UNPACKING A SIGNATURE PEDAGOGY IN LITERARY STUDIES

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Whatever our research interests, or our theoretical positions, teaching is our job; and applying our specific scholarly skills to the problems of doing it well could give us something to talk about that’s really worthwhile.
—Elaine Showalter, “What Teaching Literature Should Really Mean”

“Why major in literature—what do we tell our students?” was the question posed to 12 literary scholars, from a community college to a variety of Ivy Leagues, in a 2002 symposium written for PMLA, the journal of the Modern Language Association (MLA, the primary professional organization of literary and language scholars). The question is significantly different from “Why major in literature—how do we teach our students?” but the responses still offer literature teacher-scholars and students insight into the state of the discipline in the 21st century, its current changes and challenges, and its persistent values.

The symposium was a response to two specific problems confronting literary studies. The first is the declining number of literature majors and the resulting probability of declining institutional resources. Even as the numbers of students attending and graduating from college rose between 1970 and 2000, B.A.s in English fell by 20% (Miller, 2006). Increasingly, these literature majors also seek a second major, which they consider “their ‘real’ major” (Alonso, 2002). In these concerns, the symposium focuses on English majors as tomorrow’s professionals and contributors to the field, because a future with fewer literary scholars and educators poses a serious threat to the health of the discipline. However, these diminishing numbers are also reflected in the rest of the student body: Unless required, fewer non-majors will take literature courses at all. The dip in literature majors is thus the canary in the coal mine, symbolic of American college students’ waning interests in literature, literary reading, and our disciplinary values. Confirming what most of us have long suspected, the National Endowment of the Arts’ “Reading at Risk” (NEA, 2004) and “To Read or Not to Read” (NEA, 2007) studies document a dramatic decline in the reading habits and abilities of teenagers and adults, including college graduates. For example, the average number of adults who had read a single work of literature (broadly defined) within the last year dropped by over 10% between 1982 and 2002, and the rates among 18- to 24-year-olds fell by 17%, making them the group least likely to read literature (NEA, 2004). In terms of reading proficiency, rates have remained steady or are dropping among all adults at all education levels, and college graduates’ rates have fallen over 20% between 1992 and 2003 (NEA, 2007).

A second disciplinary change revolves around the place of literature itself in the discipline. In the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, literary theory began to share and sometimes vie for attention with and sometimes become more important than literature. The rise of cultural studies caused the literary canon to become more contested than ever before, with challenges to redraw and even dissolve its borders. As a result, for some, it was no longer clear what literature was being studied in literary studies, and many experienced this change with great anxiety. For example, according to Schwartz, “Literature’s Year 2000 Problem” was the politicization of literature. His advice to theorists was to “study political science. . . . Move to Washington. Become an agent of change. Work for a nonprofit organization . . . , [but] please stop trying to twist literary study” (1999). Alonso similarly describes this “crisis” by saying “there is no longer a consensus on the object of literary studies or on the justifications for pursuing this field as an intellectual project” (2002, p. 401), and Pope sounds the alarm about “dangerous signs, symptoms perhaps of the forgetting of literature” (2002, p. 505). Others, however, describe some of these changes more positively. Shirane describes how the field “has transformed itself” from being too “narrowly construed as the study of national literatures or of belles lettres” to now teaching “new generations to have a better understanding of the world as a multiplicity of global, intertwined cultures” (2002, p. 513).
Despite the potential gravity of these current issues in the discipline, the essays in the *PMLA* symposium—and countless other publications—illustrate, even as they disagree, that there is common ground. There is a core to what we do, a reason why many of us were drawn to literary studies, a common purpose to what we do and will continue to do as scholars and teachers, and what we want our students to do, think, and feel in our classes. Graff (2006) contends that the attention to these disciplinary conflicts of the last 50 years has made it easy to forget that there is “more consensus . . . than we’re used to acknowledging” (p. 371). For instance, in a succinct and often-cited list, Scholes (1985) identifies the fundamental, universal practices of the discipline, despite one’s theoretical stance, area of specialization, or enrollment numbers: reading (comprehension of texts), interpretation (seeking subtextual meanings of texts), and criticism (determining the greater implications, significance, and value of texts with results most often presented in writing). Graff notes another universal practice of the discipline: With very few exceptions all literary scholars teach undergraduates, an observation that echoes Showalter’s (2003) recommendation that this common practice of literary scholars “could give us something to talk about that’s really worthwhile.” This observation—from two major scholars in the field and the 1998 MLA president (Showalter) and the 2008 MLA president (Graff)—is significant because it locates the teaching of literature firmly within the discipline, rather than something literary scholars do on the side in order to support their disciplinary practices of reading, research, and writing.

When Showalter asserted that “applying our specific scholarly skills to the problems of [teaching] well” would lead to valuable disciplinary conversations, she was arguing for a scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) in literary studies presented “in a language that our [disciplinary] colleagues will understand.” In addition to how such research is written, she was also referring to the “language” of research design, encouraging projects that don’t conform to external pressures for experimental design or expectations for empirical data, but instead draw on our own disciplinary methodologies of research and analysis. Informed by this disciplinary SoTL, literary teacher-scholars would more effectively “help students learn how literary scholars think, read, analyze, annotate, evaluate, and interpret texts.” In other words, she was calling for a SoTL that reflects the disciplinary ways of knowing, doing, and valuing.

**SoTL in the Discipline**

The discipline we call English or English Studies is actually a collection of several disciplines, including literary studies, composition studies, creative writing, and linguistics, with the first two representing the majority. Literary studies revolves around the interpretation of literary texts and is often divided into areas of specialization according to one or more of the following categories: nationality or geography (e.g., American literature, British literature), chronology (e.g., Renaissance literature, Romanticism, Modernism), politics (e.g., postcolonial literature), and perspective or theory (e.g., feminist, Marxist, New Historicism, Jungian). Composition studies focuses on research on and postsecondary instruction of writing, rhetoric, and discourse analysis, with its attention to writing processes, student writing, and classroom practices.

The differences between literary studies and composition studies result in some general differences between the SoTL of the two fields. Logically, although there are of course exceptions, literary SoTL tends to focus on issues of reading, whereas composition SoTL focuses on writing. A review of the online archives of *Pedagogy*, the premier SoTL journal in literary studies, reveals some common themes in literary SoTL: teaching specific texts (multicultural texts, canonical texts, children’s literature, theoretical texts, graphic novels, hypertexts, major literary anthologies, films [e.g., Kahn, 2004; Wilner, 2002]), teaching within specific contexts (overseas, rural or urban areas, culturally diverse or homogenous regions, working-class classrooms [e.g., Mack, 2006]), teaching with a specific classroom dynamic (an “out” lesbian or gay instructor, a white instructor teaching multicultural texts, an international instructor [e.g., Chatterjee, 2001]), teaching with technology (digital archives and other resources, student-generated hypertexts [e.g., DeVoss & Sefle, 2001; Jones, 2007]), teaching literature in conjunction with other goals (interdisciplinarity, service learning, environmentalism [e.g., Garrard, 2007]), and teaching literary reading practices (understanding complex texts, ambiguity, the challenges of poetry, responding to texts [e.g., Linkon, 2005]).

The broader field of English has been engaged in SoTL longer than others in the humanities, and composition leads literary studies in formally embracing SoTL in its most respected venues, with creative writing even less engaged (Whitman & Richlin, 2007; see Meacham in this book for an
literary criticism (New Criticism, deconstruction) and the discipline's major practice of close reading—"the most fundamental methodological [and pedagogic] protocol of our profession"—began as conversations about how to teach literature more effectively (p. 168). On the other hand, as with the professionalization of other academic disciplines, pedagogy, craft, and practice were relegated to secondary teaching while content, knowledge, theory, and the research of discovery became the focus in higher education.

Salvatori (2002) looks more closely at the MLA symposium's claim that "the discourse of teaching among university teachers [has] not caught up with advances in other areas of research" (p. 297). She acknowledges a tradition of teaching anecdotes that may be considered problematic when viewed through a SoTL lens: they're primarily entertaining, teacher-centered, not meant to be published (according to the literal etymology of "anecdote"), unsystematic, and irreproducible. As such, these specific narratives lack important elements of scholarship. However, Salvatori also notes more than 20 years of disciplinary pedagogical research with all the key elements of SoTL, claiming that these diminished characterizations of SoTL in English are "gesture[s] of misrecognition" (p. 298). Her work with Donahue (2002) articulates the main characteristics of SoTL in English, including highlighting and honoring "student language and the status of student text" (emphasis in original, pp. 70–71) through our "dominant styles of inquiry and methodologies," such as "textual interpretation and critique, discourse analysis, historical analysis, theoretical formulation" (p. 82). Indeed, literary SoTL is particularly strong in grounding learning problems within larger contexts (institutional, disciplinary, and even cultural) and theories (literary, pedagogical, and cultural). Further, Salvatori's description of "the most salient characteristics" of SoTL—"an unprecedented attentiveness to students' work, their cultural capital, and their learning as a litmus test for the theories that inform a teacher's approach" and "the classroom as a site where student voices are actually heard, where their knowledges are actually acknowledged and engaged" (p. 298)—implies that English scholars are uniquely positioned to employ them.

The Default Literary Pedagogy: Professorial Packing

Ultimately, most SoTL scholars would argue that a discipline isn't defined by its journals or other scholarly publications (Miller, 2006) or in its institutional
for the essential disciplinary act of "unpacking" a literary text and its meanings. Unpacking a text connotes opening up something, sifting out what's inside, and exploring the contents. The process turns a singular entity (a text) into multiple elements. There's a sense of anticipation, delight, and wonder in the process. In contrast, professorial packing occurs when a professor presents his or her fully formed interpretations to students—in essence packing the text (and the students) with the professor's own interpretations, rather than teaching the students themselves to unpack texts. Blau explains that this traditional approach to teaching literature comes in a variety of forms, most often in lectures about a text, or pseudo-Socratic discussions in which we ask questions designed to elicit our interpretations from the students. It also appears when we present a text's historical or biographical contexts before the students read it, which may then too narrowly focus their interpretations to that information given by us, or, paradoxically, when we withhold basic but necessary information about a text, setting up students to give a faulty interpretation that's corrected when we finally reveal that necessary information. Even those small instances when we provide students with definitions of unfamiliar terms illustrate this practice because in each the professor is again packing the text and the students with the meanings, rather than helping the students discover the meanings themselves.

Graff (2006) notes that, in the 1960s and 1970s, graduate school training for new teaching assistants in English was limited to talking about interpretations of texts, "interesting things an instructor could say—or try to get students to say—about a literary work" with no discussion of their own or students' impressions of literature, reading, and interpretation (p. 375). These English professors of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and today have been trained not to recognize students' literary preconceptions and expectations, not to discuss the discipline itself and its value, not to guide student practice of disciplinary ways of thinking, but to teach literature by presenting interpretations that interest the teachers. Given this context in which most English Ph.D.s are being trained solely in content knowledge and not pedagogy or even pedagogical content knowledge, it's understandable that they rely on their strengths—presenting interpretations—and begin teaching as they were taught. In this moment when a novice teacher and content expert faces a literature classroom for the first time, we see the beginnings of the relationship between pedagogical narcissism and professorial packing. We've all experienced professors who guided us toward their interpretations, and who
rewarded us for mirroring them in class discussion and in our writing. Some of our fondest memories in the classroom even revolve around charismatic teachers and professors who dazzled us with the way they read texts, and the impulse to be like them is often why we got our Ph.D.s. And so, without thinking about the differences between us and many of our students, we emulate those professors who inspired us. In short, we rely on the default pedagogy of the discipline—packing texts, packing interpretations, packing the students—without thinking carefully about what students learn from it.

This conventional, literary pedagogy does not reflect the ways of knowing and doing in literary studies and, like many other disciplines, is typically focused on the goal of coverage of texts rather than deep disciplinary understanding. After lecturing about 10 George Herbert poems in one late-semester day because his Renaissance survey hadn't yet addressed this major poet, Blau (2003) later admitted that this strategy served the syllabus, the pressures of coverage, and his love of the poet. Like Blau, Gregory (2005) recalls teaching one of his favorite poems by presenting his meticulous analysis. Eventually, he also acknowledged that his students weren't learning much aside from “why some people—namely me or other strange persons like me—might find [the] poem interesting” (p. 96). Both Blau and Gregory had good intentions in the way they taught these beloved works, assuming that their own knowledge and enthusiasm would simply be transmitted to students, but as with any lecture—even a good lecture—students learn the information they're given. In these moments, the students were learning Blau's and Gregory's interpretations instead of how they arrived at the interpretations, or how the students might develop their own interpretations. As Blau later realized, the “experience of learning was mine, not theirs” (p. 2), because he was doing the disciplinary work the students should do, presenting only the results or products of this work and hiding or even hoarding the intellectual moves necessary to get there. This kind of professorial packing is in part the literary equivalent of teaching scientific facts rather than the nature of science or the process of scientific inquiry.

In these instances, the students also learn that the professor knows the text well, perhaps too well. If they don't see the process of reading and rereading, including what the professor was thinking when first reading a text and then in developing an interpretation, it's understandable why many students think of interpretation as “overanalyzing.” From their perspectives, the professor is performing some sort of hocus-pocus, conjuring up meaning through mysterious spells, pulling an interpretation out of a hat. Blau also points out an ethical problem here. In these moments, we rarely admit to our prior contextual knowledge—knowledge the students don't have and don't realize we're using—that makes interpreting texts easier, we give the impression that the distance between our skills and theirs is insurmountable. By inadvertently inflating our interpretive skills rather than explaining that we're also drawing from knowledge they don't yet have (but can develop), we not only “misrepresent the gap” between ourselves and our students (Blau, 2003, p. 91); we also guard the gap between expert and novice, between disciplinary understanding and disciplinary misconceptions.

Aside from dazzling students with our brilliance (if we are that lucky), a consequence of professorial packing is “a culture of interpretive dependence” (Blau, 2003, p. 20). At some point, a cycle has been created: we accept or claim students' interpretive dependence as they expect us to give our interpretations to them (the consumers of these interpretations), which they then reflect back to us on exams and in essays. This cycle reinforces the “professor as puzzlemaster” misconception, as students grant us complete interpretive authority and envision their role as struggling to figure out our obscure interpretations (Chick, Hassel, & Rybak, 2008). Some may argue that this practice provides novices with interpretive training wheels modeling expert interpretations, but under closer scrutiny it seems not only to provide these wheels but also to peddle the bike. Again, it models the product rather than the process, as the professor has done the disciplinary work without showing the students how to do that work themselves.

Ultimately, it raises questions about our conceptions of teaching and what is being taught. Professorial packing assumes that teaching means transferring information from professor to student and that what's being taught is the professor's interpretation—not the intellectual moves required to generate interpretations, regardless of text. We know from learning theory, however, that this unidirectional, product-oriented model of teaching and learning doesn't help novices learn (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000), and we know that learning literature means far more than just learning our own interpretations.

When seeking a more effective way to teach students to read, understand, remember, and value literature, Gregory (2005) jumped outside of the discipline to propose a “liberal arts pedagogy,” rejecting what he saw as the only options for an “English pedagogy,” which he describes as “stultifying”
discussions about and within the discipline, these conversations should be guiding principles in our classes. Too often, we seal off from the classroom such larger questions about literature, its relationship to the world, and the discipline itself—in short, “the way intellectual work in the field is done” (Graff, 2006, p. 380). This exclusion has serious consequences for students’ understanding of literary studies, of what it means to do literary studies, and of academic culture in general, not to mention their interest in pursuing a literature major or even further literary reading. Integrating this approach into our pedagogy opens up or unpacks the discipline by engaging students in the conversations, questions, and debates central to what we do professionally and, most importantly, in the processes used to carry on these conversations, rather than hiding them altogether or merely exposing students to the results of such debates.

Significantly, this approach is Graff’s first proposal for overhauling how graduate students are socialized into the discipline, not only for their benefit as future literary scholars but also as future literature teachers. Because conventional ways of teaching literature make the discipline itself “elusive” or “mystifying,” from introductory courses all the way up through graduate school (2006, p. 376), many graduate students don’t even know “what it means to be part of ‘the profession’” of literary studies. As a result they teach by relying on the default of professorial packing (which contributed to their own disorientation) and thus perpetuate the cycle of confusion and lack of disciplinary understanding (p. 375). Graff argues that graduate students in literature should be learning the conflicts and how to teach them.

Perhaps appropriately, the meaning of the approach has been a point of contention. Because the phrase “teaching the conflicts” implies antagonism, polarity, and even dualistic thinking, it is easily misunderstood and misrepresented, despite attempts at clarifying the principle to include a sense of dialogue, conversation, and even negotiation (Benton, 2003; Graff, 2003; Tompkins, 2003). Another misconception is that this approach prescribes certain conflicts or debates. On the contrary, the specific themes or topics will vary at least according to context and don’t by themselves provide the ultimate value of the approach (Graff, 2003). Instead, the value comes from the intellectual, emotional, and pedagogical moves used in teaching and learning this way. It’s in line with at least two key elements of current learning theory: first, it confronts and contradicts specific misconceptions about
the discipline itself, why and how we read literature, and what literature is ultimately about (Chick, Hassel, & Rybak, 2008). Also, by invoking large, complex questions which can't be answered by singular answers and simple pro-con debates, it nudges students out of dualistic thinking (Graff, 2003; Kloss, 1994; Shumway, 2003). Emotionally, when literature is placed in larger, more meaningful contexts, it's easier for students to recognize a sense of both personal relevance and the greater significance of literature than is possible with the more traditional practice of narrowly focusing on textual analysis, to the exclusion of any extra-textual considerations. Ultimately, the essence of this signature approach is twofold: organize teaching and learning around the conversations that engage literary scholars and readers (including students), and share, teach, and have students practice the disciplinary moves we make within these conversations.

By involving students in the conflicts and conversations that make our disciplinary processes meaningful, this literary signature pedagogy is guided not by the answers asserted in the singular perspective of professorial packing but by questions and by multiple perspectives. These key principles undergird everything from course design and text selection to assignments, in-class activities, and class dynamics. Students participate in conversations (oral and written) evaluating and negotiating different interpretations, theories, critical responses, and contexts for texts—appropriately adjusted to considerations of depth and course level. Certainly, no single course or teaching practice will create literary scholars or experts in a semester, but that's neither the claim nor the objective of a signature pedagogy. Instead, its goal in lower-level courses is to help students begin to recognize, value, practice, and internalize these essential moves of literary studies, and then continue this process in upper-level courses—or, to follow the disciplinary metaphor, as students participate in unpacking the discipline, they gain the skills to unpack it further themselves.

Such courses engage in inquiries about the literature, disciplinary processes, and the discipline itself. For instance, textual conversations might include showing students how to unpack the ambiguous and seemingly contradictory meanings within a single text, such as the ending of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* or Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz" (Chick, Hassel, & Haynie, in press); placing texts that are in conflict side by side, such as the Booker T. Washington—W. E. B. DuBois debate; examining the social value and impact of texts, such as the discussions about *The Adventures of Huckle-

*Harry Finn* as a racist text; evaluating the insights offered through different theoretical perspectives (e.g., New Criticism, New Historicism, postcolonial theory, feminist theory); engaging in canon debates by considering what should be read (popular works such as *Harry Potter*; non-print genres such as film and song lyrics?) and why; or exploring the "newness" of such genres as the short story cycle or flash fiction. Inquiries about disciplinary processes might include examining the role of the author in interpreting a text. A common novice practice is the intentional fallacy, or the assumption that an author's intended meaning is the privileged and perhaps only meaning of a text (Chick, Hassel, & Rybak, 2008), but the disciplinary caution against relinquishing interpretive authority to the author is a product of the New Critics from the mid-20th century and isn't universally applied, as lyric poetry may be seen as the voice of the poet and not a separate persona (Blau, 2003). These complications make the reader's relationship to the author an ongoing site of negotiation. More broadly, an effective metacognitive and meta-disciplinary pursuit would be considering how literary reading processes overlap with and differ from what's commonly perceived as its opposite: "beach reading" or "reading for pleasure." Questions about the discipline itself might involve defining the discipline and its moves, discussing how it's related to other disciplines, how it's relevant to the world outside of academia, why it values reading, and what disciplinary practitioners can do about the nation's decline in reading and reading abilities (Graff, 2006).

This principle of teaching the conflicts, conversations, and questions speaks to how literary scholars view literature itself. First, it reflects the discipline's sense of the canon as a contested issue that invites critical evaluation and debate, a *conversation about* rather than a predetermined *list of* what literature we value and why. It also captures the discipline's approach to texts and what they mean: they are multiplicitous, layered, ambiguous, and influenced by contexts, rather than singular, flat, definitive, and decontextualized—as professorial packing erroneously suggests. In other words, rather than teaching that a text and its meanings are fixed or even dead, remains from a bygone era ready to be autopsied by contemporary readers, this element of a signature pedagogy teaches that texts are still alive, generative, and inviting of new questions, approaches, interpretations, and significance. After all, we talk about what happens in literary texts using what’s called the literary present tense because we consider the text, its events, and its characters alive every time we look at the page. Each time we read *Hamlet*, he agonizes over what
to do about his father's death; each time we read Moby-Dick, Ishmael joins Captain Ahab in search of the white whale; and each time we read The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Huck decides that helping Jim escape the slave-catchers is worth going to hell. We talk about the texts we love as offering something new with each reading. For us, literature and literary study can't be captured in a lecture or a pseudo-Socratic dialogue focused on one interpretation. It's the conversation—indeed many conversations—about the texts, what to make of them, and why we do it in the first place that makes literature and the discipline meaningful to us and to our students (Blau, 2003; Wallen, 2003).

By foregrounding significant conversations and debates, this pedagogical principle also heightens the awareness of perspective and differences in perspective. In doing so, it draws on the key literary element of the point of view or persona from which a narrative is told. For example, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn would be a very different book if—instead of being limited to 13-year-old Huck's first-person perspective—it were told by the runaway slave Jim or by an omniscient narrator who gave equal insight into the minds of Huck, Jim, Tom Sawyer, and Pap. Similarly, the shifting perspectives of Toni Morrison's Beloved speak to the differing impacts of slavery on blacks and whites, on women and men, on adults and children, on Southerners and Northerners, on humans and animals. This literary signature pedagogy emerges when we ask students to examine how different characters in Beloved experience slavery and its aftermath, or the differences between characters in Huck Finn and Beloved, or how the two novels—one from 1885 and one from 1987—talk to and talk back to each other.

This signature pedagogy also reflects what literary scholars do. We invariably develop our responses to texts in dialogue and conflict with others: we exhaustively research what others have written about the texts, apply our perspectives influenced by larger theories, present our work at conferences, publish our written responses for our peers, and often share (or impose) our interpretations in our classes. Yet when students read only the literary texts, get only a single way (the professor's) of reading and responding to the texts, and miss the larger conversations within and about the texts, they are not participating in literary studies. On the other hand, this literary signature pedagogy has students reading literary criticism and perhaps even theory to engage in what scholars have said and continue to say, as well as how they say it. These disciplinary genres provide students with models of the moves they're expected to make, such as how to ask questions of texts, how to respond to these questions, how to use textual evidence, and how to place texts in dialogue with other texts and with broader contexts. Students learn something about the literary, historical, and cultural contexts in which the texts are produced and then read, as the literature itself is often in dialogue with these contexts. In such class discussions and in writing assignments, students are producing their own literary criticism, even if preliminary, rather than what some consider the more artificial assignments that require them to simply describe elements of setting, symbolism, theme, or character (Blau, 2003; Graff, 2006; Stephens, Corey, & Chapman, 2003).

As literary teacher-scholars answer the calls for SoTL that reflects the discipline and for SoTL-informed teaching that helps students do literary studies, the resulting conversations will continue to explore ways of teaching that embody what makes the discipline so meaningful to us: how literary texts, the meanings they suggest, the questions they raise, and the conflicts they provoke are connected to the larger concerns of the world we all live in. Applying the signature pedagogy discussed here, this conversation about a universal activity in literary studies—teaching—this needs to make its way into the literature classroom, as students participate in the further development of literary signature pedagogies. Such a pedagogical disciplinary conversation about "Why take literature—how do we teach our students?" will indeed be "really worthwhile."

References


exercise in overcoming such self-deception, or nostalgia, or pedagogical narcissism by learning to empathize with students and see what happens in the classroom and how we teach through their eyes, rather than through our own reflections.


8. The bibliography that accompanies the 2003 Pedagogy symposium on “Teaching the Conflicts at Twenty Years” is useful in tracing Graff’s development of the concept (p. 274). It’s also worth noting that, although Graff has extended his challenge more broadly across the disciplines, his concept originated in and has gained the most traction in his discipline.

9. This later symposium focuses on Graff’s more recent and broader concept of students’ “cluelessness” to the moves we make, as explained in Clueless in Academe: How Schooling Obscures the Life of the Mind (2003). The central moves Graff says we fail to teach students have to do with recognizing and engaging in debates, conflicts, dialogues, conversations. They Say / I Say (Graff & Birkenstein, 2006), his textbook companion to Clueless in Academe, teaches students how to make these moves. It’s also worth noting that Calder, a leading SoTL scholar in history and author of “Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey” (2006), called Clueless in Academe “the best SoTL book” he’s read in years in his presentation at the 2006 CASTL Institute in Chicago.

10. For greater detail on the debates surrounding the “teach the conflicts” approach, see the 2003 Pedagogy symposium (pp. 245–275).

Notes

1. I’m grateful to my colleague Holly Hassel for her ongoing support and collaboration, as well as Aaron Haynie and Chuck Rybak, whose work on other collaborations has been invaluable. I also wish to thank Aaron Haynie and Regan Gurung, my fellow editors of this book, for their thoughtful feedback on this chapter.

2. The title of Schwartz’s 1997 book After the Death of Literature speaks to what he sees as the consequences of these theorists.

3. In fact, Downs and Wardle (2007) articulate what may be a composition signature pedagogy, which they call “writing studies pedagogy” (p. 578), in their description of a course that “does not teach from principles that contravene writing studies research. Instead, it draws on research from the field and principles and ethics that shape the field to help students understand the nature of writing and to explore their own writing practices. Unlike pedagogies that are so detached from writing studies’ specialized knowledge as to deny it, [this] pedagogy emerges from that knowledge and ethos” (p. 560).

4. Weimer (2006) validates the “wisdom of practice” found in personal narratives for their potential to motivate “the observation, adaptation, and application of those specifics in another context” (p. 90).

5. Given the focus of this book and the parameters of a single chapter, my summary of the disciplinary history and its traditional ways of teaching is limited to its practice in the United States.

6. Brookfield’s Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher (1995) is an extended