

Editors' Introduction

"Our Work"

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When we were still graduate students and began to consider founding the journal that would become *Pedagogy*, we little thought about what shape the university would take over a decade hence. But we were concerned, even then, with what the discipline seemed to value, with the rather uneven weighting of the reward system given the hours of our day. Ten years into *Pedagogy*'s publication and writing now as tenured professors, we find that though much has changed, much of what has appeared in these pages still resonates. Indeed, in the very first issue of *Pedagogy*, George Levine's (2001: 7) commentary argued that English studies is "a nation divided" between our work as teachers and our work as scholars. His description of our dilemma remains remarkably accurate.

"My work" usually means research and writing as opposed to work in the classroom or service to department or university. But what is most remarkable about this obvious fact of university life is that despite professional devaluing and recent years of attack on the professoriate for not caring about teaching, "my work" normally waits in second place after dedicated, even passionate commitment to students and teaching. Even those who measure academic success, as most do, by the number of course releases they get and the number of competitive leaves they can win tend on the whole to take teaching very seriously. That's lucky.

Since 2001 *Pedagogy* has sought to broaden and redefine "our work," and this special anniversary issue celebrates both where we have come from and where we currently are — at a pivotal point in the history of higher education.

When the journal first appeared, we were most concerned with making the scholarship of teaching — or, better, the critical discourse on teaching across English studies — ever more relevant within the field. We wrote in our first “Editors’ Introduction” that *Pedagogy* sought to introduce new ways to conceive of and critically engage our work as teachers: “Above all, we believe that the essays [in this issue] represent a starting point: they engage the idea of devoting our scholarly energy to teaching. Because there is little tradition of critical work on teaching, we lack a language for speaking about it. . . . This journal, we hope, will help create the necessary discourse. Its early issues might be considered attempts — ‘essays’ in the Montaignian sense — in that direction” (Holberg and Taylor 2001: 5).

From this beginning, we have gone on to publish 185 articles and commentaries that span the subdisciplinary specializations in English studies. In addition to exploring a theme in depth in three special issues,¹ we believe we have enlarged the scholarship of teaching in English studies generally. Here is just a sampling of topics that have emerged in the past ten years. We have published work on writing studies, such as Joshua Fausty’s “Framing Composition: A Graduate Instructor’s Perspective” (2001) and Thomas Hothem’s “Suburban Studies and College Writing: Applying Ecomposition” (2009). We have also provided a forum for a delicious array of methods for approaching literature. Take, for example, our symposium on teaching the *Faerie Queene* (2003); Marsha Bryant’s “IMAX Authorship: Teaching Plath and Her *Unabridged Journals*” (2004); Karen M. Cardozo’s “At the Museum of Natural Theory: The Experiential Syllabus (or, What Happens When Students Act Like Professors)” (2006); Dawn M. Vernooy-Epp’s “Teaching Mary Darby Robinson’s Reading List: Romanticism, Recovery Work, and Reconsidering Anthologies” (2009); and Michael Lund and Leigha McReynolds’s “The Class as Periodical: A Contemporary ‘Humanities Lab’ ” (2009). We have quite a body of work on what we would call “professional issues” that go beyond individual classrooms or curricula to influence “our work” in larger ways. For instance, many of our commentaries and articles have engaged issues such as reenvisioning graduate education (see Schilb 2001; Crisco et al. 2003; and Thomas 2005); disciplinary differences and divisions (Levine 2001; Lim 2003; Beech and Lindquist 2004; McCurrie 2004; Long 2005; Jeffrey Williams 2008); administering programs (Miller 2001; Stygall 2003; Harris 2004); and the changing culture of higher education (see esp. Bérubé 2002; Insko 2003; Holberg and Taylor 2005, 2007, and 2009; and Bauer 2007).

Two of the most productive topics over the last ten years deal, not

surprisingly, with the opportunities and threats of teaching English in a globalized, digitized world. The journal has featured pieces on online identity (DeVoss and Selfe 2002; Lenard 2005); hypertext (McDonald 2002); the use of digital archives and tools (Flanders 2002; Rice 2005; DigiRhet.org 2006; Jones 2007; Norcia 2008, Pennell 2008; and Tara Williams 2009); and how the pedagogical, technological, ethical, and rhetorical intersect (see esp. Weinstock 2004; Purdy 2005; and Ritter 2006). Finally, our largest group of submissions has focused on multiculturalism and globalism. Here is just a small taste of the scholarship we have published in this area over the past ten years:

“Encountering ‘Third World Women’: Rac(e)ing the Global in a U.S. Classroom (Chatterjee 2002)

“Broadly Representative’? The MLA’s Approaches to Teaching World Literature Series” (Meyer 2003)

“Starting Somewhere Better: Revisiting Multiculturalism in First-Year Composition” (Reid 2004)

“Postcoloniality, Critical Pedagogy, and English Studies in India” (Baral 2006)

“Why Read *Reading Lolita*? Teaching Critical Thinking in a Culture of Choice” (Hay 2008)

“Service Learning, Multiculturalism, and the Pedagogies of Difference” (Jay 2008)

“National Narratives and the Politics of Inclusion: Historicizing American Literature Anthologies” (Lockard and Sandell 2008)

“From Language Experience to Classroom Practice: Affirming Linguistic Diversity in Writing Pedagogy” (Lovejoy, Fox, and Wills 2009)

In this anniversary issue, we wanted to further the conversation by reflecting on what colleagues from across the discipline see as the most pressing pedagogical issues facing teachers and university citizens in 2010 and beyond. Their answers, like our profession itself, are wonderfully thoughtful and diverse.

Clearly, however, the current moment influences greatly how we react pedagogically, and, not surprisingly, the economic recession has brought the question of the relevance of “our work” to the forefront. As David Laurence (2008: 4) notes in introducing a recent issue of the *ADE Bulletin*, “Economic stress lends new impetus to trends in educational and public policy and gives new urgency to questions of purpose and pertinence as departments and

disciplines compete to make their case, whether within their institutions or to the wider public. In good times and bad, the case for the humanities has always been an uphill battle—the hill just gets steeper when times get worse.”

In this downturn we must demonstrate the relevance of the entire enterprise of the humanities. Despite what may seem a sudden “crisis” brought on by a perfect storm in the financial markets, trends in the higher education workforce over the past ten years clearly reflect values that place our work in the humanities at the bottom of the institutional heap. A recent study by AFT Higher Education (2009: 5–6) found that between 1997 and 2007 the following occurred:

- College enrollments increased by 3 million students.
- Although the *overall* number of instructional staff increased, “The number of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty members declined from approximately one-third of the instructional staff in 1997 to just over one-quarter in 2007.”
- The number of noninstructional staff grew by 24 percent.
- The number of administrators grew by 41 percent.

As our economy shrinks, and we compete for fewer students with more limited resources, who imagines that this staffing trend will shift? Institutions are converting tenure-track lines to temporary ones, full-time positions to part time ones, and eliminating many jobs altogether. Laurence (2008: 3) cites stark statistics: the 2008–2009 edition of the Modern Language Association’s *Job Information List (JIL)* carried 322 (21.9%) fewer jobs than the year before; the decline marks “the biggest one-year [drop] in the *JIL*’s thirty-four-year history, both numerically and in percentage terms.”

Doubters of the humanities’ “usefulness” have used the economic downturn to argue for more obviously vocational paths toward degrees and for greater oversight and accountability. Some argue for three-year bachelor’s degrees, finding that “core” curriculum courses, particularly in the humanities, are extraneous. On another side, Stanley Fish (2008: 153) asserts that even if we stick to our academic values—doing the job we were hired to do and only that job—thus depriving conservative critics and watchdog groups of their arguments, we would still have the problem of money: “Who is going to pay for the purified academic enterprise I celebrate in these pages? The unhappy fact is that the more my fellow academics obey the imperative always to academicize, the less they will have a claim to a skeptical public’s support.”²

Yet a third and perhaps the most radical perspective comes from Mark C. Taylor, who in his 2009 op-ed in the *New York Times* calls for a total restructuring of higher education, labeling graduate education “the Detroit of higher learning.” Colleges and universities, “like Wall Street and Detroit, must be rigorously regulated and completely restructured.”³ Meanwhile, consumed by work in the factories of higher education, we are often so busy figuring out how to teach differently (online, with larger class sizes and an ever-shrinking full-time, tenured professoriate) that even if we could convince skeptics of our relevance (an effort both Fish and Laurence say would be counterproductive), we would be hard pressed to find the time necessary to make these arguments.

Several authors in this issue of *Pedagogy* take up the question of the place of English (and the liberal arts in general) in our new economic environment. In particular, Colin Jager, Michael Bérubé, Paul Lauter, Marc Bousquet, and Sheila T. Cavanagh discuss various responses to this question of value. What is key, we believe, is not just reasserting the importance of the humanities in the contemporary university but imagining their value in light of the discipline required by harsh economic realities. Despite what the field of English studies might think about “our work,” despite what the profession still values by and large, the public tends to focus on the work of teaching. The question then becomes twofold: First, how do we do that work even better — even as we struggle to do it for less — *and*, in so doing, make the case for liberal education through our actions in the classroom? Second, how do we resist the shrinking of the tenure-track professoriate? Is it possible to convince parents and taxpayers that we, the faculty, *are* doing right by students, that we *are* upholding our end of a bargain to educate students in habits of mind that seem to be increasingly doomed by public indifference to the ends of a liberal education? Is this something we are willing to fight for, or will English studies soon become a very different enterprise?

These are some of the hard questions we will face as we enter the next phase of the journal, and we hope you will continue to participate in these difficult discussions — on your campuses, within our professional organizations, and by contributing to *Pedagogy*, as you have done for the past ten years. We are astounded that ten years have passed since the launch of this journal. Time has flown, mostly because our team at Duke University Press and our editorial board and reviewers have made things so easy for us. Despite economic challenges affecting academic presses,⁴ we have always felt fully supported by Duke University Press and have never received anything except the most wonderful treatment from the staff there. We also want to

take this opportunity again to thank our superb editorial board and the large group of colleagues who serve as reviewers, their generous and diligent work making ours as editors possible. We remain deeply conscious of the truly *pedagogical* relationship between our reviewers and us and between us as editors and our authors, and we take great joy in the reciprocal quality of our editorial work. We thank our home institutions for their ongoing support. We acknowledge, too, the efforts of several very fine editorial assistants who have made the daily chores of the journal lighter and less burdensome — we have been lucky to have strength succeed strength. And, of course, our family and friends have our love and gratitude, as always.

We are indeed blessed that “our work” includes editing this journal, and we want to thank all of you for participating in it with us for the past decade.

Notes

1. Vol. 7, no. 1, “Wayne Booth: Perspectives on a Master Teacher” (guest edited by James Phelan); vol. 7, no. 3, “Anglo-American Pedagogy” (guest edited by Ben Knights and Nicole King); vol. 8, no. 3, “Professional Development” (guest edited by Barbara Schneider). We also have a special issue in the works for volume 10, “Teaching in the Small College.”
2. Fish (2008: 154) notes the decline in state support for higher education, in some states to a 10% appropriation or less, and asks “at what point is it no longer accurate to designate an institution ‘public’?” The question is particularly relevant given that taxpayers base accountability and “value-added” arguments on the warrant that their tax dollars are funding “our work”: teaching the state’s undergraduates.
3. To make higher education more “agile, adaptive, and imaginative,” Taylor suggests six steps: (1) restructuring the curriculum to be more cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural; (2) replacing permanent departments for undergraduate education with problem-focused departments; (3) increasing collaboration among institutions; (4) transforming the traditional dissertation and moving it away from the book; (5) expanding the range of professional options for graduate students; and (6) imposing mandatory retirement and abolishing tenure.
4. We have written in these pages on the economics of scholarly publishing and their relationship to potential shifts in our reward system, as we look not only at alternative publication venues and formats but also at how the scholarship of teaching is valued in tenure and promotion decisions (Holberg and Taylor 2004). Here we note that the so-called crisis in scholarly publishing in the humanities predates a recession that will no doubt accelerate changes in academic publishing.

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