

But why bother? What does this have to do with teaching composition? On a practical level—nothing. There are no quick fixes or assignments to be gleaned from its pages unless we want to engage our composition students in the left-right controversy. But there are some theoretical underpinnings upon which we might base investigations into the hemispheric arrays in our classrooms. And further still, this book can serve us as quick reviews (if we use the index and not read straight through) for history of written language, theory of language acquisition, and anthropology. Yet here in this fertile soup of science is the reminder that a generative, vocabulary-rich, capacity of language in both spoken and written forms sets humans apart from all other life and that is some of what composition studies ought to be about.

—Margaret-Rose Marek  
Texas Christian University

---

*An Introduction to Composition Studies* —ed. Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate; Oxford University Press; 1991; 182 pp. ISBN 0-19-506363-5.

Introductory texts are notoriously difficult to write. How, for example, do academic writers insure that the introductory text is balanced, that it looks at the subject from many angles, that it avoids the crimping prejudices of only one writer's vision?

Erika Lindemann and Gary Tate attempt to introduce the subject of "composition studies" by isolating the most important questions in composition, by rounding up the leading authorities on those questions, and by asking those writers to provide comprehensive answers for the layperson. Certainly, few write more articulately about the history of the discipline than Robert Connors or know more about the actual practice of teaching writing than Lisa Ede. And who better than Andrea Lunsford to write an overview of the "nature of composition studies?"

For the most part, Lindemann and Tate's strategy works well in this informative collection of essays. Consequently, *An Introduction to Composition Studies* could be used in an introductory course possibly at the master's level, something, perhaps, to assist young graduate students trying desperately to make some sense out of the composition class they are teaching or are about to teach.

In the main, the essays are clearly and concisely written, offering enough information to answer a reader's questions, yet not droning on about concepts or information more correctly left to the specialists. For example, Patrick Scott's chapter on bibliography is especially illuminating on the subject of how we record our scholarship and how we can go

about retrieving it. Though somewhat rebellious in places, James Slevin's essay on the politics of the profession asks legitimate questions about how we are regarded by others and how, indeed, we should regard ourselves. John T. Gage carefully separates the twisted strands of rhetoric and composition to show that are really quite different entities, a herculean task, indeed.

A few of the essays momentarily engage in epistemological juggling that may leave the amateur wondering about its connection to composition studies. But eventually the sheer weight of information and insight redeem the remainder of the essay. Some may even justify these philosophical gyrations as part of the full complexity and sophistication of our discipline.

In the end, the reader comes away recommending it to others for its valuable information, for its courageous attempt to answer knotty questions, and for the cogent presentation of our discipline's *raison d'être*.

—Marshall Myers  
University of Louisville

---