Post-Process "Pedagogy":
A Philosophical Exercise

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Recently, "post-process" theories of composition instruction have suggested that process (prewriting, writing, rewriting) is no longer an adequate explanation of the writing act. Many post-process scholars, largely influenced by postmodernist and anti-foundationalist perspectives, suggest that the process paradigm has reduced the writing act to a series of codified phases that can be taught. These critics suggest that process pedagogy simply offers us another foundational explanation of writing. Indeed, the dominant contention of post-process scholars is that process has come to represent Theory with a capital "T." Gary Olson explains, for example, that the process approach is problematic because it attempts to generalize the writing act:

The problem with process theory, then, is not so much that scholars are attempting to theorize various aspects of composing as it is that they are endeavoring (consciously or not) to construct a model of the composing process, thereby constructing a Theory of Writing, a series of generalizations about writing that supposedly hold true all or most of the time. (8)

This generalization can be especially problematic if teachers of writing present the writing process as one universal process rather than as plural processes (see Russell 80).

The suggestion that process is no longer a viable explanation for the writing act has spurred further discussion about the nature of the writing process. For example, while some scholars suggest that the process approach may attempt to represent the act of writing universally, others find this characterization of process inaccurate. Bruce McComiskey notes his disagreement with this characterization: "Invention and revision strategies, as I understand and teach them, do not assume a stable and
predictable linguistic system for generating universal meaning; their function is, instead, to harness the polyphonic character of language in communities, to develop rather than constrict a writer’s sense of purpose” (39–40). David Russell also argues that the idea of a universal process—“the process,” as he puts it—is less accurate than the idea of plural processes. He argues for a “progressively wider understanding of writing processes as they are played out in a range of activity systems in our culture(s)” (88). Joseph Petraglia suggests that we should not abandon or reject process, but simply move past it:

Of course, the fundamental observation that an individual produces text by means of a writing process has not been discarded. Instead, it has dissolved and shifted from figure to ground. . . . We now have the theoretical and empirical sophistication to consider the mantra “writing is a process” as the right answer to a really boring question. We have better questions now, and the notion of process no longer counts as much of an insight. (53)

Because process is so often the topic of discussion in post-process scholarship, post-process has come to mean a critique of the process movement in composition studies. In response, I argue that post-process scholarship is shortchanged by the continued emphasis on process in that the broader implications of post-process theory have very little to do with process. Furthermore, I suggest that the only importance process has to post-process theory is in the form of an illustration—and a poor one at that. That is, “process” as it is cast by post-process scholarship is the scapegoat in an argument to forward postmodern and anti-foundationalist perspectives that are critical to post-process theory.

In this article, I attempt to clarify what I believe post-process theory can contribute to composition pedagogy. In accordance with Sidney Dobrin, who suggests that post-process theory should not fall into the “pedagogical imperative,” I suggest that there is no identifiable post-process pedagogy that we can concretely apply to writing classrooms; however, I believe post-process theory offers many insights for the profession of teaching that we all should consider (Constructing 63). Specifically, I argue that post-process theory encourages us to reexamine our definition of writing as an activity rather than a body of knowledge, our methods of teaching as indeterminate activities rather than exercises of mastery, and our communicative interactions with students as dialogic rather than monologic. My mission to highlight these insights is driven by what I perceive to be a lack of clarity in post-process theory, fueled by a
diversion into discussions of process and by arguments that seemingly resist pedagogical application. When we look past arguments that dominate current scholarship in post-process theory and instead uncover the assumptions that guide post-process theory, we may find helpful and even profound contributions that inform our pedagogical practice—if not in specific pedagogical agendas, then in philosophical principles that guide our practice.

In the next section, I explain how post-process theory may seemingly defy pedagogical application. I specifically review central arguments made by Thomas Kent, a prominent post-process scholar, and I offer a critique of current scholarship on post-process theory.

Post-Process Resistance
On the surface, post-process theory seems to resist pedagogical application because of post-process claims that writing cannot be taught, vague pedagogical agendas, and divergent depictions of post-process pedagogy. If one were to casually explore post-process theory, these three characterizations may leave the impression that teaching writing is a hopeless endeavor. I argue that the wrong arguments are highlighted in this scholarship—arguments that focus on the negatives of process pedagogy rather than on the possibilities of post-process theory. In this section, I explore these arguments further to uncover central assumptions that inform the post-process perspective.

Pedagogical resistance is perhaps most apparent in the claim that writing cannot be taught, which stems from the argument forwarded by Kent that writing is a situated, interpretive, and indeterminate act. In Paralogic Rhetoric, Kent suggests that accepting a post-process perspective (at least in a paralogic sense) means rejecting process as the ultimate explanation for the writing act and instead recognizing the role of interpretation and indeterminacy in the writing act. Consequently, if we consider writing as an indeterminate and interpretive activity, he asserts, then “writing and reading—conceived broadly as processes or bodies of knowledge—cannot be taught, for nothing exists to teach” (161). This statement is critical to the post-process perspective for its rejection of process as both an explanation of the writing act and a method of teaching writing. Indeed, this claim seems to have spurred discussions about what Petraglia has called “life after process,” so it is necessary to examine it more closely.

Certainly, the claim that writing cannot be taught—and that writing process is inadequate to explain the writing act—on the surface indicates
resistance to pedagogical application. However, when investigated more closely, we see that Kent does not completely abandon writing pedagogy, as the following passage from *Paralogic Rhetoric* about his “externalist pedagogy” reveals:

Stated baldly, an externalist pedagogy endorses the following claims: (1) writing and reading are kinds of communicative interaction; (2) communicative interaction requires triangulation; (3) triangulation requires us to make hermeneutic guesses about how others will interpret our utterances; (4) the process we employ to make our hermeneutic guesses cannot be codified; (5) consequently, no system or framework theory can predict in advance how our utterances will be interpreted; (6) therefore, neither writing not reading can be reduced to a systemic process or to a codifiable set of conventions, although clearly some of the background knowledge useful for writing—such as grammar, sentence structure, paragraph cohesion, and so forth—can be codified and reduced to a system. However, we should remember that knowing a framework or process is necessary but not sufficient for communicative interaction; knowing a grammar, for example, only prepares us to write or to read. (161)

I argue that this passage demonstrates not a total resistance to pedagogy, but rather a careful pedagogical position, for Kent’s stance on teaching writing depends on the definition of *writing* that he has outlined in this passage. Kent distinguishes background knowledge—grammar systems and so forth—from the writing act, which he says is indeterminate, dynamic, and defies systems. That is, while grammar and rules about cohesion or sentence structure can be easily codified and transmitted to students, these systems should not be confused with the writing act—an act that he describes as uncertain and indeterminate: “Certain background skills, such as an understanding of grammar, can be taught, but the acquisition of these skills never guarantees that a student will be able to communicate effectively; no framework theory of any kind can help a student predict in advance the interpretation that someone else may give to an utterance” (161).

It is important to note that Kent does not reject the instruction of system-based content such as grammar; rather, he suggests that these skills do not in themselves comprise the writing act and that we cannot reduce the writing act to a system that can then be taught. These statements help us to understand that in saying “nothing exists to teach,” Kent is not rejecting pedagogical application altogether, but rather the
specific pedagogical application of process pedagogy, which he claims attempts to reduce the writing act (not background knowledge) into content that can be taught to students:

So, any composition or literature pedagogy that presupposes such a framework assumes that writing and reading consists of a well-defined process that, once mastered, allows us to engage unproblematically in communicative interaction. These process-oriented pedagogies generally assume that discourse production and reception are cognitive activities that may be reduced either to frameworks that describe the mental processes writers and readers employ or to social activities that describe the conventions or conceptual schemes that hold together a discourse community. (161–62)

Let's take this claim for what it's worth. Kent suggests that writing is not a system or process and therefore cannot be taught as such. Consequently, he does not suggest that teaching writing is impossible; he suggests that teaching writing as a system is impossible. Thus, while some may take the claim that "nothing exists to teach" to mean that writing pedagogy is an impossible project, I argue that the claim exists to attack process pedagogy specifically.

While Kent's project here seems to be to dismantle process pedagogy, he does provide suggestions for reconceptualizing pedagogy based on the theoretical framework he has outlined. Yet these, too, demonstrate resistance to pedagogical application. As some scholars have pointed out, Kent's discussions of pedagogy are "vague," "cautious," and "less developed" than his theoretical framework (Dobrin, Constructing 89; Ward 158). Nonetheless, in order to illustrate the ways in which Kent moves away from process pedagogy, it is important to review the pedagogical insights he does offer. Kent's reconceptualization of pedagogy begins with the suggestion that we use a new vocabulary to discuss writing in relation to communicative interaction:

As strong externalists, we would stop talking about writing and reading as processes and start talking about these activities as determinate social acts. This shift from an internalist conception of communicative interaction—the notion that communication is a product of the internal workings of the mind or the workings of the discourse communities in which we live—to an externalist conception that I have outlined here would challenge us to drop our current process-oriented vocabulary and to begin talking about our social and public uses of language. (169)
What results from this proposal is an increased emphasis on communicative interaction between teachers and students. Kent discusses at length how this emphasis would affect teacher-student roles in writing classrooms:

Instead of dialecticians who initiate students into new knowledge, mentors who endorse a paralogic rhetoric become co-workers who actively collaborate with their students to help them through different communicative situations both within and outside the university. As co-workers, these mentors—by relinquishing their roles as high priests—engender a new relationship with their students in that they actively collaborate with their students and become, in a sense, students themselves. (166)

Kent’s (re)vision of writing pedagogy, then, pushes past process and toward a dialogic understanding of meaning-making. This dialogic pedagogy requires two-way rather than one-way communication, suggesting that teachers move away from a transmission model of education and toward a transformative model that includes active participation from both teachers and students as collaborators.

While Kent’s comments about pedagogy do provide direction beyond process, some scholars have been quick to point out that his comments are not specific enough to outline any pedagogy that could be labeled “post-process,” thus increasing the resistance to applying post-process theory to pedagogy. Indeed, the vagueness of Kent’s proposed pedagogy has indicated to some that post-process theory should remain a theoretical enterprise. Dobrin in particular supports this viewpoint: “Perhaps Kent’s own glossing of classroom application should serve as an indication that these theories, while informative about the nature of discourse, are not necessarily practice-oriented theories, a recognition which, of course, puts us at an awkward crossroads” (Constructing 86). Dobrin argues that post-process theory is not yet developed enough for pedagogical application: “Even those who see the classroom potential of post-process theory have too hastily fallen into the pedagogical imperative and seek to create pedagogies from theories we are just beginning to discuss” (64). Warning of the “pedagogical imperative,” or the idea that a theory must have direct classroom application, Dobrin says that rushing to outline pedagogical application is “frivolous” (86).

Further resistance to pedagogical application of post-process theory exists in the inevitable trap of trying to specify a pedagogy that upholds anti-foundationalist and postmodern beliefs. That is, post-process theory
as outlined by Kent upholds the anti-foundationalist view that knowledge is situated, indeterminate, and thoroughly hermeneutic. Thus, in advocating a pedagogy based on anti-foundationalism, one must wrestle with the paradox of any pedagogical agenda it forwards. David Wallace explains:

> If we recognize that structural understandings of language and rhetoric are not *objective* and have no intrinsic basis in *reality*, then we must also recognize that any act of pedagogy that requires (or encourages) conformity to convention is ultimately a power move. . . . Thus *any* pedagogical act must be seen as socially and culturally implicated because asking students to move in any direction—whether that be toward mastery of the conventions of standard written English or toward a critical awareness of the social and political consequences of acts of literacy—is to ask them to change not just what they know but who they are. (110–11)

Wallace claims that any pedagogy—postmodern or anti-foundationalist—adopts a stance and therefore cannot be considered indeterminate or ambiguous. Note that Wallace suggests that *any* pedagogical act is an act of power, thus reinforcing the paradox of any anti-foundationalist pedagogy.

What results from this inherent paradox of pedagogical application is confusion about any pedagogical insights post-process theory might offer; in addition, the resistance to a single pedagogical agenda encourages pluralism. For example, in recent years, various "post-process pedagogies" have emerged that bear no resemblance to one another. One example of post-process pedagogy is offered by McComiskey, who openly rejects what he calls Kent's "anti-process" and builds a post-process pedagogy on the idea of "social-process rhetorical inquiry," which he defines as "a method of invention that usually manifests itself in composition classes as a set of heuristic questions based on the cycle of cultural production, contextual distribution, and critical consumption" (40, 42). Raúl Sánchez, who stays closer to Kent's arguments and advocates pedagogy as a one-to-one mentored relationship between teacher and student, articulates another pedagogy that claims to be post-process. In this proposed pedagogy, Sanchez suggests that writing courses no longer focus on process as content, but rather use class time to engage in discourse about writing (see Dobrin, *Constructing* 84). Irene Ward also builds on Kent's ideas to articulate a "functional dialogism" for writing pedagogy, which includes the following forms of dialogue in the writing classroom:
• internal dialogues between a self and an internalized audience

• dialogue between teacher and student

• dialogue between students and other larger social institutions, including but not limited to the educational institution or some other social institution within any one or more of the student’s immediate communities

• dialogues among students about the formal matters of the composition or the ideas or subject of the discourse

• composing using dialogic forms in order to understand an issue or group of issues from various points of view and gain insight into one’s relationship to those ideas and into multiple perspectives represented by many voices that have already entered into public dialogue. (171)

Still others articulate different visions for how post-process theory might apply to pedagogy. For example, Barbara Couture suggests that pedagogy must move beyond modeling a process and toward the development of agency in students:

Our current scholarship on diverse ways of knowing, meaning, and communicating strongly suggests that modeling specific conventions and procedures will not ensure that writers learn all they need to know in order to communicate effectively to others. . . . Writers need to become subjective agents, making willful judgments effected in concrete actions that convey them successfully to others. (42)

Russell takes a different approach and does not advocate rejecting process outright but, rather, extending the notion of process—or, as he puts it, “to extend the activity system of the discipline of composition studies, to offer to teachers and students more and more refined tools for helping people in and entering various activity systems to write and learn to write and transform their activity through writing” (91).

Lest we become confused by these divergent attempts to apply post-process theory to pedagogy, Petraglia reminds us that given the increase in scholarship about writing in the past two decades, both qualitative and quantitative, it is “natural” for post-process theory to exhibit such complexity (53). Yet, this does not help us understand with any clarity just what post-process theory can offer. Kent admits to the hybrid nature of scholarship about post-process theory in the introduction to his edited collection about post-process theory: “Although the authors appearing in
these pages may disagree about the nature of the ‘post’ in ‘post-process’ theory, all of them agree that change is in the air” (5). Further, he describes three assumptions that he claims most post-process scholars share: writing is public; writing is interpretive; and writing is situated (1). Perhaps these assumptions clarify to some degree how we might understand post-process theory, and I return to them later in this essay.

In sum, there are good reasons to believe that post-process theory resists pedagogical application: the declaration that writing cannot be taught, the lack of a clear pedagogical agenda, and the divergent applications thus far of post-process theory. With respect to Dobrin’s insistence that we too easily fall into the “pedagogical imperative,” I suggest that there are implications for pedagogy but that they are not highlighted in a productive way. The first implication is the recognition that writing is more than a body of knowledge to be mastered, which I address in the next section.

**Post-Process Rejection of Mastery**

While it is unclear what post-process theory offers in the way of concrete assignments or classroom environment, post-process theory does make an important pedagogical contribution through its rejection of mastery. Not coincidentally, many post-process scholars associate the process movement with mastery, suggesting (as Kent does) that process represents a system of writing that can be learned and perfected. Couture explains: “We pay a price . . . by reducing those acts that make us uniquely human—speaking and writing—to a device or technology to be mastered, ignoring their more central role in shaping the way we are and live” (39).

In this section, I explain in further detail the assumptions of mastery that post-process scholars have articulated (and rejected) about process pedagogy. I argue that whether or not we agree with the depiction of process as mastery, the post-process rejection of mastery is an important recognition for writing scholars and teachers.

One way post-process theorists depict process as mastery is by suggesting that writing process is a “thing”—a system, body of knowledge, or model—that can be skillfully practiced and conquered. When we reexamine Kent’s claim about writing pedagogy, this language becomes apparent: “Writing and reading—conceived broadly as processes or bodies of knowledge—cannot be taught, for nothing exists to teach” (161). Helen Ewald observes that Kent’s claim “seems based on the assumption that the ability to teach a subject rests on its having a codified body of knowledge that can be transmitted” (122). Of course, Kent
ultimately rejects the idea that writing can be described as a body of knowledge, but in doing so process becomes the scapegoat, representing little more than a body of knowledge. Dobrin, also speaking from a post-process perspective, makes this point clear: "Certainly, process pedagogy is convenient; process pedagogy makes it easy to define texts and to write texts. We can unproblematically, clearly present a body of knowledge and evaluate students' abilities to absorb and rehash that body of knowledge, that process" ("Paralogic" 139). According to these and other post-process scholars, process means little more than content—a body of knowledge.

This depiction of process as a body of knowledge often leads to what Erika Lindemann calls "what-centered" teaching approaches, in which teachers emphasize subject matter above all else. It is helpful to examine process pedagogy in this light to better understand the post-process critique that process leads to mastery. According to Lindemann, a what-centered writing course might emphasize subject matter such as literature, films, linguistic systems (grammar and sentence structure), or even modes of writing. In contrast, "how-centered" approaches emphasize activities that occur in a writing class (Lindemann includes process pedagogy here) such as prewriting, writing, and rewriting, in addition to activities such as listening to and discussing the writing of students in class (251, 252). She suggests that "what-centered" courses emphasize nouns (content), while "how-centered" courses emphasize verbs (activities).

The distinction between what-centered and how-centered approaches is particularly important where process pedagogy is concerned. If process pedagogy is considered an approach that reduces writing to a thing—a body of knowledge that can be transmitted to students—then process pedagogy would certainly be considered a what-centered approach to teaching writing. However, Lindemann notes (and I agree) that process pedagogy as it was originally introduced in composition represents a how-centered approach because of its emphasis on the activities involved in process approaches to writing (prewriting, writing, rewriting). Indeed, process pedagogy and the research of Janet Emig, Ken Macrorie, and Peter Elbow in many ways encouraged a shift away from content based approaches, such as current-traditional pedagogy, which emphasized grammatical structures. But viewed through post-process lenses, process seems to have lost its luster. Indeed, post-process scholarship has ignored process as how-centered and has curiously assumed that process is content-based.
Thinking about process or writing as "what-centered" facilitates mastery, as Lindemann explains: "We turn process-centered courses into what-centered courses every time we're tempted to interrupt students engaged in writing with an explanation of some subject matter. Or, if we 'explain' prewriting strategies during the first few weeks and never refer to them again, we've made prewriting a subject matter, a body of information to learn about rather than an activity to practice" (252). Lindemann argues that this turn is not productive and that teachers should be conscious of their efforts to uphold process as how-centered. However, post-process theory seems to be certain that this turn toward content has in fact occurred. Couture explains that instructors have emphasized process as content as a result of a historical habit of modeling writing in the classroom: "How did the emphasis upon process, like so many ideas about writing that are derived from scholarship and research, lose so much when applied en masse in our classrooms? At least one reason can be traced back to how we traditionally have approached composition instruction, teaching students to model technique rather than to emulate expression" (30). As Couture explains, our tendency to perceive process as mastery is historically consistent with past pedagogy, such as current-traditional approaches:

Teaching the writing process as the modeling of technique certainly is consistent with a tradition of composition pedagogy extending from the practice of imitating good writing by good writers; through the practice of perfecting the argumentative strategies of deduction, induction, comparing, contrasting, and defining; to following the basic pattern of the five-paragraph theme, mastered by most of us in high school English and freshman composition classes. And, too, emphasis on process as model has reflected an overt desire of many composition instructors to identify methods for improving writing instruction so as to "right" their students' writing. . . . (33)

Couture explains well how we—both students and teachers—might interpret process as mastery of writing techniques. From a student's perspective, process could be presented as a technique that could be mastered to improve student writing. From a teacher's perspective, process could be viewed as a pedagogical method that could be mastered in the classroom. Either way, the argument presented here suggests that process has been treated as a thing to master in writing pedagogy. Yet, this characterization of process as mastery seems too simple. Lisa Ede reminds us, for example, that research on writing process has displayed
enormous complexity. To illustrate this complexity, she reviews the work of several process scholars such as Emig, Elbow, Donald Murray, Linda Flower, and John Hayes, and she reminds us of their divergent approaches to process. But, as Ede articulates, process became “co-opted and commodified—by textbooks that oversimplified and rigidified a complex phenomenon, by overzealous language arts coordinators and writing program administrators who assumed that the process approach to teaching could be ‘taught’ in one or two in-service sessions” (35–36; see also Russell 84).

I review these arguments to problematize the assumption that process is “what-centered,” based solely on content or a body of knowledge. While it may be true that process has been “co-opted,” as Ede suggests, I argue that this commodification of process should be considered as a slip and not as a fact. As Lindemann reminds us, the characterization of process as how-centered is more true to the origins of the process movement. Simply stated, before accepting post-process arguments about the failure of process, we need to examine the assumptions informing them. When we do, we can find value in the post-process insistence that we reexamine the way we think of process in the writing classroom, as well as our approaches to mastery. That is, post-process scholars seem most concerned about writing being characterized as a thing, whether that thing is process, grammatical systems, discourse conventions, and so on. When considering these arguments, the value in post-process scholarship appears not to be the rejection of process, but the rejection of mastery—the rejection of the belief that writing can be categorized as a thing to be mastered.

Post-process opposition to mastery is also apparent in arguments that characterize process as Theory—or process as having universal explanatory power. And, like the “what-centered” characterization of process, process as a Theory is rejected by post-process scholars, as Olson reminds us:

The problem with process theory, then, is not so much that scholars are attempting to theorize various aspects of composing as it is that they are endeavoring (consciously or not) to construct a model of the composing process, thereby constructing a Theory of Writing, a series of generalizations about writing that supposedly hold true all or most of the time. (8)

Couture’s observation that process is a way to teach writing the “right” way also supports the argument that process presents a Theory. Like the
rejection of mastery, these arguments illustrate the postmodern and anti-foundationalist influences on post-process theory. As Olson explains, “The postmodern critique of theory serves as a useful corrective in that it alerts us to the dangers of creating master narratives and then adhering to these explanations as if we have obtained truth” (8). Postmodern critique is especially helpful in deconstructing what Pullman describes as the “rhetorical narrative” of process pedagogy, a “motivated selection and sequencing of events that sacrifices one truth in order to more clearly represent another” (16; see also Foster 149). Indeed, the postmodern influences on post-process theory denounce the search for universal truth. Kent reminds us of the “master narrative of objectivity,” the idea that truth resides outside of language and that knowledge is systematic rather than interpretive (Paralogic 63). At the root of the post-process critique of process pedagogy is the idea that process is a systematic method for learning writing—one that is objective rather than subjective.

Again, considering the post-process opposition to mastery, we must reexamine the claim that process represents a Theory or a grand narrative. I suggest that given the postmodern and anti-foundationalist influences on post-process theory, post-process scholars are more concerned with the rejection of universal theories in general than the rejection of process pedagogy in particular. Process appears to be merely a convenient illustration of the post-process perspective. For example, because process scholarship has been the dominant perspective in writing pedagogy, it is easy to paint it as an illustration of a master narrative, a Theory, or a model to be imitated. It is tempting to wonder if the purpose of post-process scholarship is to simply knock process off of its pedestal. Similar moves have been made in the past regarding the current-traditional movement in composition studies. Pullman describes the rush to associate the term current-traditional with a movement, theory, or label about teaching writing effectively:

We forget that [this] expression did not refer to a theory but was instead a shorthand and off-the-cuff way of alluding to the way the tradition of rhetoric was currently being purveyed in the Freshman Composition textbooks of [the] day. Because we forget this, we tend to think that current-traditional rhetoric was a bogus theory based on prejudice and misunderstanding, a kind of mindless application of traditional folklore or naive interpretations of Aristotle’s Rhetoric when in fact it did not exist as a theory except to the extent one could extrapolate a theory from the textbooks current at the time. (22)
Pullman asserts that the rush to define current-traditional rhetoric forwarded the process movement: "The writing process was not, in other words, so much discovered as created . . ." (23). Further, he suggests that this "creation" of process gave scholars reason to reject current-traditional rhetoric: "In a sense, the reified expression current-traditional rhetoric does little more than create a daemon for the sake of expelling it" (23).

In describing the building and rejecting of current-traditional rhetoric, Pullman illustrates his perception of the rhetorical narrative of process. Ede makes a similar observation of this rhetorical move, suggesting that advocates of the process movement depicted current-traditional rhetoric negatively. She claims that the process movement "in effect constituted itself through a denial of origins that involves creating that which it wishes to oppose and then erasing the shared ground that made the original construction of the other possible. In an important sense current-traditional rhetoric did not exist until advocates of writing as a process created it" (37). Ede calls this strategy "a characteristic move of the western intellectual project," and the point I wish to make is that this same move may be apparent in post-process scholarship (37). Here, process is described as a master narrative, a Theory, a content- and what-centered approach. Process is first described as a thing and is then promptly rejected. Petraglia articulates this move: "As I understand it, 'post-process' signifies a rejection of the generally formulaic framework for understanding writing that process suggested" (53). It could easily be argued that post-process scholars have created their own rhetorical narrative of process as content-based, thus casting process as the scapegoat.

As I suggested previously, I disagree with the depiction of process as a formula, model, or "thing," but I do agree with Petraglia's assertion that post-process scholarship signifies a rejection of generally formulaic frameworks for explaining writing. This broader understanding of post-process scholarship—not focused on process, but on the rejection of formulaic explanations of writing—is a key contribution to the reconceptualization of writing. Petraglia explains this well: "This reconceptualization requires that the discipline let go of its current pedagogical shape (i.e., its focus on supplying students with productive rhetorical skills that can be exercised through writing) and instead deploy its efforts to inculcate receptive skills" (61–62). Thus, I argue that rather than the rejection of process, the post-process critique contributes to our discipline through the rejection of mastery—the description of writing as
In giving up the search for a way to teach writing, post-process theory advocates, in the words of Petraglia, the "letting go" of the discipline. As I explain in the next section, post-process theory can be more fully explained by reviewing key assumptions critical to the theory, assumptions that are informed by postmodern and anti-foundationalist perspectives.

Post-Process Assumptions about Writing

In moving away from writing as a "thing," post-process theory encourages us to examine writing again as an activity—an indeterminate activity. By "indeterminate" I mean that the writing act cannot be predicted in terms of how students will write (through certain formulas or content) or how students will learn (through certain approaches). The shift from writing as content to writing as activity can be more fully explained by assumptions that are central to the post-process perspective. These are, according to Kent, the following: "(1) writing is public; (2) writing is interpretive; and (3) writing is situated" (Introduction 1). As I suggest in this section, because so much post-process scholarship has focused on the rejection of process, we need further explanation about assumptions that support a post-process view of writing. In my attempt to provide more background and explanation of these assumptions, I refer to the work of Donald Davidson, Richard Rorty, Thomas Kuhn, Stanley Fish, and scholars in composition who have discussed these assumptions.

Writing Is Public

The assumption that writing is public grows out of the post-process perspective that meaning making is a product of our communicative interaction with others rather than a product of an individual. Acknowledging the public nature of writing means acknowledging a reading audience—people to whom the writing matters—whether that audience is oneself, another person, a group of people, or any other reader. Emphasizing the public nature of writing reminds us that beyond writing correctly, writers must work toward communicating their message to an audience. It is this goal—being understood—that Kent suggests cannot be "guaranteed"; therefore, we cannot know with certainty if students are successful, nor can we know how to teach students to be successful in communicative interaction. However, we can encourage students to become more aware of their interactions with others.
We can further understand the assumption that writing is public by examining the Davidsonian perspective of “language-in-use,” a concept that has influenced some post-process scholars, particularly Kent. Davidson explains in “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs” that language-in-use does not rely on some sort of foundational structure (like Noam Chomsky’s deep structure) or even conventions of language. His description of language-in-use has radical implications for the idea that language is contextually or “convention” bound:

There is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed. There is therefore no such thing to be learned, mastered, or born with. We must give up the idea of a clearly defined shared structure which language-users acquire and then apply to cases. And we should try again to say how convention in any important sense is involved in language; or, as I think, we should give up the attempt to illuminate how we communicate by appeal to conventions. (446)

Davidson’s version of communicative interaction suggests that meaning is not relative to a community or to discourse conventions but is a product of language-in-use, and language-in-use, as Reed Way Dasenbrock explains, is always public and accessible to other language users:

Networks of meaning, thus, are both inner and outer, including ourselves and others in a web. It is not that we have something unique to say stemming from our personal experience before we negotiate the public structures of meaning, but what we have to say forms as a response to that public structure, to what has come before us and what is being said and done around us. (29)

Davidson terms this public interaction “triangulation,” which he understands as the connection between language users and the world. In explaining triangulation, Davidson writes that the “basic idea is that our concept of objectivity—our idea that our thoughts may or may not correspond to the truth—is an idea that we would not have if it weren’t for interpersonal relations. In other words, the source of objectivity is intersubjectivity: the triangle consists of two people and the world” (Kent, “Language” 7–8). Triangulation is a key concept for explaining how meanings are located within our communicative interactions with others, and it suggests that we can’t know things without knowing others.

The public aspect of writing, which incorporates Davidson’s depic-
tion of language-in-use, is already apparent in some writing pedagogies; however, these pedagogies are often described as “dialogic” instead of “post-process” because they emphasize communicative interaction in the teaching of writing. Sánchez outlines a writing pedagogy, for example, as a one-to-one mentored relationship between teacher and student that emphasizes communicative interaction. In this proposed pedagogy, writing instruction is no longer focused on process as content, but rather on class time used to engage students in discourse about writing (see Dobrin, *Constructing* 83–85). Similarly, Ewald suggests that a pedagogy emphasizing communicative interaction would “enjoy an intimate connection between instructional subjects and methods. Writing instruction could be organized around discourse moves” (128).

Other pedagogies that emphasize dialogue employ concepts from Bakhtin—particularly the concepts of heteroglossia and addressivity. Ward explains how these concepts relate to writing pedagogy: “The self in a dialogic pedagogy is not autonomous and solitary but multiple, composed of all the voices or texts one has ever heard or read and therefore capable of playing an infinite number of roles in service of the internal dialogic interaction” (172–73). Using Bakhtinian concepts of dialogue, Ward describes a “functional dialogism,” a pedagogy that encourages students to interact with others, thus reinforcing the public aspect of writing:

Because learning takes place best in communicative interaction, a functional dialogic pedagogy will have to employ a great deal of public writing—that is, writing directed to others capable of and interested in responding—if we are to produce students who are able to generate not only correct, readable prose, but also prose that can elicit a response from others, thereby enabling students to become active participants in communities beyond the classroom. (170)

Dialogue is even more prominent in Kay Halasek’s *A Pedagogy of Possibility*, in which she argues that “dialogue has replaced writing as a process as a defining metaphor for the discipline” (3–4). Halasek’s decidedly post-process pedagogy emphasizes Bakhtinian scholarship, which she conceptualizes as “a world that recognizes the viability and necessity of existing social, economic, and national languages. Through the concept of dialogism, Bakhtin establishes the critical need to sustain dialogue in the unending quest to maintain difference and diversity, hallmarks of intellectual growth and health . . .” (8). Emphasizing the importance of communicative interaction, Halasek suggests that
heteroglossia—reflexivity and response—ought to characterize writing pedagogy.

The assumption that writing is public, therefore, incorporates the idea that meaning is made through our interactions. Terms used to describe this emphasis include language-in-use, communicative interaction, and dialogue, but they all point to the idea that writing is an activity—an interaction with others—rather than content to be mastered.

**Writing Is Interpretive**

A second assumption of the post-process perspective is that writing is interpretive. That is, the production—not just the reception—of discourse is thoroughly interpretive (or what Rorty calls “interpretation all the way down”). This assumption supports the belief that writing is indeterminate, for saying writing is interpretive suggests that meaning is not stable. We can better understand this assumption by reviewing what has been called the “interpretive turn” in philosophy, the claim that what we know is shaped by our interpretations. The interpretive turn, as described by James Bohman, David Hiley, and Richard Shusterman, follows previous philosophical movements such as the “epistemological turn” of the eighteenth century (where knowledge was equated with rational thought, especially the kind of rational thought exemplified by the scientific method) and the “linguistic turn” early in this century, where emphasis was placed on the structure of language and the meanings generated through language systems. According to Bohman, Hiley, and Shusterman, the interpretive turn breaks with these previous traditions by giving up the notion that the essence or the foundations of knowledge and meaning can be discovered: “The views about the foundations of knowledge and the knowing subject that were the basis for the epistemological turn have been called into question, and it has seemed to many philosophers that language and meaning cannot bear the kind of weight the linguistic turn required” (1). When we give up our search for the foundations of knowledge, and when we relinquish our attempts to reduce knowledge and meaning to foundational categories of linguistic or mental states, we encounter the interpretive turn—the acknowledgment that meaning is shaped by our interpretive acts.

Critical to the assumption that writing is interpretive is the degree to which interpretation penetrates. That is, are there some things, ideas, concepts, that are not subject to interpretation? The post-process assumption is that writing is thoroughly interpretive, or what Rorty calls “interpretation all the way down.” Bohman, Hiley, and Shusterman
explain that the move toward interpretation can take one of two forms: either "hermeneutic universalism" or "hermeneutic contextualism" (7). Hermeneutic universalism holds that interpretation never stops—that communication itself constitutes an interpretive act. Hermeneutic contextualism holds that interpretation takes place within some context, community, or background (7). In short, contextualism suggests that there are limits to interpretation, while universalism does not.

These competing conceptions of interpretation characterize a recurring debate within current hermeneutic theory, and clear examples of this debate are found in the writings of Kuhn and Rorty. For example, in "The Natural and the Human Sciences," Kuhn, a hermeneutic contextualist, notes that both the natural and the human sciences rely on interpretation, but the human sciences rely on interpretation more completely: "The natural sciences, therefore, though they may require what I have called a hermeneutic base, are not themselves hermeneutic enterprises. The human sciences, on the other hand, often are, and they may have no alternative." Kuhn endorses the idea that the natural sciences are more objective, and, finally, more "truthful" than the human sciences because the natural sciences "are not themselves hermeneutic enterprises" (23).

In contrast, Rorty, a hermeneutic universalist, argues that interpretation goes "all the way down": "My fantasy is of a culture so deeply anti-essentialist that it makes only a sociological distinction between sociologists and physicists, not a methodological or philosophical one" (71). In "Inquiry as Recontextualization," Rorty asserts that our minds are "webs of beliefs and desires, of sentential attitudes—webs that continually reweave themselves so as to accommodate new sentential attitudes" (59). For Rorty, both the human sciences and the natural sciences are thoroughly hermeneutic enterprises, and he argues that what we know or could ever know about the world derives from the webs of beliefs and desires that we continually reweave or "recontextualize":

As one moves along the spectrum from habit to inquiry—from instinctive revision of intentions through routine calculation toward revolutionary science or politics—the number of beliefs added to or subtracted from the web increases. At a certain point in this process it becomes useful to speak of "recontextualization." The more widespread the changes, the more use we have for the notion of "a new context." This new context can be a new explanatory theory, a new comparison class, a new descriptive vocabulary, a new private or political purpose, the latest book one has read, the last person one talked to; the possibilities are endless. (60–61)
According to Rorty, interpretation—what he calls “reinterpretation” and “recontextualization”—never ceases, for every interpretation is based on a previous interpretation. The different views about the power of interpretation held by Rorty and Kuhn exemplify the current debate concerning hermeneutic universalism and hermeneutic contextualization that we encounter in studies of both the reception and the production of discourse.

To understand writing as a thoroughly interpretive activity (in the spirit of hermeneutic universalism) means accepting that no foundational knowledge is the basis for writing as a discipline. Given this assumption, we can better understand the post-process rejection of mastery and its depiction and consequent rejection of process as a foundational body of knowledge. In addition, when we understand writing as thoroughly interpretive, we must also accept the indeterminate nature of the writing activity. Writing becomes an activity that requires an understanding of context, interaction with others, and our attempts to communicate a message. Understanding interpretation as universal helps illuminate the third post-process assumption: that writing is situated.

Writing Is Situated

The assumption that writing is situated also illustrates the indeterminacy of the writing act, as writing must correspond to specific contexts that naturally vary. Of all three post-process assumptions, the assumption that writing is situated has been discussed most frequently by scholars interested in postmodern or anti-foundationalist perspectives. For example, James Sosnoski asserts that postmodern classrooms “do not have to follow a single blueprint and should change according to the situation” (210). Also endorsing situatedness, Thomas Barker and Fred Kemp explain that postmodernism is “a self-conscious acknowledgment of the immediate present and an attempt to respond to it in new ways” (1). James Berlin draws on postmodern thought and social-epistemic rhetoric to suggest that pedagogy becomes enforced through “dialectical interaction, working out a rhetoric more adequate to the historical moment and the actual conditions of teacher and students” (25). Situatedness, for these postmodern scholars, refers to the ability to respond to specific situations rather than rely on foundational principles or rules.

Situatedness has been discussed similarly in the anti-foundationalist perspective. For example, Patricia Bizzell asserts that “an anti-foundationalist understanding of discourse would see the student’s way of thinking and interacting with the world, the student’s very self, as
fundamentally altered by participation in any new discourse" (43). She includes situatedness in her definition of rhetoric: "Rhetoric is the study of the personal, social and historical elements in human discourse—how to recognize them, interpret them, and act on them, in terms both of situational context and of verbal style" (52). Likewise, Susan Wells suggests that technical writing pedagogy should help students enter into communicative action and to help them understand their situatedness (264). Further, in "Teaching Professional Writing as Social Praxis," Thomas Miller suggests that we need to teach technical writing not as techné (or cognitive skills) but as praxis, which means that writers must understand the situations and contexts that surround them: "We can foster such 'practical wisdom' by developing a pedagogy that contributes to our students' ability to locate themselves and their professional communities in the larger public context" (68).

While situatedness has been addressed more explicitly in these passages, we can see traces of all three post-process assumptions in this scholarship. They are evident in assertions that writing should change with the situation, that students interact with the world through dialectical interaction, and that rhetoric involves interpretation of social and historical elements of human discourse. Given these similarities, we see that post-process scholarship is not advocating new directions, but rather endorsing anti-foundationalist and postmodern approaches that have already been articulated. To see writing in terms of post-process assumptions—as public, interpretive, and situated—encourages us to think of writing as an indeterminate activity rather than a body of knowledge to be mastered. These post-process assumptions (strongly influenced by postmodern and anti-foundationalist perspectives) finally shed light on how post-process theory might inform teaching.

Post-Process Pedagogy?
My purpose thus far has been to reveal the post-process rejection of mastery and to outline the anti-foundationalist assumptions informing post-process theory. In doing so, I have suggested that post-process theory rejects system-based explanations of writing and embraces indeterminacy in the writing act. Given this understanding of post-process theory, in this final section I assert that post-process theory resists pedagogical agendas that are comprised of content, but that it offers valuable pedagogical principles about the activity of teaching. I discuss implications of these principles, which include mentoring and tutorial approaches to writing instruction.
Understanding the anti-foundationalist nature of post-process theory places us, as Dobrin suggests, "at an awkward crossroads" (*Constructing* 86). To articulate any kind of pedagogy based on anti-foundationalism would be to support the claim that knowledge can be rooted in a particular approach or system and, therefore, would no longer be anti-foundational. It is for this reason that I do not advocate a specific pedagogical agenda that espouses post-process theory, for I believe doing so presents an inherent paradox. Fish more clearly explains that we ought not to place too much pedagogical stock in anti-foundationalist assumptions such as situatedness:

To put the matter in a nutshell, the knowledge that one is in a situation has no particular payoff for any situation you happen to be in, because the constraints of that situation will not be relaxed by that knowledge. It follows, then, that teaching our students the lesson of anti-foundationalism, while it will put them in possession of a new philosophical perspective, will not give them a tool for operating in the world they already inhabit. Being told that you are in a situation will help you neither to dwell in it more perfectly nor to write within it more successfully. (351)

Similarly, if we accept the post-process perspective that writing is indeterminate, public, interpretive, and situated, there is little we can do with this knowledge.

When it comes to pedagogy, however, the temptation is to turn our revelations into content to be delivered in the classroom, thereby falling prey to what Dobrin calls the "pedagogical imperative." While we may want to translate the post-process assumptions (writing is public, interpretive, and situated) into content to have our students learn, what good does this do? I completely agree with Dobrin that the force of the "pedagogical imperative" is alive and well and also that it is premature in relation to post-process theory. Dobrin suggests that post-process theory is too new to generate pedagogical insights—that its discussions should be theoretical at this point (*Constructing* 64). While I agree with Dobrin, I suggest that because of the anti-foundationalist influence on post-process theory, it is unlikely that we will ever see a "post-process pedagogy," complete with neat, bulleted points about applying a specific approach to the writing classroom. Fish is again insightful here, for he argues a similar point in declaring that the project to develop a postmodern or anti-foundationalist pedagogy should be abandoned—not simply because the project would be difficult, but because it is impossible. According to Fish, anti-foundationalism only helps us understand *that* we
are situated. He argues that we can do nothing with this knowledge, and we certainly can’t put it to use. In the conclusion of “Anti-Foundationalism, Theory Hope, and the Teaching of Composition,” Fish offers a kind of apology for this view: “Perhaps I should apologize for taking up so much of your time in return for so small a yield; but the smallness of the yield has been my point. It is also the point of anti-foundationalism, which offers you nothing but the assurance that what it is unable to give you—knowledge, goals, purposes, strategies—is what you already have” (355). Similarly, I offer a kind of apology that I have no specific pedagogical agenda to offer that I could claim would be “post-process pedagogy,” for I don’t believe such an agenda is compatible with the theory.

More to the point, Fish’s viewpoint actualizes, in my opinion, the “letting go” of the discipline that Petraglia spoke of in terms of post-process theory. Petraglia suggests that instructors of writing need to let go of the idea that writing is built on a foundational body of knowledge and accept the idea that we need to focus on situational response. Likewise, we must resist the temptation to turn our understanding of post-process assumptions into content to be delivered and mastered by students. Accepting post-process assumptions truly implies a “letting go” of the desire to find a right way to learn and teach writing.

While post-process theory does not offer concrete pedagogical agendas based on content, I believe that it offers valuable pedagogical principles that guide our practice as teachers. I see two main principles that post-process theory can offer pedagogy: the rejection of mastery and the engagement in dialogue rather than monologue with students. I have already illustrated these principles in my explanation of post-process assumptions (writing is public, interpretive, and situated), so I won’t explain them again here. It is worth noting, however, that these principles have been present in previous scholarship about composition pedagogy, alternative pedagogies, and pragmatic theories dating back to John Dewey. We need to recognize that these post-process principles are not out in left field but, rather, that they support excellent scholarship in education. It is worth briefly reviewing these principles, most notably in the scholarship of Dewey and Paulo Freire.

We find traces of the rejection of mastery and engagement in dialogue in Dewey’s declaration that education is a social process instead of subject matter (230). In “My Pedagogic Creed,” Dewey suggests that “the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child’s powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself,” that education is a life-long process, and that school “must represent present
life—life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground" (229, 230–31). In declaring these beliefs, he rejects the idea that education is a fixed body of knowledge to be transmitted passively to the student: “I believe, therefore, that the true centre of correlation of the school subjects is not science, nor literature, nor history, nor geography, but the child’s own social activities” (232). The idea is that the rote learning of subject matter, without understanding its relevance to one’s situation and the world, does not improve one’s education. Dewey’s ideas resonate with the post-process rejection of system-based writing approaches and its emphasis on language-in-use.

In some regards, an even more striking resemblance exists between post-process principles and the work of Freire, particularly his notion of the “banking concept.” In the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire describes the banking concept as “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (67). Freire considers the banking method of teaching to be a dehumanizing practice that ultimately reinforces teachers as oppressors, controlling knowledge, and students as the oppressed, incapable of response (68). In place of the banking concept of education, Freire advocates a “problem-posing” concept of education, which would require students to play active rather than passive roles:

Those truly committed to liberation must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of women and men as conscious beings and consciousness intent upon the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relationship with the world. (74)

By suggesting that critical consciousness requires that students must communicate with the world, not just be in the world, Freire illustrates the post-process emphasis on writing as public interaction with others and the world. And he emphasizes the social aspect of education when he asserts that human life can only have meaning through communication (72). He encourages the teacher-student relationship to be a “partnership” in which teacher and student engage in two-way dialogue. To do so requires a dialogic relationship between students and teacher in which roles of the
traditional banking concept of education no longer exist and in which "the students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (70,75). Although Freire's pedagogy is thoroughly ideological—a premise Dewey's pedagogy does not share to the same degree—both principles of rejection of mastery and engagement of dialogue can be seen in this scholarship.

In composition studies, we have also heard these principles before. As I outlined earlier in this essay, postmodern and anti-foundationalist "pedagogies" have advocated writing as situated, interpretive, and public rather than based on foundational knowledge, and several "dialogic" pedagogies have also been discussed in composition scholarship. Although the principles of rejection of mastery and engagement in dialogue have been discussed in previous scholarship, what is different about post-process theory is the combination of these principles in one theoretical perspective, as well as its sharp criticism of the dominant paradigm in composition studies. These features of post-process theory push the discipline forward in a most pronounced way, as its very name suggests.

Although I am unable to produce specific content-based pedagogical agendas that can be immediately transferred to the classroom, I do suggest that the rejection of mastery and engagement in dialogue lead to an important implication for how we teach writing: such a stance helps us reconsider teaching as an act of mentoring rather than a job in which we deliver content. To think of teaching as mentoring means spending time and energy on our interactions with students—listening to them, discussing ideas with them, letting them make mistakes, and pointing them in the right direction. This type of teacher-student relationship demonstrates instruction that is collaborative and dialogic, and it in fact reflects Kent's suggestions for pedagogy in *Paralogic Rhetoric*: "By working in partnership with their students, mentors would no longer stand outside their students' writing and reading experiences. Instead, they would become an integral part of their students' learning experiences..." (166). This type of mentoring suggests a release of the idea of mastery and the embrace of indeterminacy in teaching situations. Indeed, the connection could be made that like the post-process description of writing, the act of teaching is also public, interpretive, and situated—another type of indeterminate activity.

Given this emphasis on mentoring, I believe the strongest application of post-process theory is in the practice of one-to-one instruction that manifests itself in teacher-student interactions. Kent, Sánchez, Ward, and Halasek have come to similar conclusions, drawing attention to dialogue
between teacher-student and to student-student interactions in the classroom. I support the kind of one-to-one, dialogic instruction these scholars have advocated; however, their descriptions of one-to-one interactions tend to be broad and abstract, leaving readers with little concrete sense of how post-process theory might apply to one-to-one instruction. For purposes of illustration, a more immediate and tangible application of post-process theory might exist in tutorial interactions between tutors and students in writing centers. Writing centers provide a concrete context for post-process theory because one-to-one interactions are the primary practice of writing center tutors, as well as the subject of writing center research. For example, Christina Murphy and Steve Sherwood suggest that the essence of tutoring is *conversation*, or language-in-use (2). Similarly, Eric Hobson suggests that writing center scholarship often derives its credibility from practice, or “lore.” In addition, illustrations of one-to-one teaching interactions abound in writing center literature; many scholars have addressed the dynamics of teaching interactions, teacher-student roles, and methods involved in one-to-one writing instruction. Given that post-process theory emphasizes dialogue in writing instruction, as well as the importance of mentoring, and given that such dialogue in writing instruction is the core of writing center work, the connection between post-process theory and writing center pedagogy is easy to support.

Post-process theory, then, could find immediate application in writing center work and could benefit from writing center scholarship about one-to-one teaching. Alternatively, writing centers could benefit from post-process theory in exploring theoretical avenues to support writing center practice. There exists a wonderful irony in this connection because of the sometimes perceived gap in prestige between post-process theory and writing center practice. That is, post-process theory, at least in the terms Dobrin describes, appears on the surface to be an ivory-tower endeavor. Writing centers, on the other hand, because of their focus on practice, have historically been marginalized and have consequently struggled to legitimate scholarship based on tutorial practice. The connection between the two might result in a happy marriage. For instance, anti-foundationalist and postmodernist perspectives are appearing more frequently in writing center scholarship. Traces of the public, situated, and interpretive aspects of post-process theory in writing centers exist in Joan Mullin’s suggestion that writing centers “provide spaces where the personal and public, the individual and other, struggle to honor the singular voice, to recognize different language communities” (xiii). In
addition, claims such as that expressed by Hobson ("no single theory can dictate writing center instruction" are reminiscent of the post-process rejection of a grand theory or narrative to describe communicative practice (8). The union of post-process theory and writing center practice could potentially demonstrate how theory and practice could live in harmony, providing both illustration and explanation of one-to-one writing instruction. Of course, while there are some interesting overlaps between post-process theory and writing center work, asserting a strong connection would require another lengthy and careful discussion, which I do not have time to develop here. But I do see this connection as a fruitful area for future research, and I see writing centers as an immediate illustration of the kind of instructional dialogue post-process theory endorses.

For the purposes of my discussion here, however, I wish to suggest that post-process theory is, at its very core, concerned with pedagogical practice. In asserting this claim, I disagree with those scholars who suggest post-process theory should remain a theoretical enterprise, and I suggest that post-process theory is most decidedly connected to a how-centered approach to teaching. Critiques that deny any pedagogical relevance of post-process theory are, I believe, based on the expectation that pedagogy is what-centered and needs to produce a concrete pedagogical agenda based on content. The real pedagogical thrust of post-process theory has to do not with content or subject matter, but rather with what we do with content. As such, post-process theory has much to offer teachers in any discipline, whether they teach writing, math, physics, women's studies, history, or occupational therapy, for the pedagogical thrust of post-process theory is in its reminder that teaching does not equal mastery of content but rather how teachers and students can interact with one another about content. Thus, in addition to posing the question "what does it mean to write?" post-process theory also poses the question "what does it mean to teach?"

Letting Go
As discerning scholars, we must not take post-process theory at face value, associating it only with a critique of process. If, as many post-process scholars articulate, post-process theory means accepting an anti-foundationalist perspective and adopting language-in-use, then its relevance to pedagogy is to encourage us to reexamine the "foundations" from which we may have been operating, as well as our communicative practices with students. Even if this examination does not make anti-
foundationalists out of us, it reminds us to think carefully about our teaching practices, to avoid co-opting or reducing complex research in composition studies, and to become more aware of our interactions with students in the classroom.

"Letting go" in the case of post-process theory does not mean an avoidance of the teaching of writing; it does not mean becoming irresponsible teachers. It means, quite frankly, the opposite. It means becoming teachers who are more in tune to the pedagogical needs of students, more willing to discuss ideas, more willing to listen, more willing to be moved by moments of mutual understanding. It means, in sum, to be more conscientious in our attempts to meet the needs of students in their educational journeys. Post-process theory does not prescribe a pedagogy and ask us to adopt it blindly. Rather, it enhances our sensitivity as teachers, our knowledge and expertise, and the way we communicate with students to help them learn. In short, post-process theory asks us to take a close look at ourselves as teachers. Thinking through the principles of rejection of mastery and engagement in dialogue provides all teachers with a valuable philosophical exercise.¹⁰

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Notes

1. See, for example, Olson; Pullman; Kent, "Introduction."
2. See Petraglia; Dobrin, "Constructing; Kent, "Introduction"; Pullman.
3. See, for example, Pullman, Olson, Couture.
4. In his Paralogic Rhetoric, Kent identifies this assumption with "externalism."
5. We can note similarities between Davidson's argument that "there is no such thing as language" and Kent's argument that "we cannot teach writing . . . for nothing exists to teach." Both arguments reject the idea that language and writing are comprised of foundational systems.
6. The term "triangulation" that Davidson uses is not to be confused with the term "triangulation" that denotes qualitative research methodology in which data are compiled from three or more perspectives to establish a more verifiable analysis.
7. While much has been discussed about interpretation in the reception of discourse—for example, Stanley Fish's concept of interpretive communities and how meaning is received—little has been discussed about the interpretive nature of writing or speaking.
8. See, for example, Murphy and Sherwood; Hobson; Harris; Black; Clark; Mullin and Wallace.

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**Works Cited**


