

# **Composing Theory and Pedagogy Examination**

**Fall 1998**

## **Instructions**

You have four hours to complete this examination.

You must answer three (3) questions, one from each section of the exam.

Questions in section A are worth fifty percent (50%). Questions in sections B and C are each worth twenty-five percent (25%). Plan your time according to the value of the question.

In your responses be sure to refer to a range of sources. Do not write extensively on a major theorist or theory in more than one answer.

**Section A**

1. Many different critical perspectives inform research and teaching practice for composition theory and pedagogy. Perspectives include: current traditionalism, expressivism, cognitivism, constructionism, discourse analysis, and genre theory. With such a variety of perspectives making up the field, the composition researcher must consider the implications and consequences of focussing her efforts on one or two perspectives or broadening her scope with a more eclectic approach that encompasses multiple perspectives. Discuss the implications and consequences (for research and teaching) of specializing in one or two areas versus taking a more eclectic approach.
2. Composition researchers and theorists are currently debating the value of "general writing skills instruction" (GWSI) courses. According to Joseph Petraglia, GWSI courses claim to provide students with writing skills that transcend any particular content and context. Discuss some of the theoretical, social, and pedagogical issues involved in this debate.
3. Some composition researchers claim that empirical research results support their theoretical insights and often their pedagogical practices. Select one empirical tradition (for example, the experimental, textual analytic, or ethnographic) and discuss its impact on some aspect of theory or pedagogy.

**Section B**

1. Based on an evaluation of the theoretical texts in Category A and the textbooks in Category B, discuss whether or not (and to what extent) composition research and theory makes its way into textbooks and handbooks.
2. Your chair has asked you to develop a writing course for Mature Students. You receive a letter from the Director of Mature Students Services asking for information about the textbook you have selected and about your approach to the course. Write a letter to the director in which you explain your text selection, given your course goals and the students in the course.

**Section C**

1. To what extent is teaching ideological critique a part of composition teaching? In your answer, you should refer to specific theories and theorists of ideology and to a specific teaching context (e.g., first-year composition, WAC, graduate courses in composition theory, etc.).
2. Design and justify a classroom activity that exemplifies for students the concept of ideology.