Rhetorical stance in a humanities-based community college advanced composition course

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Rhetorical stance in a humanities-based community college advanced composition course

by

Michelle Gardner Ramthun

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department: English
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Iowa State University
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

One mission of the community college is to prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities; therefore, community college English instructors must prepare students to write for upper-level courses in their majors. At four-year institutions, students face writing challenges that they probably would not take on at the community college level.

One reason for this is that community college composition courses tend to emphasize the "basics," including introductions and conclusions, paragraph development, and grammar and mechanics. They may also touch upon library research and writing with sources. However, another important aspect of writing—the rhetorical stance—is not always included in community college freshman writing courses. Therefore, there is a need for an additional, advanced composition course which explores rhetorical stance in depth.

Wayne Booth defines rhetorical stance as "a proper balance among the three elements that are at work in any communicative effort; the available arguments about
the subject itself, the interests and peculiarities of
the audience, and the voice, the implied character, of
the speaker" (153). This balance, Booth says, should
be the main goal of rhetoric teachers. Although students
may never find the balance easy, they "will know that
it is what makes the difference between effective
communication and mere wasted effort" (153).

Because students planning to transfer to four-year
colleges need practice in their formal writing, to ignore
rhetorical stance in writing is to risk leaving these
students unprepared for the writing assignments in their
future academic careers. To argue this point I will
demonstrate how rhetorical stance can be taught. An
advanced composition course at Iowa Central Community
College will be used as an example, and I will add an
essential factor: how to develop students' awareness
of the rhetorical stance and how it contributes to
successful academic writing.

The proposed advanced composition course will use
a humanities-based approach to study rhetorical stance.
This means students develop their own purposes, aim their
essays at specific audiences, and create their own
voices. To develop their own ideas for essays, students
can benefit from discussing topics which fall under the broad category of humanities. Such an approach includes the study of social issues, as students read essays on topics such as family structures, racism, and education; these topics invite students to analyze these subjects in the world around them in order to develop their own ideas in writing.

If students do not develop their own purposes, voices and awareness of audience, their writing may lack the extra dimension which makes their essays interesting and effective for readers. Therefore, my hypothesis is that advanced composition instructors at community colleges must prepare students for writing challenges ahead by teaching the importance of rhetorical stance, and one way to do that is with a humanities-based approach.

In addition, this thesis serves as a guide for instructors. While the ideal community college English instructor has a Master of Arts in composition and an understanding of composition pedagogy, not all teachers at the two-year college level have this background. Instead, they come from diverse educational programs, including composition, literature, or creative writing. Therefore, some instructors will be familiar with the
material presented here, while for others some terms and instructional techniques will be new.

The following chapter illustrates rhetorical stance in more detail, arguing its importance and showing how its elements work in student writing.

Chapter three uses the Advanced Composition course at Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge as a model of how a rhetorical stance/humanities-based writing course can be defined and structured. The terms currently used in the course will be explained, followed by an argument for the inclusion of rhetorical stance.

Chapter four rationalizes the value of a humanities-based classroom.

The final chapter focuses on the details of the course, such as the textbook, course objectives, a look at an essay from one unit in the course, and how a specific essay can be analyzed for audience, purpose, and voice from a humanities-based approach.

Together, these chapters form an argument for the inclusion of rhetorical stance in advanced composition at the community college level. This important ingredient of writing is essential to four-year college students, and community college students who lack this important
preparation miss an essential tool for written communication.
CHAPTER TWO: RHETORICAL STANCE

Advanced Composition must implement the rhetorical stance as a means to effective writing. This stance, however, has only relatively recently become a major composition theory used in the classroom. Until the late 1960s, the most common classification of discourse used in writing classes was the use of the four modes: narration, description, exposition, and argument. While exposition and argument are still used today—as they are in Advanced Composition, explained in chapter three—composition tends to take a different approach: purpose (an element of rhetorical stance).

The modes approach thrived during much of the 1800s, but came under attack in the twentieth century. For example, in 1953 Albert Kitzhaber wrote in *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900* that modes represented "an unrealistic view of the writing process, a view that assumes writing is done by formula and in a social vacuum" (220-221). In 1971, James Kinneavy asserted in *A Theory of Discourse* that composition theory stressed use of modes rather "'why' a thing is being talked about. . . . Something is narrated for reason."
Narration, as such, is not a purpose" (28). Therefore, according to Kinneavy, purpose, not modes, should be the goal when writing. Purpose, along with the other elements of rhetorical stance, writer and audience, is explained in the next section.

The Importance of Rhetorical Stance

Rhetorical stance—the writer's awareness of audience, purpose, and voice—allows a writer to communicate information clearly. Its importance is evident in an essay topic for an upper-level women's history course:

Assess women's contributions in economic endeavors, military undertakings, political matters, and women's rights during the Civil War. Show that positive changes came about for women as a result of their wartime effort (Riley 1).

Since the history student is expected to be knowledgeable on the subject, she needs not only to demonstrate an informed voice, but also write with a specific audience and purpose in mind. She should emphasize facts, offering examples of specific women's achievements, how and why they made their contributions, and the benefits
which resulted. The writer's purpose is to demonstrate her understanding of women's contributions during this time period. As for her audience, she writes for a history instructor who is judging her presentation of historical knowledge.

Unfortunately, some undergraduates do not have a purpose, audience (reader), or voice (writer) in mind for their writing. In order to produce effective writing, a writer should maintain a proper balance between the three elements--purpose, audience, and voice--illustrated in the communications triangle (Figure 1).

![Communications triangle](image)

**Figure 1:** Communications triangle
According to Erika Lindemann in *A Rhetoric for Writing Teachers*, the communications triangle "offers students a useful model for defining the rhetorical problem a writing assignment must solve." It helps students formulate questions about what they know about their subject, who their audience is, and what their audience needs to know about the subject (12).

Although balancing the three elements may never come easily for a student, "he will know that it is what makes the difference between effective communication and mere wasted effort" (Booth 153). The three ingredients of effective writing--voice, purpose, and audience--are explained in detail below.

**Writer or Voice**

The responsibility of the writer, Erika Lindemann says, is to compose the message (12). According to James L. Kinneavy, John Q. Cope, and J.W. Campbell in *Aims and Audiences in Writing*, the writer may "present himself as an authority on the subject" and therefore assume the role of instructor: offering readers information they do not know (155). In doing so, the writer's voice is heard.
In *A Writer Teaches Writing*, Donald Murray writes that voice "allows the reader to hear an individual human being speak from the page" (21). Tom Liner, co-author of *Inside Out*, advises that "The first thing beginning writers should learn is how they 'sound' when they write" (114). As writing instructors, Liner and co-author Dan Kirby give students time to write about things that are "close to them and important to them," encouraging them to explore their own methods of expression (116).

Writing with voice possesses, according to Peter Elbow in *Writing with Power*, a "sound or texture"--the sound of the writer (288). Elbow gives an example of an expository paragraph with voice, written by a student:

> In the United States there is supposed to be freedom of expression, and yet there are laws against obscenity. No one can say what obscenity really is. And is obscene material really harmful? Maybe some forms of censorship are necessary, but this is just another instance of our country being called free when it is not (Elbow 289).

This paragraph has the qualities of what Elbow defines
as voice: the writing sounds like the person who wrote it. For example, explains Elbow, if one reads a letter or something else a friend has written, it "has the sound of them. It feels as though writing with voice has life in it...as though the breath makes the words themselves do the work of getting up off the page and into our head as we read" (288). The student's paragraph seems to express her personal dilemma or concern over obscenity and freedom of expression. She argues that people disagree over what obscenity is, and questions whether it is harmful; she seems to guide her reader through her own process of questioning whether obscenity should be censored, and the consequences to free speech.

Unfortunately, Elbow explains, students sometimes drain their writing of voice. He says that as they clarify a point or correct the language, they "dissipate the breath." For example, when the student who wrote the example above rewrote her work, she managed to "revise it away," as she attempted to "assert one opinion more definitely."

We should admit that freedom of expression is not truly realized in the United States, since the censoring of materials which are
considered obscene constitute a definite limitation of this freedom (Elbow 289).

By giving the paragraph a more direct focus, she lost the voice that had given life to the first version (289). Her own personal questions and sense of dilemma are gone, leaving a straightforward statement void of personal reaction.

Voice adds life to writing, but it can be misused or overdone. Wayne Booth calls this the "entertainer's stance--the willingness to sacrifice substance to personality and charm." Booth claims to admire Walker Gibson's attempts to "startle (readers) out of dry pedantry" through exhortations, but Gibson does so at the expense of his voice, leading to "empty colorfulness." Composition students should be discouraged from empty writing; Booth recalls a student complaining about one of Booth's colleagues: the student said "I soon learned that all I had to do to get an A was imitate Thurber" (Booth 156). While that student may have successfully patterned his writing style after a famous author's, he was denied the opportunity to explore his own voice.
Purpose

Kinneavy, Cope, and Campbell say that when a person uses language, she does so to achieve a purpose. For example, a person may speak or write to tell a joke, or to make his wants known. The authors explain that "No one speaks or writes...isolated from any reason. We believe that purpose or aim is what makes...certain kinds of sentences effective or ineffective" (4).

Purposes vary; for example, a student may choose to convey facts and concepts (inform) or to prove a thesis (argue) (Kinneavy, Cope, and Campbell 6). Purpose directs the writer's material. A student writing about an increased number of reported rapes on college campuses may approach her topic as an informative report or as an argument. As an informative report for her English class, she would do some library research and interview counselors on campus who have worked with rape victims.

After gathering information on the estimated number of campus rapes, and where and why they occur, the writer turns in an informative essay to her instructor. After researching this topic, the writer may realize that something can be done about rape. Therefore, she
decides to hold an informal meeting in her dormitory, where students can discuss ways to protect themselves and others from such attacks. In order to persuade dorm residents to attend, she writes a flyer which argues that rape is a serious problem on college campuses, and that students must meet and discuss ways to curb it. Her purpose in this case is not only to inform, but to convince her readers to recognize rape as a problem and therefore attend the meeting.

While purposes vary widely, students should "pursue aims in writing that are important to them," as Erika Lindemann states. They should be encouraged to use writing as "an instrument of thought," to use in school and "in the world beyond school" (226).

Audience

Composition students tend to think of the teacher when they picture a reader. For most academic writing, the teacher is indeed the immediate audience, such as in the example of the history student's essay on women's contributions to the Civil War. Her purpose is to demonstrate what she has learned to her instructor. However, Erika Lindemann says, "students need to practice writing
for themselves, for each other, for audiences outside the classroom." By doing so, students will understand how to write for more diverse, complex audiences, enabling themselves to "establish larger networks of social relationships" (Lindemann 13).

Identifying one's audience is not always a simple task. As Douglas Park points out in "The Meanings of 'Audience'," the familiar question "Who or what is the audience for this piece?" may receive blank looks from students. The difficulty in identifying audience usually lies in finding appropriate terms for the audience, such as "people who do not approve of the subject" or "readers of Atlantic Monthly," for example (159). However, Park cautions writers that audience may or may not include the intended readers. People read for many reasons, he explains; for example, an article on asparagus roots may draw many readers, such as those who are genuinely interested in the topic, or those who "read out of idle boredom as casual spectators amused at the eager enthusiasm of the implied audience." Although the article was probably aimed at the first kind of readers, the second kind mentioned are also readers. Therefore, the meanings of "audience" branch into two directions: 1) the readers
a writer "must accommodate" and 2) an "implied audience" and "evoked attitudes, interests, reactions, conditions of knowledge which may or may not fit with qualities of actual readers" (Park 160).

In "Audience Addressed/Audience Invoked: The Role of Audience in Composition Theory and Pedagogy," Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford explain in depth the difference between concrete readers and an implied audience. Writers who envision "audience addressed" think of "the concrete reality of. . .audience" (170). "Audience invoked," on the other hand, is when a writer realizes the physical presence of readers, but believes that a writer cannot be aware of the reality of an audience the way a speaker can. Therefore, the writer "provide(s) cues for the reader. . .which help to define the role or roles the writer wishes the reader to adopt in the text" (174).

For instance, a resident of a Colorado town hears that a mining industry has plans to excavate mountains near her town. She does not want such traffic and damage to the land so close to her residence, so she writes a letter to persuade her neighbors to stand up against the project. Her neighbors are her addressed audience.
However, she does not know some of her neighbors and cannot predict how they will react to the situation. She knows basic demographic factors about them, such as age, race, and class, but other aspects are more complex; for instance, how much do they know about the industrial project? Are they aware of the harm it will do the environment? Do they think it will harm or help the town economically? In order to write a letter which aims to persuade readers to take action, she will have to provide cues to help her implied audience define the roles they are to assume as they read.

The Role of Rhetorical Stance

Through awareness of rhetorical stance, students can develop their own voices in essays appropriate for their audiences. Advanced Composition students read essays in class, discuss them, and analyze each writer's voice, purpose, and audience. Once students realize the importance of these aspects, they have the opportunity to write their own essays. Along the way they use the elements of rhetorical stance. To guide students in developing their own ideas and purposes, the class takes a humanities-based approach which encourages class
discussion, and provides students with the opportunity to explore their individual voices for social issues which may prompt topics for their own essays. The next chapter looks at an Advanced Composition class, defines terms used in the class, and shows the role of rhetorical stance.
CHAPTER THREE: ADVANCED COMPOSITION

Advanced Composition at Iowa Central Community College

Iowa Central Community College's General Catalog defines Advanced Composition as a writing course which "includes work in exposition and argument with emphasis on critical thinking, organization, and style (74)."

The study of these topics would be enhanced by rhetorical stance; for example, knowing how to develop the appropriate voice to present an argument to an audience not only makes the argument more effective, but allows the writer to practice critical thinking and experiment with her own personal style.

The key terms from the course description--exposition, argument, critical thinking, organization, and style--are defined below. While the course as it stands may briefly touch upon the elements of rhetorical stance, it needs to place greater emphasis on these essentials of writing. Therefore, ways to include rhetorical stance are pointed out throughout the chapter.

Expository Writing

Exposition and argument (explained in the following
section) differ in purpose and intent. Expository essays are informative and relatively objective. An instructor must emphasize the difference between exposition and argument, for these types of writing may have different purposes, audiences, and voices. Examples of expository essay topics can help students understand the purpose(s) of this means of communication. An instructor can use a current event topic of interest to students, such as the use of laboratory animals to test products such as medicines or cosmetics. An expository approach would explain why scientists use animals for research, what animals are used, and how various tests are conducted. The writer would not, however, state whether she was for or against the use of animals for research; her opinion would make the essay argumentative. In composing an expository essay, her thesis would be that laboratories use animals for experimental purposes.

Another current event which can be used for illustration is the growth of industry and tourism in the American West; mining, cattle ranching, timber logging, and farming, as well as the expansion of ski resorts, have caused clashes between industrialists and environmentalists. An expository essay would explain
reasons for the growth of the industries and why environmentalists are opposed, but not take a stand on either side. While this topic has great potential for an argument, it also has a purpose as an expository topic. For example, if a newspaper reporter were assigned a front-page story about the debate over the West, she would present the material objectively. Her purpose would be to inform readers of what is happening in the region, not try to persuade readers to accept one point of view over the other.

While students in both freshman composition and Advanced Composition study and practice expository writing, the freshman courses cover the basics of writing, and advanced composition goes into more depth. The advanced course works on critical reading skills, strengthens organizational skills and style, and shows students the importance of rhetorical stance. With this knowledge, community college students will be better prepared for upper-level writing assignments than they would by taking only freshman writing at the community college.

When writing an argument, however, a student's purpose, audience, and voice are different. If the student is aware of these elements of the rhetorical stance as she
creates an argument, she can easily adjust her material for the proper assignment.

Argument

According to John D. Ramage and John C. Bean in their composition textbook *Writing Arguments*, argument "is concerned with discovering and conveying our best judgments about the truth of things through an appeal to reason" (4). Developing the skill of argument is important, for individuals are exposed to a variety of opinions each day through the media, travel, and education. Since a person's values are "not universally shared or even respected," he is "faced with the need to justify (his) ideas in such a diverse society" (11). For an argumentative assignment, students need to justify their ideas in writing.

Aristotle lists three basic means to persuade others: 1) logos, the appeal to an audience's sense of reason, 2) ethos, the appeal of the writer's personality or character and 3) pathos, the appeal to an audience's emotions (Corbett 37). Through demonstration of these means, an instructor can show students how they draw readers into an argument.
Each of the expository topics presented in the previous section could be converted into an argument by assuming a different voice, shifting the purpose, and appealing to the audience through logos, ethos, or pathos. A writer interested in animal experimentation could argue that such experiments are painful to the animals, and therefore should not be conducted; his voice would be one of concern, and his purpose to persuade others not to support animal experimentation. The writer could argue that some experiments are needlessly repeated, or that computer-simulated models are available to predict the outcome of many experiments, therefore eliminating the need for tests on live animals. Expository writing would play a small role in this essay; the writer would explain what tests are conducted and how. He could use such background information to explain in detail how a particular test is performed, and then argue that there are better methods of testing. To gain his readers' sympathy, he could use pathos by describing the painful procedures and the animals' frightened reactions.

As for the topic of industry in the American West and environmentalists' opposition, the newspaper reporter who wrote an expository article could turn it into an
editorial favoring one side. She could argue that heavy industry in the region harms the land. She would use exposition by explaining the debate between industrialists and environmentalists, and present an argument by asserting that cattle ranchers allow their animals to overgraze, resulting in eroded soil, polluted water, and ravaged vegetation; and that extensive logging in the Pacific Northwest has caused the northern spotted owl to nearly become extinct. Her purpose would be to argue for the protection of the environment, and her voice that of a citizen aware of the damage heavy industry can do to this region. To consider her audience, she could use logos by explaining that while industry is economically appealing, it destroys the land and endangers animals, which could have serious long-term effects on the ecology of the West. In the long run, this could also harm the economy, if the area becomes so damaged and depleted that it no longer draws industry.

As the above examples indicate, many topics for essays can be either expository or argumentative. In fact, it can be difficult to distinguish between the two; for example, if an expository article about the debate between industrialists and environmentalists in
the West were to go into great detail about the effects on the environment, describing the landscape as a once-beautiful scene turned into a polluted wasteland, readers may subtly be persuaded into siding with the environmentalists despite the writer's supposed intent to remain objective.

**Critical Thinking**

When writing a paper, students need to think critically to develop and analyze written discourse. Advanced composition uses published essays to help students develop critical thinking skills. When analyzing an essay, students see a writing as a whole as well as break it down to see how it is put together. This process gives students ideas about how to put together their own essays. However, in order for students to analyze essays effectively, they must be able to look at an essay at three levels of increasing difficulty, as follows:

1) a basic, literal understanding
2) interpretation
3) in-depth analysis (Flachmann 134).

While English 1 and 2 at Iowa Central guide students through a basic understanding of essays (levels
l and 2), Advanced Composition helps them interpret meanings and analyze the works in depth.

This performance scale appears in "Literacy: The Convergence of Reading, Writing, and Thinking" by Kim Flachmann. She explains that the first level, literal understanding, is the ability to know meanings of individual words and phrases, and to quote or paraphrase something from a text. Moving to level two, students can interpret, or make associations and recognize relationships between ideas in a reading. Finally, when students break an essay into parts and understand how these parts work separately as well as in an essay as a whole, they are analyzing (134).

A similar scale of learning is explained in "The Paideia Proposal" by Mortimer Adler. The first level, or "column" as Adler calls it, involves "fundamental branches of learning." In terms of English, students gain information about language--usually the basics of grammar and syntax, and perhaps the history of the English language (181).

The second level, according to Adler, is coaching, which involves showing students how to apply knowledge. Level two differs from one in that students are doing
activities instead of listening to lectures (182).

The first two levels have a drawback: they may cause students to become "memorizing machines" who recite facts by memory without understanding what they mean (Adler 184). Therefore, the third level of analysis serves to combat the memorization trap by discussing ideas presented in the arts, including literature and rhetoric. At this advanced level, instructors encourage students to use their imagination to ask questions about what a work of art means, and to draw their own conclusions (183). While the first level involves learning the facts, the second allows students to apply data, and the third helps them develop original ideas.

The study of rhetorical stance develops in level three, where students develop original ideas about the text. They may find clues in the text to determine the writer's audience, purpose, and voice.

For example, a writer who is against animal experimentation may try to convince a pharmaceutical laboratory to find feasible alternatives to medical experiments which cause physical or psychological pain in animals. The writer's voice would demonstrate concern for the animals as well as respect for the laboratory's
endeavors to produce effective medicine. Although the writer probably would not explicitly identify her purpose and audience by saying "My purpose (or audience or voice) in this argument is...", her readers analyze her essay to determine these elements. For instance, by insisting that the laboratory use alternatives, readers may ascertain that she has respect for the laboratory's efforts. If she did not hold such respect, she would argue against animal experimentation while ignoring the need for pharmaceutical tests. If she proposes alternatives, however, she demonstrates sensitivity to her audience's cause.

Students can transfer their reading skills to writing. The three levels of analysis give students the skills they need to read an essay, understand how it is put together, and perhaps develop their own reaction to its meaning. By learning to apply these skills (which help students understand the purpose of text and gather ideas about it), students can "successfully integrate reading and writing" (Holladay 189).

Organization

In a writing course, students must learn to "solve
the problems of building a piece of writing," according to Donald Murray in _A Writer Teaches Writing_. "Experienced writers take time in planning a structure that will develop and communicate meaning," says Murray. Such writers are also aware that their initial "structures" are never final; to cite Murray's analogy, "the football game plan changes with what happens on the field." Nevertheless, plans guide writers as they write, and can solve many problems they face in the process (25).

There is no single method of organizing an essay. However, some instructors try to simplify the task of arranging information in a readable order by teaching students to use formulas such as the "five-paragraph 'theme'," use of topic sentences, or "well-tuned" outlines. Formulas leave students with little room to try out different ways to present material, and discourages them from experimenting with their own writing processes. As a result, formulas often produce poor writing (Kirby and Liner 174).

Students who believe they must follow formulas might face writer's block. A study done on ten UCLA undergraduates examined common writing problems among college students, as Mike Rose explains in "Rigid Rules,
Inflexible Plans, and the Stifling of Language: A Cognitivist Analysis of Writer's Block." While all ten students could write competently, five of them wrote with great ease and the others suffered from writer's block. The main difference between these two groups was not anxiety or fear of evaluation (common causes of writer's block) (Rose 389), but their approach to structure in writing. The five who were blocked "were all operating either with writing rules or with planning strategies that impeded rather than enhanced the composing process" (390). Such rules or formulas apparently led students to follow patterns of organization which they found difficult to fulfill, such as beginning with a traffic-stopping, attention-grabbing introduction, or bringing up at least three main ideas in one essay (Rose 395).

These rules force students to be concerned about the rules themselves, not about content. While these may be used as guides to writing, a student should not be pressured to follow them closely. A student who only has two main points about his topic may have to force a third point into the essay and bring down the quality of his paper.
Rose reports that the non-blocked students in the study avoided strict, specific rules, and took a more relaxed approach to writing. Their own "rules" included trying (not insisting on) keep audience in mind during the initial stages of writing, and writing what one can at the moment. Non-blockers "operate with fluid, easily modified, even discarded rules and plans" (397).

Advanced composition allows students to experiment with organization and presentation of ideas. They are encouraged to write their own ideas in an essay (implementing the in-depth analysis reading skills mentioned earlier), and later pay attention to audience, correctness, and other components necessary for a formal, well-organized essay. The initial step of writing without rules and organizing later encourages students to discover their own writing processes and create their own unique, workable, and flexible "formulas" or "rules."

**Style**

Style "has something to do with better communication, adding as it does a certain technicolor to otherwise black-and-white language," says Winston Weathers in "Teaching Style: A Possible Anatomy." It is "proof of
a human being's individuality, communicating the writer's attitudes and values (187).

While freshman composition at Iowa Central guides students to write clear essays, often no time remains in the semester to discuss style; thus its placement in advance composition. As Weathers points out, style makes the difference between everyday and colorful communication. Style is important because it is a vehicle for students to express their unique ideas in writing.

One way to encourage style is through imitation. In "Imitation and Style," Frank J. D'Angelo defines imitation as the writer's participation "not in stereotypes, but in archetypal forms and ideas" (199). In other words, students are not to simply copy another writer's words or ideas, but to study how the writer develops style. This method of teaching style is implemented in Peter G. Schreffler's composition courses, as he explains in "'Where All the Children Are above Average': Garrison Keillor as a Model for Personal Narrative Assignments." Schreffler assigns several of Keillor's humorous essays to his composition classes, and they discuss what makes Keillor's essays interesting. The students then attempt to develop their own style in a narrative. Schreffler
If we expose them to the rich possibilities that Keillor presents, we can allow them to probe the truth of their experiences for the insights, emotions, and sensations intrinsic to a week at summer camp, a day of student teaching, a childhood friendship, the death of a grandparent, and so on (83).

Schreffler's students report that Keillor's works generally had three effects on their writing: "motivation to enrich their own narratives with vivid detail, freedom to attempt humorous approaches, and a relaxed attitude in writing about everyday events" (Schreffler 84).

Analyzing other writers' styles and developing one's own style are important in Advanced Composition. The class reads many essays by prominent writers and studies each author's style and how it is appropriate for the subject. Students are encouraged to imitate select aspects of a writer's style in their own writing, or, more importantly, create their own.

The Inclusion of Rhetorical Stance

The Advanced Composition course at Iowa Central
covers some important elements of successful expository and academic writing: development of critical reading skills, organization and style. However, some other important elements, which are covered in passing (such as consideration of audience in argument), are not part of the course description, and therefore are not covered as thoroughly as they should. Audience analysis, purpose, and voice--rhetorical stance--should be a more prominent part of the course. Awareness of rhetorical stance invites students to channel their ideas and voices to the proper audience.

To help students explore and develop their own ideas, advanced composition takes a humanities-based approach, allowing students to discuss and react to various issues and essays. The humanities method is used to achieve the goals of the course description and the fundamental objectives of rhetorical stance. The next chapter argues that the humanities is an effective technique to encourage students to explore their own voices.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE HUMANITIES IN ADVANCED COMPOSITION

Humanities courses cover a variety of subjects, from ancient Greek civilization to technology, through a variety of approaches, such as seminars and discussions. Humanities invite students to explore topics and how they relate to their own lives. Writing courses benefit from a humanities-related approach; for advanced composition it is a method of facilitating the learning of rhetorical stance, as explained later in this chapter.

Why Study Humanities at Community Colleges?

In *Improving Humanities Studies at Community, Technical, and Junior Colleges*, Diane Eisenberg and her colleagues say that "Learning the humanities is particularly crucial in the community...colleges because of the strong interest on the part of the students in practical education." While it is important for students to obtain a practical education enabling them to be economically self-supporting, it is also important for them to "broaden their horizons so they may participate willingly and wisely in a fuller range of human activity" (82).
Community college students can, through humanities studies, be better able to discover a sense of relationships among life, work, and circumstances; to understand self and society through different eyes, places, and times; to reflect on the way personal origins and beliefs affect actions and values; to encounter questions and answers posed in the past; and to raise similar questions about the present and future (Eisenberg, et al. 82).

These skills—which could be classified as critical thinking skills—help students develop their thoughts and transfer them into essays.

The Humanities and Composition

Through humanities topics, students may explore issues and relate the humanities to their own understandings and experiences. Humanities therefore serve as a useful learning tool, as students "concentrate on direct ways on skills of the mind and skills of language, while the ability to reason clearly and communicate well should be a goal of all branches of study (Eisenberg,
et al. 82). Since this tool conditions skills of the mind and of language, humanities work well in a writing class.

Humanities and English, according to Brook Workman in "The Natural: The English Teacher as Humanities Teacher," are "naturals for initiating experiments in interdisciplinary learning." Since humanities are interdisciplinary, Workman says, they embrace subjects touched upon in English. For example, an American literature teacher discusses history in relation to a literary work, or discusses film technique when relating the difference between a film and the written work it was based upon. By including various disciplines in the classroom, English teachers show their students that "the world is not departmentalized" (28).

Advanced Composition uses humanities as a vehicle to compose effective essays, and this is where rhetorical stance comes in: as students read and discuss essays on current issues, such as the changing family, education, and gender equality, they are encouraged to develop opinions and write essays using their own voices to persuade their audiences to accept their viewpoints. Humanities-based courses promote discussion, prompting students to voice
their ideas.

Students read several essays for each unit, and write papers based on the topics read for and discussed in class. Students create their own thesis statements, voices, audiences, and purposes. The following examples demonstrate how humanities-based topics and rhetorical stance are used in student writing.

One topic discussed in class is the "melting pot" of different cultures in the United States. Students read "Why English Should Be Our Official Language," a proposal by S.I. Hayakawa, a former U.S. senator from California. Hayakawa argues that bilingual Spanish-English education divides the United States culture in two rather than promotes the melting pot idea. Some students may choose to write an essay arguing for or against this assertion. The elements of rhetorical stance guide each writer's direction.

A writer's personal voice is the first determining factor in the essay's development. For example, a Hispanic student whose family spoke only Spanish at home may empathize with children who are not encouraged to speak English outside of school. He argues that bilingual education is necessary for young Spanish-speaking students,
at least during the early elementary grades. He uses his own experiences as a boy who knew no English, but was able to learn to read and write in Spanish. Once he grasped his native language, he was able to learn English and translate what he had learned in Spanish. Without the training in Spanish, however, he would have had extreme difficulty keeping up with lessons in English.

On the other hand, a student whose primary language is English may observe the difficulty some Spanish-speaking people have in communicating. She has observed several Spanish-speaking individuals try to ask for directions or apply for jobs but were turned away because of the language barrier. She argues that the education system in the United States needs to educate all children in English so that they can communicate clearly and obtain better jobs.

These writers might have different audiences and purposes. The first might aim his argument to those who agree with Hayakawa and believe that English should be the official language. He wants to show them how bilingual education can benefit Spanish-speaking children, who might fall behind in an English-only classroom, until they grasp some ideas in Spanish first. As for the
second student, she could write to a school district, arguing that bilingual education prevents Hispanics from succeeding in an English-speaking culture. Her purpose is to support English as the official language in the United States, and that schools need to comply to best educate their students.

These writers could have the same audience, but different purposes. For example, Hayakawa introduced his proposal to the United States Senate; both writers could aim their arguments at U.S. senators, but their purposes would be different: one in favor of bilingual education and the other against. If the writers were to change their purposes, they would transform their arguments into exposition, such as a front page newspaper article explaining the debate over bilingual education.

Each student who writes on this topic will have a slightly different viewpoint. Therefore, one cannot assume that every Hispanic student favors bilingual education and every English-speaking citizen is against it. Each student brings his or her own voice to the argument, determining the audience and purpose.

Community colleges have diverse student populations. They have many non-traditional (according to Arthur M.
Cohen and Florence B. Brawer in *The American Community College*, the median age of students was twenty-seven in 1986), lower ability, economically disadvantaged, and minority students (Cohen and Brawer 32-33). A student from an English-speaking rural area may not see bilingual education the same way a Hispanic student who grew up in a low-income urban neighborhood does. These students' individual backgrounds create different voices, creating a rich variety in student essays.

Another advanced composition topic is gender differences. Students read two essays for class discussion: "Sexism in English: A 1990s Update" by Alleen Pace Nilsen and "Real Men Don't: Anti-Male Bias in English" by Eugene R. August. The first essay says that the English language degrades women (for example, pairs of words such as "bachelor, spinster" and "master, mistess" contain positive connotations for men but negative ones for women). The second says that men also face sexism in language (for example, when one thinks of a "criminal" he is likely to picture a man rather than a woman).

One student may note the harmful effects sexist language has on women and men. She is particularly concerned about language degrading women in movies and
television, and wants to see changes in these media. She writes a letter to a television network, giving examples of language from several shows and from Nilsen's essay. As a woman who believes her gender is depicted unfairly on these shows, she wants to convince the network to present women in a positive light.

Another student may say that he has long been aware of derogatory language toward women. However, until he read August's article he never realized that language can degrade men. Therefore, he writes an editorial for the school paper persuading students to become more aware of sexist terms—towards both women and men—and curb their misuse of these words.

These examples show how students write a variety of essays using the same topic. They demonstrate the importance of rhetorical stance in writing, as each student speaks from her own voice to a selected audience, and determines her own purpose. Without practice in rhetorical stance, students are often tempted to write a general essay for a nonspecific audience. For example, a student writing about gender issues may merely list a number of derogatory terms towards women and explain that they are harmful because they make females look passive or
incompetent. Rather than bringing the issue to life for a specific group of readers, she has only a list of terms and possible effects. The student mentioned earlier, however, aims her argument at executives of a television network, and adjusts her material accordingly. As an offended viewer who insists upon changes in specific shows, her readers are more likely to make use of this argument than they would one which simply mentions sexist terms and effects, without personifying the writer or addressing the issue to a specific audience who can take action.

In order to develop their own voices, audiences, and purposes, students need to discuss issues to voice their own opinions and hear what others have to say. The best method for discussion is through the humanities, which encourages students to talk and develop ideas. The next chapter shows how the humanities-based approach would best work in the Advanced Composition course described in chapter three.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE ADVANCED COMPOSITION CLASS

This chapter shows how Advanced Composition should use the rhetorical stance and humanities-based discussions to help students prepare for writing challenges they will face in future classes. While the Advanced Composition course defined in chapter three is effective in helping students improve critical thinking skills, organization, and style, the ideal course presented here places greater emphasis on rhetorical stance than the present course does.

Textbook

The book for the ideal Advanced Composition course should contain essays on a number of controversial issues for discussion. One such text is Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing, editors Gary Colombo, Robert Cullen, and Bonnie Lisle. The book contains units on the American Dream, justice, immigration and assimilation, gender, the changing family, and so on. These topics, the editors explain, often "stir up strong responses" and encourage class discussion.
(Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle, *Resources for Teaching Rereading America* V); the text was designed to help students become active learners, responsible for their own education (Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle, *Rereading America* vii).

A list of course objectives is below, followed by a basic outline of the units studied in Advanced Composition. Each unit contains several essays on an issue of American society today. Following the outline, an essay from "The Changing Family" unit serves as an example for analyzing and using rhetorical stance.

**Course Objectives**

In Advanced Composition, students will:

* read essays on controversial topics, designed to encourage discussion and help readers develop ideas for their own essays.
* examine the role of the rhetorical stance (writer, audience, and purpose) in writing.
* participate in class discussions about the essays read for class.
* discuss methods of persuasion, how the authors read in class attempt to persuade their audiences, and implement persuasion in some of their own essays.

* choose topics for papers from a given list or develop their own ideas. For each essay, a student will
  --find a narrow topic for their essay.
  --establish their own purpose in writing the essay.
  --determine their audience.
  --establish their voice.

Later in this chapter, an example of a student essay topic shows how a writer can develop these points.

Course Outline

The units listed below provide a number of topics for discussion and writing. In a semester-long class there may not be enough time for all units; they can be cut or rearranged as necessary.
I. The Changing Family
   A. Reassessing Family Life--a look at definitions and expectations of the family.
   B. Alternative Family Structures

II. Gender Roles: Tradition and Change

III. Justice for All: The Problem of Equality (examines prejudice, racism)
   A. Theories of Prejudice
   B. Confronting Racism
   C. Racism and Gender Issues--blends essays from units two and three

IV. One Nation or Many? Immigration and the "Melting Pot" in America
   A. The Immigrant Experience
   B. Ethnic Identity and Majority Culture

V. Grading American Education
   A. The Hidden Curriculum (analysis and criticism of American schools)
   B. Challenging the Traditional Classroom (nontraditional forms of education)

VI. Making a Living: How Work Shapes the Worker
   A. The Meaning of Work
   B. Occupation and Social Status
VII. Television and the Consumption of Images
   A. The Power of Television
   B. Consumerism and TV Culture

IX. American Dreams
   A. Land of Freedom and Opportunity
   B. The American Frontier
   C. Individualism and Success

A Closer Look Within Unit One: The Changing Family

For the unit "The Changing Family," several essays are assigned for class discussion and individual writing assignments. One essay from this unit is presented here to show how the class can study the author's use of rhetorical stance, and to suggest how students can create topics through reading the essay.

The topic of the family was chosen for demonstration here because one may assume that most students belong to a family of some sort, and will be familiar with characteristics of families, typical or atypical.

The unit on the changing family will take approximately two weeks; longer if class discussion warrants extending a topic into another class period, or if students require more time in developing their
own writing. The following essay is used to discuss "reassessing family life"; students can talk about the issues brought up in the reading and share their own ideas or experiences. As they examine the ideas in the essay, they also analyze rhetorical stance. After reading and analyzing, they may use the essay as a springboard for writing their own papers.

Reading and Analyzing Essays

By reading and analyzing essays, students gain an understanding of what writing with a purpose and audience means. The essays read for class serve as models, showing students how a writer can express her voice, determine a purpose, and write for a certain audience. The main purposes in reading are to provide students with a subject area, and to give them ideas about what to write. By reading essays in the textbook, students are actual audiences. From this vantage point, they can actively read and form opinions, agreeing or disagreeing with each author. By pointing out well done or poor aspects of essays, students see how audiences react to information and arguments, and realize that
their own readers will have reactions to their writing also.

Reading and discussing how several authors use the rhetorical stance may guide students to be aware of the same elements as they write. The example presented here is "The Hurried Child" by David Elkind, which argues that several factors cause children to imitate adults before they are mature enough.

**Audience(s) and Purpose**

An instructor should avoid asking "who are this author's readers?" because the obvious answer is "we are" or "anyone who picks up his essay or book." Instead, students should probe further to determine who would be interested in the work under discussion.

Elkind writes about children being pushed psychologically into growing up too quickly, so his audience could be academic, including students majoring in psychology; counselors; parents of young children or teenagers; or others interested in child psychology. His readers are educated, as indicated by references to sources such as French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau and psychologist Jerome Bruner. Elkind intends to make
readers aware of the causes and instigators of children growing up too quickly, and warns readers of the effects such pressure has on children. Elkind's essay is primarily argumentative; it aims to convince readers that the stress society places on children is harmful. He uses logos (argument through logic) by showing how sexually explicit media, parental divorce, and other factors lead to damage.

Advanced Composition students could discuss how audience and purpose shape the essay. For instance, they could suggest how the essay would differ if aimed at teenagers; Elkind might try to relate directly to them through examples of their lifestyles, and perhaps take out references to philosophy and so forth which many teens may not recognize. Other audiences could be parents of newborns, the entertainment industry which "promotes teenage erotica" (Elkind 366), contributing to teenagers growing up too fast. The instructor can encourage students to imagine different audiences and purposes, and their effects on Elkind's message.

**Writer or Voice**

Elkind's persona is academic and informative. While he is explaining information, he also asserts
an argument that children are forced to grow up too quickly and should be allowed to act like children. Since, as the textbook's introduction to his essay explains, Elkind is a psychologist, his title earns him credibility in this topic. He uses many sources to back up his argument, including philosophers, psychologists and journal and magazine articles. By using these sources, he backs up his personal viewpoint.

Elkind is formal, using vocabulary which is not too specialized yet demonstrates his mastery of his field. For example, he states that the idea of childhood as a distinct phase preceding adult life became inextricably interwoven with the modern concepts of universal education and the small nuclear family (mother, father, children—not the extended family of earlier eras) in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the heyday of the Industrial Revolution (361).

Words such as "inextricably" and "interwoven" are part of an educated person's vocabulary.

Elkind's voice is also one of concern. He not only
supports his argument with facts and statistics such as the increase in crime rate among young children, but also insists that something can and should be done for the "hurried child":

Children need time to grow, to learn, and to develop. To treat them differently from adults is not to discriminate against them but rather to recognize their special estate. . . . All children have, vis-à-vis adults, special needs—intellectual, social and emotional. Children do not learn, think, or feel in the same way as adults. To ignore these differences, to treat children like adults, is really not democratic or egalitarian. . . . In truth, the recognition of a group's special needs and accommodations to those needs are the only true ways to ensure equality and true equal opportunity (Elkind 374).

Writing Essays

Before beginning the unit, the instructor hands out a list of suggested paper topics for students,
explaining that they may choose one or create their own ideas for an essay on the topic of "the changing family." Because students have a list of topics before they read and discuss the essays, they can form potential ideas for their essays as the unit progresses.

One suggested topic is:

In "The Hurried Child," David Elkind argues that children today are forced to mature before they are ready, and explains several causes. Choose one of these causes--academic pressures, provocative media, etc.--and either 1) argue against Elkind, saying that this is not a cause of children growing up too quickly, or 2) support his stand, but offer some sort of alternative, suggesting how readers can help prevent "hurried" childhoods for today's children. You may use secondary sources for your argument.

For this topic a writer draws material from an essay, but asserts her own ideas. It also helps the student narrow down the topic; if she were to argue against Elkind's thesis in general, that children are growing up too quickly,
she would be forced to address a number of causes, which would be too great a task for an Advanced Composition essay. This way, the student approaches only one of Elkind's points, which can be more easily handled in a brief essay. The following example demonstrates how this may be done.

A student who reads Elkind's essay becomes interested in his assertion that one catalyst of the "hurried child" is the increase in divorces, single parent families, and dual-career marriages. Children of these families lose the freedom of childhood that children in past decades may have enjoyed. Since single parents and dual career couples often cannot afford not to work, many leave their children in day care centers. As a result, the children have a "feeling of being used, of being exploited by parents, of losing the identity and uniqueness of childhood" (Elkind 373).

Upon reading Elkind's essay, the Advanced Composition student remembers an article she read about the child care system in many European countries, where businesses and corporations offer free or low-cost day care within the workplace. Parents benefit from the low cost, and both parents and children benefit from frequent contact
during the workday. The student believes this is a good idea, and wants this plan in the United States. She decides to set up an argument for establishing in-house day care in businesses and corporations in this country. The result would be increased parent-child contact, which could reduce the feeling of "exploitation" daycare children may harbor; this could lessen the pressure to grow up too quickly. Therefore, she chooses to take the second option in the writing assignment: focusing on one cause of hurried childhood. Now that she has a topic, she works on assigning an audience, purpose, and voice.

**Audience and Purpose**

The student reads that while some European governments support daycare in businesses and corporations, the United States government does not get very involved with daycare policy. She considers approaching lawmakers, proposing that the government work toward establishing day cares in businesses. However, she is not certain how strong a role government plays—or should play—in this issue. She would also need to research lawmaking policies, and decides that she does not have time for such detailed research. Therefore, a different audience seems more
appropriate: businesses and corporations themselves. While her essay would not be a letter directed specifically at one business, she could write it for a magazine with an audience of business employees.

Another component of her audience is parents of small children, who would be interested in spending more time with their children during the day, yet not giving up the economic benefits of working full time. Her main audience, however, is business, as an individual business would have the final say on whether or not to set up a day care. If her main audience were the parents, her argument would slightly change as she focused on the benefits of in-house day care and encouraged parents to propose such plans in their places of employment.

Her audience might weld opinions of their own which conflict with her views. For instance, one opinion on the day care issue is that a married couple with children should have one parent quit work to stay home with the children full time. This way, the child spends more time at home with a parent, and the family does not pay day care costs. However, the writer could argue, many families in today's economy need two incomes.
to maintain a comfortable living. Since both parents must work, a halfway point between the dual career-stay at home debate is to offer day care within business and corporations, enabling parents to spend some time with their children while at work. This is her counterargument.

At this point, the writer has established her audience: businesses and corporations in the United States, and her purpose: arguing that day cares in the workplace are better for children, for children receive more contact with parents and in the long run may not feel the pressure to grow up so quickly. Businesses would also benefit by offering day care to attract quality employees with families.

**Writer or Voice**

Now that the writer has determined her audience and purpose, and has lined up counterargument(s), she needs to establish her own voice. As a twenty-year-old sophomore, she could explain that she has plans to raise a family someday, but she wants a career as well. However, she will be concerned about her child's development while she is away at work. Her voice, therefore, would be that of a concerned future business employee and
parent. If she were an older, non-traditional student, she might bring up her own experiences in taking her children to day care—the separation from her children, the cost, and so on. She could argue that she wants an alternative for today's children and her future grandchildren. Whatever voice a student brings to the argument, she can develop examples and express a tone which bring her own style to the surface. Use of appeals also falls under use of voice. She may use pathos to make her reader feel the frustration a child may experience when entering day care, or describe some negative effects that daily separation from parents can have on a child. She may use logos when explaining that workplace daycare is a logical alternative to the current situation or to expecting one parent to stay at home and forego income.

The writer may gain ideas for her voice through critical reading skills. She understands the basic ideas in the essay on a basic, literal level: the straightforward information from Elkind's essay, which gives her the idea for her own paper. As for the second level, interpretation, she analyzes Elkind's purpose, audience, and voice, and determines why he settled on an academic essay for an educated audience.
The third level enables her to develop original ideas on the text or opinions based on the information in the text. At this level, the student uses the essay as a springboard for her own ideas. Using the day care example, Elkind's mention of day care leads her to think about child care alternatives and she chooses to write about one she considers best. Therefore, critical reading plays a role in helping her find her own voice.

The Role of Humanities and Rhetorical Stance

The student mentioned above probably had an opinion on the daycare situation before reading Elkind's essay. However, she might not have effectively developed her argument had she not studied under a humanities-based approach and, most importantly, rhetorical stance. Through these methods of exploring writing, she found a topic based on an essay read in class as well as her personal beliefs, developed her own voice and purpose, and targeted her audience.
To produce effective writing, community college students need to use rhetorical stance. Unfortunately, most community college English courses focus on the basics of writing, such as introductions and conclusions, and grammar and mechanics, which often does not allow time for rhetorical stance. Students planning to transfer to a four-year college or university must be aware of audience, purpose, and voice in order to produce quality writing in upper-level courses.

The Advanced Composition course at Iowa Central Community College, as an example, provides good instruction for students preparing for writing challenges ahead. However, the course needs to place even greater emphasis on rhetorical stance. As it stands, it mentions the role of voice, audience and purpose, but not in the detail students need. As the example in chapter four—about the student who writes to a television network to voice her opinion on sexist language on several programs—indicates, writing is made more effective with rhetorical stance. If this student had merely listed sexist terms and how they are degrading, she would not directly express
her voice as an offended television viewer to an audience of network executives. Since her essay is aimed at that particular audience, those readers will take notice and perhaps take action.

In order to create essay topics and develop them through rhetorical stance, advanced composition takes a humanities-based approach. The humanities serve as the method best for facilitating class discussion and prompting students to develop their own voices. The course consists of several units on humanities-related topics, such as the changing family, gender, bilingual education, and numerous others. Students design their own essays on each topic.

Community college English instructors are responsible for preparing transfer students for writing assignments at a four-year college. The most effective method is through the humanities, with a strong emphasis on rhetorical stance. Other important aspects of advanced composition, such as exposition, argument, critical thinking, organization, and style also play an important role in a writing course. They are enhanced by use of rhetorical stance.

To ignore rhetorical stance is to leave students
unprepared for future writing projects, particularly those who will need to defend positions in academic essays. Therefore, voice, audience, and purpose must be a main goal of a writing course, rather than just something briefly mentioned during the semester.
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