theories a partial answer to the question posed by Ronald and Ritchie in *Teaching Rhetorica* I mentioned earlier: the authors ask how scholars might be affected by their own teaching of women’s rhetorics: “How does the ongoing teaching of women’s rhetorics effect our thinking about our own practices in the classroom, our understandings of theory, and of pedagogy in general?” (Ronald and Ritchie 2).

As a student of Freire, bell hooks shared many of his beliefs about pedagogy and communication, seeing education as a form of praxis; engaged pedagogy requires the voices of both students and teachers, thus, teachers must work to become self-actualized<sup>1</sup>. A teacher who has not engaged in sufficient self-reflection (about herself in general, or about her approaches in the classroom, her choices and beliefs) cannot satisfactorily meet the needs of her students.

These frequent references to the importance of self-reflection – both for students as well as for instructors helped form my beginning questions as I structured the assignments that make up the tools of this project: “Why?” Why is this the best approach? Why is this important for students to do? Why does this work have that result? Why is that result better than a different

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<sup>1</sup> hooks’ conception of “self-actualization” as described in *Teaching to Transgress* involves “wholeness, a union of mind, body, and spirit” (14).

one? Returning to a place of constant questioning, I was enacting the approach to my own scholarship and pedagogy that I try to teach to my students – that of looking at knowledge and ideas, but always questioning them, their basis, who benefits from them, and why one idea might be better than another. In other words, looking not just for a right answer, but also for reasoning as to why it might be something else entirely.

Constant questioning and re-visioning ideas and concepts perceived as absolute and set in stone is a key component of teaching a women's rhetorics class such as the one discussed here. Without a willingness to do that sort of work, Cheryl Glenn would not have been able to argue that women had a place in classical rhetoric as actors and subjects, rather than mere objects. Nor would we have been able to see silence as a form of rhetoric, or how it fits especially into the dialog about women rhetors. Women's rhetorics is about complicating what has been established as the norm, and about inviting in new perceptions of what has gone before.

So why does it matter for us to engage in projects focused on the creation of a class based around women rhetors as well as the reasoning behind the choices surrounding its creation? On one hand, women rhetors and feminist/feminine scholarship should be unremarkable – this sort of scholarship leads to the most even-handed treatment of our research subjects, our students, and each other, so seeing it spread can only be positive. Royster and Kirsch make this argument in their text, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, when they state that

Feminist rhetorical scholarship is now moving far beyond the rescue, recovery, and (re)inscription of a diversity of women participants and on to the establishing of new watermarks of regard and worthiness in rhetorical studies more generally for the methodologies that we have been using and the types of insights that such methodologies have the capacity to yield. (31)

However, engaging in non-reflexive and non-reflective scholarship is counterproductive to the goals of feminist scholarship, so constant interrogation of the work we do in academe is absolutely crucial. One of the things my project does is to require us to think about the context in which women's rhetorics is created and taught, and how those contexts can help us see ways to improve our approaches to what we want our teaching to do and achieve.

Work of this nature (considering and reconsidering our academic work, both publicly and privately) is frequently called for in various scholarly articles, and is done both "out loud" as well as behind closed doors without setting anything down on paper. Often, that work leads to not just better personal pedagogical practices, but also a more public exercise, as is the case in Royster and Kirsch's introduction to their book, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*:

We take into account the roads that we ourselves have traveled, sharing reflections and key professional connections from each of us. In doing so we claim and celebrate feminist rhetorical studies as a professional identity while underscoring, as the volume continues, how important it is – as professionals in this field – *to critique this work* and to fashion and sustain a strong sense of professional accountability." (emphasis added, 3-4)

I want to both improve my own practices in the classroom, as well as to make available to others my process and the tools with which I enact that process. I have a responsibility to my students, of course, but I also have a responsibility to other instructors who might be looking for ways to bring some of these ideas and concepts into their classroom. If we want to further the study of women's rhetorics and writings, and the teaching of them, then we need to do what we can to make the implementation of them as easy (and eventually a normal part of teaching) as possible – another possible answer to the earlier question of how the teaching of women's rhetorics can affect the instructors as well as the students.

One reason we teach classes focusing on recovered women rhetors is both to expose students to what has gone before, but also to teach them how to make use of the resources created by women rhetors, historically and currently. While treatment of women rhetors can be said to have improved since the days of Aspasia, women still find it necessary to refight battles that seemingly were already won. Women's writings are not as blatantly disregarded out of hand merely because they are written by women, but women's voices being exercised in public and taken seriously by that public is still a newsworthy, comment-worthy event – see, for instance, the recent filibuster of a bill relating to women's reproductive rights by Texas Senator Wendy Davis in Austin. Women's texts are worthwhile to study for historical reasons, but also to begin to make use of and normalize to students the various aspects of feminist, feminine scholarship. The importance of our perception of female rhetors is described by Patricia Bizzell in her essay, "Feminist Methods of Research in the History of Rhetoric: What Difference Do They Make?" when she describes some of the choices she had to make (and the struggles that those choices caused her) in the creation of the anthology *Rhetorical Tradition*. Decisions she made regarding which female writers and speakers to include resulted in the need to combine certain women's works, thus implying their works were not sufficiently important or intellectually robust enough to deserve individual inclusion (6).

The concept of normalizing women writers can be seen in the increasingly frequent inclusion of "non-traditional" forms of creation and writing in research, scholarly discussions and publications. More and more often, women's letters, journals, and other traditionally "non-scholarly" forms of writing have been studied and discussed, lending them the mantle of legitimacy they previously would not have had. Cheryl Glenn explores the rhetorical import of Aspasia, arguing that a historical lack of "traditional" forms of writing by Aspasia does not signify that she didn't write and create. Glenn also explores the concept of autobiography as a



richer and more nuanced form of rhetorical action in her essay, “Reexamining *The Book of Margery Kempe*.” Glenn states that the act of creating her autobiography was not limited to merely writing the words on paper – Kempe was unable to read or write, but this did not prevent her from being a “skillful and powerful rhetorician” (54). Within the discourse of Franciscan piety she created for herself, Kempe “self-consciously created and owned the story of her life, authored her *self*, recorded her spiritual development, and most important, validated her life and her visions to her authorial audience (54).

The format of Kempe’s rhetoric – the autobiography – is not by its nature non-traditional or an unacceptable format for study; however, the creation of the story by a woman made it so. In a work aimed partially at bringing ordinary, everyday writing into the scope of acceptable rhetorical study, Jennifer Sinor undertakes the study of a family diary in her book *The Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing: Annie Ray’s Diary*. In so doing, Sinor discovers and discusses some of the reasoning behind the study of “ordinary writing.” She states that in order to adequately consume a text like Annie Ray’s diary (an ordinary text), we must learn how to do so. Learning to see a diary both as an important rhetorical artifact while also a piece of ordinary writing

(1) illuminates more clearly the making of both subject and text and in so doing reveals the partiality of all texts, (2) complicates the site of ordinary writing beyond simple considerations of the ordinary that work to either idealize or demonize that site, and ushers ordinary writing into conversation with lifewriting and in so doing demands a broader definition of what counts within the field.

(182)

Sinor’s experience with Annie Ray’s diary opens up new pathways of scholarship (the daily and ordinary as worthy of study, and as important to the study of rhetoric), but it simultaneously

models research methods and ways of thinking that make envisioning a family diary written by the wife of a farmer an important rhetorical artifact possible. Sinor's work speaks to the ways that students frequently can see important aspects of life (such as politics and rhetoric) as ordinary, everyday things that are also beyond their control. Exploration of Sinor's scholarship can help students to shift their view of issues relating to their lives (such as political ones) from the realm of beyond their reach into something they can effect. Understanding that a diary is legitimate research material can help students see ways that rhetoric and the ways we communicate (whether personal communication in a journal or through a political speech) are important, legitimate issues to study and attend to.

Students should expect the sort of thoughtful, thought provoking discussion from their leaders (elected or otherwise) as provided by Senator Davis, and part of the job of women's rhetorics classes is to encourage students to look for and demand a certain level of discourse, making action an important aspect of this project as well. I am arguing for action on the part of both the students in the class as well as the instructors who teach (and theorize about teaching). In order to teach students the things they need to learn in college, we have to take them seriously, as well as expect them to take us seriously. Thus, as feminist pedagogues, we need to examine our approaches to our teaching and the results we gain from that pedagogy on a regular, ongoing basis. Teaching a class such as the one I have created for this project requires that students take themselves seriously by creating and sharing knowledge as a result of what they have read and discussed in class. The project requires us as instructors and pedagogues to think about what we are teaching, why we are teaching it, and why it's important...not just once, but regularly. Theory is critical to the work we do, but as argued by Paolo Freire, theory without reflection is empty work, as is action without reflection. An earlier section of this introduction discussed bell hooks and Freire, providing the complication of the teacher's role into that of teacher-student and

helping to illustrate the import of the balance between the two. Collapsing the theory/practice binary is a focal part of Freire's work, and I intend for this thesis to attempt to enact that sort of collapse, allowing theory and practice to work together rather than remain on opposite sides of a spectrum.

As a graduate student in Women's Studies, most of the classes I took were very theory based. My classmates and I spent a great deal of time discussing those theories both in and out of class, but also (most frequently out of class) discussing what exactly to DO with the knowledge we gained as a result of our privileged education, the classes we were taking, and the theoretical discussions and readings around which all of it was based. Students who are passionate about an issue (or even those who aren't quite there yet) engage in classes like these to gain more knowledge, but also to move beyond simply knowing – they want to DO. Acknowledging that need and finding ways to help students meet it is a large part of utilizing a feminist pedagogy.

When we teach with a feminist grounding, we complicate things in the “standard” classroom. Research subjects must retain their individual voices, researchers must be “witnesses” to the lives of their subjects, and varying positionalities are considered and engaged. Devoting effort and time to what Royster and Kirsch describe in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* as “critical imagination, strategic contemplation, social circulation, and globalization” is needed, and a focus on the ethical self within scholarly work is required (20). When we depart from the normalized Western classroom, we are broadening our field of inquiry, and we are encouraging new ideas and ways of thinking – always a messy process. We understand that bodies and placement are a critical part of this change, leading us to address physical aspects of the classroom by considering the geography of the room and students themselves. Some ideas work well; some do not. Some work well for one class, but when we try to incorporate them at the start of a new

semester, we find them less successful. At the close of the semester, we think about what worked, what we will carry forward, what we will discard, what we will resurrect.

The type of thinking I am attempting to engage in through this project is described in Royster and Kirsch's text, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices* as "critical imagination," a concept first discussed in Royster's book, *Traces of a Stream*. Royster and Kirsch discuss the importance of critical imagination being used as a tool for inquiry, "a mechanism for seeing the noticed and the unnoticed, rethinking what is there and not there, and speculating about what could be there instead" (20). The intention of the authors, through the application of critical imagination, is to enlarge and deepen the ways we interact with scholarship: "...the objective is to develop mechanisms by which listening deeply, reflexively, and multisensibly become standard practice not only in feminist rhetorical scholarship but also in rhetorical studies writ large" (20). The authors argue that applying this sort of approach to thinking about academia in general, and women writers specifically, we can develop an "ethos of humility, respect, and care," allowing us also to rely less on our assumptions about the women authors we study and more on their writing (21).

In my pursuit of both a solid foundation to structure my project around as well as my desire to work from an "ethos of humility, respect, and care," I felt it important to look to bell hooks not so much as the source of a "how-to" manual for conducting a class, but as a "theoretical" stepping stone towards the theories I struggle to create of my own (21). Not all the texts I explored for this thesis can be cataloged in a binary fashion (helpful/nonhelpful or hands-on techniques/theory only), but instead helped form my supportive scaffolding for my thinking. hooks' work is a good example of texts that do not fall into the above-mentioned binary, but instead, afford some mixture of approaches. hooks has written a trilogy of books about teaching: *Teaching to Transgress*, *Teaching Community*, and *Teaching Critical Thinking*, and each of

these texts (as well as her other writings) treat writing about pedagogy as a true discussion, a telling of stories, a personal narrative. She views the classroom as the perfect place to work on issues relating to social justice, and sees her role there as not just someone who facilitates dialogue, but someone who enacts that dialogue. She sees the importance of instructors living their lives in the way that they hope their students will choose to live – working to subvert and extinguish racism, sexism, classism, and all forms of social inequity. She stresses that balance is key – the student is right to expect a major experience in class, but at the same time, class must not be seen as a form of therapy.

hooks further believes that the instructor's job does not end with the modeling of behavior for the students – she must also become self-actualized herself, as she is encouraging in her students. Self-care and self-actualization help to create instructors who are less frightened of a classroom run on a radical approach, and, she says, they make much better border-crossers between students of different class, race, and gender backgrounds than do instructors who might work towards a radical approach but who have not yet become Freire's "fully human," or self-actualized – providing again at least a partial answer to the previously mentioned question of how instructors can be effected through the teaching of women's rhetorics.

#### STRUCTURE OF PROJECT

Chapter 2 of this thesis discusses the theoretical grounding of the project – why women's rhetorics is an important class to teach, and to take, and how feminist/radical/critical pedagogy fits into the structuring of the class. Chapter 3 attempts to explain some of the choices I made as I structured the syllabus and the accompanying materials, and includes the text of the syllabus and the reading calendar created for the class. The goals of the individual assignments are the focus of Chapter 4, with the assignments themselves included in the text of the chapter. The final chapter summarizes my findings and discusses areas for further research.

## Chapter 2: Why Women's Rhetorics?

For this thesis project, I have created a class that would introduce students to the study of women's rhetorics that will help to further one of the goals discussed in Royster and Kirsch's *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*: one that focuses on practices centering both on "work that involves rescue, recovery, or (re)inscription . . . in recognition of women as rhetors but also on finding innovative ways to engage in an exchange with these women both critically and imaginatively in order to enable a more dialogical relationship between past and present, their worlds and ours, their priorities and ours" (14). Additionally, I share the hope of Jacqueline Jones Royster, as described in *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, that the dependence upon "serendipity" and "lyrical literacy learning" by students hoping to learn about women rhetors can be lessened as women's rhetorics classes become more routinely and regularly included in the study of rhetoric (8).

### CRITICAL/FEMINIST PEDAGOGY

As this thesis explores pedagogy and pedagogical tools that I and others might use, some foregrounding of my own approach to pedagogy seems important. Many of the authors I utilize (Freire, hooks, Ronald, Ritchie, Bizzell – all mentioned in the Introduction, for instance) are considered critical pedagogues, and much of their scholarship forms the basis for my own thinking and theorizing. Feminist pedagogy is defined by Carolyn Shrewsbury in her article, "What is Feminist Pedagogy?" as beginning with a vision of

the classroom as a liberatory environment in which we, teacher-student and student-teacher, act as subjects, not objects. Feminist pedagogy is engaged teaching/learning - engaged with self in a continuing reflective process; engaged actively with the material being studied; engaged with others in a struggle to get beyond our sexism and racism and classism and homophobia and other

destructive hatreds and to work together to enhance our knowledge; engaged with the community, with traditional organizations, and with movements for social change (166).

Similarly, critical pedagogy was recently described in the article “Lessons from Paulo Freire” in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as being an “educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action” (Giroux). I approach this project from the crossroads where feminist pedagogy and critical pedagogy meet, but will refer most often to my personal pedagogical approach as being feminist.

Enacting a feminist pedagogy means (among other things) the sharing of power with the students wherever possible, accepting that learning can take place anywhere, at any time, and thus requires a certain amount of flexibility, and the importance of empowering students through the work we do together in the classroom. Frequently I work counter to the desires of the establishment by prodding students to consider the ways our culture can be at odds with the dreams it encourages them to have and pursue.

At the heart of a feminist pedagogy is the concept of complication. There is no black and white, there is no “capital-T-Truth” in the world, and what each of us does and says has repercussions in ways we can’t always understand. We complicate our subject matter and the way that we teach it to students in an attempt to expose them to different ways of seeing the world and engaging with it. One way to successfully complicate our teaching is to revisit our approaches – when things become too comfortable or rote to us, it’s time to step back and re-vision our classrooms.

Feminist pedagogy can be a tool to help further the goals of women’s rhetorics, and women’s rhetorics can work to make feminist pedagogy more effective and influential in

students' lives. Critical and feminist pedagogies and women's rhetorics are by their nature connected with social justice issues. Rhetoric (modern or otherwise) is a thread running through students' lives, social justice, and pedagogies of all sorts, whether it's for suasive purposes that we speak or otherwise.

Teaching students writing is not merely the application of formulas, but is something deeper and more meaningful. Writing has the capability to do so much to and for a student – it's a place for discovery, and for persuasion, and for change. Many authors of the texts I consulted for this project see writing as a transformative experience for both the writer and ultimately, the reader of the text.

A goal of this project is for students to have an exposure to a different conception of writing and discourse, and to move away from the more traditional ideas of rhetoric (i.e., no women wrote or spoke; rhetoric deals only with text on paper; creativity is less important than a well-organized paper; an individual text is more important than the connectivity it has with other texts; speaking is more important than listening; rhetoric and communication are only practiced through words, etc.). In her opening essay in *Reclaiming Rhetorica*, Andrea Lunsford discusses her desire to consider new and risky forms of rhetoric, “rhetorics that would not name and valorize one traditional, competitive, agonistic, and linear mode of rhetorical discourse” (6). She continues to describe what she imagines for a “reclaimed Rhetorica,” ultimately discarding the traditional rhetorical aims of “deception or conquest” in favor of similar concepts to those I described above: “understanding, exploration, connection, and conversation” (6).

Neither Lunsford nor I are advocating for an approach to rhetoric that discards completely the established scholarship and thinking about classical and traditional rhetoric, but instead a broader, more inclusive method of thinking. I have approached this project as an attempt to interrupt the “seamless narrative” present in the study of rhetoric that Lunsford



describes, as well as an opportunity to create a class that might allow students to write and create in ways and for reasons that they do not in other classes.

#### WHY WOMEN'S RHETORICS?

My definition of women's rhetorics is action-based (i.e., what women's words can *do*), is similar to that given by Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie in *Teaching Rhetorica*, and it centers around what uses women's rhetoric can provide us: "it challenges dominant epistemologies, asserts new topoi/contexts from which to argue, places material experience – especially that of women, women of color, sexual minorities, and other nonmainstream groups – at the center of knowledge formation, and it reconnects language/rhetoric to action and change" (11). This is a very action-oriented definition, and one that does not limit itself to only women, but instead includes nonmainstream groups. Gender is not *the* definition, but it is a *part* of the definition.

Creating a class based around women's rhetorics seemed like a natural thing to do, given my background in Women's Studies and interest in women writers. Many authors in both disciplines write of the problems inherent in coming to speech after long years of silence, and issues related to race, class and gender. They also explore new and dangerous styles of writing and voices of authoring, and the importance of identity, difference, and othering. In Women's Studies, we sometimes use writing as a tool towards an end, whereas in Women's Rhetorics, I hope to help students study that tool as well as those who use it. While a Women's Studies class might discuss the use of experiential evidence as a legitimate source of knowledge, focusing on the epistemological aspects of the topic, a women's rhetorics class places the use of that knowledge into dialogue with other rhetorical appeals. As Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald write in *Available Means*, women writers have had to rely more on appeals to experience, "to irony and on the constant assertion of their own ethos, since ethical appeal, by definition, has been historically denied to women" (xxii).

Women's Studies can have a more political stance, exploring social and cultural values and mores that allow these denials to happen, as well as the denials themselves and the ways that women worked around and through them. A class in Women's Rhetorics delves deeply into the rhetorical choices women have made, as well as "engages in changed practice and offers strategies to readers for enacting change themselves" (*Available Means*, xxiii). Both Women's Studies and Women's Rhetorics explore how women communicate, both utilize gender as a specific *topoi* from which to ground an author's writing, but Women's Rhetorics focuses on women's practices of writing/creating, choices and stances made as rhetoricians, and use of language and symbols. While the class will indeed be colored by women's issues, the ultimate intention and goal of my project is to expose students to the methods women utilized to create (both themselves, as well as their writings/texts) and the importance of incorporating women's rhetorical artifacts into our study of language and writing.

This class represents a study of what women do to create, why they do things that way, and how those decisions affect both the written/created artifact as well as the writer and the reader. While it is similar to a literature class in that there is a great deal of discussion of the substantial readings, the focus is not so much on literature as an artistic medium as would be the case in a literature class. There is a focus on women as creators of texts, but this differs from the study of literature due to the broader focus we give the topics of study.

#### WOMEN'S RHETORICS AS THEORY

In the Introduction to *Available Means*, Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald state that rhetorical theory "begins as a description of practice, then becomes a prescription for practice, often separated from the context out of which it grew in the first place" (xxvii). During some of my earlier classes in Women's Studies, I struggled with the frustration I felt as a result of the disconnect that I experienced when struggling with certain theoretical texts – the context that

brought the text into being had been lost in the shuffle. Ritchie and Ronald go on to state that, generally speaking, the rhetorical situations from which women work and create are such that the abstract is just not a practical jumping-off place. The exigency of women writers is set within their own here and now, but unfortunately it frequently continues into our here and now as well (regardless of how far in the past the woman wrote).

Teaching a class centered around women creators offers many opportunities to see women rhetors as theorists, and many of the assigned readings included in the calendar can be read as such (most of Gloria Anzaldúa's work, for instance, as well as Alice Walker and Audre Lorde). Ritchie and Ronald pose many questions in their anthology's introduction relating to the importance of theory – one such question asks how we determine the difference between “reading women's writing rhetorically (analyzing their rhetorical methods, the use of their available means) and claiming that a given work by a woman *is* rhetorical theory?” (xxix). My project focuses on the first of these two tasks, because I believe that in order to reach the second point – claiming a work to be rhetorical theory – we have to first be able to analyze the writing rhetorically. I enact this in my syllabus by including multiple opportunities for students to practice this skill, as well as utilizing readings that offer many different ways to be read.

Kathleen J. Ryan explores the different approaches to considering theory and theorizing in her book chapter in *Rhetoric in Motion*, “Making Pathways.” While her chapter is more concerned with feminist research and recovery, she devotes a substantial amount of space to theorizing, arguing that through the use of theory, scholars are provided with a way to conceptualize and (re)create our discipline and our lives (96). She views theory as “an activity for changing, framing, and understanding,” all of which are activities found (or called for) within the texts of a women's rhetorics class (97).

I consistently include in my approach to teaching an attention to questioning. I tell my students I want them to cultivate an attitude of constant questioning, and I do this for many reasons, including the hope that it will encourage them to see the world around them in different ways. I agree with Ryan when she states that we should “recognize questioning as a heuristic for theorizing” as well as when she places categorizing and explaining as theoretical activities (98). When we encourage students to think about silence and listening as rhetorical activities, we are categorizing these things in new and different ways, just as we are when we revisit the stories of Aspasia with the intent to broaden our rhetorical map, as Cheryl Glenn encourages.

#### INCLUSION

When we list the reasons why the inclusion of women’s rhetorics into the fold of the larger discipline of composition and rhetoric is important, the first one will usually be that women were previously left out. Essentially, continuing the “traditional,” male-centric understanding of rhetoric is dishonest. We know now that women have always composed, and leaving them out of our histories short-changes the women left out as well as the tradition. This project is intended to both make women rhetors more familiar to students as well as to encourage them to look anew at the “rules” governing what we as a culture see as topics that are worthy of study.

As we bring women into the canon, redefine and challenge the canon, and question the existence of the canon, we by necessity must also bring their forms of creating in with them. This means that we must begin to recognize the significance of journal writing, gardening, photography, letter writing, and many other non-traditional forms of communication – a more difficult undertaking for this time period than the understanding of women as rhetorical actors. It can be done, though, as Karen A. Foss and Sonja K. Foss reassure the readers of their text *Women Speak*: “All concepts are really just labels for explanations about how communication

works, developed by inquiring people seeking to understand communication by studying particular samples of it” (31). Foss and Foss work to establish a more nuanced understanding of women’s ways of communication in their book by considering (among other things) dance, children’s parties, graffiti, and motherhood to be legitimate forms of rhetorical communication. In choosing the areas to be included in their book, they took into consideration the nature of the exigence, the audience, the text, and the world created.

Women rhetors bring with them, also, an added nuance to the traditional concept of “invention” in rhetoric – while male rhetors historically had only to create their text, women have had to create both themselves and their texts, creating their role as acceptable female speaker along with the words to be spoken. The study of this extra step up to the podium in preparation for speechmaking brings a great deal to the student’s understanding of invention and rhetoric. So much of the reading I have done for this project has revolved around re-seeing and re-conceptualizing established ideas, and these readings can show students that the same re-seeing and re-conceptualizing being done in textual format can and does take place regarding the women authors themselves – and it can be something that they, too, can make use of.

The most important gain, for me, in terms of “Why Women’s Rhetorics?” would have to be passion. Teaching a topic that is an important one, personally, makes all the difference in the world in a classroom. No matter how hard we try to give our all in the classroom, our students always get the better educational experience when we bring our own excitement and joy to the subject. I find in the works listed on the reading calendar opportunities for experiencing connection with others in ways I don’t find with other texts. As bell hooks explains in *Teaching to Transgress*, “...excitement about ideas was not sufficient to create an exciting learning process. As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another’s voices, in recognizing one another’s presence” (8). I

find the experience of working with women's rhetorics to be intensely personal and very fulfilling, and I hope that I am able to relate that experience to my students as we experience the works together.

### **Chapter 3: Rationale for Syllabus and Accompanying Materials**

#### SCOPE AND STRUCTURE

I visualize this class as being an amalgamation of various types of classes offered in a standard English department: the study of some rhetoric, some theory, and some history, all by reading the approaches others have taken, contextualizing and synthesizing them through discussions and through the students' own writing. This class does not have a fancy "hook," and cannot be considered to be completely original by any stretch of the imagination. It's simply a class structured around the writings of women, who have been historically silenced, ignored, and/or forgotten, and the largest work of the class will be the study of the works of authors who fall into those categories, as well as the authors themselves.

I structured the class as a reading intensive upper-division rhetoric class, but which could also cross-reference with other departments to provide credit as a literature, journalism, mass communications, or a Women's Studies class. My intended audience, though, is the English major who has been exposed previously to some historical rhetoric classes already and likely may have some exposure to some women writers. The class is reading heavy, as would be expected, as it involves the study of writers, what they wrote, and why they chose to write the way that they did.

I created the class with an eye to engaging the students in substantial rhetorical criticism of the writers, to establish a strong appreciation and understanding of why the women had the choices they had, why they made the choices they did, and when some things offered as choices were not choices at all. My hope was to create a classroom situation where students were simultaneously learning about the texts of the women authors while also learning the historical, cultural, and critical contexts of those writings. What follows is a brief overview of the syllabus and class reading calendar, then the documents themselves.

## SYLLABUS AND CALENDAR OVERVIEW

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, the class is intended to expose students to a different conception of rhetoric; however, the syllabus itself does more to move women's rhetorics into a "normalized" state than anything else – it is similar in language to other rhetoric and writing classes that do not focus on women rhetors, with some exceptions. For example, the opening paragraph immediately discusses flexibility and mutability of our understandings of rhetoric and communication. Questions relating to the definition of "women's rhetorics" and the relation of gender to communication are posed, but I make a point to emphasize that definitive answers to those questions are not the point of the class, but instead the posing of the questions and the thinking that accompanies the creation of the questions is what matters most, a concept Cheryl Glenn theorizes about in *Rhetoric Retold*, as well as do Kate Ronald and Joy Ritchie in *Teaching Rhetorica*.

The Reading Calendar sets forth the assigned readings and the days we will be discussing them. Additionally, I provide students with some very broad concepts that I intend for us to discuss from the readings – I do this to give them a little guidance in their reading and thinking about where they might want to focus their thinking for their writing about the readings, without (hopefully) confining them as scholars too much. The section of this Chapter following the actual Syllabus and Reading Calendar goes into more detail regarding the specific choices I made regarding the readings.



## SYLLABUS AND READING CALENDAR:

Women's Rhetorics  
 ENGL 4123-000  
 Instructor: Laura Knudson  
 Office & Office Hours: TBA  
 Email: l.adams.knudson@tcu.edu

### **Course Description and Class Overview**

This course focuses on women's choices in writing and argumentation. We will be making a semester-long inquiry into the approaches women have historically used to speak, write, and create publically, in an attempt to further the goal of broadening both our own understanding and that of our discipline of the importance of a more inclusive and flexible approach to what is important communication. As women did not traditionally allow themselves to be limited to the written word, we will be studying more than merely traditionally written texts. We will address ourselves to the following questions (among others): What is women's rhetoric, and how (if at all) does gender affect the writing and creating choices of a rhetor? What are the forms, methods, stylistic choices, and genres that women have chosen in their attempts to persuade and communicate? We will attempt to obtain a better understanding, through our discussions, research, and our writing, of the importance of early and current women rhetors.

This is an upper-level undergraduate course; therefore, please expect to do a great deal of both reading and writing as well as discussing. I consider this class to be closer to a seminar class than to a writing class due to the fact that much of the finished products we create will be communal; however, the class does require that you do your own writing and thinking. Just be sure to share that with your colleagues, as we are working together on a larger and greater understanding of women as writers and communicators.

### **Course Goals**

The core questions this class strives to answer are how have women historically communicated, why did they choose these particular methods, and how can our study of women's rhetorics benefit us and others? We will explore these questions not so much to achieve a concrete answer, but instead to experience and explore the various complexities and difficulties inherent in their posing and consideration.

### **Course Learning Outcomes (or what you will gain from this class)**

- ✓ Through the authorship of a Rhetorical Analysis of their chosen author, students will further develop skills of Rhetorical Analysis.
- ✓ Students will show the ability to employ writing strategies and rhetorical practices learned in lower division writing courses (i.e., Written Communication 1 and 2) and will produce writing that demonstrates clarity and precision of thought.
- ✓ Through the creation of the Online Author Wiki/Webring (and other engagement with online technologies), students will develop and utilize the ability to compose and create in various technical media (online, in short and in long written assignments, etc.), and will expand and demonstrate their various abilities to problem-solve.

- ✓ Through the creation of the online Author Wiki/Webring project and the Rhetorical Analysis, the students will identify, evaluate, choose, and ethically use primary and secondary research sources.
- ✓ Through reading, discussion, and interaction with both primary and secondary texts, students will gain an understanding of the following:
  - the varied and disparate multiple definitions of “women’s rhetoric”;
  - a deeper understanding of the modes of communication women have historically used, why they used them, and how this has changed (and/or remained the same) for today’s female rhetors;
  - issues relating to the creation and maintenance of a “canon”;
  - the differences between women’s rhetorics and the rhetorics of other groups of people, as well as an understanding of the differences between women’s rhetorics and feminist rhetorics; and
  - the importance of historiography to the understanding and inclusion of women into the study of rhetorics (and other disciplines).

### **Texts and Materials**

- Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald, *Available Means: An Anthology of Women’s Rhetoric(s)*
- Lindal Buchanan & Kathleen J. Ryan, *Walking and Talking: Feminist Rhetorics*

### **Requirements/Assignments**

Your specific readings are detailed in the document, “Class Readings,” along with due dates for the assignments. I reserve the right to change the readings to suit the needs of the class; however, I will remain mindful of time constraints.

You will have four major assignments due throughout the semester, each of which is detailed in the assignment sheet and rubric accompanying this syllabus.

### **Evaluation**

Talk Back Papers; Established Author Wiki & Presentation; New Author Introduction: 20% each; Rhetorical Analysis: 30%; Participation: 10%

### **Grading Scale and Criteria**

Grading Criteria- This is generally the grading criteria I follow although you will receive a more detailed rubric for each assignment.

100-93: A 92-90: A-	Exceptional college-level. An A paper is a publishable paper. It offers an excellent response to the assignment; it fulfills minor as well as major purposes. Its overall pattern of organization is appropriate; the internal organization of ideas is effective; transitions are smooth. The message is well written, interesting, and easy to read. It may show originality in organization, development, sentence structure or word choice. It is free of all major and almost all minor errors in format, grammar, mechanics, organization, and development. It follows instructions completely. A-level work is stellar work, over and above what is required in the assignment.
B+: 89-87 B: 86-83 B-: 82-80	Good college-level work. It offers an effective response to the assignment. Both the overall pattern of organization and the internal organization are good. The writing style is clear, concise, and friendly. It may have a few minor mechanical errors or some awkward spots, but basically it is well written. It follows instructions

	completely.
C+: 79-77 C: 76-73 C-: 72-70	Satisfactory college-level work. It offers an acceptable response to the assignment; it uses an acceptable pattern of organization; the writing follows the conventions of standard English. There may be minor errors in style, tone, internal organization, format, or mechanics. It generally follows instructions. OR A good (B) paper with a major flaw in one of the following: the organization, development, tone, or writing style.
D+: 67-69 D: 66-63 D-: 62-60	A satisfactory (C) paper with a major flaw in one of the following: the organization, development, tone, format or writing style. OR A poor paper which shows some evidence of attempting to solve the problem, but which has many minor errors in organization, development, word choice, style, tone, format, and mechanics. None of these alone would necessarily doom the paper; however, together they make the paper unsatisfactory.
F Below 60	A poor (D) paper with a major flaw in one of the following: the organization, development, tone, or writing style. OR A paper that violates the facts explicitly given in the problem OR A paper that is marred by an unacceptable number of errors in organization, development, word choice, style, tone, format, and mechanics. OR A paper that contains any form of dishonesty.

**Administrative Topics (tardies, behavior, late papers, office hours, etc.)**

**The Writing Center:**

**ADA Statement:**

**Academic Dishonesty:<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> In a “real world” syllabus, I would include the language required by the institution where I was offering the class; however, for brevity’s sake, I leave these items out.

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

\*\*This schedule is tentative because I like to draw on the needs, interests, and ongoing discussions of each class when making assignments.

You may receive updated schedules.\*\*

*Note:* On the schedule, what is listed as “Read” and “Due” for the day is what you need to have completed before that class period. I have listed “Backtalk” as due each week; however, once you meet the minimum submissions (12) you are done. Always bring your “Backtalk” essay with you to class as well as post it online. “Class” denotes the concepts we will be discussing in class (and that you should keep in mind as you are reading) and/or activities we will be doing when we meet.

**WT** = *Walking and Talking Feminist Rhetorics*; **AM** = *Available Means*; **OL** = Online (please print and bring to class); **T** = Tuesday; **R** = Thursday

#### WEEK 1 – CHARTING THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN’S RHETORICS

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	N/A
	<b>Due:</b>	N/A
	<b>Class:</b>	Introductions; Syllabus Review; Defining Women’s Rhetorics; Reading and Discussion of hooks’ “Talking Back” (handout); Assign Backtalking Reading Responses; Assign New Author Introduction
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>WT:</b> Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. Introduction to <i>Man Cannot Speak for Her</i> (7-18) and Jarratt, Susan C. “Speaking to the Past: Feminist Historiography in Rhetoric” (18-35)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Feminist rhetoric vs. women’s rhetoric: what’s the difference? Historiography – women’s history, women’s writing; Why did women write?

#### WEEK 2 – CHARTING THE EMERGENCE, CON’T AND CLAIMING THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>WT:</b> Glenn, Cheryl. “sex, lies, and manuscript: Refiguring Aspasia in the History of Rhetoric” (35-53) <b>AM:</b> Grimke, Sarah. “Letter to Theodore Weld” (114-119); Wells, Ida B. “Lynch Law in All its Phases” (188-204); Montague, Lady Mary Wortley. “Letter to Lady Bute” (84-89)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Introduce Author Webring; borders and intersections; theories and naming
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Wollstonecraft, Mary. From <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> (92-106); Cooper, Anna Julia. “The Higher Education of Women” (163-171)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Education as a right; purposes of education; invention of text alongside invention of speaking self

#### WEEK 3 – CASE STUDY 1: DEBATING DISCIPLINARY DIRECTIONS: RECOVERY VS. RETHEORIZING

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>WT:</b> Biesecker, Barbara. “Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric” (333-355)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night; choose your author for Webring Project</b>

	<b>Class:</b>	Canons, tokenism, techne, inclusion
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>WT:</b> Campbell, Karlyn Kohrs. "Biesecker Cannot Speak for Her Either" (355-360)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night; create initial page for Webring Project</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Problems relating to recovery of women

#### WEEK 4 – ARTICULATING AND ENACTING FEMINIST METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>WT:</b> Bizell, Patricia. "Feminist Methods of Research in the History of Rhetoric: What Difference Do They Make?" (107-123)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Purposes of research in history of rhetoric; the role of emotion in research and writing
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>WT:</b> Enoch, Jessica. "Survival Stories: Feminist Historiographic Approaches to Chicana Rhetorics of Sterilization Abuse" (182-201)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Rhetorics of survival, rhetoric of normalization, resistance to historiographic closure

#### WEEK 5 – ARTICULATING AND ENACTING FEMINIST METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES, CON'T

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Behar, Ruth. "Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart" (478-489); Buck, Gertrude. "The Present Status of Rhetorical Theory" (211-218)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Empirical research; academic research, subjectivity
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Rich, Adrienne. "When We Dead Awaken" (267-283)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Writing as exploration; equality versus "sounding the same"

#### WEEK 6 – EXPLORING GENDERED SITES, GENRES, AND STYLES OF RHETORIC

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>WT:</b> Johnson, Nan. "Reigning in the Court of Silence: Women and Rhetorical Space in Postbellum America" (274-291)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Conduct literature; hidden rhetoric; assign Rhetorical Analysis; sign up for individual conference times
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>WT:</b> Dow, Bonnie J. and Mari Boor Tonn. "'Feminine Style'" and Political Judgment in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards" (313-333)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Watch portion of video of Richards' speech; feminine style

#### WEEK 7 - EXPLORING GENDERED SITES, GENRES, AND STYLES OF RHETORIC, CON'T

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Woolf, Virginia. "Professions for Women" (241-247); Mairs, Nancy. "Carnal Acts"
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Angel in the house; language stealer; triple bind
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Allison, Dorothy. From <i>Two or Three Things I Know for Sure</i> (435-454); Silko, Leslie Marmon. "Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit" (462-471)

	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Construction of truth in language; language for survival

WEEK 8 – DIFFERENT RHETORICS, RHETORICS OF DIFFERENCE

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Belinda. “Petition of an African Slave” (89-92); Harper Frances Ellen Watkins. “We Are All Bound Up Together” (147-151) <b>OL:</b> hooks, bell. From <i>Yearning</i> : “Aesthetic Inheritances” (115-122)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Alternative creativity/rhetoric
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Cherokee Women. “Cherokee Women Address Their Nation” (106-109); Woo, Merle. “Letter to Ma” (306-313); Hamer, Fannie Lou. “The Special Plight and the Role of the Black Woman” (179-188) <b>OL:</b> Frye, Gladys-Marie. From <i>Singular Women</i> : “A Sermon in Patchwork: New Light on Harriet Powers” (81-95)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Authority to speak; alternative creativity/rhetoric

WEEK 9 – INDIVIDUAL CONFERENCING

WEEK 10 – CASE STUDY 2: DEBATING THE AIMS OF DISCOURSE: PERSUASIVE VERSUS INVITATIONAL RHETORIC

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>WT:</b> Foss, Sonja K. and Cindy L. Griffin. “Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an Invitational Rhetoric” (360-381) <b>AM:</b> Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. From <i>Women and Economics</i> (204-211)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Invitational rhetoric; cooperation
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>WT:</b> Condit, Celeste Michelle. “In Praise of Eloquent Diversity: Gender and Rhetoric as Public Persuasion” (381-398) <b>AM:</b> Walker, Alice. “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens” (314-323)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Looking high and low; non-dichotomous study of gender; types of rhetoric and creativity

WEEK 11 – CREATING NEW FORMS OF DISCIPLINARY ARGUMENT

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> hooks, bell. “Homeplace (a site of resistance)” (382-391); Williams, Patricia. “The Death of the Profane” (409-416)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Homeplaces; safety; feminine practice of writing
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Carson, Rachel. “A Fable for Tomorrow” (259-262); Jordan, Mary Augusta. From <i>Correct Writing and Speaking</i> (218-223)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night; bring draft of Rhetorical Analysis to class for in-class workshopping and discussion</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Workshopping Multiple modes of persuasion; rules in writing and speaking

WEEK 12 – SILENCE

	<b>Read:</b>	<b>OL:</b> Glenn, Cheryl. From <i>Unspoken</i> : “Defining Silence”; Glenn, Cheryl and
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<b>T</b>		Krista Ratcliff. Introduction to <i>Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts</i>
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Silence as speech; listening as communication
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Lorde, Audre. “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action” <b>OL:</b> Glenn, Cheryl and Ratcliffe, Krista. From <i>Silence and Listening as Rhetorical Arts</i> : “Finding Democracy in our Argument Culture: Listening to Spike Lee’s Jazz Funeral on the Levees”
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night; Rhetorical Analysis due in final form via Turnitin.com</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Watch a clip from “When the Levees Broke”; Rhetorical listening

### WEEK 13 – LISTENING

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Anzaldúa, Gloria. “To Tame a Wild Tongue” (356-366) <b>OL:</b> From Ratcliffe, Krista. <i>Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness</i> : Translating Listening Into Language and Action” (1-17)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Gender and listening; silence vs. silencing
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>OL:</b> From Ratcliffe, Krista. <i>Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness</i> : “Defining Rhetorical Listening” (17-46)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night; New Author Due</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Listening for the unknown

### WEEK 14 – RHETORICS OF SPIRITUALITY AND OF THE BODY

<b>T</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>OL:</b> Anzaldúa, Gloria. <a href="#">“now let us shift...the path of conocimiento”</a> <b>AM:</b> Julian of Norwich. From <i>Revelations of Divine Love</i> (25-29)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Intersections of spirituality and body rhetorics
<b>R</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>AM:</b> Truth, Sojourner. “Speech at the Woman’s Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio” (143-147) Lamm, Nomy. “It’s a Big Fat Revolution” (454-462)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Wednesday night; New Authors Reflection due</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Presentation of New Authors

### WEEK 15 – WRAPPING UP

**T:** Final entries and associations on Webring/Wiki due; presentation of wiki authors

**R:** In class reflection writing

## CLASS READINGS

I chose the assigned readings largely from the texts *Available Means* (Ritchie and Ronald) and *Walking & Talking Feminist Rhetorics* (Buchanan and Ryan). I found a number of things present in the Buchanan and Ryan text that were compelling and that made me feel it was a good fit for a class in women's rhetorics (the title, certain texts included, and the organization all worked in its favor), while *Available Means* provides texts not easily located in one place and that are not widely taught.

Having "feminist" in the title of the textbook provides us the opportunity at the start of the semester to discuss the difference between feminist rhetorics and women's rhetorics – just because something is written by a woman does not make it feminist, and vice versa. Many of the texts in both books address issues could be considered feminist (the basic issue of can and should women speak publicly being the first issue most women rhetors had to deal with, for instance, as I mentioned in the Introduction), but the focus of the class is not on the *feminist* nature of the texts but instead the way in which the authors made their arguments (the style, tone, rhetorical choices, etc.). In the following sections, I will justify my use of some of the texts I chose, and explain how I intended them to be utilized in class.

### Weeks 1 and 2 (Charting the Emergence)

The first assigned reading in the Reading Calendar is from Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's *Man Cannot Speak for Her: A Critical Study of Early Feminist Rhetoric: Vol I*. Campbell introduces the concept of "feminine rhetoric" and "feminine style" in this text. As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, understanding a style as feminine yet not limited to women alone is a key concept for students to grasp. Conceptualizing a style as feminine, but then also stating that it is not necessarily limited to women is challenging; however, this does help us to sketch



out one possible approach to the make-up of a women's rhetoric. Understanding feminine style to be a joining of approaches and practices stemming from a certain social understanding of gender is a big part of what I intend students to glean from this class. I recognize that the concept of "feminine style" can be essentializing; however, the concept does offer us a framework to understand the thinking of women at that time as they wrote and rewrote themselves and their texts. Teaching a concept that runs the risk of essentializing one (or more) groups of authors/people requires a great deal of contextualizing and discussion – something invaluable and necessary in a women's rhetorics course. I recognize the problematic nature of the term itself, but choose to use it in this context not for its correctness, but instead for the opportunity to call the concept and its problematic nature into discussion.

The characteristics Campbell sketches out as being descriptive of a feminine style are also related to the learning of a craft (whether that craft is rhetoric or canning). Campbell presents the characteristics as having the following: 1) a personal tone; 2) inductive structure; 3) audience participation; 4) audience as peers; 5) linkage of authority with experience, and 6) attempts to engender identification on the basis of similar or shared experience (13). I anticipate that this list is something we would refer back to throughout class discussions, along with regular discussions relating to issues of essentialism.

I further wanted to establish early in our readings the concept I introduced earlier in this thesis that women had to both create their texts as well as the persona of the woman drafting that text, and that this was fully a rhetorical move. Campbell argues (as do many of the other authors assigned) that because women had to surmount the societal taboo of publicly speaking, she had to factor this into her argument as well. Women had to write and speak persuasively, even though this would also result in her being viewed as unwomanly, impure, impious, and no longer acceptable in polite society. Thus, women had to present their arguments well, but also had to do

so in such a way that they could continue to be seen as fulfilling the role(s) of their gender. Along with the Campbell reading, the Glenn reading (“sex, lies, and manuscript”) explicitly makes this point very well, while the Ida B. Wells and Sarah Grimke readings function as examples of women doing this very thing.

Susan C. Jarratt’s essay, “Speaking to the Past: Feminist Historiography in Rhetoric” addresses two concepts I mentioned earlier in Chapter 1: arguments in favor of a particular approach to the treatment of women’s rhetorics, and gender specific approaches to research and methodologies. She states early in her essay that her concerns have changed over time, she situates herself as regards her gender, and she states that she is “describing history writing as a social practice that contributes to a radical critique of dominant discourses on gender” (20). She argues for a similar approach to historiography as does Cheryl Glenn: one that “questions the narrative logic operative in traditional histories” (20). Assigning this reading early in the semester offers us the opportunity to discuss the concept of flexibility in scholarship, the concept of “talking back” to the readings, to the authors, to the very concept of “truth with a capital-T.”

Also included for the first week is “sex, lies, and manuscript,” by Cheryl Glenn. Glenn poses a challenge in this essay for us to rethink the established history of rhetoric and women’s place within it. A big part of the class is the concept that academic publications and established traditions are not infallible and that they can be challenged, as Glenn is calling for here, and as the readings in Week 3 also address. I would argue that, in a way, Glenn’s text also works to help normalize women’s rhetorics – a goal I discuss earlier in this thesis. By focusing her study on a time frame and geographic area students frequently equate with the “traditional” study of rhetoric (classical Greece), she helps further the concept that women rhetors are as important to traditional rhetorical study as Sophocles, Pericles, and Socrates.

Week 3 makes use of one of the case studies compiled in *Walking and Talking*. The case study is made up of a short summary of the discussion relating to recovery work versus retheorizing that took place between Barbara Biesecker and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell in their texts “Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric” and “Biesecker Cannot Speak for Her Either,” respectively. These two texts, and the summary, offer the opportunity for discussion in class (as well as writing by the students) on a number of topics I mentioned earlier in Chapter 1 as being vital to this project. A gender specific approach to research methodologies is clearly discussed, along with the arguments for and against various approaches to the treatment of women’s rhetorics, how we should change (if any) our view of the canon, and the multiple ways that gender can and does inform our thinking about writing and about researching.

The week spent on the Biesecker/Campbell discussion leads well into Weeks 4 and 5, in which we discuss at greater length the concept of feminist methods and methodologies. The readings begin with Patricia Bizell’s “Feminist Methods of Research in the History of Rhetoric: What Difference Do They Make?” In this essay, Bizzell examines the role of emotion and feminist ideals in the work of a researcher. This essay speaks strongly to the question I highlighted earlier in this thesis relating to gender-specific approaches to research and methodologies – Bizzell grapples with our understanding of what is most important in research, and what is possible. This reading opens up opportunities for class discussion based around types of researching, the purposes academics engage in research, and what the outcomes of that research can possibly be. Additionally, leading a discussion relating to research and feminist inquiry is an opportunity for instructors to consider their own methodologies and approaches, engaging in the important self-reflection and ultimately, self-actualization that bell hooks calls for, and which I mention earlier in this project. To determine the answer to Ronald and Ritchie’s

question regarding how academics might be changed through the work of teaching women's rhetorics, we have to be willing to constantly engage with the material as we present it to our students, and I see the use of this essay as a great opportunity.

The use of Ruth Behar's essay in conjunction with Gertrude Buck's essay in Week 5 are intended to offer opportunities for discussion relating to changes to research methodologies over time (Buck's essay is dated 1900, while Behar's essay is from 1996) as well as to see examples of how emotion and research can work together to provide a more nuanced and complicated understanding of a subject under study. Adrienne Rich's essay, "When We Dead Awaken" speaks to the complications inherent in the concept of a "canon," and how important wrestling with issues such as this are. She also addresses the troubling issues of gender and writing: "the specter of this kind of male judgment, along with the misnaming and thwarting of her needs by a culture controlled by males, has created problems for the woman writer: problems of contact with herself, problems of language and style, problems of energy and survival" (271). She struggles with the concepts of equality in writing, and enunciates the difficulties of being a female poet largely influenced by male writers, explaining that she had confused equality "with sounding the same" as men (273).

Rich's essay is rife with opportunities to discuss many of the concepts I discuss in the introduction to this thesis: Rich struggles with the creation of both text and persona, her writing is an excellent example of working with a "feminine style," and she explores issues of connectivity and obviously of gender, as well. I assigned this essay alone in the hopes that class discussion could delve more deeply into the many messages Rich conveys in and with her writing.

Weeks 6 and 7 deal with gendered styles of writing and rhetoric. I have included two readings from the Buchanan and Ryan textbook: Nan Johnson's chapter regarding conduct

manuals (“Reigning in the Court of Silence”) and Bonnie Dow’s text, “Feminine Style and Political Judgment in the Rhetoric of Ann Richards.” The first text focuses on conduct manuals and the way that they kept the women in the home and out of the public arena. This text reinforces the argument that rhetoric is about power, highlighting the ways that conduct literature functioned to disguise their purpose. I can imagine a class discussion comparing conduct manuals with women’s magazines – the presentation might be quite different, but when we engage in some critical reading and thinking based around the contents of “Parenting Magazine” as compared with early conduct manuals, we might find some fascinating similarities, allowing students to locate areas in their culture ripe for “talking back.”

Placing Johnson’s essay in conversation with the essay on the feminine style of Ann Richards offers some excellent opportunities to dissect not only what “feminine style” is, but also how it stems from women’s working to subvert the limitations set on them by cultural understandings of gender and the conduct manuals written to encourage women to conform to those standards. Through the use of the Dow essay in conjunction with a video excerpt from the Ann Richards speech the essay draws from, the students will have the opportunity to both read the text of the speech as well as to hear it being delivered and hear the crowd’s response to it.

Week 7 utilizes readings by Virginia Woolf, Nancy Mairs, Dorothy Allison and Leslie Marmon Silko. Much of the focus for this week is intended to be with language – how we use it to construct truths, to survive, and how it can be stolen. The concept of the “angel in the house” is presented in the Woolf reading, and the Allison and Silko readings offer opportunities to explore the difficulties inherent in the concept of “truth.” Even having read these essays before, revisiting them from the standpoint of preparing to teach them offered me the opportunity to reexamine them, embrace the possibility of “getting it crooked,” and reflect on how my

understanding of them has changed since I first read them – another opportunity to embrace the self-actualization work hooks calls for and which I described in earlier chapters.

Week 8 is dedicated to rhetorics of difference. Some of the readings are about physical differences (race, gender, etc.); however, two of the readings deal with the creation of texts that are not written on paper with words, but instead are created in the form of quilts. By bringing non-traditional work into the realm of rhetoric, we can discuss the concept of community and connectivity in new ways (a piece of text in the form of a quilt simultaneously telling a story about the Bible and the doings of the family); we can discuss the ways feminine style might or might not be present in non-traditional texts, and how we might translate that text into a feminine style; how the use of the text in this way might involve running the risk of “getting it crooked,” and the value in non-public rhetoric for women.

Non-traditional rhetoric of this sort has long been seen as a tool of women rhetors. bell hooks writes of her grandmother’s quilting practice and the rhetoric of quilting in “Aesthetic Inheritances” (from *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*). Alongside this text is Gladys-Marie Fry’s book chapter from *Singular Women* (“A Sermon in Patchwork”) which details the work done by and about Harriet Powers. Both of these essays bring focus to two of the key themes of the class described in the opening chapter of this thesis: connectivity and “different” types of rhetoric.

Week 10 works to lay the groundwork for the next three weeks’ work by addressing the concept of persuasive versus invitational rhetoric, and the importance of considering communication that does not aim to persuade to be a form of rhetoric. We make use of the second case study in *Walking and Talking* and a Charlotte Perkins Gilman essay from *Women and Economics*. The case study in *Walking and Talking* focuses on two articles. The first assigned article is Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin’s “Beyond Persuasion: A Proposal for an

Invitational Rhetoric” in which the authors suggest that because the intention of persuasion is to change the audience’s beliefs, persuasion then is, by its nature, patriarchal (360). Foss and Griffin argue that invitational rhetoric is more feminist in nature, through the use of “offering” and “yielding,” with the end result being an exchange of views that may or may not lead to a change of mind.

The next article assigned for this week is Celeste Michelle Condit’s “In Praise of Eloquent Diversity: Gender and Rhetoric as Public Persuasion.” Condit takes a differing stance from that of Foss and Griffin, stating that the perspective described by Foss and Griffin relies on “a faulty, essentialist understanding of identity and a failure to appreciate the inherently persuasive character of discourse” (381). The use of these two articles in a discussion of the merits of persuasive and invitational rhetoric offers students the opportunity to explore how different scholars understand rhetoric and its uses. These articles offer a great opportunity to further the normalization of the study of women’s rhetorics, by placing the concept of suasive rhetoric into conversation with that of invitational rhetoric, complete with some narrative examples.

The essay by Alice Walker, “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens” functions as an example of invitational rhetoric, and again discusses the various ways women had to create differently from men, as well as how differently women of color had to create. Walker makes use of Woolf’s writings, and students will be able to again see an author who is willing to risk “getting it crooked.”

Week 11 explores new forms of disciplinary argument, opening with readings by bell hooks and Patricia Williams (“Homeplace (a site of resistance)” and “The Death of the Profane,” respectively). Both essays focus on concepts I touched on in Chapter 1 of this thesis: providing an opportunity to struggle with the concepts of gendered writing and living, ways that writing

and creating can be seen to reinforce or challenge the status quo, and discussions of ways in which both authors make use of the “feminine style.” In hooks’ essay, “Homeplace,” she turns the concept of private home life and “rereads it as a theoretical stance and as a public act of resistance” (Ritchie and Ronald 382).

Similarly to hooks, Williams uses personal narrative to consider objectivity and subjectivity, critiquing “the way in which legal discourse distorts the truth of experience, as specific people, events, and circumstances are stripped away in order to render experience more ‘objective’” (Ritchie and Ronald 409-410). As does hooks, she takes some fairly commonplace occurrences and uses them as the basis for exploration of both theoretical and personal knowledge. Williams’ essay offers the opportunity to discuss a myriad of the concepts outlined in the opening chapter of this thesis, and to complicate them further with the possibility of a discussion of race. Williams’ work might also be an opportunity to explore the concept of the exemplary woman versus the ordinary woman, in that she states that her identity “as a black, female, and a commercial lawyer has rendered me simultaneously universal, trendy, and marginal” (“Brass Ring” 7).

Weeks 12 and 13 go even further by exploring silence and listening as forms of rhetoric. These units offer students the opportunity to, as mentioned in Chapter 1, consider things from a “crooked” standpoint: silence is not just an absence of speech, but instead can be a chosen rhetorical strategy. Just as we don’t initially think of silence in that way, so too can we overlook the importance of listening. Additionally, when we open up the ways we define rhetoric to include silence and listening, we can further complicate the frequent misunderstanding of the exemplary woman as the only type of woman allowed to speak/write, as mentioned in Chapter 1.

Week 14 is the week slated for discussion of spirituality and the body. In the lesson plan I created for this week which follows this section, I include the possibility of viewing a video



(approximately 20 minutes long) and relegate the remainder of the class for discussion of the readings, the video, and the work students will have done on their Backtalking responses.

In creating the detailed lesson plan for this project I kept in mind that much of what occurs in class depends on the responses of the students, and a strong response to a reading results in our discussion remaining focused on that reading, versus adhering strictly to a time limit I previously devised. I remain as flexible as possible in class by preparing a large number of activities/discussion prompts so that if a discussion prompt does not seem to be meeting the needs of the class and our goals for the day, I am able to move on to more productive areas.

The lesson plan for Week 14 is made up predominantly of discussion questions, aimed at assisting students in recognizing various rhetorical moves of the authors, such as the ways the two authors subverted the standard (at the time they wrote) approach to writing about spirituality, a concept I initially discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Julian of Norwich breaks decisively from the norm of the time (Christianity is preached – i.e., researched, translated, and then delivered – by men; the heads of religion are all male, including God the Father, and women are descended directly from Eve and thus responsible for the Fall). She represents God as maternal as well as paternal and describes Jesus as female and in so doing, creates a rhetoric of inclusion, according to Cheryl Glenn.

I assigned a more contemporary piece to accompany this one – Gloria Anzaldúa’s “now let us shift.” In this piece, Anzaldúa is (among other things) considering the Cartesian mind/body split, and offering a solution to that split. She describes a “path to *conocimiento*” and in so doing, works against many of the expectations of the genre in which she writes. She states in her essay that “*conocimiento*” is a term that derives from *cognoscera*: “a Latin verb meaning ‘to know’ and is the Spanish word for knowledge and skill. I call *conocimiento* that aspect of consciousness urging you to act on the knowledge gained” (577). Her essay can be classified as a number of

things – an exploration of her own spiritual side, an autobiographical text relating her health issues, her struggles as a writer and creator, her struggles as a woman. The text also can be read as a “how to” guide, laying out the steps one must take to become the whole person you are intended to be. This essay speaks to many of the topics I introduced in the first chapter of this thesis: getting it crooked, self-reflection and actualization, the feminine style, and the exemplary versus ordinary female speaker.

Finally, I included for that lesson a short video of a TED talk by Katie Rubin – this portion of the lesson plan is intended to function as a further “conversation starter,” should the planned discussion fall flat. By introducing the video (if necessary), discussion of the rhetorical decisions each woman made could be easier (while the Anzaldúa piece is indeed more contemporary than the Julian of Norwich piece, neither is as current as the Rubin video). If students have difficulty making the connections between the written texts, viewing the video as a bridge between each of the writers (to borrow a concept from Anzaldúa) could allow an easier understanding. For instance, each one of these women are moving away from specific, traditional rhetorical moves while embracing other, riskier moves – the first being the one most commonly broken by women writing and speaking: women aren’t supposed to preach, and each of these women is, in a way, doing just that. Each of them choose language that might be shocking/problematic/disturbing to some: Julian of Norwich speaks of God as our Mother, for instance. Anzaldúa writes in numerous languages in one essay, in an essay that almost reads as if she were talking to herself: “you swallow air, your primal senses open” (540). Rubin speaks of spirituality in a comedic sense, bringing her audience to laughter a number of times. Each of these moves are contrary to “traditional” conceptions of writing and speaking (as introduced in Chapter 1), especially relating to the subject matter each woman is addressing.

I see the majority of the readings assigned in the Reading Calendar as working on multiple levels. A reading might function as an example of a woman making rhetorical moves and choices that relate to a topic of discussion in class, while it might also work as an example of the sort of writing the student should think about for a particular assignment. I will provide an example for each of the assignments.

The Talk Back papers offer students the opportunity to consider their own resistance to concepts and institutions, just as bell hooks does in her essay, “Homeplace.” Essays of a personal nature (Anzaldúa’s “now let us shift,” for example) reflect a personal style of writing that students might want to utilize as they construct their Talking Back essays. The Established Author Wiki assignment has connections with many of the scholarly essays relating to research, while also encouraging students to try to think about academic research in alternative ways (as does Ruth Behar in her essay, “Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart”).

The essay by Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin (“Beyond Persuasion”) encourages students to think about varying reasons individuals might write, which in turn can help their thinking as it relates to unknown authors. Gladys-Marie Frye’s essay from *Singular Women* also helps students think about unknown authors by encouraging them to consider texts as more than merely words on a page. The intention of the assignment to introduce an unknown author is not so much for the student to locate and research an author who is unknown, but instead to think about those women in her everyday life as probable authors (of texts that might or might not be textually based). Thus, the readings that address various types of texts would be applicable here, as well as those texts which discuss women who wrote/created in unrecognized mediums.

Finally, the Rhetorical Analysis connects with the readings associated with academic research (“Susan Jarrat’s “Speaking to the Past,” for instance, or Patricia Bizell’s essays). Nan Johnson’s essay, “Reigning in the Court of Silence,” would connect with the Rhetorical

Analysis assignment as well, by functioning as a sort of example for students to model in their writing.

Each of the assignments also is associated with the writing outcomes from the syllabus in varying ways. Some of the outcomes make that explicit, but others are less so. For example, the Wiki assignment can address the outcome relating to the modes of communication women have historically used, why they used them, and how this has changed (and/or remained the same) for today's female rhetors. Through the research and writing the students do for the Rhetorical Analysis assignment, students can better see the importance of historiography to the understanding and inclusion of women into the study of rhetorics (and other disciplines). The Talk Back assignment works to encourage students to continue to develop and employ writing strategies and rhetorical practices learned in lower division writing courses and will produce writing that demonstrates clarity and precision of thought.

#### LESSON PLAN:

ENGL 4321 SPRING 2013

TIME: 3:30-4:50 TUES/THURS RH 120

Assigned Work for Today:

WEEK 14 – RHETORICS OF SPIRITUALITY AND OF THE BODY

<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Read:</b>	<b>OL:</b> Anzaldúa, Gloria. " <a href="http://tinyurl.com/mz487wp">now let us shift...the path of conocimiento</a> " [ <a href="http://tinyurl.com/mz487wp">http://tinyurl.com/mz487wp</a> ] <b>AM:</b> Julian of Norwich. From <i>Revelations of Divine Love</i> (25-29)
	<b>Due:</b>	<b>Backtalk by midnight Monday night</b>
	<b>Class:</b>	Intersections of spirituality and body rhetorics

#### CLASS PERIOD OBJECTIVES:

- Define rhetorics of spirituality and of the body
- Locate textual/rhetorical similarities in the readings for today
- Discuss Backtalking essays
- Watch short video and discuss

#### SITES TO PULL UP ON THE INTERNET:

Class wiki

[Video](http://tinyurl.com/k2vjvuf) [<http://tinyurl.com/k2vjvuf>] of a TED Talk by Katie Rubin about spirituality

## IN-CLASS ACTIVITY:

1. Take roll
2. |3:35| Backtalking: exchange your Backtalk with a partner, and write a brief response to her or pose a question that her text might have raised for you. Be ready to discuss your response as well as that of your colleague in class.
  - a. |3:45| Class Discussion: Open the floor up to the students Backtalking. Class discussion is your responsibility, and your comments should be posed to each other rather than me.
  - b. Depending on the course of the discussion, I could pose the following questions:
    - i. Do Julian of Norwich and Anzaldúa write in a form/style/tone that we could consider to be “feminine rhetoric?” Why/not?
    - ii. What is the job of the “shadow side”?
    - iii. What is *conocimiento*?
    - iv. How does Anzaldúa relate *conocimiento* to Christianity?
    - v. What’s the purpose of the earthquake story?
    - vi. What is Anzaldúa’s addiction of choice? Why does she consider it an addiction?
    - vii. Anzaldúa asserts that *conocimiento* will lead to meaning in things that are “devalued” in our lives. What are some things that are “devalued” that would (if valued) lead to positive social change in our lives?
    - viii. Both Anzaldúa and Julian of Norwich make important choices about the pronouns they use. What were the choices, and why did they make them, do you think?
  - c. |4:05| How should we define “rhetorics of spirituality” and “rhetorics of the body”? Watch Rubin [video](#) (20 minutes)
  - d. |4:25| Discuss video
    - i. What similarities exist between Anzaldúa, Julian of Norwich and Katie Rubin in their discussion of spirituality?
    - ii. Rubin described herself as discovering the female through her new understanding of her spirituality. How does her description of this mesh (or not) with your understanding?
    - iii. As a rhetor and creator, was Rubin engaging in a female style of speaking? How did/didn’t she do this?
    - iv. We have now read or listened to three women discuss various aspects of spirituality – how would you describe your concept of spirituality (if you have one)? (This question would involve some in class writing prior to any substantive discussion).
3. |4:45| Reminders for next class:
  - a. Read: Truth, Sojourner. “Speech at the Woman’s Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio” (143-147) and Lamm, Nomy. “It’s a Big Fat Revolution” (454-462)
  - b. Introduce New Author reflection due

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4. Should any of the above discussion areas prove to be less than fertile, and I find myself with more time at the end of class than I have discussion questions remaining, I would use the remainder of the time to work with students on their New Author assignment and/or their wikis:

- a. Suggestions for those who like to live on the edge and have not yet chosen a new author:
  - i. Visit Google's page where you can search only blogs and see what pops up that looks interesting to you
  - ii. Consider looking at collaborative blogs – the author of a specific entry that you might write about needs to be female, but if there are male writers on the blog as well, that's fine.
- b. As to writing your reflection, here are some fast writing prompts to get you going:
  - i. Re-read your chosen author's text (or engage with it in whatever way is appropriate)
  - ii. Now write for 5 minutes on what speaks to you in this piece – why did you pick this piece?
  - iii. Pull out the syllabus and revisit all the authors we have discussed in class. Pick one that's similar and do a free write for 5 minutes on how her writing is similar to your new author's.
  - iv. Think about the concept of a feminine rhetorical style. Does your author have one? How does she fit into (or not) that style? Free write on one or two of the ways for 5 minutes.
- c. Wiki work – pull up wiki page and as a group make some connections and notes as a result of our discussion today (this would be a weekly event, towards the end of class, which would help students make some connections with regard to their own authors as well as to review the concepts we touched on in class)

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## CONCLUSION

While none of the articles assigned can (or even should) attempt to do all the things I suggested this project might do, together they provide students the opportunity not just for exposure to the concepts, but also to return to those concepts in later discussions. Some of the essays make use of earlier works (the Walker piece does this, for example, by turning to Virginia Woolf), and other essays work clearly as discussions amongst academic researchers debating complex concepts. Students can see important aspects of rhetoric being enacted, they can consume secondary sources to help them make sense of (or complicate further) those primary sources, and can then turn to their classmates – enacting the community aspect I reference earlier – to begin to engage publicly with those scholars. Many of the older readings offer us opportunities to discuss how writing was used to enforce the status quo as well as the historical context in which they were written (Fannie Lou Hamer's text, for instance, or Mary Wollenstonecraft's essay). Many of the readings do double and triple duty, providing

opportunities for discussion of various issues introduced in Chapter 1, and the connectivities between them. The readings themselves are only a portion of the class – they are the tools the students have to create responses to the assignments in the class. In the following chapter, I provide the assignments themselves and explore the goals I have in creating and using them in the classroom.

## Chapter 4: Goals of Assignments and Activities

### **Introduction**

More and more of my coworkers are creating their syllabi and course plans around the concept of the organizational/departmental goals created by administrators and which, ostensibly, put forth the concepts and ideas students should have encountered by the end of the course and semester. We can look at those “Course Learning Outcomes” as embodying the basic goals we as instructors are supposed to shepherd our students towards, and around which our planning should take place. It is the rare student, though, who reads the Course Learning Outcomes on the syllabus at the start of the semester and recognizes how those outcomes actually might apply to them individually, or their actual educational needs.

I tend to look at the administrator-created outcomes as being starting places for the implementation of my pedagogical goals, and look for ways I can combine the two sets of goals to reach the end result I’m hoping for: the student capable of critical thought, willing to engage in it, and unwilling to accept an answer “just because.” I see this as a part of the feminist pedagogy I discussed in Chapter 1. Alerting the student to my reasoning behind an assignment is, in part, my attempt to translate the Course Learning Outcomes into more accessible language and to hopefully help the student set off in the right direction as she begins work on the project.

The purposes for the assignments and activities in this course all pertain to helping the student create knowledge relating to women rhetors and the situations in which they worked. The assignments work to do the standard sort of things we expect from assignments in college, but the following are some of the purposes and goals that are more specific to this project. The assignments included in this thesis perform multiple duties. For instance, the “New Author Assignment” requires students to think in multiple ways about authorship – what constitutes authorship? Is someone an author once they have published for payment? Or is someone an



author once they hit “publish” on their blog, even if no one reads it? Interacting with this assignment as an instructor also offers us the opportunity to reflect on how the academy sees publication, how we see publication, and perhaps to engage in some of bell hooks’ self-actualization I discussed earlier in this thesis. The assignment further can help instructors to wrestle with the question of how they are affected by the act of teaching a women’s rhetorics class. While I doubt very seriously there is much that can have an impact on the concept of “publish or perish,” part of challenging the canon necessarily includes (re)considering our approach to publication. This assignment also asks students to see “ordinary” women around them in their lives as possible (probable) authors, whether or not that woman has ever put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard (an excellent opportunity for discussion of the myth I mention earlier in this thesis of the exemplary female speaker). The creation of a wiki encourages students to visualize the authors/rhetors under study in connection with each other, and is dependent on the input of others in the class – collaboration (another important concept I mentioned earlier) is required for this assignment.

As I argued in the Introduction, teaching a class about women rhetors requires a multi-focused approach, partly because of the multiple goals instructors might strive for. On an individual (micro) level, classes in women’s rhetorics can do so much for students and teachers alike (beyond the obvious of exposing them to women authors not typically studied). On the macro level, increasing the number of classes of this nature throughout the discipline can do a great deal to further the goal of normalizing the study of women’s rhetorics. The assignments I include in this thesis do work on both the macro and micro level, moving between the personal and the societal.

I have organized this chapter as follows: I will begin with a brief summary of each assignment, followed by the assignment itself largely as I would provide it to the students (each

class assignment is titled as “Assignment Sheet: \_\_\_\_\_” for ease in location). I then discuss the goals and intentions of that assignment, associating them where necessary with readings.

*Talking Back Assignment (Reading Responses)*

**Summary Description of Assignment:** Students write responses (200-300 words) to assigned readings, in which they question the author’s argument and/or their own response to the argument of the author. This assignment is a staple of literature and writing classes – instructors use it for many reasons: it can guide the instructor in preparing for class discussions, just as it can guide the student in preparing for class. By assigning a short graded writing on the day’s reading, the instructor increases the likelihood that the students do the readings, and do so closely enough that they can speak on at least one aspect of the reading. Further, when viewed at the end of the semester as a whole (possibly in a portfolio), the student and the instructor can chart the changes and growth of the student’s understanding. The responses, when shared with others in class, can allow a student who might not otherwise express herself in class to do so in some way with her classmates. The assignment itself follows.

*Assignment Sheet: Talk Back to the Authors/Texts*

**Assigned:** Week 1

**Due:** Midnight the night before the class during which we will discuss the readings

**Task:** Write 12 short response papers (200-300 words/1 single spaced page) on one reading assigned for the coming class period. Post your response online and bring your responses to class.

**Why?**

The study of rhetoric can be seen as attempts to reflect upon and understand the process by which communities are generated and maintained by the persuasive use of symbols—linguistic, visual, and material. By studying women’s rhetorics specifically, we are reflecting upon (among other things) communities created and maintained by and for women. “Reflecting upon” does not limit itself to the act of merely thinking – reflecting is an active process, as is reading. In this activity, you will be taking an active role in our group understanding of the texts we explore, just as you will be claiming an active role in our classroom community.

bell hooks encourages us to “talk back” to authority figures, and our readings function (partially) as our authority figures in this class. Question them, interrogate them, act on them and with them – [I encourage you to read them actively, highlighting and jotting notes in the margins.](http://tinyurl.com/mj1jzvz) [<http://tinyurl.com/mj1jzvz>] From these questions and responses you formulate as you read (i.e., your interaction with the text), you can pull some very insightful writing, in my experience (if you would like a refresher on active reading, I’ll be happy to help).

The purpose of the “Backtalking” papers is to encourage you as a reader to critically engage with the readings and to help you develop the habit of **constant questioning**. Simply because something is written down, or is presented to you as true by an authority figure (such as a teacher) does not mean that it is unassailable or perfect. We all began life as that kid questioning everything; however, through our time in the educational system, our natural curiosity is trained out of us. I want you to work on getting it back. Asking “why?” is not rude – it’s intellectual work and it’s worthwhile.

Some questions you might consider as you work through these assignments are: What is the author saying through her work? Why? Does her work stir you especially, or are you particularly resistant to it? Why? What does the work say, how does it express it, and why do you react to it the way that you do? What connections can you make with other texts we have read (or that you have some experience with in other classes)? Why? What terms or concepts are new, fascinating, troubling, questionable? Why? **Finally, always include in your paper a brief discussion of how this reading can help you to “act effectively in the world,” as Karen Kohrs Campbell puts it.**

**Logistics:** Your responses should be 200-300 words in length. You are free to choose the readings you wish to respond to; however, once we have passed that week’s readings, they are no longer possible for you to return to for “Talking Back” purposes. They are due by midnight the night prior to class.

Identify 12 class readings for the purposes of this exercise, compose your responses to them, and submit them to our class website “Doc Sharing” section. I would suggest that you make your

choices in readings for response based on a number of factors: Did the reading stir a larger than normal amount of questions for you? Do you find your thoughts returning to the reading? Does this reading cause you to think of other authors in other classes you are taking? Or other authors in this class?

Finally, do take into account your personal calendar requirements (i.e., other things you have going on in your life) as well as how interested you are in the readings. You may want to schedule your choices in readings around other assignments in this class and other classes as well. Please consult the Reading Calendar for the days these papers can be submitted (nearly all of them, to be honest ☺).

These writings will perform a number of functions: firstly, they will (hopefully) help you to continue to develop the critical questioning skills that you have ostensibly already begun to use as a college student. Secondly, they will help you (and me) to see areas of greater understanding as well as areas where understanding and comprehension is not as extensive (and thus is in need of more discussion and unpacking). Thirdly, writing to find out what you know and what you think is an exercise that will help you in all your classes (as well as in general). An exercise such as talking back to your textbooks will assist you in developing a more thorough and nuanced understanding of the things you have read.

## GOALS AND INTENTIONS OF TALKING BACK ASSIGNMENT

The purpose of this assignment is for the student to engage in her own rhetorical reading and writing in response to the assigned text. Rhetorical reading calls attention to the writer's intentions for readers and focuses on how texts work to change readers' minds. As students read, they are not just learning about the world; rather, they are learning about the author's worldview demonstrated in the text.

Further, encouraging students to "talk back" to the text (a title that I have taken from Karen Cochran Roop, who in turn, acknowledges bell hooks' text) is another way to encourage critical thinking in students. Encouraging students to see a text as something with which they can argue in their own writing can also help them formulate their participatory work for class.

In the assignment, I have included a link to a website which discusses active reading. Typically when I assign work in class, I do so on the overhead, utilizing a computer and the internet. I also make use of a class website (whether through a school-associated site or one of my own making), so including hypertext is an easy way for me to guide the students in understanding what I am looking for them to do through the use of example or further explanation. Encouraging students to read actively – to truly speak back to the text, to interrogate it, to address the author specifically – is enacting what Ronald and Ritchie describe as some of the "central uses of women's rhetoric: it challenges dominant epistemologies, asserts new topoi/contexts from which to argue, places material experience – especially that of women, women of color, sexual minorities, and other nonmainstream groups – at the center of knowledge formation, and it reconnects language/rhetoric to action and change" (*Teaching Rhetorica* 11). Of course, having a student speak directly to the author of a text, or the text itself, is not going to do all these things alone; however, to challenge (even briefly) is to step into the realm of

academic speech, as well as to begin to formulate questions and posit possible answers – these are all actions that can lead to many of the stated goals of this project: self actualization (on the part of the student, and the instructor), running the risk of “getting it crooked,” and normalizing the student to women writers, for instance.

*Established Author Wiki/Web Ring and Presentation*

**Summary Description of Assignment:** As a class, students create and curate a wiki covering authors and terms discussed in class. As the wiki grows, the students can establish connections between the entries.

One of the areas where nearly all instructors struggle (even seasoned ones, I believe) is that of time. We cannot cover all that we would like to cover in a regular semester, and we are thus forced to make choices that do not always make us happy. Cutting one important, yet very challenging, author to make room for two other authors, who are also important, yet are more accessible, is a decision that we have all been faced with as we plan for a semester. Making use of a wiki can allow for the introduction of information we might not necessarily have the time to cover extensively in class.

Through the creation of a web presence like a wiki, students are reminded that the work they do is worthwhile – as I researched for this project, I encountered a number of class websites (including the one referenced in the Enoch and Jack’s article which I mentioned earlier in this thesis, “Remembering Sappho”). Reviewing the sites was helpful to me from a pedagogical standpoint (seeing how others navigated a similar assignment, and the results) as well as from an informational standpoint. The assignment itself follows.

*Assignment Sheet: Wiki/Webring*

**Assigned:** Week 1 (Tuesday)

**Due:** Ongoing task, but final form submission is Week 15, last day of class

1. Join the class wiki. I will give you authorship rights to the entire site. Use your new powers wisely ☺. Create pages for topics you think are important, or you are having trouble with, or just that you think are interesting (and that, of course, relate to our class). This wiki will, at the end of class, contain a listing of women authors/creators as well as a list of topics we have covered in class. Your job will be to connect the things in these two groups in as many ways as you can.
2. Choose a woman author, rhetor, or creator. She can be someone from our text, someone from the list on the Wiki, or someone you choose on your own.
3. Create a Wiki page for your author.
4. Regularly consult classmates' wikis for places your author and their authors converge in some way.
5. Using the hyperlink feature on the wiki page, connect your author with your colleagues' authors (see my example on the wiki page) and with other theories, terms, concepts, as appropriate. To get you started, I have created some basic pages with some terms you might find helpful as you start out linking.
6. Prior to the final due date, post a page wherein you describe what you intended your project to look like and do, the steps you took in creating the page, what went well, what didn't go as well as you would like, and how you would alter your approach if you were to attempt this project again.

**Purpose:**

A large part of the purpose for completing this assignment is to explore the connectivity of the women authors and rhetors we are discussing this semester. The concept of connectivity in the rhetorical work that our authors have done and are doing is important because one of the main purposes of rhetoric is the creation and cultivation of communities (both physical and discourse). Finding places where our thinking is in line with someone else's is a key feature of a community – after all, it can be really difficult to form a community with someone if you cannot communicate with them. Looking for ways your author and her work correlate with other women and their work/texts/etc. is just one way that a community can be nurtured and expanded.

Also of importance in our purpose here is the concept of collaboration. Your work in partnership with the work of your colleagues can open up new avenues of discussion, thinking, and scholarship. Placing artists and rhetors and their works into discussion with each other is a form of collaboration, a style of work that is undervalued, and which has import in our consideration of women rhetors and women's rhetorics.

**Grading:**

I will be grading this on the depth and breadth of your entry (does your entry include enough biographical information? Enough information about your author's texts? Her historical time period?) as well as its organization. This assignment might be the creation of a wiki, but that does not mean I want you to recreate Wikipedia. While there is nothing wrong with Wikipedia entries in and of themselves, even they have a bit of artistic effort put into them. Be creative, and claim your place as a rhetor and creator. There is no limit to what you may use in your wiki to

reflect who your author is/was, what she created, and what she represents. Go outside your comfort zone!

The connections you make should not be limited to the simple, basic ones (i.e., both authors are found in our textbook). Extend your thinking, look high and low (as Alice Walker states in “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens”), look outside the norm for connections, and include them, no matter how tenuous they might be.

#### GOALS AND INTENTIONS OF THE WIKI ASSIGNMENT

One of my intentions in this assignment is that the students gain more in-depth exposure to one of the writers we are discussing in class. Also important in this assignment is the visual illustration of all the varied and different ways the women’s works interconnect. Finally, this allows students an opportunity to attempt to work in online technology they may not previously have encountered as creators and rhetors.

While I haven’t used this assignment yet as an instructor, I have worked on a similar assignment as a student, and have discussed the assignment with other students assigned it in other classes. As a student, I encountered this assignment in Dr. Melanie Kill’s class (Genre Theory) and in Dr. Joddy Murray’s class (Image Studies and Multimodal Rhetorics). I saw students working on similar assignments (closer to the assignment as described in this thesis) as assigned by Dr. Ann George in her Modern Rhetorics Course.

Creating various wiki pages for assignments, authors, and questions relating to the readings allowed me, as a student, to visualize and understand the topics at hand in a broader sense. I was able to consume, also, the contents of my classmates’ wiki pages, and this helped to clarify gaps in my own understanding, allowing me to be better prepared for class and discussion.

I envision the assignment as being similar to the large, sometimes wall-sized charts created on detective shows, in which photos, index cards, rap sheets, and any other bits and pieces of knowledge are placed side by side in the hopes of allowing the detective to make the intuitive jump necessary to close the case. String is frequently used to reflect association of one



bit of knowledge with another. Utilizing a wiki, with the benefit of associating pages and concepts with other pages and concepts is a technical form of the “murder charts” used on television. Students can make those intuitive jumps through seeing the connectivity of ideas (a concept I mention in Chapter 1) while also experiencing the connectivity of a community. As I state in the assignment sheet, I hope the students begin to engage in collaboration, pointing each other to research items or readings that will help their classmates in their work. By so doing, students can glean a better understanding of the worth collaboration can have in their lives, apart from importance in the business world or as it applies to school requirements. Seeing their peers as scholars can help students begin to view themselves as scholars as well.

#### Unknown Author Reflection

**Summary Description of Assignment:** Students choose an unpublished author and write a short reflection on her and her work.

I include in the assignments for the course a requirement that students introduce us to a previously unknown rhetor. In so doing, I am gently prodding students to look at the women around them in a different way: as creating entities, capable of (and likely doing) rhetorical work regardless of her knowledge of Aristotle. This gentle prodding furthers the dismantling of the myth of the exceptional woman rhetor, and helps students to see that women are constant creators, and our previous understanding of early women rhetors as rare and exemplary women is questionable at best. The assignment asks students to bring in an artifact from an unpublished writer and explain how it functions as a rhetorical work, thus helping to do some of the “normalizing” work that I referenced in Chapter 1 of this thesis. This accomplishes several things: it forces students to place women around them into roles they might not have otherwise considered for those women; it allows them to consider the works done by their chosen subject through a wider lens, and it further brings into discussion the concept of “publication” (or, in

other words, “how do we decide if a work is important?”). This assignment engages the students with each of the themes I outlined earlier in this narrative: they are looking at women who are already members of their community as possible rhetors (even if they do not choose a work from that woman, they still have considered her for inclusion); they are looking at the women around them in new ways, having those women try on a role that may or may not fit them – they are risking “getting it crooked,” as Glenn states and as I mentioned in earlier chapters. Finally, this exercise reinforces the idea that just because a woman has not published for money, that does not mean she is not a rhetor of value.

I have not taught this exercise yet, and initially I wondered how a student might encounter an unknown writer; however, once one moves past the basic conceptions of “author = publication” or “text = written word” and is able to view authorship and textuality in a larger scope, I can imagine that there is no shortage of topics to be found for this assignment. I see this exercise as opening students to the ideas of writing, textuality, and rhetoric as being fluid and not confined to one single definition – much as is the argument in Buchanan and Ryan’s *Walking and Talking*, for instance. This assignment also offers us an opportunity to think and talk about the ways that historically, women’s writing practices had to differ from men’s – a concept I introduced in Chapter 1.

### Action Assignment

**Summary Description of Assignment:** For this assignment<sup>3</sup>, students perform a rhetorical analysis of an event connected to women’s issues on campus or in the community.

One assignment that is included in the appendix but which is not referenced on the class calendar or syllabus is the Action Assignment. As I worked my way through the project, I felt a real need to include work for the students that had some sort of outside-the-classroom

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from Dr. Charlotte Hogg’s Women’s Rhetorics class at TCU.

repercussions. This need reflects the sort of work bell hooks discusses and which I mentioned earlier in this thesis relating to self-actualization and how we as instructors are affected by our engagement with the teaching of women's rhetorics (as posed by Ritchie and Ronald). Creating an assignment requiring students to do something in the community was scrapped in favor of the "web ring" assignment – I see the wiki/web ring as being a form of outside community work, as it will remain in place for the use of other students as well. However, the need for more standard "community involvement" assignment is still significant and the two assignments could be alternated from class to class. There can be a collaborative sense to both assignments, but neither is written specifically with that intent.

Further, having read and re-read the Enoch and Jack article, "Remembering Sappho," one of the articles that I felt gave me the most opportunity to peek into real classrooms, I could see very clearly the import of students working on a project that involved community outside the classroom. While none of my students thus far have helped to create a memorial for a forgotten woman writer (as is described in "Remembering Sappho"), I have seen female students empowered through their advocacy work associated with an assignment similar to this one.

Having taught the standard "community involvement" writing assignment (i.e., in a class not themed at women writers, or at women's rhetorics), I have had both rousing success as well as pretty dismal failure. In one instance, the assignment was specifically geared to be collaborative, with the students being required to create both a paper discussing a problem on campus, a call to action in relation to that problem, and some sort of artifact associated with that call. After substantial classroom brainstorming, discussions in small groups, and some hesitant pre-writing, one of the groups decided to address the issue of parking on campus. They did not, however, want to approach the problem from the standpoint of the lack of parking – although that was a complaint – but instead, addressed what they perceived as the public safety office's

mishandling of parking related information: a fine distinction. Memes were created, flyers were copied, and a rousing discussion was had in class regarding how short sighted and unhelpful the public safety office's attempts to be helpful actually were. During this same semester, another group of students began a campaign to raise awareness of celiac disease, with their call to action being aimed at the administration, requesting more gluten-free options in the cafeteria. I later saw two of the women involved in this project in an article in our school paper, continuing their outreach campaign and celebrating its success with the inclusion of more gluten-free options available to students.

As the above anecdotes reflect, I am still certain that students need engagement with assignments directly relating to “real-world” problems, requiring them to determine what matters to them and that they engage in some of Lindal Buchanan and Kathleen Ryan’s “walking and talking” relating to that issue. I see both the Action Assignment and the Wiki/Webring assignment as being assignments with real world implications for students. Especially in a Women’s Rhetorics class, we need to engage our students with assignments that can return them to the same genre of context as the writers we study experienced: the recognition of a need in society, a call to action to address that problem, and (usually) a proposal for improving the lives for those involved. Having been assigned this as a student as well as assigning it as an instructor, I have found it beneficial from both viewpoints. As an instructor, it helps me to see what’s important to students – if they are truly trying to engage with the assignment, their “real world” concerns and reasoning for those concerns will become quite evident, as well as their thinking about how they should and could engage with others to fix the problems at hand. As a student, I found that thinking about the implications of my writing outside the classroom was empowering, and that the areas I considered were different from those I had in the past (I briefly considered as topics for the assignment Title IX issues, even though I am in no way an athlete, and issues

relating to daycare on campus, even though my children are nigh into their thirties). In short, Buchanan and Ryan's focus on both the walking and the talking aspect of women's rhetorics pushed my thinking to areas it might not have gone otherwise.

### Secondary and Critical Material Used to Create the Course

In thinking about this project from the beginning point of "normal" Western classes I have taught, I realized I needed to re-see my stated purpose for the class – I needed to give my "imagined audience" of students a reason to take the class as well as to give myself a guiding set of principles I wanted the students to leave the class understanding. Thus began my thinking of some good reasons for studying women's rhetorics. I determined that there were four constants that I ran into as I read, which I introduced earlier in this thesis, and I discuss them below.

### Connectivity

I begin with connectivity as this is a concept I feel can bear the greatest fruit in terms of furthering the discipline – recognizing the existence of the interconnectedness of various scholarly disciplines, communities, and discourses will expand our understanding of much more than just rhetoric and composition. Suzanne Langer's theory reflects this concept in that she argued all aspects of the human experience (emotions, society, thoughts) were inseparable from each other and from language. As two individuals without a large amount of commonalities communicate, the context that they share determines the meaning. Commonalities reflect connectivity, and connectivity opens up new paths of understanding in unusual ways and areas.

Connectivity is something that can be taught from nearly every reading listed on the class reading list. For instance, Anna Julia Cooper states in her speech, "The Higher Education of Women," that "as individuals, we are constantly and inevitably, whether we are conscious of it or not, giving out our real selves into our several little worlds..." (167). Similarly, the excerpt of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Women and Economics* opens with a description of differences that

might exist between various animals, but which are overwhelmed by a common similarity. Other essays more specifically address connectivity: “Cherokee Women Address their Nation,” “Letter to Ma,” and “Homeplace: a Site of Resistance,” each address in some form the drive for connection with others that led the author to speak.

### *Feminine Style*

I see the concept of feminine style as a helpful one to understanding the choices women make as speakers, writers, creators, and rhetors.<sup>4</sup> In *Man Cannot Speak for Her*, Campbell lays out aspects of a feminine style early in her first chapter. The goal of this sort of rhetoric, Campbell states, is empowerment, whether that empowerment is to speak, create, or otherwise “act effectively in the world” as agents of change (13). Exploring the concept that there is a style or format for speaking, writing, or creating that might be considered feminine gives us the opportunity to discuss gender as a social construct, one that can be seen being reinforced within the writings of women currently as well as years ago. The concept of feminine style also speaks directly to the rhetorical nature of the class: how women communicate, the forces around (and inside) them that result in various rhetorical decisions, and how successful those decisions might be.

### *Getting it Crooked*

Cheryl Glenn’s concept of “getting it crooked” encapsulates a seemingly enormous problem into an easy-to-grasp concept. By “getting it crooked,” she means that we must approach the discipline and study of rhetoric in such a way as to allow us to see things that a straight-on approach (i.e., traditional) would not reveal. Sometimes the messages, themes, and

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<sup>4</sup>As I worked with the concept of a feminine style, I realized that it correlates with my own approach to pedagogy: I encourage the personal from my students, as well as utilize my own writing and personal stories in class; student participation is mandatory for my classes to work well, and I attempt to share power as much as practicable with the students. My goal for all of my classes is to help students understand how best they can “act effectively in the world.”

lessons of a text have to be seen from the corner of the eye before we are able to see nuances of the story. Glenn applies the “crooked” approach to our traditional understanding of historiography.

Glenn is far from the only author who has put forth this concept of re-mapping and re-figuring a historical landscape. Many of Gloria Anzaldúa’s texts focus on the concept of autohistoria, which is a form of history-telling less concerned with linear fact-relating and more with blending cultural and personal biographies with memoir, biography, history, and myth. What this is, essentially, is an argument about truth – is there one, single, all-knowing Truth? To engage in Anzaldúa’s autohistoria or Glenn’s “getting it crooked” is to question the existence of one, single Truth, and consider that perhaps the histories and stories we have been told might not contain all the Truth, or even some.

### Ordinary versus Exemplary

The final, complicated thread in the quilt of my project is the ordinary woman versus the extraordinary woman. The issue here is the idea that only women who were supremely gifted (in oratory, intelligence, class, etc.) could possibly write in light of the stacked deck women faced, historically. Privilege complicates things - white women had to navigate waters that were treacherous due to their gender and possibly their class, while women of color navigated the same water but with the added difficulty of racism. We do know, however, that regardless of the challenges that women faced, many more women created than history leads us to believe (at least a history that refuses to risk “getting it crooked,” that is).

Ordinary and extraordinary women were both able to find ways to enact their creativity within the systems that existed at the time; however, traditional rhetoric has simply disregarded most of their work as unimportant. This is clear in the writing of Andrea Lunsford (*Reclaiming Rhetorica*), Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (*Man Cannot Speak for Her*), Nan Johnson (*Gender and*

*Rhetorical Space*) and other important texts. bell hooks does a beautiful job of describing this phenomenon in her text *Talking Back*:

Our speech, ‘the right speech of womanhood,’ was often the soliloquy, the talking into thin air, the talking to ears that do not hear you – the talk that is simply not listened to. Unlike the black male preacher whose speech was to be heard, who was to be listened to, whose words were to be remembered, the voices of black women – giving orders, making threats, fussing – could be tuned out, could become a kind of background music, audible but not acknowledged as significant speech. (6)

Just because the women around hooks were not listened to, or granted any worth, did not prevent them from speaking. Normal women spoke, wrote, and created; however, their works and words were not viewed as important enough to study.

In her text, *Refiguring Rhetorical Education*, Jessica Enoch studies the pedagogies of five women, providing us with examples of the “normal” woman who successfully created during a time when women faced massive gender-based hurdles to public creativity and rhetorical activity. She describes five teachers who outwardly engaged in a typical form of teaching while actually subverting the traditional norm of the time requiring that the teacher prepare the student for a “form of civic participation geared toward sustaining the social order and preserving the nation” (3). Enoch argues that the five teachers she examines in her book did rhetorical work from traditional, gendered pulpits which were allowed to women at that time – in other words, they were ordinary women, doing what they considered ordinary work, but which had important, historical, rhetorical importance yet fell into anonymity. The pedagogies of these five women teachers were, in essence, their texts and those texts worked against the standard expectations of teachers at that time. Pedagogy is creative as well as rhetorical and these women were rhetors



through their pedagogy, whilst also being normal and engaging in a normal undertaking: teaching.

Finally, as I began work on my revision of the project, I received a kind email (quite in the spirit of some of the concepts introduced in this thesis, indeed) from Karen Cochran Roop, a professor at Kennesaw State University. I had previously written to her about her thesis (“The Knowledge of Women”) in which she discussed just the sorts of things I wanted to do with my own project. She was writing to let me know she had made her previously embargoed thesis available. I found that she described quite well some of the ideas I had struggled with, especially the “Talk Back” essays and the “New Writer” paper. I adapted her approach to both those assignments and incorporated them into my project with some revisions, additions and subtractions of my own.

### Technology

By requiring students to create a page for their chosen author on a class wiki, they work in a medium outside the norm (i.e., the written page, or, if we are discussing specifically the students’ current chosen medium of technology, the phone). While not assigned as a collaborative project, the project does indeed lend itself to collaboration between students. The students would necessarily need to create the pages to which they wanted to link (in some instances) as well as to create the page for their chosen author. The larger purpose of the assignment is to encourage students to consider the ways in which texts, authors, and concepts interact with each other and are interrelated.

### Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have attempted to do the sort of work I encourage of students through the wiki page assignment: I want to string thread from one idea to another, to another, creating a traceable map from perhaps a more theory based reading intended for the instructor’s

contemplation, to an assignment created as a basis of the thinking that originated from that reading, into some examples of readings that might help students in grasping the concepts intended. When attempting work like this (whether one is a detective investigating a murder or an academic trying out her skills at theorizing) we risk finding ourselves at the end of the day not so much holding great ideas but instead with a snarled knot of yarn. Only through continued engagement with the tools we use and the reasons for using them will we be able to pick our way through to a well-constructed afghan (or tidy consideration of a crime scene, for that matter).

### Conclusion: Reflecting on the Gap

In the introduction to this thesis, I discuss a need I saw in the scholarship relating to women's rhetorics and propose some ways addressing the gap would be beneficial to both students and instructors of women's rhetorics. I argue that the work we continue to do to recover women writers remains urgent and fruitful; however, recovery is only the first step in a complicated and as yet still uncertain process. The introductory chapter also addresses the import of self-actualization and strategic contemplation on the part of instructors, and how teaching a women's rhetorics class can help us in this work – a concept I believe is a partial answer to Ronald and Ritchie's question relating to how teachers are both teaching, and being taught by, women's rhetorics. I introduce the concept of normalization in the introduction, and I lay the foundation for my argument that the work this thesis does to fill the gap in scholarship I described will do much to help in the normalization process. I pose a number of questions in the introduction, such as: once women writers are recovered, what do we do with them? Which women writers do we recover? How do we apply the canon "rules" to them, or do we? What does the existence of previously unknown women writers say about the canon itself, and our view of it? If the canon which can hold so much power in our discipline could ignore such a large number of writers, what should that tell us about that canon?

In Chapter 2, I address the question of "why women's rhetorics?" and briefly discuss the application of feminist or critical pedagogy as it relates to women's rhetorics, arguing that as one of my purposes for teaching women's rhetorics is to encourage students to see the study of rhetoric in a different way from the way it is taught classically, a feminist pedagogy is necessary. I also briefly lay out the similarities between a feminist and a critical pedagogy, focusing on the areas where the two styles overlap. I address in Chapter 2 ways that theory can be helpful in my project, but how it does not completely fill the gap I have identified.

Chapter 3 attempts to explain some of the choices I made as I structured the women's rhetorics syllabus and the accompanying materials. In that chapter, I establish the scope and structure of the class and give an overview of the syllabus and reading calendar. I organize the integration of the class documents into this thesis following the brief summary of their contents, then move through the Reading Calendar week by week, discussing the ways that the readings assigned could do the work I argue in earlier chapters is necessary. Additionally, I include a sample lesson plan, along with a discussion relating to the structure of the class period for which the plan was intended. As done earlier in the chapter, the overview and discussion follows the document itself.

The goals of the individual assignments are the focus of Chapter 4, beginning with a discussion of feminist pedagogy and how it relates to the "Course Learning Outcomes" established at the opening of the syllabus. I make connections between the Enoch and Jack article "Remembering Sappho" and the intentions and goals of my thesis, and I include the assignments themselves. Following a brief introduction, the chapter is organized as follows: the title of the assignment, a brief overview of the assignment, the assignment itself, and finally, the goals and intentions of the assignment. Following the inclusion of all the assignments and discussion of same, I discuss the use of secondary and critical materials used to create the course, identifying and discussing four constant themes I ran into as I researched for and created the course materials (connectivity, feminine style, getting it crooked, and exemplary versus ordinary women writers). I close the chapter with a very brief discussion of the technology used in the class.

Scholars have used many metaphors to describe their intended argument, or how they see a particular aspect of their discipline – Cheryl Glenn utilized the concept of mapping in *Rhetoric Retold*, while Royster and Kirsch utilized geological-based metaphors (assaying, digging, etc.) in

their book, *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*. In an earlier chapter, I compare one of the assignments with a chart used by detectives to assist them in seeing how facts relate to each other, and I find myself returning to that metaphor frequently (while also wishing I could call it something other than a “murder chart”). As an undergraduate in a class on postmodern women writers, I was struck by an illustration of the connectivity of the authors we were studying – the illustration showed how many of the writers were influential to the other writers in their circle, showing which authors actively critiqued (publicly or otherwise) the work of their compatriots. The illustration looked very much like an extremely complex connect-the-dots puzzle, and has stayed with me all these years. We do not create in a vacuum, and we do not teach in one either. My metaphor of choice is the “murder chart” (or connecting the dots, if that name is more palatable) – a visual representation of as much information as possible and how it relates to each other piece, with the intention that the making visible bits of information can help us to see a larger, more cohesive picture. My intention with this project is to provide a combination of two types of information – discussion of scholarship of a theoretical nature accompanied by the materials that grew from the contemplation of that scholarship.

As I worked on this project, I found strings connecting pieces of information everywhere – I could connect Cheryl Glenn’s “risking getting it crooked” with assignments in which I encouraged students to embrace the uncertainty in scholarship, and to turn away from the absolutes they are taught to look for in other classes. I saw few places where I could say that theoretical and pedagogical tools had been merged, and looked for opportunities to place my own threads between a theory and a tool. I believe that the more commonalities we can find, the more normalized the discipline of women’s rhetoric can become.

Some of my “thread placement” is fairly obvious and self-explanatory (for example, the importance of encouraging students to “talk back” to a text”) while other placements might seem

to stretch the thread (and metaphor) to the point of fraying (self-reflection/actualization discussions, for instance). I continue to see hooks' discussions of the importance of self-actualization on the part of the instructor as an important aspect of our chart, and one that cannot be functional without Royster and Kirsch's concept of strategic contemplation. Teacher burnout is a real threat in our line of work, and as this thesis is a merging of theory and praxis to create tools for instructors, the tools cannot be limited to what to do in the classroom, but also must include a reminder to do the work necessary to *want* to stay in the classroom.

Many of the questions I posed throughout this thesis remain unanswered. I still have no good answer for questions relating to the canon or the rules relating to it. Neither do I have a handy answer relating to how else we can go about normalizing women's rhetoric to the point that it is required study without which student's understanding of rhetoric is incomplete, other than the exhortation to continue to teach it, as often and as well as we can. Nor do I think that there is just one answer to the question, but instead the possibility of many possibilities – including the importance of a productive grappling with the question in order to find as many possibilities as we can.

On the other hand, some of the questions I did answer, and conclusions that I did draw are, I hope, helpful to others in our discipline. I found through my research and self-reflection a number of answers to Ronald and Ritchie's question from *Teaching Rhetorica* regarding changes brought by teaching women's rhetorics. We are encouraged through our teaching choices to view the exigencies of women writers as less theoretical, and more practical. We are encouraged to re-create our discipline(s) and to engage in a constant revisioning of our pedagogy and practice. Through our teaching of women's rhetorics, we can engage in important reflection on how the academy views publication, and we can also see what is important to students.

Along with thinking about how we, instructors, are changed by women's rhetorics, I also found it helpful to think about how women's rhetorics can change our students, other disciplines, and research in academia. Students are changed by women's rhetorics in many ways: it exposes them to what has gone previously, but also teaches them how to make use of the resources created by current and historic women writers. They are taught the import of re-seeing common aspects of life, which allows students to imagine aspects of their lives as changeable and able to be acted upon. Student's dependence on "lyrical literacy learning" is lessened, it complicates the concept of invention, and it encourages the value of non-public rhetoric for women/everyone.

Other disciplines can be changed by exposure to teaching women's rhetorics through the development of mechanisms by which listening deeply, reflexively, and multisensibly become standard practice. An ethos of humility, respect, and caring can grow from an exposure to women's rhetorics, both in students and instructors in other disciplines alike.

Finally, research in academia can benefit and be changed by women's rhetorics through a more engaged approach, one that calls on researchers to "linger deliberately" and to consider "intuitions" as relating to subjects of research. Our field of inquiry is broadened, and emotion in research is legitimated through an exposure to women's rhetorics.

Through my creation of the pedagogical tools in this thesis, I hope that I have acted in the spirit of connectivity and collaboration, and have helped to bring those concepts more to the forefront as we think about our teaching practices. These are cornerstone concepts in understanding women's rhetorics, as well as in the understanding and navigation of the world of academia. Much as my assignments are intended to teach students the value of the words and work of others, this thesis is intended to offer the opportunity for reflection on the value of the collaborative work we do as scholars. Much of the texts I consulted were collaborative, and I

hope that we as a discipline are able to continue to move away from the higher value placed on the individually authored manuscript.

Further, the creation of this thesis is an example of working and writing within the feminine style, as described in earlier chapters and introduced in Karlyn Kohrs Campbell's *Man Cannot Speak for Her*: 1) a personal tone; 2) inductive structure; 3) audience participation; 4) audience as peers; 5) linkage of authority with experience, and 6) attempts to engender identification on the basis of similar or shared experience (13). Encouraging students to think about their writing (or the writing of others) with these six concepts as guideposts can help them to better understand the craft of rhetoric, as well as to see themselves as capable of evoking change in their world. Campbell describes the goal of this sort of rhetoric as being “empowerment, a term contemporary feminists have used to refer to the process of persuading listeners that they can act effectively in the world” (13). Empowerment is indeed a goal for the class I envisioned, and not limited by gender.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, I hope that the gap I describe throughout this thesis – that of a lack of hands-on, “how-to” materials – is closed up a bit. The teaching of a women's rhetorics class will, by its nature, require that we engage in some gender-specific approaches to the topic. The class and discipline does, after all, revolve around the ways gender affected women writing through different times in our history. My argument for the normalization of women's rhetorics into the discipline does not mean that I want us to stop teaching the history of women's rhetorics and how women were erased from it or forgotten. The difference in approaches to writing between men and women is something that needs to be taught, as those differences manifested themselves

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<sup>5</sup> I recognize that the use of the term “empowerment” is problematic, in that the pedagogy I am espousing treats students as subjects (who would do the work and take the initiative to empower themselves) versus objects (who would be acted upon, and empowered by the authority figure in the classroom: the teacher). However, as I have pointed out earlier in this thesis, much of the resources from which I have drawn are, indeed, dated (due, in part, to the gap in scholarship serving as the exigence for this thesis) and certain terms (feminine style, for instance, and empowerment, as in this discussion) have come to be seen in a different, more complex light from when they were initially coined.



in the times of Sappho as well as how they manifest themselves currently (in academia as well as other formats). However, these differences and the history of women's exclusion are not the majority of what the study of women's rhetorics can bring to our education (our education as instructors, as well as the education we provide to our students). The study of women and the rhetorical modes they employ can allow us to see and understand rhetoric as an important tool in our scholarly arsenal, regardless of our discipline. Royster and Kirsch make this point in *Studies in Rhetorics and Feminism* when they write that they

affirm that the three Rs (rescue, recovery, (re)inscription) constitute only one dimension of what potentially is a more substantial, ambitious, and ultimately far more compelling enterprise. In fuller scope, feminist rhetorical studies promises to be a dynamic framework, a model of action for enhancing our capacity as researchers, scholars, and teachers in rhetorical studies to deepen, broaden, and build rhetorical knowledge and to offer multiple mechanisms for enhancing our interpretive capacity with regard to the symphonic and polylogical ways in which rhetoric functions as a human asset (132).

My work in this thesis is intended to build on Royster and Kirsch's concept of rhetorical studies as a "model of action," in that I hope that the tools I have crafted and reflected upon can assist others in navigating the complicated, important, and ultimately very fulfilling experience of thinking about, constructing, and finally teaching a class around women's rhetorics.

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## VITA

Laura Adams Knudson was born April 12, 1967 in Maryland. She is the daughter of Reed Adams, Ph.D., and Sue Adams, M.S.W. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English and a minor in Women's Studies from Middle Tennessee State University in 2004. She then received a Master's Degree from Texas Woman's University in Women's Studies, with a minor in English, in 2007.

In August, 2008, she enrolled in graduate study at Texas Christian University. During this time, she worked as a Graduate Instructor and an adjunct instructor. Additionally, she taught at Columbia College, Dallas County Community College, and Tarrant County Community College.

She is married to Gary Knudson, has a son, a step-daughter, and a grandson.

## ABSTRACT

### NEXT STEPS: CREATION AND STRATEGIC CONTEMPLATION OF A WOMEN'S RHETORICS COURSE

by Laura Adams Knudson, M.A., 2014  
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As a result of continuing and fruitful recovery and integration of women's voices into the study of rhetoric, there is a newly burgeoning exigence for scholars to undertake the next steps towards normalizing the study of women's rhetorics in the discipline. Much as new teachers of composition have need of "hands-on" material, so too do the new teachers of women's rhetorics. There is a definitive gap in the scholarship of how best to teach a women's rhetorics class, which this thesis intends to fill. Additionally, scholars have declared a need for strategic contemplation of our approaches to research, teaching, and scholarship, and this thesis works to argue in favor of that as well as to engage practically in it.