American rhetoric. Bacon positions *Freedom’s Journal* as a central—and transformative—component of antebellum black “life, letters, and activism”: “It gave voice to the concerns of African Americans about the issues that affected them and the nation . . . in ways that influenced black and white abolitionists and reformers” (252). Without pressing the argument too far, Bacon offers a most compelling case for why this newspaper deserves our attention. A vehicle of growing African American literacy, a complement to the burgeoning black literary societies, an instrument of antislavery efforts, and an important mode of rhetorical education, *Freedom’s Journal* was groundbreaking in the struggle against oppression. Bacon achieves her aim of demonstrating its great influence without idealizing its editors and contributors or ignoring its faults and cleavages. Bacon has done a masterful job of providing a history of early black rhetoric and writing that gives agency to the African Americans themselves who wrote for, read, distributed, and discussed the paper. *Freedom’s Journal* is essential reading as it expands our current understanding of the role of rhetoric in early African American politics and culture.

Columbia, SC

**Work Cited**


Reviewed by Amy Lynch-Biniek, Kutztown University

Before I began writing this review, I did some homework: I read at least a dozen other reviews published in *Composition Studies*. I was aiming to understand the style, structure, and other textual conventions of the medium. According to Anne Beaufort’s new text, this skill in analyzing the norms of a discourse community is precisely what students of freshman composition need. In *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*, Beaufort presents the results of a six-year study in which she followed the writing development of Tim, encompassing his four undergraduate years as a double major in history and engineering. The study included interviews with Tim and with his freshman composition teacher, Carla, as well as analysis of the feedback he received on written work in composition and in first-year through advanced courses in history and engineering. Beaufort follows up on Tim for two years after graduation, learning about the writing he does on the job as an engineer,
as well as his changing views of writing. Beaufort states the purpose of her study as examining a question that has frustrated academics since the genesis of the field: “why graduates of freshman writing cannot produce acceptable written documents in other contexts” (6). She wishes, moreover, to uncover data that could “build more coherent writing instruction at the post-secondary level” (6). The issue at the heart of the matter is transfer of learning, something she finds lacking throughout Tim’s college experience. Under consideration as well, I believe, is a larger question: Just what is the purpose of freshman composition?

While she focuses on the transfer of writing skills across the disciplines Tim studies, Beaufort clearly evokes what is perhaps the most important debate surrounding freshman composition. What is it that a composition class should do? The field has long manifested a variety of answers, including instruction in a set of “universal” writing skills; introduction to a “general” academic discourse; writing in individual majors; appreciation for literary forms and language; and practice in the principles of rhetoric. Beaufort suggests that even composition courses that employ a variety of approaches tend to leave students like Tim without a clear sense of what to do when faced with writing tasks that do not share the same sensibilities as their composition teachers.

Beaufort admits the danger of drawing any generalizable conclusions from the study of a single student (7); indeed, Carla notes this concern in the Epilogue, in which she and Beaufort reflect on the experience of the study. Nevertheless, many teachers will recognize Tim and the difficulties he faces in adjusting to writing in multiple contexts. Moreover, her small if long-term study marks a good beginning—Beaufort notes throughout chapter 1 the dearth of longitudinal research of student writing knowledge and progress.

While she appears primarily in chapter 3 and the Epilogue, I found Carla the most intriguing figure in the text. Frankly, I have been Carla, as have the majority of us teaching composition today. Carla was originally and primarily schooled in literature studies—Beaufort calls her a “poet”—yet finds herself teaching composition. Her employment mirrors that of the profession as a whole: despite the growth of graduate programs in composition, the CCCC Committee on Part-time / Adjunct Issues reported in 2001 that the bulk of classes are still taught by part-time employees, adjuncts, and graduate assistants, even in free-standing writing programs (340). This majority is, like Carla, lacking significant study in composition. That Carla expresses some defensiveness in the post-study interview comes as no surprise; she is a hard-working teacher trying earnestly to learn and perform in an area outside her expertise.

Beaufort seems to avoid directly addressing the issue of the who’s who of composition teaching, but occasional pointed remarks make clear her take on it. In chapter 2 she notes that at the institution where the study took place, “the writing program was overseen . . . by faculty who were not part of the professional community of composition and rhetoric scholars” and that those teaching composition had limited time and resources for studying the field (31). This, Beaufort says, was
“a contributing factor in the delivery of instruction” (31). She observes, moreover, that Carla focused her class on writing genres in the humanities, such as the literary nonfiction essay. Such assignments, she finds, did not prepare Tim for genres in history and engineering. In fact, she notes the confusion Tim experiences as he tries to apply standards of the composition class in new contexts. Rather than recognizing that a different discipline may have different standards, he initially blames the teachers or the assignments for his difficulty in adjusting. I appreciate Beaufort’s implications here, but I wish she had taken the opportunity to say directly what so few are willing to say: that composition might best be taught by compositionists. Still, I understand her subtle approach to this issue—I have been wary of saying as much in committee and department meetings, worried that I might alienate the literature-dominated faculty.

Beaufort returns instead to the issue of how a composition class might best be structured to ensure that students learn concepts and skills that can indeed be transferred to the work they do in any context. Her analysis depends heavily on the concept of discourse communities. Acknowledging the critiques of discourse communities in composition scholarship, she nonetheless sees it as the best framework for the transfer of learning. Her description of Tim’s introduction to the history and engineering discourse communities (notably without much in the way of explicit writing instruction from teachers in either discipline) does well to demonstrate the real differences that exist among disciplines in the knowledge domains of writing process, subject matter, rhetoric, and genre. I could not argue with her claim that little of what Tim learned about writing in his composition class would be useful in his future writing. This does not seem to reflect on the capabilities of his composition instructor, for whom Beaufort repeatedly expresses respect; instead, it suggests that writing curriculum and staffing have become too detached from composition research into the acquisition of literacy.

Composition instructors who rely on a version of current-traditional rhetoric or employ traditional literary nonfiction models may feel defensive in the face of Beaufort’s claims. She is not alone in her call for curricular reform, however. For instance, she compares her focus on teaching the analysis of discourse communities to what David Smit calls “rhetorical flexibility.” Indeed, Beaufort often refers to Smit’s The End of Composition Studies. While the curricular proposals in Smit’s text differ in many ways from Beaufort’s suggestions, she does seem to be addressing what Smit calls “[t]he problem facing composition studies as a field,” namely, “how to respond to the substantial picture of what we know” about learning to write (181). Beaufort’s response is to teach students the analytical and meta-cognitive skills necessary to discover and learn the conventions of any discourse community.

The author provides an appendix filled with ideas for implementing this approach, including activities, suggested reading, assignments, and a course outline developed along with Dana Driscoll. Many of the assignments may seem familiar to compositionists. In fact, I began to feel the target audience of this text...
might be administrators, specifically those who persist in the attitude that anyone who writes well is well equipped to teach writing, and that any practice in writing is academically valuable practice. Beaufort makes a convincing case that composition programs should more carefully consider what practices do and do not translate into writing beyond the composition classroom door. For those teachers and scholars searching for a unified purpose for composition, Beaufort offers an intriguing answer.

Kutztown, PA

WORKS CITED


Reviewed by Larken McCord, Georgia State University

From its title alone, Preventing Plagiarism appears to have an agenda. This is not the text to waste time interrogating the scope of plagiarism in all its forms or parsing any nuance concerning intellectual property or discourse conformity: Plagiarism has been identified as the problem, and this book will help instructors get rid of it. Speaking from a dual vantage point as a high school teacher and an adjunct professor at New York University, Laura Hennessey DeSena offers a wealth of experience from which to find solutions to the plagiarism problem. Upon reading the book, however, it appears that her project is bigger than plagiarism, if not adjacent to it altogether. The book DeSena wanted to write is actually about originality of expression and the use of freewriting exercises to engage this originality. The art of preventing plagiarism occupies an afterthought status throughout the book. Though it could well be argued that preventing plagiarism should not be foregrounded in the minds of writing instructors, the disconnect between DeSena’s argument and the argument expected by her readers obscures the book’s strongest ideas.

Chapter 1 (“The Rewards of Original Thinking”) announces DeSena’s purpose: moving students away from reductive, redundant writing to original critical thinking. The tone of the chapter borders on sanctimonious, particularly

122 Composition Studies