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Apparent Feminist Pedagogies
Interrogating Technical Rhetorics at Illinois State University

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Abstract. This curriculum showcase introduces apparent feminist pedagogies and reports on their use in a technical rhetorics course at Illinois State University. I describe the exigence for apparent feminist pedagogies, which seek to recognize and make apparent to students the urgent and sometimes hidden need for feminist critique of technical texts, and I offer a theoretical rationale supporting apparent feminist pedagogies. Finally, I critically reflect on my own experience enacting one possible iteration of apparent feminist pedagogy in hopes that readers might see how such an approach can enhance the efficiency with which technical communicators (including instructors) reach diverse audiences.

Keywords. technical communication, apparent feminisms, course design, social justice, technical rhetorics, efficiency, objectivity, women, culture, resistance

This curriculum showcase introduces apparent feminist pedagogy and reports on the use of this pedagogy in a technical rhetorics course at Illinois State University. K. Alex Ilyasova (2012) suggests that the curriculum showcase should "self-critically describe a specific pedagogy that engages in the larger discourse of the field and that reflects the diversity and innovation of our curricular goals, content, structures, or approaches" (p. 138). In this essay, I engage in critical reflection on and description of a technical rhetorics course I taught with an apparent feminist approach at Illinois State University. I also make the case that apparent feminist pedagogies are an increasingly necessary part of our field's discourses and that they stand to enhance the efficiency with which technical communicators reach diverse audiences.

In brief, apparent feminist pedagogies seek to recognize and make apparent the urgent and sometimes hidden exigencies for feminist critique of contemporary politics. Functioning at the nexus of social, ethical, politi-

cal, and practical technical communication domains (Hart-Davidson, 2001; Johnson, 1998; Miller, 1989), *apparent feminism* is a theoretical approach that emphasizes responses to social justice exigencies, invites participation from allies who do not explicitly identify as feminist but do work that complements feminist goals, and seeks to make apparent the ways in which efficient work actually depends upon the existence and input of diverse audiences. The term *technical rhetorics*, meanwhile, refers to any rhetorical assemblage that attempts to persuade a specific audience with a specialized set of knowledge (Frost & Eble, forthcoming). For example, I asked students to consider disciplinary histories—like McDowell's (2003) history of technical communication—as examples of technical rhetorics; disciplinary histories qualify as such because they 1) address audiences who are members of specialized cultures and 2) attempt to persuade those audiences of their own perspective on the foundation of a discipline.

Exigency

During a semester when I taught an introductory technical communication course at Illinois State University, I worked with another instructor to do a peer review of instruction manuals between our students. While students in my class were reviewing sets of instructions from the other class, one found a document on how to change a tire, written explicitly for young women. She was offended by the content of the instructions because of the way she believed they constructed women as—in her words—helpless and fashion-obsessed, and she voiced her displeasure to the class.[1] Students began a discussion of why the document was or was not offensive and how it might be read differently or revised. Without really meaning to—and without me pushing them in this direction—they embarked on a smart and dynamic feminist critique. This particular discussion was one that many students later told me they found to be the most useful and productive of the course.

Although the student-scholar-trainees in this story found their own exigence for feminist inquiry, such conversations do not happen in every technical communication classroom and often would not happen at all without guidance and support from a feminist teacher. I fear that technical communication students take far too few courses that use feminisms and other critical approaches to explicitly question rhetorics of objectivity, neutrality, efficiency, and truth. This fear arises partly from my experiences

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[1] In the interest of representing the student's work as fairly as possible, the instruction manual was almost certainly a satirical or humorous piece. Regardless of the author's intention, it did provide for an enriching discussion.

with students who arrive in the classrooms I teach in and partly from my observation that almost 15 years have passed without a collective, sustained interrogation of the relevance of feminist theory and methodology for technical communication. That is, while feminisms have been taken up in technical communication literature and a number of contemporary technical communication scholars use feminist and gender-based inquiry in their work, collective works heralding the importance of feminist theory in technical communication are things of the past and the conversations they began have not been as widely sustained as they should be. Further, the term *postfeminism*—along with other terms like *postrace*[2]—has arrived on the scene, despite the fact that we live in a world still bound up in the issues that feminisms were developed to critique.

My assertion that sustained, collective attention to feminisms in technical communication has fallen by the wayside in recent years is based on qualitative analysis in my dissertation project. Further, this argument is supported by Isabelle Thompson and Elizabeth Overman Smith's (2006) findings, which were reached through quantitative analysis. They surveyed the use of feminisms in technical communication journals and concluded that "technical communication scholars' interest in feminism and women's issues has declined over the past 15 years" (p. 196) though individual, isolated articles on the topic still occur. Because teaching tends to develop parallel to or in reaction to research agendas, waning interest in feminisms in technical communication scholarship over such a long period of time demands that we consider the effects on technical communication classrooms.[3] Further, in a more direct reflection of the state of feminist influence on technical communication at the programmatic level, Meloncon's (2009) survey of 84 technical communication Master's programs found "intercultural/global courses are poorly represented in curriculums" (p. 144) and "Specialized Other" courses were required in only 1% of the programs surveyed (p. 142). Perhaps more tellingly, I report the statuses of these broad programs under which feminist courses might conceivably fall because feminisms simply did not come up as a relevant term in this survey data. Even given the fifteen-year gap in focused scholarship that I mention above, this lack of attention at the programmatic level is troubling.

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[2] For a discussion of the rhetorical effects of the term postrace, see Haas (2012).

[3] I believe this pattern is striking and further underscores the importance of reviving interest in feminisms in technical communication, particularly in classroom settings. However, I do not wish for this claim to elide the important work done by individual scholars on diversity and feminisms in technical communication. For example, Gerald Savage, Kyle Mattson, and Natalia Matveeva all have recently published work on racial and ethnic diversity in Programmatic Perspectives (Savage & Mattson, 2012; Savage & Matveeva, 2012).

Thus, rather than wait to find an opportunity to engage in feminist critique, teachers should enact apparent feminism in the classroom by creating such opportunities and making them apparent to student audiences. This is especially important in relation to technical documentation, which students too often perceive as objective, neutral, and efficient. This cultural belief in the objectivity and efficiency of technical documentation is recognizable when we encounter two characteristics in combination: 1) a document (or set of documents) that supports a hegemony and 2) popular resistance to any and all critique of said document(s). In other words, it is precisely a resistance to critique—often manifesting as apathy— of particular materials that makes those materials so important to study. As evidence of this, a number of scholars have engaged in historiographical recoveries that demonstrate how hegemonic resistances have covered over important feminist technical communication work. For example, Gail Lippincott (2003) examined Ellen Swallow Richards's rhetorical development of an ethos that allowed her to do work with her experimental food laboratory; Lee Brasseur's (2005) historiographic work on Florence Nightingale's persuasive use of rose diagrams to advocate for government reform of sanitary conditions in hospitals points out that Nightingale was a talented administrator, statistician, and technical communicator.[4] Both discoveries demonstrate that student engagement with feminist perspectives can aid in the development of new strategies for effective technical communication for a wide range of audiences.

Following these scholars, I seek to intervene in a discipline that is profoundly masculinized in many ways and in a nation that continues to silence women. Thus, I argue that it is vital for technical communication students to engage with feminist perspectives during their training. For this reason, and many others, technical communication professionals, scholars, and teachers cannot and should not rely only on exigent circumstances to provide opportunities for talking about feminist issues. Rather, we can recognize the exigence already surrounding us by looking to public discourses and technical communications that demand a feminist presence. That exigence is easy to find; I wrote parts of this article on the eve of Texas Senator Wendy Davis' attempted filibuster of the Texas Senate, during which she was silenced because Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst considered her mention of ultrasound to be not "germane" to a bill on abortion—this, in a

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[4]   See also, for example, Allen, 1994; Bosley, 1994; Brady Aschauer, 1999; Carrell, 1991; Durack, 1997; E. Flynn, 1997; E. Flynn, Savage et al., 1991; J. Flynn, 1997; Gurak & Bayer, 1994; Koerber, 2000; LaDuc & Goldrick-Jones, 1994; Lay, 1989, 1991; McDowell, 2003; Moulettes, 2007; Ross, 1994; Rothschild, 1981; Sauer, 1994.

state that legally requires pregnant people to undergo ultrasound prior to any abortion procedure (Frost, 2013). The technical rhetorics on display on the Texas Senate floor during this event would certainly be instructive for technical communication students.

Taking up apparent feminism in classroom settings involves numerous challenges, several of which I will articulate in this essay. That said, I will continue to use apparent feminist pedagogies because of the many benefits they offer to teachers of rhetoric and technical communication. Those benefits include attention to the fallacy of pedagogical objectivity, the danger of believing in the objectivity of fields of knowledge, the shifting power of the teacher and students, and the role of subjectivities in classroom dynamics as well as curriculum and course design. More specifically, apparent feminist pedagogies are efficient for students in that they encourage thinking about the subjectivity of technical documents, textual production, and embodiment and cultural memory. They support students' recognition of their own ability to intervene in unjust situations. Above all, apparent feminist pedagogies sponsor social justice work by teachers and students; a dedication to *social justice*, in this instance, means a dedication to widening our perspective and reminding ourselves that we have an obligation to work for the betterment of a community as well as the individuals in it.[5] Because technical communication is concerned with audiences, technical communicators must also always be concerned with communities. Further, apparent feminist pedagogies involve teaching with specific concerns about the status of women, feminist identification, and rhetorics of efficiency—and also teaching students to recognize social injustice and to produce work that disrupts hegemonic rhetorics and systems.

I opened with the example that began this section as experiential knowledge pointing to the efficiency—when we consider broad and diverse audiences, as we should—of employing apparent feminist approaches in technical communication and rhetoric classrooms. However, I wish to point out that it is a story about future technical communicators engaging in job-related training and professionalization practices. It is a story that reflects upon technical communicators' dedication to serving "the public good," (Society for Technical Communication, 2012) if we look to the Society for Technical Communication's ethical principles; it is a story about technical communicators' obligations to, according to Constitution of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing, "both the greater academic community and to the public at large" (Association of Teachers

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5   For more on the use of the term *social justice*, see Frost (2013).

of Technical Writing, 2013). This example underscores the necessity for technical communication instructors to work toward a structured approach to incorporating feminist methodologies and social justice goals in technical communication courses and conversations by showing the value of acknowledging and incorporating feminist perspectives in technical communication training and professionalization.

Course Description, Goals, & Contexts

I first employed an apparent feminist pedagogical approach while teaching an undergraduate course focused on rhetoric and technical communication studies in Fall 2011. The present article uses that course as an example of the potential benefits of this pedagogical approach. This course, English 283: Rhetorical Theory and Applications, was listed as a rhetoric course. My specific section included a special focus on technical and professional rhetorics. Illinois State University's undergraduate major in English Studies emphasizes that students should have familiarity with three different sub-disciplines: literary and cultural studies, rhetoric and composition, and linguistics. In addition to those main areas, students also are encouraged to explore technical and professional writing, publishing studies, and creative writing. This intradisciplinary approach supports teachers who recognize and value the overlap between sub-disciplines like professional writing and rhetoric; faculty tend to emphasize that these areas of study are inextricable.

My main goals for this course were threefold. First, I wished to support and emphasize the value of the English Studies approach. Second, I wanted students to make explicit the ideological commonplaces their chosen disciplines used to create a community and simultaneously required them to adhere to for entrance into that community. Third, I was determined that students would engage with cultural studies and social justice; in so doing, they would come to a more critical understanding of what is happening—who is being marginalized—when the term *objective* is invoked. This third goal was the most explicit in the course and often served to undergird the former two goals. I used apparent feminism as an approach for critiquing rhetorics of objectivity, meaning that we often examined the roles of women in the shaping of disciplinary histories. However, in keeping with apparent feminism's dedication to goal-oriented social change, persuading students to identify as feminist was not a specific goal of the course.[6]

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[6] To be clear, I certainly did not dissuade students from identifying as feminist. Rather, I focused on convincing students they should research culturally loaded terms before identify-

To elaborate upon these interconnected goals, I purposefully designed this course to trouble the boundaries between professional and technical communication and rhetoric as an example of the ways that disciplinary boundaries should sometimes be challenged. To explain further, I intended my version of English 283, in part, as a recruiting tool for the professional writing and rhetorics curriculum at Illinois State University[7]; I also worked to make it a point of connection between the English Studies major and the English Education major. Many students who enroll in English 283 are majoring in English Education; the course is a program requirement. For English Studies majors, the course is one of four choices[8] to fulfill one component of the program. It is especially important for future teachers to recognize the power of texts, such as study guides, curriculum guides, and rubrics, which are often heralded in their field as technical and objective.

To make the class most useful to students in Illinois State's English Education and English Studies programs simultaneously, I designed the course to educate students about the rhetorical effects of technical communication, particularly technical documents that reinscribe disciplinary conventions and histories. The course description in my syllabus informed students that the "class will have a focus on rhetorical artifacts broadly considered to be public, technical, and objective; we will focus especially on analyzing the ideologies such artifacts support." As such, the methods I used to focus this class (which I will discuss below) are applicable to any technical communication classroom; in fact, I saw this course as a technical communication course as much as a rhetoric course, even though its catalog name positions it as a rhetoric course in the university's curriculum.

My sense that students benefit from studying the development of disciplinary histories—an assertion corroborated by Edward A. Malone and David Wright (2012)—was pivotal in the design of the course. Thus, we concentrated on the gendered nature of the writing of histories, an endeavor widely understood to be professional, technical, objective, and efficient. By considering a history as a technical artifact that is subjective in scope, style, and content, students worked toward understanding the gendered nature of the writing of histories and canon formation, whether those histories and canons are about the field of rhetoric, technical communication, education, or on some other subject entirely. The course en-

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ing or dis-identifying with them.

[7] I mean this in several senses. Most of all, I hoped to recruit students into additional technical communication and rhetoric courses. I also made students aware of the value of a double major and the potential usefulness of Illinois State's Masters in Professional Writing and Rhetorics.

[8] The other three options are Poetry, Drama, or Prose.

couraged students to engage in their own work with the tension between canonical/traditional interpretations of rhetorical history and de-centered rhetorics and rhetorical histories.

Twenty-five students enrolled in the course and twenty-four students finished the semester. Most of the students majoring in English Education had the intention of becoming teachers. All but one student (a sophomore) were juniors or seniors in Fall 201. Only one student had ever taken a rhetoric or technical communication course before. Several students have since taken courses in technical communication and rhetoric at Illinois State.

Theoretical Rationale and Methods

English 283 builds on a foundation of interdisciplinary feminist theory. One of the most influential concepts I drew upon in designing this course was Francesca Bray's (1997) gynotechnic methodology, which involves recognizing "a technical system that produces ideas about women, and therefore about a gender system and about hierarchical relations in general" (p. 4). Because I set the course up to examine rhetorical histories as technical documents, the course design was informed by a study of historical and historiographic work on feminisms in technical communication (Allen, 1994; Barker & Zifcak, 1999; Bergvall, Sorby, & Worthen, 1994; Bernhardt, 1992; Boiarsky, Grove, Northrop, Phillips, Myers, & Earnest, 1995; Bosley, 1992, 1994; Carrell, 1991; Dragga, 1993; J. Flynn, 1997; Gurak & Bayer, 1994; J.W. Herrick, 1999; Koerber, 2000; Lay, 1991, 1993; Malone, 2010; Moulettes, 2007; Petit, 2001; Ranney, 2000; Ross, 1994; Royal, 2005; Sutcliffe, 1998; Tebeaux, 1998; Zdenek, 2007) and in rhetoric studies (Dingo, 2008; Enoch, 2005; Glenn, 1994, 1997; Lunsford, 1999; Queen, 2008). Finally, the course presupposes that students will be willing to accept the premise that technical communication is always rhetorical and thus is an appropriate focus for study for a rhetoric course.[9] Based on my experience, the content of the course bears out this premise for students who are willing to suspend disbelief (if it exists) long enough to engage with class readings. Once students begin to understand the connections between rhetoric and technical communication, they often make connections to their own fields of study.

Building on the research cited above as well as other social-justice oriented research that privileges apparency—particularly the work of Winona

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[9] For more on technical communication's rhetorical nature, see Halloran, 1978; Johnson, 1998; Kinsella, 2005; Koerber, 2000; Kynell-Hunt & Savage, 2003, 2004; Lay, 1991; Mara & Hawk, 2010; Ornatowski, 1997; Peeples, 2003; Rude, 2004; Savage, 2004; Winsor, 1998.

LaDuke (1999) and Chandra Mohanty (1988; 2003)—I made apparent on the first day of class my personal ideological approach to teaching, which includes my identification as a feminist. I also asked students to use particular types of feminist perspectives on various assignments. My hope was to study how undergraduates understand technical and seemingly objective documents, but also how feminist rhetorical theories can help students become more critical of such documents and of the resulting effects on their lives. In doing so, my objective was also to determine pedagogical strategies that are most effective at achieving these results. I planned for students to come away from this course with greater insight into hidden ideologies. That is, I wanted students to raise questions about *why* they are tempted to look at a document and call it objective. I also wanted them to become more aware of the rhetorical methods used to mask ever-present ideological bias in technical communication. As many instructors have, I found that some students are tenacious in resisting efforts to destabilize worldviews that they consider to be neutral, objective, and efficient. Several students were resistant to many of the basic ideas about feminisms that I introduced in the course. They were especially resistant to my efforts to make the benefits of feminist perspectives apparent. As such, this study positions me well to discuss the problems that apparent feminism introduces for students in an applied setting. However, I also found that my work as an apparent feminist teacher-scholar was highly productive for some students, who were able to follow the example I modeled and make feminist values apparent in the classroom. Indeed, the resistance enacted by a minority of students often proved to be a valuable meta-text and precipitated some of the most valuable discussions in the course.

My attempts to collect data from this course focused in two main areas. First, and most importantly, I introduced a series of class discussions that often incorporated metadiscussions. For example, I would ask students to discuss a set of texts I provided (such as a study about the effect of gender on choice of career). I would then introduce a new concept or idea (like thinking about gendered patterns of communication); finally, I would ask students to use the new concept to analyze their own previous discussion (considering who spoke in the earlier discussion and why they felt compelled/comfortable to speak). I also alternated between large class discussion and small group discussions. By doing so, I tried to create a variety of different discussion spaces so that students might feel encouraged to speak at different moments. I kept a detailed journal of every class discussion throughout the semester. Second, I required ten written responses to texts and class discussions throughout the semester. These written

responses were supposed to be a productive space for those who were less comfortable speaking out loud as well as a place for more detailed reflection. My own reflections on the course draw largely from my discussion journal and from the students' reflections I was given permission to use.

Critical Reflections

Because I found instances of conflict and resistance to be the most interesting and productive parts of the course, and because I think examining these pieces might be most useful to instructors employing similar approaches, I focus my reflections here on resistance. Perhaps unsurprisingly, my application of an apparent feminist pedagogy resulted in the most overt and interesting instances of student resistance I had ever encountered in my teaching. One student was undoubtedly resistant to the idea of an instructor acknowledging bias in course design. Others were resistant to taking up feminist perspectives themselves. And still others were resistant to critically examining documents they considered to be technical, traditional, objective. I am certain, as well, that other strands of resistance occurred that I am so far unable to identify, but time and reflection might make these perspectives apparent (to me) in the future. In the meantime, I focus here on student resistance to critiquing technical, "objective" documents.

One of the patterns I found most fascinating was that the students who were resistant to critiquing technical documents—in this case, "traditional" and "objective" curricula and histories—were many of the same students who self-identified as feminists. Their resistance almost uniformly stemmed from a feeling that non-traditional courses and interpretations of history do a disservice to students by leaving out canonical works and ideas. A helpful parallel is Elizabeth Robertson and Bruce K. Martin's (2000) description of Malaysian educators' attitudes toward the concept of world Englishes: They "were more concerned to help Malay students perfect their English and catch up with the Chinese and the Indians…At issue, then, was not the purity of English language standards, but the greater success of one ethnic group over another" (p. 500). In other words, I feel that students' concern over the material effects of their own education is pragmatic, smart, and appropriate, though it introduced a problem for me as an apparent feminist instructor.

Obviously, this type of resistance is one I especially struggle with; this resistance seemingly pits social justice against students' desires to learn to navigate civil society. To help illustrate the situation, I quote at length from Susan Welsh's (2001) article on resistance theory:

> Resistance theory posits an expert teacher/analyst, whose aim is to reform predictably uncritical students/clients who are about to enter into legitimate social critique—into the conversion or redemption narratives…counter-resistance in students is not, as Jay had argued, a "defense" of endangered, uncritical, and static positions (793). It is itself a critical social literacy, a complex, self-preserving, and community-preserving or community-building strategy aimed against the conditions of power under which public dialogue has been constrained. (p. 561)

Here, Welsh frames student resistance as "counter-resistance" to the resistant/critical dialogue already introduced by the instructor. She highlights some of the potentially productive purposes of this counter-resistance. She also hints at the underlying social function of student resistance to critical dialogues: to reify hegemony. Peter Mayo (2005), drawing on Antonio Gramsci (1971), said "hegemony entails the education of individuals and groups in order to secure consent to the dominant group's agenda" (p. 67). By the time they reach college, students have been educated for years to support hegemony. Asking them to be critical of or resistant to hegemony is an understandably challenging prospect. Mayo goes on to suggest that Gramsci's *war of position*,[10] which involves being both embedded in and actively working against hegemony, as a useful approach to university education:

> Civil society institutions such as universities are not monolithic. Rather, they are sites of contestation in that they serve to cement the present hegemonic arrangements while containing pockets wherein these arrangements can be contested. Such contestation or counter-hegemonic action constitutes a "war of position" waged primarily by cultural workers/educators acting as organic intellectuals with an ethical commitment to the subordinate groups whose interests and cultures they seek to promote. (p. 79)

By taking up Gramsci's war of position, I seek to position myself as an instructor whose goal is to help students recognize increased possibilities for *efficiently* navigating civil society, which requires simultaneously supporting social justice. Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean C. Williams (2000) suggested "that the direction for action begins with an attitude of resistance to the officializing effects of our master

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[10] Like many feminists, I am generally hesitant to use war metaphors in my work. However, in this case, I find that Gramsci's war of position does not call a war into being or encourage engagement in metaphorical combat; rather it acknowledges the existence of a pre-existing struggle and creates space for me to take up a position of embedded and active resistance.

narratives and with a commitment to action" (p. 135). As a teacher-scholar constantly revising her apparent feminist pedagogy, it may be more useful for me right now to imagine that the direction for action begins with developing in students the ability to critically recognize the effects of master narratives and to engage in resistance when they feel ethically compelled to do so.

In discussing resistance to feminist pedagogies in technical communication and rhetorics, it may also be helpful to talk about some specific contexts of resistance. Near the end of October 2011, I asked students to begin thinking about different types of feminisms rather than seeing the F-word as a monolith (Bauer, 1990). I also set up a discussion intended to help students see the inherent ideologically biased nature of course design. To this end, I provided students with two syllabi for an American Literature course. The syllabi were identical except that the required readings for one were all by male authors and the required readings for the other were all by female authors. After examining the documents, students determined that the syllabus with the female reading list would generally be called something like "Women in Literature" rather than being credited as a general "American Literature" course. I distilled the following main themes from the discussion that followed: a) Some students, who had been in explicitly feminist courses before, came away angry at being "forced" to engage with feminist perspectives; b) Most students seemed to struggle with the idea that the canon is also biased and operates from a specific kind of perspective; however, some students did understand this and introduced ways for students to intervene when being taught only canonical texts; and c) A few students made connections with rhetorical theory in their discussion of the place of "–isms" in the classroom.

Even though this discussion was characterized in some ways by students protesting that they should "have a voice" and not be "forced to deal with" feminist issues, the conversation was also noteworthy because a female student, Sydney,[11] explicitly told a male student, James—with considerable heat—that he was being "anti-feminist" when he said that the canon was "objectively more important." I intervened in the conversation at that point. Quintillian (1987) asked, in one of the pieces we read for this course, "Shall a pupil, if he commits faults in declaiming, be corrected before the rest, and will it not be more serviceable to him to correct the speech of another?" (p. 109). Partially because of this reading, I later sent

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[11] All student names are pseudonyms. The study received Institutional Review Board approval (protocol 2011-0177) from Illinois State University.

Sydney an e-mail thanking her for her participation and for intervening in male-dominated discussions. I also asked her to remember to consider the effects of her rhetoric on the men she is trying to persuade. Now, much later, I wonder if I might have put this Quintillian quote to action better by allowing Sydney to correct James, rather than taking it upon myself to correct her. In hindsight, I regret my intervention. Sydney had a valid point, and I should have allowed her and James to have a discussion, even if it was a heated, uncomfortable one. Such a discussion could have been a lesson to the rest of the class, including me. My apparent feminist curriculum design and pedagogy created the space into which Sydney asserted her identity as a feminist, her feminist apparency, her resistance to traditional and objective technical artifacts like histories and curricula; my apparent feminist classroom management should have supported her use of that space.

Later in the class, after reading Plato's *Menexenus* (Jowett, 1953) and Cheryl Glenn's (1994) "Sex, Lies, and Manuscript: Refiguring Aspasia in the History of Rhetoric," James raised the possibility that Aspasia might not have really existed. Several students, all males, picked up on my argument that we have no primary sources from Socrates; that is, we have no technical documentation of his existencey. Yet no one was suggesting he might not be real. Students argued that there is much more secondary textual evidence for Socrates' existence than for Aspasia's. However, they were unable to name or discuss these secondary sources. At that point, I suggested that they were drawing on a particular and biased set of cultural memories. We discussed the inclusion of cultural memories versus written histories as technical documents that we feel allegiance to and problematized our own methods for choosing one to sponsor our values over the other. Nevertheless, these students continued to express resistance to the idea of Aspasia being "real" in their later written responses; some students displayed a quite literal inability to hear my teaching on this subject. For example, despite his explicit valuing of open-mindedness and general intellectual flexibility, Marc was determined throughout the class that "We do not know if Socrates simply made [Aspasia] up." Although he said similar things out loud in class and I told him that our reading was by Plato and that we have no primary work from Socrates, he seemed unable to transcend the idea that Socrates and Plato are "real" and that Aspasia might not be.[12]

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[12] However, he was able to engage with the idea of rhetorical effect being more important for our purposes: "If [Aspasia] is taught simply as an idea, similar to the way Mulan (the oriental female warrior) is taught, it can be quite effective" (Marc, in a weekly written response). Marc was tapping into an understanding that we can recognize important rhetorical effects on culture and history even when elements of the rhetorical situation in question (up to

Meanwhile, and to my surprise, every woman in the class indicated that Aspasia was an important part of rhetorical history and that her absence from many modern technical documents, such as textbooks, course syllabi, or university curricula, was unacceptable and inefficient for female students.[13] For example, Florence wrote in a weekly written response that "teaching Aspasia would broaden the history of rhetoric....Before I knew anything about Aspasia, I felt that the art of rhetoric was very sexist." Suzanne said, "It shouldn't matter if she existed or not because she was written about. ...[O]ther great rhetors, including Plato, Socrates, and even Aristotle are thought of by some to never have existed—this does not mean that classrooms stopped teaching their works and influence within history and the rhetorical sphere." Women also revised their responses in order to react to the class discussions. June took particular issue with the men in the class who questioned Aspasia's existence while putting Socrates on a pedestal, saying that our beliefs in this regard are a product of our educations and the technical documents we value; they arise "because we are taught in a fashion that implies that Socrates was indeed a real figure in ancient Greece" and also in a way that elevates him to the status of cultural hero. Christina, in particular, offered a nuanced exploration of Aspasia's place in modern rhetoric courses and the effects of historical technical documentation. I include here a lengthy passage from her response:

> Although there is some debate as to whether or not Aspasia actually existed, I think that the concept behind Aspasia and her teachings is what actually matters in teaching a rhetoric class. Moreover, I strongly believe that the only reason why Aspasia was never well-documented and could potentially be seen as a fictional character is because of the fact that she is not a man, but a woman. On a different note, when trying to establish a positive and credible ethos as a teacher, I can understand why one might not teach Aspasia due to the lack of information that is documented in regards to her.…I feel that Aspasia, or the stories of Aspasia, should be taught in a rhetoric class for the sake of gender equality. The teachings of Aspasia allow courses such as English 283 to incorporate theories

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and including the rhetor herself) were/are not "real"; some examples of this phenomenon that we discussed in class include Marie Antoinette's famous line "let them eat cake," Marc Antony's (via Shakespeare) "Friends, Romans, countrymen" speech, and the existence of Tom Sawyer's boyhood home in Hannibal, Mo., to name just a few.

[13] I make this statement based on the women students' oral and written responses.

and concepts from both men and women.

Christina goes on to say that she struggled with one of the weekly responses that required feminist analysis, and that she might have been better equipped to handle this response if we had read Aspasia earlier in the semester or if she had ever had a teacher prior to our class who made feminisms apparent as a valid epistemological perspective.

Also of interest in Christina's response is her clear acknowledgement that teachers who explicitly engage in feminist teaching in technical communication and rhetoric courses will likely damage their ethos with their students. My explicit engagement of feminist perspectives was one of the few critiques students offered in their anonymous evaluation of the course; one student stated that feminism is a "flawed worldview," with no further explanation about the implications for the class experience. I also have often found that my desire to work through complicated rhetorical issues with students, rather than insisting on a predetermined outcome or a technical and objective answer, results in student challenges to my expertise. Although Shari Stenberg (2005) values this, suggesting that the scholar-teacher challenges "the conflation of good teaching with 'technical expertise,'" (p. 37) it is nevertheless a problematic subject position for an instructor whose bodily apparency is similar to mine.

The particular contexts of resistance discussed above are the ones that have demanded the majority of my energy as I have revised my course design in subsequent semesters. I was especially interested in students' perceptions of the importance (or lack thereof) of feminisms in the classroom and their feelings that such ideologies are unjustly forced upon them; I was also intrigued by the ways in which discussion and written responses helped me develop a more nuanced understanding of how individual students understood their own subject positions and the subject positions of others. While these triangulated data points were helpful, I am also very aware that many facets of the experience are not apparent to me even now because of my own cultural situatedness.

Further, the limitations I am able to understand are considerable. I am aware that my self-identification as a feminist on the first day of class affected possible learning opportunities in the course. This highlights one major limitation of apparent feminist pedagogies: the format of traditional courses confines the timing of making one's feminism apparent. That is, I have learned that the timing of making my feminism apparent, particularly when I am in a position of some power, can greatly increase my persuasive influence. However, traditional university semesters run for about 16 weeks. While I have revised the timing of when I self-identify as a feminist to stu-

dents in the courses I've taught in recent semesters,[14] this time limit means that I sometimes have to force the issue. The perfect kairotic moment to introduce my feminist positionality may simply not occur in 16 weeks.

Indeed, I found that even for students willing to do difficult intellectual work, it often takes more than one semester to be able to think of the terms *feminism*, *technical*, efficient, and *objective* as similarly situated and mutually contextual. For example, the following two statements come from some late-semester work written by two female students who had been particularly willing to intervene in male-dominated conversations throughout the semester. All emphasis is mine.

- "We have become so accustomed to only viewing the male point of view that, *although I am not a feminist by any means*, I fear people today believe the woman's perspective in this field is less valuable because they have never before been brought to our attention or taught in our classes" (Rory).

- "As a female, *I don't consider myself to be much of a feminist*. It doesn't really bother me when I am asked to do domestic things or when men hold doors open for me and offer me their arm. However, I am aware of the inequality that exists between the genders and can be aware of the anti-feminist or feminist concepts and languages that can be uncovered in texts" (Natalie).

I was surprised by these responses. These women were explicitly moving to narrate themselves in a particular way—*as women but not feminists*. They were certainly reacting to a) the presence of a woman in authority who self-identified as a feminist and b) the failure/refusal of that woman to create a resistance-free classroom space.[15] These women saw the troubles I brought upon myself by being "out" as a feminist, and although they both verbally espoused ideas and beliefs aligned with postmodern and apparent feminisms throughout the course, they sought to avoid labeling themselves as feminists.

Finally, a significant limitation of apparent feminist pedagogies is precisely the concern that my students often articulated about being "forced"

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[14] I usually wait to explicitly identify myself as a feminist until we have time to problematize the term *feminism* and our reactions to it. I am tactical about the ways I self-identify, the frequency with which I do so, and the related work I assign. I maintain my dedication to feminist apparency, but I am more careful in managing the ways in which I allow that apparency to manifest in the classroom.

[15] To be clear, I do not consider a safe or resistance-free classroom space to be a goal of my teaching, but I do recognize that students might be invested in these concepts as evidence of "good" teaching.

to think about particular subjects. In reaction to these complaints being directed at other instructors, I designed an end-of-semester project that allowed students in Fall 2011 to examine their choice of text using their choice of rhetorical theory or theories. Despite the obvious focus of the class, only two students out of twenty-four completed final projects that explicitly engaged with feminism as a major organizing principle. Further, several students displayed a marked difficulty in identifying a topic narrow enough for rhetorical analysis; some struggled to tie a topic they chose based on personal interest back to the course. In subsequent semesters, I have significantly revised the final project to make attention to feminisms more apparent. For example, in Spring 2012, I asked students to create some sort of technical document that shows major events or people in the history of rhetoric. The exact format of the document is left up to the individual student. As part of the project, I encouraged them to imagine apparent feminist ways of subverting or critiquing the traditional linear timeline model that many students immediately planned to utilize; for example, one student created a web that placed Sappho in a central position and attempted to map her rhetorical effects on other scholars. Students were required to justify the choices they made on this timeline. This project prompt yielded much stronger results than the previous semesters' more open-ended prompt.

I will certainly continue to find new challenges, obstacles, and limitations to apparent feminism as a pedagogical approach, in addition to those discussed above. However, I offer this Curriculum Showcase precisely because of the enormous benefits this approach also offers. To review, those benefits include attention to the fallacy of pedagogical objectivity, the danger of believing in the objectivity of fields of knowledge, the shifting power of the teacher and students, and the role of subjectivities in classroom dynamics as well as curriculum and course design. Perhaps most importantly, taking up apparent feminist pedagogies in technical communication classrooms provides a way for students to increase their understanding of the permeable nature of disciplinary boundaries, while encouraging them to re-examine hegemonic technical rhetorics that are often difficult to challenge.

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Syllabus for English 283: Rhetorical Theory and Applications

Course Description

English 283: Rhetorical Theory and Application is a critical examination of the nature and historical development of rhetorical theory and its applications to contemporary discourses. The course is designed as an introduction to rhetoric, a field with both classical origins and important modern applications. Rhetoric—though it can't really be defined in so few words— is the art of persuasive communication. In this class, we will study how we can shape language to our own benefit, but we also will examine how language, in turn, shapes our lives. This class will have a focus on rhetorical artifacts broadly considered to be public, technical, and objective; we will focus especially on analyzing the ideologies such artifacts support. In doing so, we will devote significant time to rhetorics that you might recognize as examples of *technical communication*, and we will explore this related field.

Required Materials

Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students. 4th ed. ISBN: 978-0205574438
Ability to print a minimum of 400 black-and-white pages
Internet access

Required Readings (PDFs will be provided)

Augustine. (2011, September 7) Augustine, on Christian doctrine, book IV. *Georgetown University: Web Hosting*. Retrieved from http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/jod/augustine/ddc4.html

Bitzer, Lloyd F. (1968). The rhetorical situation. *Philosophy and Rhetoric 1*(1), 1–14.

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*Additional readings as deemed necessary

Grades

Grades will be rendered on a straight scale. (A 90 percent and above is an A, 80 percent and above is a B, etc.) Students who fulfill requirements will earn Cs; higher grades require extra and exceptional effort.

Participation – 100 points
Weekly Responses – 200 points
Midterm Exam – 200 points
Final Project & Presentation – 300 points
Final Exam – 200 points

Assignments

Written Responses – Written responses will help us build a foundation for our class discussions. I will give detailed instructions for the structure of each weekly response during the class before it is due. You will be called on at least once during the course of the semester to read your response out loud to the class. You should keep all written responses in a folder that you bring to class with you every day. I will collect your folder at several unannounced points during the semester in order to grade your work. You will write 11 written responses throughout the semester, and the lowest grade *above a zero* you receive will be dropped.

Midterm Exam and *Final Exam* – Each exam will be a closed-book evalua-tion of your comprehension of terms and concepts covered in the course. Exams will ask you to answer content-based questions that assess your understanding of the theoretical material we have covered as well applica-tion questions that assess your ability to rhetorically analyze a specific text. The final is comprehensive.

Final Project & Presentation – During this course, you should be teasing out some area(s) of interest that you would like to explore further. For the final

project, you will conduct a detailed rhetorical analysis of a particular text (or set of texts) from your area(s) of interest using a rhetorical theoretical framework we have studied. Your final project should be a paper 8-10 pages in length (or the equivalent, should you choose to produce a multi-modal project) that demonstrates your understanding of a rhetorical theory and a method of applying it to a particular text/discourse. A *complete draft* is due in time for peer review. The final draft of your project should be turned in along with your rough draft and copies of the two peer reviews you wrote. More details on this assignment will be given as we progress through the semester. You will also give a formal presentation (6-8 minutes) to the class that explains the work you do in your final project. Part of your grade on the final presentation will rest on your written and oral responses to others' presentations. More details on this assignment will be given as we progress through the semester.

Approximate Course Schedule

This course schedule will change as we incorporate readings into the course that are most relevant for the area(s) of interest of particular students.

Week /Day	In-class activities	Work assigned
1/1	Course introduction, including brief discussion of feminisms as a guiding principle. Discuss students' prior knowledge of rhetoric. Discuss my IRB and the nature of the study I'll be conducting this semester.	Read Wikipedia's definition of rhetoric, paying particular attention to places where the words "objective" or "objectivity" are used. Doing additional research as needed, write your own definition of rhetoric (WR1). Discuss the relationship between rhetoric and objectivity.
1/2	Discuss Wikipedia article on rhetoric, focusing especially on what is left out of that article. Discuss the audience for this article. Detailed introduction of feminisms as guiding theoretical framework for the course. Two students read their WR1 aloud. Introduce key concepts we will study in detail later, including the modes of persuasion, species of rhetoric, canons of rhetoric. Introduce textbook, focusing on discussion of bias in the preface.	Read Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students (ARCS) Chapter 1, which introduces rhetoric as an area of study.

2/1	Open class by talking about connections between Chapter 1 of the text and students' lives. Talk about technical communication, give examples, ask how students who evaluate these examples in terms of objectivity/subjectivity. Discuss ideological, cluster, generic, and narrative criticism and the relative biases of these different approaches. Show clip of Jon Stewart on Crossfire (http://youtu.be/aFQFB5YpDZE) and use what we've learned from ARCS Chapter 1 to analyze.	Read ARCS Chapter 2. Complete WR2 on the following prompt: Write response on the difference between Chapter 1 and the Wikipedia article. If you struggle to narrow this prompt, try focusing on what each text is trying to persuade you of.
2/2	Collection of IRB consent forms. Volunteers read WR2 aloud; discussion of ideological perspectives of the Wikipedia article versus the textbook. Students break into small groups to read WR2s and to analyze what ideological perspectives various writers in each group are coming from. Review of important terms from Chapter 1, including discussion of the difference in public and private, technical and layperson documents. Discuss ARCS Chapter 2 and the implications of kairos.	Read Oscar Wilde trial transcript. Write analysis of the transcript using the modes of persuasion and with explicit discussion of the fact that you are looking at this text from a different kairotic context (WR3). This response should devote at least some space to the role gender plays in this transcript.
3/1	Labor Day Holiday	
3/2	Give students five minutes to write short revised definitions of rhetoric given what they now know. In small groups, go over reading responses together in order to remember them after the long weekend. Three students read WR3. Discuss what qualifies this transcript as a piece of technical communication and why it's important for us to look at in a rhetoric course. Discuss pathos and humor. Discuss ethos; discuss the values of Wilde's audience and whether his purpose was to persuade them of his innocence or his good character, especially given that he had already lost his libel suit. Review important concepts from ARCS Chapter 2.	Read ARCS Chapter 3 on stasis theory.
4/1	Work with short definitions from last class period. In small groups, find patterns and disagreements. Ask if feminism/gender showed up in any of the definitions. Use this analysis as a text for working through stasis theory.	Read ARCS Chapter 4 on commonplaces and write a one-page analysis of the commonplaces that a particular bumper sticker relies upon (WR4).
4/2	Define and discuss topics, ideologies, commonplaces. View political commercials and identify the commonplaces and ideologies at work in them. Break into small groups and identify an ideological group all members belong to, then find the ideologies and commonplaces that underlie that affiliation. Two students read WR4.	Read ARCS Chapter 5 on logos. Write WR5 on how you have developed ethos in class so far and how you might continue to work on it.

5/1	Evaluation of rhetorical space in the classroom—who's talking a lot, who should talk more, do we see patterns? Where do we, as a class, reach stasis on these questions? What should any resulting policy changes be? Divide into five groups with each group taking one of the following pairs from the Logos chapter: deduction/induction, enthymemes/rhetorical examples, historical and fictional examples, analogy and similar and contrary examples, maxims and signs. Define your terms for the class and offer at least two examples. Each student write an enthymeme. Volunteers read two parts out loud (usually the major premise and conclusion) and then someone else fill in the minor premise. Touch base about WR5; how is it going? Do we need some time to peer review?	Read ARCS Chapter 6 on ethos.
5/2	Discuss ARCS Chapter 6 on ethos. In small groups, talk about how to develop ethos as an expert on a particular subject. Three students read WR5.	Read Chapter 7 (pathos) and "Cruel Pies" as well as responses to "Cruel Pies." Analyze the Cruel Pies article using Aristotle and Cicero's sets of emotions (WR6).
6/1	Continue work on ethos using recent examples of when businesses have run into ethos problems. Discuss the ways that ethos, pathos, and logos interplay. In-class work on WR6.	
6/2	Break into groups answer following questions about "Cruel Pies." How would you classify this article in terms of the species of rhetoric? Explain. This article often upsets readers. In rhetorical terms, explain why. Do you think gender could have anything to do with the article's reception? Explain. Using rhetorical terms as much as possible, explain the difference between something professional and something technical. What does the status of this article as professional and/or technical have to do with the way readers think of it?	Read ARCS Chapter 8 and write WR7 as a proposal for the final project.
7/1	Three students read WR6. Discussion of fatalgrams and enargeia. Discussion of technical communication as a field and its connection to rhetoric as a field: How do students understand this relationship at this point in the course?	

7/2	Discussion of intrinstic and extrinsic proofs. Talk about which extrinsic proofs qualify as technical communication. Talk about testimony and authorities, data, and arguments from experience. Discuss feminisms and embodied experience. Several students read WR7. In small groups, workshop final project ideas.	
8/1	Prepare for Midterm	
8/2	Midterm Exam	
9/1	Go over midterm; collect take-home essay portion of test.	Write WR8 on the difference between rhetorical analysis and opinion in class discussions. What are some markers of a smart rhetorical analysis happening verbally in the classroom?
9/2	Return and discuss take-home essay portion of midterm test. Evaluation of rhetorical space in the classroom—who's talking a lot, who should talk more, do we see patterns? Where do we, as a class, reach stasis on these questions? What should any resulting policy changes be?	Read Augustine, Bitzer, Herrick.
10/1	Three students read WR8. In small groups, discuss the following questions: What is the relationship between personal opinion and objectivity/subjectivity? . . . In a rhetoric class? If we privilege our own opinions to the point of silencing others (in a rhetoric class where we say audience is important), are we suggesting objectivity exists on the issue in question? How do we define objectivity? What if we exchange the term "objectivity" for "absolute preference" or "accepted premise"? What does experience have to do with it? We start having experiences from the moment we're born and everyone's are different, so can we ever be "objective"? What does this discussion mean for how we define rhetoric? Is it as much the art of judgment as it is the art of persuasion? What do we make of the place of objectivity/subjectivity when we are distinguishing between a skill or a talent (or a science vs. an art)? Where does rhetoric fit? What do these questions mean for those who identify as feminists? For those who don't?	Write a feminist analysis of Augustine, Bitzer, and/or Herrick OR write a feminist analysis of one of our recent class discussions (WR9). Make sure to articulate the specific type of feminist approach you are using.

10/2	Discuss Augustine, Bitzer, and Herrick. Discuss the instructor's purposes for choosing these readings. Discuss what makes a feminist class and why certain ideologies are marked while others are not. In small groups, discuss progress on final project and prepare for peer review.	
11/1	Two students read WR9. Continue discussion of bias in technical artifacts like histories, course design, university curricula.	Read Menexenus and Glenn. Write WR10 on why Glenn's work is important to read in a course like this and what you take away from her article.
11/2	Discuss Menexenus and Glenn. Answer the following questions: If we recognize that "traditional" courses are not neutral, how can we justify leaving Aspasia out? Why is it so important to have discussions about technical artifacts like these in a rhetoric class?	Read ARCS Chapters 11 & 12
12/1	Two students read WR10. Continued discussion of Menexenus and Glenn, including talking about what constitutes a "fact" and how cultural memory works.	Write WR11 as a reflection on the course. Explicitly discuss what you've learned about objectivity, technical communication, and feminisms.
12/2	Discuss ARCS Chapters 11 & 12 Preview of how peer reviews will work and what I expect. Two students read WR11.	
13/1	Draft of Final Project due. Today you should 1) Get in peer review groups 2) trade papers and frame what you need from peers 3) Skim, ask questions 4) Leave a draft for me 5) Go home and do a detailed peer review. This class period is also the last opportunity to distribute surveys/handouts if you are collecting data from classmates for your project.	Work on Final Project and Presentation.
13/2	Peer Review Discussions	Work on Final Project and Presentation.
14	Fall Break	
15/1	Panel 1 (7 presentations)	Work on Final Project
15/2	Panel 2 (6 presentations)	Work on Final Project
16/1	Panel 3 (6 presentations)	Work on Final Project
16/2	Panel 4 (6 presentations)	Work on Final Project
17	Final Examination; Final Project Due	

Author Information

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