Overview: Lydia McDermott, Kaitlyn Patia, and Matthew Bost proposed a Departmental Inquiry PIG grant in Spring semester of 2019, to be completed over the 2019-2020 school year. Below is a description of the process we used, a reflection on results, and copies of the core curricular documents produced during the PIG meetings. I've also included a bullet point summary below.

Summary of Accomplishments:
- Revised learning outcomes for core major courses (RWPD 230, 330, 387, 487)
- Workshopped learning outcomes for core RWPD skills courses (RWPD 110, 170)
- Produced substantive revisions to several major courses (approved in Feb '20 as course and major revisions)
- Finalized a policy for crosslisting courses/counting courses for major credit
- Began reading across Communication and Composition areas of the field of rhetoric. Discussed core articles, skills and concepts we want students to have in the major.
- Broadly discussed scaffolding of core courses and learning outcomes, and workshopped syllabus for RWPD 487. Discussed previous versions of RWPD 230, 330, 387 and laid groundwork for future instructors to change those syllabi.
- Finalized basic course structure for new senior experience and assessment. Workshopped new version of oral assessment to reflect the split between honors theses and senior capstone projects.
- Began open-ended discussions about future campus visits to consider comparable school curricula, and about relationship to gen ed (especially relative to a potential in-major requirement to take credits emphasizing intensive oral/written communication)

Process: While we had initially envisioned an intensive retreat over the month of June, we quickly realized that it would be beneficial to the work we were trying to produce to space meetings out more and allow more time for reflection and more informal discussion in between. We also realized that some of the details for our project (e.g. the senior assessment rubric) would work themselves out more effectively if we worked on those elements as we were teaching certain courses (or after we had had a chance to try out the new senior assessment model we implemented starting this year). Thus, we met once in June, once in July, once in August, once in December 2019, and once in January 2020, each time for around 3 hours (the December meeting was closer to 2). Each meeting combined bigger-picture discussion of department curricular priorities with specific nuts-and-bolts work, like discussion of learning outcomes. While we began with an agenda that started with big-picture questions and moved to more concrete questions, we ended up foregrounding more operational concerns like learning goals and working out of those to bigger intellectual priorities. We also did some reading between meetings, and each member of the PIG suggested articles they felt set broad agendas for the department curriculum (e.g. reflections on definitions of rhetoric, or histories of different parts of the field) or that they felt were essential reading for class. We envision that reading work as part

of a longer process of reading key articles across communication studies and Rhetoric/Composition, that we will continue with our new colleague, Ellen Defossez, in the coming years. Similarly, we began discussions of some questions (like schools to visit for ideas on curricular development) that we plan to pursue over the next year, as Victor Villanueva joins us as an Arnold visiting educator, embarking on campus visits either concurrently with his visit in 2020-21, or afterward. We have some initial thoughts, but feel those will become more concrete as the new program curriculum settles. We emerged from the PIG process with a stronger sense of intellectual agenda, improved learning outcomes, and some clear consensus on some elements of our relationship to Whitman's larger curriculum (like crosslisting) where other elements (like an in-major written or oral comm. requirement) will remain more open-ended until the College finalizes a new general education policy, and until the writing outcomes of the new first-year course become clearer.

Results/Reflection: We emerged from the PIG with a few concrete results, most notably revised learning goals for our core courses and a senior assessment rubric. We quickly found that there was broad intellectual agreement on many aspects of our curriculum moving forward, and so our work on the learning goals largely focused on making them more assessment-friendly and clarifying them, as well as thinking about how the courses related to one another.

We didn't end up substantially changing any of the core course purviews, but had a more extended discussion of the relationship between the two 3xx major courses (rhetorical criticism and rhetorical theory). One reason for this was that the degree of distinction between "criticism" (textual, contextual, or theoretically-informed work to analyze arguments, speeches, and other instances of public discourse and consider their effects on an audience or their composition) and "theory" (conceptually-driven work aimed at asking larger questions about what rhetoric is, how it works, the relationship between rhetoric and power, rhetoric and the human condition, etc.) is greater in communication studies than in rhetoric and composition (the two are often treated as distinct approaches to rhetoric, or as different areas of emphasis) and is often different depending on the level of education (i.e. while many graduate courses or journal publications might argue the distinction doesn't exist--every theory has implications for practices of rhetoric, and every criticism is theoretically informed--the distinction often appears in undergraduate texts to distinguish primary-source driven research about instances of public discourse from more conceptually informed readings). We also wrestled with the problem that we currently offer both courses in parallel as setup for thesis, which is difficult for some students (especially those studying off campus spring junior year) and has also led to many students taking both courses in sophomore year to avoid this problem, and then waiting a year before extending the skills in those courses in thesis. We decided to keep Rhetorical Criticism as a course that was more tied to the methods and practices of rhetorical scholarship (both primary-source research, and using concepts to inform readings of texts) and open up Rhetorical Theory as a course that asked

bigger philosophical questions about rhetoric, and also provided a space to consider dialogue between rhetoric and other disciplines and theories (e.g. ideology critique, rhetorical ethnography, dialogue between rhetoric and interdisciplinary critical theories of race, gender, ability) the field has worked with. The theory course will thus become something that students can take any time, that is not directly tied to senior year written work, and that asks larger questions about rhetoric and the human/more-than-human condition, the criticism course will continue to be a methods course that directly informs students' thesis or capstone research.

While we had originally discussed offering specific assignment guidelines for our core courses, after a conversation we decided that it would be better to consider the skills we wanted each course to develop relative to the overall curriculum, and leave most specific assignments and syllabi to individual instructors. We spent time working through the syllabi of our intro course (230) and the junior criticism/methods course (387); in the first case, we came to a consensus about the kinds of assignments we wanted the course to contain (a mixture of written and oral presentation, short papers incorporating criticism and direct work with concepts from the course text) and largely confirmed Prof. Patia's redesign of the course, which replaced the syllabus designed by Prof. Hayes (that included tests on top of presentations and a longer, open-ended research project that we felt worked better as part of an advanced course). We also highlighted a set of critical questions or variables we wanted to make sure students in RWPD 387 got (close reading, audience analysis, primary source contextual research) and agreed on an open-ended list of critical concepts, from ideology to public memory, that we felt were essential parts of such a course. For RWPD 330, the main discussion focused on opening up the course more, but we did pay attention to student comments that suggested the course do more to bring in texts from outside the Greco-European rhetorical tradition. Prof. Bost incorporated some discussions of this theme in the form of a unit on "comparative rhetoric" in the senior course this past fall, and we plan to work with all of these changes as the course is taught over the next couple of years. We also discussed distributing the work of a literature review assignment, currently in RWPD 330 as an element of thesis preparation, across our other core courses, scaffolding a short, limited engagement in 230 where students will be asked to explore a concept in the course text, an expanded assignment in RWPD 387 where students would be asked to more substantively explore the scholarship around a rhetorical concept in order to critically apply it, and a full discussion of secondary research and scholarly conversations in senior seminar.

Finally, we reworked the syllabus for RWPD 487 (our senior seminar) to reflect the split between thesis projects and capstone projects that we implemented with the shift to a new program, drafting a handout for incoming seniors, reviewing assignment guidelines, and workshopping the reading and assignment schedule for the course. After seniors had completed capstone projects in the fall, and we had a better idea of what capstone projects would look like relative to honors theses, we designed the senior rubric below, adapting the gender studies senior

rubric. We also started to think about the best way to engage senior orals in the long-term--in the past, thesis students had offered a brief presentation and longer defense to their committees that mimicked a masters thesis defense. This year, capstone orals were integrated into the last several weeks of class, and included a presentation and Q/A from both the student's readers and other students; theses will have (at this point videoconferenced) defenses that eliminate the presentation component and focus largely on a conversation about the students' projects.. In the future, as much as possible, we are interested in creating some form of public component to senior presentations and inviting community participation. We discussed maintaining the defense as a Q/A and then scheduling a larger public senior research night at some point in the spring where students could engage their research with their peers in a more public space.

Our next set of discussions revolved around our relation to general education. We talked about the need to balance our commitment to general education around campus (in the form of courses like RWPD 170 and Public Speaking, that largely serve non-majors) with the ability to provide a robust major education in the field of rhetoric. Until now, public speaking and the courses formerly listed as COMP courses have not been required for the major, nor has there been any direct incentive for majors to take them. We discussed language for a major requirement that would ask majors to take one or more courses focusing on written and/or oral communication skills. We agree that, depending on how current conversations about general education play out, such a major requirement might be redundant, and will revisit the requirement once those questions have been decided. We also re-assessed the list of current crosslisted courses, and discussed several criteria for thinking about when to count courses for major credit, especially a course's relevance to rhetoric, and its coverage of an area outside current rhetoric faculty's expertise.

The final element of our PIG was an open-ended discussion with the goal of building intellectual common ground and comparing our respective perspectives on rhetoric. While they draw on a unified tradition and have strong overlap, Rhetoric as taught in communication studies, and Rhetoric/Composition have different histories and some different areas of emphasis. We began by asking each member of the PIG to send in articles that they felt were either essential reading to assign to a class, or revealed an important conversation within our respective areas of the field. These articles formed the base for much of the skills discussions we worked through above, especially our consideration of the junior methods class (387), the theory class (330) and senior seminar (487). We also began the process of looking through a number of anthologies and textbooks on rhetoric and composition, laying the ground for instructors to work in different elements of writing pedagogy discussions into future courses, especially the senior course; these conversations also informed our discussions of scaling assignments between intro-level courses and the senior course, and of workload for the capstone paper and thesis. Finally, we began discussing programs we might eventually conduct visits for to think about developing RWPD.

To some extent, this meant triangulating different criteria cross a few programs (e.g. there are writing programs at liberal arts colleges, comm- and media-focused rhetoric programs at liberal arts colleges, interdisciplinary rhetoric programs that incorporate both comm and rhet/comp at larger schools, but these features are not necessarily all in the same programs). We ended up with initial lists of programs that looked structurally similar to ours, and programs that worked at colleges similar to Whitman and balanced gen-ed with a rhetoric-focused curriculum. We decided to table a final discussion of campus visits until after our Arnold educator, Victor Villanueva, visits next year, since much of our Arnold application focused on working with him (as both a distinguished scholar in rhetoric and composition, and someone with substantial administrative experience in rhetoric and composition) to develop our program, though it obviously remains to be seen whether the visit will be able to happen.

We see several benefits to the campus community emerging from our PIG. The most direct is a vastly increased sense of departmental cohesion, a clear set of shared intellectual priorities, and a strong agenda for the next several years which (circumstances allowing) will let us continue to strengthen the department. The learning goals we crafted and discussion of scaffolding skills and work across major courses will make our major both more accessible to students and more academically effective. Our revised senior year assessment creates a clearer sense of the difference between honors and non-honors work, facilitates more independent student learning and research, and offers more accessible information to students about what they will be graded on than in the previous major documents. We hope, over the next several semesters, to continue to work on a major handbook and on documents that will guide major advising and students' path through RWPD. Finally, as conversations about general education continue to develop, we have a strong sense of how we want our courses currently aimed at non-majors to fit into the major curriculum as it develops, which will enable us to think more specifically about how those courses will evolve as we balance major obligations with a general written/oral communication requirement, if such a requirement appears.

Documents:

1) *RWPD Core Course Learning Outcomes (We revised our department learning outcomes prior to the approval of the PIG; they were implemented as a catalog change in Feb 20, and will go into effect for the 2020-2021 academic year)*

   a) *110*

1. Practice public speaking as a dynamic art that ranges from extemporaneous, conversational speeches delivered with note cards to memorized speeches delivered from a podium or platform.

2. Speak confidently, eloquently, and ethically.

3. Draw on a variety of appeals and invention strategies.

4. Speak in a variety of forums, styles, and genres, adapting to different audiences and different goals.

5. Critically listen to and evaluate the public address of others. This involves skillfully engaging with your peers and broader publics.

b) *170 (We discussed these learning outcomes but retained them as already written)*

At the end of this course, students should be able:

1. To identify claims and evidence in text.

2. To design claims in their own writing with sufficient and strategic evidence.

3. To create cohesion at sentence, paragraph, and essay level.

4. To create a unified paragraph.

5. To develop awareness of audience and purpose

6. To understand writing as a mode of understanding as well as a mode of communication.

7. To be able to respond to texts/data/artifacts in their own writing.

8. To understand how form and content are related

9. To be flexible: to change ideas, experiment with different forms, take risks with revision.

10. To expand their writing vocabulary.

c) *230*

1. Understand the political, social and theoretical foundations of rhetorical studies.

2. Critically approach rhetorical acts for the purpose of enhancing understanding of and engagement with civic life.

3. Critically reflect on and rigorously evaluate rhetorical artifacts, texts, contexts, and public culture.

4. Recognize and critique the power dynamics enacted, constrained, and reproduced through rhetorical acts and situations.

5. Present original research with the goal of communicating to a broad audience.

6. Engage in dialogue with peers about their work and provide constructive criticism.

d) 330
1. Pose and reflect on questions about rhetoric's relationship to knowledge, power, and being

2. Place different theoretical approaches to rhetoric into conversation with one another

3. Consider how broader perspectives on public discourse have been incorporated into rhetoric as a field

4. In discussion and written work, articulate theoretical positions reflexively and offer generous readings of others' positions.

e) 387
1. Synthesize and differentiate a wide range of conceptual and methodological approaches to rhetorical criticism

2. Read and interpret exemplary academic scholarship within rhetoric

3. Rhetorically analyze particular rhetorical acts with nuance and precision

4. Synthesize primary contextual and historiographic research within the act of rhetorical criticism

5. Articulate the ways that cultural and historical power dynamics shape both rhetorical acts and the act of rhetorical criticism

   f) *487*
      1. Model exemplary academic scholarship in rhetoric

      2. Produce a substantial, independently researched argument about rhetoric and public discourse

      3. Consider the relationship between form and content in academic argument, and organize your work to reflect your argument

      4. Reflect on time management, writing, and learning styles as they pertain to the research and composition process

      5. Engage composition as a recursive process,responding to professor and peer feedback and thinking critically about how to implement that feedback

   2) *RWPD Senior Rubric Draft (Adapted from the Gender Studies Senior Rubric)*

Rhetoric, Writing and Public Discourse Senior Evaluation Criteria[1]

Average of 2.7 – 3.0 = *Pass with Distinction*

Average of 1.7 – 2.6 = *Pass*

Average below 1.7 = *Not pass*

A. Relevance to Rhetoric[2]

   3 – The project topic and analysis directly engage major debates, concepts or theories within Rhetoric.

   2 – The project topic and analysis indirectly or tangentially engage major debates, concepts, or theories within Rhetoric.

   1 – The project topic and analysis are not directly relevant to Rhetoric.

B. Clear and focused problem

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[1] This rubric is expanded and adapted from the Whitman Gender Studies senior assessment rubric. Thanks go to those whose labor went into its development.

[2] "Rhetoric" here may include rhetorically focused work in Communication Studies, Rhetoric and Composition, or a combination of both scholarly traditions. It may also draw on interdisciplinary literature as relevant to core concepts, debates, or theories of rhetoric, whether that literature has been drawn on by prior scholarship or the student makes original connections to facilitate their own project.

3 – The problem addressed by the project is clearly defined and narrowly focused; the argument demonstrates an original contribution in conversation with other literature in the field

2 – The problem addressed by the project is defined, but may not be completely clear or focused. It demonstrates a solid contribution to the field or effectively applies rhetorical concepts to a critical artifact, but does not demonstrate an original contribution to a scholarly conversation.

1 – The problem addressed by the project is vague and overly broad, and/or concerns a topic that has been covered extensively and in the same way by many other scholars.

C. Mastery of relevant literature

3 – The project demonstrates a thorough mastery of the body of literature relevant to the topic.

2 – The project demonstrates an adequate mastery of the body of literature relevant to the topic.

1 – The project does not demonstrate mastery of the body of literature relevant to the topic.

D. Reliable and high-quality analysis of critical artifacts and primary sources

3 – The project makes exemplary use of chosen critical artifacts and primary sources, effectively engaging the artifact's composition, audience, context and/or relevance to systemic power dynamics, and engaging multiple critical variables in relation to one another.

2 – The project makes acceptable use of chosen critical artifacts and primary sources, engaging the object's composition, audience, context and/or relevance to systemic power dynamics as they are relevant to their artifacts' rhetorical significance.

1 – The project does not effectively engage chosen critical artifacts and primary sources, or engage features relevant to their rhetorical significance.

E. Methods and/or theoretical approach

3 – The methods and/or theoretical approach employed in research and analysis strengthen the project's ability to answer the research questions it poses.

2 – The methods and/or theoretical approach employed in research and analysis facilitate acceptable answers to the research questions the project poses.

1 – The methods and/or theoretical approach employed in research and analysis do not enable adequate answers to the research questions the project poses..

F. Composition and Voice

    3 – The project shows significant grasp of compositional choices and authorial voice, and strongly embodies the student's communicative goals

    2 – The project some grasp of compositional choices and authorial voice, and adequately embodies the student's communicative goals.

    1 – The project shows little to no grasp of compositional choices and authorial voice, and does not embody the student's communicative goals.

G. Engagement with Writing Process

    3 – The student is reflexive about research and composition as recursive processes and effectively engages available faculty and other intellectual resources in the service of independent research

    2 – The student shows some engagement with research and composition as recursive processes, and works with faculty readers to find intellectual resources that help them construct the project.

    1 – The student is overly reliant on faculty help, fails to adequately communicate with faculty readers about deadlines or research and composition processes, or fails to meet substantial deadlines for the project.

H. Use of Evidence and Support

    3 – The project effectively marshals appropriate evidence in support of its claims

    2 – The project adequately marshals evidence in support of its claims

    1 – Evidence is inadequate to support the claims being made; claims are unclear or unsupportable.

I. Organization

    3 – The organization of the project is thoroughly clear, readable and comprehensible.

    2 – The organization of the project is clear, readable, and comprehensible in many places.

    1 – The organization of the project is largely unclear, difficult to follow, and/or incomprehensible.

J. Mechanics

    3 – The grammar and style of the project are exemplary.

    2 – The grammar and style of the project are acceptable.

    1 – The grammar and/or style of the project is poor.

Average of 2.7 – 3.0 = *Pass with distinction*

Average of 1.7 – 2.6 = *Pass*

Average below 1.7 = *Not pass*

A. Building on the thesis

> 3 – On her/his own, and/or as prompted by the committee, the student is regularly able to expand on the work in their project with clarity, consistency, and depth.

> 2 – On his/her own, and/or as prompted by the committee, the student is sometimes able to expand on the work in their project with clarity, consistency, and depth.

> 1 – The student is not able to expand on the work in their project with any significant clarity, consistency, or depth.

B. Ability to link the thesis to other work in Rhetoric.[3]

> 3 – The student can consistently and creatively draw significant connections between their project and the work of other Rhetoric scholars.

> 2 – The student can sometimes draw significant connections between the thesis and the work of other Rhetoric scholars.

> 1 – The student cannot draw significant connections between the thesis and the work of other Rhetoric scholars.

C. Facility with Rhetorical concepts.[4]

> 3 – The student demonstrates exemplary knowledge of and facility in applying central theories, concepts and debates within Rhetoric.

> 2 – The student demonstrates adequate knowledge of and facility in applying central theories, concepts and debates within Rhetoric.

> 1 – The student demonstrates insufficient knowledge of or facility in applying central theories, concepts and debates within Rhetoric.

D. Oral communication skills.

> 3 – The student communicates clearly and confidently at all times.[5]

> 2 – The student communicates clearly and confidently some of the time.

> 1 – The student rarely communicates clearly or confidently.

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[3] Note: the committee may determine, at its discretion, that prompting is acceptable – this is not a test of the student's detailed recall, but of her/his facility in applying well-known concepts in the field (e.g., the rhetorical situation).

[4] As above, note that the committee may determine, at its discretion, that prompting is acceptable – this is not a test of the student's detailed recall, but of her/his facility in applying well-known concepts in the field.

[5] Note that "clear and confident" doesn't necessarily mean the student always has an answer to the committee's questions; "I don't know" can be said clearly and with confidence.