

Tate, Gary, Amy Rupiper Taggart, Kurt Schick, and H. Brooke Hessler, eds. *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2014. 343 pages. \$49.95. 978-0-19-992216-1. Print.

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A Guide to Composition Pedagogies (2014), collected by the late Gary Tate and editors Amy Rupiper Taggart, Kurt Schick, and H. Brooke Hessler, is a fully updated and expanded version of the 2001 title of the same name. Far from minor updates we might come to expect from subsequent editions, the 2014 version of *A Guide* is comprised of entirely new material: Twenty-six scholars in composition studies contribute to the “bibliographic guide[s]” and “personal teaching narratives” (10) that comprise seventeen featured pedagogies. What remains constant across these two editions may only be the volumes’ stated goals: In 2001, to provide “a current map of composition pedagogies for the uninitiated” (vi) and in 2014, to present “a bibliographic guide written primarily for newcomers to the field, but also for scholars looking for an overview of pedagogical scholarship in key areas” (10). As contributors introduce pedagogies through core texts, guiding principles, foundational questions, and further reading, the volume is indeed primarily suited to classroom settings—“teacher preparation, composition pedagogy, and even composition theory courses, as well as professional development reading groups” (10). However, given the expanded introduction in which editors Rupiper Taggart, Hessler, and Schick grapple with the concept of pedagogy, this text makes a broader contribution to the field of composition studies, rendering it a nutritious refresher for those already familiar with the various pedagogical approaches. And although the collection focuses specifically on the histories of college composition approaches, its thorough treatment of pedagogy makes it relevant also to those who teach writing to a range of ages. *A Guide to Composition*

Pedagogies not only compiles a complex, interrelated sense of the major strains of contemporary writing pedagogies for students of composition studies, but also argues compellingly that pedagogy plays a foundational role in the production of disciplinary knowledge.

The significantly expanded introduction then is the most impactful update of the second edition. As the editors note, we tend to talk about pedagogy “inductively” (2), invoking the term without clearly establishing what we mean by it. While the 2001 edition elected to “reflect the varied usage” (vi) of the term simply by virtue of the range of featured approaches, the 2014 edition forthrightly rejects this inductive habit: “We have become somewhat dissatisfied with our disciplinary definitions of this term, particularly when compared to other terms such as *rhetoric*, *discourse*, and *literacy*, whose definitions have been the subject of rich discussion and debate” (2). The editors significantly expand the 2014 introduction to advance the debate they wish to see around the term, beginning with a working definition:

Composition pedagogy is a body of knowledge consisting of theories of and research on teaching, learning, literacy, writing, and rhetoric, and the related practices that emerge. It is the deliberate integration of theory, research, personal philosophy, and rhetorical praxis into composition instruction at all levels from the daily lesson plan to the writing program and the communities it serves. (3)

Pedagogy is understood as the dynamic interplay among theory, research, and classroom practice, each “push[ing] and pull[ing]” on one another as “complementary, not hierarchical, ways of knowing” (4). This definition makes explicit the complexities and rigor involved in the study and implementation of pedagogy, establishing for newcomers—and reminding the discipline—that pedagogy is a continual and complex process of situated intellectual action.

The situatedness and rhetoricity of pedagogy becomes a central idea for this collection, a sentiment echoed in some way by nearly every contributor. “Pedagogies are analogous to genres,” write the editors; “they emerge out of practice and need but also sometimes drive practice...With a nod to Carolyn Miller, we observe that pedagogy is a kind of *social action*. Hence pedagogy never looks the same way twice, though we can recognize patterns we cluster and name” (6). Characterizing pedagogy in these ways—as dynamic, theoretical, situated—and aligning it with our understanding of genre, the editors emphasize the importance of *doing* rather than just *knowing about* any given pedagogical approach. And pedagogy does quite a lot, the editors emphasize. To enact pedagogy is to investigate and respond to student needs (7), evaluate and assess the goals and assumptions of everyday practice (8), engage in critical reflection to uncover ideological assumptions (9), discover the ground from which new writing theory can emerge (10), and “disrupt or reinforce normalized socialization” (10). Establishing the significant reach and intellectual depth of doing pedagogy invites the newcomer audience to engage actively with the collection chapters.

Pedagogy, the editors argue, is also an ultimately personal endeavor, connected to an individual’s values and scholarly commitments (6). Just as the editors encourage readers to understand pedagogy as an active, personal process, they too encourage readers to read the volume this way. Making clear that readers won’t simply read and subscribe to a single approach (a practical impossibility, of course, and a point echoed by some of the contributors), the editors hope readers will “start to see affinities among pedagogies and ways that elements of more than one might be productively combined” (11). The contributors, to some extent, also perform this ethos of pedagogical synthesis, as most make at least one reference to concepts, values, or scholarship from other approaches. However, readers are not exposed much to how pedagogical elements may be blended in the everyday. This may be symptomatic of the nature of gaining pedagogical knowledge; some things can only be learned on the

ground. More overt use of personal narrative (a mode promised in the introduction) in some chapters, though, may have better demonstrated the flexibility and mix of pedagogical influences in practice.

On the other hand, there is value in letting readers forge their own connections and this readerly control is one of the conscious goals of the second edition. The first edition attempted to craft some tentative relationships between featured approaches, placing process, for example, at the beginning as it represented a “defining moment” (vii) in the discipline, putting expressivism next for its close conceptual and temporal connections to process, and linking critical and cultural studies approaches through their animus toward process and their similar political allegiances. The second edition, by contrast, attempts no such organization; the approaches are encountered alphabetically. This organizational decision demonstrates that the editors are (and, perhaps too, the discipline is) now “more comfortable with the fact that there is no single correct way to teach writing, nor even one unified set of goals all writing teachers need to help students achieve” (1).

This multiplicity is also evident in that all of the pedagogies featured in 2001 remain in the second edition in some form. Charles Moran’s 2001 “Technology and the Teaching of Writing” is the only chapter that doesn’t remain in the 2014 edition; instead, it spread into two new chapters in the second edition—Collin Brooke’s “New Media Pedagogy” and Beth Hewitt’s “Fully Online and Hybrid Writing Instruction” and also into discussions of other established pedagogies, like collaborative pedagogy, transformed in many ways by social media and developments in Web 2.0 (Kennedy and Moore Howard 44-45). The growth of the second edition asserts a subtle but significant reading of composition history. Although each approach is historicized and historical to some extent, the contributors compellingly demonstrate how elements of older and often highly critiqued approaches (i.e., expressivism, cultural studies) still prominently inflect contemporary practices. Chris Burnham and Rebecca Powell capture this sentiment, insisting, “Expressivism is not

dead; it grew up” (112). This cumulative view of pedagogical influence disrupts that oversimplified and persistent narrative in composition studies that one pedagogical movement inevitably cancels out the previous (process wipes out current-traditionalism, cognitivism pushes out expressivism, postprocess negates process). This collection provides a much more nuanced read of how pedagogies rise, meet inevitable criticisms, and are reshaped but never fully dismissed. Bringing forth the criticism, and even impossibilities, of every approach is ultimately instructive for the uninitiated: the pursuit of pedagogy is, after all, a fundamentally critical process of constant reflection, evaluation, and experimentation.

Contributors on approaches included in 2001, in addition to emphasizing how their pedagogies have endured, each mark time in slightly different ways. Chris Anson, for example, stresses how process pedagogy has endured critique: the postprocess thinking of the 90s unsettled process approaches, “[b]ut without a clearly theorized *replacement* for attention to students’ writing processes” (225), the foundations of the process-based classroom generally persist, indeed to this day “deep in the discipline’s bones” (226). Anson also imagines a process future, suggesting that Writing about Writing pedagogies may rectify process and postprocess sentiments, shifting the focus of process from the learning of writing methods to methods of “interrogati[ng] of writing and literacy” (225). In “Basic Writing Pedagogy: Shifting Academic Margins in Hard Times,” Deborah Mutnick and Steve Lamos mark time by emphasizing the unrelenting “pressure on four-year colleges to jettison basic writing (BW) courses and programs” (20) that has only increased in the years since the 2001 edition of *A Guide*. In light of the consistent pressure on BW spaces, the authors emphasize the unity of the approach around its “deeply democratic and humanistic ethos” (32), enacted by BW pedagogues in ways responsive to “political and economic pressures, changing demographics, and local conditions” (32). Overall the contributors—especially those assigned to pedagogies with long histories—excel in their short page allotment in

revealing both the detailed histories of their approaches and the emergent concerns of the present.

The second edition also expands into several new areas. Two new chapters (as previously mentioned) reflect rapid changes in technology (Brooke's chapter on new media and Hewitt's on online and hybrid pedagogies). Another two represent a split in rhetorical approaches to include the rise of genre pedagogies (Amy Devitt's "Genre" and David Fleming's "Rhetoric and Argumentation") while remaining new chapters include Literature and Composition (Christine Ferris), Researched Writing (Rebecca Moore Howard and Sandra Jamieson), and Second Language Writing (Paul Kei Matsuda and Matthew J. Hammill). These new chapters often deliver insights relevant beyond the boundaries of a particular approach. That is, it is productive to approach the chapters in the spirit of Universal Design, looking for how a specific consideration might be fruitfully applied to the general practices of composition pedagogy. In her discussion of the modalities of online writing instruction, for example, Hewitt emphasizes the need for online pedagogues to develop "strategies that help mitigate the loss of facial and bodily cues" (200) in online classrooms. This identified loss relevant specifically to teaching online provides readers of the collection the chance to bring conscious attention to how bodily modalities and nonverbal communication operate in the *traditional* classroom, something likely otherwise taken for granted in teacher training contexts. Similarly, in his New Media chapter, Brooke asks us to apply a challenge unique to new media to a larger question about assessment practices, suggesting that the seeming instabilities of assessing new media texts also productively unsettle our assumptions about assessing more familiar alphabetic texts. Why don't we, this chapter had me thinking, require writers not only of new media texts, but also of traditional argument or research essays to include rationales outlining their rhetorical choices? New media isn't about trading new products for old ones, Brooke suggests, but rather is about "chang[ing] the dynamics of the classroom" and "what it means to write and write well" (187). For

this reader, stretching these pedagogy-specific concerns out to the general enterprise of pedagogy was a highly productive method for reading the collection, but not necessarily one emphasized by the volume itself.

In a collection that so strongly asserts its multivocality, it's difficult to identify meaningful through-lines. One point though repeated through the collection is the impact of local circumstances on pedagogies. Contributors are eager to warn that any pedagogical practice is contingent upon local factors that cannot be known in advance. Ann George, for example, emphasizes the contingencies of critical pedagogies, noting that they "are insistently tied to local material circumstances, which may make curricula difficult, perhaps impossible, to transfer from teacher to teacher and institution to institution" (88). Amy Devitt repeats this reality almost verbatim, making clear that "[h]ow any given genre-based pedagogy incorporates the three [approaches to genre pedagogy]...depends on the teachers' larger goals and the institutional setting, including especially the nature of the student body and their prior genre knowledge" (160). The local situation becomes a drumbeat principle for the collection, as the editors forefront from its first pages the "rhetorical situation of teaching—the people, the class, and the institution that shape pedagogy" (3). This insistence on contingency represents some current theoretical commitments of our field: our postprocess, postmodern perspective pushes us to recognize the unpredictability of rhetorical action. But aside from enacting our shared assumptions, these statements don't do much to elaborate on the implications of the local; contingency is recognized, but no methods or principles for responding are offered. This again, like failing to demonstrate ways to imagine synthesizing pedagogies, might be simply a limitation of learning the art of pedagogy. But because it's emphasized across the text, more could have been offered to newcomers as to how to gauge the factors in a local pedagogical situation. As it stands, these admissions read more like disclaimers than points of instruction.

Reading through the second edition of *A Guide*, one can't help but imagine a third edition that examines the histories and present states of composition pedagogies circa 2025 or 2030. The editors help us anticipate this future in a section in the introduction, "Deflections: What's Not Included (Yet)." While allowing for the possibility they've missed more, they identify writing about writing approaches and multimodal composing (15) as omissions that may be included in the future. This forward-looking impulse raises some broad questions: How will the third edition expand? Will any of these approaches finally and fully be over, no longer influencing contemporary practices? Will approaches be even more mixed and combined? Though these questions must remain unanswered, one thing is clear at the end of this book: composition studies is a discipline uniquely invested in pedagogy. "Composition studies distinctly emphasizes pedagogy," the editors write, "perhaps more than any discipline outside of colleges of education" (16). This is not a new idea—it echoes, for instance, Joe Harris' 1996 assertion that composition is foundationally a "teaching subject." But as our discipline now steadily grows into middle age and our disciplinary focus becomes more expansive, we've lacked occasion recently to take stock of ourselves in the way *A Guide* does. Claiming the centrality of composition pedagogy, and doing so in such a capacious way, rings powerfully in 2014. *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies*, 2nd edition, is ultimately a very self-aware volume, successful in showing the dynamism and rigor of pedagogy as a critically reflective scholarly enterprise.

Works Cited

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