Course Description

The course is the first of a two-part seminar focusing on research in the discipline of rhetoric and composition. It is intended to introduce you to reading the spectrum of research in the field. It focuses on reading processes that will help you to learn and be critical of the research “literature” currently available in the discipline. It will also serve as the foundation for a career in which reading the research in rhetoric and composition will play an integral role.

While the focus is on reading, graduate students will also have the opportunity to write in two principal ways: (1) exam writing and (2) a seminar essay in which you read and write about the research most relevant and interesting to you. The exam writing will help prepare you for comprehensive exams. The seminar essay is designed to lead to publication, either now or in the future.

Some of the questions addressed in the course include:

• What does research tell us about student writing processes and the development of writing abilities?
• What does research tell us about error in college students’ writing?
• What does research tell us about the most effective teaching (best practices) of writing?
• What does research tell us about the effectiveness of teacher commentary on student writing?
• What does research tell us about the value of extensive reading in first-year writing courses for the improvement of student writing in these courses?

Possible Course Readings

While some additions and substitutions are possible, the following texts are likely to be used in the course. If you want to get a head start, I advise you to start with Emig, North, Ray, Shaughnessy, and Straub. A full, and definitive, list of the texts will be available by December 1 and will be sent to all enrolled students. In addition to full texts, articles will also be assigned.

Bateman, Donald, and Frank Zidonis. The Effect of a Study of Transformational Grammar on the Writing of Ninth and Tenth Graders
Beaufort, Anne. College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction
Britton, James, et al. The Development of Writing Abilities (11-18)
Coles, William. The Plural I—And After
Emig, Janet. The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders
Hillocks, George. Research on Written Composition
North, Stephen. The Making of Knowledge in Composition
Phelps, Louise Whetherbee. Composition as a Human Science: Contributions to the Self-Understanding of a Discipline
Ray, Ruth. The Practice of Theory: Teacher Research in Composition
Shaughnessy, Mina P. Errors and Expectations
Straub, Richard. Key Works on Teacher Response: An Anthology