Manufacturing a Context:
Rhetorical Implications of Standalone Critical Information Literacy Courses

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Introduction

Is a standalone credit-bearing course—one that like a first-year course in composition or public speaking is integrated into a general education curriculum and required of all students—an effective medium for introducing a critical approach to information literacy?

With increased instructional contact with students and the value of course credit, it is tempting to think such a course could produce an environment in which a basic critical awareness of how cultural, economic, and political systems influence the creation, organization, and dissemination of information would flourish.

But like their standalone counterparts in rhetoric/composition and communications programs, these general education information literacy courses can often serve as inoculations. When offered as part of a first-year experience, their typical purpose is to provide students with a set of generalizable skills that can transfer to other parts of a college or university curriculum. Assuming skills to be generic with universal value, meaning, and applicability is a pragmatic necessity. Instructors in these kinds of service courses have neither the time nor the expertise to situate skills in and define them from the perspective of every discourse community. As a result, context-specific expectations regarding the use of context-specific conventions to achieve context-specific goals may not be made explicit to students. This has clear implications for learning transfer. As Patricia

Bizzell warns, if students remain "unaware that there is such a thing as a discourse community with conventions to be mastered," they may struggle to respond to the situated, ideological demands of a context.[1] Skills learned in generic contexts may not easily transfer to situated ones.

The generic nature of standalone information literacy courses designed to prepare students to research in all situations, therefore, presents a problem for the development of a transferable critical awareness that recognizes the cultural, economic, and political assumptions present in any information practice or text. To provide students with a basis for critically reading and consciously responding to the ideological demands of a discourse community, as proponents of critical information literacy suggest,[2] all practices and texts must be analyzed and situated as artifacts of that context. Divorced from communities they purport to prepare students to participate in, the contexts so often occupied by inoculation-oriented, standalone courses are acontextual. By not conforming to the demands of a given context, specific ideological assumptions that influence the use of certain practices and production of community texts are not easily exposed to students. Or to put it differently: when everything appears ideologically neutral, it is difficult to demonstrate the range of any context's power. Creating a critical awareness in a standalone course, therefore, requires more than the simple implementation of critical methods.

So, how can standalone courses provide students sufficient practice with the fundamental elements of critique?

In short, they must manufacture the circumstances in which research practices and informational texts can be embedded. Through this focused lens, the ideological power of context can be demonstrated and understood. Through the analysis of authentic texts and the use of realistic activities, it can be constructed and maintained, offering a plausible demonstration of how to interpret context. To some degree, manufacturing context is a part of one-shot library instruction. Tailoring lessons to the requirements of specific assignments attempts to situate information literacy skills within the work of particular disciplines. It tacitly acknowledges that those skills have value in specific circumstances. Doing that over the course of an entire semester, without the benefit of activities situated in disciplinary contexts, is a much more daunting process. A manufactured context may be a limited simulation of something much more complex, but it can organize the frequent and intentional practice that is necessary to foster an

elementary critical awareness, which can be transferred and developed in other contexts.

This chapter examines both the manufacturing of a context in an actual standalone course, York College of Pennsylvania's Information Literacy (IFL) 101, and the use of rhetoric to address some of the process's thornier implications. In its turn toward social constructionist philosophies, rhetoric—the formal study of how people use language, informed and constrained by a context, to influence the behavior of others—recognizes that a discourse "can never be innocent, can never be a disinterested arbiter of the ideological claims of others because it is always already serving certain ideological claims."[3] This always situated, always political conception of discourse suggests a number of potential difficulties in using a manufactured context in fostering a critical awareness. But the ability of rhetoric to highlight the ideological assumptions that motivate choices in a text's construction also suggests a potential framework for teaching students to recognize how context encourages them to think and act in certain ways.

Manufacturing Context: A Rhetorical Dilemma

In situating individual actions within the structures of a broader social context, modern rhetorical approaches view every text as a response to a rhetorical situation. Simply put, a rhetorical situation is the context that influences a text's construction. It consists of several interdependent elements—an author (the person or group crafting a text), an audience (the target group being addressed), and a purpose (the exigence motivating the text)—which are subject to a set of contextual restraints (the conditions and circumstances in which the text is constructed). For example, if a student (author) emailed his or her professor (audience) to petition for a grade change (purpose), he or she would need to account for certain aspects, such as performance on past assignments, timeliness of the request, and the personality of the professor (contextual restraints). Working together, elements of the situation dictate specific rhetorical choices in tone, grammar, salutation, and so on.

Every rhetorical situation is a social construction, both a product and a producer of the ideology in which it occurs. In other words, a community sets expectations for what counts as appropriate in its common rhetorical

situations, coordinating the interactions of participants and promoting a standard for how a text should be constructed and interpreted.[4] From a rhetorical perspective, then, generic practices that have universal meaning and value in every context do not exist. Every text is bound by context.

For this reason, appeals for situating writing and research practices emphasize authentic contexts. Writing in the Disciplines initiatives, for example, take advantage of rhetorical situations throughout a college or university curriculum to provide students with situated practice in using a discipline's rhetorical conventions.[5] Calls for situating information literacy practices also argue for understanding practice in terms of a particular community's epistemology.[6] The University of Alberta's Augustana Campus has designed standalone courses with this approach in mind, teaching students "scholarly communication practices, resources, and IL skills pertinent to a particular discipline."[7] By presenting skills in context, situated programs provide an actual ideology to critique, demonstrating the relevance of critical methods to the activities of a particular community.

Standalone experiences struggle to account for the range and complexity of disciplinary structures. Consider the example of First-Year Composition (FYC). Some rhetorical scholars have called for the abolition of such universal and compulsory experiences.[8] Specifically, Sharon Crowley argues, "It is difficult to design a course for a large amorphous audience when …the course fits into no discernible disciplinary or scholarly sequence."[9] Such courses have often assumed the responsibility of teaching students a "universal academic discourse," a style of academic writing that is assumed to be adaptable to every rhetorical situation in a college or university curriculum.[10] To teach this discourse, FYC has relied on generic assignments, such as the persuasive essay or the research paper. Referred to as "mutt genres" by Elizabeth Wardle, these assignments "mimic genres that mediate activities in other activity systems."[11] In other words, a "mutt genre" does not address an authentic rhetorical situation; it addresses a rhetorical situation that "is fundamentally different from the rhetorical situation of a writing task in another activity system."[12] They are "a false representation" of the "social practices and conventions" that influence any genre's construction.[13] Even if "mutt genres" could adequately teach disciplinary practices and conventions, Wardle warns, "*the activities of FYC do not provide the content needed to practice writing those genres in any meaningful way*" (emphasis in original).[14] Because FYC cannot easily replicate the rhe-

torical situations encountered in other contexts, the possibility of transfer between generic and situated contexts may be limited.[15]

Other rhetorical scholars have argued for retaining these standalone writing courses but restructuring them around genre awareness. Informed by genre theory, these programs take a critical approach to the concept, defining genres as social acts issued in response to a community's common rhetorical situations.[16] Every choice is suffused with social purpose. For example, elements of the IMRaD article format—introduction, method, results, and analysis/discussion—are chosen for their demonstrated ability to share new research findings with peers. Every disciplinary community relies upon a host of genres, such as "lab reports, working papers, reviews, grant proposals, technical reports, conference papers, journal articles, monographs," to address a variety of situations.[17] Rather than explicitly teach students every genre, genre awareness encourages a metacognitive awareness of how ideologies inform a text's construction and condition an individual's participation.[18] Understanding these constraints is a crucial component of competent critique. To teach it, Amy Devitt recommends: "Genres must be embedded within their social and cultural ideologies so that critical awareness can counter potential ideological effects."[19] By problematizing ideology's role in the construction of genres, "students can come to see how the forms suit the context of situation; from there, students can be taught to discern how the context of cultural influences the choices of forms."[20] The resulting schema could be used to learn new genres when immersed in novel contexts. Learning to draw explicit connections between a genre's form and its social purpose—an essential element of genre awareness—can be adapted to form the basis of a critical awareness in how ideology shapes the broader concept of information literacy.

But that awareness may need to be embedded in a broader rhetorical context. In a study of students exposed to a general media literacy program, Mihailidis found the curriculum created "*informed cynics*—critical but unable to connect critical media viewing with the necessary understanding of media's central role in society" (emphasis in original).[21] He warns:

Media literacy, if not taught within the social and civic contexts that media function to affect American and global societies, may not be attaining its curricular goals. Media literate students must not only understand how to summarize, analyze, and personally identify with a message, they

must also understand the connections between media and social ideologies, and be aware of the democratic necessity of a media system.[22]

In other words, the value of critical methods must be demonstrated in some kind of rhetorical context. If that context does not exist in inoculation-oriented IL courses, research practices and texts must be embedded in something manufactured. And though, rhetorically speaking, it is not ideal, embedding them within a context that is manufactured and maintained through carefully chosen examples and well-planned activities can organize the fundamental practice that might lead to transfer.

IFL 101: A Study in Manufactured Context

In order to bridge rhetorical theory with practice, consider its application in an actual standalone information literacy course. Though some of the following details may be unique to my situation, I believe there are general lessons that can be learned.

From 2004 to 2012, I taught and coordinated Information Literacy (IFL) 101, a two-credit core course designed to prepare students to research throughout the curriculum of York College of Pennsylvania. IFL was created in 1996 as part of a reform to the school's general education program. Preceding ACRL's *Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education* by four years, it hewed closely to the conception of information literacy described in the *ALA Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final Report*: "To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information."[23] General course outcomes included the ability to

- use accurate and complete information for critical thinking, problem-solving, and intelligent decision making;
- develop and use a variety of search strategies;
- use appropriate tools to identify and locate potential sources of information;
- evaluate information and select best sources;
- manage and communicate information professionally; and
- demonstrate an understanding of the legal, ethical, and security implications of creating, sharing, and using information.[24]

Designed as a standalone experience, IFL was functionally isolated

from other elements in York's curriculum. Within the general education curriculum, collaboration between the IFL faculty and the writing faculty, who taught a two-course writing sequence, and the communications faculty, who taught a public speaking course, was logistically (and politically) difficult. Rather than mutually reinforcing skills, each department approached research from the perspective of the department responsible for teaching each course. This meant terms defined in the context of IFL, such as "credible" or "primary source," could be redefined in the context of these other courses. It also meant expectations for similar assignments, such as a research proposal or an annotated bibliography, could be contradictory. Limited communication between the IFL faculty and majors-based programs further served to isolate the course. There was no explicit connection between the generic experience of IFL and the situated experience of any discipline-based research methods course. And even if contextualizing research was possible, it was impractical. Students from every major could be enrolled in a single section of IFL; there was simply no way to incorporate the perspective of every discipline. As a result, the course tended to teach academic research as a set of generic rules, which were heavily biased toward library-approved strategies, tools, and sources. Since these elements were assumed to have universal value and meaning in all situations, transfer from context-to-context was assumed; strategies for adapting them to meet situated expectations were not typically taught.

Given the opportunity to observe students outside the one-shot instruction session, I quickly discovered the limitations of these rules. Students began to find endless exceptions. Sometimes the Web was the "best" place to start an academic research paper. Sometimes a single-word search yielded more relevant results than a carefully crafted Boolean search. Sometimes evaluation criteria could be applied correctly and still lead to an inaccurate conclusion. Context mattered. But a generic approach could not account for it. If the course was to prepare students for research in any future situation, I needed something to account for these kinds of exceptions.

Critical information literacy seemed the best way to introduce the multi-faceted power of context. To make students aware of its ideological influence on the research process, I would need to construct something other than the generic context IFL offered. And to foster a transferrable critical awareness, I would have to provide them with plenty of practice deconstructing that context.

Construction

A topical theme seemed the most straightforward means of manufacturing a context. Embedding content in a simulated social context seemed excessively difficult, as well as counterproductive**.** Rather than approach the course content from a single perspective, the theme needed to accommodate a wide range of social contexts. The existence of first-year seminars with special academic themes, courses "where a small group of students and a model learner/teacher use a variety of methods to investigate an important theme,"[25] suggested organizing IFL around an accessible topic might work. Still, I had no clear framework for organizing a critical approach to a theme.

Through a five-year process of experimentation and iteration (2007 to 2012), I developed a framework based on rhetorical analysis. The act of deconstructing a text's rhetorical situation to evaluate the effectiveness of specific choices reveals "something of the sanctioned social behaviours, epistemic beliefs, and institutional structures of academic communities."[26] This process could demonstrate how the political nature of context could condition choice throughout the research process. Ultimately, I identified three interdependent learning outcomes.

First, students were to identify and analyze how social contexts influence the ways information is purposefully created, controlled, disseminated, and used. The primary objective of this outcome was to draw attention to the convention-bound discourses communities used to coordinate participation in their respective activities. Though students would not learn these languages in IFL, they could learn how ideologies might be embodied within them. Second, students were to recognize scholarship as a bounded process. "We write," says Joseph Harris, "not as isolated individuals but as members of communities whose beliefs, concerns, and practices both instigate and constrain, at least in part, the sorts of things we can say."[27] This outcome highlighted the boundaries imposed by disciplinary standards and methods, exploring how they shaped an academic community's research practices, from the substance and scope of a research question to the experimental design of a study to the structure of an argument to the format of an article. Students could learn about the rhetorical necessity of acknowledging these various standards and methods in texts constructed for particular audiences. Third, students were to evaluate messages based on their social purposes and intended audiences. The broad goal of this

outcome was pattern recognition, connecting rhetorical choices used in constructing authority, establishing accuracy, and controlling bias to the rhetorical expectations of a specific community. Through these relationships, students could identify and describe patterns of actions performed by such choices. This would differentiate the various information types they might encounter. It would also enable them to make strategic choices that recognized the expectations of intended audiences.[28] Structuring IFL around these outcomes made it possible to organize the intentional development of a critical awareness.

The lack of this structure explains why the first attempt at a theme, the "War on Terror," did not accomplish what I had hoped. I had not fully contemplated the need for anything as formal as the above framework. I was simply using critical methods to teach existing outcomes in a way that was more applicable to students' academic, professional, and personal lives. The "War on Terror" theme did provide plenty of opportunities to analyze practices and texts as political, economic, and/or cultural artifacts. There was no shortage of contemporary sources—reports from government entities, stories from mainstream and partisan news outlets, arguments from special interest groups, and episodes of television shows. Nor was there a shortage of perspectives to analyze—from the Bush Administration's argument for the Iraq invasion to the representation of Muslims on television to the fluid definition of torture to the presence of reporters on the battlefield. Viewing every information literacy skill and concept through a singular topic, class after class and week after week, became a challenging and exhausting practice to maintain. In hindsight, this was because I naively assumed that repeated chances to deconstruct something in context would lead to a critical awareness. Deconstructing the rhetorical nature of texts, the basis for the course's third critical outcome, was a reasonable way to begin. Unfortunately, I failed to acknowledge the breadth of an ideology's influence. Though discursive power and community standards were certainly mentioned, they were byproducts of other discussions rather than the result of intentional planning. I also failed to consider the limited scope of the "War on Terror." Sources discussing the war were certainly prevalent, but their focus was surprisingly singular. The perspectives they presented were not endless, nor were they always relevant to achieving IFL's stated outcomes. Another weakness was the theme's bias toward popular sources, such as websites, newspapers, and television. In 2007, scholarly journals

and books, sources that took more time to produce, were not always available as a means of comparison. With every lesson and assignment reiterating the same essential message—each text's rhetorical construction—maintaining the context became drudgery. Still, the unifying potential of a theme seemed the only plausible way to manufacture context. A different approach was undeniably necessary.

Beginning in 2008 and continuing until 2012, I used the more expansive "Culture of Fear." Based on sociologist Barry Glassner's book of the same name, the theme examined how fear (or the perception of it) was used as a means of persuasion. This theme kept every practice and text firmly situated in their cultural and rhetorical contexts. Authentic examples were abundant. Advertisers used it to sell products. Newspaper and magazine editors used it to attract readers. Politicians used it to gain support. Scholars and scientists avoided it to bolster credibility. By comparing the ways different authors controlled the use of fear, we were able to explore how different standards and methods addressed different rhetorical situations. The theme also presented many opportunities to cloud the transparency of discursive ideologies. We could deconstruct cultural narratives that exploited fear to perpetuate stereotypes (e.g., "She was asking for it," "Immigrants are stealing our jobs," or "Social media will cause society to collapse"). By explicitly integrating the rhetorical construction and ideology into the theme, it became easier to demonstrate the value of a critical approach.

Because of its broad focus, the "Culture of Fear" was a far easier context to construct and to maintain than the more concentrated "War on Terror." It also made it easier to incorporate current issues and relevant examples into a wide range of discussions. Its flexibility made it easier for students to situate their personal interests within the theme, hopefully increasing motivation. The theme created endless opportunities to read and respond to a context, and in doing so, granted me the chance to experiment with explicit critical outcomes that could frame the entire approach.

As long as a theme keeps practices and texts embedded in their rhetorical and social purposes, it is possible anything could work. I briefly considered a critique of higher education. I feared, however, that such a theme would not be accessible to first-year students in a mandatory, general education course. And if they were not motivated, my attempts to at developing a critical awareness would be much more challenging.

Practice

With the course increasingly structured around these outcomes, I focused on the role classroom activities played in the creation and maintenance of "The Culture of Fear." Every lesson and assignment needed to emphasize the situated nature of practices and texts. The practice necessary for recognizing the constraints of context, determining the appropriateness of their choices, and adapting choices to new situations, would need to be frequent and steady. Without deliberate repetition, a foundational awareness seemed unlikely to transform into a competent critique. Decontextualized library assignments, like Boolean worksheets or I-Search papers, were not embedded in any social or rhetorical purpose beyond the context of IFL. The course needed a different approach. Writing About Writing initiatives supplied a potential solution. Rather than learn to write in every genre, in every community, FYC courses employing Writing About Writing methods teach students "that writing is conventional and context-specific rather than governed by universal rules—thus they learn that within each new disciplinary course they will need to pay close attention to what counts as appropriate for that discourse community."[29] Increased awareness of how a piece of writing addresses rhetorical expectations is achieved by asking students to constantly reflect on and write about their choices. But extensive writing was not an expected component of IFL. Rhetorical analysis, with an emphasis on choices in the research process, presented itself as a likely proxy. Integrated throughout the course, it could provide the repeated and progressive practice that would encourage reflection on the social purpose and ideology of choices.

To begin, I assumed every text was an artifact of some ideology. We analyzed the standard sources associated with research: encyclopedias, books, news stories, journal articles. We also analyzed non-standard sources: Tweets, song lyrics, movie clips, email spam. As a way of discussing the ubiquity and the transparency of stereotypes, I even offered myself as a text, asking students to guess, based only on observable elements (e.g., my age, gender, clothes, etc.), what styles of music I liked. Students were also asked to reflect on how overlapping personal contexts (e.g., age, gender identity, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.) might shape their understandings of the world. In making everything a readable text, students could recognize socially constructed aspects of every source they encountered.

Elements of rhetorical analysis were integrated into most assignments. Immediately after introducing the "Culture of Fear," students were asked to find a news article that used scare tactics to report the findings of a recent research study. Using only their existing skills, their task was then to locate evidence that corroborated or refuted the article's key claims. For me, it helped diagnose individual awareness of search choices. For students, it introduced the rhetorical nature and ideological expectations of popular and scholarly sources. A peer review of each other's written arguments encouraged reflection on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the evidence used to support conclusions. Another assignment, a blog, required students to post several analyses of texts designed to manipulate or mislead. Because these examples could be used as the basis for classroom discussion, students were expected to defend their claims. This assignment was primarily designed to focus the students' attention on the social purpose of including or excluding certain features (e.g., credentials, references) to achieve a desired effect. To introduce the concept of community standards and methods, an in-class exercise asked students to analyze how the same study on adolescent sexuality was shared in *Time* ("A Snapshot of Teen Sex") and the *American Journal of Sociology* ("Chains of Affection: The Structure of Adolescent Romantic and Sexual Networks"). Then, they compared the cues used by the journalists and by the scholars to establish authority, ensure accuracy, and control bias. To explore standards and methods further, students analyzed how the visible choices in two sources—one reliable, the other not—discussing a single topic, reflected the ideological constraints of their respective situations. Final assignments were designed to assess all three outcomes in practice. One asked students to pick a contentious topic and research a perspective on it that was opposite to one they held. I wanted them to understand how cultural, economic, political, and/or religious contexts shaped the boundaries of discussion and the description of key claims. Students completed an annotated bibliography, which defended their choices as representative examples of their researched perspective, and a reflective essay, which outlined the effectiveness of their research process. Another assignment attempted something similar with a topic of personal concern. Students wrote a researched editorial and submitted to an actual newspaper. The existence of an actual audience gave students the chance to apply critical methods in a very public way. Rhetorical analysis proved to be a powerful tool for constructing and maintaining context.

With activities embedded in a more authentic context, the class was able to explore the breadth of a discourse's ideological power. In a lesson on identifying bias, the class investigated how discourse functioned to perpetuate cultural narratives and stereotypes. The alleged sexual harassment of Inez Sainz, a sports reporter for Mexico's *Azteca TV*, in the New York Jets locker room, provided an excellent illustration. Citing her attire and attractiveness, most of the media, including outlets like *CBS News* and the *Today Show*, blamed Sainz for her own harassment. No sources blamed the Jets players or locker room misogyny. In a lesson on academic integrity, the class discussed the ability of ethical guidelines to set standards of appropriate behavior. The discussion illustrated how unfamiliarity with its demands (e.g., suitable paraphrasing, in-text citations, and citation formatting) could easily lead to unintentional violations. Even a lesson on database searching provided an opportunity to make the power of a discourse explicit. The class explored how the language used to describe concepts revealed the situated values and beliefs of the community that discussed them. It was a tangible demonstration of how unfamiliarity with a discourse excluded the participation of the inexperienced participants from communal conversations.

Though rhetorical theory provides a productive tool for organizing IFL, there was little guidance on how to translate it into a coherent critical information literacy pedagogy. The course outcomes I developed were a best guess at what a critical awareness might look like, but they did not provide a holistic model or understanding. I struggled to sequence and scaffold experiences in a way that limited cognitive overload. I struggled to develop rubrics that indicated the learning of basic skills (e.g., identifying cues indicating authority, accuracy, and bias) and advanced skills (e.g., analyzing a text's rhetorical intentions). I debated the amount of practice necessary for learning any skill. And I grappled with how much instructional time to devote to the "content" of both themes. Addressing all of these issues was an iterative process. For example, when I first began to teach rhetorical analysis, I provided little opportunity to practice the skill before assigning a high-stakes assessment. Students could identify specific rhetorical choices (e.g., word choice), but they struggled to determine their meaning in a specific situation (e.g., why journal articles used "adolescent," not "teenager"). Rather than devote a single week to analysis, I spent three weeks on identifying and interpreting choices that signified authority, ac-

curacy, and bias. Despite the additional time, students still struggled to complete an independent rhetorical analysis. So, each week I integrated a mini-analysis activity that focused on identifying and interpreting specific cues. This process of iteration was extremely slow. Issues, like the one above, could not be easily addressed until the following semester. At times, this was extremely frustrating. But it settled me into a pattern of continuous assessment, reflection, and revision. All of this eventually led me to create a matrix of information literacy development, which plotted learning from awareness to application to critique. Though for reasons related to internal politics, the matrix was explicitly designed around IFL's existing outcomes; my outcomes were implicitly integrated. Still, defining my expectations for what constituted a basic awareness made it easier to improve the overall learning experience for students. Providing timely, meaningful, and ongoing feedback to every student across multiple sections, however, proved a matter that iteration could not easily solve. And that is a potentially significant problem. Learning basic elements of reading and responding to context's demands requires guidance; feedback is vital.

Transfer

In the absence of a comprehensive study of students across the curriculum, I also had no clear way to determine if a manufactured context successfully developed a critical awareness. Rubrics only assessed basic elements, such as identifying credibility cues or providing evidentiary support, and transfer from assignment to assignment. They provided no indication of any skill's potential for transfer in the long-term. This means, unfortunately, I have no idea how mitigating factors, like student motivation and curricular isolation, impacted my efforts.

Themes have the potential to limit motivation to learn and, in turn, motivation to transfer. Students did not register for my IFL course out of intrinsic interest in the themes; as far as they knew, one section was like any other. The theme, as well as the critical approach, were only announced on the first day of class. In doing so, I inadvertently tied the development of a critical awareness to investment in the content. The novelty of the experience, so drastically different from previous experiences with library instruction, was not as successful in overcoming this shortcoming as I hoped. Comments on Ratemyprofessors.com, like "Great guy who tried to keep it interesting even though the class itself wasn't great"[30] were com-

mon and, though anecdotal, supported Adams and Morris's observation: "Because they may see no need for it, students may resent having to take a library course more than other required courses."[31] If, as Davidson found, credit-bearing classes are the least preferred method for learning about library research,[32] there are obvious implications for how much students are willing to invest in questioning the powerful and transparent ideologies that construct our understanding of the world. In a study of a first-year seminar, Jessup-Anger reported that its single credit correlated with diminished student expectations of effort.[33] IFL's two-credit load may have also been a liability. Without motivation, the development of a critical awareness seemed unlikely.

But even if motivation had not been a problem, students were not guaranteed opportunities to refine their awareness through application in other contexts. To become proficient in critical methods, students need far more practice than IFL could provide. Without other departments agreeing to develop an awareness through situated reinforcement, students were left to improve skills on their own. Assuming transfer to be unproblematic, this might not have been a serious issue. However, it is possible that the manufactured context replicated the "mutt genre" problem. Filtering every skill and concept through these manufactured lenses turned both themes into de facto course content. And as the content became context, it may have limited the value of a critical awareness in other situations. Practice in these manufactured contexts may not have provided students with a foundation for critical analysis in situated ones. Minus the context-specific application, students may have simply become "informed cynics," individuals capable of asking questions about power structures but without a broader understanding of their implications.

Manufactured contexts aside, librarians engaging with critical approaches cannot presume methods are easily transferable. The impact of student motivation and curricular isolation on metacognition and transfer is clearly a question that needs further investigation in all situations where critical information literacy is practiced. Though the literature on genre awareness and genre transfer is limited,[34] it could be useful in setting a research agenda.

Before I had the chance to study the ways students applied their critical awareness in other contexts, IFL was eliminated at the forefront of a reform to York College's general education curriculum.

Conclusion

Did embedding practices and texts in a manufactured context work? Was it worth the effort? Does it teach students of the fundamentals of reading and responding to the ideological constraints of any context? Were those students capable of transferring that schema to other situations and contexts?

For all the time and effort devoted to the process, I have no direct evidence to suggest definitive answers. The only thing I can offer is this: analyzing the context through the critical lens of rhetoric changed me.

It provided me with a schema that I have used to make sense of an ideology's power to constrain behavior in any context. It exposed the structures and the strategies communities use to maintain the world views of those in power. From tweets to scientific journal articles, it is impossible for me to look at a text and not consider its ideological origins. I understand how problems, like native advertising and "Fake News" manipulate journalistic standards to achieve their respective ends. I also understand how anti-science agendas succeed by sowing doubt in the unfamiliar methods of science. I feel capable of critiquing or resisting an ideology. I changed, in large part, because I immersed myself in the process of manufacturing context for nearly five years.

In order to provide students with that kind of time, approaches to critical information literacy need to be programmatic. At best, standalone courses with manufactured contexts can foster a rudimentary awareness that context-specific rhetorical conventions and expectations do exist. But raising awareness is a vital part of the process. As Devitt writes in her argument for genre awareness, "[B]y the time one has learned to perform a genre, one is already inducted into its ideology."[35] Opportunities to practice reading and responding to the peculiar demands of contexts across a college or university curriculum must be frequent and intentional. Analysis in disciplinary contexts, where an authentic ideology permeates every activity, may provide a more effective demonstration of an ideology's actual effects. Given enough practice reading and responding to demands in a variety of authentic contexts, the schema should enable students to make informed decisions about when to conform, when to adapt, and when to resist. To move students systematically from awareness to critique, we need a more holistic conception of a rhetoric-based approach to critical information literacy. We need to be clear what awareness looks like in the research process, from formulation of a research focus to selection of evidence to synthesis of resources.

This conception can be used to inform conversations with faculty about assignment design, course-integrated instruction, cooperative teaching opportunities, and course design and/or curriculum mapping. Of course, librarians need to recognize the difficulty in garnering support from faculty outside the library. As Norman Fairclough explains:

> It should not be assumed that people are aware of the ideological dimensions of their own practice. Ideologies built into conventions may be more or less naturalized and automatized, and people may find it difficult to comprehend that their normal practice could have specific ideological investments.[36]

Deliberate collaboration between librarians and faculty is essential for fostering a critical reflection that clouds the transparency of any ideology. Librarians can become more familiar with authentic, discipline-specific expectations and conventions. Disciplinary faculty can become more familiar with the ideological dimensions of rhetorical choices that have long seemed "natural" or "common sense." Collaboration is necessary if students are to consciously and effectively transfer a critical awareness across contexts, be they academic, professional, civic, or personal. A holistic, rhetoric-based conception—perhaps, born out manufactured contexts in a standalone information literacy course—can serve as a framework for this effort.

Endnotes

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