ALTERNATIVES TO ARGUMENTATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERCULTURAL RHETORIC

by

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DEDICATION

To my parents, my family, and my friends who have supported me through all the ups and downs, I dedicate this work to you.
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ABSTRACT

American composition classrooms focus on teaching students to be assertive, self-assured, and definitive. What they do not tend to emphasize is how to reach mutual understandings, especially when communication takes place across cultural borders. This dissertation explores interdisciplinary perspectives on intercultural communication and alternatives to argument to suggest possibilities for building a rhetoric that better enables understanding between cultures. In this text I challenge assumptions about culturally based rhetorical strategies, question the tendency to teach argumentative writing in American composition classes, propose rhetorical strategies for reaching mutual understanding across cultures, and show the positive feelings of contemporary university students toward nonargumentative writing assignments.

This dissertation has two main aims. The first aim is to show that trying to manufacture a one-to-one correspondence between a culture and its communication strategy is not as straightforward as it may seem. Such efforts not only tend to essentialize the differences between cultures, but they also ignore the multiple strategies that people from all cultures use to deal with complex rhetorical situations. By analyzing press releases from both the United States and North Korea, I show that categorizing an entire culture’s communication style under one label is a mistake. Instead, I show that in different situations both Americans and Koreans use a variety of rhetorical strategies in their communication. The second aim of this dissertation stems from the first. Once I have shown that people across cultures are both the same and different and that our use of language reflects this reality, I call for a change in our educational practices in order to
better reflect these complexities. I show how teaching alternatives to traditional academic argumentation can better foster intercultural understanding by describing a research-based writing assignment I designed that asks students to explore controversial issues nonagumentatively. This assignment encourages students to explore the many facets involved in complex situations and avoid simplistic either-or thinking. In meeting this challenge, students often make use of collaborative writing and go beyond traditional text formats to create hybrid texts. Overwhelmingly they report positive reactions to such innovative writing strategies.
INTRODUCTION

The roots of what you are reading can probably be traced back to the early 1980s when, during one elementary school summer, friends of my parents hosted a “Fresh Air Child” from New York City. We lived in what was then a small New England town, filled with lots of “fresh air.” My parents’ friends had a harbor-front home, a dog, and our town was filled with trees, grass, and small village shops. I suppose my hometown was quite a contrast to what this young girl named Rhonda was used to in inner-city New York. I was recruited to accompany my parents’ friends and Rhonda on several outings, including a trip one evening to an outdoor concert. This concert was held on the historic grounds of the “summer cottage” of a nineteenth-century magnate who had chosen to make his vacation home in my small New England town. This so-called “cottage” is really a forty-five-room mansion, with thirty-three acres of expansive grounds playing host to an arboretum of imported and domestic trees (Blithewold). The mansion and grounds are now open to the public, and it was here that a family friend was performing a vocal concert one summer evening.

Rhonda and I enjoyed the sunset view across the broad lawn leading down to the waterfront, and then it was time to make our way to the concert site. We had to cross from the lawn to another area of the grounds, and in order to get there, we needed to pass through a thick grove of trees. My friend was petrified. The huge pine trees turned into monstrosities in the darkness of nightfall, while the leaves of the towering deciduous trees rustled like long skirts or robes brushing against a wooden floor. Rhonda thought the trees were monsters reaching out to grab her, their shadows surrounding her as we
scurried as quickly as possible to the clearing where the concert was to be held. I remember feeling a mixture of emotions while Rhonda clung to me in utter fear. Part of me found her pathetic, silly, incomprehensible. What was so frightening about trees, after all? Everyone knows trees can’t hurt a person. Another part of me felt touched that she chose me to cling to as we made our way through this foreboding place. My parents’ friends were with us, and they were acting as her host parents, so why didn’t she grab onto them? I realized that she felt safe with me, her new friend, and I felt honored by that trust.

The foregoing tale is a piece of my first intercultural experience, but it was not to be my last. Several times throughout my life I have found myself mingling with those from a culture different than my own. In high school I went for two weeks to the then Soviet Union. Three teachers took a group of twenty-one students to see what was behind “the iron curtain.” Mostly we were typical tourists, sightseeing with cameras around our necks, following the lead of our tour guide and an official translator (suspected by many of us to have been provided by the KGB). There were a few remarkable experiences, however. One of them involved a stop in Yerevan, Armenia, a city experiencing unrest at the time of our scheduled visit. For several days before our arrival, we were told the region was off-limits to foreigners. However, almost miraculously, as the moment came for us to board our train, the restriction was lifted, and we were allowed to travel. After our overnight train ride, we found the way to our hotel, only to be woken up from a short nap by protesters marching in the street below our
hotel, carrying banners and chanting loud slogans. Later in the day, we came across a larger group of protesters, and our teachers talked with us about the history we were witnessing. (See Fitts for a more detailed explication of this tale that was featured in the local newspaper upon our return to the US.) I remember being struck by the fact that although living under different governments, the people of Yerevan, Armenia, had the same desire to express their opinions as the people of the United States.

Such a dramatic public situation perhaps made this revelation more vivid than it otherwise would have been, but I had been feeling these similarities with the people we were meeting throughout our trip. The first city we visited was Moscow where our hotel was located in a quiet, residential area. Standing in the grass under some trees outside were several young men looking to trade with foreign visitors. My high school friends and I took some time to say hello, trade some cigarettes and pins; then a few of us sat in the grass to talk. We learned a few words of Russian and had some laughs at our awful accents before being corralled by our teachers back into the hotel. I remember wondering why Russia was an enemy of the United States when the people seemed friendly to us. The scene was little different inside the hotel. The presence of a group of young, rambunctious Americans was hard to hide, and soon some young Russians came knocking at our doors. It turned out we had crossed paths with a traveling Russian rock band. We spent hours talking that first night in Moscow, none of us wanting to go to sleep, all of us trying our best to express, either through song or through our shared

Fig. 2. Moscow Boy
language of French, our goodwill. Those mixed emotions I had felt with my “Fresh Air” friend came back again, part of me feeling confused by our differences (this time differences in language), and part of me feeling honored that I was able to share such human moments with people from a foreign culture. This strange juxtaposition of emotions made it hard for me upon my return to summarize for people what my time in the USSR was like, and I usually ended up saying something along the lines of “it had its ups and downs, but overall it was fabulous.” How could I explain my realization that I was at once the same and different from people living in a country that was then the arch-enemy of my own? How could I make my family and friends feel what I had felt? For the time being, I couldn’t.

These frustrations resurfaced years later when I decided to spend a semester of college in Melbourne, Australia. At Melbourne University I participated in a study abroad program that was specially designed for students from my small college in Florida. We studied such subjects as Australian literature and the Australian environment, and we were taught by instructors hired to teach our small group of seven. One weekend involved a field trip to the Lake Tyres Aboriginal Reserve in East Gippsland, Victoria. While there, we took guided walks through “the bush” to study the flora and fauna of the area, and we also spent some time learning to throw boomerangs. In the evening, there was a campfire around which sat my American friends, our chaperones, and several of our Aboriginal hosts, including one of the most respected elders of the community, Uncle...
Albert Mullett. Several of our hosts brought didgeridoos, so there was music along with storytelling around the campfire. We felt connected during that time, sharing song, laughter, and even tears. The Aborigines told stories of how they had been driven off their land, shunted into the desert outback or swampy marshlands while the British settled their prime real estate. (An extensive website detailing the history of the Lake Tyres Aboriginal Reserve can be found at <http://www.abc.net.au/missionvoices/lake_tyres/default.htm>.) We Americans cried at the similarities between the Aborigines’ poor treatment and the poor treatment Native Americans suffered in our own country. This perhaps was an example of “white man’s guilt” that my friends and I were feeling, and perhaps it was more an expression of sympathy that we cried together than a connection between equals. Other moments around that campfire, though, revealed more direct connections between these seemingly disparate groups of people. We all bemoaned the tendency of twentieth-century culture to draw people away from the environment, and we shared joy at having hiked through the trees and sat by the water’s edge together for one day. We spoke of our sense of peace and restfulness when communing with nature, our realizations that the earth felt intimately connected to us and that we felt “at home” in this rustic place. Was it really possible that I, an American of European descent, could be connecting with Aboriginal Australians? How could I make sense of both our connections and our disconnections at once? What words could I use to explain these experiences to my friends and family when I returned from my time abroad? As was the case when I returned from the USSR, words failed me many times. All I could do was
tell stories such as the ones I am recounting here in the hopes of illustrating for others what I had experienced.

Soon after my return to the United States from Australia, I found out I would be traveling overseas yet again, this time to spend a year in Korea. I was eager to gain more international experience, and I hoped spending an entire year immersed in a foreign culture would allow me to reach deeper insights into both my connections to and disconnections from it. As one of a handful of Westerners living in the industrial city of Ulsan, South Korea, I experienced what it was like to be stared at, whispered about, and marginalized as I went about my daily activities. Sometimes, as I sat in a small coffee shop, rode the bus to work, or walked around downtown, I would become aware that I was the object of people's conversations. Not realizing I could understand some of the Korean language, people would talk about me out loud, thinking I had no idea what they were saying. Once in particular, two teenage girls tried to decide if I was a man or a woman, since I was sporting a rather short haircut at the time. I shocked them when I turned around and said “여자입니다,” “I am a woman.” Other times I became so desperate for the familiar that I resorted to reading the English on the toiletries I had brought with me from the States—lists of ingredients on toothpaste tubes and deodorant, boastful claims about cavity protection and dryness. Out on the neighborhood sidewalks, little children, toddlers mostly, sometimes cried at the sight of me having never seen any non-Koreans before. Just my physical presence, my appearance, was enough to frighten them. It was times like these that I felt like an outsider, as if I didn't belong.
At the same time, as part of those same daily activities, I became friends with my coworkers, homestay hosts, and others. It was through this process of friendship-making that I began to sense the profound connections that are possible between people of different cultures. Many times, more than I can count, my Korean friends would tell me, “You seem more Korean than American.” I was not sure what they meant by this at first, so I pressed them to explain. Their reasoning included a contradiction of the stereotypical “ugly American” they had perhaps expected all Americans to be. I was not pushy, did not insist that my way was the right way, was not loud, and these contradictions of the stereotypical American surprised my Korean friends. Beyond this breakdown of stereotype, though, was a connection being made. My friends explained that somehow they sensed I understood them. None of us had the vocabulary in each other’s language to explain what was happening between us, but at moments like these clearly our similarities were transcending our differences.

Once again in my intercultural interactions, I was noticing both moments of disconnection and moments of connection. How was I to capture this juxtaposition of sensations when I returned to the United States? How could I explain to my friends and family how these realizations were beginning to influence my thinking about the world? At the time I still couldn’t put these intimations into words. In the years between then and now, I have worked on deepening my knowledge of intercultural rhetoric in an attempt to rectify my inability to verbalize my sensations. As such, my current work has two main aims. The first aim stems from my recognition that “foreign” cultures are no
simpler than my own. I have been frustrated by research that tries to draw a one-to-one correspondence between a culture and its communication strategy. It seems to me such efforts overly essentialize the differences between cultures and result in overly broad generalizations that ignore the multiple strategies people from all cultures use to deal with complex rhetorical situations. To illustrate this claim, my first chapter focuses on a comparison of press releases from both the United States (US) and North Korea, also known as the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK). These press releases center around the conflict between the DPRK and the US over the January 11, 2003, decision by the DPRK to end its moratorium on its withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. In analyzing these press releases, I show not only that we cannot categorize an entire culture’s communication style under one label but also that in different situations, both Americans and Koreans use a variety of rhetorical strategies in their communication.

The second aim of this work stems from the first. Once I have shown that at one and the same time, people across cultures are both the same and different, and that our use of language reflects this reality, I call for a change in our educational practices in order to better reflect these complexities. In chapters two through four, I draw on such theorists as Kenneth Burke, Jim Corder, Linda Flower, John Gage, Jürgen Habermas, Paul Ricoeur, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Richard E. Young to illustrate the theoretical background for teaching alternatives to traditional academic argumentation. As I show, we can draw on diverse rhetorical strategies across cultures to better foster intercultural understanding. In most contemporary composition classrooms, we teach students how to
construct arguments that project a closed confidence in their stances, and we in turn close these students to possibilities that could result from maintaining openness. Instead of proving points and making cases, what could happen if we shared our thoughts with one another? What could happen if, instead of winning arguments, we focused on asking questions? What could happen in cases of intercultural interaction if we weren’t so confrontational? What kind of journey could we accompany each other on through our dialogue? Where might we end up? It is questions such as these that I pursue in this work.

My final chapter provides reflections on my own experiences with teaching alternatives to argumentation in college-level composition classes. I ponder what students have shared with me about their feelings regarding what they learned in my classes. Most students enjoyed the chance to write in a different rhetorical style than they were used to from their other classes. I have not undertaken pretest and posttest interviews to see if my writing assignments have a significant impact on student attitudes toward other points of view on a chosen topic; however, I do share anecdotal evidence showing that students felt they learned new strategies for investigating their own opinions in greater depth through my nonargumentative writing assignment. They also claim they were better able to account for contradictions between themselves and others through the strategies they learned in my classes.

Overall, this work is an attempt to bring to bear theoretical work in rhetoric and composition, linguistic anthropology, and the philosophy of language as they apply to my own experiences with intercultural understanding. Attempting to blend the academic and
the personal is not always easy, and it mirrors the work I ask my students to do in their
own nonargumentative writing assignments. I strive to make sense of my own
experiences while at the same time remaining open to the perspectives of others. The
chapters that follow both make claims and ask questions. They engage the intellect while
also delving into emotions. They state opinions while giving readers room to shape their
own perspectives. As such, I hope this work represents what I call a collaborative, hybrid
inquiry into the question of intercultural rhetoric.
CHAPTER I:
HOW CONTRASTIVE SHOULD WE BE? A COMPARISON OF NORTH KOREAN AND AMERICAN RHETORICAL STRATEGIES

In this chapter I examine the claim that rhetorical practices are necessarily determined by culture. I question the validity of identifying “Asian” or “American” ways of thinking and writing in order to point out the reductiveness of such claims. It is my belief that cultural practices are too complex to be easily pigeon-holed, and I will show that rhetorical practices are no exception. I illustrate my claim by turning to an analysis of press releases from both North Korea and the United States. This analysis shows the tenuous nature of traditional distinctions that have been made between typically “Asian” and typically “American” forms of expression.

The Contrastive Approach

Robert Kaplan is one of the best-known theorists claiming that there are direct connections between culture, language, and thought. In his article “Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Rhetoric,” Kaplan studies the writing produced by people of various cultures. One of his conclusions is that because Americans tend to write linearly constructed essays, they must think linearly. Similarly, he concludes that because Asians tend to write in indirect, circular ways, their thinking must also be indirect and circular. He writes, “[. . .] each language and each culture has a paragraph order unique to itself, and [. . .] part of the learning of a particular language is the mastering of its logical system” (14). Here is made explicit the assumption that rhetorical practices necessarily mirror thought patterns, so that linear structure in writing implies linear thinking, and
indirect structure implies indirect thinking. Kaplan’s aim in this article is to explain why international students struggle in American classrooms, and he asserts, “The foreign-student paper is out of focus because the foreign student is employing a rhetoric and a sequence of thought which violate the expectations of the native reader” (4). This conclusion seems to paint a rather gloomy picture of intercultural rhetoric, for the scene created here is a scene of people from different cultures speaking past each other by using different logics, not a scene of people reaching mutual understanding. In fact, in his 1990 article “Writing in a Multilingual/Multicultural Context: What’s Contrastive about Contrastive Rhetoric?” Kaplan writes, “What I am suggesting is that speakers of other languages: 1) may be logical in a different way; and 2) that their logical orientation may make them appear illogical to readers anticipating a certain culturally-constrained demonstration of logic” (10). As Kaplan describes them, then, intercultural encounters are situations in which people from different cultures seem incomprehensible to each other rather than situations in which mutual understanding is a realistic goal.

More recent studies have replicated the contrastive methodology used by Kaplan. One example of this approach is Haru Yamada’s 1997 book, Different Games, Different Rules: Why Americans and Japanese Misunderstand Each Other. As Yamada explains in her Preface, this book is based on the premise that different cultures communicate according to different rules and that these differences are the root of potential misunderstanding in intercultural communication. One example Yamada uses to illustrate the divergent rules governing American and Japanese communication styles is what she calls “talk about talk.” Yamada claims that Japanese speakers have a tendency
to use talk about talk in their conversations. This strategy is used to change topics and make various sorts of transitions in the midst of interactions. For example, Yamada quotes a Japanese bank section head as saying, “This talk is completely different, but there’s going to be another American regional meeting around August” (73). The clause, “This talk is completely different” is what Yamada means by talk about talk, and her claim is that Japanese speakers tend to use this strategy in contrast to American speakers of English who jump directly into new topics by saying such things as, “All right first deal today is Morrow” (74). Yamada claims that by supplying transitions between topics, Japanese speakers seem to Americans to be wasting time while American English speakers seem to Japanese listeners to be overly abrupt by not supplying transitions between topics. Clearly Yamada’s intention here is to draw a contrast between people based on their cultures and languages, a contrast she claims will explain common misunderstandings that occur between them.

Another recent example of research that follows Kaplan’s contrastive model is Jai Hee Cho’s 1999 doctoral dissertation, *A Study of Contrastive Rhetoric between East Asian and North American Cultures as Demonstrated through Student Expository Essays from Korea and the United States*. In this dissertation, Cho traces Confucian influences in Korean culture, such as the tendency to work for group harmony. Because of these cultural tendencies, Cho claims, essays by Korean students tend to lack clear introductory thesis statements (176), and these essays also lack clearly defined topic sentences throughout the body of the text (182). According to Cho, these writing habits are indicative of Koreans’ Confucian tendency to avoid individual attention, preferring
instead group harmony. He writes, “[. . .] because [Confucianism] prefers collectivism, the individual’s opinion is discouraged [. . .]. These Confucian teachings influence the writer to [. . .] put his/her intention near the end of an essay or perhaps to never state it [. . .].” (191). According to Cho, this tendency among Korean writers to avoid thesis statements is in contrast to the American tendency to place “[. . .] a thesis statement in the introduction” (186). As with Kaplan and Yamada, Cho’s study focuses on difference, highlighting the ways Koreans and Americans differ in their rhetorical practices.

Finally, Stephen Levinson’s article, “Language and Cognition: The Cognitive Consequences of Spatial Description in Guugu Yimithirr,” also takes a contrastive approach to analyzing language practices across cultures. Levinson explains in his article that speakers of Guugu Yimithirr [GY], a language spoken by an aboriginal group in the Australian outback, use an absolute system to talk about spatial relationships, whereas English and Dutch speakers use a relative system. The absolute system, according to Levinson, requires “[. . .] a specialized kind of background computation of orientation and direction” (100-1), and he goes on to assert that “[. . .] the fact that absolute directional information is a fundamental prerequisite for speaking GY must have pervasive psychological implications” (101). Levinson’s use of the word “pervasive” implies that because speakers of GY and speakers of English use different linguistic systems to discuss spatial orientation, their psychological makeup must be different in an all-encompassing, invasive, or insidious way. This supposedly overwhelming psychological divergence in turn implies that a person from one group could expect to encounter great difficulty when attempting to communicate with a person from the other.
As seen by this brief review, there is a continuing trend in rhetoric, communications, and anthropology to draw distinctions between cultures based on their communication styles. Theorists working in this contrastive tradition often connect these differences in rhetorical practices to supposedly varying systems of logic and thought. However, this approach is overly reductive in that it does not fully account for the complex ways in which people from all cultures use language. A less contrastive approach would allow us to recognize the richness of language use across cultures and enable us to more effectively work toward achieving intercultural understanding.

A Critique of the Contrastive Approach

Susan Gal and Judith Irvine, in their article “The Boundaries of Languages and Disciplines: How Ideologies Construct Difference,” explain how language is used in the construction of “the other.” They explain that one way for dominant groups to remain dominant is to exoticize “the other,” making members of non-dominant groups seem vastly different or completely alien from the dominant group. To heighten difference, the tactic of “erasure” is often used. Gal and Irvine write, “Erasure is the process in which ideology, in simplifying the field of linguistic practices, renders some persons or activities or sociolinguistic phenomena invisible. Facts that are inconsistent with the ideological scheme may go unnoticed or get explained away” (974). In other words, in the attempt to draw clear distinctions between cultural groups, researchers may inadvertently oversimplify their analyses of the available data. The danger of focusing solely on difference in language use across cultures is that we may overlook subtle similarities.
For example, Kaplan uses academic essays as the basis for his analysis of American thought patterns. He makes the claim that because these academic essays are arranged linearly, with thesis statements in the introduction and body paragraphs that use deductive logic, Americans must also think linearly. However, as most instructors of writing know, such linearly constructed essays are not always produced on the first attempt. Instead, freewriting, brainstorming, and rough drafts are often filled with tangents and incomplete ideas. What Kaplan “erases” from his analysis is the fact that linear writing often takes multiple drafts to produce. While his motivation in overlooking this situation may not have been to subjugate “the other,” his assertion that Americans think in linear ways seems to be an oversimplification of reality, and it seems to contribute to the drawing of overly sharp distinctions between cultural groups as a result.

Similarly, Yamada’s analysis of American and Japanese speech in business meetings seems to “erase” similarities in order to accentuate difference. While it may be true that speakers of Japanese tend to use “talk about talk” in their speech, it may not be so true that Americans do not also make use of “talk about talk.” Yamada claims that Americans and Japanese are significantly different in this area, and her main line of reasoning is that such differences lead to misunderstandings. However, Yamada may be overstating the situation. For example, it is quite common to hear such statements as “This is off the topic, but…” or “On a completely different subject…” in American English interchanges. Yet Yamada “erases” such “talk about talk” from her analysis of American English speech. The reason for this seeming erasure is not clear, but the result is that differences between Japanese speakers and American English speakers seem more
accentuated than may be necessary.

Likewise, Cho’s division between the Korean desire to achieve harmony through indirection and the American desire to be direct also seems to be the result of erasure. While it is true that sometimes Koreans avoid making direct statements in order to achieve group harmony, it is also true that Koreans sometimes make very direct statements to achieve the same goal. For example, “How old are you?” is one of the first questions a Korean will ask when meeting someone new. This direct question is essential to maintaining social harmony because the Korean language operates on varying scales of politeness. Different endings are added to verb stems depending upon how respectful the speaker wishes to sound, and the appropriate level of respect is often determined by the age of the person being spoken to. In order to know which level of diction to use so as not to offend, Koreans need to directly ask the age of the person they want to talk to. However, Cho “erased” evidence such as this when making his claim that in order to achieve social harmony, Koreans are indirect. Such erasure tends to create overly simplistic cultural divisions by pitting “us” against “them”—pitting supposedly indirect Koreans against supposedly direct Americans. It seems to me that such divisions are overemphasized and that in actuality the situation is more complicated.

Finally, Levinson also seems to succumb to erasure in his analysis of spatially descriptive language. He notes that speakers of Guugu Yimithirr describe their relationships with other people or objects by using the cardinal directions rather than relative directions. When standing next to someone else, then, a speaker of Guugu Yimithirr might state, “I am to your north,” for example. This is in contrast to speakers
of American English who, Levinson claims, would state, “I am on your left,” using relative directions. However, having lived for the past five years in a city with streets laid out in a grid pattern, I can attest that when giving directions, it is quite common for speakers of American English to use the cardinal directions rather than relative directions. It is common for a Tucsonan to state “Turn West on Speedway, then turn North on Campbell,” for example. Yet Levinson “erases” this observation from his analysis, emphasizing instead the differences between cultural groups.

The US-North Korean Context

To further illustrate my claim that cultural differences in the realm of rhetoric have been overstated, I wish to turn my attention to the conflict between the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the United States (US) over the January 11, 2003, decision by the DPRK to end its moratorium on its withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. In order to understand tensions such as this in international relations, the foregoing theorists would have us investigate the contrasting communication strategies employed by the countries involved, claiming that culture, communication, and logic are all intermingled. However, by comparing press releases from both the US and the DPRK governments, I will show that trying to manufacture a one-to-one correspondence between a culture and its communication strategy is not as simple as it may seem. I do not wish to refute that we can observe differences in communication styles across cultures. What I do wish to show is that the differences observed in particular rhetorical situations are not necessarily generalizable to entire cultures at all times. Take the claim about direction and indirection, for example. While
it may be true that at times American writers are more direct than Korean writers, my research shows that it is not true at all times. In studying press releases issued by the North Korean and the United States governments over approximately three months, from early January through mid-April 2003, I find the situation more complicated than the typical intercultural communication research would suggest. I argue that this complication illustrates the sophisticated ability of both parties to respond to specific rhetorical situations by using a variety of communication strategies.

To begin, then, I would like to investigate the state of US-DPRK diplomatic relations in order to provide some context for the press releases in question. The United States and North Korea have not shared normal diplomatic relations since the time of the Korean War in the 1950s. During this conflict, the United States government was allied with the Republic of Korea (also known as South Korea), and because a formal treaty has never been signed, North Korea, South Korea, and the United States are still officially at war, a war kept at bay by an ongoing armistice agreement (Insight 38-40). Throughout the fifty-three years since the armistice was signed, tension among these nations has been high. Several military conflicts have occurred at the site of the Demilitarized Zone, or the DMZ, that separates North Korea from South Korea. One significant conflict was the capture of the “U.S.S. Pueblo” by North Korean forces on January 23, 1968, and the holding of its crew as prisoners for close to a year (Kirkbride 62). Another notable conflict was the Panmunjom Axe Murder Incident of August 18, 1976, in which American service members trimming a tree in the DMZ were killed by North Korean soldiers with the axes being used for the trimming (Kirkbride 68-69). As a result of these
incidents and others, distrust among all three governments has never been completely erased and at times has been substantial.

In recent years the United States and North Korea have disagreed over the development of nuclear technology in North Korea. In March 1993 this friction rose to an extraordinary level, prompting the DPRK to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. By June 11, 1993, an agreement was reached between the two nations, and North Korea suspended its withdrawal from the treaty (“Statement”). For several months, North Korea and the United States worked on crafting its Agreed Framework, a document that was finally signed on October 21, 1994 (“KCNA detailed”).

In the years after the establishment of this Agreed Framework, North Korea and the United States worked toward normalizing relations between their countries. During those years, President Bill Clinton was leader of the United States, but with the transition of power to President George W. Bush in 2001, there was yet another deterioration in the relationship between the two countries. This deterioration contributed to the North Korean announcement that it would lift the moratorium on its withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty effective January 11, 2003 (“Letter”).

Analysis of North Korean Press Releases

I start my analysis of the press releases in question by looking at those issued by the DPRK government between the dates of January 10, 2003, when the DPRK announced an end to the moratorium on its withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and April 18, 2003, when talks aimed at resolving the conflict with the United States were announced. These press releases were issued in English by the Korean
Central News Agency, or KCNA, a press agency that “[. . .] speaks for the Worker’s Party of Korea and the DPRK government” (“KCNA”). As the agency’s website states, within North Korea “The KCNA is in charge of uniform delivery of news and other informations (sic) to mass media of the country, including newspapers and radios” (“KCNA”), while additionally, “News is transmitted to other countries in English, Russian, and Spanish” (“KCNA”). This website contains not only statements by DPRK government officials and the KCNA, but it also carries reports from North Korean newspapers and other media around the world. In the interest of space, I will not look at the newspaper and other media reports and will instead limit my analysis to the statements issued by DPRK government officials and the KCNA itself.

A total of sixty-nine press releases issued during this time deal directly with characterizations of DPRK-US relations, the DPRK itself, or the US. The main concerns of these documents are to remind readers of the sovereignty of the DPRK, call for equality in the relationship between the DPRK and the US, and give voice to the perceived hostility and ignorance of United States policy. For example, statements concerning the sovereignty of the DPRK include the following:

Under the grave situation where our state’s supreme interests are most seriously threatened, the DPRK government adopts the following decisions to protect the sovereignty of the country and the nation and their right to existence and dignity. (“Statement”)
This is an important measure taken to protect the supreme interests of the DPRK and the country and nation’s sovereignty, right to existence and dignity. (“KCNA hails”)

We would like to remind him once again that the DPRK issued its government statement on Jan. 10 on its total withdrawal from the NPT in order to protect the sovereignty, vital right and dignity of the country and the nation. (“KCNA refutes”)

Explicitly speaking, it is an indisputable sovereign right of the DPRK to produce and deploy missiles to protect its sovereignty and supreme interests and export them to other countries within the framework of normal military cooperation and exchange. (“KCNA flails”)

Using the phrases, “our state’s supreme interests,” “the sovereignty of the country,” and “their right to existence and dignity” repeatedly in these statements, the DPRK government makes its concerns clear. It even uses the marker, “explicitly speaking” to draw attention to its effort to be direct in its communication. Here, then, is a case of an Asian government making use of directness as a rhetorical strategy in its official pronouncements, pronouncements aimed at asserting the dignity of the DPRK government.

The next set of remarks are those expressing the need for equality in the relationship between the DPRK and the US. These statements include:
The only way of solving the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula peacefully and in a most fair way is for the DPRK and the U.S. to hold direct and equal negotiations. (“DPRK”)  

It is the only best solution to the nuclear issue for the DPRK and the U.S. to have direct talks on an equal footing. (“KCNA urges”)  

The nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula should be settled by way of holding the DPRK-U.S. dialogue on an equal footing and by concluding a non-aggression treaty between them in view of the circumstances of its emergence, the true nature of the crisis and the responsibility for it. (“U.S.”)  

Again, the directness of address is noticeable. The words “fair” and “equal” are stated in these instances, leaving no doubt what the DPRK government is asking for. Here, as with the statements asserting the sovereignty of the DPRK, it is interesting to note that an Asian government is making use of directness as a rhetorical strategy. It seems when the rhetorical situation warrants a direct call for fair treatment, Asians are capable of being quite direct rather than being limited to an indirect form of address as some theorists would have us believe.

There are countless examples of statements concerning the perceived hostility of US policy toward North Korea. Statements regarding this hostility include such references as “the U.S. vicious hostile policy toward the DPRK,” “threats,” and “the U.S.
moves to stifle the DPRK” (“Statement”). Furthermore, these press releases contain remarks such as “criminal nature,” “crime against humanity,” “aggressive,” and “mean and perfidious” to describe US policy toward the DPRK (“KCNA refutes”). Other terms commonly used in these statements to highlight US hostility include “belligerent” (“KCNA hails”), “arrogant” (“Letter”), and “high-handed” (“KCNA accuses”). These kinds of remarks paint the DPRK as a victim of the United States, and in fact, one KCNA statement reads, “[. . .] it is the U.S. which has posed a threat to the DPRK” (“KCNA ridicules”), while another states, “Peace and stability have not settled on the Korean Peninsula but the situation there is getting tenser with each passing day. The U.S. is entirely to blame for this” (“U.S.”), and yet another remarks that “[. . .] the DPRK [is] the victim [. . .]” (“Statement”). These statements often coincide with remarks about the DPRK’s “legitimate self-defensive measure” of withdrawing from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and preparing its army in the face of such a “grave situation,” including the threat “of preemptive nuclear attack” by the United States (“Statement”). These kinds of statements seem aimed to unify the North Koreans together against what is portrayed as a dangerous threat and to simultaneously serve as a reminder to the international community and to the United States not to take the DPRK for granted.

What is noteworthy here is the direct form of address used in order to achieve these aims. Far from being limited to an “Asian indirectness,” these statements reveal the ability to use a direct style when the rhetorical situation calls for it.

Finally, we see statements concerning the ignorance of US policy toward the DPRK. The KCNA press releases repeatedly call the United States “ridiculous” and
“ignorant” (“KCNA flails”). Remarks such as “nonsensical” (“U.S. hit”), “groundless,” and “superficial assumption” (“KCNA ridicules”) used to describe US policy toward the DPRK help paint the United States as ignorant. Consider the following statements designed to show the perceived stupidity of the United States government:

The U.S. is insisting on its strange assertion that it can not respond to the DPRK-U.S. talks as they mean a sort of reward for the DPRK despite the unanimous world public opinion that DPRK-U.S. direct talks should take place to find a peaceful solution to the nuclear issue. This is an illogical far-fetched assertion. (“U.S. accused”)

All facts go to clearly prove how ridiculous and hypocritical the U.S. sophism that the peace in Korea is ensured on the strength of the Armistice Agreement is. (“Spokesman”)

Occasionally, statements combining the ignorance of the United States with its hostility are made, such as the following:

Bush has so far earned an ill-fame as an emotional back-biter, but his recent address clearly proves that he is a shameless charlatan reversing black and white under the eyes of the world and the incarnation of misanthropy as he rejects the people out of his favor for no reason. (“Bush”)
This is no more than a crafty attempt and sophism to equate an assailant
with a victim. (“KCNA calls”)

Overall, these statements serve the same purpose as the others, to unify the North Korean
populace against an ineffectual enemy and to show the right of the DPRK government to
do as it pleases. Again, by using the rhetorical strategy of being direct, clear, and to the
point, a strategy many theorists ascribe only to “Western” cultures, the North Korean
government seems to expose such a stereotype as being overly generalized.

What should be noted in all these statements is that there is no hedging on the part
of the North Korean government, no circularity of thought, no need to second-guess what
these wordings mean. Unlike Kaplan’s claim back in 1966, then, that Korean
communication is marked by indirection, here we see just the opposite. By pointing out
this discrepancy, I do not mean to imply that North Koreans are always direct in their
communicative strategies. Nor do I mean to imply that the way the North Korean
government uses language is necessarily representative of how everyday North Korean
people always use language. Nor do I wish to imply that the North Korean government’s
use of direct language in these particular cases is representative of the way all Asians
always use language. What I do wish to argue is that we can not make blanket statements
about the way a culture’s people communicate at all times, everywhere, under all
circumstances. In the press releases and statements I have analyzed, we can see that the
DPRK government uses the strategy of directness in its handling of this particular
rhetorical situation.
There is no reason to suggest that Koreans are never indirect. In fact, there is much previous research highlighting a tendency on the part of Koreans to use indirectness as a rhetorical strategy. I also have first-hand knowledge of this indirectness having lived in Korea myself. For example, one of my hostmothers never told me she wanted me to move out of her home, but over winter break the entire family moved away, taking all my belongings with them for me to retrieve when I returned from my vacation. Was this perhaps an extreme case of indirection? Rather than being direct with me, asking me to find a new place to live, was the topic completely avoided until a drastic action was taken to end the situation? Perhaps. Or what about when it was time for me to leave the country? My new hostmother insisted I leave without saying goodbye to my three-year-old hostsister. Why? Perhaps because such an indirect approach would avoid a scene, avoid me having to see the little girl cry at my departure, or her having to see me cry. However, as the press releases show, Koreans are also capable of being direct, making it safe to claim that Koreans make use of a variety of strategies in their communicative practices.

Analysis of US Press Releases

Similarly, Americans are capable of using a variety of strategies in their communicative practices depending upon the particular rhetorical situations in which they find themselves. Typically, as Kaplan remarks in his 1966 article and others have noted since, Americans are thought of as being direct in their communication. However, in this study I have found a pattern of not only directness but also indirectness used by politicians discussing the North Korean nuclear nonproliferation issue. Having analyzed
thirty-six press releases from the US State Department and the White House consisting of remarks, interviews, and speeches by Secretary of State Colin Powell and President George W. Bush between January 10, 2003, and April 22, 2003, I can say it seems clear that in this particular situation, the style of communication used is one that seems blunt, straightforward, and sure at some points and careful, guarded, or cautious at others. These politicians are practicing well-crafted international relations, choosing words to coincide with the goals they are trying to reach through their diplomacy, goals which seem to vacillate back and forth over time.

The most direct statements made by United States government officials during this period include those made immediately after North Korea announced its intention to lift its moratorium on its withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. For example, on January 10, 2003, Secretary Powell remarked, “[. . .] the United States condemns this action on the part of North Korea [. . .]” and “[. . .] North Korea has thumbed its nose at the international community,” as well as “[. . .] we hope the North Korean leadership will realize the folly of its actions [. . .]” (“Remarks With Director”). A few days later, on January 14, 2003, President Bush commented about North Korea, “[. . .] the decision they made was to ignore the international norm, ignore treaties that they had [. . .],” and he continued by stating of the United States, “[. . .] what this nation won’t do is be blackmailed” (“President”). Six days later, Secretary Powell stated, “North Korea has chosen to ignore the resolution from the IAEA and to dismiss it [. . .]” (“Remarks to the Press”). These direct statements leave no doubt that the United States
has a low opinion of North Korea’s actions or that the United States government is prepared to take a hard-line stance with the DPRK government.

Direct remarks of this type occurred again on January 28, 2003, with President George W. Bush’s annual State of the Union Address. In this speech Bush remarks:

On the Korean Peninsula, an oppressive regime rules a people living in fear and starvation. Throughout the 1990s, the United States relied on a negotiated framework to keep North Korea from gaining nuclear weapons. We now know that that regime was deceiving the world, and developing those weapons all along. And today the North Korean regime is using its nuclear program to incite fear and seek concessions. America and the world will not be blackmailed. (“President Delivers”)

These references to oppression, a North Korean regime, deception, and blackmail are repeated by both Secretary Powell and President Bush intermittently on February 19, 23, 24, and 27, and March 6 and 9, 2003. At the same time, in these press releases we can see direct comments that neither “[. . .] the United States nor any other nation in the region has any intention of invading or attacking the D.P.R.K.” (“Interview with Phoenix”). These sorts of comments, comments that paint the DPRK government as being willfully aggressive and negligent of its duties to its starving people while painting the United States government as responsible in its use of power in the face of such dismaying news, are clearly intended to put the North Korean leadership in its place while also unifying the United States populace in sympathy for the suffering North Korean people and in disgust with their leaders.
Intermingled with these direct statements, however, are a series of more indirect public comments, comments that are marked by vagueness. One such press release includes the following statements by Secretary Powell: “Yes, I think I said that there’s been some progress, but no breakthroughs. […] There are some things that are going on, no breakthroughs, I’ll say again. At the same time, I think it’s settled down a little bit” (“En route”). It is unclear here what Powell means by “progress,” “some things that are going on,” or “settled down.” In an interview two weeks later, Secretary Powell made another vague remark concerning the type of solution he expects to achieve in this situation, stating, “This time, it has to be something that is ironclad, something that removes the problem once and for all, and something that involves the other nations in the region” (“Interview on NBC’s”). Exactly what this “something” is that Powell has in mind remains vague and unclear, however.

Ill-defined terminology is also used in the press releases issued throughout this time period. For instance, Secretary Powell repeatedly uses phrases such as “diplomatic channels” and “diplomatic options” without ever clarifying what these phrases mean. On March 28, 2003, for example, Powell states, “We are pressing ahead seeking a variety of channels and using a variety of channels to see if we cannot begin such discussions,” and he continues, “We are spending a great deal of time pursuing this – these diplomatic alternatives” (“Remarks With Minister”). All of these indirect statements seem to be a form of hedging. By not being clear about what it means by diplomacy, the United States government cannot be held to a particular interpretation of its statements later. In fact, Powell once states, “I don’t want to make any predictions or promises that I’m not able to
keep at the moment” (“Remarks With Minister”). By being indirect, the United States government leaves itself room to wiggle out of what it may have said, or downplay the effect of what it has later said.

One particularly confusing reference can be traced throughout Secretary Powell’s remarks. In several press releases, Powell refers to a “genie in a bottle” to describe the DPRK’s nuclear activities. On January 16, 2003, he states, “[. . .] for eight years, the United States and the international community believed that, good, we have gotten the genie back in the bottle in North Korea. We had no idea that there was another bottle and another genie and the cork was out until earlier this year [. . .]” (“Interview With Journalists”). He makes similar remarks on January 21, February 21 and 23, and March 9, 2003. Using this ill-defined and vague metaphor to imply a sort of magical trickery on the part of the DPRK government is yet another way for Powell to avoid accusations later. Should his use of the term “genie in a bottle” come to be contested later, Powell can spin his words in whatever way he likes to lessen their impact. With indirect speech like this, Powell plays the diplomatic game, implying his dislike for the DPRK’s actions without stating his dislike outright.

Perhaps the best way to summarize the comments made by President George W. Bush and Secretary Colin Powell during this time period would be to call them double-sided. Frequently, single press releases issued throughout the dates in question contain mixed messages. President Bush, on February 7, 2003, utters a single sentence that epitomizes this sort of mixed message when he states, “All options are on the table, but I believe we can solve this diplomatically” (“President Bush”). This sort of statement, one
that at once threatens to use military means to solve this situation and at the same time
suggests a preference for avoiding these military means, is uttered by Secretary Powell
repeatedly in this period. He states on January 16, 2003, “[...] we are trying to solve this
one diplomatically. But, you know, a president—any political leader, any president or
prime minister has a full range of options available to him or to her: political, diplomatic,
economic, law enforcement, intelligence and military” (“Interview With Journalists”). In
another instance, Powell states, “[...] North Korea’s policies have dragged its people
into a dark, cold, hungry hell,” a clear condemnation of the DPRK government, only to
follow a few moments later with the comment, “The United States stands ready to build a
different kind of relationship with North Korea [...]” (“Remarks at the World”). It is
unclear which sentence is meant to carry more weight, the sentence condemning the
DPRK government, or the sentence indicating a willingness to work with it.

As shown by this brief review, in this particular rhetorical situation, Americans
seem to be relying on indirection as a rhetorical strategy. Does this finding imply that we
should replace the generalization that Americans tend to be direct with one that states
Americans tend to be indirect? Certainly not. Instead, what this brief review suggests is
that we should not be so quick to label entire cultural groups under the heading of one
particular rhetorical strategy. Instead, we should note that Americans, like those from
other cultures, make use of a wide variety of rhetorical strategies in their communication
practices. Certainly Americans are sometimes direct with their opinions, such as when
writing thesis statements for final drafts of academic essays, but Americans are also
sometimes indirect, such as when they are giving official, diplomatic speeches. It is a
disservice to intercultural understanding to “erase” such complexity from our analysis; rather, we should embrace the complexities that exist in our use of rhetorical strategies across the globe.

A Call for Change

Hopefully what this brief survey of press releases from both the DPRK and US governments reveals is that we cannot categorize an entire culture’s communication style under one label. In different situations both Americans and Koreans use a variety of rhetorical strategies in their communication. In intercultural encounters, then, it seems important to reserve judgment about each other’s rhetorical strategies until we have assessed each particular situation. Rather than operating out of preconceived notions about each other’s communication practices, notions that may be misguided, we could better negotiate mutual understandings by acknowledging the complex ways in which we all use rhetoric. In the next chapter I turn my attention to the role one rhetorical strategy, ethos, can play in enabling mutual understanding across cultural groups.
CHAPTER II:
THE ROLE OF ETHOS IN INTERCULTURAL RHETORIC

In this chapter I illustrate how a change in perception about ethos can contribute to improved intercultural relations. Interestingly, while there has been quite a bit of interest in ethos recently, and also interest in intercultural rhetoric, the two realms have not overlapped to date. I wish to investigate the possibilities held in such an intersection. To do so, I first trace how ethos is perceived in contemporary rhetoric and composition pedagogy by looking at textbook treatments of the concept. I show that students are taught a limited notion of ethos that emphasizes only assertiveness and self-assurance when it comes to academic writing. It is my argument that such a limited notion is insufficient for successfully navigating complicated intercultural rhetorical situations. To conclude the chapter, I present an alternative model of ethos that better prepares students for using rhetoric toward intercultural understanding.

Current Scholarship on Ethos

In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in ethos in rhetorical studies. From anthologies such as Enos and Miller’s Beyond Postprocess and Postmodernism: Essays on the Spaciousness of Rhetoric to Hyde’s The Ethos of Rhetoric, collections of authors are reinvestigating what it means to use ethos in rhetorical engagements with others. In journals ranging from the Quarterly Journal of Speech to College English we see titles such as Doxtader’s “Reconciliation—a Rhetorical Concept/ion” and Christoph’s “Reconceiving Ethos in Relation to the Personal,” hinting either obviously or not so obviously at articles taking into consideration the role of ethos in human communication.
Considerations of ethos range from the realm of technology, such as Enos and Borrowman’s “Authority and Credibility: Classical Rhetoric, the Internet, and the Teaching of Techno-Ethos,” to the realm of composition pedagogy, such as Whitfield, Pantoja, and Roen’s “The Challenges of Establishing a Feminist Ethos in the Composition Classroom: Stories from Large Research Universities,” to the realm of business, such as Costea, Crump, and Holm’s “Dionysus at Work? The Ethos of Play and the Ethos of Management.”

Along with this interest in ethos has come an interest in intercultural rhetoric. Linda Flower’s Problem Solving Strategies for Writing in College and Community investigates the ways American subcultures can learn from each other, in this case African-American inner-city youth and predominantly white middle-class college students, while Gray-Rosendale and Gruber’s anthology Alternative Rhetorics: Challenges to the Rhetorical Tradition investigates the need to account for types of rhetoric other than those included in the traditional canon. Others in intercultural rhetoric have been interested in defining and describing the rhetorics used by minority groups. Among these works are Willard-Traub’s “Rhetorics of Gender and Ethnicity in Scholarly Memoir: Notes on a Material Genre,” Richardson’s “‘To Protect and Serve’: African American Female Literacies,” and Mao’s “Rhetorical Borderlands: Chinese American Rhetoric in the Making.”

Textbook Treatments of Ethos

Such investigations into ethos and intercultural rhetoric, though, have not made their way into most contemporary textbooks. The five textbooks I will investigate are all
based on an Aristotelian notion of rhetoric. In *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines rhetoric as “[. . .] an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion” (36). In other words, he wishes his students to be able to identify what makes certain speeches persuasive and what makes others not so persuasive. In this way he hopes his students will be able to create persuasive speeches of their own. According to Aristotle, ethos is one strategy speechmakers can use to achieve persuasion. He explains that persuasion occurs “[. . .] through character whenever the speech is spoken in such a way as to make the speaker worthy of credence” (38). Certainly this makes sense; if my aim is to persuade an audience, seeming credible to that audience is essential. If I do not appear to know what I am talking about, after all, why should anyone believe my line of argument? If I do not have knowledge or experience or other authority upon which to base my assertions, my assertions are not likely to be very persuasive.

With persuasion as the primary aim of rhetoric, then, many writing, rhetoric, and composition texts aim to teach students to adopt a credible ethos in their own writing. The first textbook I wish to examine served as my own introduction to academic writing, Annette Rottenberg’s *Elements of Argument*. Basing her work on Toulmin’s model of argumentation, Rottenberg outlines how to make successful arguments using claims, support, and warrants in logically structured ways. As Rottenberg points out, though, such strategies are not enough to achieve persuasion because a key component to making successful arguments is the audience. She writes: “All arguments are composed with an audience in mind” (13), going on to explain that “[. . .] success in convincing an audience is almost always inseparable from the writer’s credibility, or the audience’s belief in the
writer’s trustworthiness” (14). The writer, in this conception of rhetoric, can make arguments that are structurally sound but still not achieve persuasion, because persuasion relies on the audience’s belief in the writer’s trustworthiness and knowledge.

Therefore, Rottenberg goes on to instruct the student writer in how to achieve a credible ethos. “First,” she writes, “you can submit evidence of careful research, demonstrating that you have been conscientious in finding the best authorities, giving credit, and attempting to arrive at the truth” (15). Here is the advice on how to appear knowledgeable to the reader. If a writer has researched carefully and presents evidence of that research through citations, the audience is more likely to be persuaded on the strength of the authoritative voices used to support the argument being made. “Second,” Rottenberg instructs, “you can adopt a thoughtful and judicious tone that reflects a desire to be fair in your conclusion” (15-16). By adopting such a judicious tone, the reader is more likely to be persuaded that the writer is trustworthy, Rottenberg claims, since such a writer is acknowledging that other perspectives exist, then going on to explain how his/her own perspective is the best. Such a writer is not, Rottenberg suggests, going to be perceived as being deceitful, because the writer portrays honesty by admitting to valid points in opposing arguments. Only the truly trustworthy would be able to be strong enough to acknowledge opposing arguments without fear of being overpowered by them.

In a similar way, David Jolliffe demonstrates the importance of credibility in his text *Inquiry and Genre*. In his chapter “Writing to Make a Difference: Changing Minds and Influencing Action,” Jolliffe explains: “The first step in writing to change people’s minds or actions is obvious. You need to decide [. . .] your persuasive goal and [. . .]
your audience” (139). Once these decisions have been made, the next steps include shaping the writing for the audience and appealing to their interests. Jolliffe explains that shaping writing for an audience involves addressing “[. . .] those ideas, attitudes, and beliefs that the audience holds that you, the writer or speaker, must bring up and capitalize on if you hope to influence the audience’s thinking or behavior in the way you want” (140-41). Another way of persuading the audience is to use the pathetic appeal. As Jolliffe explains: “One way to get your readers to think or act in a new, different way about your subject is to appeal to their interests and emotions and those of the people they care about as well. For thousands of years, teachers have referred to this type of ‘move’ in writing as an appeal to the audience’s pathos” (145). So here we have two ways for a writer to achieve a persuasive goal: understanding the audience’s attitudes and ideas about the topic at hand, and managing the audience’s emotions to suit the desired end.

Another necessary step for achieving persuasion, though, is, as Jolliffe calls it, “Appealing to yourself as a credible person [. . .]” (146). As he explains, “In addition to appealing to the feelings and interests of your audience, you can also influence their minds and actions by appealing to yourself as a credible person. Teachers call this an appeal to the writer’s ethos” (146). As in Rottenberg’s text, the purpose of ethos is to achieve persuasion, and Jolliffe proposes several strategies for achieving this end. The first he calls “[. . .] the ‘good sense’ strategy” (146). Here he directs: “You should do everything you can to show your readers that you have a solid, well-informed perspective on your subject matter [. . .]” (146). Such advice is reminiscent of Rottenberg’s advice to appear knowledgeable on the chosen topic. The second strategy Jolliffe proposes he calls
“[. . .] the ‘goodwill’ strategy” (147). Here he advises “You should do everything you can to suggest to your readers that you have their best interests in mind when you propose your persuasive goal, when you try to get them to think and act in a different way about your topic” (147). What should be clear here is that ethos, as it is portrayed to the student, becomes a tool for achieving persuasion. It is a strategy to employ to appear knowledgeable and sincere so as to achieve a predetermined effect on the audience.

Another text that promotes a similar notion of ethos is Michael Berndt and Amy Muse’s *Composing a Civic Life*. In their chapter “Arguing: Action as Inquiry,” Berndt and Muse explain, “[. . .] writing is not just self-expression; it is communication with the goal of affecting readers in real ways” (133). Here we see the same Aristotelian bent we have seen in the other textbooks; all would agree the primary aim of rhetoric is to influence an audience to suit the rhetor’s predetermined goals. As the other texts do, this one also introduces students to the three classical appeals, stating: “When we appeal to evidence, to reason, to our reputations as careful researchers or writers, and, to readers’ emotions, we already have some sense of how readers will probably respond. Knowing more about these arguing strategies can help us employ them more effectively and ethically” (133). In Berndt and Muse’s conception, there are two ways to develop a reputation as a careful researcher or writer. They explain: “The first way, called our *situated character*, refers to our reputation at a given time and within a given community. [. . .] The second way, called our *invented character*, refers to our *persona*, the image we project of ourselves by how we write” (144). As with the other discussions on ethos
examined thus far, Berndt and Muse focus on ways of projecting a persona that will achieve the writer’s intended outcome.

Yet another text that adopts this same viewpoint of ethos is Patsy Callaghan and Ann Dobyns’ *A Meeting of Minds.* In this text again we see rhetoric’s main purpose defined as “To get your reader to see your subject the way you do [. . .]” (6). Callaghan and Dobyns elaborate on this point, writing: “A person using this kind of rhetoric is not trying to trick another person into accepting an answer to the question but rather to convince the other person to consider the strength of a position” (9-10). In an academic setting, they explain, such an outcome is achieved through assignments that require students to “[. . .] study a problem, take a position, and give good reasons for your opinion” (12). The focus here is on communication that is aimed to persuade.

Like the other authors noted so far, Callaghan and Dobyns introduce students to a key strategy for convincing the reader of the soundness of the opinions expressed, ethos, by explaining: “*Ethos,* or the ethical appeal, relies on the character of the speaker and appeals to readers’ value systems. Writers are using ethical appeals when they show good sense or practical wisdom, when they are knowledgeable about the subject matter, when they demonstrate their value system, and when they exhibit good will toward their readers” (127). Again, students are taught in the Aristotelian manner that ethos is a tool for achieving a predetermined aim. As Callaghan and Dobyns put it: “To appeal ethically: Identify for readers the beliefs and values they (should) share with you, the writer, and then show how your argument is connected to those values and beliefs. [. . .]
Argue that your position is the ‘right’ one” (128). An effective use of ethos, then, contributes to giving “[. . .] the reader reasons to accept the writer’s argument” (128).

The final textbook I wish to examine is *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* by Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee. Like Berndt and Muse, Crowley and Hawhee focus on invented ethos in their discussion of ways to achieve persuasion. As they explain, “A rhetor who uses invented *ethos* [. . .] constructs a character for herself within her discourse” (169). As they go on to write, “[. . .] people tend to believe rhetors who either have a reputation for fair-mindedness or who create an *ethos* that makes them seem fair minded” (170), so learning how to construct such an ethos is an important task for students. Crowley and Hawhee’s instructions in this matter include the need to demonstrate intelligence, seem to be of good moral character, and have the audiences’ best interests in mind. To achieve these goals, Crowley and Hawhee state:

Rhetors can construct a character that seems intelligent by demonstrating that they are well informed about issues they discuss. They project an appearance of good moral character by describing themselves or others as moral persons and by refraining from the use of misleading or fallacious arguments. Rhetors project good will toward an audience by presenting the information and arguments that audiences require in order to understand the rhetorical situation. (170-71)

They conclude their section on ethos by asserting that by following their directions, “[. . .] rhetors can create character within a discourse and that such self-characterizations are
persuasive” (181). As with all the other texts analyzed, the role of ethos in communication is to help achieve persuasion.

**A Questioning and Open Ethos**

The foregoing characterizations of ethos contrast with my own notion of the role ethos can play in intercultural communication. All five textbooks focus on the portrayal of a knowledgeable, credible, authoritative ethos in order to achieve the writer’s predetermined goal of persuading the audience. In my own conception of successful intercultural rhetoric, however, ethos plays a much different role. In the type of intercultural communication I envision, the main goal is not persuasion; rather, the main goal is mutual understanding. As such, an ethos that is authoritative or assertive could actually be detrimental. If I approach someone from another culture with an attitude that is authoritative or arrogant, how can I expect to achieve mutual understanding with that person? Simply put, I can’t. Instead, I need to approach that person with sensitivity, patience, and a desire to learn. Only by adopting an ethos that is questioning and open to new possibilities can mutual understanding be the outcome of intercultural interaction.

To explain my thinking, I would like to elaborate on the story of my final homestay situation during my year’s stay in Korea. I lived with a couple in their 30s who had a three-year-old daughter named “Yaesul”. The woman in the couple was a fellow English teacher at the middle school where I was teaching, and the man was a worker at Hyundai Heavy Industries, a large employer in “Ulsan”, the city where we lived. They made space for me in their home, moving their daughter's bed out of her room and into theirs so I could have a space to call my own in their two-bedroom
apartment. My second homestay family had housed me through the cold winter months in a spare, unheated room in the attic of their spacious penthouse suite, so I appreciated my third homestay family's generosity, modest as it may seem.

My level of fluency in Korean was about equal to the three-year-old girl's in this household, if not a bit below, so she was the only person I could have an “equal” conversation with in Korean. Due to the hierarchical nature of Korean society, though, this girl needed to treat me with the deferential respect she would use to treat any elder, even though my language skills probably marked me as being something of an imbecile. As a result of this curious situation, little Yaesul called me 개런 어모 (“Karen Imo”), a phrase that translates to mean “Karen, Aunt on my Mother's Side.” Being called “Karen Imo” by Yaesul was a mark of my role in the social order of this small family, a mark the young girl took upon herself to give me. She could have chosen to ignore me, she could have called me 미국 사람 (“Miguk Saram,” American Person), she could have called me 외국 사람 (“Waeguk Saram,” Foreign Person), or she even could have chosen to call me 개런 선생님 (“Karen Sonsaengnim,” Teacher Karen, a stock naming phrase used when speaking to someone of a higher status); however, she chose to call me “Karen Imo,” marking my inclusion into her vision of her family. At the same time, she used a tone of voice and rate of speaking with me that she would use to talk down to perhaps a two- or one-year-old. If I told her to turn off the TV, she would obey me, for, after all, I was “Karen Imo,” but if she wanted me to sit next to her, she would say 여기 앉으 (“sit here”) using an absence of word markers as when speaking with equals or lessers on the social ladder.
Overall, this little girl and her parents treated me almost as a member of their family, and I found my relationship with Yaesul to be the most touching aspect of my year's stay in Korea. Her parents did not expect me to tutor her in English, did not expect me to drill her in textbook English phrases, and did not expect me to make her fluent in English in a matter of weeks by spending one hour a day with her, unlike the parents in my previous two homestays. Instead, her parents wanted her, and themselves, to have the chance to meet, interact with, and coexist with a person from another culture. Likewise, I wanted the chance to meet, interact with, and coexist with people from another culture. By having such attitudes, this homestay family and I were able to forge a relationship that led to intercultural understanding. We learned from each other only because we did not assume the assertive ethos so often taught by composition textbooks. We did not try to persuade each other into believing predetermined viewpoints. Instead, we interacted with each other with open minds, exploring another’s way of life and striving to understand each other. These were some of the primary reasons I was in Korea in the first place, and these close relationships that developed helped make some of the more difficult times easier to bear.

**When Communication Fails**

Let me be clear—during my year in Korea, all evidence of my being different was not erased. In addition to two previous uncomfortable homestay situations as well as tales of crying toddlers, confused whispering, and curious stares, I remember one day in particular when I was visiting the nearby city of 부산 (“Pusan”). I had gone with another Caucasian American friend staying with me for the weekend from her homestay city of
We were standing outside a department store, waiting for a bus I think, or maybe we were just resting, when, as was a frequent occurrence, a Korean person walked up to us and wanted to talk. Usually the people who approached us wanted to practice their English; it wasn't often, after all, that native speakers of English were available to the average person wanting to try speaking the language all students are required to learn from the sixth grade on. Often we got a shy “hello” followed by a “how old are you?” or a “where are you from?” These were the stock phrases that had been learned by drill from the school textbooks year after year, and they were the same phrases my friends and I were teaching our students in the various public schools around the country where we were teaching. But today we did not get a shy “hello” followed by a “how old are you?” or a “where are you from?” Instead we ended up being shocked and frightened.

A middle-aged looking man approached us that day on the sidewalk in Pusan and started talking. He asked us in Korean if we were Americans, and we answered in Korean that we were. I remember that it was a hot day, and my friend and I had been walking quite a bit that day, so we were sticky and tired. We wanted to sit and rest, I think, and we were probably a bit headachy and grumpy, too. Nonetheless, at all times in this foreign land we tried to be friendly, good ambassadors of America, so we tried to be engaging in this conversation as in so many others. But suddenly, things went wrong. As we talked to this man, his speech became faster, far faster than our elementary levels of Korean would allow us to comprehend, and he started speaking louder and louder as he gesticulated with his arms. At one point, as Kristen and I tried to walk away from this
visibly angry man, and as a small crowd of Koreans watched the scene warily, he rushed up behind us, pushing Kristen, giving her a shove in the back that sent her stumbling ahead of me. I reached out to her, checking to make sure she was not hurt, dumbfounded at what had just happened. I turned to glare at the man who was by now receding away from us, and at all those bystanders, all those who would let a middle-aged, relatively strong man shove around two young women who were physically smaller than him. How could this happen, I wondered. What had gone wrong?

It seems the culprit in this case of intercultural misunderstanding was the same as the champion of the more pleasant intercultural understanding that occurred in my homestay with Yaesul's family, for ethos can explain both situations. In my stay with Yaesul's family, the communication was motivated by the aim of learning from each other, while in the situation on the Pusan sidewalk, the communication (or lack thereof) was motivated by the aim of confrontation. In the first instance, the ethos projected by the communicators was that of inquiry, quest, and curiosity, while in the other instance, the ethos projected was that of certitude, steadfastness, and hostility.

**Developing an Inquiring Ethos**

What accounts for such difference? How can we foster the development of an inquiring, questing, curious ethos? How can we use such an ethos to communicate successfully across cultures? These are the questions I am exploring in this chapter. I hope to illustrate the links I see between developing an open ethos, the teaching of academic writing, and achieving successful intercultural communication. To do so I draw on several theorists, first turning to Jim Corder, who establishes the importance of
an open ethos for communication and who points out that much academic writing insists on a closed ethos. I next turn to Richard E. Young, who provides a case study illustrating the prevalence of adopting a closed ethos prematurely in academic writing and who calls for changes in current writing pedagogy. I then turn to Thomas Sloane's work with Ciceronian invention as a means to making changes in our writing pedagogy that can allow for developing a more open ethos and in turn more successful intercultural communication.

Starting with Jim Corder, then, we can see how important an open, inviting, sincere ethos is to successful communication, as opposed to one that is assertive, argumentative, and closed. In “Academic Jargon and Soul-Searching Drivel,” Corder writes: “To demand that others accept our particular experience is arrogance and dogma. To offer our experience to another may be the only plenitude we have” (317). Clearly, on that street in Pusan, the man who confronted me and my friend demanded that we notice him, and his physical aggression made him appear arrogant and dogmatic. We had no chance to offer him our experiences, no chance to share our viewpoints. Our conversation, if we can even call it that, was over before it had a chance to begin. I'm not sure if my friend and I were not appropriately deferential and therefore seemed insulting to that man, or if he had made up his mind to yell at us as soon as he saw our non-Asian complexions, but in either case, we were not able to enter into a dialogue with him in an open, inviting, sincere way. The ethos he projected to us was certain, steadfast, and hostile, and perhaps we seemed the same to him. As a result, no dialogue could occur.
Corder explains how, in the writing classroom, we teach students to assume an ethos of authority similar to that Korean man's, and the foregoing survey of textbooks seems to back up his claim. We teach students how to be steadfast, sure, and clear. We teach students to write with assertion, make claims with confidence, and construct an indestructible argument. Corder worries about how such teaching encourages disconnections between people, writing, “A perpetual sorrow in human communication, I think, is that often we only announce ourselves to each other, declare ourselves to each other, write as authorities before and at each other, but don't give each other much time” (317). The man on that Pusan street certainly didn't take time to hear what Kristen and I might have thought. He bowled us over, literally and figuratively, with his pronouncements, his personal perspectives, his authoritativeness. He announced himself to us, declared himself to us, showed his authority to us, and in a similar way, we teach our students to adopt this type of persona in their academic writing. Doing so, it seems to me, closes off the possibility of intercultural communication before it has the chance to begin.

Wanting to move beyond such woes, Corder proposes the integration of personal writing into the academic sphere, allowing space for the writer to project a more accommodating ethos. By doing so, Corder suggests, “Perhaps instead of confronting each other with truths already found, we can learn to accompany each other toward what we'll find” (319). Instead of proving points and making cases, what could happen if we shared our thoughts with one another? What could happen if, instead of winning arguments, we focused on asking questions? What could have happened if that
interaction on the Pusan sidewalk hadn't been so confrontational? What kind of journey could the three of us have accompanied each other on through our dialogue? Where might we have ended up? Just as we will never know what could have been in this intercultural situation, we will never know what other types of possibilities could occur through academic writing if we continue to teach only agonistic writing to our students in the composition classroom. By teaching students how to construct arguments that project a closed, confident ethos, we in turn close them to possibilities that could result from maintaining openness in their writing.

Richard E. Young, in a chapter titled “Toward an Adequate Pedagogy for Rhetorical Argumentation: A Case Study in Invention,” investigates this dilemma and makes points similar to Corder's. Using his own experience of teaching an “upper-level course in argumentation at Carnegie Mellon University,” Young examines the difficulties he had in teaching students to “develop a considered judgment on an issue” (159). As he explains, he began the course by introducing his students to formal logic and argumentation, asking them to write persuasive essays articulating their positions on euthanasia. Later in the course, Young made use of videodisk technology to show his students a scenario that, he hoped, would open them up to reconsidering the formal arguments they had learned to construct earlier in the course (160-61). To his dismay, he found by the end of the course that he had not managed to teach his students the kind of openness he had wanted to teach. As Young puts it:

[T]he students had simply become more expert at arguing their initial positions. Apparently, I had taught them to be more articulate about their
positions, to explain them better, to perhaps be more persuasive about them, and to be more effective in their criticisms of other positions. I see now that they had learned quite well what I had actually taught, which was not without value; however, it wasn't what I was trying to teach, what I thought I was teaching. That is, I had not taught them to be more critical of their own positions and more sensitive to the complexities of the controversy. (161)

What Young is noticing is the same thing that Corder has noticed and that my brief textbook survey helps substantiate, that is, the emphasis in our classrooms on agonistic writing at the expense of exploratory writing. Young's students became quite skilled, more skilled than he had perhaps hoped, at the argumentative writing that is so valorized in the academy. But, like Corder, Young had hoped for more. What Young had hoped for was an investigation of the self. Young wanted his students to rethink their conceptions and be open to change. Just as Corder wants space in the academic for the personal, so too does Young. Young and Corder both want academic writing to be more open to inquiry, more open to questioning, more open to curiosity, more open to those things that made my final homestay experience in Korea a positive one.

While Young does not investigate what implications his disappointing course might have beyond the sphere of the writing classroom, he does make points that seem applicable to the realm of intercultural communication. For instance, he posits, “Certitude tends to induce a predisposition to look no further, confirming the mind in its habitual grooves and encouraging it to ignore whatever might threaten to dislodge it.
Certitude, then, subverts dialogue as discussion and encourages debate” (165). On that hot, sticky day in Pusan, it seems possible that the Korean man who confronted Kristen and me was certain of his existence in a monoracial society. His mind was quite possibly settled in its habitual groove of seeing nothing but Korean faces day after day. As he saw me and my friend outside the department store, perhaps our physical presence was impossible to ignore, so he tried to shove us out of his way, out of his line of sight, so his mind's habitual grooves would not have to be dislodged by our imposition into his space. His certitude about the way things ought to be, then, was quite possibly what subverted the possibility of any dialogue between us and resulted in a contentious situation.

How do we avoid this type of contention? In addressing this question, Young makes two claims. The first of these is:

[W]e need an art of rhetoric that encourages inquiry and discussion; the present art, the one I relied on in the course, while valuable for many purposes, does not do this well. It emphasizes abstract principle, the self-evident, and the axiomatic in contrast to the particular, the practical, and the probabilistic [ . . .]. It tends to devalue shared experience, communal belief, the situational and contingent, and the prudential. The dominant rhetorical tradition and our textbooks on argumentation, which are informed by this tradition, have been and still are essentially eristic. (166)

In order to communicate interculturally, don't we need to value just what our present art of rhetoric tends to devalue? Don't we need to value “shared experience, communal belief, the situational and contingent, and the prudential” in order to understand people
from other cultures and make ourselves understood to them as well? Don't we need to take note of “the particular, the practical, and the probabilistic” when dealing with the multitude of confusing factors that come into play when we try to communicate interculturally? Similar to Corder, Young, without naming it as such, points out the need for a more open ethos in the rhetoric we teach our students and use in our daily lives. Such openness can lead to less disagreement and less hostility, and it is time for us to develop a rhetoric that encourages an open ethos for use in intercultural communication.

Young's second closing point elaborates on his first. He writes:

[B]ecause certitude tends to transform discussion into debate, I think we need to build into rhetorical invention what for want of a better term might be called a problemology. We need to find ways of moving students beyond easy notions and into [. . .] a state of mind where questioning rather than asserting and bolstering assertion characterizes thinking. (166)

Again, while Young's analysis focuses only on the writing classroom, it seems that if we move into the realm of questioning and away from the realm of assertion as we communicate interculturally, we can tend to have more interactions of the sort I had with Yaesul than of the sort I had on that Pusan sidewalk. If we can move into a state of mind where assertion is not our primary aim, where our goal is not to prove ourselves right and the other wrong, the inquiring, questioning, curious ethos that will result should help us reduce hostility and enable us to carry out intercultural dialogues rather than shoving matches. Again, while Young doesn't name it as such, what he seems to be talking about is the need for what Corder calls an open ethos.
For insights into how to make developing an open ethos a reality, I turn to Thomas O. Sloane's discussion of Ciceronian invention. According to Sloane, Cicero's later-life conception of invention “[...] is dialogic and it must be pursued pro and con, prosecution and defense, affirmation and negation. One must, that is, debate both sides—or, for that matter, all sides—of any case or one's own inventio will remain not fully invented” (462). In other words, we must openmindedly investigate as many aspects of each situation as possible in order to come close to fully understanding them. Yaesul, my Korean homestay sister, had to make sense of my conflicting roles in her life in order to make sense of me. She had to understand that I was at once an elder to her, an inferior intellectually (at least as reflected in my use of her native language), and a close colleague of her mother's. Had she rushed to judgment on any one of these points, she would not have been able to incorporate me into her life as she did. She would have pigeonholed me into a less-than-completely-satisfactory category instead. Rather than doing this, she took note of my complex relationship to her and constructed an appropriate, unique way of interacting with me.

As Sloane remarks, not choosing sides too early in a debate is key to developing a rich understanding of complex situations. Instead of choosing sides immediately, students should learn to see all sides involved. Sloane writes, “This continual practice of debating one side and then the other [...] is a key to Ciceronian inventio [...],” “[...] for it helps students form new resolutions and reexamine the ones they already hold” (466, 467). Unlike Young's students, who refuted opposing arguments in order to bolster their own, as Sloane envisions Ciceronian invention, each student must stand in the place of
others. In this way they come to know the multiple sides of any issue and can use this knowledge to reach new conclusions. Unlike Young, who started his course by using the common pedagogy of the composition classroom that calls for students to make judgments, choose sides, and construct arguments, Ciceronian invention calls for students to hold off on making judgments, hold off on choosing sides, hold off on constructing arguments until their investigation of the complexities involved is complete. Just as the students Sloane is interested in, and just as Young wished his students would, Yaesul was able to form a new opinion about me based on her knowledge of my varied facets. It is interesting to note that a three-year-old could do this while the eighteen- to twenty-one-year-olds Young was teaching could not. This quite likely illustrates the effect years of learning assertion, argumentation, and certitude has on students. We have taught them to be closed, taught them to adopt the ethos of closure, and they have lost just the openness to examining viewpoints, of others and one's own, which is so vital in successful intercultural communication. It seems Corder's vision of an open ethos had not yet been educated out of Yaesul; instead, she was by instinct employing the techniques Sloane would like to see integrated into the writing classroom.

Sloane's call for Ciceronian invention, therefore, can be an effective tool for facilitating successful intercultural communication, even when used by a three-year-old. Yaesul investigated her own opinions of me from many angles to reach an understanding that could be close to complete. When using Ciceronian invention to investigate not only one's own viewpoints but also the viewpoints of others, according to Sloane, “[. . .] the student's rhetorical task is always to put the matter into debate, voicing the multiplicity of
issues until the stasis, the point of crucial difference, is reached, the point beyond which
discussion cannot proceed until agreement between people is attempted” (467). It is this
reaching for agreement between people that is key. When we are already closed to what
others might offer before they utter their opinion, which is what happened to my friend
and me in Pusan, our chances of reaching agreement are diminished. Remaining open to
the variety of opinions voiced by multiple people, listening for the places where they
clash, then moving beyond that clash, is what allows for intercultural communication and
is what allows for understanding. As Sloane explains, “Pro and con reasoning is
humanizing” (471). It allows us to see the opposing side not just as something against
which to argue, but as a positioned statement from a human being with reasons,
emotions, and values. By conceptualizing a position as coming from a human being, by
conceptualizing a position as coming from a person who thinks, feels, and is authentic, I
can show that person, through an open ethos, that I want to communicate across cultural
divides.

**Overcoming “The Argument Culture”**

In *The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue*, Deborah Tannen
makes the claim that in the United States today we are living in “[. . .] a pervasive warlike
atmosphere that makes us approach public dialogue, and just about anything we need to
accomplish, as if it were a fight” (3). She continues by explaining that this tendency “[. . .]
has served us well in many ways but in recent years has become so exaggerated that it
is getting in the way of solving our problems. Our spirits are corroded by living in an
atmosphere of unrelenting contention—an argument culture” (3). Much like Sloane,
Tannen would like to see a change to our educational system. As Tannen points out, in contemporary classrooms we teach students that the most important skill they can gain is to express their opinions in a convincing manner. We neglect to teach them how to listen to divergent opinions and wrangle meaningfully with those opinions. Instead, we teach students to be assertive in their single-minded opinions on matters. We teach students to write in order to convince an audience to agree with them, rather than teach them to reach mutual understanding with others. Perhaps a change in our educational practices could bring positive change for intercultural understanding.

Nothing is ever complete, of course. No mode of behavior can be foolproof. Although I tried to approach the Koreans with whom I interacted during my year in their country with respect, care, and concern, I still had my difficulties. I still wondered why, when I watched *Schindler's List* in a Korean movie theater, I cried at the scene of two boys hiding in the pit of an outhouse from their Nazi tormentors while the Koreans in the audience surrounding me laughed. Was laughter just a way of showing discomfort? Possibly, although I am not sure. I wondered why, when I was traveling from Ulsan in the southeast to ⓥ אירועים ("Iri"), a small town on the opposite side of the peninsula, and I was lost in some third city in the middle of the country, a young woman helped me find my way from the bus station to the train station to catch the last train out to my destination. I wondered why even more when I got to Iri to find the stationmaster waiting to greet me with a note from my colleagues that contained directions to the small inn where I was to meet them. Why do we take care of each other sometimes, and why do jar up against each other at others? Why do we put in the extra effort sometimes, willing to care for
foreigners as if they were our own family, and why do we give up at others, feeling like our cultural differences are completely insurmountable? Why are we allowed to mingle freely in another culture sometimes, and why are we ostracized by the people in that culture at others? Perhaps ethos is part of the answer to all of these questions.

I like the idea that I am not alone in my search for answers to these questions. I am glad to read chapters such as Richard E. Young's in an entire book devoted to Jim Corder's notion of openness. All the authors included in *Beyond Postprocess and Postmodernism: Essays on the Spaciousness of Rhetoric*, in fact, reinvestigate the important work done by the New Rhetoricians of the 1970s, especially Jim Corder, opening the modern scholar to the possibilities suggested by their work. Linda Flower, while not one of the authors in this anthology, integrates some of the ideas I am investigating in her own work with service learning in Pittsburgh. Investigating the collaboration between students at Carnegie Mellon University and inner-city teens, she uses the term “intercultural inquiry” for the type of writing produced through this collaborative activity. In an article from *College English*, Flower writes, “The practice I explore here under the name of intercultural inquiry is a literate action defined by the open-eyed, against-the-odds, self-conscious attempt to engage in collaborative acts of meaning making that are mutually transformative” (186). While she is investigating communication across cultures that exist within the United States, even within one city, and I am interested in communication that exists across cultures separated by oceans, we agree in our sense of how important openness and collaboration is in allowing intercultural communication to happen. We agree that for communication to occur
interculturally, all parties involved must be open to change. I trace my own path to this understanding to Jim Corder's work; Linda Flower may not, but nonetheless, our thoughts seem similar.

Having taken part in Flower's service-learning based course, I can attest that her model, like mine, is not foolproof. There are times when, no matter how hard people try, they fail to communicate, and these difficulties are fraught with heightened tension when culture is at stake. It is easy for inner-city youth to resent what seems like an attempt on the part of their university compatriots to erase their dialect. It is easy for university students to feel torn between helping teens find a way of expressing themselves to the broader public and helping them master the rules of standard English they themselves have been taught to master. It is easy for a Korean man to feel angry with two young women who seem to be representatives of what he sees as the imperialistic United States government. It is easy for a young American woman to feel isolated and ostracized in the industrial city of Ulsan. All the same, though, hope is held in the attempt to overcome such tensions. In this chapter I have shown that reshaping the way we discuss ethos in writing classes is one way to approach overcoming intercultural tension. In the next chapter I analyze the works of Kenneth Burke, finding further strategies for fostering understanding in intercultural rhetoric.
CHAPTER III:

BURKEAN STRATEGIES FOR INTERCULTURAL RHETORIC

As I have shown in the previous chapters, education in America emphasizes that the world is made of distinct people divided by geographic boundaries. We are taught that each culture has its own ideas, its own practices, its own morals, its own language, and its own identity. How, then, can we possibly communicate with one another across our cultural divides? In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke explains the typical approach to this seeming impossibility, writing, “At the stage of blunt antithesis, each class would deny, suppress, exorcise the elements it shares with other classes. This attempt leads to the scapegoat (the use of dyslogistic terms for one’s own traits as manifested in an ‘alien’ class)” (141-42). Here Burke uses class distinction to explain the divisions that exist between people. The argument Burke makes is that class-based divisions between people often lead to an us-them mentality and the practice of scapegoating. By widening the scope of investigation, however, we can see parallels between Burke’s comments on class and the divisions between people of different nations. Just as we view members of different classes as others, we view members of different nationalities as others as well. However, Burke is not content to let humanity rest in a state of incomprehensibility and alienation. He provides possible means of communication across differences with his notions of “Margin of Overlap,” “Identification,” and “Dialectic.” After explicating what Burke means by these terms, I aim to show that by aiming for an enactment of them through changes to our educational practices, we can come closer to reaching intercultural understanding.
Margin of Overlap: Envisioning Intercultural Similarity and Difference

As the foregoing figure illustrates, the term “margin of overlap” is a means for describing how two things can have both commonality and uniqueness. Both circles that make up the diagram are complete circles on their own; neither needs the other to be whole. Therefore, we could consider them separately, each circle possessing its own identity. However, in the way that they are drawn, the circles coexist. They are not completely isolated, existing only for the sake of their perfect, individual circularity. Instead they share a space in common, and this space is their margin of overlap, which has been shaded to make it more evident. Even while the circles overlap, we have several options when it comes to ways of looking at them. We can focus our eyes on each circle individually, we can focus only on the area of overlap, or we can see both the area of overlap and the individual circles at the same time. These options in ways of looking at the circles are where potential conflicts exist, for while one person may view the circles separately, another may view only the overlapping area, and a third may be keeping both the overlap and the separate circles in mind. Agreeing on which is the best way to look at the image is not easy, but Burke encourages us to see it in its entirety, noticing both the shaded and unshaded areas at once so that we can appreciate its complexity.

Moving from the realm of geometry to the realm of people, then, we can use this image as a metaphor to describe the coexistence of people. One way in which this
metaphorical extension can work is to think of people who live in different time periods. We might think of them as completely isolated from each other with completely unique cares, concerns, and exigencies. However, we can also recognize that all people share commonalities regardless of the time in which they exist. Burke writes:

Situations do overlap, if only because men now have the same neural and muscular structure as men who have left their records from past ages. We and they are in much the same biological situation. Furthermore, even the concrete details of social texture have a great measure of overlap. And the nature of the human mind itself, with the function of abstraction rooted in the nature of language, also provides us with “levels of generalization” [. . .] by which situations greatly different in their particularities may be felt to belong in the same class (to have a common substance or essence). (The Philosophy 2)

While acknowledging the similarities that exist between people, Burke would not want to claim that people are completely alike. This is because, to refer to the figure above, thinking of people as completely alike would be to focus solely on the shaded portion of the two overlapping circles. While Burke would not have us go this far, he would have us recognize that this shaded area exists rather than focusing solely on the unshaded portions of the circles. Burke shows us that we have in common these margins of overlap with other people and that we should attempt to keep them in mind at the same time that we keep in mind our distinctness.
Not only can the concept of “margin of overlap” be used to explain people’s existence across time, it can also be used to conceptualize communication between people living in the same time. Often we think that because differences exist between people, understanding between them is difficult if not completely impossible. For example, if we think of the situation between North Korea and the United States, it might be easy to think that the two nations will never reach agreement. What commonly comes to mind are our different systems of government, our supposedly divergent rhetorical strategies, our different cultural practices, our different religious beliefs, our different languages, and so on. Such thoughts result from only focusing on the unshaded aspects of our lives, the aspects of our lives that are unique to each nation, cultural group, or person. However, a shift in focus to the shaded area, the margin of overlap between people’s experiences, can affect the way we think about communication. Burke explains, “[. . .] while it is dialectically true that two people of totally different experiences must totally fail to communicate, it is also true that there are no two such people, the ‘margin of overlap’ always being considerable (due, if to nothing else, to the fact that man’s biologic functions are uniform)” (Counter-Statement 78). As Burke notes, there are no two totally different people, totally different cultural groups, or totally different nations. Too often we assume that because we have differences from others, we are completely different from them. As Burke points out, though, this is not the case, for there are always margins of overlap between us.

Let’s take for an example the role of directness and indirectness in Korean and American rhetorical practices. As illustrated in chapter one, at times Koreans tend to be
more indirect in their rhetorical practices and Americans more direct. For instance, if, when sharing a meal, an American is offered food not to his/her liking, he/she is likely to refuse directly by stating “No thanks,” while a Korean would be more likely to make indirect excuses for refusing the food, such as being on a diet, only to pile his/her plate high with other foods on the table. It would be easy to extrapolate from such instances to the conclusion that Americans and Koreans are completely different in their communicative practices, but this is not always the case. Instead, both Koreans and Americans are sometimes direct and at other times indirect. As the analysis of press releases in chapter one shows, Americans are not always direct but sometimes prefer an indirect approach, and Koreans are not always indirect but sometimes prefer a direct approach. Focusing on such overlaps can help foster understanding between cultural groups. Rather than focusing solely on the differing communicative practices across cultures, we can focus on the similar communicative practices different cultures share and aim to understand each other from the basis of these overlaps. We must not go so far as to ignore the unshaded areas of our lives. We are distinct from each other even while we are similar, and any communicative situation must keep both realities in mind. Acknowledging the complexity of the situation in this way allows for inevitable imperfections while aiming us toward greater understanding.

Identification: “Both Joined and Separate” in the Act of Communication

In explaining what he means by the term “Identification,” Burke describes a situation in which two people have both similarities and differences. He writes: “Here are ambiguities of substance. In being identified with B, A is ‘substantially one’ with a
person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another” (A Rhetoric 21). Identification with another person, therefore, involves being at once unique from and consubstantial with that person. In other words, in order for one person to identify with another, an acknowledgment of both the similarities and differences between them is necessary. The notion is closely related to the idea of margin of overlap discussed above. Just as the two interlocking circles can be seen as completely distinct from each other, so can people be seen as completely uniquely motivated. At the same time, the circles could be seen as consubstantial, for in their interlockingness, they form a new shape. Similarly, people can be seen as consubstantial with other people when we focus on their common humanity, for the existence of humanity is reliant upon the existence of many people together. However, to identify with one another, we focus on the margin of overlap between us. When we focus our attention on the shaded area, the overlap, that is when we are truly identifying, for we are acknowledging our uniqueness at the same time that we are acknowledging our similarity.

When we move away from identification, acknowledgment of both similarity and difference, and instead focus only on what seem to be absolute differences, we are led to alienation. This alienation results because focusing solely on difference leaves little option but to adopt an us-against-them mentality and the agonistic attempt to prove the other side wrong. Taking such a stance focuses on the unshaded portions of the margin of overlap diagram. Each cultural group identifies itself as distinct from others, leading
to an ability to see only difference. We notice that we speak different languages, wear different styles of clothing, eat different foods, hold different political viewpoints, practice different religions, and other outward signs of difference, and we take this litany of difference to mean that we are fundamentally unique from each other. With such a focus on difference comes tension, because the divisions we perceive between ourselves grow to such a point as to appear insurmountable. What results are tensions such as those that exist between the United States and North Korea, Iraq, Osama bin Laden, al-Qaida, and countless other sites of conflict. Out of such a lack of identification come statements such as ones issued by President George W. Bush in his 2002 State of the Union address. Statements in this speech classify countries and groups involved in a range of activities deemed unacceptable to the United States as belonging to “an axis of evil” (“President Delivers”) that is united together as the enemy of America. Bush states: “Our enemies believed America was weak and materialistic, that we would splinter in fear and selfishness. They were as wrong as they are evil” (“President Delivers”). Bush also states, “Our cause is just […]” (“President Delivers”), further emphasizing the division between America, portrayed as being correct and righteous, and other countries and groups, portrayed as wrong and evil. Such divisions are only possible when identification is not at work, for the act of identification would allow us to see that we are never truly complete opposites of others. Instead, when we choose not to identify with others and we focus on difference, alienation and even violence results.

At the same time that focusing solely on difference is problematic, a focus on nothing but similarities is also problematic in that it erases the complexities that truly
exist between both individuals and cultures. We cannot deny that the governments of the United States, North Korea, and Iraq all have distinct differences, for example. We should not go so far as to overlook that American democracy, North Korean communism, and the once Iraqi dictatorship constitute three distinct forms of government with distinct ideals and goals. We should not naively assume that these differences are slight or can be easily surmounted when dealing with diplomatic issues. Similarly, we also cannot deny that the United States government and Osama bin Laden do not see eye to eye on the issues that caused the violent acts of September 11, 2001. Ignoring these differences of opinion allows them to fester under the surface of any compromise, only to explode again later. However, we do need to recognize that we share similarities across these differences. Most people, whether North Korean, Iraqi, American, or a member of al-Qaida, share concerns such as providing food, clothing, and shelter for themselves and their families, share emotions such as joy, sorrow, fear, and contentment, share intellectual desires such as understanding the unknown and solving problems, and the list continues. Recognizing these similarities while at the same time acknowledging our differences is the means Burke provides to avoiding the alienation and violence involved in focusing only on difference. Identification is the path Burke proposes that allows us to be at once similar and different, to recognize our uniqueness yet embrace our common humanity at the same time.

We must first recognize our similarities and differences through the process of identification in order to reach agreement in our communications across cultures. Only
after the identification process is complete can we move to communicating. Burke writes:

Identification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly one substance, absolute communication would be of man’s very essence. It would not be an ideal, as it is now, partly embodied in material conditions and partly frustrated by these same conditions; rather it would be as natural, spontaneous, and total as with those ideal prototypes of communication, the theologian’s angels, or “messengers.” (A Rhetoric 22)

Burke sees identification as a means for coming closer to the ideal of seamless communication, for although he realizes humans cannot communicate as ideally as angels, he hopes that we can improve our communication across cultures. He does not want to make all people the same, for that would erase the need for communication. What he does want is for us to recognize both our divisions and our similarities so that we can move toward more complete understanding of each other. Dialectic is the means through which Burke proposes we achieve this vision, a term I explore in the following section.

**Dialectic: A Replacement for Rhetorical Persuasion?**

Rather than focusing on agonistic, persuasive rhetoric, Burke suggests we aim for dialectic. As Burke defines it, the goal of dialectic is not to prove one side correct and
the other side wrong, as it often is in rhetorical persuasion. In fact, the mindset of being
on opposite sides at all is de-emphasized. What is important in Burkean dialectic is the
reaching of a shared reality, a shared understanding. Burke explains:

The notion of rhetoric as a means of “proving opposites” again
brings us to the relation between rhetoric and dialectic. Perhaps, as a first
rough approximate, we might think of the matter thus: Bring several
rhetoricians together, let their speeches contribute to the maturing of one
another by the give and take of question and answer, and you have the
dialectic of a Platonic dialogue. But ideally the dialogue seeks to attain a
higher order of truth, as the speakers, in competing with one another,
cooperate towards an end transcending their individual positions. Here is
a paradigm of the dialectical process for “reconciling opposites” in a
“higher synthesis.” (A Rhetoric 53)

It is this dialectical process for transcending individualism that holds hope for Burke. It
is through this process that we can come closer to achieving communication that will lead
to something other than conflict and strife. There are many potential outcomes of
dialectical communication, to be sure, but Burke chooses to focus on the optimistic
outcome of two distinct parties forming a new identity, a new mutual understanding, “[. .
.] a third term that will serve as the ground or medium of communication between
opposing terms” (A Grammar 405), what he above calls a “higher synthesis.” The aim is
for both parties to stop focusing solely on the unshaded areas of themselves and to focus
also on the shaded areas of themselves, the margins of overlap they share with others, so
that they can identify with them and overcome the distance between them. Burke calls this “[. . .] a process of transformation whereby the position at the end transcends the position at the start [. . .]” (A Grammar 422). As dialectical communication reaches its conclusion, neither party remains the same. Rather, both have transformed themselves in the process of coming closer to reaching complete understanding of each other.

As an example of how dialectical communication can work, consider the case of two people involved in a minor fender bender. Imagine this accident takes place in a parking lot as the parties involved back out of their respective parking spaces. One of the drivers claims she was already pulled out of her spot and stopped in the aisle when the other backed into her, while the other driver claims both were moving at the time of the accident. If these drivers were to use rhetorical persuasion to solve their disagreement, both would advance arguments meant to convince the other to see the situation their way. For example, the first driver would explain that she was stopped when the accident happened, that she was getting ready to shift gears when she noticed the other driver starting to back up, that she even blew her horn to try to get the other driver to stop, all in the hopes of convincing the other driver to see things her way. The aim here is to shift the second driver’s viewpoint to that of the other’s, to convince the second driver that she is wrong. However, if these drivers were to use dialectical communication to solve this disagreement, the primary aim would be to help both drivers understand the other’s point of view. The first driver could still explain to the second driver why she felt the accident was not her fault, but rather than serving to prove the second driver wrong, such an explanation would serve to illustrate the first driver’s sense of being wronged; it would
illustrate the driver’s emotional state. Similarly, the second driver could express to the first driver her own emotions, her fear of being reprimanded by her parents, her despair at having to find a way to pay a higher car insurance premium, her frustration at being made late for school, and so on. It could be that the second driver would still end up taking the blame for the accident, but rather than resulting in a one-sided “win,” such a conversation could result in both parties reaching a higher level of understanding about themselves and each other as well. A “higher synthesis” about the situation could be reached, wherein both parties are changed as a result. In the next section I explore the means to making such ends possible.

**Educational Aims**

Burke recognizes that the educational processes we use now, which aim to create cohesion within small groups of people, must be overcome in order to come closer to the ideal of intercultural communication. Burke explains that education is essentially a socialization process, and he explains the ramifications of such socialization below:

Such considerations make us alert to the ingredient of rhetoric in all *socialization*, considered as a *moralizing* process. The individual person, striving to form himself in accordance with the communicative norms that match the cooperative ways of his society, is by the same token concerned with the rhetoric of identification. To act upon himself persuasively, he must variously resort to images and ideas that are formative. Education (“indoctrination”) exerts such pressure upon him from without; he completes the process from within. (*A Rhetoric* 39)
Education here is the process used in which one person becomes part of a larger society. This process is one in which the individual is shown how s/he fits with the larger society. At the same time, this process of education shows how the individual does not fit with other societies. For example, in the United States recently, we have been told by our President, George W. Bush, that we are different from terrorists because we do not hijack airplanes and fly them into skyscrapers and government buildings, killing thousands of people as a result. This is told to us in order to show us not only how we are different from Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida, but also to give us an identity around which we can rally. We are the people who are united by our unfair suffering at the hands of terrorists, and it is therefore acceptable for us to scapegoat the terrorists and consider them “the other,” or so the education goes. However, instead of using education to make people within one society only identify with each other, Burke wants us to be able to overcome the scapegoating mindset that occurs when the individuals within a society feel cohesive against another society. He wants to expand the identification that often happens within societies to the level of intercultural identification so that whole societies can learn to identify with each other, thereby easing the tensions between them. Rather than identifying as “Americans who have been wronged by acts of violence,” then, Burke would have us recognize that other cultural groups have also been wronged by acts of violence and perhaps begin to identify with each other instead of only with ourselves.

Burke offers some suggestions as to how to change the shape of education so that we can better achieve such a goal. One suggestion he makes is: “The over-all aim of secular education would be to discover just what it means to be a symbol-using animal”
Burke considers language use a form of symbol use, so his aim here is to suggest that in our teaching we should focus on helping students discover what it means to use language. What he is calling for is a kind of meta-knowledge about language use that could help students understand not only how to follow rules of grammar and form but also how to understand the motivations and effects involved with using language in society. He further explains the importance of understanding the ways we use language within contexts when he writes: “The basic educational problem at this stage of history would be: How best adapt the symbol-using animal to the conditions of world empire that are being forced upon us by the irresistible ‘progress’ of technology? (Such would be the ‘global’ aim of education.)” (Attitudes 375). It was 1937 at the time of Attitudes Toward History’s first publication, so Burke most likely had in mind a different sort of “world empire” than we must deal with now. However, his focus on a “‘global’ aim of education” is no less important now than it was in 1937, for we still have tensions across the globe, and we could still learn to adapt ourselves to these tense conditions in ways that would more effectively aim toward the goal of reaching intercultural understanding than we currently do.

One particular area of education that could stand revision in order to reach this goal is the area of composition. Burke criticizes the academic essay, noting its tendency to focus on the conveyance of information rather than on the reaching of mutual understanding. He writes, “[. . .] the essayistic method of communication is most in keeping with the high value which the technological psychosis and its attendant phenomena have placed upon conceptualization and information-giving” (Permanence
48). He offers “the poetic medium” (*Permanence* 48) as an alternative to the essay, but this is not our only option. Ultimately the shape of the writing we ask our students to produce is not of primary importance. What matters most is the mindset we encourage our students to take when writing. If, rather than insisting students write argumentative essays, we encourage students to communicate with the goal of negotiating an understanding with their readers, we can encourage intercultural understanding. In chapter five I investigate the details of a writing assignment designed to reach this goal, but what I wish to emphasize here is the importance of teaching students that the aims of writing are to encourage interactions between people in their margins of overlap and to encourage people to identify with one another. If in our educational practices we focus on dialectic instead of rhetoric, we can come closer to teaching our students how to write in order to reach understanding instead of conflict.

**A Question of Motivations**

Burke explains his motivations in his second book, *Permanence and Change*, when he writes of himself, “The author became concerned with thoughts of a Joining, a Categorical Joining, a Joining ‘in principle,’ a joining-at-one-remove by joining with the sheer Idea of Joining. And, in keeping with his ‘occupational psychosis’ as a writer, he thought of such joining in terms of communication [. . .]” (liii). I share Burke’s starting point, the desire to bring people together through communication. Burke’s writing is in response to the difficulties he sees people having when they try to communicate. He comments particularly on the difficulties he notices with intercultural communication,
and he points out that the excuses we make for our troubles, which includes citing the use of different logics across cultures, do not stand up to close scrutiny. He writes:

Most accusations of the illogical are of [the sort] where the hidden disagreement is over a matter of premises, whereas each of the opponents, accusing the other of being illogical, is in reality moving from premises to conclusion with the syllogistic regularity of a schoolman. We see this particularly in cases where Western investigators discover the lack of logic in the behavior of savage tribes. As a matter of fact the savages behave quite logically, acting on the basis of causal connectives as established by tribal rationalizations. We may offer grounds for questioning the entire rationalistic scheme, as tested by our techniques of testing—but we cannot call a man illogical for acting on the basis of what he feels to be true.

*(Permanence 85)*

Burke explains here that logic is not different across cultures. Across cultures we may give different explanations for using our logic in the ways we do, but the logic itself is the same. We have misunderstood the international nature of logic, according to Burke, and this misunderstanding has created rifts between cultures. He explains that

Given the potentiality for speech, the child of any culture will speak the language which it hears. There is no mental equipment for speaking Chinese which is different from the mental equipment for speaking English. But the potentiality externalizes itself in accordance with the
traditions into which the individual happens to be born. (Counter-
Statement 49)

We have tended to hear different languages being spoken and to observe different patterns of argumentation being used within those languages, and we have tended to draw the conclusion that logic varies across cultures as a result. Instead, Burke claims, people around the world think in the same way, using the same “mental equipment,” and they then shape the form of the expression of their thoughts to their immediate surroundings. For example, when the three-year-old girl I lived with in Korea, Yaesul, was not hungry and did not want to eat her dinner, she might say “אני לא רוצה есть” which translates to the English “I don’t want to eat.” Just because Yaesul uses different words to explain her lack of desire to eat than an English-speaking American child would does not mean the logic she uses to describe her lack of desire to eat is any different. This phenomenon is a prime example of a margin of overlap. The differing expressions used by people speaking different languages can be seen as the unshaded areas of the circles, while the same logic that is used to process ideas before their expression can be seen as the shaded area of the interlocking circles.

Burke points out that in our communication across cultures, we have chosen to focus on difference at the expense of similarity, that we have focused on the unshaded areas of our language differences rather than on the shaded area of our common logic. He would like to offer an alternative to this practice. Burke explains that he “[. . .] would propose to replace the present political stress upon men in rival international situations by a ‘logological’ reaffirmation of the foibles and quandaries that all men (in their role as
‘symbol-using animals’) have in common” (The Rhetoric 5). He wants to draw our attention to humanity’s use of words used to talk about the ways in which we use words (logology) so that we can acknowledge both our differences and our similarities. Here Burke is drawing on his notion of identification to propose a solution to our communicative difficulties. He wants us to remember that we are at once distinct from and the same as those around us. He writes:

To be sure, there is the individual. Each man is a unique combination of experiences, a unique set of situations, a unique aggregate of mutually re-enforcing and conflicting ‘corporate we’s.’ But he must build his symbolic bridges between his own unique combination and the social pattern with relation to the social pattern, instead of treating his uniqueness as the realm of an uncrowned king. (Attitudes 289)

For too long, Burke claims, people have seen their ways as the right ways and expected others to conform. The impossibility of such a stance becomes clear when we consider what happens when everyone wants everyone else to conform to his/her practices. There can be no agreement and no movement toward compromise or understanding when we refuse to build bridges between ourselves. This applies particularly to our use of language, for as Burke explains, “[. . .] we could say that language reflects ‘personal equations’ by which each person is different from any one else, a unique combination of experiences and judgments. [. . .] Or, at the very opposite extreme, there are respects in which we use language ‘universally’” (Language 28). Understanding that we are both different and similar in our use of language is just the sort of bridge Burke would like us
to build on the way toward smoother communication. If we can understand that “[. . .] whatever the race of human beings may be in their particularity, they are all members of a symbol-using species” (Burke, *Permanence* lvi), we can begin to communicate with the dialectical goal of mutual transformation rather than the rhetorical goal of one-sided persuasion. We may not ever reach the ideal, but by aiming toward it we increase our chances of coming closer to it, thereby coming closer to avoiding conflict and strife.

To conclude this chapter, then, I leave you with a dialogue between Satan [S] and The Lord [TL] as constructed by Burke. The topic of this dialogue is the paradox between similarity and difference as well as the path upon which we will find ourselves as we acknowledge and negotiate this paradox. Burke writes:

S. Milord, not by way of heckling, but in order to advance our meditations another necessary step, could I ask you this: Is it not true that the language-using animals will use many different languages, and that such differences will cause them to think differently?

TL. Exactly.

S. Yet they will all think alike, insofar as they are language-using animals, and thus will have their modes of thought moulded generically by the nature of discourse?

TL. Exactly.

S. But is not this a contradiction in terms? They will all think alike, and they will all think differently!
TL. Your love of paradox is tricking you, even in the midst of your resolve to be contrite. Languages will differ, and in that sense each will have its own way of looking at things. But there are some important properties that all languages have in common. Thus, no human animal can live on the sheer words for food; no language can be without some such principles of order and transformation as will go by the name of grammar and syntax; all languages must have words that put things together and words that take things apart; all tribal idioms will have ways of naming and exhorting. Such elements, common to all languages, coupled with the conditions common to all bodies, will make for a common underlying logic. And this logic will be headed in the same direction, aiming at the same ultimate perfection. (The Rhetoric 296-7)

We may never reach the “ultimate perfection,” but hopefully by teaching our students across the globe how to aim for it, we can eventually communicate with goodwill and understanding more often. In chapter five I turn my attention to a specific assignment created in the hopes of coming closer to reaching this ideal. But first, in the next chapter I draw on the work of other language philosophers to further support my call for changing current practices in the teaching of writing.
CHAPTER IV:
THE PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE AND INTERCULTURAL RHETORIC

As we have seen, theorists often note that people from different cultures communicate differently. The argument commonly developed out of noting these communicative differences is that speaking different languages results in the development of different systems of logic. As a result, intercultural communication is said to be fraught with close to insurmountable difficulties. However, philosophers working with language have demonstrated that humanity shares a common system of logic. They have also shown the power educational programs across cultures have to shape that common logic into unique language-based expressions. It is my claim that focusing on the work of these language philosophers as we make changes to our educational practices can provide ways of fostering greater understanding in intercultural communication.

Philosophy of Language as Alternative

Rather than focusing solely on differences between speakers of varied languages, one philosopher, Ludwig Wittgenstein, suggests the possibility of finding both differences and similarities between speakers of various languages. He does not simply replace the notion of difference with the notion of complete alikeness; rather, Wittgenstein shows how complex language use is. He writes:

Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all, -- but that they are related to one another in
many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these 
relationships, that we call them all “language.” (27)

Wittgenstein acknowledges difference between languages, but he also acknowledges the 
relationships between them, and it is this acknowledgment of the relatedness of languages 
that is key. We are not erasing differences, but we are not ignoring connections, either. 

But what is it that connects languages to one another? Is it that they all consist of words, 
sounds, grammar rules? To explain the connection between languages, Wittgenstein 
draws an analogy to that class of activities we call games, writing:

Consider for example the proceedings that we call “games”. I mean 
board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What 
is common to them all? […] If you look at them you will not see 
something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a 
whole series of them at that. […] Look for example at board-games, with 
their multifarious relationships. Now pass to card-games; here you find 
many correspondences with the first group, but many common features 
drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ball-games, much that 
is common is retained, but much is lost.—Are they all ‘amusing’? […] Or 
is there always winning and losing, or competition between players? […] 
In ball-games there is winning and losing; but when a child throws his ball 
at the wall and catches it again, this feature has disappeared. Look at the 
parts played by skill and luck; and at the differences between skill in chess 
and skill in tennis. […] And we can go through the many, many other
groups of games in the same way; we can see how similarities crop up and disappear. (27)

As Wittgenstein points out, there is not one, concrete, stable quality we can point to that is common to all games of every type, yet we can feel confident in calling all games “games” because of a complex web of relationships we can observe that connects them to each other. In the same way that we can observe this complex web of relationships between different types of games, so too can we see a series of relationships uniting languages to one another. Wittgenstein summarizes, “And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail” (27). For example, sometimes languages may only share similarities in the broadest sense, such as Korean and English both being phonetic languages wherein each symbol or letter carries a sound that can be combined with other symbols or letters to create more complex sounds. Other times, languages may share more specific commonalities, such as the English word “bicycle” bearing close resemblance to the French word for bicycle, “bicyclette.” We may not be able to draw the same comparisons between all languages, but because of a network of similarities we can observe between them, we can call them all languages. Each one is unique yet at the same time connected to others.

This stance taken by Wittgenstein is important for working toward intercultural understanding. By not ignoring connections, we allow communicants the possibility of finding similarities between each other. At the same time, however, by not erasing differences we allow communicants the comfort of their self-identities as the basis from
which to communicate. Wittgenstein’s stance fosters this both-and perspective in which communicants can both feel comfortable with their own identities and feel comfortable with their similarities to the other party involved. Paul Ricoeur follows this reasoning when he extends Wittgenstein’s attention to languages to an attention to people. He explains how all acts automatically involve both the individual and the larger whole, writing:

[A] sort of entanglement [. . .] makes it difficult to attribute to a particular agent a determined series of events. It is the way the actions of each one of us are intertwined with the actions of everyone else. [. . .] The action of each person (and of that person’s history) is entangled not only with the physical course of things but with the social course of human activity.

(107)

Here Ricoeur is widening the scope of investigation to go beyond just language use. He conveys the idea that all human action involves the idea of uniqueness and commonality, and he explains that at all times people are acting both individually and as part of a social whole. He provides a larger context for Wittgenstein’s discussion of languages, for just as Wittgenstein discusses the notion of language as both unique and universal, Ricoeur discusses the notion of people as both individuals and community members.

To begin thinking about intercultural communication, then, we need to recognize that we are not dealing with an either-or proposition. We need to realize that people are not completely divided nor completely unified as human beings, nor in their use of language. As Ricoeur explains, “we have to acquire simultaneously the idea of
reflexivity and the idea of otherness [. . .] ” (39). We need to notice that we are all
connected by our states as both selves and others at once. For, at the same time that we
feel ourselves to be ourselves and hold all others to be the other, we are being held as the
other by someone else. By acknowledging this reality, “Becoming in this way
fundamentally equivalent are the esteem of the other as a oneself and the esteem of
oneself as an other” (Ricoeur 193-94). Ricoeur, then, like Wittgenstein, places primary
importance on the ability to see both duality and unity at once. For both theorists, it is
important to see how each of us are both unique from and the same as others. For
example, a Caucasian American woman might think of herself as being distinct from a
South Korean man because of their differing physical features, or she might think of
herself as being similar to him because of their shared identities as citizens of
democracies, or she might think herself as both distinct from and similar to him.
Wittgenstein and Ricoeur would suggest that taking the final perspective, the both-and
perspective, would best acknowledge the complexity involved in human relationships.

Achieving this type of both-and perspective is sure to be difficult. In fact, we
may never achieve it in totality. However, if we want to come closer to seeing the world
in a both-and manner so as to help facilitate intercultural communication, education is the
key. Currently our educational practices in composition are aimed at perpetuating
dualistic thinking. As we have seen, dualistic thinking does not bring us closer to
achieving intercultural understanding, it only directs us toward emphasizing divisions at
the expense of commonalities. In the following sections I show how educational
practices operate today and how they need to change in order to come closer to reaching the goal of intercultural understanding.

**Education as Perpetuation of Discourse**

As explored in the previous chapter, education can sometimes be equated with indoctrination. Wittgenstein addresses such education when he writes: “The children are brought up to perform *these* actions, to use *these* words as they do so, and to react in *this* way to the words of others” (27). In other words, students are taught to perpetuate the rules of their societies; they are taught to use the actions, the words, and the reactions that are appropriate for their social group. As John Searle puts it, each student “[. . .] has come to be disposed to behave that way, because that’s the way that conforms to the rules of the institution” (144). People, he explains, create institutions through daily practices. As practices are perpetuated and supported, either implicitly or explicitly, they take on the power of institutions. Once our practices have the power of institutions, the desire to act according to the rules of the institutions gains momentum.

One example of such an institution is the institution of the academic essay found in many composition classrooms. As Judith Butler explains, in order to be accepted in the academic community, or at least to pass composition courses, students need to present themselves as being worthy of speech by showing they can conform to the accepted practices of the institution. In order to have the rights and privileges of a member of the academic discourse community, students must first learn to conform to the accepted practices of that community. She writes: “To become a subject means to be subjected to a set of implicit and explicit norms that govern the kind of speech that will be legible as
the speech of a subject” (133). Butler also notes that moving outside norms, such as by moving beyond the accepted patterns of discourse, is dangerous. The safe route, she posits, is to follow the rules of acceptable discourse, writing: “To move outside the domain of speakability is to risk one’s status as a subject. To embody the norms that govern speakability in one’s speech is to consummate one’s status as a subject of speech” (133). Butler explains how the writing practices advocated in the composition classroom are perpetuated as a result of students wanting to gain and then retain the power of the subject. These students may or may not realize that while they are gaining the power of speech, they are also being subjected to the rules of the institution that govern that speech, but that is the process at work.

To be more specific, when American composition instructors expect from their students the production of deductively presented arguments that are well supported with evidence, students, most likely not wanting to fail their courses, will produce what their instructors want. Because the rules governing what is seen as acceptable discourse vary from classroom to classroom, and more significantly from country to country, the writing that students produce in these varied contexts also varies. When we look at intercultural examples of essays, then, we find writing that reflects the differing rules governing the students who are producing that writing. These differing texts are in turn often interpreted as being revelatory of culturally divergent thought patterns. In fact, what differing essayistic practices signify is simply the different institutionalized practices various educational situations have taught their students.
Across cultures, our institutionalized educational practices in composition are little more than power plays. Those of us already in academia act as gatekeepers to those wishing to either pass through or join the system. Instructors hold the power to pass or fail students based on the students’ abilities to conform to the rules the instructors and their instructors before them have established and maintained. Yet, composition instructors often do not acknowledge this power they hold. As Butler writes, “[. . .] the conditions of intelligibility are themselves formulated in and by power, and this normative exercise of power is rarely acknowledged as an operation of power at all” (134). We would rather tell ourselves we are helping our students to think critically, logically, and clearly than acknowledge that we are really perpetuating rules of discourse that are exclusionary.

By noting J. L. Austin’s work, however, we are provided with ample opportunity to see the power language has over people. In his book, *How to Do Things With Words*, Austin describes what he calls locutionary acts, illocutionary acts, and perlocutionary acts. To explain what he means by the locutionary act, Austin writes:

> We first distinguished a group of things we do in saying something, which together we summed up by saying we perform a *locutionary act*, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to “meaning” in the traditional sense. (109)

The locutionary act, then, is the act of using language to convey meaning. For example, the statement “I told her to stop” is a locutionary act, for it conveys a meaning to the
reader. It reports, for example, the writer’s perception of her actions, information that carries meaning to the reader. In the conveyance of meaning through the medium of writing, a certain amount of power is at work, for one’s meaning is presented to another asynchronously. The reader of the words may react, but the reaction is not conveyed back to the writer unless the writer happens to be present in some sort of workshop scenario, or unless the reader becomes a writer him/herself and informs the text’s author of his/her reaction through a letter or an e-mail. In asynchronous communication, the writer’s meaning is foisted onto the reader to be accepted, rejected, or modified, but the writer has a certain amount of power in simply presenting his/her meaning in the first place. In the example given, the reader may or may not believe that the writer “told her to stop,” but the writer has conveyed her meaning to the reader through her locutionary act.

Locutionary acts are not the only type of power plays implicit in language use. Austin goes on to explain the illocutionary act, writing, “[...] we also perform *illocutionary acts* such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, &c., i.e. utterances which have a certain (conventional) force” (109). Here Austin makes more explicit the power of language, calling that power a “force” in the world. By stating information, orders, or warnings, for example, the speaker or writer makes an attempt to exert power over the audience. In this case, language is used in the hopes of changing the behavior of another person. For example, by shouting, “Stop!” as someone tickles me, I can hope to make the person who is tickling me stop doing so. By ordering someone to do something, or by warning someone of a negative event that is about to happen, the writer
or speaker puts him/herself in a position of power, using words in such a way as to exert force over the audience, hoping that audience will hear the message being conveyed and act accordingly. The audience’s reaction is not guaranteed, my tickler may not stop tickling me, but illocutionary force has been used in the attempt to elicit a reaction.

The third type of speech act that Austin describes, the perlocutionary act, holds yet another type of power. Austin writes: “Thirdly, we may also perform perlocutionary acts: what we bring about or achieve by saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading” (109). Here the power of language goes beyond the power conveyed by illocutionary acts. This is because in the case of illocutionary acts, the power of the speaker or writer is limited to the attempt to create change in the audience. By shouting, “Stop!” I can only hope to make the person tickling me stop doing so. With perlocutionary acts, the power the speaker or writer holds over the audience is found in the actual effect achieved. For example, suppose I have a neighbor who spreads bird food on the ground, attracting dangerous wildlife to our neighborhood. Next, suppose I write a letter to my neighbor that states, “If you do not stop, you will be fined,” and as a result, the neighbor stops spreading the bird food on the ground. My letter can be said to have been a perlocutionary act, for a perlocutionary act has force to the extent that the reader is convinced, persuaded, deterred, surprised, misled, or otherwise influenced. Here the language used by the speaker or writer creates effects that may or may not have been intended, but nonetheless, an effect has been produced.

By keeping such analysis of the power of language in the forefront of our minds, composition instructors can begin to see the importance of our practices in the classroom.
When we consider that we are giving students a vehicle for exerting power over the world, we should take a moment to think about what type of power we want to encourage. If we want to encourage intercultural understanding, we do not want to encourage our students to write in ways that suggest that the meanings that hold validity for them are the only ones worthy of merit, we do not want to encourage them to write in ways that attempt to convey one-sided information, nor do we want to encourage them to write in ways that force others to change their points of view. Instead, we want to encourage our students to write in ways that share with others the meanings that hold validity for them, we want to encourage them to write in ways that convey multifaceted information, and we want to encourage them to write in ways that result in mutual understandings. The next two sections of this chapter discuss these educational goals in more detail as well as offer practical methods for reaching these goals in our classrooms.

A New Kind of Communication as a Means to a New End

In a recent article, Richard Fulkerson attempts to summarize the shape of contemporary composition teaching. He concedes that his “[. . .] argument will necessarily be based on indirect evidence: published scholarship, textbooks, a few organizational documents, and personal discussions” (682). As he explains, he must rely on such indirect evidence because “There is no available and current synthetic account of what goes on in college writing classrooms in the United States: the syllabi, writing assignments, readings, classroom procedures” (682). As such, although “[. . .] we desperately need a comprehensive empirical study of what actually goes on nationwide”
(682), for now we will have to rely on articles such as Fulkerson’s that synthesize indirect evidence to draw hypotheses about the shape of contemporary composition instruction.

Fulkerson claims that “Within [composition] scholarship, we currently have three alternative axiologies (theories of value): the newest one, ‘the social’ or ‘social-construction’ view, which values critical cultural analysis; an expressive one; and a multifaceted rhetorical one. I maintain that the three axiologies drive the three major approaches to the teaching of composition” (655). Within Fulkerson’s descriptions of these three major approaches, we can see that instruction in argumentative writing dominates all but one. In expressivist composition pedagogy, Fulkerson explains, “Many traditional features of academic writing, such as having a clear argumentative thesis and backing it up to convince a reader, are put on a back burner” (666). Instead, in expressivist classrooms, “Writing is a means of fostering personal development [. . .]” (Fulkerson 667). Here, then, we see an exception to what Fulkerson paints as the rule in college composition—the teaching of argumentative writing.

Despite this exception, in both rhetorical and cultural studies approaches to composition, which account for two-thirds of the approaches to composition pedagogy, “[. . .] evidence indicates that treating writing as argument for a reader is widespread” (Fulkerson 672). Part of this evidence is that the “[. . .] growth and success of argument-based textbooks in the last twenty years has been phenomenal [. . .]” (Fulkerson 672). In chapter two I delineated several textbooks that present ethos as a tool for establishing credibility when writing argumentatively. To this list Fulkerson adds texts by “[. . .] Ramage, Bean, and Johnson; Clark; Lunsford and Ruskiewicz; Williams and Colomb;
Faigley and Selzer; Fahnestock and Secor; Crusius and Channell” (672). Texts such as these are used in rhetoric-based composition classrooms to teach such approaches to writing as “[. . .] composition as argumentation, genre-based composition, and composition as introduction to an academic discourse” (Fulkerson 671). In addition to explicitly teaching rhetorical argumentation, then, Fulkerson explains that some rhetoric-based composition teaching focuses on genres, and he describes how such teaching ultimately gives rise to the “argument genre:”

The more fully evolved first-year argumentation texts that coherently use a genre approach tend to accept some modern version of classical Greek and Roman stasis theory. [. . .] Stasis theory asserts that only a limited number of claim types can be “at issue” in [. . .] discourse. If one can identify the type of claim, that knowledge has immediately generic implications concerning what features must, may, or must not be included, and even some traditionally expected orders of presentation. [. . .] So a text arguing for a claim of a specific stasis (such as evaluation), especially within a context including exigency and audience, gives rise to what can be called an argument genre. (677)

Even in rhetoric-based courses not explicitly taking an argument approach to writing, then, argument still becomes the predominant genre taught. Similarly, in another form of rhetoric-based composition teaching, the discourse community view, argumentative writing becomes the primary mode of composition undertaken by students. Fulkerson explains that the goal of this approach to teaching writing “[. . .] is to allow students to
read, write, and reason as they will be expected to do in other college courses, and thus to absorb the sorts of rhetorical moves that will help them survive in college” (678).

Further, “The discourse community approach assumes that most college writing responds to other texts, that it relies on close reading, that the student text will present an interpretive argument [. . .]” (Fulkerson 678). Therefore, we see throughout the three different approaches to rhetoric-based composition classrooms an emphasis on argumentative discourse. Additionally, Fulkerson claims “In fact, even CCS [critical/cultural studies] teachers actually want argument from their students: claims about oppression, race, or the American Dream are to be grounded in close readings of various social ‘texts’; assertions of cultural patterns are to be backed up with artifactual data” (672). Overall, Fulkerson paints a convincing description that the type of academic writing we currently perpetuate in America is argumentative.

Given the predominance of argumentative writing in composition classrooms, writing aimed at proving that one side of an issue is more correct than another, we extrapolate to see one way that students are taught to think dualistically. Our standard academic discourse encourages dualistic thinking, for it encourages students to point out the one side of an issue they agree with and persuade others to agree with them. Jürgen Habermas, however, provides an alternative to such dualistically oriented writing, calling instead for communication aimed at understanding. He writes:

[. . .] I prefer to speak of general presuppositions of communicative action because I take the type of action aimed at reaching understanding to be fundamental. Thus I start from the assumption [. . .] that other forms of
social action—for example, conflict, competition, strategic action in general—are derivatives of action oriented toward reaching understanding [. . .]. Furthermore, [. . .] language is the specific medium of reaching understanding at the sociocultural stage of evolution [. . .]. (21)

Thus, the kind of gatekeeping, standard academic discourse full of strategizing that we currently encourage in so many composition classrooms is derivative to what Habermas sees as the foundational purpose of communication, reaching understanding. In standard academic discourse, ways of reaching understanding between author and audience is not stressed. What is stressed is the persuasion of the audience to the author’s point of view through argumentation. Such manipulative ends are not conducive to intercultural communication, and they are what Habermas would have us replace with the goal of reaching understanding.

Habermas is joined in his call to have us rethink our communicative practices by Ricoeur. Ricoeur, who above calls for the nondualistic way of seeing ourselves as both selves and others, proposes what he calls an “ethical” approach to communication when he writes, “Let us define ‘ethical intention’ as aiming at the ‘good life’ with and for others, in just institutions” (172). Gone is the focus on solely proving one’s point, and gone is the focus on convincing others to change their opinions. Instead, the focus is on working “with and for others” in our practices. Such a goal is not an easy one to reach, as we see each time any of our attempts to communicate with others fails. However, what is important here is the call for aiming for the goal of understanding as opposed to
the goal of *convincing*. Without the changed goal in mind, after all, we can never come closer to reaching it. By perpetuating current practices, change is impossible.

The call that is made by both Habermas and Ricoeur for changing the goal of communication to that of reaching understanding is reminiscent of the debate in rhetoric between Platonists and Aristotelians. Plato saw as the primary aim of communication the reaching of shared understanding whereas Aristotle saw as primary the ability to persuade. Plato’s method, the dialectical, stands in contrast with Aristotle’s method, the rhetorical. The rhetorical is what most of us in composition are familiar with, and it is what most of us ask our students to produce. The dialectical offers rich possibilities for change, however. John Gage explains the contrast between these two approaches to writing instruction in his article, “An Adequate Epistemology for Composition: Classical and Modern Perspectives.” He writes:

Dialectic implies that knowledge can be created in the activity of discourse, because it is potentially changed by that activity, either as discourse gets closer to it or as it emerges in the interaction of conflicting ideas. [...] Rhetoric can be viewed as dialectical, then, when knowledge is seen as an *activity*, carried out in relation to the intentions and reasons of others and necessarily relative to the capacities and limits of human discourse, rather than a *commodity* which is contained in one mind and transferred to another. [...] The “erotics” of rhetoric that emerge in [Plato’s] the *Phaedrus* depend on the condition that the rhetor’s object not be to force his knowledge onto a passive other, since by that means he
cannot come to know, but that mutual “lovers of knowledge” can through
dialectic arrive at knowledge neither alone could possess. (207)

Gage explains here the dialectical goal of reaching understanding as opposed to the
rhetorical goal of imparting one’s point of view onto another. He calls for changes in our
thinking similar to the changes Habermas advocates with his call for “action oriented
toward reaching understanding” (21) and the changes Ricoeur promotes with his call for
“ethical intention” (172). What Gage is calling for from the field of rhetoric is the same
thing Habermas and Ricoeur are calling for from the field of philosophy—making the
goal of written communication one of reaching mutual understanding instead of one of
persuasion.

Putting Theory into Practice

How can we turn these theoretical assertions and suggestions into classroom
practices? Basically, any writing assignment that emphasizes the goal of reaching
understanding will be a step toward instantiating the theories. Any writing assignment
that asks students to think about understanding their audience while also aiming to be
understood is the type of assignment that will help realize the theories discussed above.
Rather than focusing on persuasion and argument, then, or on a standard academic essay
format, instructors should focus on the mindsets of their students, helping them see the
world in other than simple dualities. No list of sample assignments could exhaust the
possibilities, and ultimately each instructor will need to design assignments that fit into
his/her curriculum. In the next chapter I describe one assignment I created that aims to
help students reach beyond dualistic thinking. For now perhaps the following
descriptions of a few sample assignments and activities will be helpful in the design of similar assignments tailored to particular circumstances.

One example that could replace the standard researched persuasive essay could be a paper that describes the multifaceted complexities of any controversial issue. Rather than asking students to choose one side of an issue, find ways to support their reasoning for choosing this side as the most desirable, and present their argument so as to convince their readers to agree with them, students could be asked to acknowledge how complex controversial issues can be. In conducting research, they could be asked to find as many divergent opinions as possible. Their papers would then present the cases all sides offer and point out the pros and cons of each. The goal in this sort of paper shifts from trying to prove a case, or support one side, to reaching a more complete understanding of the controversies that exist. This is just the sort of assignment I describe in more detail in the next chapter.

Another approach could be taken to altering the researched persuasive argument. Students could be paired up to write collaborative conversations in which major points must still be supported with research. As each student raises an issue and supports his/her opinion with research, the other student in the pair could point out opposing arguments that are also supported with research. As the students find and present their arguments, they could record the resulting dialogue between them, perhaps dedicating single paragraphs or multipartographed sections of the final document to each side. The resulting format is not so important. What matters most is one last requirement of the assignment: the students must aim for a compromise stance at the conclusion of their
writing. The goal is not for one writer to convince the other writer to change his/her opinion, nor is it for one writer to persuade the reader. Instead, both writers must work together to reach a mutually agreeable concluding stance.

Yet another possibility is to follow a similar procedure to the one described above, only instead of pairing students within a class to write collaboratively, students from different writing classrooms across the country or internationally could be paired to compose collaboratively. Always the instructors in these situations must work to emphasize the mindset of seeing the sides of arguments not as either-or scenarios but as stances in conversation with each other. No matter how large or small the scope of the writing assignment, and no matter whether the assignment asks students to write individually, collaboratively within a classroom, or collaboratively across cultures, the goal is to reach mutual understanding.

A Hopeful Outlook for Change

The philosophers cited above all provide insights into the problem of intercultural communication that can inform our educational practices in composition. They show us the influence education has over our communicative practices, and they allow us to see that the ways we have learned to express ourselves through language do not have to be seen as indicative of insurmountable differences in logic. They do not naively assert that the similarities they find across cultures will allow for seamless communication. What they do allow us to do, though, is to see more than just the differences that exist across cultures. They allow us to see that at one and the same time, people across cultures are both the same and different, and that our use of language reflects this reality. If we can
shape our educational practices to reflect these complexities, we can hopefully come
closer to avoiding communication breakdowns more often. The process of change will
not be easy, nor will it be quick, but it will hopefully help us achieve more fruitful
intercultural relations in today’s complex world. In the next chapter I detail steps I have
taken in my own teaching of writing to try to engage students in such a process of
change.
CHAPTER V:

REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING ALTERNATIVES TO ARGUMENTATION

As indicated in the last chapter, there are various ways to conceptualize writing assignments that focus on nonargumentative writing. Such assignments can require students to produce individually constructed writing, or they can be more collaborative in nature. They can focus on traditional paper formats, following MLA citation guidelines, using Times New Roman in 12-point font, maintaining one-inch margins, and following standard rules of English grammar, for example, or they can stray from such ink-on-paper guidelines and allow for a broader definition of what constitutes text. The decisions made when crafting an assignment that focuses on nonargumentative discourse will depend on, as with any other assignment, the goals of the course, the tastes of the individual instructor, and the proclivities of the particular student body with which that instructor is working. What this chapter provides is my perspective on teaching nonargumentative writing to students at The University of Arizona in the Spring 2004, Fall 2004, and Spring 2005 semesters. I paint a picture of the context surrounding the courses in which I have taught this assignment, describe the assignment and the rationale behind its construction, and share student reactions to the assignment from anonymous teacher evaluation forms completed at each semester’s end. What I show is that through such an assignment, students learn how to explore through writing complex issues without closing the opportunity for dialogue across difference. As such, I suggest that teaching students to write in nonargumentative ways can help achieve the goal of reaching mutual understanding across cultures.
Contextualizing the Particularities

My teaching of nonargumentative writing has taken place at The University of Arizona, a public land-grant university with a student body in fall 2004 of 36,932 students (UA Factbook 2004-05). Of these close to 37,000 students, 28,368 are undergraduates, 8,564 are graduate or medical students, 26,520 come from Arizona, 7,819 come from other US states, and 2,593 come from other nations (UA Factbook 2004-05). The ethnic makeup of these students is as follows: 63.9% are identified as White Non-Hispanic, 13.6% Hispanic, 7% Nonresident Alien, 5.4% Asian or Pacific Islander, 2.7% Black Non-Hispanic, 2.1% American Indian or Native Alaskan, and the remaining 5.4% are of unknown ethnicity (UA Factbook 2004-05). The mean SAT score of the 2004 incoming freshman class was 1118 (UA Factbook 2004-05), and the average GPA of all undergraduate students on campus in spring 2005 was 3.013 (Greek Life).

For the incoming class of 2005, students graduating in the top 25% of their high school classes were guaranteed admission to the University (Entrance Requirements), and of the incoming class of 1998, 57% had graduated by 2004, or within six years (Frequently Asked Questions).

As a graduate instructor in the English Department, my teaching has taken place in the University’s writing program, which focuses heavily on first-year composition but also offers several upper-division writing courses (see Appendix A for descriptions of the Writing Program’s course offerings for the 2005-2006 school year). The curriculum of many of these courses is highly prescribed by the writing program administration with somewhat more flexibility allowed of instructors in a few of the courses offered. Course
goals are clearly stated in all the course descriptions, and in those courses in which more flexibility is allowed, as long as instructors are aiming to meet these goals, the shape of individual writing assignments can be customized according to each instructor’s tastes. It was in two of these more flexible courses, English 306 and English 109H, that I introduced my alternative to argumentative writing assignment.

As the course description states, English 306 is open to any student who has completed first-year composition and is designed to introduce students to “[...] classical rhetoric and contemporary research on composition in order to further develop [their] ability to write and communicate” (*Composition Courses*). Currently the course is required of all English Education majors, and English majors following the rhetoric and writing emphasis are strongly encouraged to take it. Others take the course to satisfy upper-division writing requirements in their majors that do not specify which course must be taken, while some take the course as an elective. As this description suggests, students taking this course often have rather varied goals for their writing. In the two sections of English 306 that I taught, the students taking the course were majoring in Journalism, Psychology, Media Arts, English Education, Political Science, Accounting, Computer Engineering, Classics, English, History, and Finance.

English 109H is a first-year course designed for students who received a score of 4 or 5 on the English Literature Advanced Placement Exam or a 5, 6, or 7 on the English portion of the International Baccalaureate Exam. This one-semester honors course aims to achieve the combined goals reached in English 101 and 102 for mainstream students. Like all other first-year composition courses at The University of Arizona, English 109H
is a required course, considered part of the University’s general education requirements. As can be imagined, the diversity of student interests in a course such as this can be phenomenal. In the two sections of this course I taught, students indicated they were majoring in Engineering, Optical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Material Science and Engineering, Engineering Physics, English, Psychology, Molecular and Cellular Biology, Art History, Nutritional Sciences, History, Pre-Business, Political Science, Communications, Journalism, Religious Studies, Veterinary Science, German Studies, Spanish, Creative Writing, Elementary Education, and Chemistry. Of course, since these students were early in their college careers, their majors may have changed between the start of the courses, when I was provided the list of majors, and the end of the courses. Nonetheless, it seems safe to conclude that the students in these sections represent a wide range of interests.

The Assignment

Given the relatively broad course goals and the wide range of interests of the students taking these two courses, I felt justified in creating a writing assignment designed to foster intellectual inquiry in general. In both courses I required two major papers. In the first-year course, I felt obligated to ensure that students would be able to competently meet the writing requirements of courses across the curriculum, so their first paper was a traditional, thesis-driven, academic argument. Students were introduced to various types of analysis, such as literary analysis, visual analysis, and rhetorical analysis, and they then chose an artifact or text to analyze using one of these forms of analysis.
Their work with this assignment culminated in a thesis-driven paper that argued for their interpretation of the text or artifact they had chosen.

In the upper-division course, I felt that by making it to their junior or senior years of their college careers, students had most likely already mastered the traditional academic argument, so the first paper for this course was a personal reflection that integrated several course readings. Students first read excerpts from Plato’s *Gorgias*, Aristotle’s *On Rhetoric*, Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, and Bain’s *English Composition and Rhetoric*. They then analyzed the approaches to rhetoric and composition in each of these texts and reflected on ways these approaches could be found in their own writing experiences. For example, students noted Aristotle’s emphasis on persuasion and Blair’s emphasis on clarity, then thought about ways they had been taught to write persuasively and with clarity throughout their schooling. Such reflection in the upper-division course and practice with analytical argument in the first-year course created a springboard for the second half of the semester focusing on alternatives to argument.

The second assignment for both courses focused on inquiry. I have included the most recent version of my nonargumentative inquiry assignment in Appendix B, and this assignment includes the following description of the assignment:

As the syllabus states, this paper “will be written in a collaborative, hybrid, inquiring manner about any issue of concern.”

**Collaboration:** For this paper, you will need to listen to and use the words of others in your writing. You are required to cite from the writing
prompts of at least one of your classmates and a passage from at least one author you’ve read for class since the mid-term paper. Your quotations should be used to show an appreciation of the people who wrote them, an appreciation of the meaning behind the words.

**Hybrid:** Hybridity means not necessarily conforming to the standards of Academic English. It might mean using various font types within one text. It might mean incorporating visual rhetoric into an otherwise linguistic text. It might mean using more than one genre (poetry, narrative, business memo) within your text to convey your meaning. Your options here are almost limitless.

**Inquiring:** Inquiring means to write without arguing. It means to investigate rather than to assert. Writing in an inquiring manner means, as Young explains, writing from a state of mind without answers. It means, as Gage suggests, using writing as a means for creating new knowledge in both the writer and reader. To write this paper you should find an issue about which you feel a “felt difficulty” and create an inquiry into that issue. To provide context for the issue you choose, you should refer to at least one source from outside the class readings.

I used basically the same assignment in both the upper-division and the first-year courses, illustrating its flexibility and broad applicability to students at varied levels of education. In leading up to this assignment, students read works contemporary rhetoric and composition theorists who emphasize alternatives to argumentation. These readings
included Richard E. Young’s “Toward an Adequate Pedagogy for Rhetorical Argumentation: A Case Study in Invention,” Carl Rogers’ “A Counselor’s Approach,” John Gage’s “An Adequate Epistemology for Composition: Classical and Modern Perspectives,” Jim Corder’s “Varieties of Ethical Argument, With Some Account of the Significance of Ethos in the Teaching of Composition,” a chapter from Deborah Tannen’s *The Argument Culture*, and Linda Flower’s “Talking across Difference: Intercultural Rhetoric and the Search for Situated Knowledge.” In fact, the roots of this assignment can be traced to one Linda Flower describes in *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing in College and Community* (418-28). I completed this assignment when I took her course, “Rhetoric and the Writing Process: Community Literacy and Intercultural Interpretation” at Carnegie Mellon University as part of my Master’s degree. In fact, Flower cites my work as an example of an effective approach to writing an inquiry (421-23), and I drew on my work with this assignment as I designed my own inquiry assignment. Our assignments, although they are not identical, have in common the focus on inquiry as well as the latitude for textual hybridity.

Perhaps a note here on what textual hybridity means would be helpful. A succinct definition is provided by Kris Gutiérrez, Patricia Baquedano-López, and Carlos Tejeda in their article “Rethinking Diversity: Hybridity and Hybrid Language Practices in the Third Space.” They explain that “[. . .] hybridity [. . .] is manifest in the coexistence, commingling of, and contradictions among different linguistic codes and registers [. . .]” (289). In other words, hybridity occurs when various language forms come together and interact to make meaning. For example, hybridity occurs when an American learning the
Korean language utters the sentence, “나무 hot 입니다,” a sentence that uses a mingling of Korean and English to state, “I am too hot.” While hybrid discourse sometimes involves this type of bilingual usage, Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda claim “[. . .] such language practices are always present, though not always legitimized and utilized, in formal learning contexts” (289). Even when bilingualism is not at issue, then, hybrid language use takes place. This is true because even though all speakers in a given conversation may use standard American English, they do not share identical contexts. Hybrid meanings are created whenever people gather and make use of language, for different connotations, different ideologies, and different perspectives are given voice and intermingle.

Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda cite such authors as Anzaldúa, Arteaga, Becquer and Gatti, Bhabha, Gómez-Peña, Lipsitz, Shohat and Stam, and Valle and Torres as providing the theoretical basis of hybridity theory, and they summarize this sizeable body of work as follows:

In particular, this body of work captures the struggle of translation and difference in contexts where cultural and linguistic practices, histories, and epistemologies collide. Such translation, in which people negotiate what is known, for example, local cultural knowledge and linguistic registers, occurs when people attempt to make sense of one’s identity in relation to prevailing notions of self and cultural practices. (288)

The authors cited focus their work primarily on the hybridity that occurs when people of dominant and nondominant cultural groups interact. The members of the nondominant
group strive to make sense of life in the dominant culture by drawing on their cultural and linguistic backgrounds in comparison to the new reality they face. What results is a hybrid creation, a creation that mixes dominant and nondominant languages, cultural practices, and ideologies.

Yet Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda carry the analysis further, extending the notion of hybridity to classroom situations: “This same complexity and struggle, [. . .] we have argued, is found in other contexts of cultural contact, particularly urban classroom settings” (288). In such settings, hybridity may involve bilingualism, dominant and nondominant cultural groups, and competing epistemologies, but it may not. Hybridity in classroom settings may revolve more around socioeconomic differences between classmates, different levels of technological expertise between students and teacher, or different tastes and interests between classmates and between students and teacher. In such circumstances, the creation of hybridity may involve students who are well-versed in videogame culture, or adept at sports, or skilled in painting importing such knowledge into standard academic subjects. In cases such as this, “[. . .] the teacher and the student are in a new hybrid space [. . .] where student knowledge, including use of alternative representations of meaning, become new tools for learning” (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda 295). These “alternative representations of meaning” are what come to define hybrid texts, for often these representations do not fit the mold of standard academic discourse. Instead, these representations of meaning go beyond ink on paper texts to involve a “[. . .] broader range of linguistic and sociocultural resources and experiences [. . .]” (Gutiérrez,
Baquedano-López, and Tejeda 301). They could involve the integration of drawings into a standard academic paper, or they could be more all-encompassing, such as the creation of a multimedia website instead of a standard academic paper. The possibilities of what could constitute a hybrid text are nearly limitless, shaped in each circumstance by the experiences and knowledge of the particular students involved.

As the assignment sheet I gave my students illustrates, students in my classes enjoyed broad flexibility in designing hybrid texts. Students exercised their options in terms of hybridity to varying degrees. Some used the flexibility to write a paper on an academic subject in a creative genre, such as a play or extended dialogue. For example, one student explored the question of self-identity through an extended dialogue of his imagined alter egos. He gave these identities names, imbued each identity with characteristics of his personality, and recorded an imagined dialogue between them. The imagined characters then puzzled through such issues as the contribution of ethnicity to personality. Since this student was of mixed ethnicity, he wanted to know if certain parts of his personality could be attributed to certain sides of his ethnic heritage, and the creative genre of the imagined dialogue gave him a unique way to approach the topic. This sort of text represents hybridity in that it uses a mode of discourse that goes beyond the bounds of what is normally accepted as academic, yet it stays within the traditionally accepted ink on paper format.

Another student created a hybrid text that stayed within the bounds of an ink on paper text in quite another way. This student explored questions surrounding public schooling and theories of education, integrating ponderings about her decision to be an
education major along the way. To explore this topic, she chose to use the traditional ink on paper format with significant alteration. She used legal-sized paper turned to a landscape orientation, saving the left three-quarters of each page to record a narrative exploration of her topic. To the right, on the remaining one-quarter of each page and separated by a vertical line, she inserted commentary of assorted kinds, using a variety of clip art to indicate the differing rhetorical purposes of the commentary. For example, to indicate a source of information, she inserted an image of a stack of books followed by a citation. To indicate a new insight, she used an image of a light bulb followed by a connection she had made between different perspectives or ideas. This sort of hybridity mixes narrative structure with tangential asides and visual images to create a journey through the topic at hand. To convey her meaning, this student drew on a wider range of tools than are ordinarily accepted in standard academic discourse, creating a hybrid text as a result.

Other students strayed even farther from traditional text formats. In addition to the female student above who explored questions of public education and theories of schooling through a hybrid ink on paper format, another student wanted to explore questions surrounding public schooling and theories of education while integrating ponderings about his experience as a home-schooled student. This student enjoyed playing videogames, and he had expertise in computer programming as well, so he decided to create a videogame to serve as the textual representation of his inquiry. As users entered the game, they were confronted with a floorplan meant to represent a public high school. As the player moved around the floorplan, various encounters occurred.
For example, upon entering room “A,” the player might encounter a disgruntled teacher ridiculing students for answering questions incorrectly. Upon entering room “B,” however, the player might encounter an inspirational teacher encouraging students to find their interests and follow them. In the hallway between classrooms, the player might run into bullies or might run into a group of friends making plans for the weekend. By creating this game, the student was able to explore his attitudes toward home-schooling and call into question some of his preconceived notions about public schools. The game represents a hybrid text because it drew on this student’s existing interests and expertise with videogames while also satisfying some of the requirements of traditional academic discourse, such as conducting and documenting research. Other students painted artworks of various sorts in response to the permission to create a hybrid text, while some integrated audio into their final inquiry projects. The range of texts created has been wide and serves to illustrate that “[. . .] learning contexts are imminently hybrid, that is, polycontextual, multivoiced, and multiscripted” (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, and Tejeda 287). Affording students the opportunity to create hybrid texts allows the hybridity that is latent in any situation to become visible.

The idea behind textual hybridity in assignments is to allow a break from the linearity of traditional academic argument. Students are aware that thoughts do not always arrive arranged with their thesis statements first followed by evidence and then analysis. Textual hybridity allows students to follow their trains of thought in a more organic manner and in whatever genre with which they are most comfortable working. Howard Gardner’s notion of multiple intelligences provides a strong theoretical basis for
promoting and using such hybridity in educational settings. Gardner explains the methodology used to establish his theory, stating:

In formulating my brief on behalf of multiple intelligences, I have reviewed evidence from a large and hitherto unrelated group of sources: studies of prodigies, gifted individuals, brain-damaged patients, idiots savants, normal children, normal adults, experts in different lines of work, and individuals from diverse cultures. A preliminary list of candidate intelligences has been bolstered (and, to my mind, partially validated) by converging evidence from these diverse sources. I have become convinced of the existence of an intelligence to the extent that it can be found in relative isolation in special populations (or absent in isolation in otherwise normal populations); to the extent that it may become highly developed in specific individuals or in specific cultures; and to the extent that psychometricians, experimental researchers, and/or experts in particular disciplines can posit core abilities that, in effect, define the intelligence. (9)

By observing such a broad population sample and finding patterns of abilities, Gardner is able to delineate several types of intelligence. These intelligences include “[. . .] the linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligences that are at such a premium in schools today; musical intelligence; spatial intelligence; bodily-kinesthetic intelligence; and two forms of personal intelligence, one directed toward other persons, one directed toward oneself” (Gardner xi). As Gardner notes, “In ordinary life [. . .] these intelligences
typically work in harmony, and so their autonomy may be invisible. But when the appropriate observational lenses are donned, the peculiar nature of each intelligence emerges with sufficient (and often surprising) clarity” (9). By isolating each intelligence, we can see that different people are stronger in certain areas than in others. For example, not all people are strong linguistically. Allowing for textual hybridity gives students who are stronger in other intelligences, such as spatial or musical intelligences, a credible way to explore their ideas. Of course, in adopting this assignment and adapting it to various contexts, instructors will have to assess how much hybridity they feel comfortable accepting.

With minor revisions, I used the same assignment in all four English 306 and 109H courses I taught. The biggest change I made to the assignment over time involved the number of sources students were required to cite. Through informal feedback, students had indicated that requiring a set number of sources of various types seemed arbitrary, and upon reflection I realized they were probably correct. My goal in requiring students to make use of sources was to ensure that they were considering viewpoints other than their own as part of their inquiry into their “felt difficulty” or issue of concern. I realized that simply by indicating students needed to consult at least one fellow students’ perspective, at least one author read as assigned reading during the course, and at least one additional source with a perspective on the issue in question, I could ensure that students considered multiple perspectives without needing to impose seemingly arbitrary quotas of sources. I also altered my requirements for documentation once I realized how many students took advantage of the chance to construct hybrid texts.
Originally I had required MLA format for documentation, and I had indicated verbally that if anyone wanted to stray beyond traditional text, I would adjust that requirement accordingly. However, over time I decided to formalize my flexibility with MLA documentation, indicating that although students were required to document sources, they could do so in any format they chose or constructed themselves. I made similar alterations to the requirements for mechanics as indicated in the grading guide. Again, because many students chose to construct hybrid texts, it simply did not make sense to require standard academic English in all cases. For example, the student who wrote the imagined dialogue between his alter egos created dialects appropriate to each persona. Although the created dialects did not follow standard academic English, they did serve a carefully constructed rhetorical purpose. I felt it would be inappropriate to penalize such creative uses of language, so I simply removed the requirement for following standard rules of mechanics and grammar from my grading considerations. Because I was teaching honors and advanced students and because the first paper in the semester had required proficiency in standard academic English, I felt confident in dropping this requirement. However, anyone wanting to adopt such an assignment would need to evaluate his/her own comfort with this flexibility and adjust the requirements accordingly.

**Student Reactions**

Overall, students seemed pleased with the chance to try a new mode of writing. Each semester, students fill out Teacher Course Evaluations (TCEs) to which instructors have access after grades have been submitted. Students evaluate both their instructor’s
teaching effectiveness and the course content using a 5-point scale over a range of questions, and they also write narrative responses that allow the chance to explain their responses. In the tables below I have compiled comments relevant to the course content and the inquiry assignment in particular. I have included both positive and negative feedback in separate tables, and I have divided the evaluations based on course level, so there are two tables for evaluations of English 306, the upper-division course, and another two tables for evaluations of English 109H, the first-year course. I have tried to limit comments to those that seem particularly related to the inquiry assignment.

Table 1
English 306 Positive Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TCE Question</th>
<th>Student Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your overall rating of this course?</td>
<td>- I liked the freedom to try new things and be more expressive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Very interesting course that leaves me with a lot to think about.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The assignments were refreshing, approachable, and presented a new and (preferable) way to view writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- I will use the inquiry-based writing in my own teaching and future writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Learning about diverse writing styles and being able to write in creative contexts was great.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- This course centered around alternate writing techniques—moving away from traditional argumentative styles—this focus allowed for more creativity, involvement, and enjoyment in the writing assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- This course was helpful in allowing me to explore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I really like the exploratory nature of the class.

- I felt free and encouraged to try or at least be open to all forms of composition.
- The inquiry assignment/hybrid text exploration was among the most valuable, enjoyable, and practical assignments I’ve completed in college.
- This experience opened my eyes to the different writing styles that exist. It was the first English class I have taken that did not follow the five paragraph essay format. It allowed me the freedom to be creative.
- Thanks for letting us write creatively!
- I loved the way it challenged me.

Freedom, openness, and exploration are recurring themes in these comments. Students seem to have been both challenged and invigorated by the inquiry assignment.

Table 2

English 306 Negative Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TCE Question</th>
<th>Student Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your overall rating of this course?</td>
<td>The writings didn’t help me for my future writing tastes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I expected a course that would help me to explore argumentation, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was your overall experience in this course?</td>
<td>The course was listed as “Basic Argumentation” but the instructor changed it to study “Alternatives to Argumentation.” We never wrote anything argumentative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These few negative comments focus on unmet expectations for the course content and a perceived lack of relevance to future studies or work.

Table 3

English 109H Positive Evaluations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TCE Question</th>
<th>Student Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your overall rating of this course?</td>
<td>▪️ It was refreshing to get to try new styles of writing after years of the same expository writing assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪️ I really enjoyed this course because it challenged me to think in ways not shown to me before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪️ The course goes clearly beyond the normal monotonous writing of other classes and instead pushes the students to reach their peak capacity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪️ This course made me think in a new way and opened my eyes to a new perspective of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪️ It challenged me to think and learn in new ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪️ This course was very helpful in helping me to get past arguing in essays. I learned how to rhetorically analyze and to write an inquiry without always asserting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪️ I loved doing non-conventional writing. It really helped me become more inquisitive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪️ We were allowed a lot of freedom so we were able to write about what interested us and express it in a way that is unique and not dry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was your overall experience in this course?</td>
<td>▪️ I think the greatest aspect of this course is that it opens up one’s mind to new ideas and perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>▪️ I like the nature of the course—it’s focused on developing our writing and breaking from the mainstream.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                                                  | ▪️ I enjoyed the personal and academic freedom this course
allowed. It made me think more than focus on the right or wrong answers.

- I liked the essays. This was the first English class that allowed me to be creative—and learn about methods of inquiry as well.

Recurring themes in these positive comments include experiencing new ways of thinking and learning, feeling free, and being challenged.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TCE Question</th>
<th>Student Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your overall rating of this course?</td>
<td>- I didn’t really feel that I learned anything new.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- I didn’t take all that much away from it. I’ve learned more about writing in history classes than this one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was your overall experience in this course?</td>
<td>- I wish we wrote more papers and developed more writing techniques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- It was good—I just don’t know how it will help me in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These few negative comments focus on feeling unchallenged and feeling the writing will not be useful in future courses or work.

**Reflections on Feedback**

In thinking about the negative feedback, I am troubled by the idea that some students do not seem to understand the relevance of nonargumentative writing to their future lives. I have included in my syllabi for both of these courses readings that explore the importance of developing new ways of communicating about complex problems.
These readings have included works by Carl Rogers, Richard E. Young, Deborah Tannen, and Jim Corder, among others. It could be that these readings have been too difficult for some students to fully understand, but I would have hoped that class discussions might have helped elucidate the main points. However, I might have helped further clarify the usefulness of learning to communicate nonargumentatively by asking students to reflect on arguments or misunderstandings they have experienced in their own lives. Perhaps even a role-playing activity in which two or more students take on the role of people engaged in a disagreement could better highlight why learning to communicate in ways aimed at fostering mutual understanding has importance.

That some students may be unable to see the relevance of this type of assignment to typical school activities could also be indicative of the indoctrination model of schooling discussed in chapters three and four. Whereas the inquiry assignment I have created allows for free thinking and creative problem solving, these types of activities may not fit students’ expectations of what is normally expected of them in educational settings. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous chapters, composition classrooms typically focus on linear, thesis-driven writing, and the inquiry assignment I have created could seem ill suited for preparing students to do well in future composition classrooms that follow the more typical model. While these observations may be accurate, to me they point more to the shortcomings of current educational practices than to the shortcomings of this assignment.
As for the comment that the course did not meet stated course goals, this seems less well founded. As the description of English 306, Advanced Composition, in Appendix A states:

In this course you will study classical rhetoric and contemporary research on composition in order to further develop your ability to write and communicate. You will research rhetorical situations, write essays, and critique fellow students' work both formally and informally. The course explores how to write persuasively in different rhetorical situations.

Nowhere is the course titled “Basic Argumentation,” and while students did not write argumentatively, they did study classical rhetoric, contemporary research on composition, and develop their abilities to write and communicate. Perhaps the statement regarding writing persuasively is one that could seem at odds with nonargumentative writing, although class time was devoted to exploring and comparing the purposes and aims of argumentative writing, persuasive writing, and inquiry. I had hoped my course design would lead students to a more sophisticated understanding of how to assess rhetorical situations to determine the best form of writing to use in each, but perhaps more explicit instruction in the differences and similarities between persuasion, argumentation, and inquiry could have been helpful.

Similarly, the English 109H student who wrote that s/he learned more about writing from history classes than this one is perhaps also finding it difficult to overcome preconceived notions. It is possible that to this student the inquiry assignment, with its exploratory intent and its hybrid shape, did not fit a preconceived notion of what writing
is. I feel regret that this student remained so closed to the new way of writing that I tried to introduce that s/he feels nothing new was learned about writing at the end of the semester, but sometimes students are not ready to accept new concepts at particular points in their lives, and without a willingness to learn, there is not much an instructor can do. Similarly, the comment from the English 109H student who felt s/he did not learn anything new at all simply confounds me. The vast majority of the comments from these sections indicate the complete opposite, although it is possible that perhaps a few students had learned to write inquiringly in high school. I honestly cannot think of a way to proactively respond to the possibility of these isolated incidents, other than to focus on the majority of students who made more positive comments and take comfort in the notion that this assignment has made an impact in their writing and thinking lives.

Much of the positive feedback centers around the affective domain. Students comment on feeling free, open, and refreshed. They speak about enjoying the assignment, feeling creative, and being involved. These comments may not denote much quantifiable learning going on, but they speak powerfully to me. To have created an assignment that fosters feelings of excitement and happiness is gratifying to me as an educator. Too often students feel disengaged from learning, finding it to be more drudgery than enjoyment, or they associate learning with feelings of dread as they think more in terms of requirements to be met than in terms of invigorating discoveries to be made. Mike Rose speaks movingly of such challenges to educators in Lives on the Boundary, and from the time I first read this book, I wanted to find ways to help students feel positively about learning and education. Students with optimistic outlooks seem
more likely to be open to active engagement with ideas, unlocking their potential to engage with the world in fruitful ways. That the inquiry assignment I designed has had this effect on many of the students who have worked with it is moving to me.

Other student comments focus more directly on the content of their learning. Several mention being challenged to think in new ways about writing. In other words, students stretched the boundaries of what they thought it meant to write before taking the course. Many students are familiar with the traditional five-paragraph essay, and by commenting directly on the notion of moving beyond this structure, students imply they have learned new methods of organization and development than are allowed by the traditional format. One student mentions becoming more aware of rhetorical options by learning how to rhetorically analyze situations to best determine when it is appropriate to argue and when a different approach might be more helpful. These comments reveal that not only does this inquiry assignment have a positive impact on students’ affective domains, it also is effective at teaching the content of composition and rhetoric.

**Implications for Composition and Rhetoric Instruction**

I feel confident in suggesting that the inquiry assignment I have created carries with it great potential for positively shaping the way students think and feel about writing. As the student feedback I have received reveals, most students come away from working with the assignment with positive results. They have come away with an optimism about writing and learning, and they have also learned new composition and rhetoric skills. Rather than feeling limited by the persistent five-paragraph essay format, students have felt freed to explore new ideas in ways that may not have fit the
constrictions inherent in such formulaic writing. The inquiry assignment I have described in this chapter provides students a means through which to investigate complex topics in depth. It gives them the space and flexibility to pursue possibly contradictory evidence or lines of reasoning, exploring how such contradictions and complications coexist in the world and shape their own way of thinking. By not requiring students to develop clear-cut lines of argument in straightforward, thesis-driven writing, this assignment helps avoid the oversimplification of complex issues. Students are free to include all information they find, contradictory or not, confusing and unclear or not, and have the space to begin to puzzle it out through writing. Rather than being required to provide answers and assertions, students working with this assignment are encouraged to take on challenging problems and figure out where they are in their thinking about them for the time being.

How can such writing help achieve the goal of reaching mutual understanding across cultures? By teaching students through assignments such as this that it is at times appropriate to be provisional in their thinking, to be exploratory, to be curious, to be unsure, rather than only teaching them to be absolute, confident, certain, and assertive, we can begin to open the lines of dialogue across cultures. Assignments such as this teach students the skills necessary for engaging in inquiry by encouraging them to be always open to unexpected possibilities as they arise, encouraging them to be respectful of the diversity of opinions that exist on any given topic, encouraging them to ask questions, withhold hasty judgment, and truly listen to and understand others’ viewpoints. These skills are not only valuable in academic settings, but they are also valuable in real-
world intercultural communication. By enacting these skills, our students have the potential to engage those from different cultural backgrounds in meaningful dialogue, dialogue that hopefully will result in increased mutual understanding.
CONCLUSION:

OR, A CONCLUSION THAT IS NOT A CONCLUSION

Today I held conferences with my students to workshop their nonargumentative inquiry projects. One student had a question about how to write his conclusion. He is writing a comic strip about changes to the television cartoon industry, and he is unsure about what to depict in the last panel of his comic. I told him I couldn’t definitively answer his question because, while I am certain that he does not have to find the one real truth about the changing cartoon industry and state it conclusively at the end of his project, I do not know exactly how he could best represent in a conclusion the open-ended nature of his inquiry. He asked half jokingly if he should, in the last panel, just stop writing in the middle of a sentence. I looked at him and said, “Maybe. Maybe not.” It’s hard to imagine all the possibilities that exist. He could stop writing in the middle of a sentence. He could recap what he learned through his project, what new insights he has reached. He could ask the new questions he now has as a result of his inquiry. He could share what he thinks at this point are the best answers to the questions his inquiry asks, leaving the possibility open for future revisions to these answers. He could draw a large question mark to fill the final panel. He could finish with ellipses to represent the ongoing nature of his inquiry. He could come up with some other way of concluding his project, some way I can’t imagine until I see it.

Students such as this one who choose a linear format to represent a nonlinear inquiry often seem challenged by the prospect of reconciling the nonargumentative stance they have taken in their inquiries with the decisiveness associated with traditional
conclusions. Traditionally, conclusions are supposed to summarize. Conclusions are
supposed to reiterate the main findings contained within the forgoing argument.
Conclusions are supposed to be conclusive. When faced with the prospect of disrupting
these conventions, students often become unsure about what to do instead. Even those
who create a painting or use some other nonlinear format face similar challenges. After
all, paintings are supposed to fit within the canvas, so how is the painter to represent the
thinking that has gone on beyond the border? How is one to represent a nontraditional
action through a traditional medium? I can’t say I have the final answers to these
questions because, honestly, I am currently facing these same challenges myself as I try
to write this conclusion.

When I started this project, I wanted to create an inquiry more than an argument.
I wanted to enact the theory with which I was working. I wanted to create a hybrid,
nonlinear text, a text that asked questions and followed the tangential trains of thought to
which those questions led. Instead, I fear I have strayed too far to the argumentative. As
I face the penning of this conclusion, I realize the irony of the work I have created. I
have argued for not arguing, and I realize how straightforward it would be to summarize
my main points here in the conclusion. It would be more straightforward than if I had
followed my own assignment, the assignment I give my students. If I had done so, I
wouldn’t be able to explain in my conclusion that the point of the first chapter was to
probe into the dichotomies that are often constructed between different cultures’
rhetorical strategies. I wouldn’t be able to state that chapters two through four are meant
to provide varied theoretical lenses through which to investigate the notion of
communicating to reach mutual understanding, question the efficacy of argumentative modes for reaching mutual understanding, and examine the privileging of argumentative discourse in our teaching of composition. Had I fulfilled my own assignment, I wouldn’t be able to point out that chapter five is aimed at illustrating through example how the forgoing theoretical discussions can take a practical shape in the classroom. Or would I?

Is it necessarily true that an inquiry can’t be concluded? Do summarizing and wrapping up major lines of thinking have to be close-minded activities? Inquiries take twists and turns. Is it too close-ended to create a map of those twists and turns for the reader at the end of the journey? Is it overly assertive of the author to impose upon the reader one version of where the inquiry has been in its course? Or is it a helpful gesture, a gesture that assists the reader in understanding the author’s perspective, a gesture that can lead to mutual understanding? Maybe such a gesture is what Jim Corder meant when he wrote, “To offer our experience to another may be the only plenitude we have” (317). Perhaps a conclusion can be a place to offer such a plenitude. I’m not sure, as I see both sides of the situation. Conclusions may be too conclusive sometimes, but other times conclusions may help the reader and author reach mutual understanding. Maybe a conclusion doesn’t have to be seen as an imposition of the author’s perspective onto the reader. Maybe a conclusion can be seen as an opportunity for the reader to revisit some of what the author feels are the most important issues raised in the text, an invitation to gain deeper insight into the author’s perspective, an invitation to learn what the author feels is most meaningful. While a conclusion could be seen as an opportunity for the author to be one-sided, to lecture, to assert a stance, giving voice to perspectives does not
have to be argumentative. Instead, a conclusion that summarizes the author’s point of view could be seen as an opportunity for the reader to engage with the author, a step toward deeper mutual understanding.

As I attempt to express these varied perspectives on conclusions, I start to wonder about how well I have explored varied perspectives throughout this project. It seems true to me that my stance has not been as open-minded as I encourage my students to be as they progress through their inquiries. This project makes assertions, and it critiques others’ assertions. Perhaps I should apologize for these actions. Perhaps I should inquire into why I am not able to inquire when it comes to alternatives to argumentation and intercultural rhetoric. Perhaps I feel strongly that I have something of value to say, something that deserves to be proclaimed, something important that shouldn’t be lost in the midst of multiple possibilities. Perhaps I have reached a sense of certainty about these issues and want to share that sense with others. Is this what troubled Richard E. Young when he noticed his undergraduate students being certain about the pros and cons of euthanasia? Have I, like Young’s students, not reached considered judgments but rather argued my preexisting ideas? I hope not, but I wonder. I have some doubts. I feel I may have fallen into the traps into which I try to keep my students from falling. I worry that in this project I have let argumentative conventions shape my writing and my thinking too much. There are times in this work when I do not successfully enact the aim of broadening my perspectives. In chapter two, for example, where I propose an alternate way of teaching ethos to students, I do not spend time trying to understand why traditional notions of ethos are commonly taught. Instead, I delineate the dangers I see in
teaching ethos as credibility. What might I have found if I had paused to wonder why
this notion of ethos is privileged? What aim are theorists and teachers who present ethos
in this way trying to achieve? Isn’t there anything positive to traditional notions of
ethos? I do not spend time on such considerations in chapter two, and as such this
portion of the work fails as an inquiry.

I can’t completely surrender my work to total censure, though, for I recognize
rhetorical moves I have made that seem to go beyond the traditional academic argument.
At the same time that this project fails in places as an inquiry, it also seems to fulfill
several requirements of the assignment I give my students to complete. It does ask
questions, and it is hybrid to the extent that it blends the personal with the analytical and
even includes a few images. Despite my failure in chapter two to understand others’
perspectives, at other times it has shown a concern for where others’ perspectives, those
against which I protest, originate. I can see that in this text I work to understand, if not
agree with, where Kaplan and his followers gain their perspective on intercultural
rhetoric. In chapter one I acknowledge that the contrastive approach to intercultural
rhetoric that Kaplan and his followers practice can help ESL students gain fluency in
American English and American educational practices. I do not ultimately agree with
their methods, but I do show an understanding of the reasons behind them. This is the
sort of thinking my assignment encourages in the students who complete it. It is not
about abandoning one’s perspectives. Rather it is about broadening one’s understanding
of others’ viewpoints. My aim is to understand others and write in such a way as to
encourage others to understand me. Perhaps my treatment of the contrastive approach to
intercultural rhetoric is a good example of how to enact that aim, and as such I can acknowledge this work as at least a partially successful inquiry.

This acknowledgement still leaves me with the question of how to write this conclusion, though. As I wonder about this question, I wonder about my sense of what traditional conclusions are supposed to do. Why are conclusions of academic papers seen as places to finish, to summarize, to wrap up, to end, as if thought were that neat and tidy? Why don’t we think of conclusions as starting points for new ideas? Death, after all, is the end of life, but many faith traditions see death as the start of a new reality, an opportunity to leave one existence behind and begin another. Academic graduation ceremonies, too, are the end of a student’s career, but they are also referred to as commencements, as one commences a new sort of life at this transition. On the thirty-first of December each year, Americans and others around the world not only acknowledge the end of one calendar year, we also look ahead to a new year, making resolutions and celebrating a new beginning. What would happen if I wrote this conclusion as a new beginning? How would it be different from an introduction?

Perhaps I’m thinking too dualistically. I’m imagining polar opposites here, as I think of endings and beginnings. What comes between those possibilities? In academic essays, we speak of the body as coming between the introduction and conclusion. Can a conclusion just be more body? If so, why the compelling urge to call it a conclusion? What about a conclusion that is not the same as the body, but that neither only ends nor only begins either? What would this conclusion be like? Would it first end and then begin? For example, if I first summarize my text, then imagine new trains of thought,
have I created a nondualistic conclusion? Or have I just lived within the dichotomy, blending the opposites but not really transcending them or moving away from them?

Let me try thinking visually here.

![Fig. 6. Imagining a Conclusion](image)

In my current thinking about conclusions, I’m investigating the notions of finishing and beginning. As with the Burkean margin of overlap, in which a higher synthesis results when we find similarities between seemingly polar opposites, my current higher synthesis, represented by the shaded portion of the figure above, is to find a way to both finish and begin in my conclusion. I need to find the ways in which finishing and beginning overlap, then carry out that margin of overlap in my writing. This sounds promising, but somehow it leaves me feeling uninspired. Maybe my lack of inspiration stems from wanting to do something new in this conclusion, and I feel that if I write in a way that both concludes and introduces, I will be blending two preexisting forms of writing rather than inventing something more distinctive. Why this quest for distinctiveness? I’m not sure, exactly. While I recognize the value of blending opposites into a higher synthesis, and I see the potential held in its transcendence of dualistic ways of thinking, as I write I feel a lack of complete satisfaction with creating a blend of
finishing and beginning in this conclusion. Perhaps, while the Burkean model is a step toward embracing multiplicity, the model is not complex enough in this instance.

What other possibilities exist? I think I’ll turn to visual thought again to investigate this question.

![Diagram](image)

**Fig. 7. Reimagining a Conclusion**

What if playing and painting are also included? How do I write a conclusion in the form of the shaded shape above? How do I finish, begin, play, and paint all at once? (Playing and painting are just the first two options that came to my mind.) How do I write a conclusion that incorporates other actions and stances as I think of them? How do I finish, begin, play, paint, and narrate all at once? How do I finish, begin, play, paint, narrate, and ask all at once? How do I finish, begin, play, paint, narrate, ask, and dance all at once?

Why do I need to know what shape my conclusion will take before I begin writing it? Often, when I distribute the assignment sheet for the nonargumentative inquiry project, students look at me with an expression once called “the deer in
headlights look.” They look surprised, afraid, invigorated, and curious at the same time. I think they’re used to receiving assignment sheets that tell them what to write about and how to write it. This assignment does not do that. This assignment does suggest rhetorical stances to take and avoid, such as taking an inquiring stance while avoiding an assertive stance, but it does not spell out a paragraph structure, for example, that will help achieve these ends. It leaves the what and the how of the project up to the students to create, and this can be overwhelming at first. The same is true of my feelings as I create this conclusion. What should be the content of the conclusion is unclear, and how I should write it, what format it should take, is unclear as well. Perhaps if I had a camera with me right now, I could take a picture of my expression and see if it shows “the deer in headlights look.”

Perhaps at this point there’s nothing left to do but stop pondering about conclusions and just write a conclusion, stop trying to figure out the conclusion before it’s been written and just write it, stop trying to plan the conclusion in advance and just let it emerge. Perhaps. Perhaps not. Perhaps what I’ve already written is enough. Perhaps not.

Here I sit
at my desk—
a change of scenery
from the coffee shop.

Here I sit—
wondering
imagining.

The radio plays
not so quietly in the background.
I wonder—does my choice of music influence my typing?

A jogger jogs past my window.

Every day he jogs—

uphill
downhill
long strides
short strides
arms pumping
head weaving.

Others drive past in their cars.

So many cars.

How do jogger and cars coexist?

Does the jogger feel afraid as the cars dash past?

Do they understand each other, drivers and jogger?

Maybe.

Maybe not.

A DJ comes on the radio—
advertising chatter—
she annoys me.
I change the channel
from pop to hip-hop.

How do these musics coexist in my taste?

Do they understand each other?

Do they threaten each other’s existence?

The sky is cloudy today
yet the temperature is warm—

another odd juxtaposition.

The singer says “release your inhibitions”

“the rest is still unwritten”

then I change the channel again

leaving the rest unwritten.
APPENDIX A


Composition Courses

English 100
English 100 is designed to introduce students to college-level reading and writing expectations. Through the emphasis on analysis, inferential thinking, and careful consideration of evidence, the course seeks to strengthen students' critical thinking while asking them to apply that thinking to a variety of texts-visual texts such as advertisements and photographs, academic and popular printed texts from journals and magazines, and living texts such as personal experience, communities, and society.

English 101
This course will focus on close reading and written analysis of a wide range of texts, which can include nonfiction prose, historical documents, creative texts, film, visual images, speeches, and so on, offering a soft bridge from high school to an entry level college writing course. Students will learn how to select and use research correctly and effectively. You will also study and practice a variety of methods for reading and analyzing texts both in in-class and out-of-class writing. Each essay will involve multiple drafts essays and writing workshops. In essay one, you will learn analytical methods for reading closely. In essay two, you will consider how a text gains meaning from its contexts: other texts, issues, cultures, eras, and so on. In essay three, you will consider how your own culture influences how you read and write about texts. In sum, students will learn a repertoire of strategies for close reading, critical thinking, focused research, and analytical writing as well as understand how their own lives influence what and how they read and write. Students will learn to write sustained, critical analyses and arguments that incorporate evidence from a variety of sources including their own experiences.

English 102
This course builds on the close-reading and research strategies introduced in English 101, but focuses more on the craft of writing and the students’ own fields of interest. The key concepts and skills taught in 102 are rhetorical analysis, research, reflection, and revision. In the first unit, students will explore texts for their rhetorical situations and the strategies used to meet those situations. In the second unit, they will apply what they have learned in the first unit to their own writing as they design an inquiry into an issue in their field of interest. They will learn effective research strategies and analyze they sources they discover as well as learn ways to integrate sources into their texts to give substance and credibility to their arguments. They will also learn to read their own rhetorical situations so that their essays appeal to their target audience, accommodate their and their audience’s context, and fulfill their purpose. In the third unit, they will choose two essays to rewrite and revise as well as reflect upon themselves as writers and look closely at
their writing practices and habits. In a series of workshops, they will learn to revise more effectively as well as describe what and how they have revised.

One of the goals of 102 is help students understand that texts are effective and successful not by accident but by purposefully designing them to meet their rhetorical situation. Because 102 may be the last writing class that many students take, it is structured so as to help them become more independent writers—more conscious of how they write and what their strengths and weaknesses are, as well as more aware of what steps to take to improve their writing.

**ESL Composition Courses**

*English 106*

This course is designed for international students and other non-native speakers of English who will benefit from extra practice at college-level writing in English. The course is taught by teachers with special training in the field of ESL (English as a Second Language.) This classroom setting is diverse and dynamic with students from all over the world. Reading material, writing assignments, and discussions on language use issues are relevant and specific to multi-lingual students. English 106 is comparable to the English 100 course for native speakers of English.

*English 107*

This course, which corresponds to English 101, is designed to introduce ESL speakers to the strategies and conventions of American academic discourse, both formal and informal. A personal narrative, a textual analysis, and a documented argument constitute the major writing assignments. Topics for essays evolve from your personal knowledge and interests in certain issues. Because the course emphasizes writing as a process of discovery, you will take your essays through several revisions based on responses from your instructor and your classmates. You will use journal writing to invent ideas and to record your responses to assigned readings. Stylistic, syntactic, and grammatical problems will be part of class discussion.

*English 108*

English 108 corresponds to English 102 and is the second-semester First-Year Composition course for ESL speakers. In this course, you will continue to strengthen your awareness of American academic writing and research strategies and applications of those strategies. Through journal writing and other pre-writing activities, you will reflect upon the texts and synthesize your ideas and experiences with those presented in the texts. You will begin by writing a personal response to a story, poem, or other text. You will also write an analysis of a text by studying its rhetorical and cultural contexts. Your next essay will consist of a detailed analysis of a novel or other long text in which you incorporate research into your writing. In the final (in-class) essay, you will synthesize and expand on the writing strategies you have developed over the semester.
Honors Composition Courses

English 103H
This course is the honors equivalent of English 101. Because placement in the honors sequence usually indicates advanced competence in writing and a varied background in reading, the course aims to refine your critical thinking and writing skills. Works may include major literary texts, significant scientific and historical writings, outstanding dramas, and other art forms. Class discussions, informal writings, documented papers, and essays written in class provide a forum for assessing ideas and writing in ways you will be expected to perform throughout your college experience.

English 104H
This course provides students who have completed English 103H with further opportunities to expand their understanding and application of rhetoric and to expose you to various challenging ideas in contemporary culture, the academic community, the world at large. You will critically assess strategies employed by other writers and compose essays of your own. Other activities include informal writings, active discussions, in-class essays, and a formal, documented presentation of research.

English 109H
This course is designed to prepare you to integrate critical reading, thinking, and writing tasks in one semester. You will engage in a wide range of intellectual, aesthetic, and rhetorical inquiries. Readings include a series of interdisciplinary texts that are thematically relevant, culturally diverse, and representative of a wide variety of voices speaking for different purposes to different audiences. Art forms other than literature are incorporated into the course in which principles of rhetoric (the study and practice of how texts produce their effects) and poetics (theories of reading, criticizing, and interpreting texts) merge. You will work independently and collaboratively to prepare written and oral texts that are shared with your class. A research component is also required. Only available for students through Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or portfolio placement.

Advanced Composition Courses

English 207: Sophomore Composition
English 207 is open to all students who have completed English 101 and 102. Certain departments and colleges require majors to take this course. 207 offers you further opportunities to study and practice forms of expository and argumentative writing. The syllabus varies according to the individual instructor, but all instructors emphasize understanding of the rhetorical situation in both student and professional writing. You will write four to six essays, taking them through a process of invention, drafting, and revision, read and discuss examples of professional nonfiction prose, and participate in large- and small-group workshops of class members' writing. In most classes, students may choose their own topics in order to develop writing related to their own individual
disciplines, though these are written to a general rather than to a specialized audience. Over the course of the semester, you will create a portfolio of their writing. Prerequisite: completion of Freshman Composition is required.

**English 306: Advanced Composition**

In this course you will study classical rhetoric and contemporary research on composition in order to further develop your ability to write and communicate. You will research rhetorical situations, write essays, and critique fellow students' work both formally and informally. The course explores how to write persuasively in different rhetorical situations. Prerequisite: students should be juniors or seniors who have completed the Upper Division Writing Proficiency Requirements.

**English 307: Business Writing**

This course introduces the theory and practice of communicating within organizations, with emphasis on written communication. You will learn how to determine the needs of a reader and select the most appropriate organization and language for each letter or report. You will progress from routine correspondence to cases requiring more persuasion or tact. You will prepare a resume and cover letter as well as a formal report based on original research. Instruction includes class discussion, group exercises, individual conferences, and one or two library tours. Assignments and texts vary from section to section, but all sections have regular writing assignments. Prerequisites: Freshman Composition and successful completion of Upper Division Writing Proficiency Examination. Junior or senior standing is recommended.

**English 308: Technical Writing**

This course is for juniors and seniors majoring in scientific or related disciplines. Through regular exploratory writing, you will produce a final project that represents significant work in your field and is presented in written form appropriate to a particular, real audience and situation. You will learn how to find and use library resources and field methods in their areas of specialization. Writing assignments include a formal research report and five to six short papers, such as a letter of application, trip report, proposal, progress report, or assignments derived from rhetorical principles and strategies. All students select subjects for their writing assignments from within their major study areas. Prerequisites: Freshman Composition and successful completion of Upper Division Writing Proficiency Examination.

**English 414: Advanced Professional Writing**

This course is only offered on an occasional basis. It is designed to help you write typical technical documents and to give you experience creating web pages using hypertext mark-up language—tasks technical writers in most fields must do. You will employ advanced editing skills, practice writing on-line documentation, and develop hypertext links. Instruction throughout the course stresses the rhetorical skills needed to create effective texts that meet the constraints of particular writing contexts. You will write detailed rhetorical analyses for each of their writing
assignments and produce effective letters, memos, technical descriptions, proposals, resumes, progress reports, and other appropriate documents for their course projects. Prerequisite: English 306, 307, or 308.
APPENDIX B

Final Paper

Assignment:
As the syllabus states, this paper “will be written in a collaborative, hybrid, inquiring manner about any issue of concern.”

Collaboration: For this paper, you will need to listen to and use the words of others in your writing. You are required to cite from the writing prompts of at least one of your classmates and a passage from at least one author you’ve read for class since the midterm paper. Your quotations should be used to show an appreciation of the people who wrote them, an appreciation of the meaning behind the words.

Hybrid: Hybridity means not necessarily conforming to the standards of Academic English. It might mean using various font types within one text. It might mean incorporating visual rhetoric into an otherwise linguistic text. It might mean using more than one genre (poetry, narrative, business memo) within your text to convey your meaning. Your options here are almost limitless.

Inquiring: Inquiring means to write without arguing. It means to investigate rather than to assert. Writing in an inquiring manner means, as Young explains, writing from a state of mind without answers. It means, as Gage suggests, using writing as a means for creating new knowledge in both the writer and reader. To write this paper you should find an issue about which you feel a “felt difficulty” and create an inquiry into that issue. To provide context for the issue you choose, you should refer to at least one source from outside the class readings.

Format:
Your paper should be at least 8 pages long. You must document your sources, although you are not required to do so in MLA format. You also do not need to follow MLA guidelines for format, since this will be a hybrid text. Paper drafts should be brought to class on the dates listed below. Hard copies of your final papers, along with hard copies of the drafts, should be handed in by the due date listed below. All final drafts should include highlighting with a marker or, if using a color printer, with the highlight function of your word processor to indicate revisions made. You should also hand in this assignment sheet with your final paper. See the diagram below. Any late papers will result in a 10-point per day reduction of the paper’s final grade.
Conferences:
Given the unique formats and topics of each of your papers, I will be holding individual conferences on the dates listed below. You should come to your conference with two copies of your draft. During your conference, you will read your draft aloud, then receive feedback from me. Comments will focus mainly on global-level revisions (i.e., is the content appropriate, is the organization effective, are main points well developed). Local-level revisions (i.e., style and mechanics) most likely will not be addressed during conferences, although students are responsible for revising their papers for these matters before the final due date.

Due Dates: Draft 1: Group 1 ( ) T 4/19 Office Hours
Group 2 ( ) T 4/19
Group 3 ( ) R 4/21 Office Hours
Group 4 ( ) R 4/21
Group 5 ( ) T 4/26 Office Hours
Group 6 ( ) T 4/26

Final Draft: R 4/28

Grading Policy:
Your final grade will be determined not only by your level of mastery of several skills, but also by your ability to respond to feedback between drafts. All assignments are expected in class on the due date. Any late assignments should be turned in to the English Department (ML 445) at any time other than our scheduled class meeting, or to me during our next class.

Final Paper Grading Guide

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<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>The final paper content is completely appropriate to the audience and purpose. (27-30 pts)</td>
<td>The final paper content is mostly appropriate to the audience and purpose. (24-26 pts)</td>
<td>The final paper content is somewhat appropriate to the audience and purpose. (21-23 pts)</td>
<td>The final paper content is barely appropriate to the audience and purpose. (18-20 pts)</td>
<td>The final paper content is not at all appropriate to the audience and purpose. (0-17 pts)</td>
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<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
<td>The main points are superbly developed, showing excellent depth of thought. (27-30 pts)</td>
<td>The main points are well developed, showing good depth of thought. (24-26 pts)</td>
<td>The main points are adequately developed, showing average depth of thought. (21-23 pts)</td>
<td>The main points are barely developed, showing weak depth of thought. (18-20 pts)</td>
<td>The main points are not at all developed, showing no depth of thought. (0-17 pts)</td>
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### Mechanics

| (10 pts) | The writer uses an extremely clear means of documenting sources. (9-10 pts) | The writer uses a mostly clear means of documenting sources. (8 pts) | The writer uses a somewhat clear means of documenting sources. (7 pts) | The writer uses a barely clear means of documenting sources. (6 pts) | The writer does not clearly document sources. (0-5 pts) |

### Revision

| (30 pts) | The final paper went through all required drafts, and revisions were exceptional. (27-30 pts) | The final paper went through all required drafts, and revisions were significant. (24-26 pts) | The final paper went through all required drafts, and revisions were adequate. (21-23 pts) | The final paper went through all required drafts, and revisions were barely significant. (18-20 pts) | The final paper went through all required drafts, and revisions were insignificant. (0-17 pts) |

**Total points and final grade:**
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