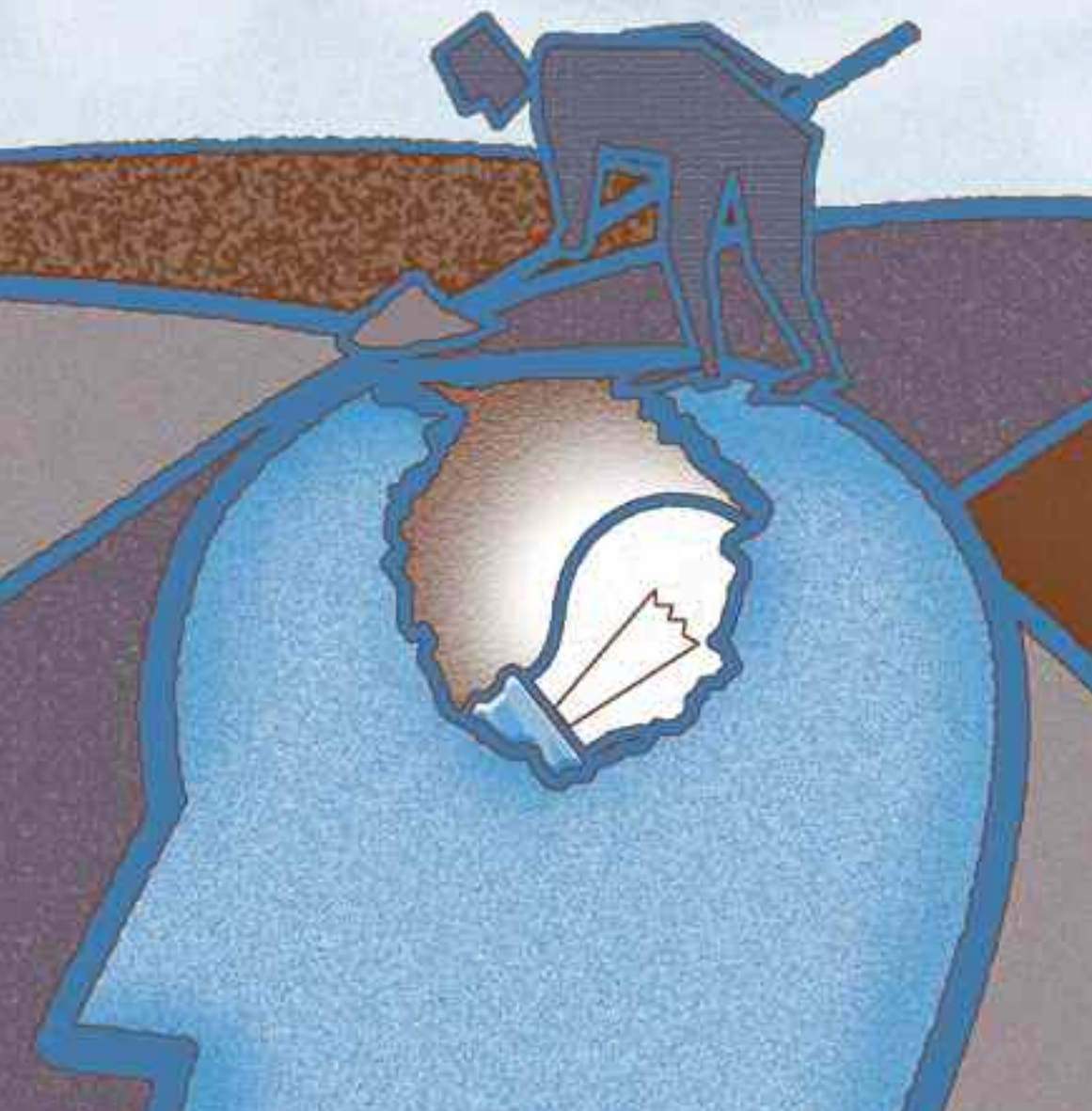


Don't Call It That
**The Composition
Practicum**

Edited by Sidney I. Dobrin





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Finding Space for the Composition Practicum

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Practicum: N. Amer. [a. late L. *practicum*, neut. of *practicus*, Gr. ΠράΤΙΚός practical, concerned with action. (Cf. G. *praktikum* practical training.)]

A practical exercise; a course of practical training.
Oxford English Dictionary Online

It might seem trite to begin this introduction by offering something as simple as a dictionary definition for the key term addressed in this book, particularly when that definition seems so simple, so evident. But as the contributors to this collection explain, in composition studies, defining the graduate-level (or even undergraduate) composition practicum is not such an easy task. The seventeen essays found in this collection consider, in fact, just how problematic the composition practicum has become, not only in terms of definition, but also in terms of its role in composition studies and larger university communities, its function as a training mechanism, and its share in the propagation of composition studies' cultural capital.

The title for this collection, *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, is taken from the fact that in many institutions, the introductory, graduate-level teacher training class that has traditionally trained new teachers of writing has offered more than simple day-to-day classroom guidance. The "practicum" more

often than not serves as an introduction to composition theory, to research methodologies, to pedagogical theory, to histories of composition studies as a discipline, and to larger disciplinary questions about writing, not just to teaching writing per se. In many institutions, compositionists have developed more academically challenging courses than had been expected in a traditional practicum, despite the general impression (most often by those not directly attached to the course) that these intro courses merely teach new teachers of writing how to grade assignments, teach mechanics, oversee classrooms, and the like. Hence, *Don't Call It That* refers to the battle many composition programs have had to fight to identify their introductory graduate-level composition courses as not, in fact, practica, but as more sophisticated introductions to a dynamic field of study, and to identify the role that validation and legitimation have played in the history of the composition practicum. “Don’t call it that” refers to the desire for the practicum course not to be perceived as a how-to course, but as a richer, more academically sophisticated and rigorous course.

This collection explores not only the various approaches taken in teaching the introductory graduate course in composition studies for new teachers of writing, but also the debate regarding the role such courses play in graduate-level (and in some cases, undergraduate) curricula in general. By approaching the place and purpose of the practicum both as a subject that should be discussed pedagogically and in terms of curriculum, this collection moves to centralize conversations about the role of the graduate (and in some cases, undergraduate) composition practicum. *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum* works to such an end in order that first, composition studies communities have a better idea of how the practicum is addressed at various institutions. Second, it works to bring more scholarly debates regarding the role of the curriculum to the fore in professional conversations so that compositionists better understand not only why this course has become a “universally” offered course, but also why it is—and has been historically—one of the most contested and questioned courses offered in graduate-level English studies.

This collection, unlike other works that address the composition practicum in conjunction with other aspects of teacher train-

ing or professionalization, provides a provocative consideration of the scholarly questions that surround the contested site of the composition practicum, rather than simply addressing ways in which to more effectively offer the practicum. The essays in *Don't Call It That* specifically emphasize the central question of the role of theory in the composition practicum. In doing so, the collected essays situate the practicum as one of the most important locations in which composition's "theory wars" or theory/practice debates are played out with very material ramifications. This question of the role theory plays in the practicum is, then, intrinsically enmeshed with the questions of legitimacy that departments, colleges, and universities often ask of the practicum: Should students receive credit for the course since it isn't a "real" course? Should faculty receive teaching credit for teaching the course? These are a few of the major issues that relate to the political positioning of the practicum addressed in this collection.

In addition to these core political questions, the contributors to this collection address the role technology plays in practicum courses. They also consider the direct relationship often found and assumed between the writing program administrator and the course, both in terms of the function of the course in relation to larger programmatic training agendas and methods and in terms of who is assumed to be the faculty member assigned to teach the practicum.

That is to say, then, the chapters in this collection are about more than just how we think about devising the course that gets subsumed under the practicum rubric. They are about the institutional politics of these courses; they are about the subject position of composition studies within departments and larger university structures. The chapters further conversations not just about theory/practice debates but also about the very role and function of theory within the discipline. They consider the professional positions of writing program administrators and the often default association with practicum classes. In fact, one of the greatest strengths of this collection is not just that it addresses the composition practicum as a site of contestation, but that it also addresses the connections that very site has to larger political questions about composition studies, writing program administration, and

the role of theory in the discipline, and in doing so, addresses the powerful position of the composition practicum.

For me, the overwhelming attention to the ongoing conversations regarding theory and practice that many of the contributors draw is a crucial facet of this book. For those familiar with my work, it is evident that I am deeply interested in how composition studies negotiates the theory/practice split. The fact that so many contributors to this collection have identified the practicum as a site where this debate is played out, quite literally, on the bodies of new teachers and new scholars—both in and outside of composition studies—is telling. Let's face it, as a device through which ideologies are reinforced and programmatic cultures are created and maintained, the practicum course is a powerful tool not only for guiding the ways new teachers learn to think about their teaching, but also for controlling how and in what ways the very discipline of composition studies is perpetuated. The cultural capital of composition studies is maintained and immortalized by way of the practicum.

Until now there has been little conversation about the composition practicum beyond discussions of how and what to teach in this course. For the most part, conversations about the practicum have been limited to disciplinary lore, and this lore has, in many ways, taken on stereotypical and conventionalized understandings of the practicum. Little attention has been paid to the location of the practicum as a political force in composition. One of the most comprehensive discussions about the practicum appeared in the Fall 1995 special issue of *Composition Studies* titled "A Forum on Doctoral Pedagogy." In this special issue, guest editors Bill Bolin, Beth Burmester, Brenton Faber, and Peter Vandenberg ask a series of critical questions not about the practicum per se but about doctoral pedagogy in general:

To what extent is the radical diversity of approaches to teaching composition to undergraduates apparent at the graduate level? Just how different can "composition studies" look depending on where one enters the field as a doctoral student? How are theory and practice conceived, differentiated, and/or unified in the training of doctoral students? When doctoral students are introduced to the theory-practice of composition teaching and research, where, how, and why do disciplinary

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knowledge and values give way to local or programmatic conditions and expectations? (4)

These are, of course, important questions. The special issue then provides syllabi from seventeen institutions' "first (introductory) or only graduate course in/about rhetoric, writing, composition" (4). Each syllabus is followed by a short critical or evaluative comment from the contributor who submitted the syllabus. These statements are perhaps the best collection of descriptions of why different institutions approach their practica as they do.¹ Under the rubric established by the guest editors, the courses presented in the special issue can each be considered the practicum course for that institution. Inherent in the methodology and questions asked by the guest editors is the recognition that the practicum is the very location—if not the only location—through which composition studies, as a discipline, as theory, as practice, is constructed for the newest members of the field and, perhaps more important, for many who will never identify themselves as compositionists. The titles of these courses are all quite telling:

Seminar in Approaches to Teaching Writing—Catholic University of America
Theory and the Teaching of Writing—University of Connecticut
Teaching Freshman Rhetoric—East Texas State University
Teaching English in College—Florida State University
Teaching Composition—Georgia State University
Introduction to Composition Studies—Illinois State University
Rhetorical Traditions—Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Theory and Research in Professional Communications—Iowa State University
Theory and Practice of Teaching Composition—Miami University
Composition Theory and Practice—University of Nebraska—Lincoln
The Teaching of Composition—University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Teaching College English—University of North Dakota—Grand Forks
Seminar in Teaching Composition—University of Pittsburgh

Approaches to the Teaching of Composition—Saint John's University

Composition-Rhetoric, 1700–1995—University of Southern California

Introduction to Scholarship in Composition and Rhetoric—Syracuse University

The Teaching of Writing—Wayne State University

And to add to this list, I can note that here at the University of Florida we offer Theories and Practices of Writing. Notice the recurring notion of teaching, of theory and practice. As I will show in a moment, neither these course titles nor the approach to these courses has shifted very much in the past ninety years, despite remarkable changes within composition studies.

Other studies, too, have made substantial contributions to how we have come to think about the practicum. Notably, Elizabeth Rankin's *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher: Conversations with Five New Teachers in a University Writing Program* provides interviews with five new teachers a year after they have taken the practicum. The interviews themselves show new teachers struggling with their own attempts to negotiate the theory/practice divisions of their own teaching, and the interviews manifest the ways in which the very course designs of practica that negotiate the theory/pedagogy division affect new teachers' professional frustrations and development. Similarly, Sarah Liggett's "After the Practicum" moves toward assessment of how new teachers move from their practicum training to their classrooms. Liggett identifies a need to assess the practicum in ways different from how other graduate courses are assessed, in ways that take into account the transition from student in the practicum class to teacher who applies information gained in the practicum class.

In each of these instances, the practicum is painted as a powerful mechanism. In fact, as I will argue, the practicum functions as a primary purveyor of composition's cultural capital. Before developing this argument, however, I think it is necessary that we briefly examine the history of the composition practicum in order to better contextualize its current position and to clarify that its history is also the history of the commodification and distribution of composition's cultural capital.

A (Brief) Historical Look at the Practicum

What I offer here is by no means a comprehensive history; it is merely an attempt to provide a general overview of how conversations about the practicum course have been constructed. I offer this with the intention of identifying when and how the very idea of teacher training courses entered into English department conversations, of examining the ways in which those conversations were resisted, and finally, of contending that though more institutions now offer such courses, and though the content of such courses may have changed over the years, the political arguments that surround such courses have changed very little.

The question of how to train new teachers of composition has been asked for a good while. Raymond MacDonald Alden, in his 1913 “Preparation for College English Teaching” published in the *English Journal*, examines the relationship between a graduate student’s course work and his [sic] training for a career in teaching. He does not call for a particular course in teaching, but emphasizes the role of teaching as part of professionalization and the need for strong connections between graduate course work/research and classroom preparation. In the same volume of *English Journal* is a printed version of a talk and responses given before the College Section of NCTE on November 29, 1912, by Chester Noyes Greenough. Greenough reports that

for some time the department of English at Harvard has felt that the equipment of the men whom it has been sending forth to teach English has been inadequate on the side where beginners are most likely tested, namely, in their ability to teach elementary English composition. This inadequacy has been perceptible both in the very moderate skills displayed by most graduate students in writing theses and reports, and in the dismay with which even the best of them have approached the unfamiliar task of teaching Freshmen to write. (109)

To remedy these “inadequacies,” Harvard in 1912 established English 67, a course officially described as “English 67—English Composition. Practice in Writing, in the Criticism of Manuscript, and in Instruction by Conferences and Lectures. Discussion of the Principles of Composition and of the Organization

and Management of Courses in English Composition” (109). Even in this early experimental manifestation of a practicum-type course, Greenough is quick to note that the course is “one in English Composition more than in methods of teaching” (110). Because the course is taken for credit, the appearance of validation and legitimation is apparent. This is not a teaching methods course; such courses would not rate as valid in English departments, we hear Greenough suggest. Despite this, Greenough’s introduction of the composition teacher training course initiates a call for the need for such courses. In response to Greenough’s talk, M. Lyle calls attention to “the present glaring need of courses for English instructors—not necessarily teachers’ courses as we ordinarily know them, but courses for teachers, nonetheless. . . . I am convinced that a specific need exists for courses for English teachers” (Greenough 116). He goes on to explain that “in composition this need for adequate training is even more glaring than in the language and literature courses” (117).

Likewise, J. M. Thomas calls again for specific training for teachers of composition courses as different from training for teaching literature courses in his 1916 article “Training for Teaching Composition in Colleges.” In this article, Thomas notes Greenough’s call for specific courses in training composition teachers, but unlike Greenough, he is not willing to commit to the method as useful: “whether the plan of establishing special courses in method will solve the problem remains to be seen. It may be that we cannot expect successfully to combine graduate study with instruction in pedagogy” (450). But, like other early discussions of the development of training classes, Thomas does specify that any training of composition teachers must be presented in a multifaceted way that includes a number of training mechanisms.

Two years following Thomas’s skepticism of Greenough’s experiment in offering graduate courses for training teachers of composition, J. V. Denney published “Preparation of College Teachers of English,” in which he examines the professional value of such training courses. He identifies two primary classifications of such classes:

- (1) Courses that aim to supply elements that have been omitted in the previous education of the student and that are

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deemed essential to professional equipment; (2) courses that deal directly with the educational problems involved in the teaching of English and that appeal directly to the student as a prospective teacher. (322)

What Thomas contends is that very few of the content-driven courses in English graduate programs “have a distinctively professional intention” (324). Thomas also argues, however, that much of what is taught in graduate courses—particularly those in linguistics and historical English grammar—is necessary for the college English teacher to know and to transfer into teaching strategies. Ultimately, Thomas calls for the development of specific teacher training courses:

[T]here is a need of at least one directly professional course for the prospective teacher, and it is highly desirable for those who have experience in teaching, as well as for those without such experience. I mean a course in which attention is given specifically to the problems of teaching that center in the Freshman composition work and in the first college course in English literature. (326)

Yet, even in such early discussions of the practicum course, Thomas identifies prevailing concerns that must be addressed:

the specific aims of the elementary course; the necessity for such courses[;] . . . the proper content of such courses; the order of topics; the best basis of differentiating students into groups for instruction; the use of the conference period; cooperative schemes among departments; the grammar question; oral composition; the measurement of results. (326)

By the mid 1940s, some programs had begun to adopt Greenough’s experiment. The University of Illinois, for instance, developed Rhetoric 480, *The Theory and Practice of English Composition*. The UI catalog listed the course as “A study of the problems facing the writer and the teacher of writing at the college level.” Yet Charles Roberts in “A Course for Training Rhetoric Teachers at the University of Illinois” notes that there was confusion as to what the course should offer. Roberts explains that in the first eight years of the course, he essentially taught sixteen different

classes under the same title (191). It “is not really a course in writing at all but a teacher training course,” he explains (191). Part of Roberts’s frustration grew from the fact that there was no successful connection between the course and the PhD program in which his students were enrolled (192). For Roberts the central goal of the Illinois practicum course was to address teaching specifically:

[W]hat, I asked myself, is the biggest problem which all teachers of English everywhere have in common? It is the young person seated at a desk, with a blank piece of paper before him, and gnawing on a pencil, whole ideas tumble over one another in his mind. Our job is to help him get those ideas arranged in his mind and recorded on that sheet of paper. (192)

Roberts even notes the discrepancy between compositionists (writing teachers) sitting at conferences such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) quibbling “about the relative merits of composition and communication programs or the latest developments in the upper stratosphere of linguistic research” while students struggle to write (193). In this, I hear not only early rumblings of composition’s theory/practice debates and questions of composition’s disciplinary agendas, but also direct links between the development of the composition practicum and those very debates. In many ways, the early practicum courses became the very site in which questions of pedagogy and theory as valid pursuits within composition began to get played out. The question, of course, must be posed as to what extent, then, the practicum was responding to those debates, fueling those debates, or engaging in a mixture of both activities.

In 1950 the University of Kansas introduced its teacher training course, *Rhetorical Background of Written English*, under the direction of Albert Kitzhaber. “We must help [graduate students] to know what to teach; for though such young teachers usually have an abundance of enthusiasm and the best will in the world, they are often at a loss to know just where and with what to begin,” explained Kitzhaber (195). Kitzhaber saw the importance of training teachers of writing, even though some would likely go on to work in more literary areas:

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We would like to give the students in this course something that will be of use to them as long as they are teaching composition, whether on our campus or elsewhere. And, even after they have served their novitiate and have been transplanted to the headier regions of the teaching of literature, we hope they will have gained a perspective that will cause them to show more understanding of the problems of composition work, and a keener appreciation of its importance, than I am afraid many literary scholars do now. (195)

Of course, Kitzhaber is talking about more than teaching skills here; he is addressing the propagation of cultural capital, of teaching a particular view of composition in the practicum in order to propagate a disciplinary understanding of what is done in composition teaching. He is working toward spreading an understanding of composition designed to infiltrate traditionally resistant populations. I will address this notion of the practicum as purveyor of composition's cultural capital in detail in a moment. For now I want to note that even in the early inception of the composition practicum, compositionists recognized the power such a course had for disseminating a particular (political) view of what teaching composition is. That is, by training students who did not intend to pursue composition (teaching) as a career choice to recognize that teaching composition is a difficult and legitimate endeavor, Kitzhaber hoped to perpetuate a more professionally amiable view of composition work through (future) literature faculty.

The KU course was established to emphasize day-to-day operations of a composition classroom. Yet, even in this early development of practica agenda, Kitzhaber explains, "We had no wish to standardize, to impose teaching methods or teaching philosophies" (196):

We wanted, rather, to put our young teachers in the way of ideas that would stimulate them to think seriously about the teaching of compositions. We wanted to help them develop ideas of their own and organize these ideas into some sort of coherent system. And, finally, we wanted to give them the opportunity to put their ideas to the test in their own classrooms. (196)

In the second volume of *College Composition and Communication* (CCC) (1951), in which workshop proceedings from the first CCCC Convention were reported, Workshop 16, “Teacher-Training for Composition or Communication” (attended by ten participants and chaired by Albert H. Marckwardt of the University of Michigan), reports that “[t]hough some favored a specific graduate curriculum for future teachers of composition or communications, predominant opinion favored, as practical minimum, a single course supplementing the present curriculum” (31).

Even with these early courses, the understanding that there needed to be a curriculum of theory and practice is evident:

The two-hour class meeting is divided equally between lecture and discussion—a lecture during the first half of the period on whatever topic is being considered that week, followed by a discussion that aims to work out some of the practical applications of the theoretical material presented in the lecture. (Kitzhaber 196)

“In this way,” Kitzhaber goes on, “we try to avoid the unreality of the purely theoretical course, and at the same time offer enough *legitimate* subject matter to distinguish the course sharply from courses in educational method” (196, my emphasis). What is interesting here isn’t just that the issue of theory/practice splits was evident from the earliest moments of composition practica, but that how theory and practice were valued and how theory was to be delivered to student teachers are underwritten implications. Here we see Kitzhaber clarifying that the theory portion of the course was set as lecture, as a delivery of information, information that he denotes as more legitimate than the practical, but that the practical applications of such theories could be more collaborative, dialogic. I also read a hierarchy in Kitzhaber’s statement that devalues the students/teachers’ ability to engage the theoretical aspect of pedagogy as more than information provided them, and that if they are to engage such material in any substantial way, it necessarily must be by way of finding practical application for those theories. I suppose, in this way, Kitzhaber is clearer about what he means by putting “young teachers in the way of ideas that stimulate them to think seriously about the teaching of composition” (196). He later notes,

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Certain things, though, we have intentionally excluded from the course and will probably continue to do so. Except for incidental discussion in the second hour of the meetings, we do not take up routine matters such as how to handle assignments, what to do about late themes, how to take care of plagiarism, etc. It is not that we think these matters unimportant; we simply believe there are other and better ways of attending to them. (198)

He specifically notes that discussions of teaching methodologies are deliberately not included in the course: “We have done this not alone because we wish to distinguish our course from one in Education, but mainly because we believe that specific teaching methods are a perishable commodity” (199).

Kitzhaber also seems to be making a statement of legitimation, of what would legitimize such a course in the eyes of both English programs and universities in general. He writes that at KU the practicum course (though he doesn’t use that term) was not regarded as “a course in how to teach, but as one in what to teach; it is, in other words, a course which we may validly claim to be one in English” (196).

In the same issue of *CCC* in which Kitzhaber details the KU course, Joseph Schwartz addresses Marquette University’s English 208: Seminar in the Teaching of College Composition. Schwartz notes that it is a responsibility of English departments to have teacher training courses since teachers of composition cannot be assumed to know how to teach composition based solely on their experiences in having taken composition. Unlike the KU program Kitzhaber describes, the Marquette course is entrenched in “how-tos.” It introduces rhetoric and linguistics. Its ultimate goal is to make “beginning teachers more conscious of their teaching” (204). When the course at Marquette was developed, the dean of the Graduate School resisted the class, questioning whether there was sufficient course content to be able to offer credit for it (201). Similar questions and arguments, I’m sure, are familiar to many. In fact, one of the prevailing discussions, though often handled briefly, in early conversations regarding the practicum is the question of awarding credit for the course. More often than not, in their early history, graduate teacher training courses were not given for credit, because they were seen as courses in “education”

or “professionalism,” not in substantive scholarly disciplines; more to the point, many of the early courses were devised specifically to avoid appearing to be education or training courses, but instead to appear as legitimate subject area courses in order to be credit worthy, in order to be institutionally validated.

It is crucial that these kinds of resistance be noted and that we pay attention to the push not just to develop such courses, but also to identify the ongoing resistance from institutions to such courses, despite the evident push from course developers to make the courses “legitimate.” For instance, in his 1951 CCC article “A Training Course for Teachers of Freshman Composition,” Robert S. Hunting contends that “insofar as a graduate student or beginning instructor spends time with a training course and gives more than the minimum required time to teaching freshman composition, he is doing hurt to his professional career. Willfully to do such hurt is manifestly foolish” (3). Of course, by “professional career,” Hunting refers to the study of literature. Yet Hunting recognizes that most colleges and universities have to have first-year composition and, therefore, until such conditions can be “fixed” (Hunting’s language throughout this article is quite telling), some bare-minimum training programs should be established: “if, under such conditions in most universities, there is really no solution, one can at least offer some plan which would permit us to muddle through less aimlessly than we have in the past” (3). Hunting goes on to describe the content for such a course that “should not be vaguely directed at any sort of college teaching” (4). Hunting describes how to develop such a course and manage to keep it away from legitimate graduate study. What is critical here is that, following a rather vague outline of the course, Hunting is clear that “the amount of work demanded by this training course should not seriously interfere with the *normal* pursuit of graduate studies. Those studies should still come first” (5, my emphasis).

In his final paragraphs, Hunting makes clear that this program outline must not interfere with the real work of English departments. In response to the claim made in Blegen and Cooper’s *The Preparation of College Teachers* that “the curriculum for college teachers must include professional subject matter” (qtd. in Hunting 5), Hunting is adamant that he is “in emphatic

disagreement. The curriculum for college teachers must not, of necessity, include any professional subject matter at all” (5). He goes on to explain as well that no credit should be given for the course because

it really involves extra-curricular work. A graduate school of liberal arts is not, and should not pretend to be, a trade or professional school. To give credit for training in a trade or profession would betray its purpose. Such training must always be a felicitous, but incidental, increment to graduate studies. (6)

This sentiment is echoed in Harold B. Allen’s 1952 CCC “Preparing the Teacher of Composition and Communication—A Report.” In this piece, Allen recounts numerous department chairs who questioned his motivations in inquiring about how graduate students were trained as teachers. One such chair

suddenly leaned forward and asked suspiciously, “Did you say you were a professor of education?” “No,” I replied, “my field is English Linguistics.” “Huh!” he grunted, “I didn’t know that anyone but a professor of education thought you had to train a scholar in order to make him a teacher.” (4)

Allen’s report goes on to show that a majority of the campuses he visited did little to prepare graduate students in the teaching of composition; only in a few departments did he find courses offered specifically for training in composition pedagogy. According to his observations, Michigan had offered the course since 1925; Indiana added one in 1950 (when Philip Wikelund moved from Michigan to Indiana); NYU ran such a course in 1949 but abandoned it; Illinois (as I noted earlier) offered Theory and Practice of Composition; and several programs at other institutions offered courses specifically in the teaching of communication that were rarely attended by English graduate students (6–7).

In “The 1956 Conference on College Composition and Communication Workshop Reports,” published in CCC, Workshop 9, “Preparation of Composition/Communication Teachers: Toward a Comprehensive Program,” conference participants offer a five-point program that integrates the work of graduate students in English with their training as composition teachers. Because this

report recounts work done in the five previous years' workshops on preparation, four of the five points offered had been addressed by previous workshops: that adequate professional preparation in composition be offered; that the training of composition teachers be the responsibility of English departments, not education programs; that changes in graduate curriculum should be made to improve teacher training; and that there should be more latitude in allowing graduate students to do research in composition areas. The remaining point, however, and the focus of the 1956 report, includes a detailed examination of the development of inservice training programs, including "a special course in the teaching of composition/communication" (138). Though the report does not outline what the course should entail, it does identify the course as a necessary requirement. Interestingly, Kitzhaber chaired this session.

In 1963, CCC published a series of statements regarding training graduate students as teachers. These statements, organized by institution, represent Pennsylvania State University, Loyola University, Arizona State University, and the University of Illinois. Of these, all but Penn State report offering a teacher training course. James D. Barry details Loyola's English 404: Studies in Methods of Language Analysis, which operates on five premises: (1) "Beginning graduate students have little background in the study of language"; (2) "Our graduate students pursue a set of courses which are predominantly literary"; (3) "Our graduate assistants acquire very good preparation in literature through their graduate studies and a good to very good preparation in composition through their teaching and the conferences dealing with this important matter"; (4) "Graduate assistants who plan to go into high-school teaching and those who plan to stay in college work need not be in separate groups for their training in language"; (5) "A graduate course like 404 should not degenerate into a methods course. It should be predominantly—in the ideal order exclusively—academic" ("Training Graduate Students" 76–77). In contrast, Arizona State University offered a required course in which "practical matters rather than theory dominate course content" (79). The course addressed issues of plagiarism, classroom management, spelling, and grading themes. By 1962 the University of Illinois had revamped its TA training program

into a three-part inservice training system involving regular staff meetings, a mentor program identified as a “big brothers” program, and a requirement that “assistants with less than one year of college teaching experience take Rhetoric 480, a course in the teaching of college composition” (81).

One of the things I find interesting in looking at the historical development of the practicum is that the earliest incarnations of the course (Greenough, for instance) made the argument for a course heavy in theory. In the 1940s and 1950s, the debate became more vocal, and proponents of both sides of the theory/pedagogy argument developed courses that emphasized varying positions. While this history is intriguing, what I find more interesting is the manner in which lore has evolved about the practicum course, casting its history as one of a tradition of a practically focused class. Scholars who address the practicum in their work have been quick to associate the course with a history of pedagogical focus and to account for the desire to move toward theory as a recent maneuver. Stephen Wilhoit, for instance, makes the common assessment that “while early in-service practica focused on pedagogy, the trend lately has been to place more emphasis on theory” (18). The fact is that the emphasis on theory—and the subsequent questioning of that emphasis—has existed since the inception of the idea of composition practica. Of course, much of this history can be reconsidered through the simple fact that it was not until the late 1960s and the 1970s that writing scholars had developed any theory of writing that attended to practical and pedagogical approaches. That is, the advent of cognitivism and process approaches to writing provided writing teachers with specific methodologies of how to teach writing students how to write. Hence, training new teachers how to teach the writing process allowed the practicum course to shift to a more fully practical focus. By the 1970s and 1980s, the push to include theory in graduate-level teacher training was as dominant as ever but now stood in opposition to conventional wisdom grounded in the process paradigm. Scholars such as Frank D’Angelo, Richard Gebhardt, and John Ruszkiewicz all called for theory-integrated training. Certainly, this debate carries through in contemporary conversations of the practicum, and we see much insistence on a theory-based graduate training from a variety of well-respected

composition scholars, including many in this collection. Yet I want to be clear that this debate is not new. More recent manifestations of these debates are evident in the program descriptions provided in Betty P. Pytlik and Sarah Liggett's excellent collection *Preparing College Teachers of Writing*, a collection that provides one of the most substantial examinations of composition practica in conjunction with other aspects of teacher preparation prior to this collection.

Likewise, the resistance to theory that has also plagued the field (particularly since the advent not only of cognitivism but also specifically of expressivist rhetorics) has been manifest in resistance to inclusion of theory in the practicum. Wendy Bishop's 1997 book *Teaching Lives: Essays and Stories* stands as a recent example of the ongoing struggle against theory in graduate programs. Rather than rehash all of Bishop's argument here, I want to note her position that "most of us have failed to consider how the 'theory' in our graduate student (teacher)s complicates any changes we hope to introduce to the culture of English studies" (194). What Bishop argues is that new graduate students come to courses like the practicum or other teacher training programs already invested in particular theories and cultures of teaching and learning. In reference to one student, she writes, "clearly, theory was already in the student" (195). Ultimately, Bishop argues that because students come to graduate programs with their own theories and because the theories we often throw at them are contested by other theories, the very introduction of theory can confuse new teachers as they try to negotiate their own ideas about teaching (I am still trying to understand why this would be thought of as a bad thing). Similarly, in 1993 in "Teachers as Students, Reflecting Resistance," Doug Hesse examines the frustration and resistance many new graduate students demonstrate in relation to the introduction of theory in their first composition course. Though the course Hesse describes is not cast as a practicum course directly, it is a course populated by new composition teachers—many of whom are literature students—trying to make connections between their teaching and their work as graduate students. The course, Introduction to the Composing Process, is described as a site in which theory and practice are placed in conflict, if not by Hesse himself, then certainly by his students.

I don't want to rehash all of composition's "theory wars" or the "new theory wars" (Olson 25) here, though discussing the history of the composition practicum would seem to lead to such a discussion. What I want to emphasize (again) is that historically, little has changed in terms of how we perceive the role of the practicum course. Certainly, in many programs the content of how we achieve these goals has shifted over the last fifty years, yet historically the course's position has shifted little. I note this not to make some progressive argument that in fifty years the course's position *should* have changed, but to clarify that as a field composition studies has done little to consider that location of the course. Look for instance at the titles of such courses and the ways in which these titles have been maintained over the past ninety-plus years. This is not to suggest that such course titles should change; in fact, I think departments have been quite savvy in maintaining the titles, because their ambiguity allows faculty flexibility in course design. What needs to be noted is that throughout the history of the composition practicum (one which I admittedly offer only a sketch of), the prevailing questions have been posed in regard to the content of the course, its role within graduate curricula, and the validity of the course as an academic course.

The Power of the Practicum

As a primary component in teacher professionalization,² the practicum serves multiple ends, many of which are in no way central to providing teaching methodologies to new teachers of writing per se, but rather are more broadly conceived in terms of overall professionalization of graduate students and introduction to composition studies. In other words, the practicum, since its inception, has developed not just into a course about teaching methods and theories, but also into a general introduction to composition studies, to teacher professionalization, to research methodologies in graduate-level English, to theory (to specific theories), to writing, and so on. Rosemary Winslow explains about the practicum course at the Catholic University of America, "as this is the only course in composition theory, research, and practice the majority of them will ever take, the course must provide an

overview of knowledge in the field and make available resources with which to pursue further study on their own” (9). Donna Dunbar-Odom makes a similar point about the East Texas State University practicum when she explains that “because many of the teaching assistants come here as literature majors, I also want them to have a solid sense of process pedagogy and at least a fast contextual grounding of composition as a discipline with a history and different branches” (19). Numerous other descriptions of practica make similar claims (see the critical statements in the special issue of *Composition Studies* mentioned earlier). My own Theories and Practices of Writing course, which I have now taught and revised twice at the University of Kansas and more than ten times at the University of Florida, covers in the fifteen-week semester the following subjects: history of composition studies as a discipline; introduction to English studies as a profession (in this segment we rapidly cover the MLA job search system, credentialing, publications, graduate research, etc.); introduction to classical and contemporary rhetoric; history of first-year composition (FYC); writing research in composition studies; computers and composition; using MOO spaces; online research in English studies; and introductions to various theoretical positions (these vary semester to semester), including cognitivism, expressivism, social constructionism, feminisms, resistance pedagogies, postcolonial theory, theories of public spaces, spatial theories, philosophies of language, alternative discourse theory, literacy theory, new media theory, postprocess theory, ecomposition, and so on. All of this is set within an agenda of asking students to think not about how to teach, but about how they think of themselves as teachers and as writers. But, ultimately, to be honest, what I teach in this class is of less consequence in terms of how my students think of themselves as teachers than it is in terms of what version of composition studies and the profession of academic work in English that I present. That is, the course stands more as an introduction to thinking about how and why teachers of writing find themselves in the institutional positions in which my students find themselves. The course, then, becomes a conveyor of a particular cultural capital of composition studies, one that I personally forward and one that falls in line with departmental agendas (to some extent).

Based not on this anecdote of my own teaching experiences, but on the limited, published accounts of the composition practicum (research) and the prolific, less-formal conversation about the practicum nationally (lore), one of my primary arguments in this introduction is that the practicum—no matter how it is presented, no matter in what institution it is presented—is the largest, most effective purveyor of cultural capital in composition studies. I forward this claim since the practicum is often the first contact with and initiation into composition studies that graduate students face and because it reaches professionals who do not identify themselves as compositionists specifically. More often than not, too, it is specifically these noncomposition specialists for whom the practicum is the sole experience in composition studies, and thus the sole defining mechanism for them. How the practicum is presented, then, defines for the noncomposition specialist what composition is. The course, generally speaking, is not merely a space in which new teachers are “trained” or even professionalized, but one in which they are enculturated into the cultural ideologies of composition. This, I argue, makes the practicum one of the most powerful and important spaces of occupation in composition studies. And if that is the case, a number of issues need to be addressed in terms of the composition practicum, and while I introduce those subjects here, I do so not to wrap up those discussions in neat little dispensable packages, but to unwrap some seriously problematic issues that composition studies needs to address.

The first issue that I see as needing further examination is the manner in which the practicum course is often conflated with an introduction to composition studies course. Such confluations stand to create the image that (a) an introduction to composition studies is an introduction to teaching, that composition is centrally identified as a teaching subject, and (b) that all graduate students who teach composition classes and/or who take the course should have an introduction to composition studies. While I like the idealistic, discipline-promoting idea that all English graduate students should take this intro course, I’m not so certain this is the case. Although I admit this is how we attract/convert many of our comp/rhet graduate students—by introducing new graduate students to a field many of them were

not introduced to as undergraduates—I am bothered by the disciplinary maxim that no matter what area of study one pursues in English, one *will end up teaching composition*; hence, all graduate students *should be* trained to teach composition. This traditional understanding, not about English but about teaching composition as something everyone “must do,” seriously demonizes composition into a subordinate and servile position—the very position scholars such as Susan Miller and hosts of others have fought against for nearly as long as composition has claimed disciplinary status. Catherine Latterell, for instance, in “Training the Workforce: An Overview of GTA Education Curricula,” surveys different training programs around the country and concludes not only that the practicum is the primary method for professionalizing graduate teaching assistants and for initiating them into teaching disciplines, but also that the construct of the practicum supports the very struggles composition has had to face in developing its professional identity:

Teaching writing is not valued, even by the rhetoric and composition field. By dispensing “training” in one- or two-hour doses once a week for one (possibly two) terms, this model encourages the passing out of class activities and other quick-fixes—an inoculation method of GTA education. We need to examine the message we are sending GTAs and our colleagues in English studies by maintaining such practices. (20)

In addition, numbers of us in composition would argue that composition studies is not a “teaching subject,” or at least not only a teaching subject. As the practicum appears to be the only standard required course for graduate students in English nationally, it is the one course that conveys that a particular branch of English—composition—must be covered by all students, no matter their area of study, because it is the course in which graduate students are initiated into the cult of teaching—not scholarship, but teaching.

I think it is also important to note that when the English maxim says that everyone in English will teach composition, what is meant is that everyone will likely teach FYC. Two problems grow from this: first, a minor point, is that composition, in general, is equated with FYC, and second, part of the overall issue of pro-

fessionalism, as understood to be the goal of the practicum and as integrated with other teaching English models/methods, is the idea that training to teach composition is training to teach FYC. This is manifest in the fact that more often than not (I'd be tempted to say "always" but have no quantitative evidence to support my assertion) the practicum is taught by the writing program administrator or by another composition faculty member who is being groomed for the position or has served in that position before. The question, then, must be asked: does the practicum teach only pedagogical methods that are to be used only in FYC, or does the course address methods for English studies (or even pedagogy) in general? Of course, the answer to this question is one of economics, both in terms of the ability to afford to offer practica for multiple kinds of courses and in terms of the economics of moving graduate students through their degree programs efficiently (in terms of both their funding and the efficiency of granting regular degrees). Or, we might ask, why doesn't that class rotate to other faculty? The answer here can be articulated with two more critical questions: would those faculty choose to teach the course that appears to have been cast as the graduate version of FYC, a course not necessarily granted the same legitimation as other graduate seminars, and, second, would we trust them to do so? I assume that in the same breath that I and the other contributors to this collection question the very space of the practicum, we would also not want to relinquish control of that space. After all, the practicum is a site of control. It is a location that allows composition to maintain hold of the small bit of territory composition is permitted to occupy, despite the fact that the course curriculum is perhaps the most contested graduate curriculum.

In many ways, I have come to think about the composition practicum in the same light as FYC as Sharon Crowley positions it in larger institutional goals. Crowley, in one of the most important books in composition studies in the past ten years—*Composition in the University*—argues that FYC courses are universally required as an institutional disciplining function. Because the practicum is so directly linked with the FYC requirement (itself often the only graduate English requirement, just as FYC is often one of the only "universal" undergraduate requirements), Crowley's critiques of FYC can be applied to the practicum as well. For

Crowley, FYC is a course that sees first-year students as a homogeneous audience, all with the same needs as writers. Hence, it is assumed that general, universal pedagogies—those then taught to new teachers in the practicum—can be applied to these classes wholesale. While I agree with Crowley's argument about FYC courses, her arguments about the disciplinary function of FYC also give me pause to consider the role the practicum plays in the very problems she notes about the introductory required course; the practicum, it seems, is one of the primary institutional disciplining mechanisms for FYC. After all, it is through the practicum that new teachers are molded into the taskmasters that oversee the FYC classes. It is, despite the good, critical, liberating intention of any practicum instructor, a function of the practicum to bring order to the approaches of teaching FYC. Just as Crowley criticizes the tradition of the FYC class for being put in place to teach taste and convention—terms which imply standardization and approval—so too can the practicum be seen as an ideology-shifting control mechanism.

Other scholars have noted the ideology-shifting agendas of the teacher professionalization process as well. Wendy Bishop, for instance, in her book *Something Old, Something New: College Writing Teachers and Classroom Change*, introduces the idea of “convergent theory.” Bishop argues that the very structure of teacher professionalization programs that incorporate workshops, orientation programs, practica, and so on presents idyllic versions of what teaching is and can be, thereby driving new teachers toward an image of the ideal pedagogy in order that the new teachers pursue such a pedagogical vision. Likewise, Nancy Welch, in her 1993 *College English* article, “Resisting the Faith: Conversion, Resistance, and the Training of Teachers,” examines how the religious metaphors of conversion apply to such professionalization programs and how resisting such moves to conversion can be more empowering than blind-faith following. What each of these scholars notes is that the very idea of teacher professionalization, when manifested in institutional structures such as a practicum, is an idea of ideological conversion, an attempt to bring new members into line with a particular culture, to show them the righteous path and ask them (rather forcefully and often deceptively) to follow its teachings. Even Welch's resistance to

such religious conversions and her attempts to provide a location for resistance within the conversion process must operate within the confines of the culture; a new teacher can only resist so much before she or he is excommunicated.

We must recognize that the manner in which the practicum disseminates cultural capital is a means of control; call it a means of conversion or even enculturation. By professing a particular cultural capital through the practicum, the program itself is able to maintain control over what can and should be taught not just in FYC classes but also in any other class students then teach. The very curriculum of the practicum course initiates new teachers into the realm of what might even be considered “pedagogy” and provides them with the vocabularies with which to name their pedagogical worlds. Certainly, new teachers rely heavily on previous classroom experiences such as modeling on past teachers, but the practicum takes those experiences and does more than name them for student teachers; those courses codify, critique, validate what can be considered good teaching methodologies. As Kitzhaber notes of the continuing role of the practicum in the teaching lives of students, “We have been able, in other words, to exercise a necessary measure of control over their teaching, yet have done it, we hope, tactfully and without resorting to strictures” (199).

The practicum, then, is one of the most powerful policing tools in English. Even in contemporary attempts to use the practicum as a site of TA empowerment, we see issues of control not-so-quietly demarcating the agendas of particular programs. Often we see the inclusion of theory to suggest a critical, questioning position, but the practicum also provides a site where theory can be used coercively as well. Note for instance the professionalization program at the University of Louisville as described by Katrina M. Powell, Peggy O’Neill, Cassandra Mach Phillips, and Brian Huot in “Negotiating Resistance and Change: One Composition Program’s Struggle Not to Covert.” Basing their program agendas on Welch’s notion of convergence and Hesse’s understanding of potential student resistance to theory, the Louisville program is “theoretically ‘open’ to any method of teaching” because of the thorough professionalization provided in the practicum (English 602) (124). Students in English 602 are encouraged to explore a range of

kinds of theories in order to develop their own theories about language and teaching. While I agree in theory with the Louisville approach, I want to note two issues of control that occur in the program as Powell and colleagues describe it. First, the English 602 curriculum provides a particular set of readings for the graduate students enrolled in the course. By doing so, the course, despite its “open” intentions, paints a particular picture of what teaching is, of what writing is, and of what composition is, no matter what reading is assigned. Likewise, and perhaps more important, I wonder whether the new teachers that experience this open approach to developing their own theories then translate such openness to their own FYC classes. That is, does the open approach to teaching methodologies then translate to an open approach not to how teachers teach, but to what they require of FYC students? Are those students given an “open” training in writing? Likewise, even an “open” approach purveys a particular (read politicized) version of what teaching is and is not, what writing is and is not. I say this not to criticize the Louisville program or even to question the program as Powell and colleagues have described it, but to note that even in TA-empowering/open programs, we must begin to seriously consider the power of the practicum as a disseminator of cultural capital and a policing mechanism. Nor am I arguing for the removal of such control mechanisms in favor of anarchist pedagogy, but I am calling for attention to the manner in which such mechanisms function and their larger institutional operations. For instance, Christine Hult and Lynn Meeks, in describing the practicum at Utah State University, make the savvy point that “the curriculum of the Writing Practicum (and therefore the Writing Program) is based on collaborative learning, literacy learning, social linguistics, and discourse theory” (186). Here they distinctly make the point that the practicum is the very mechanism that defines the culture of writing programs. Practica give shape and formula to the identity of programs. This notion of program identity is important because it carries cultural capital through to first-year students and what it means “to write.”

Likewise, examinations of various practicum descriptions reveal that practica perpetuate larger programmatic agendas,

which in turn propagate the very identity of what composition studies is. For instance, the graduate program here at the University of Florida Department of English emphasizes theory, both in composition/rhetoric and in other fields within English. As a result, the practicum course is primarily a theory course. Graduate students who come to the UF English department generally come specifically because of our overall focus on theory (the notable exceptions to this are the graduate students who come to the department to pursue an MFA in creative writing; we have recently released this population from the requirement of taking the practicum). Conversely (but by no means in opposition to), the program and practicum at Florida State University emphasize the teaching of writing, as Ruth M. Mirtz explains:

[S]ince the graduate program in composition and rhetoric at Florida State emphasizes research in the teaching of writing, rather than historical research or other areas, the teacher-training course can function as an introduction to composition studies because it points future composition specialists toward an agenda for studying the teaching of writing. (24)

Hence, graduate students who take the practica course at FSU and UF are given rather different ideas as to what the discipline of composition studies is, and those disseminating these images of the discipline maintain a position of authority in determining what composition is for a particular population. I point this out not to give value to one program over the other, but to show how a single semester's introduction to composition studies at two different programs can forward distinctly different cultural capitals. I think that it is important not to ask which is the correct cultural capital to be forwarding, but to ask about the very politics of the practicum as purveyor of cultural capital.

As a follow-up, I must also point out that the cultural capital and programmatic identity that is purveyed through the practicum often can be traced to the cultural capital/program identity of the WPA's own practicum experience—should he or she have had one. Hence, a single semester practicum has the power to affect the culture not only of that one classroom but also of large numbers of institutional identities around the country.

Finally, I would like to observe that part of the power of practica comes from the fact that the identity of those who take the practicum is an oddly contested space: on the one hand, they are cast as students learning a skill/trade/pedagogy or taking an introduction to a “discipline,” and on the other hand, they are the teachers passing on a likeness of those same skills/trades/pedagogies and disciplinary knowledges to students of their own. This past semester in my own course, one graduate student asked, “In this class, are we students or are we teachers?” Unlike other graduate classes in which student identities tend to be set primarily in the role of student, the practicum confuses student/teacher identity. The very names we assign to participants in the practicum are quite telling: student, student teacher, graduate assistant, graduate teaching assistant, and so on. These labels create a system in which participants in the practicum are given identities—identities, first, that are foisted on them and that carry historical and institutional baggage, and second, that demarcate an “us” and “them” division, reinforcing the control mechanism.

What I hope this section has demonstrated is not that the practicum is a negative space, one that controls identities—programmatically and individually—in improper ways, but that we need to become more cognizant of the implications of that power and begin to see the practicum not as merely the required course in professionalization, but also as one of the most powerful sites in composition studies and English studies.

The Essays in This Book

Having made my argument about the history and power of the practicum, I want to end this rather long introduction by turning to the essays found in this collection. As I mentioned early in this introduction, one of the prevailing issues that arises in the selections in this book is the purpose of the practicum in terms of what should be taught. Through this focus, the course becomes a site in which the discipline’s continued theory/practice contestation gets played out; as Mary Lou Odom, Michael Bernard-Donals, and Stephanie Kerschbaum note in their contribution, “many practica

seem to dwell so heavily on either the theory *or* the practice of teaching writing.” There is little doubt that the question of the position of theory and practice is predominant in the essays. The question seems to carry an undercurrent of issues of validation, of making the course a legitimate intellectual pursuit, not just a how-to course. I say “not just” because as the essays in this collection contend, for many, separating the how-to from the theory is not a possibility, in terms of curriculum, content, or theoretical understanding of the relationship between practice and theory. In terms of the role of the practicum as purveyor and controlling mechanism of cultural capital, I am interested here, too, that in many essays practice often gets cast as “teaching” in the ways that the theory/practice debate gets played out. Because such divisions are prominent in curricular design of practica, such parameters of what theory/practice (read theory/pedagogy) is and can be ultimately move to set up the larger disciplinary debates, relegating practice to teaching. As Joe Marshall Hardin explains in his contribution to this collection, “The claims that practice make on the field are unusually strong, perhaps because the roots of rhetoric and composition as a contemporary field of study were planted by a group of academics, mostly trained in literary studies, who were driven by a quest to find better ways of teaching writing—a practice for which they had no theory.” The result of this quest, then, has been manifest through the practica and in turn disciplinary definitions that pit not practice against theory, but specifically one kind of practice—pedagogy—against theory. While many of the pieces in this collection maintain such a vision of practice as teaching, most do so in an effort not to play out the theory/practice debate, but in an attempt to better understand the role of that debate in the construction of the practicum and vice versa.

Likewise, one of the more striking similarities between many of these pieces is how often the contributing authors turn to the personal/the experiential. That is, more often than not, contributors ground their discussions of practica in the experiences and practices of their home institution’s practicum. I, of course, have done so several times in this introduction. I read this reliance on local experience as displaying two key facets of the ways in which

practica have been discussed professionally and publicly: First, the conversations about the practica have been so limited that there is little context in which to discuss such courses (and problems) other than in the personal/experiential. Second, even in a course that is apparently (as these essays seem to indicate) a central site in which the theory/practice debates get played out, and because these are still teaching sites, notions of teacher–student relationships still maintain a strong hold over the very discourses in and through which we can discuss teaching. That is, as Hardin suggests, because composition as a field developed as a means to discover better ways of teaching, those same teaching approaches that grew to see writing as centered in personal and experiential methods maintain an advantage over how composition can discuss issues of teaching. How we can talk about the practicum, because it is a teaching space, is regulated by the vocabularies with which we have surrounded it. To talk about a kind of class is to talk about the experiential; “here’s what we do.” Please don’t misread me here: I am not faulting the contributors to this collection for taking the experiential approach to addressing issues of the practicum. What I am faulting is composition in general and specifically the ways in which composition has failed to address the very idea of the practicum in more theoretical/political ways (prior to this collection) that would have opened the spaces for conversations other than the individual experience.

The selections in this collection begin to open doors to reconsider not just what is and can be done in specific practica classes, but also the role those classes play in larger conceptions of what composition studies is and can be. For instance, another prevailing theme that appears in many of these contributions is the relationship, often assumed and required, between practica and writing program administrators. As Kelly Belanger and Sibylle Gruber note, the practicum course is often designed and taught by the WPA, the same person who designs and maintains course agendas for the FYC course that the practicum serves. Noting both the favorable and problematic issues that come into play when a single administrator oversees these key components of a writing program, Belanger and Gruber ask us to think seriously about how the relationship between the practicum and the WPA becomes a critical point of contact in forwarding local programmatic agen-

das and well as larger disciplinary motives. Similarly, Juan Guerra and Anis Bawarshi consider the political shifts that occur during transition periods from one WPA to another, noting that “periods of transition within writing programs too often become figured as changes in WPAs, as changes from so and so’s program to so and so’s program. Such a cult of personality distracts us from recognizing these periods of transition as opportunity spaces, not for the enactment of another personality, but for thinking about the institutional and intellectual place of a writing program and its relationship to the discipline that informs and is informed by it.” In this claim I hear echoes of Jean Baudrillard’s explanation that “[f]rom a political point of view, that a head of state remains the same or is someone else doesn’t strictly change anything, so long as they resemble each other” (25). In terms of the programmatic culture of writing programs and the impact individual WPAs have on individual programs, it is crucial that we consider the relationship between WPAs and practica.

Ultimately, what this collection provides are attempts to answer some of the questions about the role of the practicum that have been asked since English departments and writing teachers began thinking about, teaching, and taking composition practica. In providing these answers, the contributors also identify the need for further speculation and further questions about the practicum. For me, this collection stands as a call to research, as a call to ask and answer more questions about the politics and power of the practicum.³

Notes

1. In my initial conception of this book, I envisioned the collection divided into two parts: the first providing syllabi of composition practica from as many programs as I could gather, and the second consisting of critical essays about the practica. My original call for papers requested both kinds of submissions. By the deadline for submissions, however, I had received only three syllabi contributions and more than twenty critical essays. I’m glad this happened and that the book has come together as it has. The 1995 *Composition Studies* special issue did a remarkable job of gathering examples of how and why different programs approach their practica as they do. There was no need to duplicate that project,

but there is a need for serious discussion of the politics surrounding the very idea of the composition practicum.

2. I want to note a specific shift here in how I address issues of professionalization. In the section prior to this, in which I sketch a loose outline of the practicum's history, I refer to teacher "training," not professionalization. For the rest of this introduction, however, I use the term *professionalization*, not *training*. In his foreword to Pytlik and Liggett's collection, Richard Fulkerson makes an important point regarding the differences between training and professionalization. Fulkerson reminds us that "training" refers to "the rote behavior for which one can be trained with some sort of Skinner-like stimulus/response conditioning." "Trained" teachers, Fulkerson says, would know *the* correct answer all of the time. "One *trains* animals. One *educates* people," he explains (xi). I agree wholeheartedly with his assessment and will refrain from using the term *training*. The only exceptions to this are instances in which "training" refers to the historical view of teacher preparation.

3. I want to thank Anis Bawarshi and Joe Hardin for comments on early drafts of this introduction.

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The title of this collection of original essays, *Don't Call It That: The Composition Practicum*, refers to the battle many composition programs have had to fight to clarify that introductory graduate-level composition courses are more than "how-to-teach-writing" courses; they are, in fact, often sophisticated introductions to a dynamic field of study. According to editor Sidney I. Dobrin, "The new 'practicum' more often than not serves as an introduction to composition theory, to research methodologies, to pedagogical theory, to histories of composition studies as a discipline, and to larger disciplinary questions about writing, not just to teaching writing per se."

This collection provides a provocative consideration of the scholarly questions surrounding the practicum. The role theory plays is intrinsically enmeshed with the questions of legitimacy often asked by departments, colleges, and universities: Should students receive credit for the course? Should faculty receive teaching credit for teaching the course? The first book to address the composition practicum as a contested site, *Don't Call It That* also addresses the connections the site has to larger political questions about composition studies, writing program administration, and the role of theory in the discipline.

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