many authors make of their fishing, backpacking, and hiking experiences in nature.

_Ecocomposition_ thus stands both as a starting point and as a potential pivot point, one at which theoretical inquiries can complicate ecocomposition's foundation. Much future work remains possible to problematize such concepts as place, context, and environment for composition studies. This collection begins that critical discussion and points to many areas of possible improvement.


Reviewed by Bruce Herzberg, Bentley College

Our service-learning center held a planning session a few years ago. Faculty members from a dozen different disciplines attended, all of whom had taught courses that included service learning. We asked ourselves, "Why are we doing this? Are there real benefits, benefits sufficient to justify the extra work that we and the students must exert for our service learning-projects?" In response, my colleagues reported that their service-learning students made greater gains in a variety of areas than students in their non-service-learning classes. The service-learning students showed a firmer grasp of course concepts, they developed greater maturity and self-confidence, and they improved as communicators. They developed empathy for people different from themselves, demonstrated concern for public affairs, and engaged in serious critical thinking. Nobody claimed that these effects were universal or inevitable. But all agreed that they occurred more frequently in service-learning courses and that they appeared with regularity in service-learning courses ranging from accounting to biology to philosophy. And all agreed that the improvement in teaching and learning thoroughly justified the extra effort.

I have heard similar reports at a number of colleges and conferences. Even if we regard such observations as merely anecdotal, our colleagues'
reports ought to be enough to justify further pursuit of service learning as a serious pedagogical tool. Empirical studies, moreover, confirm the anecdotes. Thomas Deans summarizes a number of these studies in *Writing Partnerships*. Students' self assessments, the studies show, mirror their teachers' impressions about their growth in personal skills. They felt more confident and assured, for example, about their citizenship and leadership capabilities. They were more likely "to see problems as systemic and . . . to see things from multiple perspectives." Both students and teachers express deep satisfaction at identifying and helping to address serious community needs.

Most of the published work on service learning in composition (as in other fields) provides case studies and suggestions for projects and assignments. Deans does much more in his book. While he offers three case studies, he chooses them as exemplars of three quite distinct approaches to service learning in composition. His taxonomy of the three paradigms (we'll look at it in a moment) is enormously helpful and has already become part of the standard discourse about service learning in composition. (I began using it in workshops and presentations when I first saw it in a draft of Deans' dissertation.) Deans wants to look at "situated student writing" in service-learning courses. He wants to line up the pedagogical theories behind service learning and see how they match up with composition theories. As he notes, service learning in all disciplines is student-centered, collaborative, writing-intensive, and critically reflective. These qualities make service learning a natural fit with composition. But there is much more to say about the character of the different models of service-learning courses in composition.

The three paradigms identify the relationship between the kinds of writing assigned in a course and the services that students provide for the community. The first paradigm is "writing for the community." Here the students write a document (a newsletter, grant proposal, or brochure) for a nonprofit community agency. The second is "writing about the community." Here the students write essays analyzing issues facing the community. In the third model, "writing with the community," students serve as facilitators for the communication efforts of neighborhood groups. Deans asks what we want a writing course to achieve: What discourse or discourses do we wish to teach? What intellectual or ideological goals do we have? These pedagogical and theoretical considerations should guide us in choosing a service-learning approach.

Addressing theoretical matters first, Deans offers a concise review of the work of John Dewey and Paulo Freire. While neither Dewey nor
Freire imagined service learning, they did emphasize (though in different ways) the importance of schooling for ethical and social knowledge. Dewey, as Deans reminds us, sought problem-posing and problem-solving situations in school, while service learning finds them in the community. For Dewey, personal accumulation of knowledge is not the goal of school. The goal of schooling is to work out problems in a social setting, for it is only when students seek, apply, and test knowledge in such situations that they gain knowledge that is both usable and ethical. Dewey is light on the issue of power and its effects, but Freire is not. While both philosophers look for "acts of cognition" rather than transfer of information, Freire’s goal is social transformation through the liberating force of true education. Service learning, as Deans reiterates, brings students into the community in ways that foster reflection on social and civic values and that require problem-solving and knowledge-seeking.

Dewey is the guiding spirit informing the first of Deans’ paradigms, “writing for the community.” Recall that in this model, students write useful documents for community agencies. The work is experiential, cooperative, vocational (a Deweyan value), student-centered, and civic-minded. Deans’ first case study is a very good example of this approach: a junior-level writing-across-the-curriculum course taught by Laurie Gullion, his then fellow graduate student at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Gullion is teaching students in the Sports Management program. She sends them into the community to write manuals, handbooks, and grant proposals for local nonprofit recreational organizations (like the Amherst Youth Basketball League). An enormous amount of the activity of the course is to help the students learn how to work with community agencies: how to behave and talk; how to learn what the agency needs; how to work to a schedule; how to work in teams; and how to produce a genuinely useful document.

In his chapter on this paradigm, Deans neatly summarizes the relevant research on the relationship between academic and workplace literacies, on the social perspective on nonacademic writing and, most of all, on audience. He quotes James Reither’s observation that classroom cases cannot duplicate the real pressures of writing, particularly the rhetorical exigence. But this form of service learning works like an internship, putting students into a very real situation. Deans’ description of the course is highly engaging and thoughtful and not at all a typical course description or ethnography. He notes the students’ experience of “dissonance” when they learn that they have to address a real audience, meet deadlines, and produce error-free final work. The dissonance leads to
problem solving, under Gullion's evidently careful and impressive guidance. Gullion also makes use of the students' immediate rhetorical problems to open larger discussions of rhetorical understanding and effectiveness. Deans notes that all service-learning courses should include opportunities for reflection both on the personal connection to community and on the larger course goals. But, he notes, in the "writing for" model, the task of producing the final document naturally takes precedence and may be all consuming.

From my own acquaintance with courses of this sort, I find Gullion's version, as described by Deans, to be a very good example of the type, both in what it accomplishes pedagogically and in where its difficulties lie. I would emphasize some points about this kind of course that Deans perhaps takes for granted. The students are using knowledge that is part of their major curriculum: they are learning about problems in sports management that they quite evidently have not learned in their coursework, and they are finding that their field and its knowledge can be applied for civic ends, to help groups like the elderly who are rarely the subjects of their formal education. These are terribly important things to learn and are strong arguments, to my mind, for service learning, whether pursued within a course in the students' major or in an advanced writing course.

Deans does make a point that seems urgently important to me—namely, that it is necessary to ensure that the students can actually manage the writing projects. Service learning must provide real service, not simply a learning environment for our students. This is a critical ethical responsibility of any teacher who uses service learning. The community is not providing us with experimental subjects and test cases. Gullion's is an upper-level technical writing type of course, but, even here, students required a great deal of direction and had to rise quickly to a new level of maturity and competence. Deans gives examples of first-year-level course projects but appropriately warns that projects for such students must be very carefully defined and limited. A course that aims to teach workplace literacy may, through service learning, also inculcate civic values. Deans notes, however, that the tendency of the "writing for" course is more instrumental than reflective, and that the goal is to reproduce "the dominant rhetoric of the workplace." For a more transformative approach, we need to look at courses that follow the spirit of Freire.

In 1996, Deans first visited my service-learning class at Bentley College. He had told me about his dissertation project and wanted to
include a study of my course. I was flattered and found him to be an excellent class visitor. He was already in the classroom chatting with the students when I arrived for the first class that he came to observe. I learned later that he had quickly gotten their e-mail addresses and soon established correspondence with them. It was much later, when he sent me the dissertation, that I found out that he had contextualized my course as the exemplar of the Freirean approach to service learning.

In Deans' taxonomy, my course represents the "writing about the community" paradigm. Students in this course were serving as teachers' aides at an elementary school in a poor neighborhood. They did not write anything for the school but wrote instead about issues in American public education. Their service provided them with insight into a part of the education system where the problems were evident. As Deans notes, their writing, then, was not directed to a community or workplace sort of audience; it remained instead almost exclusively in the realm of academic discourse. This approach, as Deans explains quite accurately (and as I have explained myself) is a deliberate choice that I find appropriate for students in a first-year composition course.

As for the Freire connection, Deans cites the tradition of critical pedagogy articulated by theorists in many fields, including composition. He draws on my course materials, interviews with me and my students, and some of my published work to show that the "writing about" approach lends itself well to the analysis of public institutions that disserve or underserve their constituencies. Such a course makes much use of reflection (recalling that the "writing for" paradigm can slight reflection) and critical thinking. I was fascinated to read that half of my students identified critical analysis as central to what they learned in the course. Actually, I thought it would be more, but I'm not complaining.

Deans makes much of the combination of academic discourse with social critique. On the one hand, he notes that academic discourse is at once in line with the "dominant rhetorical practices of the academy" and that it "supports the kind of abstract thinking" required for critique. At the same time, he notes, "writing-about practices are potentially the most disruptive of all service-learning approaches to broad patterns of cultural oppression." On the other hand, he is critical of my reliance on academic discourse and my tentative teaching of public discourse genres. Why don't I make more of a rather slight "Going Public" assignment that prompts students to write editorials and speeches? As we see later when Deans presents his own take on service learning, he is eager to make use of the potential of service learning for improving students' facility in a
variety of modes of discourse, public and academic. (I took his criticism seriously when I first encountered it in his dissertation and have since substantially upgraded my "Going Public" assignments. I thank him for this stimulus.)

The final paradigm in Deans' taxonomy is "writing with the community." His example here is the wholly admirable work of Linda Flower and her Community Literacy Center (CLC), a partnership between Carnegie Mellon University and Community House in downtown Pittsburgh. Through the CLC, Flower and her graduate and advanced undergraduate students provide tutoring, facilitate research projects that community members undertake as part of community action projects, provide resources for publishing a CLC newsletter, and mediate "community conversations" aimed at addressing pressing local issues. All of these activities they describe as "literate social action." Students engaged in CLC activities learn about the concerns of the community in a particularly intimate way. Moreover, they must work through the process of discovering, along with people in the community, rhetorical practices that may be effective in addressing those concerns. This is a compelling project, one that is beyond the scope of individual teachers and of many colleges, but nonetheless a model for a true institutional partnership that has substantial benefits for all who are involved in it.

In his theoretical framework for this paradigm, Deans invokes Dewey, along with Flowers' own "social cognitive" theories. It is not clear to me why he does not call on Freire here, too. Perhaps the CLC's approach does not appear aggressively transformative, but I see a connection with Freire's desire to make literacy—in this case we should perhaps call it rhetoric—the instrument for improving the material circumstances of those with little social power. Still, Deans' analysis of Deweyan pragmatism works perfectly well and makes a nice link between the Pittsburgh Community House and the settlement house movement of Jane Addams, with which Dewey was associated. Flower, too, cites the influence of Dewey, while rejecting explicit cultural critique.

I find it impossible not to be impressed by the social goals of the CLC project, its noble philosophy, and its concrete results. The civic literacy promoted by the CLC, its hard focus on effective rhetoric in a multicultural community, well represents the potential of a country whose ideals of democracy and citizenship are at once admirable and unmet. It takes nothing away from this project to admit, as Deans does, that it is a unique project. He offers the possibility that while "it would be difficult to replicate, many of its concepts and strategies are portable." Perhaps so.
Similarly, it takes nothing away from Deans’ tripartite taxonomy that his third category appears to have only one avatar. It is enough—for me at least—to see even one example of service learning carried to such a height.

Using the taxonomy in Writing Partnerships, teachers interested in service learning should be able to locate their own predilections, ideological and pedagogical, and choose a suitable form of service learning. (Deans tells us that a colleague’s failure to make such a match was an early incentive to formulate his scheme: the colleague had students writing brochures for public agencies and was disappointed that the students did not become socially critical.) Deans’ own inclination is, as I noted earlier, to mix the first two types. He describes in considerable detail the course he developed for that purpose and includes a long appendix with his course materials and sample papers. A second very useful appendix offers brief descriptions of over fifty service-learning programs.

Our field desperately needed a book that made service learning comprehensible in light of our specific pedagogical aims. The greatest difficulty in implementing a service-learning component or course is to make a strong link between the service activities and the course goals. Deans’ book makes clear why this can be tricky to do well. But it also provides the framework and examples to enable us to do it well.


Reviewed by Anne Ruggles Gere, University of Michigan

Katherine Adams’ A Group of Their Own is a brave and informative book—brave in its willingness to take on longstanding assumptions about women writers and about the history of feminism, informative in its richly detailed and often revisionist narratives of the education and lives of women authors whose biographies seemed a settled matter.