

... *Reflections/Projections* ...

*Spencer Schaffner*

*University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign*

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## GROUNDING THE WRITING MAJOR IN THE SOCIO-GRAPHEMIC APPROACH

Central pedagogies that affirm writing instruction as intellectually rigorous inadvertently undermine the potential for a free-standing writing major. When critical pedagogy shapes a writing curriculum around what Ira Shor describes as “topical themes” (55), for instance, writing as the topic of inquiry can become subordinate to the disruption of ideology. Similarly, a cultural studies writing curriculum may teach students to recognize the mechanisms of social construction, but such a course can avoid inquiry into writing as constitutive of the social. When critical thinking, social action, and ethics (Greenbaum 84) ground writing courses, writing becomes merely what students learn to do rather than what students learn about.

A distinct and viable writing major will abandon this double consciousness separating learning about writing from the activity of writing. A socio-graphemic model is based upon the philosophy that our discursive lives are comprised of graphemes (fundamental units of written language) and larger graphemic assemblages (texts, forms, genres), thus justifying an inquiry-based discipline of writing. In the socio-graphemic writing major, students study, research, discuss, and write about writing as fundamental in their lives.

The curriculum in such a major would extend as far as writing does, so that institutional, educational, and everyday scenes of graphemic activity become scrutinized, researched, understood, and challenged. This is a writing major concerned with the histories, situations, materials, technologies, and spaces of writing, encouraging students to develop genealogies of such things as handwriting and writing on hands, typewriters and online word processors, the five-paragraph essay and the uses of writing as punishment. By majoring in writing, students become specialists in the study of written language, rhetoric, writing technologies, and image/text semiotics.

Faculty with training in writing research from a range of disciplines attentive to written artifacts and practices breathe life into the socio-graphemic writing major as an academic unit. The writing major would coordinate under-

graduate, graduate, and faculty scholarship; the major also has the potential to sponsor informed graphemic activism and literate engagement. Through learning about the role of institutional and vernacular forms of writing in social engagements and confrontations, students become prepared to engage in informed activist expression that transforms the written landscape of the everyday, campus, and community.

#### WORKS CITED

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