



# Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice: Membership, Conflict, and Diversity

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Johns, Ann M. "Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice: Membership, Conflict, and Diversity." *Text, Role, and Context: Developing Academic Literacies*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge UP, 1997. 51–70. Print.

## Framing the Reading

Ann Johns, like the other scholars whose work you have read so far in this chapter, is a well-known linguist—in fact, she coedited a journal with John Swales from 1985 to 1993. While she was at San Diego State University, Johns directed the American Language Institute, the Writing across the Curriculum Program, the Freshman Success Program, and the Center for Teaching and Learning, and she still found time to research and write twenty-three articles, twenty-two book chapters, and four books (including *Genre in the Classroom* [2001] and *Text, Role, and Context*, from which the following reading is taken). Since retiring from San Diego State, Johns continues to write articles and consult around the world.

Think of Johns's text as the extension of an ongoing conversation in this chapter. When John Swales defined **discourse community**, he noted in passing that participating in a discourse community did not necessarily require joining it, but he did not pursue the idea of **conflict** within communities any further. James Gee does not help much with this problem because he argues that people from *nondominant* home **Discourses** can only join *dominant* Discourses through **mushfake**. This is where Ann Johns steps in. She published well after both Swales and Gee, so she had time to think through some of the issues they were considering and then extend the conversation by really delving into the problem of conflict within discourse communities.

When talking about conflicts related to discourse communities, Johns focuses primarily on *academic* discourse communities. She talks about some of the "expected" **conventions** of discourse in the academy (what she calls "uniting forces") and then describes sources of contention. Johns brings up issues of **rebellion** against discourse community conventions, change



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### Getting R:

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within conventions of communities, the relationship of **identity** to discourse community membership, and the problems of **authority** and control over acceptable community discourse. As always, the reading will be easier for you if you can try to relate what the author describes to your own experiences or to things you have witnessed or read about elsewhere.

### Getting Ready to Read

*Before you read*, do at least one of the following activities:

- If you've read other articles in this chapter already, make a list of the difficulties or problems you've had with the concept of *discourse communities* so far. What have you not understood, what has not made sense, or what questions have you been left with?
- Write a note to yourself on this question: What does the idea of *membership* mean to you? When you hear that word, what do you associate it with? What memories of it do you have? Do you often use it or hear it?

*As you read*, consider the following questions:

- What does it mean to have *authority* in relation to texts and discourse communities?
- How does trying to become a member of a discourse community impact your sense of self—do you feel your "self" being compressed or pressured, or expanding?
- How are discourse communities related to *identity*?

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*If there is one thing that most of [the discourse community definitions] have in common, it is an idea of language [and genres] as a basis for sharing and holding in common: shared expectations, shared participation, commonly (or communicably) held ways of expressing. Like audience, discourse community entails assumptions about conformity and convention (Rafoth, 1990, p. 140).*

*What is needed for descriptive adequacy may not be so much a search for the conventions of language use in a particular group, but a search for the varieties of language use that work both with and against conformity, and accurately reflect the interplay of identity and power relationships (Rafoth, 1990, p. 144).*

A second important concept in the discussion of socioliteracies is *discourse community*. Because this term is abstract, complex, and contested,<sup>1</sup> I will approach it by attempting to answer a few of the questions that are raised in the literature, those that seem most appropriate to teaching and learning in academic contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the contested issues and questions are: "How are communities defined?" (Rafoth, 1990); "Do discourse communities even exist?" (Prior, 1994); "Are they global or local? Or both?" (Killingsworth, 1992); "What is the relationship between discourse communities and genres?" (Swales, 1988b, 1990).

1. Why do individuals join social and professional communities? What appear to be the relationships between communities and their genres?
2. Are there levels of community? In particular, can we hypothesize a general academic community or language?
3. What are some of the forces that make communities complex and varied? What forces work against "shared participation and shared ways of expressing?" (Rafoth, 1990, p. 140).

I have used the term discourse communities because this appears to be the most common term in the literature. However, *communities of practice*, a related concept, is becoming increasingly popular, particularly for academic contexts (see Brown & Duguid, 1995; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the term *discourse communities*, the focus is on texts and language, the genres and lexis that enable members throughout the world to maintain their goals, regulate their membership, and communicate efficiently with one another. Swales (1990, pp. 24–27) lists six defining characteristics of a discourse community:

1. [It has] a broadly agreed set of common public goals.
2. [It has] mechanisms of intercommunication among its members (such as newsletters or journals).
3. [It] utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
4. [It] uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
5. In addition to owning genres, [it] has acquired some specific lexis.
6. [It has] a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursal expertise.

The term *communities of practice* refers to genres and lexis, but especially to many practices and values that hold communities together or separate them from one another. Lave and Wenger, in discussing students' enculturation into academic communities, have this to say about communities of practice:

As students begin to engage with the discipline, as they move from exposure to experience, they begin to understand that the different communities on campus are quite distinct, that apparently common terms have different meanings, apparently shared tools have different uses, apparently related objects have different interpretations. . . . As they work in a particular community, they start to understand both its particularities and what joining takes, how these involve language, practice, culture and a conceptual universe, not just mountains of facts (1991, p. 13).

Thus, communities of practice are seen as complex collections of individuals who share genres, language, values, concepts, and "ways of being" (Geertz, 1983), often distinct from those held by other communities.

In order to introduce students to these visions of community, it is useful to take them outside the academic realm to something more familiar, the recreational and avocational communities to which they, or their families, belong. Thus I begin with a discussion of nonacademic communities before proceeding to issues of academic communities and membership.

## Communities and Membership

### Social, Political, and Recreational Communities

People are born, or taken involuntarily by their families and cultures, into some communities of practice. These first culture communities may be religious, tribal, social, or economic, and they may be central to an individual's daily life experiences. Academic communities, on the other hand, are selected and voluntary, at least after compulsory education. Therefore, this chapter will concentrate on communities that are chosen, the groups with which people maintain ties because of their interests, their politics, or their professions. Individuals are often members of a variety of communities outside academic life: social and interest groups with which they have chosen to affiliate. These community affiliations vary in terms of individual depth of interest, belief, and commitment. Individual involvement may become stronger or weaker over time as circumstances and interests change.

Nonacademic communities of interest, like "homely" genres, can provide a useful starting point for student discussion. In presenting communities of this type, Swales uses the example of the Hong Kong Study Circle (HKSC),<sup>2</sup> of which he is a paying member, whose purposes are to "foster interest in and knowledge of the stamps of Hong Kong" (1990, p. 27). He was once quite active in this community, dialoging frequently with other members through HKSC publications.<sup>3</sup> However, at this point in his life, he has other interests (birds and butterflies), and so he is now an inactive member of HKSC. His commitments of time and energy have been diverted elsewhere.

Why do individuals join social and professional communities?  
Are there levels of community?  
What are some of the forces that make communities complex and varied?

Members of my family are also affiliated with several types of communities. We are members of cultural organizations, such as the local art museum and the theater companies. We receive these communities' publications, and we attend some of their functions, but we do not consider ourselves to be active. We also belong to a variety of communities with political aims. My mother, for example, is a member of the powerful lobbying group, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). The several million members pay their dues because of their interests in maintaining government-sponsored retirement (Social Security) and health benefits (Medicare), both of which are promoted by AARP lobbyists in the U.S. Congress. The AARP magazine, *Modern Maturity*, is a powerful organ of the association, carefully crafted to forward the group's aims. Through this publication, members are urged to write to their elected representatives

<sup>2</sup> Note that most communities use abbreviations for their names and often for their publications. All community members recognize these abbreviations, of course.

<sup>3</sup> These written interactions are impossible for the noninitiated to understand, I might point out.

about legislation, and they are also informed about which members of Congress are "friends of the retired." However, members are offered more than politics: Articles in the magazine discuss keeping healthy while aging, remaining beautiful, traveling cheaply, and using the Internet. AARP members also receive discounts on prescription drugs, tours, and other benefits.<sup>4</sup>

Recently, my husband has become very active in a recreational discourse community, the international community of cyclists.<sup>5</sup> He reads publications such as *Bicycling* ("World's No. 1 Road and Mountain Bike Magazine") each month for advice about better cyclist health ("Instead of Pasta, Eat This!"),<sup>6</sup> equipment to buy, and international cycling tours. Like most other communities, cycling has experts, some of whom write articles for the magazines to which he subscribes, using a register that is mysterious to the uninitiated: "unified gear triangle"; "metal matrix composite." Cyclists share values (good health, travel interests), special knowledge, vocabulary, and genres, but they do not necessarily share political or social views, as my husband discovered when conversing with other cyclists on a group trip. In publications for cyclists, we can find genres that we recognize by name but with community-related content: editorials, letters to the editor, short articles on new products, articles of interest to readers (on health and safety, for example), advertisements appealing to readers, and essay/commentaries. If we examine magazines published for other interest groups, we can find texts from many of the same genres.

As this discussion indicates, individuals often affiliate with several communities at the same time, with varying levels of involvement and interest. People may join a group because they agree politically, because they want to socialize, or because they are interested in a particular sport or pastime. The depth of an individual's commitment can, and often does, change over time. As members come and go, the genres and practices continue to evolve, reflecting and promoting the active members' aims, interests, and controversies.

Studying the genres of nonacademic communities, particularly those with which students are familiar, helps them to grasp the complexity of text production and processing and the importance of understanding the group practices, lexis, values, and controversies that influence the construction of texts.

### Professional Communities

Discourse communities can also be professional; every major profession has its organizations, its practices, its textual conventions, and its genres. Active community members also carry on informal exchanges: at conferences, through e-mail interest groups, in memos, in hallway discussions at the office, in laboratories and elsewhere, the results of which may be woven intertextually into

<sup>4</sup> When I asked my mother to drop her AARP membership because of a political stand the organization took, she said, "I can't, Ann. I get too good a deal on my medicines through my membership."

<sup>5</sup> Those of us who are outsiders call them "gearheads." Often, terms are applied to insiders by community outsiders.

<sup>6</sup> Brill, D. (1994, November). What's free of fat and cholesterol, costs 4 cents per serving, and has more carbo than pasta? Rice! *Bicycling*, pp. 86-87.

public, published texts. However, it is the written genres of communities that are accessible to outsiders for analysis. We need only to ask professionals about their texts in order to collect an array of interesting examples. One of the most thoroughly studied professional communities is the law. In his *Analyzing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings* (1993), Bhatia discusses at some length his continuing research into legal communities that use English and other languages (pp. 101–143). He identifies the various genres of the legal profession: their purposes, contexts, and the form and content that appear to be conventional. He also contrasts these genres as they are realized in texts from various cultures.

However, there are many other professional discourse communities whose genres can be investigated, particularly when students are interested in enculturation. For example, students might study musicians who devote their lives to pursuing their art but who also use written texts to dialogue with others in their profession. To learn more about these communities, I interviewed a bassoonist in our city orchestra.<sup>7</sup> Along with those who play oboe, English horn, and contrabassoon, this musician subscribes to the major publication of the double-reed community, *The International Double Reed Society Journal*. Though he has specialized, double-reed interests, he reports that he and many other musicians also have general professional aims and values that link them to musicians in a much broader community. He argues that all practicing musicians within the Western tradition<sup>8</sup> share knowledge; there is a common core of language and values within this larger community. Whether they are guitarists, pianists, rock musicians, or bassoonists, musicians in the West seem to agree, for example, that the strongest and most basic musical intervals are 5–1 and 4–1, and that other chord intervals are weaker. They share a basic linguistic register and an understanding of chords and notation. Without this sharing, considerable negotiation would have to take place before they could play music together. As in other professions, these musicians have a base of expertise, values, and expectations that they use to facilitate communication. Thus, though a musician's first allegiance may be to his or her own musical tradition (jazz) or instrument (the bassoon), he or she will still share a great deal with other expert musicians—and much of this sharing is accomplished through specialized texts.

What can we conclude from this section about individual affiliations with discourse communities? First, many people have chosen to be members of one or a variety of communities, groups with whom they share social, political, professional, or recreational interests. These communities use written discourses that enable members to keep in touch with each other, carry on discussions, explore controversies, and advance their aims; the genres are their vehicles for communication. These genres are not, in all cases, sophisticated or intellectual, literary or high browed. They are, instead, representative of the values, needs,

<sup>7</sup> I would like to thank Arlan Fast of the San Diego Symphony for these community insights.

<sup>8</sup> Knowledge is also shared with musicians from other parts of the world, of course. However, some of the specific examples used here apply to the Western musical tradition.

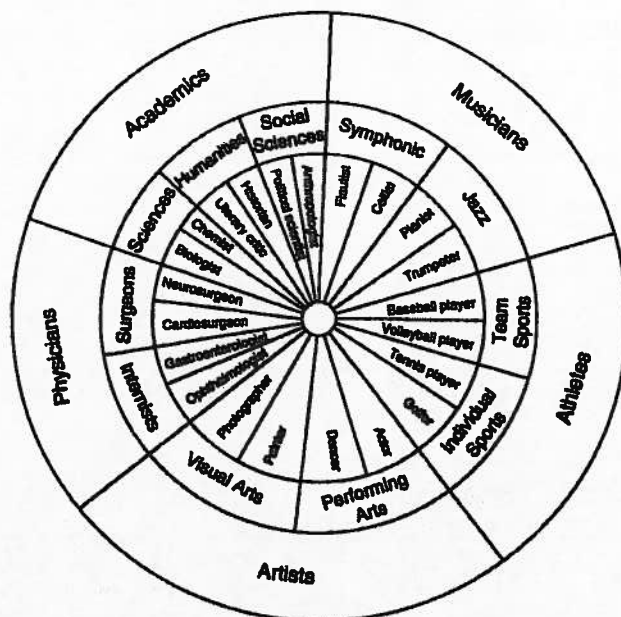


Figure 1 Levels of Community.

and practices of the community that produces them. Community membership may be concentrated or diluted; it may be central to a person's life or peripheral. Important for the discussion that follows is the juxtaposition of generalized and specialized languages and practices among these groups. Musicians, lawyers, athletes, and physicians, for example, may share certain values, language, and texts with others within their larger community, though their first allegiance is to their specializations. Figure 1 illustrates this general/specific relationship in communities.

In the case of physicians, for example, there is a general community and a <sup>14</sup> set of values and concepts with which most may identify because they have all had a shared basic education before beginning their specializations. There are publications, documents, concepts, language, and values that all physicians can, and often do, share. The same can be said of academics, as is shown in the figure. There may be some general academic discourses,<sup>9</sup> language, values, and concepts that most academics share. Thus faculty often identify themselves with a college or university and its language and values, as well as with the more specialized areas of interest for which they have been prepared.

This broad academic identification presents major problems for scholars <sup>15</sup> and literacy practitioners, for although it is argued that disciplines are different

<sup>9</sup> For example, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and several pedagogical publications are directed to a general academic audience.

(see Bartholomae, 1985; Belcher & Braine, 1995; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Carson et al., 1992; Lave & Wenger, 1991, among others), many faculty believe that there is a general academic English as well as a general set of critical thinking skills and strategies for approaching texts.

Because this belief in a general, shared academic language is strong and universal, the next section of this chapter is devoted to this topic.

### Academic Communities

What motivates this section more than anything else is its usefulness as a starting point in the exploration of academic literacies and its accessibility to students at various levels of instruction who need to become more aware of the interaction of roles, texts, and contexts in academic communities. Many literacy faculty have mixed classes of students from a number of disciplines or students just beginning to consider what it means to be an academic reader and writer. For these students, and even for some of the more advanced, a discussion of what are considered to be general academic languages and textual practices is a good place to start their analyses—although not a good place to finish.

In the previous section it was noted that professionals may affiliate at various levels of specificity within their discourse communities. They often share language, knowledge, and values with a large, fairly heterogeneous group, though their first allegiances may be with a specialized group within this broader “club.” This comment can apply to individuals in academic communities as well. Faculty have their own discipline-specific allegiances (to biology, chemistry, sociology, engineering); nonetheless, many believe that there are basic, generalizable linguistic, textual, and rhetorical rules for the entire academic community that can apply.

Discipline-specific faculty who teach novices at the undergraduate level, and some who teach graduate students as well, sometimes complain that their students “do not write like academics” or “cannot comprehend” academic prose, arguing that these are general abilities that we should be teaching. The discussion that follows acknowledges their complaints and sets the stage for discussions of more specific academic issues and pedagogies in later chapters.

### Language, Texts, and Values

This section on academic textual practices draws principally from three sources: “Reflections on Academic Discourse” (Elbow, 1991); *Words and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Geertz, 1988); and *The Scribal Society: An Essay on Literacy and Schooling in the Information Age* (Purves, 1990) (see also Dudley-Evans, 1995). Elbow and Purves are well-known composition theorists from different theoretical camps who were cited in Chapter 1. Geertz, an anthropologist, has studied academic communities and their genres for many years. All three of these experts live in the United States, and this may affect their views; however, in many universities in the world in which English is employed, these beliefs about general text features are also shared, except perhaps in literature and some of the humanities disciplines. Following is a composite of the arguments made by



the three academics about the nature, values, and practices in general expository academic prose, including some commentary on each topic.

1. *Texts must be explicit.* Writers should select their vocabulary carefully and use it wisely. In some cases, such as with certain noun compounds, paraphrase is impossible because specialized academic vocabulary must be used. Citation must be constructed carefully. Data analysis should be described and discussed explicitly. The methodology should be stated so clearly that it is replicable. Ambiguity in argumentation should be avoided.

*Comment.* Faculty often complain that students are “careless” in their use of vocabulary, in their citation practices, and in their argumentation and use of data. Because many literacy classes value the personal essay and because many readings in literacy classes are in story form or are adapted or specially written for these classes, students are not exposed to the exactness of some academic prose. One of our responsibilities in developing socioliterate practices is to expose students to authentic academic texts and to analyze these texts for their specificity.

2. *Topic and argument should be prerevealed in the introduction.* Purves says that experienced academics, particularly when writing certain kinds of texts, should “select a single aspect of [a] subject and announce [their] theses and purposes as soon as possible” (1990, p. 12).

*Comment.* Finding the argument in a reading and noticing how data, examples, or narration are used to support this argument are essential academic abilities that are praised by faculty from many disciplines. In like manner, understanding and presenting a clear argument that is appropriate to a genre are writing skills that appear high on faculty wish lists for students, particularly for those who come from diverse rhetorical traditions (see Connor, 1987). Most faculty require that arguments and purposes appear early, generally in an introduction. One of the discipline-specific faculty with whom I work tells her students not to “spend much time clearing their throats.” She wants them to “get right down to the argument.”

We must be aware, however, that the pressure to reveal topic, purposes, and argumentation early in a written text may be a culture-specific value and apply only to certain kinds of texts within specific communities. There is considerable discussion in the contrastive rhetoric and World Englishes literature about the motivations for text organization and content and the necessity (or lack thereof) for prerevealing information. Local cultures and first languages, as well as academic disciplines, can influence how and where arguments appear.

3. *Writers should provide “maps” or “signposts” for the readers throughout the texts, telling the readers where they have been in the text and where they are going.* By using a variety of tactics, writers can assist readers in predicting and summarizing texts and in understanding the relationships among topics and arguments. Most of these tactics fall under the metadiscourse rubric.

*Comment.* Metadiscourse is defined in the following way:

It is writing about reading and writing. When we communicate, we use metadiscourse to name rhetorical actions: *explain, show, argue, claim, deny, suggest, add,*

*expand, summarize; to name the part of our discourse, first, second . . . in conclusion; to reveal logical connections, therefore . . . if so . . . to guide our readers, Consider the matter of* (Williams, 1989, p. 28).

Literacy textbooks for both reading and writing often emphasize the understanding and use of metadiscourse in texts. However, it is important to note that language and culture can have considerable influence on the ways in which metadiscourse is used. For example, in countries with homogeneous cultures, academic written English may have fewer metadiscoursal features (Mauranen, 1993) than in heterogeneous, "writer-responsible" cultures (see Hinds, 1987) such as the United States, Great Britain, or Australia. As in the case of all texts, academic discourses are influenced by the cultures and communities in which they are found, often in very complicated ways.

4. *The language of texts should create a distance between the writer and the text to give the appearance of objectivity.* Geertz (1988) speaks of academic, expository prose as "author-evacuated"; the author's personal voice is not clearly in evidence, because the first person pronoun is absent and arguments are muted. He compares author-evacuated prose with the "author-saturated" prose of many literary works, in which individual voice pervades. As mentioned earlier, this "author-evacuation" is particularly evident in pedagogical genres, such as the textbook. One way to create the evacuated style is to use the passive, a common rhetorical choice for the sciences, but there are other ways as well.

*Comment.* Discipline-specific faculty sometimes tell us that students are unable to write "objectively" or to comprehend "objective" prose.<sup>10</sup> These students have not mastered the ability to clothe their argumentation in a particular register, to give it the kind of objective overlay that is valued in academic circles. When I asked one of my first-year university students to tell the class what he had learned about academic English, he said: "We can't use 'I' anymore. We have to pretend that we're not there in the text." In many cases, he is right. Literacy teachers need to help students to analyze texts for their author-evacuated style, and to discuss the particular grammatical and lexical choices that are made to achieve the appearance of objectivity and distance.

5. *Texts should maintain a "rubber-gloved" quality of voice and register.* They must show a kind of reluctance to touch one's meanings with one's naked fingers (Elbow, 1991, p. 145).

*Comment.* For some academic contexts, writers appear to remove themselves emotionally and personally from the texts, to hold their texts at arms' length (metaphorically). The examination of texts in which this "rubber-gloved quality" is evident will provide for students some of the language to achieve these ends. What can students discover? Many academic writers abjure the use of emotional words, such as *wonderful* and *disgusting*; they hide behind syntax and "objective" academic vocabulary.

<sup>10</sup> "Objective" appears in quotation marks because, though academic writing may have the appearance of being objective, all texts are biased.

6. *Writers should take a guarded stance, especially when presenting argumentation and results.* Hedging through the use of modals (*may, might*) and other forms (*It is possible that . . .*) is perhaps the most common way to be guarded. 32

*Comment.* Hedging appears to be central to some academic discourses, particularly those that report research. In a study of two science articles on the same topic published for two different audiences, Fahenstock (1986) found that the article written for experts in the field was replete with hedges (*"appear to hydrolyze," "suggesting that animal food"*), as scientists carefully reported their findings to their peers. However, the article written for laypersons was filled with "facts," much like those in the textbooks described in Chapter 3. For these and other reasons, we need to introduce students to expert and nonexpert texts; we need to expose them at every level to the ways in which genre, context, readers, writers, and communities affect linguistic choices. 33

7. *Texts should display a vision of reality shared by members of the particular discourse community to which the text is addressed (or the particular faculty member who made the assignment).* 34

*Comment.* This may be the most difficult of the general academic requirements, for views of reality are often implicit, unacknowledged by the faculty themselves and are not revealed to students. Perhaps I can show how this "reality vision" is so difficult to uncover by discussing my research on course syllabi. I have been interviewing faculty for several years about the goals for their classes, goals that are generally stated in what is called a syllabus in the United States, but might be called a class framework or schedule of assignments in other countries. These studies indicated that most faculty tend to list as goals for the course the various topics that will be studied. The focus is exclusively on content. They do not list the particular views of the world that they want students to embrace, or the understandings that they want to encourage. In a class on "Women in the Humanities," for example, the instructor listed topics to be covered in her syllabus, but she did not tell the students that she wanted them to analyze images of women in cultures in order to see how these images shape various cultural contexts. In a geography class, the instructor listed topics to be covered, but he did not tell his students about his goals for analysis and synthesis of texts. Why are the critical-thinking goals and disciplinary values hidden by most faculty? I don't know. Perhaps instructors believe that students should intuit the values, practices, and genres required in the course; or the faculty have difficulty explicitly stating goals that are not related to content. Certainly content is the most commonly discussed issue at discipline-specific (DS) curriculum meetings, and this may influence faculty choices. In a later chapter I will discuss one of the questionnaires that I use to elicit from faculty the "views of reality" or "ways of being" that my students and I would like to see stated explicitly in the syllabi. 35

In contrast to DS faculty, we literacy faculty are often most interested in processes and understandings, in developing students metacognition and metalanguages—and these interests are often reflected in our syllabi. 36

[Following,] for example, are the student goals for a first-year University writing class developed by a committee from my university's Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies:<sup>11</sup>

- a. To use writing to clarify and improve your understanding of issues and texts
- b. To respond in writing to the thinking of others and to explore and account for your own responses
- c. To read analytically and critically, making active use of what you read in your writing
- d. To understand the relationships between discourse structure and the question at issue in a piece of writing, and to select appropriate structures at the sentence and discourse levels
- e. To monitor your writing for the grammar and usage conventions appropriate to each writing situation
- f. To use textual material as a framework for understanding and writing about other texts, data or experiences

No matter what kind of class is being taught, faculty need to discuss critical-thinking and reading and writing goals frequently with students. They need to review why students are given assignments, showing how these tasks relate to course concepts and student literacy growth.

8. *Academic texts should display a set of social and authority relations; they should show the writer's understanding of the roles they play within the text or context.*<sup>12</sup>

*Comment.* Most students have had very little practice in recognizing the language of social roles within academic contexts, although their experience with language and social roles outside the classroom is often quite rich. Some students cannot recognize when they are being talked down to in textbooks, and they cannot write in a language that shows their roles vis-à-vis the topics studied or the faculty they are addressing. These difficulties are particularly evident among ESL/EFL students; however, they are also found among many other students whose exposure to academic language has been minimal. One reason for discussing social roles as they relate to texts from a genre, whether they be "homely" discourses or professional texts, is to heighten students' awareness of the interaction of language, roles, and contexts so that they can read and write with more sophistication.

9. *Academic texts should acknowledge the complex and important nature of intertextuality, the exploitation of other texts without resorting to plagiarism.*

<sup>11</sup> Quandahl, E. (1995). Rhetoric and writing studies 100: A list of goals. Unpublished paper, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

<sup>12</sup> When I showed this point to Virginia Guleff, a graduate student, she said, "So students have to know their place!" Perhaps we should put it this way: They need to know different registers in order to play different rules. The more people use these registers, the more effective they can become and, not inci-

Students need to practice reformulation and reconstruction of information so that they do not just repeat other texts by “knowledge telling” (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1989) but rather use these texts inventively for their purposes (called “knowledge transforming”; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1989).

*Comment.* Carson (1993), in a large study of the intellectual demands on 41 undergraduate students, found that drawing from and integrating textual sources were two of the major challenges students face in attaining academic literacy. And no wonder. Widdowson (1993, p. 27) notes that

When people make excessive and unacknowledged use of [another's text], and are found out, we call it plagiarism. When people are astute in their stitching of textual patchwork, we call it creativity. It is not easy to tell the difference. . . . If a text is always in some degree a conglomerate of others, how independent can its meaning be?

Drawing from sources and citing them appropriately is the most obvious 42 and most commonly discussed aspect of intertextuality. As a result, Swales and Feak (1994) claim that citation may be the defining feature of academic discourses. However, there are other, more subtle and varied borrowings from past discourses, for, as Widdowson notes, “Any particular text is produced or interpreted in reference to a previous knowledge of other texts” (1993, p. 27).

10. *Texts should comply with the genre requirements of the community or 43 classroom.*

*Comment.* This, of course, is another difficult challenge for students. As 44 mentioned earlier, pedagogical genres are often loosely named and casually described by DS faculty. It is difficult to identify the conventions of a student research paper, an essay examination response, or other pedagogical genres because, in fact, these vary considerably from class to class. Yet DS faculty expect students to understand these distinctions and to read and write appropriately for their own classes. My students and I often ask faculty: “What is a good critique for your class?” or “What is a good term paper?” We request several student-written models and, if possible, interview the faculty member about their assigned texts and tasks.

This section has outlined what may be some general rules for academic 45 literacy, most of which are refined within each discipline and classroom. Although it would be difficult to defend several of these beliefs because of the wide range of academic discourses and practices, listing and discussing these factors can prepare students for an examination of how texts are socially constructed and whether some of the points made here are applicable to specific texts.

Of course, we also need to expose students to texts that contradict these 46 rules for academic discourse. We should examine literary genres, which break most of the rules listed. We should look at specialized texts that have alternative requirements for register. In any of our pedagogical conversations, the objective should not be to discover truths but to explore how social and cultural forces may influence texts in various contexts.